

RAPPORT BETWEEN PLAYERS AND AUDIENCE IN 15TH AND EARLY
16TH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA

by

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I declare that RAPPORTE BETWEEN PLAYERS AND AUDIENCE IN 15TH AND EARLY 16TH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Century English Drama

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Summary

This dissertation falls in line with work produced during the past fifteen years or so, aimed at improving our appreciation of late medieval/early Tudor English Drama. The approach is based especially on looking at the rapport likely to be achieved between audience and players (and via the players, with the playwrights), in actual performance.

Attention is given to the permanent modes of human thought, that are unaffected by the ephemerality of a particular period; attention is therefore drawn to the traps that may mislead the unwary twentieth-century critic, and some new insights are offered into the purposes of the playwrights.

Several cycle plays are treated, together with two of the moralities and two interludes. The point is made that these playwrights showed a considerable mastery of the possibilities inherent in drama, as is demonstrated by the provision for achieving rapport with the audience.

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PREFATORY NOTE

One naturally aims for consistency in such a study as this; when one deals with the Medieval period however, there is the problem that the spelling of the period was not always consistent; in quoting accurately one therefore introduces inconsistency into one's own work. Thus examples will be found here such as "Lucrece" for "Lucres", and "John Johan" for "Johan Johan". This is simply a case of "Autre temps, autre moeurs".

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY

The aim of this dissertation is to make a contribution to the study of medieval drama, a field by no means completely explored. In fact we may say that this has been a Cinderella study, which has begun to find its Fairy Godmother increasingly over the last generation or so.

In order to set the scene, I quote from Stanley J Kahrl's preface to Traditions of Medieval Drama (Kahrl 1974: 9):-

"So much of what we have 'known' since E.K.Chambers completed his history of the medieval theatre has come unstuck".

He goes on to refer to H.C.Gardiner's Mystery's End, which proposed that the religious drama remained vital right up until it was killed by Protestants for political reasons, and that it was not the case that it was crude, to be replaced when more polished drama suddenly came into being.

To expand on this I quote other comments, showing that the study of medieval drama originally began by assuming it offered little of direct literary interest (beyond historical interest as preceding the Elizabethan theatre); but that more recently there has been the beginning of an appreciation that there is indeed much of direct literary interest in its various genres.

Some thirty years before the writing of this dissertation, David Bevington (1962: 2) wrote of medieval drama:-

"...labels of crudity and ignorance still persist in the prevalent attitude towards its structure. Even if this drama is granted to have had comic vitality and color, its contributions to dramatic form are still generally dismissed as nonexistent or as a distinct liability."

Eleven years later Paula Neuss (1973: 41) described how the miracle play was regarded as "really rather brown and grubby and of no intrinsic interest", and as late as 1979 (xi), Kelley wrote

"...and even now, it is almost impossible to find an article or book that praises any of these plays as good literature."

There is enough truth in these contentions for the writer to wish to enter the lists.

What we see then, is that earlier modern critics found the plays so alien that they recognised no merit in them, but that with the passage of time - and presumably with increasing familiarity - critics have begun to see the plays more clearly.

I have stressed that medieval drama needs closer examination but I wish to suggest further that it would be valuable for our era to study the medieval period, rather in the way that classical studies were regarded as of great importance in an earlier era.

To make my point, I quote from Woodward (1911: 10), writing of the history of the British Empire up to 1902:-

"In some respects English expansion has been like that of the City-states of ancient Greece. From them, as from England, citizens went out to found new communities, and where they went they carried the Greek name and civilisation. Or again, it has been like that of Rome - the rule of conquerors, lawgivers, governors, imposing order, toleration and peace. The British India of today throws a flood of light upon the administration of a Roman Province, Britain, say, or Syria, of the first or second century. Lastly, and the analogy is rather with Greece or Rome than with any modern nation, British expansion has another quality: it is, in a sense, inevitable. This may be due to race and its innate vigour; to geography; to maritime instinct; to permanent economic causes: it is probably a result of all these. But it is there; it perhaps eludes explanation; it certainly needs no defence."

The classical association was necessary to the English conscience in an expansionist age; sharing a classical education helped to separate a ruling caste from the hoi polloi, and to infuse them with esprit de corps. C.Northcote Parkinson (1960: 26) sums it up humorously:-

"It is also usual in works of learning to refer, sooner or later, to ancient Athens. This book will be no exception, difficult as it is to maintain for long the reverent attitude associated with classical scholarship. The Athens admired in the classical VI form is, of course, purely imaginary, the invention of classical philologists in whom any sense of history (or of reality) is almost completely lacking. It is as well, however, to bring it in occasionally, thus lending tone to the whole book and hinting that the author went to the right sort of school...."

Eagleton (1983: 27-31) describes "The rise of English", against the claims of classical studies:-

"English literature, reflected a Royal Commission witness in 1877, might be considered a suitable subject for 'women... and the second- and third-rate men who [...] become schoolmasters'... The only way in which English seemed likely to justify its existence in the ancient Universities was by systematically mistaking itself for the Classics; but the classicists were hardly keen to have this pathetic parody of themselves around..." [and referring to the work of F.R. Leavis, Q.D. Roth and I.A. Richards after the end of the 1914-1918 war] "In the early 1920s it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all; by the early 1930s it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else."

I would like to suggest he omitted a significant part of the point he was making: a few pages earlier (19) he said:-

"In England, a crassly philistine Utilitarianism is rapidly becoming the dominant ideology of the industrial middle class, fetishizing fact, reducing human relations to market exchanges and dismissing art as unprofitable ornamentation. The callous disciplines of early industrial capitalism uproot whole communities, convert human life into wage-slavery, enforce an alienating labour-process on the newly formed working class and understand nothing which cannot be transformed into a commodity on the open market."

He goes on to refer to this leading to militant protest, only to be repressed brutally. I would like to suggest that the situation is equally true today, except that indoctrination and conditioning have been substituted for brute force, while attaining the same end, equally objectionable to academic liberalism.

From time to time one meets praiseworthy attempts to combat the pervasive indoctrination - for example, in drawing attention to the shortcomings of advertisements. The hold that commercial interests have established on governments, and thereby on the financing of education, is a source of difficulty. There is also the problem of deconditioning oneself, especially in these days of the electronic media.

I am suggesting that medieval studies are an aid in this last: medieval people were very much like ourselves, but were not subjected to the pressures we face, and so maintained identity and individuality more easily than we do. It is true that they were subject to certain conditioning pressures themselves, but these we recognise easily, and may allow for.

The plays at which I look form a part of the field of medieval studies, and have especial value as such from their popular nature. If we look at the last (Fulgens and Luces), we may even detect the beginnings of the use of such media for indoctrination purposes; if we go back through the other interlude and to the two moralities, it seems to me that we can detect even earlier traces, either of political/commercial indoctrination of this sort, or else of reaction to such a 'Newguise'. I feel they represent a worthwhile study.

Before passing to the drama itself, I shall quote some interesting observations that compare medieval academic culture with our own academic culture.

Laurie Fincke in her percipient introduction to the medieval section of Literary Criticism and Theory (Davis 1989: 115), comments on the similarity between medieval and present literary concerns:-

"...suggesting that the middle ages, in fact, have much to say about the meaning of meaning; about how texts mean, how meaning relates to the author's intentions... medieval writers, it turns out, wrote sophisticated discussions about hermeneutics... that address these very problems."

Further (118) she quotes Augustine of Hippo as follows:-

"That which we have in our minds is expressed in words, and called speech. But our thought is not transformed into sounds: it remains entire in itself and assumes the form of words by means of which it may reach the ears without any deterioration in itself."

Compare this with what Ferdinand de Saussure says in his The Object of Study (quoted Lodge 1988: 3):-

"Speech sounds are only the instrument of thought, and have no independent existence."

Fifteen hundred years may separate them, but they are directing their attention to very similar issues. These pointers should make us wary of assuming crudeness to be characteristic of medieval culture, and make us more willing to approach these plays as though we had ourselves been brought up in their era.

In approaching these plays, I would like to quote Eagleton (1983: 77) on Reception Aesthetics:-

"The literary work itself exists merely as... a set of 'schemata' or general directions, which the reader must actualise. To do this, the reader will bring to the work certain pre-understandings, a dim context of belief and expectations, within which the work's various features will be assessed."

Essentially there is a difference between the play and the novel in that far more is under the control of the playwright and the players in the former: tones of voice, tempo, appearance, bodily and mood attitudes, movements etc. The audience is engaged in the same task as the reader, but in a generally more immediate, directed and intimate way, with a heightened sense of participation, and more limited scope for making any very unorthodox interpretations.

The various plays at which I look seem to have been written for widely varying audiences, which alone suggests the consciousness of the need for rapport with a particular audience. To assess how much rapport would be achieved, the appropriate pre-dispositions must be taken into account. Even when a medieval play is staged today, the audience is likely to have massively different pre-dispositions from the original audience, and it is those of the latter that must be paramount in our assessment. I am attempting to break relatively new ground here by studying the medieval audiences.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The reference sources I have used throughout this study (and therefore not specifically named) are:-

Clark (1971), who gives a social and political history of England.

Hayes, Baldwin and Cole (1967), who cover "Western Civilisation", but who have useful philosophical insights.

Meiklejohn (1896), who is exceptionally useful for his catalogue style in presenting facts and dates.

Contemporary historical factors would have had a significant influence on the pre-dispositions the audiences brought to these plays: however each play has essentially a different audience, and each audience therefore experienced its own peculiar influences; it is therefore more practical to make whatever historical reference is necessary when dealing with specific plays. Accordingly I give here just a brief note referring especially to the towns, and therefore to the cycle plays.

The feast of Corpus Christi dates back to 1311; Richard Beadle (1982: 20) gives 1318 as the date on which it was first widely observed in England, with proclamation at York in 1325. The earliest (probable) reference to the cycle plays was in 1376, and the first certain one in 1386-7. He also gives reasons to date the York script as we have it between 1463 and 1477 (1982: 10). The historical period of interest is therefore the 14th, and more especially the 15th century.

Sir George Clark (1971: 139ff) has a chapter he titles "Society and Disruption 1327-1399". In this he tells us there was an 'Industrial Revolution' (at craft levels) in textiles during this period, and that seaborne commerce, which had largely been developed by Flemings, Germans and Italians, came increasingly under English control. J.M.D.Meiklejohn (1896: 209) also tells us that under Richard II (1377-1399) there was a great expansion of chartered and similar companies.

The latter tells us further (263) that in the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483) commerce increased greatly, due to the good order Edward kept; and he quotes another historian, Creasy: "The general condition of the trading classes was remarkably prosperous". Clark supports this (1971: 161): "By the end of the century, however, foreign visitors commonly described it as a rich country, in which the few lived expensively, and the many were well fed and well clad".

In the economic sense, drama is a luxury, and we see that its expansion and sophisticated development coincide with the rise of the economic forces needed to underpin it; also that the audiences would have approached the plays as people who had no special grievances. (There were indeed grievances among the villagers, leading to the rising under Wat Tyler in 1381, but these did not to the best of our knowledge have any drama of the kind I discuss until much later.) With this for background, I begin with introducing the cycle plays in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO CYCLE PLAYS

The cycle plays were normally performed on the feast of Corpus Christi, to summarise the tremendous events celebrated by the Church between Advent and Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi being the Thursday four days after Trinity. It will heighten our appreciation of the cycle if we understand more fully the Church Calendar.

The Calendar is divided into the immov[e]able and mov[e]able feasts, the former covering the birth, life and ministry of Christ, the latter covering His death and resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The former relate to the Julian/Gregorian solar calendars, the latter to the older lunar calendars and the Jewish Passover.

When the Julian calendar was introduced in 44 BC, the Northern Winter Solstice was fixed at the 25th December, but by the time that this nominal date was fixed for Christmas at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, errors in the calendar made the actual date three or four days earlier; in the centuries that followed it became earlier still, until in the late sixteenth century the Gregorian calendar advanced the Julian calendar nine days, to revert to the conditions of 325 AD.

The moveable feasts are fixed by Easter, which relates to the Passover, which in turn relates to the full moon following next after the Northern Spring equinox.

With the lunar calendar, the month of March always began with the new moon preceding the equinox, but the solar calendars changed this to a fixed number of days before it; on the Gregorian calendar the equinox usually falls on the 20th March, but was a few days later on the original Julian calendar. If the new moon falls in the first few days of March, the full moon will precede the equinox, and the Passover will date roughly in the second half of April; otherwise it will date after the equinox, but not later than mid April. Because Easter is fixed for the Sunday (whereas the Passover can fall on any day of the week), it occasionally happens that they are separated by a month.

The actual limits for Easter are between 23rd March and 25th April; Trinity Sunday is seven weeks later, and Corpus Christi four days later still, sixty days after Easter; in terms of our Gregorian Calendar, it can fall between 31st May and 2nd July, when English weather is at its most clement. At this season then, the cycle plays portrayed relevant incidents from the Old Testament (preceded by The Fall of the Angels), and from the life and ministry of Christ (plus five plays concerning the Virgin Mary, and one of The Last Judgement).

My purpose here is to suggest a new approach, and especially to try to remove misconceptions. It seems to me that a good preparation for coming to the cycle plays would be to attend a performance of Handel's Messiah. Like the cycles, this is a performance, which gives it a significant amount in common.

The Messiah dates back some 250 years: when it was composed, it was less than two centuries since the cycle plays had been performed and enjoyed. There is a temptation to regard the Messiah as a product of our own era, while visualising the cycles as belonging to a quaint and very different era, coupled to a temptation to judge things according to our expectations of what they will be, rather than according to what examination of them reveals.

If we compare the Messiah with (say) the York cycle, the first thing we notice is that the text of the former is only some 1 500 words, compared with 100 000 for the latter: the Messiah is in fact a musical event. Nonetheless there is no reason why the material of the former should be regarded as acceptable, yet the similar basic material of the latter as an embarrassment. Recognition of this may help us approach medieval material with less bias.

Comparison of any cycle with the Bible is also enlightening: the latter comprises a relatively complete coverage of all relevant material before Christ, but it stops short with St John at about 100 AD. At the end of Revelation in fact, we find a warning not to add to nor to take away from the words of the book, which may have influenced the compilers of the New Testament.

The very fact that the Bible is so compiled tends to subordinate the Old Testament to the New, despite being far the longer text. It becomes in effect, an introduction to the New.

The subordination of the former to the latter seems to have been in the minds of the compilers of the cycles: there are only some sixty pages of Old Testament plays, compared with some three hundred pages of New Testament plays. As an event to summarise the Christian Church year, the typical play cycle deals principally with the ministry of Christ, introduced by important relevant prophecies.

Let us move on to another point. For us, the appearance of God, Angels and Devils produces a feeling similar to that we get when we look at children's comics and TV programmes, with Caliban-like cartoon characters; our conditioning makes us feel uncomfortable with the idea of adults accepting such images.

If we think about the literature we accept, we find that even in the best characters tend to be stereotypes, though less obviously so than with (say) a Mills and Boone novel. Whether it is Darcy and Elizabeth, or Becky and Amelia, or Ralph Touchett and Isabel, or whether it is the strong silent professional who falls in love with his rather silly secretary, we are seeing the same sort of stereotypes and personifications. We must not allow ourselves to exaggerate the differences between these and God etc.

I wish to mention one more stereotype, partly because it leads naturally to my next topic: we learn quite young that 'Santa Claus' is fictional; nonetheless, we are familiar with the image, and feel we know the man personating him.

In this instance, the costume represents a large part of the image-building in our minds, and this leads me on to discuss costume.¹ Many of us will have seen in a glass case in a museum, a tawdry costume, which we are told was worn by a certain actress in a certain film - where it came across as very opulent. The ephemerality of a film is the opposite of the tradition of performing cycles. In the film, lighting, camera angles, filters etc. are brought into play. There was a sort of equivalent in the cycle plays.

In a world where even the prosperous guildsman wore relatively standard and generally not very colourful clothes, those vestures described by Twycross as worn by the divine figures would be especially effective. The fact that they were to be used for many years meant that they could be made expensively and well. Since they were to be seen from fairly close, in bright sunshine, it follows that their quality could be appreciated.

In making these points, I am asking for the willing suspension of disbelief and devaluation, to allow an open-minded appreciation of medieval drama. We would be immensely surprised to see a genuine television interview with Mephistophilis/es, but - presumably because their dramatic style is more familiar - we do not attach to Marlowe or Goethe "labels of crudity and ignorance"._____

1/ I have verified here my impressions on this topic gained elsewhere, by reference to Meg Twycross's Apparell Comlye (Neuss 1983).

The essence of the cycles, as with all Christian teaching, is the growth of soul, as the central part of God's creation; not merely the propitiation of a jealous God; but of a higher order of creation. Plato is especially credited with introducing the concept into philosophy (Livingstone 1923: 283ff); he visualises man as having a nature that he likens to a charioteer driving two horses, one good and the other bad. The bad he speaks of as 'The Titan nature' (Fielden 1952: 217).

There is an obvious parallel between the defeat of the Titans by Zeus and the events of "The fall of the Angels"; the name Lucifer seems to refer to Isaiah 14.12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!", referring to the fall of the King of Babylon (H.C.Wyld 1963: 1776). The first play develops this theme to introduce the whole York cycle. The concluding play, "The Last Judgement", with elements from Revelation, balance this.

The dominant philosophy of today rejects the medieval moral philosophy, but I want to suggest we must keep an open mind in order to make a true appreciation of these plays. We shall therefore not question the medieval concept of morality. Let us begin then by looking at Lucifer, described in the York text as the 'mirror' of God. Two associations are implicit: Lucifer is the exact image of God, and of His "Let there be light"; but the light that comes from Lucifer is only the reflection of God's light, as with the moon and the sun.

It is thus inappropriate for Lucifer to boast of his brightness, which must vanish if he becomes separated from God. At the same time, the point is made that the outward form does not necessarily imply the inner light: without the latter, the outward form becomes its own negative (in the photographic sense) and false.

The audience, drawn into the action, has to recognise two aspects of this - i.e. their own appraisal of the character, and his self-appraisal. Lucifer is too wrapped up in himself to apply his own intelligence to self evaluation. Now to be effective, the powers of Darkness must have intelligence - yet high intelligence would prevent them from being evil.

Evil requires intelligence of a fairly high level, but which is nonetheless capable of being blinded by selfishness. The image is thus subtly raised in the minds of the audience that disharmony is a clash with reason. The Good Angels remain undistracted by any such selfishness, and continue to demonstrate action that lies within reason, thereby being good. I am picking out here thought processes that would largely be subconscious, since our experience of life makes us recognise the situation. The playwright and the players conjure forth the appropriate reactions.

The personification of evil has three names: 'Lucifer' at his fall from Grace, 'Satanas' when he tempts Eve (and indirectly Adam), and 'Diabolus' when he tempts Christ.

In the York cycle plays, personified devils appear on these three brief occasions, but for the most part the characters seem competent to sin without prompting. The three separate names each represent a different aspect of the clash between evil and good. Lucifer is self-temptation; Satanus ('adversary') is an attempt to defeat God's purposes in creating man; 'diabolus' belongs to a more pragmatic world, implying 'slanderer' - or more or less literally 'mud slinger', representing the human tendency to conform to societal pressures, rather than to use self-judgement. The experience and conditioning of the audience fall naturally into this pattern of interpretation.

Glynne Wickham (1974: 67) draws attention to balances in the structure between the Old and the New Testament sections: the fall of Lucifer into Hell plus Adam's expulsion from Eden balance Christ's descent into and harrowing of Hell; Eve balances Mary; the tree of knowledge, combined with the tree of life, balance the cross; all these emphasise symmetry. The respective appearances of Satanus and Diabolus form part of this symmetry. Symmetry works unconsciously in the mind, in that memory of the first item is still fresh enough to make acceptance of the second item easier.

In chapter 3 certain Old and New Testament plays will be considered, to show how their structure makes for rapport between the performers and the audience.

CHAPTER 3

A. TWO OLD TESTAMENT PLAYS

In dealing with the other types of play, a modest chapter each can be given to representative examples, but the cycle plays call for different treatment; not only are there a very large number of plays, with a very large number of lines in aggregate, but the various cycles handle the basic material differently.

In assessing them, we have to judge the merits of their intention, and their effectiveness in achieving it. The purpose was to be edifying, according to the mores of the day, so it becomes our task to assess how well they were structured to achieve this purpose.

Cawley (1956: x) refers to St Augustine, and thus to "The struggle between God and erring man, between the Heavenly and earthly cities", and also to "The conflict between God and sinful man". I do not find myself fully in accord with this way of expressing the fundamental plot of the cycles.

For one thing, the 'City' concept - as being an economic, political and potentially warlike entity, a nation in miniature - is one with which modern man has no deep engagement in these days of sprawling urbanisation; for another, man might be better described as 'prone to sin', rather than being simply and necessarily sinful, which would preclude free will, and negate the whole concept of Christian morality.

I prefer the expression that the conflict is between the forces of good and evil, where the battlefield is the human soul. I prefer also to take this further, so that the forces of good represent pure intelligence - which is creative and promotes harmony - while the forces of evil represent distorted intelligence, which is selfish and promotes discord. It seems to me that this better expresses the essential structure of all the cycles.

I concentrate on the York cycle, using the text of Beadle (1982: passim). Two Old Testament plays will be touched on, namely those concerning the fall of the angels and the fall of man. These (supported by nine other Old Testament plays) set the scene for the coming of Christ.

The fall of the Angels is tightly constructed as to time and incident, to introduce the theme of Divine Power and Goodness versus Selfish Pride. Study of a fair sample of 'narration' seems to show a natural rhythm, breaking into sections of the order of one to three minutes, and we find the same here.

The play may be conceived as falling into seven 'sequences', clearly defined from each other. Such a structure and tempo is adopted in nearly all narration, having presumably been found ideal to ease rapport with the reader or audience. First God has three 8-line stanzas, depicting Himself as alone before creation, which He then begins. As soon as creation exists it sings the Te Deum, forming the second sequence, emphasising harmony at the moment of creation.

With the end of the Te Deum, God has two more stanzas, to form the third sequence. In these, he enacts the first two verses of Genesis: then attention begins to be transferred (as part of this sequence) to His creation itself, especially in coupling Lucifer with the light whose creation is the burden of the third verse of Genesis.

Our modern scientific theories differ less than we may suppose from Genesis - "Let there be light" would be a neat, simple way to describe the "Big Bang". The association of Light with Lucifer (whether original with the compilers, or borrowed from earlier theology) is a daring concept, emphasising as it does that it is not the physical world that is bad, but only the abuse of it, so that the very brightest can be turned suddenly into darkness. A (relatively) instant costume change for Lucifer and II Angelus Deficiens would thus be especially effective.

The fourth sequence is the "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts", rounding off God's opening and creation with the highest harmony. This prepares the way for the appearance of disharmony, that materialises in the fifth sequence.

In this next sequence, Good Angels alternate stanza by stanza with Bad Angels (the first of the latter being Lucifer). First come the Seraphim, associated with purity, ardour and light - lacking the knowledge of the Cherubim, and thus perhaps naïve - recognising the power and glory of God, and accordingly praising Him.

Lucifer follows, seeming for an instant to be saying little more than the Seraphic "That us thus mighty has made"; but his stanza reveals his growing conceit, as he singles out his own special brightness. Then come the Cherubim, second only to the Seraphim, but associated with knowledge. Their stanza differs slightly from that of the Seraphim, showing that they recognise Lucifer's deviation with disquiet, emphasising the need to be "stabyll in thoughte".

II Angelus Deficiens disregards the warning - "Here sall never payne me be pynande". The Seraphim follow, intent on their own hymn of praise, not noticing the signs of growing discord. In a satire on well-known types, Lucifer is portrayed rising ever higher in his own esteem, even to the extent of snatching what ought to have been the Cherubim's - the knowing ones - second stanza, with "I sall be lyke unto hym that es hyeste on heghte" (foreshadowing the serpent's "...ye shall be as Gods" in Genesis 3.5). Just retribution follows instantly: "Owe! Dewes! All goes downe!"

The final fragments are said "off stage", before the bad angels reappear in Hell. The script continues with them in Hell, as the sixth sequence. Lucifer and the second Bad Angel (now renamed II Diabilus - variously spelled in the script) reappear in new guises: "My bryghtnes es blakkeste and blo nowe" says Lucifer in line 101. The old saying "Pride goeth before a fall" has been perfectly portrayed.

Not only are they cast out, but all harmony even between themselves breaks down as they fly out at each other, snatching lines from each other in their last stanza. Attention is drawn back away from them to Heaven again, as the Cherubim now have their delayed second stanza, opening the final sequence chorus-like, with their knowledge-based commentary on these events.

God has the final four stanzas, condemning the fallen angels, and proceeding to the third, fourth and fifth verses of Genesis. There has been a little poetic licence in associating light with Lucifer: light is created twice, having faded "when the fendes fell" (line 148). Heaven, Earth and Hell are in effect created simultaneously with the first creation of light in the form of Lucifer (ie as the mirror of God's own light).

This slight disturbance to the order of Genesis is not to be seen as an inaccuracy, since the purpose of the cycles is not to be simply a pageant of biblical scenes: its purpose is rather to be an exposition of a deep philosophy, explaining the nature of good and evil, as representing forces above humanity, but with 'Good' personified in God, to whom humanity can relate.

I believe the structure I have described would have induced a great sense of rapport in the audience: the first four sequences play a rôle rather like that of the overture to an opera; in the last three the audience - especially seeing them presented every year - would find a character study of God Himself; also of evil, of worship, and of understanding.

We look next at The Fall of Man, which brings us to humanity. I have suggested an affinity between "Let there be light" and the 'Big Bang'; I would like to look at another such affinity. To the anthropologist, the rise of man must represent 'good', with any falling back representing 'evil'; in such a context, good and evil come into the world only when men and women develop understanding, to become real men and women; this is in effect, the message of this play: that if we are to gain wisdom, we are also going to be burdened with the cares of conscience. There is a difference between the fall of man and the fall of Lucifer; the latter needed no temptation, being inherently corrupt, while mankind was 'born with a clean slate'.

There is an interesting anomaly in the Genesis story of creation - which is reproduced in the cycle - in that, whereas God creates everything else out of nothing, He creates Eve from Adam's rib, to be "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh". There is obviously a meaning in this, and I suggest we compare it with our present knowledge of conception.

At the moment of conception, the only sexual differentiation is a single chromosome: operating on precisely the same human genetic material, this emphasises some aspects of development, and de-emphasises others, to produce the separate male or female; they are purely variants of a single genetic creature. Whether this similarity with the rib is purely coincidental, or whether the essential ideas are connected, scarcely matters. The fact is

that the literal believer in Genesis and the believer in modern science have beliefs which are not essentially very different.

A further relevant comment relates to Elaine Morgan's book The Descent of Woman, in which (among other interesting features) she points out that one will gain a clearer understanding of the rise of humanity, if one takes into account that some aspects of the evolution were related to feminine needs, differing from those of men (Morgan 1972: 7ff). That Eve should play an important rôle in Genesis is perhaps significant.

There is no sexual differentiation among the immortals, and Satan might well be jealous that Adam is 'one up' on himself, which would make Eve his natural target. We have tended to look upon the expulsion from Eden as a punishment, but this raises the question whether it was possible for Adam and Eve to do anything worthy of punishment before they even had the knowledge of good and evil. We must not underrate God's understanding of this.

If we disabuse ourselves of the idea that we are looking at crude ignorant people attending a crude ignorant play, we must recognise that we are dealing with sophisticated concepts in this and other plays. The audience was not only of a reasonable intelligence, but morality was at least as major an interest to them as psychology is to us today. In considering the question of rapport, I am going to suggest we compare this play's essential plot (though not of course its working out) with that of Shakespeare's Othello.

If we make such a comparison, the Serpent will represent Iago, Adam likewise Othello, and Eve, Desdemona. The preceding events are much the same: Iago had expected to be Commander, and was determined to undermine the man he regarded as his usurper, as was the case with Satan; naïve self-flattery made Desdemona - like Eve - the point of access to the usurper's fatal flaw - Othello's arrogant sense of lèse majesté, and Adam's self-righteousness.

In comparing The Fall of Man with Othello, we must obviously take into account that Shakespeare is especially depicting emotion; that his principal characters are each on stage for perhaps forty-five minutes, either speaking or reacting to the speeches of others; and that he is writing in part for a linguistically sophisticated audience, who will appreciate such lines as "Put out the light, and then put out the light". The only character in the entire cycle who might undergo such a development is Jesus - over many separate plays, portrayed by many different actors. For the rest of the characters individually, only a minor cameo is possible - which probably occurred, since the same part must have been played by the same individual over a number of years. In the cycle, we must see each play as part of the cycle, contributing to the overall effect. This means the emotional content of any single play must be limited, though the whole cycle is a significant emotional experience for its audience.

Three plays separate The Fall of the Angels from The Fall of Man, during which God has been busy with the creation, and with Adam and Eve. Even someone seeing the cycle for the first time might well be wondering whether we had seen the last of the bad Angels; the accustomed audience would have allowed them to retire to the back of his mind, but with the expectation of seeing them again.

Thus, when in the first sequence of The Fall of Man Satan spells out his envy of Adam, the audience immediately links this play to Lucifer, and the renewal of his struggle against God; they are again in full rapport with the underlying plot. In the second sequence, Eve proves susceptible - like Desdemona.

The feminist may object to the character differences given to Adam and Eve: having eaten of the fruit, she merely wishes to share a good thing with Adam, whereas he eats and immediately responds correctly: "Allas, what have I done, for shame!". However, if we go to Genesis 2.24, we find "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother [a strange thing for Adam to say!], and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh". On this basis they would jointly comprise one person, which removes the difficulty. I suggest that Eve's behaviour, including thinking of fig leaves, would fit in with the concept on both sides of the relationship between men and women, and would support rapport. A feminist approach as we understand it today, would be likely to find little rapport in the medieval audience.

After the Satanas-Eve sequence, and that of Eve-Adam, comes the final sequence with God. It looks as though Adam is blaming Eve, and possibly he is; but possibly he is merely stating the truth, which he now has the knowledge to understand. The Serpent is punished as Iago is punished. The expulsion also looks to be a punishment for Adam and Eve, but is it not perhaps merely an inevitable consequence? After all, in Genesis 3.22 (though not in the play), God gives His reasons for the expulsion as being to prevent them also eating of the tree of life.

In making the comparison with Othello, we must remember that the end of the play is not the end of the story, as in Shakespeare. We have no catharsis here; but we have seen the portrayal of similar characters within a small compass, to give a *raison d'être* for the whole cycle. The audience is prepared for what follows, but they have an awareness of discord between Adam and Eve - and therefore in mankind in general - of the sort that Shakespeare developed to the point where 'Adam' murders 'Eve'.

B. THREE NEW TESTAMENT PLAYS

The first of these we shall look at is The Temptation. I turn first to the gospels: John omits it; Mark mentions it briefly in two verses; Matthew and Luke give eleven and thirteen verses respectively, reporting the three temptations in almost identical terms, although differing in the order of the second and third. The Gospels make it relatively peripheral, but the cycle highlights it. The reason is clearly to balance the Old Testament temptation of Adam and Eve, which the audience will have seen earlier in the day, so that it will establish a symmetrical balance in their minds, as one more facet that facilitates rapport.

The three accounts which mention it in the gospels, all place it before the calling of the first disciple, and it seems clear there were no earthly witnesses. We must take it then that Christ Himself spoke of it to the disciples, probably in such terms as "I too have known temptation". In other words, the personification of the devil was presumably seen as being a personification, both by the Gospel makers, and by the playwright.

This gives us a starting point for the characterisation in the play. Before looking at this, let us start counting lines. Diabolus has two-thirds of these, with Jesus having the rest, except for a few given to I and II Angelus. There are reasons for this division.

The reasons become clearer if we divide the play into its three sequences, amounting respectively to approximately 30%, 45% and 25%. Diabolus has the first sequence to himself, addressing the audience; in the second he also has about one third for addressing the audience, while the other two-thirds are shared equally with Jesus for addressing each other; Diabolus appears only momentarily in the third sequence.

I want to glance for an instant at dialogue, soliloquy etc, in this connection. Language and thought are bound intimately together, and as a continuum are shared with all humanity, and with whatever concept we have of 'God'; when we think - especially when we think in words - we have in a sense a universal audience, at least, within our thought processes; soliloquies in plays render this thought audible to the play's disparate audience. However, when the audience is addressed directly, it brings the audience into the play - at the risk of reminding them "it is only a play".

There are a few soliloquies in the cycle - for example, when Deus speaks at the very beginning, before he has even created the disparate audience; in The Temptation, some of Diabolus's comments could represent soliloquy if taken out of context, but coupled to his opening line "Make rome belyve, and late me gang! it is deliberately addressed to the audience present. My contention is that if the playwright chose to adopt this approach, he did so with a clear rational intention.

What I suggest as a clue to the intention is the statement of faith in the dual nature of Christ in the Oxford Prayer Book (undated: 59ff):-

"For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ...".

This is the item of theology that is most difficult of all for Christians to comprehend thoroughly, and must therefore be treated in some effective manner in the cycles. In support of the Godhead of Christ principally, are the Immaculate Conception, the miracles and the Resurrection; in support of manhood principally, are the death upon the cross, the fact that he could be described as "A man gluttonous and a wine-bibber", and the temptation. All except the second last of these are portrayed in the York cycle, and the temptation is thus given special prominence compared with the Gospel account, to emphasise manhood in Christ.

To give an extra sense of rapport for the audience, the temptation is offered in a braggart character for the tempter, one which is the very opposite of Christian humility; the two previous appearances of the Prince of Darkness, as Lucifer and the serpent/Satanas took place in an environment that was remote from the audience: now he must be very human himself.

Turning to the play: the gospel material, which can be read comfortably in the longest version in one minute, needs considerable expansion to make a play. The actual dialogue between Diabolus and Jesus is expanded by spelling out the nature of the temptation, to take about three and a half minutes; another minute or so is taken by the brief closing sequence, which embroiders on "...and behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (appearing only in Matthew 4.11). A rendering of "Veni Creator" before the second temptation both expands time, and highlights Christ, who seems to have stood on a higher point on the pageant waggon, to represent the "Pynakill".

The most interesting innovation is that not only does Satan become a braggart character, but also a device that arose from this characterisation came to be used in many morality plays, whose date so far as can be ascertained, was slightly later. His words:-

"Make rome belyve, and late me gang!
Who makis here all this thrang?
High you hense, High myght you hang
Right with a roppe.
I drede me that I dwelle to lang
To do a jape."

clearly suggest that he approaches unexpectedly (even to those who see the play every year, but easily forget such a detail), to kick the play into motion. He gives the impression of being, not a cycle character, but a member of the audience.

When I come to deal with the morality play Mankind, I shall suggest that the device was used there to bring the audience into rapport with the players, by convincing them at first that they were participating, not in a play, but in a workaday event. In the present instance, the audience knew a play was about to begin, but would assume Diabilus to be a human intruder; the effect would be to give the play - and those that followed - a sense of immediacy, and of divine-made-human. When they recognised Diabilus for a cycle character, it would be with a sense of 'Four letter word made flesh', as the immanent powers of darkness enter the visible world.

Moreover, this opening allowed Diabilus to enter upon the scene as a powerful character - to be reduced in the manner that is implicit in the Gospels, by Christ's simple statement of the power of God; his departure at the end of the sequence shows him clearly discomfited, intensifying the impact Christ makes. The audience would feel that they are happily on the 'winning side' - which will have an important influence on the way they will react to the Calvary events in due course.

Having discussed three plays, and being about to move on to the climacteric of Calvary, I feel this is a good point at which to offer a comparison between the cycle and Shakespeare's Macbeth, to take an example of what is regarded as being among the world's best drama. I believe we can make a more meaningful comparison than might have been expected.

The first thing we notice in making the comparison is that whereas the length of Shakespeare's scenes varies by up to at least twenty five to one, there is a relative uniformity in length between the twenty York plays covering the events between Christ and the Doctors and The Death of Christ, (not more than three to one). This compares twenty cycle plays with twenty three Shakespeare scenes.

The cycle uniformity in length arose inevitably since each guild wanted something it could get its teeth into. The cycle must impress the audience as more episodic, especially with the intervals between the end of one play and the beginning of the next.

There is a further influence arising from the structure. Christ had almost exactly the same number of lines as Macbeth, but whereas Shakespeare's lesser characters have only twice as many lines as Macbeth, the cycle's lesser characters have six times as many lines as Christ. Christ has a less obviously commanding rôle; moreover, he speaks in all but three of the plays, producing an even more diffuse effect (Macbeth appears in less than half the scenes, though generally in the longer ones).

Macbeth (as told by Shakespeare) causes a tragic but relatively brief disruption of lives; Christ on the other hand, acts as a leaven that continues to work on a massive scale over many centuries at least. The less dominant rôle of Christ is as appropriate as the dominating rôle of Macbeth.

Although as we have said, Christ is allotted slightly less than fifteen per cent of the lines in these twenty plays, compared with Macbeth's slightly more than thirty per cent in his play, there is a pattern of significance in the York cycle with regard to these lines: in the first eight plays, Christ's share rises to twenty five per cent, and is more nearly comparable with Macbeth.

There is still an important difference: in Macbeth, the leading protagonist is centre stage even when not actually present, as being the subject of the dialogue of the other characters; in these first eight plays, the audience sees Christ Himself virtually all the time - it is His reality that is important, rather than the reaction of others to Him.

In the first half of The Agony in the Garden, His share rises to seventy per cent, since this is the critical point for His human side; He had foreknowledge of the shameful and hideous death that awaited Him, but for years this had remained a rather nebulous future event: now it was upon Him in a moment of intense stress. Although He overcomes it, the stress was naturally still with Him, and from this time forward His was the still small voice of calm amid the hysterical babble of 'The World', that had broken in on Him.

In the second half of this play, He has little more than ten per cent of the lines, and in the following five plays, less than one and a half per cent, producing a marked effect on the audience.

Before we discuss this effect, we must consider another aspect, namely the weight given to various parts of the Gospel material. In the Gospels, generally some two-thirds of the space covering the period of Christ's ministry up to the point of His death, is given to the events before the entry into Jerusalem; here it receives a mere fifteen percent, in five short plays. These act rather as an introduction to Calvary, than as major events in their own right.

Moreover, in the Gospels, about seventy five to eighty per cent of the space separating the entry and Christ's giving up the ghost, is given to events before the moment of betrayal; here this is reduced to thirty percent. In the Gospels, not much more than five per cent is given to the trial and crucifixion, shared about equally; here some forty per cent is given to the trial, and nearly twenty per cent to the final stages.

In seeking the purpose, I offer the following suggestion: the sight of a crucifix was very familiar to the audience - but always in the victorious Christian setting of a church; the aim in the cycle was to transport the audience to the setting of a bloodlusty crowd screaming "Crucify Him, crucify him", which is not easy to achieve in a complacently Christian community.

The effect of Christ's near silence - especially coming after the intensely emotional 'Agony' scene will give the audience a sudden sense of being thrust to a distance away from Christ; but the audience will naturally still try to identify with Him.

The mere passage of time will slowly bring the audience away from their identification with Him, but this may be accelerated if the material is presented in a slightly tedious, dragging, pedantic manner - somewhat inducing Macbeth's mood: (Act V Sc V)

"To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time..."

It seems to me that this was the playwright's intention at this point, and I believe it would be very effective in making the audience feel that "the darkness comprehended it not", that they are up against an ignorant and hostile world. Moreover, at least twenty different characters are brought in (played by about sixty different players), which helps to build an image of a wholly hostile world.

We have three aspects here: the script, which is fixed; the playwright's intentions, which I believe I have reasonably interpreted; and the effectiveness in achieving the desired rapport with the audience.

This last is difficult to prove - even a modern audience subjected to the same material would probably react rather differently from the original audience. However I do not feel it unreasonable in suggesting that an engrossed audience would in fact be influenced as I have suggested. I shall look at The Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal, and at The Crucifixion.

Of The Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal, I shall look only at lines 88-95 and 102-110 (which are separated in action by a brief visit to see His disciples). This play more than any other, permits the expression of emotion:

"Thou fadir that all formed hase with fode for to fill,
I fele by my ferdnes my flessch wolde full fayne
Be torned fro this turnement and takyn the untill,
For mased is manhed in mode and in mayne.
But if thou se sothly that thi sone sill
Withouten surffette of synne thus sakles be slayne,
Be it worthly wroght even at thyne awne will,
For fadir, att thi bidding am I buxum and bayne."

"Unto my fadir of myght now make I my mone,
As thou arte saluer of all sore som socoure me sende.
The passioun they purpose to putte me vppon,
My flesshe is full ferde and fayne wolde defende.
At thi wille be itt wrought worthely in wone;
Haue mynde of my manhed my mode for to mende,
Some comforte me kythe in this case.
And fadir, I schall dede taste, I will it nogt deffende -
Yitt yf thy willis be, spare me a space.

It would be easy to visualise this spoken crudely by some 'rude mechanical', and so attach a "label of crudity and ignorance" - but this seems totally inappropriate to me. The play was performed by the cordwainers, who were presumably a numerous guild, providing sixteen actors altogether (unless there was some doubling of parts). Jesus has fully forty per cent of the total lines, and for this reason - as well as for the key nature of the part - would be played by the best player available.

Beadle (1982: 32) quotes a relevant ordinance of 1476:-

"...there shall be called afore the Maire for the tyme beyng iiii of the moste connyng, discrete and able playeres within this Citie to serche, here and examen all the plaiers and plaies... And all suche as thay shall fynde sufficient in persone and connyng to the honour of the Citie and worship of the saide craftes for to admitte and able, and all other insufficient personnes either in connyng, voice or persone to discharge, ammove and avoide."

This shows zeal for the quality of the performance. The fact that the play was repeated most years means that before taking the part, the player would have seen many performances by his predecessor, and subsequently he would have much opportunity to improve and perfect his part.

I suggest that we must therefore try to visualise with what skill a good actor could imbue these lines, using the range available to him of varying the pitch of his voice dramatically, of pauses and changes of tempo, and variations of rhythm and loudness; and in addition to the voice range, using all his skill of movement, costume management and gesture. So let us take all these facets into consideration when visualising the performance.

The opening line I quoted above is obviously the invocative beginning of a prayer; at first the reference to "food" may seem merely a clumsy way to complete the line, but it seems to me that it refers to the very familiar idea quoted by Christ in The Temptation:

"A man lyvis noghte in mayne and mode with brede allone, but Goddis wordis are gostly fode to men ilkone".

Man is not 'Bone of God's Bone and Flesh of God's Flesh', but he is 'Word of God's Word and Spirit of God's Spirit'; thus the lines have the strength of an invocation.

The next two lines are easy for us to underrate: "ferdnes" appears as a crude spelling of a word we know, and so seems relatively mild to us, but I believe the original audience would interpret this as "My flesh creeps" - put across in a powerfully dramatic manner. Lines 92-95 could be put across very feelingly, as portraying trepidation, coupled to resolution.

In the second section, I believe that if we give the word "Mone" the most intense expression we can imagine, we shall visualise its effect on the audience, with absolute pleading in the second line. After all, Jesus is the "Perfect man" of the creed, and must feel what every member of the audience would feel, were he to find himself faced with immediate crucifixion. The next two lines maintain and heighten the sense of horror.

Although the line beginning "At thi wille" immediately follows in the script, one must suppose the actor (entering fully into the part) would depict resolution gradually overcoming terror. The next two lines are almost an apology for the fact that He naturally feels all the normal human terror and horror. Then follows a line of complete submission - but finally, a last plea for delay.

Up to this point the cycle has been a comfortable, familiar ritual of a 'safe' Christian community. In the preceding play (The Last Supper), Christ has warned His disciples what is about to happen, but they have scarcely comprehended: they slept through the Agony - the passion of which has suddenly smitten the audience with a sense of horror. A process of catharsis is just beginning for them - already we see Christ bereft of the support even of His disciples.

At this moment, the audience yearns to support their Lord: but as we have said, during the dragging scenes of human insensitivity, and the due processes of law, they also become separated from Him; their intense sympathy for Christ is damped and overlaid with their identification of themselves with humankind - but it is only dormant, it needs release. For the moment, Christ has become an inconvenience.

In the last play I deal with here, The Crucifixion, we find Christ's submission, and the world's lack of understanding, rendered at their extreme pitch.

As we go through life, we expect to find a degree of fellow feeling in our human associates. If serious misfortune struck them, we would expect to show them a measure of sympathy and helpfulness; likewise, if we were the victim, we would expect to receive similar sympathy and help. We received this early in life from our parents, and occasional relevant experiences have convinced us that this is the human norm.

If we should ever suffer vicious maltreatment at the hand of another, it is difficult to decide which would be worse - malice, or blind, mindless insensitivity - as forming the underlying cause. The first would suggest that there is still intelligence in our adversary, and therefore some possibility of understanding to be shared; the latter would suggest that we are cut off from just that intelligence we share with humanity, and which gives us our sense of 'human dignity'.

In the events of the Crucifixion, Christ faced both: malice from Caiaphas and Ananias, blind insensitivity from the executive of the state, who carried out the Crucifixion. In the play of that name, we see the latter in action. Up to this point, it was theoretically possible that His prayer "Let this cup pass from me" might be answered; even the scourging might become no more than a very bad memory; but once nailed to the cross, it is utterly unlikely that He could survive. Thus the plays of the Agony and the Crucifixion represented for Him ("perfect man"), the two supreme moments of passion.

There are five characters in the play The Crucifixion, but these resolve themselves into only two, since the four soldiers form a team, performing a military exercise as a single entity. Christ, at the highest pitch of His submission, is an almost totally inactive protagonist - although, in the way the play is structured, His very passiveness makes Him the supreme protagonist, dramatically.

The play can be broken into three sequences: in the first, lasting some 100 lines or one third of the whole, the soldiers speak in strict rotation - which adds to the sense of their being a team, almost a machine - while they prepare everything for the actual nailing; once they are ready, and call Jesus "Come forth thou cursed knave, Thy comferte sone schall kele", He responds by making the first of two twelve line speeches in the play. In this, He dedicates His death to the salvation of mankind. The soldiers are somewhat surprised, and have to talk themselves again - still in strict rotation - into taking the next step.

We have only the script to go by, together with our own imagination/reason, but our sense of theatre allows us to make a guess how this speaking in strict rotation might be enhanced. If the four voices differed in pitch - or in some similar way - there might be a natural order; likewise, if their relative positions on stage allow for a geometrical rotation of voices, the effect would be enhanced. The fact that the order of the soldiers' speeches is in strict rotation for much of the play certainly seems intended to make them a relatively 'faceless' group.

When the soldiers are called upon to make some unfamiliar effort, strict rotation breaks down - which highlights that they are making an effort here in their duty. One would like to think that an execution - especially a Crucifixion - would be handled by professionals, able to effect a neat termination.

The play aims to reinforce the spectacle of unintelligent human crudity from which Christ suffers: not only are the soldiers clumsy amateurs - if such a word could be appropriate to executioners - but in addition the cross is very wrongly bored. No man's proportions could differ so much from Christ's as to make the boring even roughly right, but it gives scope for further suffering as His limbs are dragged out of joint to make them fit. Not only this, but the exhausted soldiery drop Him, with all this entails for agony; finally they shoot the cross into the hole that supports it, so that He is brought up with a mighty jerk; and then they proceed to hammer in the wedges, with a sharp jar at every blow.

There is a limit to the human capacity for experiencing emotions, especially those induced by witnessing the sufferings of others. If the audience fully empathised with Christ's suffering, they would feel sickened at an early stage, and miss the full effect. The fact that Christ is immobile and silent in His submission, while the soldiers are grunting and puffing, distracts the attention from what is really happening - until they look back on it, when they will experience a less intense, but much more prolonged sympathy with His sufferings, one that leaves a lasting impression.

It seems to me that the play was deliberately and skillfully constructed, with a good idea of audience psychology, to achieve maximum rapport with the message "Christ died for us, and for our sins".

In the opening section Christ remains quietly on the side, presumably head bowed, while the soldiers talk themselves into their task; there is an air of ritual, and reality is softened thereby. Christ's speech dedicating His death increases the sense of ritual, and the attention of the audience becomes fastened onto the soldiers, so much so that there is a detachment from any conscious empathy with Christ. When the soldiers drop Him, the audience sympathise rather with the wrenched shoulder of the first soldier, and the general grumble about the hard labour involved. 'The darkness comprehended it not'....

Only when the job is finished and I Miles addresses Christ with "Say sir, howe likis you nowe, this werke that we have wrought?", capped by IV Miles's jeering "We praye youe sais vs howe Ye fele, or faynte ye ought", does the realisation dawn on the audience that they have been part of the unfeeling crowd that casually witnessed the crucifixion. It seems to me that this removes the difficulty in putting across Christ's second speech.

In reality, by this time His voice should be so wracked with pain as to be scarcely understandable, yet he has something of major theological significance to put across. I believe it takes the audience a moment to adjust to the reality of the situation, so that He may speak - with some anguish naturally - but more strongly and clearly, without the audience recognising the anomaly; especially as what He has to say chimes precisely with their dawning realisation.

In the shocked aftermath, the audience's feelings are further enhanced by the way the soldiers - no longer sympathetic figures - dice for his garments.

With the following play (The Death of Christ), the catharsis cycle is complete. The whole essence of the message "Christ died for us, and for the remission of our sins" is the whole essence of Christianity. It is difficult to conceive a more fitting subject to generate the sense of catharsis, bringing with it a rededication to one's faith.

The York cycle is only three-quarters complete at this point: if the message is true, the tragedy has not been in vain: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15.54/5). The remaining plays complete the Christian message.

In this chapter, my aim has been to show that the Cycle, and its single plays, were skillfully constructed in a manner that was fully appropriate to be a major summary of all the events of the church year. If I can persuade others to look at these plays with a mind that is not prejudiced by their apparent quaintness, then I feel I have in a large measure achieved my goal.

CHAPTER 4

PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS

I turn now to another major branch of Medieval drama - the travelling professional players, and their repertoire. We are given a portrait of these players in The Book of Sir Thomas More (Greg 1911/61: 31/2):-

Moore. I pre thee tell me, what playes have ye?

Player. divers my Lord: the Cradle of Securitie,
hit nayle o'th head, impacient pouertie,
the playe of foure Pees, diues and Lazarus,
Lustie Iuuentus, and the mariage of witt and wisedome.

Moore. The mariage of witt and wisedome? that my lads,
Ile none but that, the theame is very good,
and may maintaine liberall argument.
Many have witt, that may come short of wisedome.
weele see how Mr. Poet playes his part,
and whether witt or wisedome grace his arte.
Goe, make him drinke, and all his fellowes too,
how manie are ye?

Player. ffoure men and a boy Sir.

Moore. But one boy? then I see,
ther's but fewe women in the play.

Player. Three my Lord: dame Science, Lady vanitie,
and wisedome she her selfe.

Moore. And one boy play them all? bir Lady, hees loden.

Shakespeare also describes such a group in Hamlet, who can provide a King, Queen, poisoner and two mummers, for the play-within-the-play.

Let us look at the type of plays that made up the repertoire of the typical "ffoure men and a boy", who constituted "My Lord Cardinalls players" in the More play. These generally fall into the two classes we call moralities and interludes, although neither classification is very solid: Cooper and Wortham (1980: xiii) speak of the general pattern of moralities as "one of innocence leading to a fall and finally, through repentance, to redemption". They also speak of "a warning to those who would judge particular works in terms of the expectations created by a concept of genre which purports to offer a universally valid model". A casual reading of several of the plays bears out this great diversity, and the consequent difficulty of classification.

I turn now to social/historical factors, especially with a view to their influence on the growth of professional drama. With the coming to the throne of Henry VII, peace and increasing prosperity came to England; this was especially true for the courtiers, with whose help Henry strengthened the dynasty he founded. Many of the old nobility had forfeited lands, to the benefit of a new nobility; the latter especially, now found it politic to keep on good terms with the King.

In particular, they found it good to build themselves a house near the King's palace, and to spend much of the year

there; to support themselves in residence financially, they employed stewards to manage their lands profitably, and remit monies to London. My principal source for this is Thompson (1937) writing of the Russell (Bedford) family, but also describing the social milieu in the process. Socially, great changes resulted, especially in the creation of a class that was not only wealthy, but also gregarious as a class. This had significant implications for the financing of entertainments, and the development of fashion as a factor in economic activity.

Another significant development that concerned plays, was the appearance of printing. One likely effect would be for each player to have his own copy of the play - and would have to be able to read it, rather than rely on being coached. Copies probably also found their way into the hands of private collectors, so that more have survived: once the type was set up, extra copies could be produced far more cheaply than by using scribes. Possession of copies in one's library would increase interest in plays, and better acquaintance would be a factor affecting rapport. One would certainly expect printing to have an effect on drama, although it is not easy to separate this influence from other historical influences.

Finally, before looking at my chosen plays, I look at another aspect of dramatic development, and glance at The Castle of Perseverance, generally dated around the end of the fourteenth century. By way of getting the feeling of the

Morality play, I want to look at this one as 'Experimental Theatre', and a sort of transition from the very early cycle plays to what the moralities became.

It is about one-third of the total length of the York cycle, and lasted around three to four hours in a single session. The number of players was reduced from perhaps three hundred in the cycle, to twenty two (allowing for doubling of parts). This means the average player had five times as many lines to learn and deliver, which alone indicates a distinct move in the direction of professionalism.

The evidence is that it was intended to travel, although we have very little information about actual performances. (Southern {1973: 5} speculates interestingly on the methods of staging, but this does not advance us much as to the extent to which it travelled). It must have been unwieldy with so many players, especially as it required a suitable site for the performance. If the players were amateurs, they would also not have been able to spend too much time away from their crafts.

In the absence of evidence, it is reasonable to assume that experience with this and any other such plays, dictated an extension of the principle of shortening and simplifying, and reducing the cast. The typical morality play that comes down to us from a little later, is about one third to a quarter of the length, and is played by about five players, with generally a greater degree of doubling of parts.

We are thus now dealing with an at least semi-professional performance; the players are not well known to their audience (even though they may have met them in the ale house, and become casual acquaintances over a series of perhaps annual visits). They would probably have aimed at maintaining a slight professional mystique on these occasions, rather as one finds today when one happens to encounter minor television personalities.

The doubling of parts implies a greater professionalism, with the result that in the performance they might not easily have been recognised even by these casual acquaintances, especially when in costume. The cycle play's distracting element of "There's Master Aylward giving his performance of Diabilus" would have been absent, so that both players and audience could lose themselves more fully in the action, to the benefit of rapport.

So small a team could not easily have handled 'advance publicity' such as 'banns', so the arrival of the players would have been unexpected. Had they been expected, the minds of the audience would have been conditioned by the idea they were going to watch a fictional play, by the time the performance took place; as it was, the illusion of reality in the events was not spoiled for them beforehand in this way. A play must have been only an occasional excitement, whose appearance of reality might mislead the audience, until they were wrapped up in the action.

The players also played in private houses, and we have the evidence of The Book of Sir Thomas More, as well as Shakespeare's Hamlet, to suggest their arrival was entirely unexpected until an hour or two before the performance began. In the former (Greg 1911/1961: 30/31), a banquet is ready: More's wife, requested to order the seating for the ladies replies:

Lady. I warrant ye my Lord, all shalbe well
Ther's one without that stayes to speake with ye,
And bad me tell ye that he is a player.

Moore. A player wife? one of ye bid him come in
.....

Moore. welcome good freend, what is your will with me?

Player. My Lord, my fellowes and my selfe,
are come to tender ye our willing service,
so please you to command vs.

Moore. what, for a play, you mean?
.....

Moore. you happen hether in a luckie time,
to pleasure me, and benefit your selues.

In Hamlet, Act 2.2 likewise:

Ham. Why did you laugh, then, when I said, Man delights not
me?

Ros. To think, my Lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to [sic] offer you service.

Ham. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and in profit, was better both ways.

In our highly pressurised entertainment environment we have tended to grow a little blasé, and may thereby underestimate the rapport actually achieved in the professional medieval drama, with only occasional and generally unexpected performances.

I shall deal with four plays: two, Mankind and Everyman, would generally be categorised as Morality (or Didactic) plays, while the other two, Johan, Johan and Tyb, and Fulgens and Luces are generally characterised as Interludes.

Humour finds a place in many of these plays, and I wish to put forward certain ideas on this subject: among the works I have found that discuss humour, the aspect I wish to present here does not seem to have been given much consideration, so that I digress to raise certain points myself.

If we look at the animal kingdom, especially those creatures which form prey for predators, we notice a timidity that can easily rise to panic. Even the big aggressive predators do not seem to be immune; when we say that a dog's bark is worse than its bite, we recognise the bark is a bluff, to avoid fighting.

Fear is never totally absent in the human being, even though he generally lives in peaceful, civilised surroundings; however the sense of it is normally sufficiently suppressed to allow it to be ignored. What fairly clearly happens is that those mental elements which decide what is to be admitted to the conscious mind, take the necessary steps to counter the awareness of fear. A sudden increase in the causes of fear is permitted to become conscious for a while, before the countering action increases to suppress it again.

Somewhere below the surface of consciousness, there is a form of 'fear meter', whose readings are known subliminally to the conscious mind. I am suggesting that any drop in the fear level impinges on the conscious mind as a sense of relaxation, or pleasure; it makes us smile; if there is a relaxation on a significant scale, it may make us laugh.

I suggest further, that the essence of humour is that the mind suddenly finds a link that seems to explain an unknown area, so that it feels more 'on top of' the situation, giving rise to relaxation, therefore to a smile; moreover, I suggest that the same relaxation leads to a momentary lowering of caution towards less familiar ideas, making them easier to accept; in doing so, it makes it easier for the constructor of an artistic piece of communication (such as a play) to manipulate the ideas of his audience. I suggest that humour in Medieval as well as modern plays, functions this way.

On page 9, I said that in economic terms, drama is a luxury; it is more likely to appear therefore, when there is a special motivation. One such motivation is to promote Christianity. In the case of the cycle plays, and also probably in the case of Everyman, this was a case of preaching to the converted, so that there was less need for humour to help undermine resistance. In the case of Mankind however, the audience was likely to be made up of people who were less affluent, and less devotional, so that we should not be surprised to find the use of even a scatological humour.

After the third and fourth decade of the sixteenth century, Protestantism became a new element, especially in being associated with rising political power. I quote Hayes, Baldwin and Cole (1967: 353):-

"...the Lutheran teachings... appealed to... the worldly who saw a chance to appropriate church lands and riches for themselves, to patriots who wanted to nationalize the church, as well as to princes and nobles who were eager to increase their political power..."

The later moralities (which I do not deal with here), and especially the interludes I discuss, had largely political motivation and context, where again humour was of value to promote a cause. I believe we must be aware of these aspects, if we are to do justice to these plays.

CHAPTER 5

MANKIND

I now look at Mankind, using G.A.Lester (1981).

Neuss (1973), writing on the dramatic images in the language of this play, has said some of the things I now have to offer, since these images naturally form part of the rapport. Let me first make an observation however, which I believe to be original: the structure of the play strongly resembles that of a cycle - say York. Since it is only one fifteenth of the length, and had only one fiftieth of the number of players, the details must obviously be massively simplified; but I maintain that in essence we have the same structure. There is a significant consequence in this for analysing the play, and a separate major direct consequence for rapport.

There is an advantage in using an existing structure, in that if it is used correctly, it will 'work'. Moreover, one can predict how well it is likely to work, in the matter of audience rapport.

Southern (1973: 44) says "Mankind has no plot in this sense". He means the sense according to E.M.Forster (1927: 94), of being overshadowed by a sense of causality. 'Structure', in the sense in which I am using the word, I take to include the plot (and therefore the story), as well as setting and character. Thus, if the play is analogous to the cycle, the question arises "Does the cycle have a plot?"

I quote St John 3.16:-

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

Given this character of God, the whole event of the incarnation has a causal relationship with what went before. One might go even further, on the basis of original sin being inherent in the creation. I feel we may say that the cycle has a plot, and I argue that the structural similarity of Mankind indicates likewise a plot. Let me justify my contention by making a comparison between the play and the cycle.

I start by making Mercy the analogue of God (and the good angels); Titivillus and his crew obviously represent Lucifer and his minions; Mankind is humanity, from Adam onward. Both the cycle and Mankind start before humanity comes onto the scene.

Deus (like Mercy) opens with a monologue; then dissension occurs among the immortals, resulting in the very first casting out of devils, from Heaven; correspondingly, Mercy says "Out of this place I would ye went" (line 148), and the mischievous characters leave. Before we go any further, let us notice that in the cycle there is first a creation of the immortals, then after the fall of Lucifer, of Adam. Man is to be the second experiment, now that evil has come into the world; he is referred to as "Mankynde" when it is proposed to create him. Likewise 'Mankind'.

With the fall of Lucifer (line 92, York: The Fall of the Angels) the choice between good and evil has come into being, and the scene is set for the appearance of humanity, to be tempted. I draw attention to a seminal analogue for temptation, in Matthew 7.13/14:-

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The corresponding point in the play reminds us of this text, and the gates of good and evil between which Mankind must choose: I strongly suggest that this is the explanation of Nought's:-

"Go we hence a devil way!
Here is the door, here is the way". (lines 158/9).

(At the time, the text from the Vulgate would probably have been translated from `Porta` gate, via `Porte` door). This new interpretation weakens the arguments that have been put forward on the method of staging, based on these lines, as I suggest the script has more symbolic (and less practical) meaning than has been assumed.

I resume comparing the play with the cycle. The parallel between Mankind and Adam has been picked up by Neuss among

others; the significance of the spade has drawn attention, notably from Steven May (1982); the joint association likewise, in 'Adam dalf'. Cain was a tiller of the ground, who brought his offering unto the Lord; being disappointed at its reception, he rose up jealously and slew his brother - and a spade would seem to have been the most likely weapon. In other words, I am suggesting Mankind is Cain, when he belabours the three N's.

A word on the subject of allegory will not be out of place here. It is quite normal to hold inconsistent view on basically similar topics: we may meet two similar sets of events, but under differing circumstances, so that in the one context we feel one way about them, and in another context we may take an opposite view of what is basically the same thing. Our minds are so compartmentalised that we do not bring the two cases together and recognise the inconsistency.

The purpose of allegory is to bring out such pairs of ideas, either to reinforce them if they are in fact consistent, or to weaken prejudice against one, if they are inconsistent. I have looked at Mankind's murderous attack with his spade (which is rather to be compared with a blunt battle axe) on the three N's. At the abstract level, it might be argued that there is a major difference from Cain, in that Mankind was attacking sin, whereas Cain was attacking the innocent. However, at the level of everyday life, which it is the aim of the play to simulate, it seems to me that the audience will feel that Mankind has merely

allowed himself to wreak grossly exaggerated vengeance on others who were annoying him mildly; it would prejudice them against his rectitude, making it easier for them to go along with his subsequent fall from grace, into the company of an apparently sympathetic gang of rogues.

If we were being strict in working out the analogy, we might feel that the subsequent board in the ground represents "cursed is the ground for thy (Adam's) sake", rather than that "Cain was a tiller of the ground" - i.e. taking Genesis out of order, and reverting back from 4.2 to 3.17; however, allegory deals with major ideas, without worrying about the order in which they occur.

In Mankind we see the protagonist first worried (lines 198-200):-

"This is to me a lamentable story
To see my flesh of my soul to have governance.
Where the good-wife is master the good-man may be sorry
(EVE) (ADAM)

We have then seen him as Cain, initially willing to serve God, but striking out in anger, as Mankind does. The audience, though not themselves killers, are aware of touches of violence in their make-up, and are pre-disposed to identify themselves with Mankind. Their sympathies and self-identification are being manipulated to achieve purposes similar to those in The Crucifixion.

After this, I suggest the intended parallels were as follows: Titivillus's whisper (line 594) alludes to Luke 22.3: "Then entered Satan into Judas, being of the number of the twelve". The mock trial of Mankind is the (mockery of a) trial of the Son of Man; the business of the coat is the parting of the raiment; finally the rope alludes to the suicide of Judas - but with Mercy showing that nobody (even Judas presumably) is excluded from the possibility of God's forgiveness.

I turn now to rapport, for which all this allegory holds considerable implications, since the events as they occur in the play will - at least subliminally - strike a chord in the minds of the audience. These events, taken together with dancing, an overt devil, and scatological language, all of which had negative associations with respectable religion, and therefore effectively portrayed the "Broad way" (Neuss 1973: 57/ Lester 1981: xxiii), present the audience with a series of rapport constructs it is well equipped to handle.

It is seduced into identifying with the 'wrong side' (as is the cycle audience during the crucifixion); but here realisation of this comes more slowly - then with a rush at the last.

Let us look more closely at the use of humour here: I suggested that humour represents the relaxation of fear; I believe we may fairly say that the moralities 'worked' by putting the fear of death into the audience. As we shall see in the next chapter, Everyman starts by doing this in the sudden

confrontation with Death; then relaxes the fear during the second half of the play, treating death as natural and inevitable. In Mankind, fear is abnormally suppressed by the use of scatological humour - and as a result it returns with redoubled force as the humour becomes increasingly unsavoury. Redemption through the reconciliation with Mercy is reduced to occupy only the final one tenth of the play, but the principle is the same.

Neuss (1973: 42) refers to a Toronto audience of 1966 as enjoying the performance, but we may suspect that it represented a very different audience from the medieval - in line with Peter Happé's speculation (1980: 99). Both audiences probably enjoyed a sense of 'adulthood' at hearing the "Christmas song" etc. on a public stage, but the Toronto audience is unlikely to have recognised - in anything like the same degree as the medieval audience - the way ribaldness degenerates into the hideousness of treason, death and decay; and the reconciliation with Mercy would therefore mean much less to the former than it would to the original audience. (I also comment in the next chapter on the difference between a medieval audience seeing an occasional play, and a modern audience - saturated with contemporary TV entertainment - seeing a medieval play as merely providing variety in its daily diet).

When we look at the play to see how the audience would have responded to all the various actions, we find these do not simply represent a crude jumble of horseplay antics stuck between some

heavy moralising, as a first casual glance at the script could tempt us to think, but a well ordered and transformative text of considerable power for its intended audience.

Had it been recognised at its opening as a play, the audience might have started drifting away. Appearing as an itinerant preacher, Mercy might hold attention rather longer - the fact that he spoke in verse might not necessarily warn the audience: his manner of speech probably made this less noticeable and in any case, a preacher might well use a trusted formula in verse form, for getting under way.

The social instinct gains him a certain respect; about two minutes pass before Mischief interrupts Mercy - and only when he turns from things Heavenly to the place of sinful man in the scheme; the audience, their thoughts being set in a mood of upliftment, ready to weigh up their own manifold sins and wickednesses, are startled at the interruption, slightly appalled at its essential blasphemy.

There is a slight element of apparent weakness in Mercy's "Why come ye hither brother? Ye were not desired" (line 53). Mischief's reply, seeming more reasonable - "For a winter-corn thresher, sir, I have hired", begins to disarm the audience, and to lose Mercy its sympathy; its members will later recognise how easily they allowed themselves to be duped, adding to the effectiveness of the play's message; the skill with which this is done, will add to the play's final rapport.

When Mercy is shortly having difficulty with three more mischievous characters (lines 74-160), their sheer number further spurs the audience's inherent gregariousness to identify with them, as being the majority. Five minutes of ever increasing licentiousness is enough however, for the audience to be glad of their departure, and to return once more sympathetically to Mercy. Since audiences vary somewhat, one would expect the players to have the skill to shorten or lengthen the material a little before departing.

With the entry of Mankind (line 186), the audience have someone they can better identify with - and he only gives his dramaturgical name in the ninth line. His respect towards Mercy gives them a lead, and they are once more 'on the side of the angels'. 'Noises off' from the three N's prevent the audience from forgetting them, and in doing so, fix into the audience's minds Mercy's words "Beware of Newguise, Nowadays and Nought!" (line 294).

The play seeks to make its audience malleable by switching their sympathies backward and forward - a form of 'sensitivity training' - so that its message will subsequently be less muffled by the audience members' sense of complacency; the overall thrust of the play is not merely a call to Godly living, but as an exposition of the Compline warning "Brethren be sober, be vigilant, for thine adversary the Devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith".

In a footnote by the editor G A Lester, the court of misrule (lines 664 to 724) is compared with the similar one in the Boar's Head Tavern, in Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV 11.iv (1981: 41). The same comparison had struck me forcibly, and while it is beyond my scope here to argue it, I believe a good case could be made for Shakespeare's familiarity with Mankind, and his appreciation of this scene's possibilities for rapport.

My point here is to suggest that, in portraying Hal's wild youth, Shakespeare took Titivillus and the mischievous characters as a model for Falstaff and his followers. That in a sense, we have Shakespeare's own comment on this play, in terms of the way he saw Falstaff as "That villainous abominable misleader of youth... that old white-bearded Satan"; comparing Hal's life in the shadows to Mankind's (or Man unkind's).

In particular, with regard to the effectiveness of the play I suggest that, with the later version of the court scene, we are given a brief hint that the original was far more sophisticated than we tend to feel on reading the script; it could scarcely have been acted to match Shakespeare's scene, but for all that, its actual performance would nonetheless have been a considerable dramatic experience, drawing the audience into siding happily with evil, when the latter is about to show its true colours, and thus supporting what I have been saying about the malleability of the audience.

Another aspect of presentation that would benefit rapport relates to what G.A.Lester says of the play: "Its very ambiguity of time and place suggests a play which could be adapted to suit a variety of occasions..." (1981: xxxvii). The sites where it was presented probably varied widely, but a thing that strikes me is that the `stage` - i.e. the area on which attention is focussed - was probably not a single clear space, but a space in the middle of, plus spaces among, a loosely packed audience. That it was less focussed even than the usual `theatre in the round`. I look more closely at this point for its effect on rapport.

We have almost the effect of the video camera, switching from one viewpoint to another. I cannot think of another play which achieves this, and it makes a significant contribution to sharpening rapport. The effect of lessening the distance between players and audience was enhanced by the way the opening of the play concealed that it was a play; Mercy was merely an itinerant preacher... and Mischief an itinerant worker; only with the appearance of the three N's was the audience sure it was a play. And even so, they remained half in and half out of the action, having the same relationship to it as they have in the eternal war for the souls.

The use of scatological humour, the essence of the `Broad way` that must be eschewed, was made easier by this lack of distance between players and audience, identifying the latter with the worldly distractions within the play; and in so doing,

making these the more repellent as they increasingly reveal their real nature. By the time the mischievous characters are trying to persuade Mankind to hang himself, the audience are all the more sick of them, and in sympathy with Mercy and his whip (which also conjures memories of Christ's scourge in the temple).

I believe the deeper we probe this play, the more we must admire the writer's mastery of drama, and the skill of its players. I doubt whether any modern production has yet achieved the full effect of the original, in the measure of rapport attained between players and audience (the more so, because the modern audience brings with it very different cultural mores).

CHAPTER 6

EVERYMAN

Most of my references in this chapter will be to the very thoroughly researched introduction to Cooper and Wortham's 1980 The Summoning of Everyman¹. I use their text.

Before we can usefully look at rapport in Everyman, we must consider the question "was the play ever produced?" C & W discuss this (xlii/xliv), where they suggest three possible modes of presentation. They discuss the headnote of the play, which refers to "A treatise... in the maner of a morall playe", suggesting that this implies it may have been intended as a closet drama.

As a closet drama it would not be unique: in his introduction to Goethe's Faust (1949: 17/18), the translator Philip Wayne says:-

"Faust, Part One, though it has a strong and famous story, is very unconventional in its shape as a play. The struggle in Faust's mind, and his trenchant commentary on our life, provide absorbing speeches for the reader rather than for the stage... Goethe himself was sceptical about any theatrical success... it is easy to prove that he intended a big dramatic poem rather than a stage play...".

The three suggested presentations C & W offer are:- "The action takes place in the area within and adjacent to the

1/ To avoid jarring repetition of the names Cooper and Wortham, I have used merely the page numbers - Roman numerals for the introduction, Arabic for the text - suitably parenthesised, after the indication 'C & W'.

identified place", by which they indicate a relatively small area for the action; or that it was played in the round like The castle of Perseverance; or that it moves from platform to platform on a single long stage.

In relation to this, we must ask ourselves who the players would have been. There is a point in the action where seven characters are simultaneously present (line 670); in fact no clear departure has been indicated for Confession, so that it is just possible that eight performers might be needed. This seems to rule out most groups of travelling players.

A further point arises from the character 'Goods': in lines 394-396 he says:-

"I lie here in corners, trussed and piled so high,
And in chests I am locked so fast,
Also sacked in bags. Thou mayst see with thine eye..."

The play seems to call for a relatively large amount of properties (if it were played in a literal sense), which could not easily be carried from place to place, nor borrowed on arrival. It seems that the players were likely to be amateurs, from cost considerations.

The play is a play of ideas, rather than of spectacle and action; while the first speeches might be suitable for declamation to a large audience, it seems to me that the performance must have been intimate by nature.

We cannot perhaps entirely rule out a large audience - perhaps large only in aggregate from several performances; but, for one thing, no record of any such performances has survived, which one might have expected to find if they had actually taken place. It seems reasonable therefore, to suppose that the performance was conducted in some expense-saving manner.

At the same time, we note the two opening lines:-

"I pray you all give your audience,
And hear this matter with reverence..."

This suggests that an actual performance was expected.

It is known moreover, that there were at least four printings, spread over at least ten years, possibly over as much as twenty-five years. Taking into consideration the number of players and the amount of property required, the number of copies of the script that were printed and the lack of records of performances, which might have been expected to exist if there were any large scale performances, I feel we must give our attention to ways in which the play might have been performed within cost constraints, for audiences of modest size.

An absolutely minimal performance could be staged by one actor, who adopts different voices for each character, also differing deportments, and who possibly has suitable properties he can snatch up, to indicate their characters more strongly.

Given a degree of histrionic talent, such an actor could bring the play to life for his audience. However, this is only to suggest the possible limit, not to suggest that this was the norm.

We must also consider the audience for whom the play was performed. I think we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be misled by the reaction of a modern audience. Such an audience probably sees at least a hundred pieces of entertainment every year, especially on television: most are contemporary stories, and inevitably suffer from a degree of repetitiveness, so that the modern audience will approach the performance of a medieval/early Tudor play with a sense of variety offered within what is a major portion of their mental diet. Their reactions may mislead us, if we take them for a guide to the original audience.

If we compare Everyman with plays such as the others that I treat here, I feel that we must assume that the audience for which it was written was of a more than usually sober disposition, and concerned with moral principles. The only secular elements in the story concern Everyman's past, which put him into jeopardy now. The nearest approach to humour lies in such lines as (119):-

"O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind!"

and 271-274:-

"I wot well I said so, truly;
And yet if thou will eat, and drink, and make good chear,
Or haunt to women the lusty company,
I would not forsake you while the day is clear..."

For the most part, the play is an exposition of the moral situation of every soul in life. It needs to be put across to a compliant audience as a type of reinforced sermon.

Taking these - admittedly limited - factors into account, I would like to suggest a significant possibility was that performances frequently took the form of a play-reading.

Before the introduction of printing, it is reasonable to suppose that cost would preclude the supply of more than one copy of the script - but with the coming of printing this situation presumably changed. Having been involved in a great deal of play-reading myself, I find it easy to visualise the cast sitting at a table on a raised dais, each with a copy of the script, reading for a (probably small) audience. Cost of production would be virtually nil, and the cast would not be called upon to learn their parts, or to have acting ability beyond the reading itself.

There is still the element of immediacy and the driven tempo of the normal play, but the audience use their imagination as to appearances, in the same manner they do in reading a novel. There will be some difference in rapport compared with a normal presentation, and I feel it might well work more effectively. If we consider the issue on this basis, it will avoid possibly fruitless speculation on certain aspects of presentation.

It is now accepted (C & W xxiiff) that the play is a rendering into English of the Middle Dutch Elckerlyc. Although dating only a generation or so after Mankind, it was written in a Europe that had entered a ferment of change. Holland, no longer associated with the old Duchy of Burgundy, was soon destined to take on a significant historical rôle of its own. Christian forces had united and triumphed over Islam in Spain, and the Inquisition had been introduced; this led among other consequences, to the fleeing of Jews who settled in Holland and neighbouring parts of Germany, bringing the local populations into closer contact with the Old Testament. Printing had been introduced, and the Americas had been discovered.

The time for the Reformation was rapidly approaching, for which conditions were already ripening in Holland with the Devotio Moderna (xxiii); arising from this last (xxiv) is the point that Elckerlyc is ante-Reformation, and Everyman is anti-Reformation (i.e. in the manner of the Counter-Reformation).

Of interest in connection with rapport, is that we are looking at an intellectual doctrinal activity, rather than at any ordinary entertainment. This alone seems to me to support the idea of a play-reading, aimed at encouraging the intellectual appreciation of the doctrines, in an audience of sober-minded people (rather than at Mankind's periodical reinforcement of basically devotional ideas, in a workaday community).

The theme is that Death is inevitable, and catches every man (or woman) unawares. The play opens at the point where Death is catching Everyman himself, and so differs in its treatment from other moralities, which depict the life of sin. In particular it avoids having to depict sin itself (which is so graphically depicted in Mankind); however, the difference is only one of viewpoint: the messenger (Cooper and Wortham 1980: 3) points to the years that are already past for Everyman: "The story sayth: 'Man, in the begynnyng... Ye thynke synne in the begynnyng full swete'."

What we might term a version of the flashback technique is used: Felawship for example (23), says "And yet, yf thou wylte ete and drynke" etc, and Kynrede (27) "Ye shall have my mayde with all my herte"; in other words, they will happily continue with what has apparently been Everyman's past life. Goodes speaks directly of the past (29), "For bycause on me thou dyd set thy mynde, Thy rekenyng I have made blotted and blynde". This continues till just past the mid-point of the script, so that the downward trend balances the upward trend to follow, with effective symmetry as G.A.Lester points out (1981: xxviii/xxix). Cooper and Wortham (xii) also see the "V" format. Let us look at the consequences for rapport in this play.

In the Middle Ages many died young, especially at the time of a plague; but every adult knew that death was sooner or later inevitable. In the play we see Everyman as apparently young

enough not to have given much thought to death; but we are also thenceforward shown the effects of age in accelerated form, so that the subject is the death of every wight, young or old. Even the old, though having reason to recognise the approach of death, might well have become senile, no longer capable of putting their house in order.

An interesting point arises concerning age in connection with rapport in this play: in other plays we consider rapport at a single performance. In the case of Everyman which was popular (xliv), with four known printings being spread over anything from ten to twenty-five years, it may be a better analysis to think of individuals watching more than one presentation - especially if it was in fact a play-reading, which can be organised at a couple of weeks' notice, with little bother or cost.

If we look at it like this, the question of missing the opportunity to put one's house in order becomes more cogent - as does the thought that death catches us all unawares - since one is looking at a period of (perhaps many) years in one's life. At a given presentation, one may well remember others who attended a previous performance, but have now gone to their rest; likewise others who were then children, but are now young adults, giving the theme far more immediacy. The audience is very receptive for rapport.

Two relevant and very familiar biblical passages would have been especially present in the minds of the audience:-

"Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them... Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.... Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man, for God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing..."

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12

The other makes the message more poignant (Luke 12.19/20)

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

Additionally, the General Epistle of James makes similar representations in 1.10/11:-

"...because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof faileth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Besides these, Cooper and Wortham (xixff) expatiate on V.A.Kolve's argument that the parable of the talents, especially in references to "Loans", is the essential source of the plot. The passage has the important effect of relating the experience to oneself, and to the life one has borrowed, instead of allowing the comfortable "These things always happen to someone else" philosophy which occurs in Mankind.

Between them, these passages stored in the audience's memory have created expectations for the play. As the familiar images arise, they each click into place to produce a vivid awareness of the need for good stewardship of life, and therefore the awareness of one's personal shortcomings. What is especially required of the audience is to realise this questioning of the state of their own souls. I suggest that a play-reading would be more effective than actual acting, since the latter directs attention at the actors, while here the lack of spectacle directs it internally.

Fellowship departs first - as it does for the ageing, able no longer to involve themselves easily in activity, or even to travel. Kindred follows - the aged have usually outlived their contemporary family members, and are separated from their living family by a generation gap. For most people, Goods are perishable and replaced from time to time out of income; when their working and earning life is over, their goods perish and are not replaced. Even those who retain riches into old age have little ability to enjoy them - unless through avarice, which murders the soul.

There is a doctrinal aspect to possession of excess goods: we should aim to have enough to maintain life and health, to allow development of talents, and perhaps a margin against harder times in an uncertain future. Beyond this point, possession of excess goods is only a hindrance to the soul.

Goods himself (line 442) says "My condycyon is manne's soule to kill". It is a reminder to an audience of probably sober hard-working people (inclined thereby to amass at least a modicum of wealth), to guard against being overtaken by blindness of spirit.

The rapport with the denial of exaggerated involvement in this life, is established principally through the knowledge of the audience that death is inevitable, that they can take no material goods out of this world, and that even their bodily attributes will slowly forsake them. This they already know academically, but to be brought up against their own knowledge, among their peers, and at a driven tempo, very powerfully reinforces their awareness.

Temptation is usually a key factor in the theme of morality plays, and this usually takes the form of 'The world, the flesh, and the devil'; awareness of this teaching would weaken the medieval audience's resistance to self-examination, and the aim is to bring this awareness home.

In Everyman as we have said, the sins are already past, so that the devil need not appear. The world appears in the form of Fellowship, Kindred and Goods, which may themselves be in good heart as death approaches an individual, but they will not accompany him; the shortcomings of the flesh are emphasised by showing how this also fades away as the grave is approached. The play brings out the very familiar realities of ageing, and is thus highly conducive to rapport with the intended audience.

Thus far we have seen Everyman's increasing mortification, as he is forced to realise that not one of his familiar sources of comfort avails him, in his new - always inevitable, but never before seriously considered - situation. Cooper and Wortham (1980: xii) describe a "V" structure in morality plays, psychologically akin to the descent into Hell, followed by the Resurrection. Everyman follows this pattern, and with the departure of Goods, we are at the nadir and turning point. From this point forward, Everyman will turn to his deeper comforts - such as they are - his moral properties and record, which will slowly recover him from the pit of despair.

Bringing together Gospel texts and the names, I would agree with G.A.Lester (1981: xxix) on the Balance between Goods and Good Deeds; I would go slightly further by linking this to Matthew 6.19/20:-

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven..."

This would have been a very familiar text to the audience I have visualised, and the similarity of names acts as a pointer for the balance between them. Goods closes the downward stroke of the "V", and Good Deeds opens the symmetrical upward stroke. That Everyman mentions them only seven lines apart in one speech, serves to emphasise the link at the transition.

Up to this point, the rapport that has been established over a period of about 35-40 minutes, has served to make the audience ever more uncomfortable; it is not only a sense of wrong doing, but even more the prospect of suddenly being snatched from familiar surroundings into the unknown (and potentially terrifying), in violation of the gregarious instinct. The time has come for comfort - but not too suddenly, and not too easily.

Lester (1981: xxix) points to a further link between Goods and Good deeds (Goods: lines 394/7 and Good Deeds lines 486/8) :-

"...I lie here in corners, trussed... I cannot stir."
(Goods)

"Here I lie... Thy sin hath me sore bound, that I cannot stir".
(Good Deeds)

The five pages devoted to Everyman in Lester's introduction scarcely touch the upward moving half of the play, and even in Cooper and Wortham's 48-page introduction it is only touched on lightly; the deconstruction of Everyman's workaday self comes easier than the reconstruction of his 'Imitation of Christ' self (I mean for commentators, but this probably also reflects the feelings of the audience).

The deconstruction is forced through with deliberate steps, audience resistance being steadily broken down. The climb back chimes naturally with the audience's slow recovery to a more sanguine frame of mind.

I now add a new observation concerning an element in this section. After Everyman goes to Presthode for last unction (line 729), there is a mild dispute between Five Wits and Knowledge concerning the sanctity of priests: what are we to make of it?

The play was available in England around the time Luther was nailing his theses on the church door: audiences would be aware of a developing dispute in the church (though they probably would not have expected it to turn into the permanent schism of the Reformation). I suggest the playwright recognised that if he ignored this, the action would seem out of touch, disturbing the rapport that was established, and that he therefore sought simply to portray each side truthfully; keeping the action in touch would enhance rapport.

In the dispute, Knowledge alludes to the shortcomings of some of the clergy, which Five Wits brushes aside - but man's five wits can be in error. Even at this moment, in his approaching extremity, Everyman still gives preference to his five wits' unquestioning trust in the system as a whole, over the knowledge of error in some of the system's followers. When Everyman reaches the grave however, even Five Wits joins Strength, Discretion and Beauty in deserting him. Only Knowledge and Good Deeds remain (and even Knowledge does not finally accompany Everyman into the grave). It seems that even faith is portrayed as something which might be misplaced, with the point that knowledge must be sought, in order to establish the truth.

Everyman is a play of ideas, and rapport must be established at this level. I would suggest that the players have been given lines well constructed to meet the successive stages of the response of the audience to the play's message, so that good rapport would be established, without necessarily calling for any great acting skill. With today's audience, I would expect good rapport only if the actors deliberately introduced dramatic acting of a sort that was not necessary with the original audience, and which is not strictly part of the play.

CHAPTER 7

JOHAN, JOHAN AND TYB

A first glance at this playscript, the full title of which is A mery play betwene John Johan the husbände, Tyb his wife, and Syr Johan the prest, gives an impression of crudeness, both of content and execution. If we fill in the historical background, we shall approach it in a very different frame of mind. My source is R. Axton and P. Happé (1991: xi/xvii, 1/12, 15/16 and 35/38). Pages 310/330 are also useful, giving a modern translation of the French original of this play.

The play is a fairly straight translation of the French La Farce Nouvelle du Pasté, as published by Heywood's brother-in-law William Rastell, without attribution; modern study has shown there is little doubt that it was Heywood's work, in choosing and translating it, Anglicising a number of French allusions, plus changing a few small details. Among the last, "Man" becomes Johan Johan, "Wife" becomes Tyb, and "Priest" (who is also indicated as bearing the name `Guillaume`) becomes Syr Johan.

These changes deserve some attention. "Tyb" is certainly not a version of Tybalt (Theobald), but seem to be a variant of "Tabby", and is one of a few associations between the lusty wife and a cat. I am going to suggest there is a very loose allegorical association with Katharine (Catalina) of Arragon and Tyb, so the two names have a distinct link.

Heywood's own name was John, and he had family connections with several other John's including the father of Thomas More, and the poet John Donne (his grandson), so the use of the name in the play would be natural to him. He was of famed literary and philosophical stock.

He was a good Catholic (approximately 23 years old when Luther nailed his theses to the door), as were most of his family (although his father-in-law John Rastell later became Protestant) He succeeded better than other members of his family in surviving the religious swings that took place in political life, which was not easy for a man whose career involved him heavily in entertaining the Royal households; but his work was popular, and he learnt to lean with the prevailing winds. Since allegory can be read into many plays, he had to keep any element of this sufficiently non-explicit to avoid making enemies, and was relatively successful in doing so.

If a work is appropriate to the events of its time, but not explicitly allegorical of them, the memory of its effect will be subsequently modified by the experience of new events, and Johan Johan is a good example. Since it was not explicitly allegorical, it was possible for audiences of varying politico-religious hues to interpret it in differing ways, and therefore with differing rapport. Of these audiences, there were three major persuasions.

There were the conservatively-minded, who did not want to see the familiar church interfered with - although most would

have welcomed reform from within the church; then there were those who felt that the papacy usurped a place in Christianity it did not deserve, and that all the evils of the church stemmed from this, so that they wanted total reform; and there was the King's party, for whom papal interference in the country's internal affairs was brought into sharp relief by the question of the King's divorce, but who did not want significant doctrinal change. For this last party, there was also the attractive prospect of the confiscation of monastic lands, with which the King might be expected to buy support for his dynasty, in an age of short-lived dynasties.

The play was not overtly a political lampoon, and each party could find a way to respond to it in accordance with its own convictions, all these being based on the subliminal association of Johan Johan with Henry VIII, Tyb with Katharine of Arragon, and Syr Johan with the latter's papal supporters. Heywood was able to please each party, without having to put himself into the wrong with any. The reference to fecundity (lines 529-589) might seem to have been dangerous, but again each party would have seen this differently. Henry was blaming Katharine for effective infertility, and the lack of sons in her progeny, so he would not see a slight to himself. If either Catholics or Protestants saw such a slight, they would be perfectly happy at it.

The play was translated in about 1527, when Heywood would have been about thirty years of age, and at the time More gave

a discouraging response to Henry's first mootings of a divorce. It was in 1529 that Wolsey failed to get the Pope's consent to Henry's divorce. This pushed Henry unwillingly, not into the hands of the Protestants, but at least into schism with the Pope. Henry would not fall in with the Protestants' wishes, but his reduction of papal influence in England pleased them. In February 1533, shortly after Henry gave Heywood a large gilt cup as a New Year present, and shortly before Cranmer declared null the marriage with Katharine, Rastell published the play. It seems fair to say therefore, that Heywood succeeded in producing an entertainment that was topically acceptable, but which did not commit him to any particular faction.

The structure of the play falls into three scenes, the first and the last at Johan's house, the middle at the priest's. Heywood introduced simple stage directions indicating the journeys, and so separating these scenes more strongly than in the French original; he also increased the central section from 90 to 103 lines (15,2% of the total, cf 11,7%). In Johan Johan, one gets the feeling more strongly than in the original, that the play is performed in three separated scenes, in the intervals of a banquet; its very subject, relating to the eating of a pie, would make it especially suitable for such treatment. Play time thus coincides with audience time, not only during the on-stage action, but approximately also during the journeys to and fro. Both in time and form of action, the play correlated with the audience.

With the nature of the English climate we can assume (and the limited records confirm) that outdoor playing would be confined to the summer months, while for those who could afford it, the winter evenings would be the ideal time for indoor plays, when the weather curtailed outdoor sporting activities. This means the plays were usually staged after dark, and lighting would be an element contributing significantly to rapport. There was no question of brilliant lighting, nor of rapid lighting changes, but an act could be played in the most suitable lighting available - from brightly candle-lit to very dimly lit. Stage directions for this have not survived, but if we ourselves can see the advantage of using the most appropriate lighting, so could Tudor producers.

The light appropriate to the settings, especially in Johan's house, would be dim: a fire, and at least a couple of candles (since the priest can give Johan two more to mend the pail). To match this relative gloom, candles illuminating the banquet would probably be snuffed, except for the pair alight on the table at which Tyb and Syr Johan sat, with Johan skulking near a real fire. In this situation, the voices and the major body movements or attitudes, interacting with snatches of speech, would convey the action - which consists largely of moods and feelings.

When I took the French I course at Unisa, the discussion in our study guide (Haffter 1971: 67) - which is therefore especially appropriate to this translated French play - suggested

there are three basic rhetorical mechanisms in plays:-

- a) Exchange of information (especially for the benefit of the audience).
- b) Agreement/disagreement with something said.
- c) Giving and receiving orders.

In Johan Johan we see a little exchange of information, a great deal of (double-take) agreement/disagreement, and a little Giving and receiving orders - which gets transmogrified into double-take agreement/disagreement. The use of dialogue here is to present a situation, rather than a plot, or even a story. From the rapport point of view therefore, the actual words are relatively insignificant: they merely support the tone, which expresses the moods. The overall effect is continually to reinforce the mood, and with this (plus the fitful lighting), to add weight to the effect this particular human dilemma produces on the audience.

Coming now to the play itself, the schema is a scene in the life of a pathetic cuckold. I again refer to Falstaff, as I did in connection with Mankind, especially in the Boar's Head scenes in Henry IV Part 1. When Falstaff is challenged over his account of the fight: and again when Poinc threatens to stab him, and yet again when Hal raises the question of the thousand pounds Falstaff claims to be owed: in all these, he shows some of the character traits of Johan Johan, and he gives us an idea what a good actor can make of the part.

We must reasonably suppose that Heywood had good actor-material available, and the means to train them: both his father-in-law and his wife's uncle showed considerable interest in acting, and he himself was closely associated with choristers. The parts would be put across with considerable skill. In such a portrayal, Tyb and the priest would be foils for Johan, although each a fair cameo. Johan's part calls for the combination in one character of weak threatening (whose feebleness he reveals even when on his own), with a grumbling but fearful subservience to his wife, and naïvety in the face of the priest.

If I am right, the snuffing of the candles would warn the guests that a scene was toward, as also the movement of one or two properties in the way of chairs and tables. Even so, the guests would probably continue to chatter, until a strong opening line caught their attention. At this moment, receptiveness to a new flow of thought would be at its maximum. Johan starts with just such a line to draw attention: "God spede you, Maysters, everychone!" (line 1).

He then goes straight into his complaint about his gadabout wife; his tone, and probable pacing about, would strengthen the effect considerably, especially in a flickering light, which would perhaps cast grotesque shadows. The pungency of his voice, the fact that he was moderately illuminated in a darkened room, his movements - all would help to grip the attention and increase rapport.

After the better part of a minute of ferocious ranting and railing, in which he establishes the character he pretends to himself, Walter Mitty-like, to have, he suddenly vacillates (line 19:-

"...Yea, but what and she therof dye?
Than I may chauce to be hanged shortly."

He vacillates ever more obviously between his ill-justified self-image as a strong character, and his knowledge that he is weak.

Axton and Happé (1991) give a recent translation of the original play: one difference is that this takes nine relatively soft lines to introduce, and the text gives more the impression of talking amusingly to the sophisticated immediate audience, than of speaking his frustration out fiercely: a second person dialogue, rather than a third person monologue as in Heywood's treatment. The differences, subtle though they are, suggest the original is intended more as a specimen under a glass case, for the inspection of an intellectual audience.

As soon as Tyb enters (line 111, after about 5 minutes of monologue), we see Johan in his full colours: angry, but too feeble-spirited to be more than merely frustrated. I believe the allegory was sufficiently non-explicit for the audience not to have made the association of Johan with Henry, but that their

response would nonetheless be conditioned by their feelings over public events, and that the play would therefore reinforce these varying feelings.

The Catholics would probably sympathise with Tyb, feeling glad Johan did not have royal power, like someone they knew.... The Henrician party would probably feel all sympathy with the man who had a termagent wife. The Protestants would not waste sympathy on a weak vacillating character, so much like Henry (who had taken six long years to get his way, and who even now was not ready to embrace their religion). If Heywood could achieve these different reactions, each party feeling that the play reflected the realities of life (though each with a different interpretation), then he was not only a master at rapport, but he was riding out a very difficult situation with great skill.

The dialogue of the play makes heavy use of a device with which we are familiar today - Johan comments viciously on Tyb or her friends: she commands him to repeat what he has mumbled, and he offers a very innocuous variant, in lieu of repeating truly. We are used to the second line sounding like the first:-

"Oh go to Hell!"
"What did you say?"
"I said 'It's going well'".

One suspects this would be true of the original French (which I do not have at my disposal: it is not easy to translate

back, especially into Henrician French). If it was true of the French, then much was lost in both Heywood's and Cohen's translations, although the general point would still come across well. This comic patter alone detracts attention from recognising any potential allegory during the performance (but the brain will do that subsequently, to reinforce feelings about public events by the members of the audience, probably without them recognising that they have been manipulated. However, though one may even admire Johan's neat turning of phrases, he comes across as a pathetic figure: when it comes to swapping insults, the priest even openly calls him "horson kokold" (line 657).

The play follows the same pattern to its logical conclusion, intensifying the disparaging effect in such actions as the priest (line 456) proferring the two candles in the form of a cuckold's horns (otherwise, why two?), and in the implication of poor Johan's inability to imitate nature, in the matter of mending the pail. An implication that parallels the highest demonstration of his subservience (on the non-sexual plane), is that he accepts orders to mend the pail, so that he can fetch water for his 'betters' to wash their hands before eating - and spends his time doing this, while they in fact get on with eating the pie in his presence. The parallel planes reinforce each other, to enhance rapport.

A good actor can really get his teeth into such a part. The flickering light that shows only his grosser movements, and with his voice pitched for the audience to hear (but coming across to

the other two players only as a mumbling), give him scope to focus the attention of the audience on himself. The latter would feel that the wife and the priest were the prominent actors on the stage - but it is the husband who really holds their attention, and has the most scope for exploiting rapport with them.

It is most likely (if this was indeed performed at a banquet) that the audience will have been drinking wine during the performance - enough to impair the sharpness of their judgement a little. With even a very mildly intoxicated effect in the minds of the audience, the focussing effect of fitful lighting can be the more effectively exploited by the actor. Since what is being portrayed is the moment by moment mood and feeling shifts, the audience is exceptionally receptive. The play was well designed to exploit these special circumstances.

Taking into consideration the predispositions the members of an audience bring to a play, the political drama may become several different plays, for different sections of the audience. In the case of Johan Johan, we might try to remove the sense of a distance of four hundred and fifty years by visualising three different (plausible) conversations between homeward travelling guests:-

Sir Catholic (in carriage with his wife):

"you know dear what that Johan fellow reminded me of? I think this Henry of ours might have been just like that, if he'd not been the King; the jumped up little tyrant, who dares to challenge both Holy Church and the Emperor!"

Sir Henrician (leaning back against the cushions beside his wife in his barge):

"You know dear, that Tyb was a tartar wasn't she? It's so sad that a man might marry young and inexperienced, and find himself tied to such a harridan. It's almost like our poor King!"

Sir Protestant (walking beside his wife in her sedan chair):

"You know what I was thinking during the play dear? How real these things are! It could have been our poor, feeble, vacillating King, who hasn't learned enough to reform the Church, even though he's had to put up with the Queen and her Popish supporters dragging him around by the nose, just like that poor fellow Johan!"

In order to make a sound evaluation of a play such as this, I believe we need to consider what sort of rapport it might achieve with the various sections of its audience; and this I have attempted to do.

CHAPTER 8

FULGENS AND LUCRES¹

This play was written by Henry Medwall, "Late chapelayne to... Morton... archebyssshop of Caunterbury", of whom we read in MeikleJohn (1896: 287):-

"Morton carried out, with unflinching determination and steady consistency, the twofold policy of Henry - to amass money, and to weaken the nobles of England."

A few pages earlier he is said to have "assisted him in all these vile undertakings".

Both Johan Johan and Fulgens and Lucres are plays that belong to the milieu of the Royal entourage, but in this chapter we are one reign earlier, which makes a considerable difference. Henry VII was very uncertain of his chances of ever becoming King, almost until the moment arrived when he was 29 years of age. I quote again from MeikleJohn (1896: 277ff):-

"Henry Tudor had been a fugitive or an exile from his native land from the time when he was only five years of age... his patient ability and subtle power of scheming gradually raised him to be regarded as the head of the Lancastrian party.... All through his reign he showed himself a patient, wary diplomatist.... He died after amassing nearly two millions of money, and earning "the great hatred of his people".

This is the reign during which Fulgens and Lucres was written and performed (there is some dispute, but it seems

1/ My source for this chapter is Nelson (1980), including his introduction.

certain there was at least one performance, probably in 1497).

His son Henry VIII was a man "born to be king" (six years after his father's accession), and the only difficulty he had concerned his heir. Again from Meiklejohn (1896: 295ff):-

"...high aims for the good of his kingdom... soon gained a wide and strong personal popularity, which he never entirely lost".

Henry VII, because he was relatively insecure, played a distant "God the Father" rôle, dealing with the people through 'archangels' such as lawyers Empson and Dudley, and Cardinal/Archbishop Morton. Drama in courtly circles - like freedom of speech - was still relatively limited (as the front table in Cawley [1983] indicates).

Henry VIII, being very secure, was more a man of the people; drama, (among other things) expanded considerably in courtly circles, both in performance and publication.

Fulgens and Luces was, in effect, an acceptable play for the 'Establishment', and unlike Johan Johan was very much a play of verbal communication. The fact that it was printed at least once (1512-14, some twenty years after it was written), suggests at the lowest, a speculative investment in further performances.

On the face of things, the play examines - albeit from a partisan point of view - one of the universal socio-political issues: to what extent can the inheritance of wealth and

privilege (thus placing the rest of society at a disadvantage) be tolerated? The historical background to its period thus becomes of interest, since the issue would have affected the predispositions of certain audiences, and consequently the rapport with the play. I opened this paragraph with the words "On the face of things"; I shall in due course suggest there is another aspect to the play.

In little more than a century after the death of Edward III, his descendants began five separate dynasties, four of them by usurpation, three of these within the final generation before the play was written. When Edward IV usurped the throne, his last lineal ancestor to occupy it had been dead 84 years; for Henry VII, it was 108 years.

These usurpations naturally factionalised the political forces in the country into the Lancastrian and Yorkist parties, and derogated from the concept of the divine right of kings by inheritance. The accompanying wars, in taking a heavy toll of the nobility, likewise weakened the acceptance of the unquestioned privilege of these families.

A generally accepted fact of history, which is supported by Pope (1969), is that only by this time had siege artillery become sufficiently mobile to be used to batter down individual castles (as opposed to city walls). This development left the old nobility relatively defenceless against the centralising power of the King.

The overall effect of these factors was to make the court far more the centre of political power than it had been, and this encouraged a new social mobility. Henry Tudor especially, looked to commerce to provide the underlying support needed for the centralisation of power (and to supply people to man the necessarily expanded administrative staff; also what we would call propaganda). To consolidate his power, he launched an attack on what remained of old feudal privilege; for the retinue of new supporters there would be new privileges, in the gift of the King.

Since Morton's entourage and guests must be taken as forming the main audience for the play, attitudes we might expect towards the dispossession of the old nobility, give us a pointer as to how this audience would have interpreted the theme of 'Let the Titans depart and the Gods arise'. Meiklejohn (1896: 280) states the case a little more strongly, quoting "one historian" as having called Henry "A royal swindler", and on the same page himself describes Morton as his "favourite minister".

The context of the play thus comprises an archbishop, in a position of exceptional power and dedicated to the squeezing dry of the old nobility, who kept his own court (to whom he always sought to justify his actions - and who were almost certainly sycophantically ready to follow his lead). There would be a degree of what I would call "forced rapport" with the theme, as these people adjusted their own thinking to conform with Morton's wishes.

In the case of Johan Johan I suggested that members of the audience might fall into one of three persuasions: in the case of Fulgens and Lucres, such a division was unlikely in the very different circumstances.

The essence of this aspect of the play is found in lines 440 - 808 of the second part, representing only one-sixth of the whole, with only one-twentieth of the play left to wind up after this.

The length of the whole play (2353 lines), with its division into two parts representing 60% and 40% respectively, must be considered in analysing the rapport it was likely to achieve. Richard Southern (1973: 85/7) suggests of Nature, that it was divided to make either a short or long play available, and he refers back (95) to this suggestion in connection with Fulgens and Lucres. However, the long first part of this play would be pointless on its own, and I think we must look for extra explanation.

Part one would have taken about an hour and a half to perform; moreover "A" refers twice to how his audience "stond/e" within the first twenty lines. The rational interpretation is that the audience took their "dyner" in the form we know as a buffet (which would also make it easier for them to see the action while they eat, without having to turn their seats round away from the food). At the end of this part (lines 1416/7), "A" comments the play has been keeping the audience "fro theyre dyner

all day - they have not fully dyed". In line 1362 we were told the play will resume "Sone, in the evynyg aboute suppere" (Lucrece had actually said in line 568 "tomorrow night", but she may have been using "night" as we use "eve", to mean the night before tomorrow).

Let us look a little more closely at the structure of this first part: in terms of importance to the title of the play, Fulgens and Lucrece - also appearing first - should be the main protagonists; in terms of the ostensible plot, this becomes Lucrece, followed by Gayus and Cornelius. In terms of presence on the stage however, these four acting together share only some 320 lines of 1432 in the first part (though Gayus shares 200 more with "A"). The two algebraic characters (and Ancilla) dominate the time. One speaks of "the play within the play" but here, in terms of structure it is "the play without the play", with the 'sub-plot' characters taking three quarters of the time. The structure clearly needs some explanation, which I shall offer in a moment.

The second part is more in line with the expectations raised by the title, with Lucrece absent from the stage for less than a quarter of the lines (and present while the minstrels perform), while her suitors share about half of her stage time; "A" and "B" share the other half, plus the time of her absence. In terms of plot the second part is far the more important, and we must clearly explain the purpose of the long first part.

It seems clear that the initial impulse for the play was to suit a socio-political occasion (possibly one of several similar occasions), at which there were to be a large number of guests present for the whole day, so that they would be given both a midday and an evening meal; the play was to accompany at least one of these meals, possibly with minstrelsy at the other.

However, I suggest that with this play we arrive at a landmark in English drama. In earlier plays, characters had been flat, and had fitted a moral/religious plot. With this play comes a major departure. In his second chapter on "people" in Aspects of the Novel (1927: 74), E M Forster has the following to say about characters:-

"...he prefers to tell his story about human beings; he takes over the life by values as well as the life of time. The characters arrive when invoked, but full of the spirit of mutiny... they try to live their own lives and are consequently often engaged in treason against the main scheme of the book. They `run away`, they `get out of hand`: ...if they are given complete freedom they kick the book to pieces..."

I believe Medwall found Lucres just such an independent character. The basic plot is that two men of ancient Rome, one a patrician of noble descent, but apparently given to riotous living, the other a man of virtue, offer themselves as suitors to the daughter of a rich senator. To suit the political purposes, the virtuous man must win her hand, while the riotous liver must be sent empty away.

In Denny (1973: 101), Bevington tells us that this changes the plot from that in Medwall's source, where Luces meekly leaves the issue with her father, and the outcome is not announced. This would not have suited the political purposes, since father Fulgens is of an older generation, and has always been a respecter of wealth and noble descent. It is more fitting that Luces, of the new generation, should make the choice herself.

Now if Luces is to choose the virtuous Flaminius, it is likely that she already knows (and prefers) him, but that she also realises that her father prefers the riotous Cornelius. To be realistic therefore, there must either be a struggle between father and daughter, or the latter must manipulate her father. The situation is something like that in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream where, it will be remembered, Egeus wants his daughter to marry Demetrius, while she prefers Lysander.

Medwall's purpose was far other than Shakespeare's, and he prefers to make Fulgens a little simplistic - as Shakespeare made Polonius in Hamlet, while Luces is a subtle young woman who knows her father's weaknesses, and how to manipulate him. Her subtlety needs space in which to work itself out, so the play cannot be too short. It seems likely that the minstrels had already been ordered for the evening, so Medwall used the lunch period to set the scene, and added a second part for the evening, incorporating the minstrels, for the denouement.

The play includes a subplot - which accounts for more than half of the first, long part - whose purpose is to provide amusement, to fill out stage time to match real time, and to hint at Lucre's well disguised subtlety in the main plot. The subplot involves the two algebraic characters A and B, who tie the two plots together, each seeking the favour of Lucre's maid Ancilla, who is also subtle in her own way.

The opening 200 lines are taken by A - apparently a stranger who has wandered in - and B, who is apparently a member of the household. These discuss the forthcoming play, giving the audience the subject matter, and even telling them who is going to win the fair lady's hand. They then appear to be mere spectators while Fulgen's discusses his feelings about Lucre's marriage, and while Cornelius enters to speak to him, giving some indication of his own character, and receiving assurance of Fulgen's preference for him.

There follows a brief passage in which A and B introduce themselves into the action of the play, after which comes another brief scene in which Lucre plays on her father's Polonius-like sense of being a righteous man, with so subservient an acquiescence in her father's judgement that he disclaims any intention of forcing her hand. She is now well on the way to gaining for herself an unassailable position (provided she plays the rest of the game correctly). She needs to take one more step to strengthen her position further.

In her dealings with Gayus Flaminius (lines 484 - 574), she coquets to draw a greater expression of warmth from him (she is a great heiress after all, wanting to be wanted for herself, and to be sure it is diffidence, not indifference, that causes his very modest approach). She lets him know (lines 556 - 560) that she favours him; but she is cautious to suggest that it still depends on her father's goodwill - she does not want him to spoil the game through overconfidence.

She leaves the scene shortly after this, but Gayus stays on to speak with A. This allows the audience to compare his modesty favourably with the impression made by Cornelius in speaking with Fulgens (lines 292 - 359).

At line 685, not quite half way through the first part, Gayus leaves, and the subplot begins, involving A and B, with Ancilla (maid). This subplot also shows a girl with two (both dishonourable) suitors, whom she too knows how to handle. In lines 923 - 927, she shows she has a very clear idea of what she is entitled to look for in a husband, in her station in life:-

"We must fyrst of the price agre,
For who some ever shall have me,
I promes you fayt(h)fully,
He shall me fyrst assure
Of twenty pound londe in joyncture."

Having thus drawn B into showing his true colours, she is willing to join in badinage and teasing, especially after A makes his appearance, until she makes fools of both; then, like her mistress, she shows she has already made her choice (neither of them, but a third party), in lines 1221/2:-

"Mary, I am sure to another man
Whose wyfe I intende to be."

During this first part, the audience may well not have noticed Lucre's manipulation of her father - and in different kind, of Flaminius. They will probably realise there is a message in the play, but will have set the question aside to be amused at the subplot. Even though they may well not visualise the pointer that the subplot represents, the general concept of a woman's manipulation of men will have been conjured into their minds, to linger there till the second part of the play.

In the second part, Lucre enters a quarter of the way through the total lines, and leaves only at the seven-eighths mark. This represents more stage time than it seems, since it includes the minstrelsy, which was presumably organised for the benefit of the guests, but which in the action of the play becomes an extravagant gesture by Cornelius for her amusement.

Of the 273 lines 433 - 705 she has only three, which allows us to look at six pages of script with only one momentary speech, and might lead us to underrate her part. The long speeches of the suitors are in fact directed at her for her approbation, so that she is more important in the action than the speakers themselves. Her three lines form an interruption, chiding Cornelius when he mildly attacks Flaminius. Interestingly, she does not interrupt Flaminius in turn, who lashes out far more viciously at his rival (lines 630ff):-

"Your lyfe is so voluptuouse and so bestiall
In followynge of every lust sensuall...
Hys grete othys, and open mayntenaunce
Of theftis and murdres every day,
Also hys ryotouse disportis and play,
Hys sloth, hys cowardy, and other excesse,
Hys mynde disposed to all unclennesse -
By these thyngs oonly he shall have noblenesse....

Lucrece not only refrains from interfering, but when Cornelius, having waited patiently for Flaminius to close, ventures to protest, she brushes his protest aside. She has made up her mind long before the debate, but she handles possible difficulties with Cornelius diplomatically, by saying she will "enquyre as fast as I may what the commune fame wyll thereyn report" (lines 725/6), after Flaminius gave her the cue by saying "As for my parte, I wyll stonde gladly to the commune voyce of all the contrey" (lines 720/1). Cornelius, secure in the knowledge that his ancestry will stand him in good stead with most people, agrees (only to be foiled by her not keeping her word).

Now let us consider rapport - and here I feel we must look at both dramatic and political rapport, which interact. One might argue that Lucrece is an artful minx, and while one might have sympathy with her situation, deceitfulness on her part would in some measure weaken that sympathy. The subplot becomes relevant here.

In the subplot, both 'suitors' have dishonourable intentions, so that one accepts Ancilla's behaviour towards them.

Having accepted, and even applauded the treatment Ancilla meted out to A and B, the audience would be more in the mood to applaud Lucres for her success also. This is of some importance politically, for we can see a purpose in encouraging the belief that the old nobility deserved bad treatment at the hands of the rising men.

We must suppose the audience included many who were flattered to be bidden to the great man's table, and who saw a glittering career ahead for themselves in Morton's entourage. Those at least who were more concerned with their careers than with their consciences would be easy to persuade, but anything that put apparent right on their side would make it easier for them. Moreover, when such men are drawn into a scheme in which they have been deliberately suppressing their consciences, they find it difficult to withdraw later, because this would involve the admission that their consciences had not been entirely clean.

By this policy, weakening any voice of conscience by an argument that suggests the old nobility were bestial and deserved maltreatment, a virtue can even be made of necessity, and I believe both Morton and Medwall recognised this.

There are other points we should notice: Cawley (1983: xxxvi) tells us that there is a record of the play being acted at Christmas 1497, which means midwinter. This is a season when opulence (such as Morton's) can be more impressive than usual, with roaring fires for warmth, and brilliant light from myriads of candles.

To the sycophantic type of audience I have suggested, the memory they would carry away from this day with Morton, would be one of good food, moral support, warmth and a generally brilliant occasion, emphasised the more in their minds by having then to make their way to their own (inferior) homes through a bleak midwinter evening.

I see it as part of a whole day's programme, aimed at bringing the audience into rapport not only with the play, but also with participating in Morton's ambitions. In this, I feel I have shown that the play was well designed to instill its own share of the rapport.

In the final chapter, I draw some conclusions from the discussions above of the various plays.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

I have aimed at achieving empathy so far as possible with the audiences of medieval drama, and to show that this gives us insight into the structures of various genres of these plays; to show in fact, that they exhibit quite significant dramatic skills in achieving rapport with their audiences, far beyond what has been suspected until comparatively recently.

I feel it would be fair to say that earlier critical attention to medieval plays baulked at the effort required to put oneself into the shoes of the original audiences; also that it had been customary to look at drama chiefly in Aristotle's terms, with plot, character and the other appurtenances, as the determining factors in dramatic assessment, rather than to look at it as a matter of artistic communication with an audience.

With this rigid approach, and with (normally) 'flat' characters, the plays would inevitably have been regarded by modern critics as dramatically uninteresting. It is only when we begin to look at literature as communication within the structure of language and human experience, that we find ourselves able to see the genuine dramatic qualities the plays possess.

Modern producers of these plays were quick to start getting to grips with these realities concerning drama, although I have not read anything that suggests they are more than on the fringe of relating these to the predispositions of medieval audiences.

The modern producer naturally has to give first priority to pleasing the actual modern audience. Peter Happé's Mystery Plays and the modern audience comes nearest to my point, in which he discusses the fact that we cannot entirely recreate the dramatic experience of the medieval audience because our own audiences live in a different age (although some interesting experiments in production have been tried).

In my assessment of these plays, I believe I have been able to throw a little extra light onto this area, and certainly I have convinced myself that the medieval audiences had very real dramatic experiences from attending these performances; also that the plays gave the players scope which they availed themselves of, to display considerable histrionic skill, which modern actors should not despise (even though Shakespeare does speak of "it out-herods Herod" in Hamlet Act III Scene II).

Consider the cycle play audience. One aspect for them was the element of an annual excitement, such as a modern congregation may get from an annual fête, but there was much more to it than that. For one thing, a large proportion of the time was taken up in watching the actual plays, whereas at a fête one moves around and talks to everyone during the day; the plays had to carry 'the heat and burden of the day', in captivating the attention in such measure that the audience would feel they had enjoyed and profited from a day that was one of the major highlights of the year.

The cycle offered something further to its audience, in that it reviewed and summarised the whole church year - and the whole Christian message - all in a single day, giving it a much stronger sense of coherence; compare this with the modern church-goer who, unless exceptionally devout - has only the twice yearly impulses of Christmas and Easter to give the same sense of cycle.

It is when we go beyond this to look at the direct rapport the audience feels with the action, that we sense how great an experience it all is for them. When the divine personages present themselves, fall into disharmony, and the duality of good and evil comes into being, for example; to an audience leading a less media-distracted life than we do, these things come across as being essential - if seldom clearly envisaged - ingredients of life. For perhaps fifteen minutes they are enthralled and transported away from their normal preoccupations, while the concept they hold of naughtiness-and-chastisement/ crime-and-punishment becomes incarnate before them. Then after a pause, comes the next play.

That the action is something they see every year does not detract from its effectiveness (after all, we have only to remember that television goes on being watched, even though what is basically the same limited set of stories is repeated so regularly!). In the case of television in fact, the repetition goes so far as to generate an addiction, leaving the victimised mind feeling uncomfortable when deprived of this diet.

The point I am making is that this exaggerated example of repetitiveness that television gives us, indicates that these impressions fade from the mind, so that there is room for the same impression to be renewed at reasonable intervals, coming always afresh. In the case of the cycle plays, coming only once a year, and tied closely to the ordinary seasonal cycle, there is likely to be a reinforcing effect, rather like that of successive synchronous pushes on a swing.

Aristotle wrote of tragedy evoking pity and fear, and so leading to catharsis. It is easy not to notice this in the cycle scripts, although it becomes perhaps possible to look for it once we begin to accept that the individual plays achieved very real rapport with the audience.

In this connection, we note that K.P.Roddy (1973: 155ff) discusses epic qualities in cycle plays. He quotes E.M.W.Tillyard as establishing four epic characteristics: high seriousness, amplitude and breadth, a sense of controlling will, and a representation of the feelings of the people. I prefer to look at the York cycle as a whole: can we find an equivalent value to Aristotle's in this?

Certainly, for the practising Christian the cycle concerns the very highest seriousness; its amplitude and breadth are universal; God's controlling will shines through the whole; and the people must respond with their deepest feelings. If rapport is indeed achieved, as I have suggested in this study, then it

seems to follow that we have here (in potential at least) the very grandest epic of all. The structure, from the moment when the audience realises with a shock that it has totally lost sight of the fact that it is Christ whom the soldiers were nailing to the cross, builds up steadily towards the last judgement - with no certainty of salvation for those watching. As a dramatic emotional experience, it has the potential to be almost incomparable. It is definitely not "brown and grubby"!

Turning to Mankind, we see a play which was very poorly regarded before it came to be produced in Toronto in 1966; this information is from Neuss (1973: 41/42), who quotes J Quincy Adams:-

"The moral element is reduced to a minimum, and even the sole representative of good, Mercy, is deliberately made fun of with his ponderous Latinistic diction, and his saccharine talk; the humour becomes at times exceedingly vulgar; and the literary skill of the writer is unusually poor".

This is a monumental misjudgement.

What is handled very skillfully is the concept embodied in Matthew 7.13-14:-

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it".

Before Mankind has even put in his appearance, the mischievous characters behave riotously, and are cast out, departing with the line "Go we hence, a devil way! Here is the door, here is the way" (lines 158/9). In the days of the Latin bible, many odd phrases must have become familiar in translation, used in sermons and exhortations, and it seems highly probable the audience would have picked up this reference, bringing them into rapport with the action. They understand that the choice between the gate of destruction and the strait gate is open to free will.

The play had opened with Mercy's opening address, which I believe the actor would have spoken mellifluously, and not ponderously as Quincy Adams states. The scurrilous entrance of Mischief poses the challenge - does one choose the superficially attractive wide gate, or the wiser strait gate? The audience is not pressurised into taking sides, as in the Victorian 'improving tale', but is exposed to the temptation to take the wrong side.

An audience with the predispositions we must expect of them, would feel very intrigued to be put into this 'dangerous' situation, and would sit on the fence, fully wrapped up in what was unfolding before them; there would not be mere passive amusement at scatology, but consciousness of challenge. The fact of continually pulling oneself up to avoid being committed to the wrong side (and wondering how other members of the audience are reacting, so as not to be 'odd man out', ensures full rapport.

I have suggested that Shakespeare was familiar with this play, and chose to use its possibilities in representing Hal in Henry IV Part 1; MeikleJohn (1896: 230) refers to this:-

"Shakespeare has, in his representation of the young Prince of Wales, induced among English people the belief that he was an extravagant, reckless roysterer..."

If I am right, Shakespeare himself experienced the full measure of rapport the play offers, and saw how others also experienced it; I feel this is a strong enough probability to be worth quoting as a support for my case.

The audience I visualise for Everyman were probably prosperous, and would have been likely to have consciences that were rather thick skinned; however, they would have taken their religion seriously, and would have an at least mildly intellectual attitude towards it. Nonetheless, they would have been sincere about it, and would have welcomed help to recognise more fully their own faults. This I believe the play gave them.

They were a very different audience from the Mankind audience: they would very soon send the mischievous crew packing; Tutuvillus would have to whisper something much more subtle in their ears - and he does of course, through their worldly seriousness. Not for them scurrility and heedlessness of God; but they are worried about how their balance sheets will look when their time comes.

The moral message is the same - "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" by all means, but absolutely render "unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22.21). For the Mankind audience, the distractions are largely sloth, and lack of attention given to living a properly organised life. For the Everyman audience, it is rather living a life that is too well organised, but which loses sight of higher things in turning too much to material things.

For the first, the message is conveyed by showing how the primrose path leads to the everlasting bonfire; for the second by a violent shock, which is the more effective because they have allowed their minds to run into a groove. In each case the folly of valuing too highly the wrong things is brought home, by projecting what is wrong in doing so, in terms that arouse rapport with their own way of life.

In Johan Johan we see the projection of something very different: what is being subliminally addressed here is the political thought in which the minds of the audience are engaged. The basic structural features of this thought are cast into a simplistic mould, where some of the rational conclusions to which they point are laid bare, that have remained obscure in the complexities of their normal context. The mind of the audience, in pursuing both sets of thoughts, finds resonances, and so promotes rapport with the play because it gels with the political thinking of each section of the audience.

Although there is a didactic element in this, which would probably be resented if recognised, the playwright's skill is to represent the basic ideas in what Eagleton's Formalists (1983: 3/4) would call a 'defamiliarised' setting. I have said that the original French version appeared to me to set the situation up as a conversation piece - almost as a sort of Doll's house in which a continuing human interaction is encapsulated. Heywood's version does the same thing, but in a very different mood setting, which brings the members of the audience into closer rapport.

When we look at Fulgens and Lucrez, we find what might have been a (rather biased) intellectual debate, defamiliarised in a different manner. The association with the idea of a girl choosing a suitor was a sympathetic defamiliarising step; but Medwall's Lucred was not content to be a flat, dehumanised personage of debate. An artful minx, having - whether for the right or wrong reason - made the right choice, sets about manipulating events to get her own way.

It was a very effective defamiliarising step, though one suspects Medwall was forced into it by Lucrez, rather than that he had rationalised it out beforehand; this perhaps made it all the more successful. Some of the early developments in the making of films, such as close-ups and dividing a film into sequences, also came this way, brought in by the exigencies of the immediate problem; the skill lies in recognising what has been achieved, and how to repeat the essence of it.

I feel that my approach here - not entirely novel of course, but conditioned by deliberately trying to achieve empathy with the audiences for whom the plays were written - does show that this branch of our literary heritage has been underrated, and that it deserves closer study.

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