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**FLESH AND SPIRIT ONSTAGE:  
CHRONOTOPES OF PERFORMANCE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH THEATRE**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by

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B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987

M.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1990

May 2004

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Rather like a surprise winner of an Academy Award, I find myself in the embarrassing position of having too many people to thank and not enough time. If I were Peter Jackson, I could simply thank all the people of New Zealand and be done with the whole thing. But since that is not an option in this case, I'd like to thank my own ring of lords and ladies who helped me get to this point.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study uses Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope, which is the informing principle of one's experience of space and time, to explore different relations among space, time, actors, and audience in medieval theatre. Relations between the material and spiritual worlds as understood in the Middle Ages are considered in the context of relations between performers and audience members with two goals. First, I explore how the ontological status of the metaworld created through performance changed in the context of specific chronotopes. Second, I explore how diverse religious discourses affected medieval modes of representation.

This study posits three chronotopes of performance informing medieval theatrical experience. In the sacramental chronotope, disciplined bodies moved through spiritual geographies in Latin liturgical dramas to bring participants into contact with an ontologically superior divine world. The consubstantial chronotope operated from an ontology of self-sufficiency locating power in the individual's body rather than in a superior being. Within the consubstantial chronotope, performance, and representation more generally, was understood as a tool for the contemplation of ideas rather than as a vehicle for bringing performers into contact with an ontologically substantive world.

The transubstantial chronotope works within an ontology of community that constructs performances as sites of cultural contestation and engagement. The communal mystery plays performed on Corpus Christi day in medieval England created a space and time for communicative bodies to tell shared narratives in a ritual effort to strengthen, purify, and heal souls. Performance within the transubstantial chronotope was uniquely open to metalinguistic and dialogic play, allowing the imaginative metaworld of the

performance to function as innerly persuasive discourse possessing its own ontological weight and agency.

Having explored these three chronotopes, this study examines the heterochronotopic quality of medieval English morality plays. I conclude with an analysis of a recent production of the Chester mystery cycle, Yimmimungaliso: The Mysteries. Using a variety of different languages in performance, as well as different languages *of* performance, this production evoked something of the transubstantial chronotope of medieval England.

## CHAPTER 1

### CHRONOTOPIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN PERFORMANCE

#### Three Preludes

##### **One: The late tenth century; an English monastery**

It is around two o'clock on Easter morning, the celebration of our Risen Lord. The air is dark and chilly, and a bit damp, as I rise from my monastic cell, pull on my scratchy robes, and tramp over muddy ground until I reach the church. It is Matins, the first office of the day, and today's office is a special one. The bells of the abbey have called me to this service, joyfully announcing a change in the world. Throughout the previous Passion week, "the church was progressively stripped of its finery and darkened" (Harris 29). By Good Friday the church had become a cemetery with one buried soul—a cross representing our Lord Jesus, which was "laid in the 'sepulchre' [near the altar, and then] an actual burial ceremony was pronounced over it" (Harris 29). The world grew dark this week, a single Paschal candle illuminating the church as a symbol of the darkened world redeemed only by the promise of the Saviour's resurrection. And now that resurrection has come.

I walk with others in procession around the altar, now lit with seven sacred candles, the bells still pealing. The procession travels around the church, eventually returning to the curtained structure to the side of the altar that serves as the "sepulchre" of Christ on this day. As has been the case for years now, that which Ethelwold wrote in his Regularis Concordia determines what happens next:

While the third lesson is being recited, let four brethren vest themselves; of whom let one, wearing an alb, enter as if on other business, and go unobtrusively to the place of the sepulchre, and there, holding a palm in his hand, let him sit quietly. While the third responsory is being sung, let

the remaining three follow, all of them vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense; and haltingly, in the manner of seeking for something, let them come before the place of the sepulchre. (Bevington, Medieval Drama 27)

I glance over at one of the novices, who seems pleasantly surprised by the sudden shift as the formerly “unobtrusive” brother stands and becomes part of the ceremony.

This brother, bearing the symbol of God’s heavenly host in his hand, now takes the role of the angel at Jesus’ tomb. He begins to sing “in a sweet and moderate voice”: “*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, o Christicolae?*” (“Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?”). To which the three seekers respond, “*Ihesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicola*” (Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, O heaven-dweller”). The heaven-dweller joyfully replies, “*Non est hic...*” (He is not here). Our Lord is risen, and songs rise to announce his triumph (Bevington, Medieval Drama 27). And through my participant-observation of this service, I have both witnessed the divine miracle and announced that miracle to the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Two: The early fifteenth century, York, England**

Spring has come to York, yet the afternoon air is still crisp, and a low gray sky hovers over Micklegate Road. Rain has threatened the Corpus Christi pageant throughout the day, but thus far, no drops have fallen and the pageant has been most enjoyable. I am one of the fortunate souls to have paid for a good seat at the fourth station, the one near St. John’s church, just before the rise of the Ouse Bridge that the wagon-handlers must struggle over. I take another sip of ale as I hear applause coming from the third station. Soon the pageant telling the story of Christ’s crucifixion will be here. Someone to my left in the stands mutters, “About time!” But this wait is a familiar

one; I have actually come to enjoy the little breaks that come between performances when one of the wagons begins to lag behind. It's certainly better than when two pageants sit at one station together, with all the fuss of the next pageant taking attention away from the one currently in performance.

At last the wagon arrives, and the players begin to set up. The crowd on the streets gathers around the wagon in anticipation. From behind the wagon appear four men dressed as soldiers escorting another man dressed in ragged white robes. I recognize the man in the robes as Geoff, one of the local ironmongers who has done some good work for me in the past. Now, however, he is bullied up onto the wagon by four brutish clods. The soldiers discuss their cruel assignment while Christ stands mute; then, after a brief prayer to the Father, Christ willingly lays down on the cross for our sins.

What follows next horrifies some, but prompts stifled laughter from others. The soldiers stupidly struggle to stretch Christ's body to fit the holes notched into the cross. From my seat near the bottom of the stands, I can't see Geoff lying on the cross, but I can see the soldiers "working" on him, stretching him, sweating and swearing as they drive the nails into his flesh. The soldiers then comically strain to raise the cross, arguing over who should take what tasks and complaining that their backs will break before the cross is raised.

Then it happens. The cross sinks into the mortise provided for it on the pageant wagon, and Christ hangs on the cross looking down upon me. And He has something to say to me: "All men that walk by way or street,/ Take tent ye shall no travail tine! (Take heed that you miss none of my suffering)" (The Crucifixion 253-254; Beadle and King

220). I have been “caught,” guilty of watching—and even enjoying—the crucifixion of Our Lord.

I take another sip of ale and say a little prayer for my soul.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Three: The late fifteenth century, an English nobleman’s great hall**

Christmas cheer fills the great hall as I take a seat at a table near the deliciously warm central fireplace. I am eagerly awaiting the evening’s entertainment, which among other events features an interlude by Henry Medwall. I know the players must be somewhere about—probably hidden behind the screens at the end of the hall—and I glance around and over several heads to see if I can glimpse one of them. Seeing no one but other revelers trooping into the hall, I spear a piece of mutton with my knife and content myself with good food and good wine.

Then, slowly, like a wave settling rather than rising, the hall grows quiet, the silence and muffled coughs moving from the screens at the far end of the hall through to the high table at the other end. Heads turn as a young man struts imperiously into the hall, surveying the seated crowd, occasionally encouraging folks to make room for him, carving a path that leads to within a few feet of the high table. Once there, he silently paces out a ring, all eyes rapt upon him as he pokes and prods those sitting there to move away, creating a small empty space. Once there, he smiles and shouts, “For Goddis will,/ What mean ye, syrs, to stond so still?/ Have ye now etyn and your fill,/ And paid nothinge therfore?” (Fulgens and Lucre I.1-4; Creeth 5) After praising the host for the gift of such a fine feast, the young man berates the assembly for their apparent lethargy: “But I mervayle moche of one thinge,/ That after this mery drynkyng/ And good

recreacyon/ There is no words amonge this presse” (Fulgens and Lucret I.14-17; Creeth  
5)

Laughter spreads around the hall. The man is a player, of course, speaking to us as if he, too, were waiting for the entertainment to begin. Indeed, when another unnamed man enters the cleared space, the first speaker questions him with false naiveté: “Shall here be a play?” (Fulgens and Lucres I.37; Creeth 6). As the play proceeds and we are introduced to the story of Lucres, who must choose between two suitors, these same two young men continue to comment on the action of the play as if they were audience members. That is, they do so until the moment when one of the men decides to do more than merely watch the play as a passive spectator by speaking with one of the characters:

B: Now have I spied a mete office for me,  
For I wyl be of counsell and I may  
With yonder man--

A: Peace, let be!  
Be God, thou wyll distroy all the play!

B: Destroy the play, quod a? Nay, nay,  
The play began never till now. (Fulgens and Lucre I.360-365,  
Creeth 15)

More laughter erupts. “The joke is based on the motif of the naïve member of the audience who doesn’t realize the difference between theatre and real life” (Twycross 75). As an experienced theatergoer, however, I know well the difference between theatre and real life. From the satisfied smiles all around the fire lit hall, I become certain that Medwall has authored a great success.

## “Just a Play”?

In the first of these preludes, the tenth century *Visitatio Sepulchri* from St. Ethelwold's Regularis Concordia, we see a play that is not a play—at least, not in the minds of the participants. Understood in the context of the Easter week services, the



*Visitatio* allows for the demonstration—not re-creation—of events from the Bible, events that in the minds of the viewers were history. The religious service commemorates those events, rejoices in those events, but never intends to duplicate or re-present those events. The four brothers remain brothers throughout, rather than becoming divine characters through mimesis, and the transformative, otherworldly qualities experienced during the service are attributable to the divine spiritual presence in the church. Nothing Godly need be embodied in this “play”; God is always already present in His House.

The other two preludes reflect a more “play-ful,” metatheatrical approach which draws the audience into an awareness of their own involvement in the process of making a play. The Crucifixion prelude, taken from the Biblical cycle of pageant plays staged in York starting in the late fourteenth century, presents the crucified Christ ostensibly admonishing the four soldiers who have finished their gruesome work to take heed of his suffering. In the context of performance for an audience, however, this speech also serves to admonish the men and women on the street watching the play, reminding them that His sacrifice was for *their* souls as well. Indeed, Christ’s words chasten this audience: “an onlooker’s silent complicity in what has gone before precipitates a guilty sense of implication in the Crucifixion” (Beadle 101).

In the passage from Medwall’s late fifteenth century interlude, the two characters “A” and “B” have presented themselves throughout the performance as audience members rather than players. Now, caught up in the action of the play, “B” decides to speak with Cornelius, one of the characters in the play. “A” chastises “B” for threatening to disrupt the fictional world, whereupon “B” asserts that his involvement in that world is precisely what “makes” the play.

More thoughtful consideration of the context of these two passages, however, reveals two very different relationships between the fictive metaworld of the play and the world of the audience members. In a general way one might argue that when a performer and his/her words “reach out” from the fictive metaworld of performance to speak directly to the world of the audience, two major effects can occur. The audience can either be reminded that the performance is “just a play,” or the audience can come to see the performance as “more than just a play.” Or perhaps, to avoid a hierarchy, we might say on the one hand that a metatheatrical moment can *void* the fictive metaworld of its ontological force for the spectator, granting more or less full interpretive authority to the spectator as the one who “makes” the play. On the other hand, a metatheatrical moment can also *enhance* the ontological force of the fictive metaworld, granting that metaworld authority to “speak to” the spectator in a manner that is, if not “more than” a play, then certainly at least “other than” a play or game.

Imagining oneself in the place of a Christian man or woman on the streets of York, especially at a time when plague is devouring the entire country, one might imagine that having Jesus personally address one would be a sobering point of contact between the divine and the mundane. While the power of Christ’s address in this performance derives in part from his violation of the supposed distance between the events of the play and the present time/space of the audience, the effect of this address is to erase that divide, to bring the viewer into contact with divine presence. While there is a certain kind of “play” going on in Christ’s address, this game is deadly earnest because of the contact between two worlds—the audience’s and Christ’s—which are *both* presumed to be “real.” The audience is watching “more (or other) than just a play,”

where each world has ontological substance for the other and can actively challenge the other.

Medwall's play, however, offers modern audiences a comfortable, reasonably familiar form of boundary breaking. For him, the play is "mere" game, and the interaction between audience and actor is conditioned both by the rules of that game and by his cleverness in subverting those rules/roles. Granted, some moralizing and chastising occurs in Fulgens and Lucres—after all, the play functions as a secular version of a morality play, encouraging nobles (including those who might be attending the play) to behave more nobly. Yet the point of contact here is between two worlds of different ontological status. The "real world" of the audience retains power over the "illusory world" of the performance. It is the interpretive effort of the audience that "makes" the world of the play in Fulgens and Lucres; without the audience's willing interaction, the world that "A" and "B" inhabit would disappear. While both Christ's crucifixion and B's determination to become part of the play might be described as metatheatrical, the moral admonitions of Medwall's plays have a different force than the force behind the words of the Christ crucified in York.

The differences between these various audience-actor relationships reminds us that to use the term "metatheatrical" is to presume certain generic conventions of "theatricality" that may not be uniformly applicable in the context of early English theatre. In particular, our contemporary sense of "metatheatrical" implies clear expectations about the distinctiveness of actor and audience roles, expectations that can then be violated by "breaking the fourth wall" or otherwise confusing the boundary between these roles. In medieval England, however, there appear to have been several

competing conceptions of the relations among space, time, actors, and audience—just as there are several such competing conceptions in contemporary theatre. In short, the concept of “playing” for an audience was as complex in the Middle Ages as it is today.<sup>1</sup>

This is a dissertation about playing. It is about the various ways in which plays and playing affect our understanding of space and time, and the ways in which our understanding of space and time affect our playing. To study early English theatre as playing requires us to look beyond and through the surviving texts to the bodies at play, the audience and performers who play with (or play against, or play about) each other. In an evolutionary model of Western theatre history, certain theatrical practices of medieval Europe can be regarded as naive efforts to recover the greatness of classical Greek and Roman theatre—faltering steps toward the brilliance of Renaissance theatre and the eventual development of psychological realism. Recent research efforts, driven in large part by an interest in the phenomenological impact of the pageant plays as live events, have suggested that the Corpus Christi plays and other religious theatrical events of the Middle Ages possess a unique and compelling power of their own.

While often derided as immature texts when considered as literature, this religious theatre appears in a different light when embodied and given flesh. The fullest possible appreciation of early English theatrical forms comes only when such plays are experienced as live—and *living*—events occurring within a community. Glynne Wickham documents the profound impact of live staging on the scholarly community’s understanding of medieval theatre in his discussion of the revelatory effects of the first twentieth century productions of the York cycle:

Audiences and critics alike who witnessed these performances were astonished. In an almost literal sense, those who had come to gaze, even

to mock, stayed to pray.[... T]he speed and efficacy of the stagecraft had proved to be as compelling and convincing as was the power of the spoken text to stir imaginations and to move hearts to both laughter and tears. Such plays could no longer be dismissed as historical curiosities: rather did they cry out to be reassessed as living theatre. (“Introduction” 5)

Moreover, live performances of medieval theatre have been steadily gaining appreciative audiences, not only among scholars but among the public generally, as “performances of medieval plays ranging from cycles to single moralities, saint plays and interludes are so frequently on offer to the public as no longer to occasion surprise; nor do large audiences who pay to attend these performances continue to regard the plays themselves as ‘quaint’ or ‘naïve’” (Wickham, “Introduction” 10).

Sheila Lindenbaum’s description of the well-known 1977 University of Toronto production of the York Corpus Christi cycle illustrates the eye-opening effects of live performance on our understanding of medieval theatre:

The effect created, at least at Toronto, was a rich and fluid theatrical environment. As the brilliantly colored wagons made their way around the stations, and the actors appeared in a seemingly endless display of medieval costumes ranging from royal regalia to shepherd’s weeds, one could sense much of the visual excitement of a medieval spectacle. Part of the audience crowded into the stands and a few perched in the windows of surrounding buildings, as records indicate they did in medieval York. They could also walk from station to station to see a pageant a second time, and many did this for the popular Harrowing of Hell. The line that separated the actors from the audience was therefore constantly shifting. The audience was pushed back by the soldiers in the Passion sequence and raided by the devils in The Day of Judgement; the actors’ space was invaded in turn by curious spectators, photographers, and the many children and stray animals who failed to distinguish the dramatic performance from the larger festival event. (202)

Live performance illuminated a variety of relations of space and time, of audience and actors, and of words and images that would otherwise be lost when considering the surviving texts of medieval plays as literary products.

In contemporary productions, the act of performing medieval theatre “can be seen to fulfil one of its original purposes in bringing together a community of participants and spectators in celebration of God and City” (Marshall 291). Indeed, Marshall attributes the increased appeal of medieval theatre today among scholars, performers, and everyday theatre-goers to the experience of such theatre as a live event: “There is clearly something in the nature and structure of medieval drama and its relationships with community and audience that generates popular appeal” (292). An analysis of the relations among space, time, audience, and actors in performance keeps us focused on those “relationships with community and audience” that generate much of the appeal of early English theatre.

By examining different conceptions of the relations among space, time, actors, and audience in early English theatre, we can explore how these relationships impacted the audience’s phenomenal experience of these performances. While live performance offers perhaps the richest phenomenal understanding of these plays as theatre, it is also possible to use New Historical research techniques, along with a healthy dose of imagination, to develop a more profound appreciation of the kinds of experiences medieval theatergoers might have had. My goal in this study is to describe the unique relationships of time and space that informed the phenomenal experience of participating in different forms of early English theatre. We may best understand the relations among these various medieval performance forms through the critical/analytical tool of Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotope, which examines how space and time are made real within and thus inform lived experience.

I will identify three significant chronotopes of early English theatre: the sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial chronotopes. As their names imply, each chronotope is informed by the pervasive influence of Christianity on medieval English life. Yet each chronotope regards religion, spirituality, and faith differently due to distinct conceptions of space and time. In some early English performance chronotopes, for instance, space includes invisible spiritual entities, while in other chronotopes such entities are ignored or ruled out. In some chronotopes, time functions like an endless spiral, always touching upon and being touched by previous events, full of foreshadowing and prefiguration. In other chronotopes, time is more straightforwardly linear, driven relentlessly forward by the ticking of the clock (Morson 42-81).

Bakhtin characterizes the chronotope not as a description of objective space and time (although such space and time are included in the concept of the chronotope) but rather as a phenomenological frame for making sense of lived experience. As Morson and Emerson note:

In a primary sense, a chronotope is a way of understanding experience; it is a specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and actions[...]. Actions are necessarily performed in a specific context; chronotopes differ by the ways in which they understand context and the relation of actions and events to it. All contexts are shaped fundamentally by the kind of time and space that operate within them. (367)

Viewing early English theatre through the lens of Bakhtin's chronotope helps us engage the phenomenological experience of performance. Considering various relations among bodies in space and time enriches our understanding of the experience of early English theatre by helping us to avoid anachronistic misreadings of these performance forms. Describing specific chronotopes of medieval performance can help us to reconstruct the

grounds for representability that would have informed a medieval townspeople's meaning-making process during performance.

The remainder of this chapter will therefore define the concept of the chronotope as it will be applied here and then discuss a variety of means available for accessing the chronotopic consciousness of participants in early English theatre. In the second chapter, I will explore various aspects of medieval experience that inform all three of the chronotopes under discussion. The following three chapters will then explore each chronotope in detail, moving from the sacramental chronotope to what might be considered its polar opposite, the consubstantial chronotope, and then concluding with the transubstantial chronotope, which to some extent synthesizes the other two. The final chapter will address the implications of these chronotopes for contemporary performance theory and practice.

### Space and Time in Performance

In order to define these three chronotopes of performance, we must first consider the nature of the chronotope in general. As Morson and Emerson point out, Bakhtin never offers a precise definition of the term "chronotope" (366). Perhaps one of the more straightforward descriptions that Bakhtin offers of the term, however, comes in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel":

We cannot help but be strongly impressed by the *representational* importance of the chronotope. Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins. An event can be communicated, it becomes information[...]. It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. (*Dialogic* 250, emphasis in original)



Here we see the chronotope described as a phenomenological framework. It functions as the informing principle that makes representation possible within narratives. For a narrative to convey acts, those acts must have a temporal/spatial context that enables those acts and which, as we shall see later, in fact conditions what acts occur and what meanings are made of them.

Reading those essays where Bakhtin specifically address the chronotope, it would be easy to misinterpret the concept in two ways. The first misinterpretation would be to regard chronotopes merely as tools for categorizing novels. In “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” and in his “*Bildungsroman*” essay, Bakhtin describes various chronotopes largely in terms of the typical plot lines they generate. This is especially true of the chronotope of the “adventure novel of ordeal,” for which both essays offer “a typical composite schema” of the plot line associated with this chronotope (*Dialogic* 87).

Yet chronotopes are not merely structuralist “distillations” of plot-forms abstracted from the specific telling of a given story. “Chronotopes are not so much visibly *present* in activity as they are the *ground* for activity[...]. They are not contained in plots, but they make typical plots possible” (Morson and Emerson 369, emphasis in original). Bakhtin identifies those acts and their associated plot lines that various chronotopes enable and even encourage, but any given chronotope is not *composed of* those acts. Rather, each chronotope provides the context in which certain acts (and sequences of acts) are possible, likely, or even inevitable.

For instance, in the “adventure novel of ordeal” as described by Bakhtin, two lovers are inevitably parted by fate. But what defines the *chronotope* of that genre is *not* the separation of the lovers, but rather the relationships of space and time that make such

separation—and the lovers’ subsequent return to each other—inevitable (or at least extraordinarily likely). The temporal gap between the parting of the lovers and their marriage, for instance, requires a time/space configuration that does “not have even an elementary biological or maturational duration” (*Dialogic* 90). The presence of any biological or psychological growth would transform the lovers’ reunion from something joyous to something potentially comic or grotesque. Bakhtin points this out in his discussion of Voltaire’s *Candide*, which parodies the adventure novel of ordeal by reuniting the two lovers only “when they have already grown old, and the wondrous Cunegonde resembles some hideous old witch” (*Dialogic* 91).

For this reason, we should avoid merely rummaging through Bakhtin’s essays for simple “matches” between the chronotopes he identifies and the various plot lines of the early English theatrical narratives we will be examining here. In the essays where Bakhtin develops the concept of the chronotope, his primary purpose is not to develop a typology of novels. Rather, he seeks to develop a richer understanding of how novels conceptualize time and space and thus how various conceptions of time and space have developed throughout history. Bakhtin aims to examine the “process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature” (*Dialogic* 84), and each chronotope that he identifies assimilates different aspects of “real historical time and space” in different ways and to different degrees. For Bakhtin, “the evaluation of chronotopes was important to his project of understanding what historicity really is” (Morson and Emerson 372).

For Bakhtin, “real historicity” might be the fullest definition of the rich chronotopicity that he finds in the novel. Bakhtin describes this rich sense of history

most clearly in his analysis of Goethe's novels. As opposed to literary works that regard space and time as "abstract" background for the actions (and personalities) of the characters, in Goethe's novels,

[t]he locality became an irreplaceable part of the geographically and historically determined world, of *that* completely real and essentially visible world of human history, and the event became an essential and non-transferable moment in the time of this particular human history that occurred in this, and only in this, geographically determined human world. (Speech 50, emphasis in original)

This emphasis on real historicity relates to Bakhtin's project of situating the ethics of human acts in the specific "eventness" of what Bakhtin calls a "once-occurrent moment of being." For Bakhtin, acts are meaningful only when *not* abstracted from their context. As opposed to Kant's "categorical imperative," which situates ethics precisely in the abstract realm of generalizable laws that are (or "should be") true for all human beings in all times and places, Bakhtin grounds his ethics in the specific situatedness of once-occurrent moments of being. The richest grasp of historicity allows one to see how time and space shape acts, and vice-versa. Understood in this light, the chronotope, rather than serving simply as a tool for literary categorization, functions as the *ground* for ethical action, both in the novel and in life.

The second easy misinterpretation of the concept of the chronotope would be to regard it as a purely aesthetic phenomenon—that is, as a phenomenological framework for artistic narratives that does not relate to everyday lived experience. Yet this is precisely the opposite of Bakhtin's larger project of reuniting artistic and everyday experience. Indeed, in one of his earliest writings, Bakhtin announces that "Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my answerability" (Art 2). Bakhtin urges that the act of artistic creation be subject to the same ethical

answerability as are everyday acts. Furthermore, Bakhtin seeks out ways in which the chronotopes of artistic narratives interact with the chronotopes of everyday experience:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers. Of course this exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space. We might even speak of a special *creative* chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the unique life of the work. (Dialogic 254, emphasis in original)

An analysis of the chronotopes of early English theatre, therefore, will of necessity address the varied relationships between the “everyday space and time” of the audience and the “artistic space and time” that informs the various theatrical performances.

Through their careful analysis of the concept, Morson and Emerson have determined the most significant aspects of the chronotope (367-69). The concept of the chronotope assumes that space and time are fundamentally interconnected; they can be separated for the purpose of analysis, but as lived experience, space and time are “fused.” Perhaps Bakhtin’s most compelling description of this fusion comes in his analysis of Goethe’s understanding of space and time: “Goethe cannot and will not see or conceive of an locality, and natural landscape, as an abstract thing, for the sake of its self-sufficient naturalness, as it were. It must be illuminated by human activity and historical events” (Speech 38). The reverse is also true: if the stamp of human historical time is always written into space, then the stamp of space is always written into the pattern(s) of history and human activity. Geography determines what acts become creatively necessary for humans: “One sees the *essential* and *necessary* character of man’s historical activity. And if he wages wars, one can understand *how* he will wage them” (Bakhtin, Speech 38,

emphasis in original).<sup>2</sup> Space informs what events are possible in time; time imprints itself on space.

At any point in history, there are a variety of chronotopes available to help individuals make meaning out of experience, and we cannot assume that all aspects of the universe-as-experienced operate within the same chronotope. “Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships” (Dialogic 252). This fact suggests that various chronotopes push up against each other in lived experience; two people experiencing “the same” event in objective time might well do so through two quite different chronotopes. Think, for instance, of parents watching a child playing in a sports event; relations of space and time for the child playing on the field might be quite different from the space and time experienced by the parents sitting in the bleachers. Likewise, the various everyday chronotopes of, say, farming experience and the release from such chronotopes occasioned by the festival/carnival time associated with most medieval performances likely interacted in a variety of ways with the chronotopes that informed the metaworld(s) of those performances.

Bakhtin in fact regards multitemporality, or heterochrony, as the richest possible experience provided by the novel. The more dense and complex the chronotopic vision of the novel, the more appealing such a vision is for Bakhtin. Here again Goethe serves as Bakhtin’s prime example: “For him contemporaneity—both in nature and in human life—is revealed as an essential multitemporality: as remnants or relics of various stages and formations of the past and as rudiments of stages in the more or less distant future” (Speech 28). Goethe’s novels demonstrate the “ability to *see time*, to *read time*, in the

spatial whole of the world and, on the other hand, to perceive the filling of space not as an immobile background, a given that is completed once and for all, but as an emerging whole, an event” (Speech 25). This “emerging whole” consists of many diverse chronotopic elements, covering everything from time as revealed in natural processes such as the “growth of trees and livestock,” to time that reflects “vestiges of man’s creativity” such as “cities, streets, buildings, artworks,” and the like, to time that reflects the “socioeconomic contradictions” which are the “motive forces of development” within a given society (Speech 25). Moreover, just as the various languages of a novel or of social life can interact with each other dialogically, so chronotopes can interact with each other dialogically, as different forms of time and space “converse” with one another (Morson and Emerson 426). The richest possible articulation of experience, in Bakhtin’s view, involves seeing and making visible all these various chronotopes as they interact with one another and shape human Being.

Chronotopes also “may change over time in response to current needs; they are in fact, and in potential, *historical*” (Morson and Emerson 369, emphasis in original). Chronotopes assume a dynamic relationship with the society that is their broader context; ways of perceiving time and space are shaped by social-historical conditions while also shaping those social-historical conditions in turn. Chronotopes do not, however, inevitably disappear over time. Indeed, chronotopes resemble speech genres in that they often refuse to die despite the fact that we often forget the social conditions that brought these “lost” chronotopes into being in the first place: “This explains the simultaneous existence in literature of phenomena taken from widely separate periods of time” (Bakhtin, Dialogic 85). Just as utterances can be stripped of most, but not all, of their

original intent and context, as new speakers assimilate and appropriate those utterances, so too chronotopes can retain a residual sense of their original flavor while being stripped of much of their informing context and function. The task of recovering chronotopes—which is the central task of this thesis—thus involves reconstructing much of the original context and function of those chronotopes as one possibly can, in an effort to study something of the “living” chronotope, rather than the “dying” chronotope that has traveled through time to us.

A chronotope, then, is the informing principle of time and space that makes perception and interpretation possible at any given moment; chronotopes are the conditions that give rise to meaning-making. Furthermore, because “for Bakhtin all meaning entails evaluation, chronotopes also define parameters of value” (Morson and Emerson 369). The connection that Bakhtin draws between space/time and value can best be understood in light of his emphasis on the ethical act. Perhaps the central element of Bakhtin’s early work is his commitment to understanding human acts as immediately situated, unrepeatable events. Rather than retreating to abstract ethical principles, Bakhtin urges that the active *subjectum* should willingly and consciously “sign” his/her act, thus acknowledging his/her unique answerability for that act in that specifically situated moment. “The ought becomes possible for the first time where there is an acknowledgement of the fact of a unique person’s being from within that person; where this fact becomes a center of answerability—where I assume answerability for my own uniqueness, my own being” (Toward 42).

Bakhtin aims to resist the lure of “pretendership,” where the *subjectum* “writes away” his or her answerability for a given act by attributing it to some abstract principle

or imaginary generalized identity (Toward 40-49). One cannot, however, embrace one's answerability in any given moment *except from* within the context in which that act becomes meaningful. Indeed, temporal/spatial context defines the parameters of what acts are conceivable in any given instance. As Michael Inwood has observed in his analysis of Heidegger's phenomenological description of time, "Time is not just a series of nows. It is time for *doing* things *with* things" (86, emphasis added). Bakhtin likewise conceives of time and space in terms of the human acts that become possible in that time and space. As a result, the chronotope functions as a necessary unit of analysis for understanding value(s) and ethical action in any once-occurrent moment of being.

#### "Loud and Living Intonation" and Performance

It may at first seem unusual to use Bakhtin's language to describe theatrical performance, especially in light of his famous dictum that "loud and living intonation excessively monologizes discourse and cannot do justice to the other person's voice present in it" (Problems 198). Bakhtin was principally concerned with the performance of voices in written discourse—that is, with the play of "*disembodied* language[s] in the novel" (Suchy 170, emphasis in original). As Michael Bowman has noted, "while Bakhtin speaks of 'multi-voiced' discourse, he does not believe that the 'voices' can or should be represented orally[...]. In other words, print-typographic media allow an individual to perform more complex 'vocal' tricks than he or she could perform orally" (19). Performance, Bakhtin feared, "suppresses metalinguistic relations among the many voices present in one's speech" (Suchy 170).

We may, however, justifiably use Bakhtin's chronotope in this discussion of medieval performance for three reasons. First, while Bakhtin's project in developing the



concept of the chronotope was related to his larger project of identifying the uniquely rich chronotopicity of the novel (and, more broadly, of “novelness”), chronotopes can be and have been described for works that are clearly neither dialogic nor polyphonic and thus not “novel” in Bakhtin’s sense. In his efforts to chart the “process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature” (*Dialogic* 84), Bakhtin describes a variety of chronotopes which do not assimilate historical space and time as meaningfully as other, more novelistic forms. In and of themselves, chronotopes are neither novelistic nor not novelistic. Those chronotopes which are less novelistic are therefore not “less chronotopic” than the chronotope of Goethe’s *Bildungsroman* novels and of the Dostoevsky novels that Bakhtin celebrates.

Second, in the broadest sense, Bakhtin’s project is a search for the otherness present in our “own” speech:

By foregrounding the eventful personalism of speech, Bakhtinian metalinguistics demand that we attend to the intent of the speaker toward the otherness in his or her speech. That intent may range from monologic attempts to suppress otherness to restless, unfinalizable wrestling matches with the other’s embedded or addressed speech. (Suchy 170)

In medieval England, speakers often addressed themselves with a “sideways glance” toward more than the corporeal presences in their space and time: “Medieval people lived in a perceptual climate in which noncorporeal beings were a familiar and to some extent a manageable force, recognized alike by theology and popular culture” (Erickson 27). Thus the “otherness” embedded in medieval discourse was particularly rich in metalinguistic relations, as there were a myriad of other discourses, on both the material and the spiritual planes, to which one could attend. Exploring the sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial chronotopes can therefore help us explore ways in

which the speech of divine (and demonic) presences is embedded in or addressed by the speech of the performers and characters in theatrical performance.

Finally, no vocabulary more fully describes the phenomenological experience of medieval theatergoers than does the chronotope. It would, of course, be possible to address similar themes and issues without reference to Bakhtin's vocabulary—by, for instance, talking about the “sacramental (or consubstantial, or transubstantial) mindset” or the “sacramental (or consubstantial, or transubstantial) mode.” Doing so would, however, reduce the value of these concepts as phenomenological constructs. What becomes lost in the substitution of “mindset” or “mode” for “chronotope” is the human body moving through space and time. Bakhtin struggled to construct a vocabulary that would return bodies to seemingly disembodied language which in turn would ground his literary studies in the situated, moment-by-moment ethics of specific (if multiple) voices speaking from specific viewpoints. Paradoxically, then, the vocabulary of the chronotope that Bakhtin created for describing disembodied language is imminently suitable for describing the play of actual bodies interacting and performing.

In his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin recognized that the “complex problem of the listener-reader, his chronotopic situation and his role in *renewing* the work or art” needed to be addressed in order to explore more fully the ways in which “every literary work *faces outward away from itself*, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself” (Dialogic 257, emphasis in original). By exploring the space and time both of the represented world of performance and the world of the performers and audience members, this study investigates the

conversation between the performed world and the world of the “listener-reader,” with an eye toward the reactions each world seems to anticipate from the other.

### Speaking with and for the Dead: New Historical Tools

It would seem reasonable at this juncture to ask whether or not we have any access to these chronotopes, and if so, through what means we might access them. Here it seems apt to note the dilemma, articulated by Greenblatt, that every New Historical scholar faces: “I began with the desire to speak with the dead[...]. If I never believed that the dead could hear me, and if I knew that the dead could not speak, I was nonetheless certain that I could re-create a conversation with them” (1). This struggle to speak with and perhaps also for the dead seems especially salient in the case of the present study, which aims to recover not literary-textual experience but rather the lived experience of those texts in performance.

Unfortunately, we cannot simply jump into our time-machine and witness a past performance. Greenblatt does, however, give us three reasons to hope for a tentative but meaningful dialogue with the dead. Our first “medium” for communication with the dead would be the texts they have left us, “for the dead . . . [have] contrived to leave textual traces of themselves, and those traces make themselves heard in the voices of the living” (1). Greenblatt points to two intertwined arguments here. First, he articulates the notion that texts have a “social energy” encoded in them that remains accessible to the careful reader (6). This argument resembles Bakhtin’s notion of the “potentials” encoded into literary texts:

According to Bakhtin, no author of a great literary work could fully command all its important implications, because great literary works exploit resources that have developed over centuries and contain potentials for development over centuries to come. (Morson and Emerson 285)

The “social energy” Greenblatt articulates would seem to involve the still-living, still-moving storehouse of potentials within texts. In the context of a performance-centered approach to medieval theatre, however, we must take into account textual potentials and, additionally, we must mine texts for traces of the bodies that produced and responded to those texts, and for the various potentials those bodies may have carried.

Additionally, Greenblatt’s concept of “textual traces” points to what Roach calls “living memory”: “‘Living memory’ remains variously resistant to [...] forgetting [...] through the transmission of gestures, habits, and skills” (26). Greenblatt—and Bakhtin, as well—would argue that language-*as-used* should also be included as one of the sources of “living memory.” In this sense, we are all carriers of history. History resides in our bodies and in our voices, and thus somewhere deep inside of us—in our linguistic-social-historical “core” of experience—the bodies and voices of past others echo forward to help us to grapple with the textual traces those ghosts have left behind. Indeed, Bakhtin’s primary tool for developing and describing various chronotopes involves deep readings of the texts themselves, readings informed by a sensitivity both to the embodied difference between “then” and “now” *and* by the embodied *similarities*.

Greenblatt’s third tool for dialogue with the dead involves looking “less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its borders, to try to track what can only be glimpsed, as it were, at the margins of the text” (4). Here Greenblatt primarily refers to the use of extraliterary sources of insight into the phenomenal world of experience hinted at by textual traces. As we shall see in Chapter Two, two primary extraliterary sources will help us develop a richer understanding of the chronotopes of early English theatre. First, we shall examine specific works of visual art with which the audiences of the time

would have been familiar. In the painting, sculpture, and other visual art forms of the middle ages, we have tangible examples of medieval visual experience. It is highly likely that such art both informed the audiences' experience of theatrical performance and that a broader set of visual-interpretive codes that informed *both* theatrical and visual art of the Middle Ages can be extrapolated from a careful study of medieval art.

Another extraliterary source of insight used in this study will involve relations between medieval theatrical experience and medieval religious experience. Christian philosophy embedded itself in all medieval experience, and the vast majority of the surviving theatrical texts from the time explicitly address Christian history, Christian beliefs, and Christian practice. Even those texts which do not explicitly employ a Christian frame, such as Medwall's Fulgens and Lucres, offer a moralistic frame shaped largely by Christian values. In messy and complex ways, Christian thought developed various and often contradictory interpretations of diverse relationships between image and reality and between flesh and spirit. Because performance also inevitably addresses such issues, we can use our understanding of medieval Christian debates over iconicity and transubstantiation to inform our understanding of the performance experiences of early English theatre.

Another way to glimpse "at the margins of the text" is to explore embodied performances of the text. A source of insight into these chronotopes of performance, then, would be descriptions of the staging of religious pageants such as Sheila Lindenbaum's discussion of the production of the York cycle in Toronto in 1977. While such performances are obviously informed by contemporary experience, many of those who write about these performances find themselves unexpectedly moved in

extraordinary ways that point toward a more rich and engaging grasp of medieval theatrical practice (Bevington, “Castles in the Air”; Lindenbaum; Marshall; Twycross; Wickham, “Introduction”).

#### Significance: Chronotopes and Performance Studies

The research offered here is designed to accomplish two primary goals in the context of current performance research. First, this study contributes to a growing body of literature committed to the ongoing project of recovering, re-presenting, and reconstructing the lived experience of medieval theatrical practices. In his preface to his 1991 collection of essays The Theatre of Medieval Europe: New Research in Early Drama, editor Eckehard Simon discusses some of the concerns his colleagues have raised about the focus on medieval theatre as performed while ultimately landing squarely on the side of such an emphasis:

Some of the [reproduced medieval] theatricals one sees are no doubt governed by the same happy spirit that dwells in such neo-medieval groups as the Society for Creative Anachronism active on American college campuses. And in service to a sterner muse, some continental colleagues will, one suspects, continue to raise an eyebrow or two. But [...] the method is sound. Medieval drama was not made to be read. This is why our students have always found it so boring. It was meant to be heard and seen. (xvii)

Such arguments, made repeatedly throughout the late 1980’s and early 1990’s by scholars in the field of medieval theatre, have fueled an intense interest, not only in staging these texts, but also in investigating how medieval people might have experienced such theatrical performances. My study hopes to make a contribution to this sustained disciplinary focus on the embodied experience of medieval theatre.

By using Bakhtin’s chronotope as my primary interpretive tool for describing and articulating various embodied responses to medieval theatre, my study also aims to

provide one of the first sustained descriptions of chronotopes in the context of performance outside of Bakhtin's work in Rabelais and His World. As an investigative instrument, the chronotope has proven remarkably serviceable in a myriad of fields investigating diverse kinds of texts. Robert Stam's Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film presses the chronotope into service to analyze the carnivalesque pleasures of film spectatorship, while Deborah J. Haynes' Bakhtin and the Visual Arts uses the chronotope to articulate certain aspects of postmodern art theory. In their essay "Scrapbooks as Cultural Texts," Tamar Katriel and Thomas Farrell gloss the chronotope in an effort to explore the historical situated quality of scrapbooks. And recently John Louis Lucaites and James P. McDaniel use the chronotope to articulate the tension between "then" and "new" in their analysis of the rhetorical construction of Japan as both fearsome WWII enemy and friendly post-WWII ally. Yet for all these diverse efforts, the full explanatory and exploratory power of the chronotope remains largely untapped, especially in the area of performance studies.

Ruth Laurion Bowman's essay "Domestic(ating) Excess: Women's Roles in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Its Adaptation" offers one of the most clear and compelling applications of the chronotope to the study of performance in her efforts to address "the social-aesthetic spaces or 'chronotopes,' to use Bakhtin's term, the female characters represent," both in Stowe's novel and in the host of stage adaptations of the novel (116). Building on such research, the present study aims to articulate chronotopes in and of performance, and it aims to do so, not simply by applying the existing literary chronotopes articulated by Bakhtin, but by describing and exploring new chronotopes that correspond to distinct ways in which participants in medieval theatre might have

understood space and time operating in theatrical performance. In this sense, the current study aims to provide the first lengthy and detailed application of the chronotope to the analysis of performance.

In our next chapter, then, we will explore those elements of medieval English experience which are relevant to all three of the chronotopes to be examined. At the heart of these elements common to all three chronotopes are two kinds of relations: relations between the world of matter and the world of spirit, and relations between the world created through performance and the world of the audience and performers. By considering medieval debates over issues such as iconicity and Eucharistic doctrine, we can begin our journey back into these long-dead bodies so as to reconstruct, in whatever partial fashion, some understanding of the way medieval theatergoers would have understood space and time. With this understanding in place, we can then consider the specific performance forms and specific chronotopes addressed in chapters three, four, and five of this study. First, however, we must consider particular forms of vision that informed thought and action throughout much of the Middle Ages in England.



## CHAPTER 2

### SHARED ELEMENTS OF MEDIEVAL CHRONOTOPES

Our lexicon associates visions with mysticism, irrationality, occultism, impracticality and madness. From our point of view, the visionary is a person who sees what isn't there; his visions separate him from reality. In the Middle Ages, visions defined reality.[...] Visions were the final arbiter of truth—but only if they were authentic. How was the visionary to tell true revelations from nightmares, divine illuminations from demonic delusions?

--Carolly Erickson, The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception, 30-36

The dominant theme of Erickson's book on medieval perception is that of all the senses, sight dominated medieval phenomenal experience. Of course, much the same argument could be made for most historical eras, including our current one, but Erickson goes further to define sight in the Middle Ages as *vision*, that is, as a peculiar capacity to see beyond the visible and to search as it were *through* the physical universe for signs of the divine. Harris notes that since the earliest days of Christendom, the faithful were urged to investigate

events in the physical world, which, it was believed, might well possess an inner symbolic meaning far more important than their outward appearance. [... The origins of this interpretive mindset] lay in an earlier Jewish vision of the whole of life as the unfolding of God's divine plan for the world, as it had been exclusively revealed to his chosen people—a viewpoint the Christians had naturally acquired with the rest of their Jewish inheritance. (7)

Such thinking was reflected in and embodied by Christian liturgy. At least since St. Gregory began the institutionalization of the Mass, Christians regarded "the Mass, and the Holy Scriptures too, as a fusion of a 'visible' outer meaning, which was often a simple story, with various kinds of 'invisible' symbolic meanings reflecting the purposes of God" (Harris 7).

In the context of this spirit-soaked phenomenology, medieval people “saw more” than we do now, according to Erickson: “Their perceptual range was broader than ours. They were aware of more possibilities, because they were less inclined to dismiss any of them as unimaginable” (32). The medieval period was “an age maximally open to belief” (Erickson 16). But expanded vision does not necessarily equate with joy or transcendence; medieval visionaries saw both heaven and hell, and they often had great difficulty telling them apart. Gregory of Tours (539-594 a.d.) demonstrates this difficulty in his description of a simple fly that may have been sent from Satan:

Pannichius, a priest of Poitou, when sitting at dinner with some friends he had invited, asked for a drink. When it was served a very troublesome fly kept flying about the cup and trying to soil it. The priest waved it off with his hand a number of times but it would go off a little and then try to get back, and he perceived that it was a crafty device of the enemy. He changed the cup to his left hand and made a cross with his right; then he divided the liquor in the cup into four parts and lifted it up high and poured it on the ground. For it was very plain that it was a device of the enemy. (Halsall)

The world required constant and vigilant interpretation; one must be on one’s guard for any clues that might lead one to God—or away from Him.

Any discussion of space and time in medieval performance will therefore of necessity reference a wholly different space and time from our own. This is generally true of historical research, but when investigating the Middle Ages, the problem becomes notably acute. There is a fundamental strangeness to medieval perception which informed the lived experience of performers and audience, nobles and peasants, clerics and heretics in every genre of medieval artistic expression. As John Drury puts it in his description of medieval painting:

We are visitors to this Christian world. Even if we are Christians [...], the kind of Christianity that one of these paintings holds and presents will not

be exactly our own—though we, Christian or not, may be able to make it our own by means of informed and sympathetic imagination. (ix)

Prior to discussing chronotopes of medieval theatre, therefore, we must first consider certain common perceptual elements which informed each of these chronotopes. We may then be able to explore the various forms of space and time in medieval geography and cosmology with greater confidence.

In this chapter, then, we will explore elements of theatrical experience that are common to all three of the chronotopes under investigation here. I first discuss the spiritual and material worlds of medieval England, exploring issues of religious thought and practice as they impacted medieval “vision.” To do this, I examine spiritual and material geographies and then move to examine medieval concepts of figural time that allow for the spiritual past and future of Christianity to come into contact with the material present of medieval England. Next, as our discussion must inevitably address issues of representation, I discuss the interaction between the “real world” of the audience and the performers and the fictive metaworld created in and through performance in terms of a variety of issues associated with *mimesis* in medieval thought.

In medieval Europe, acts of *mimesis* inevitably raised tensions about the appropriateness of using the human body to represent anything Holy. I therefore follow my discussion of *mimesis* with a discussion of various conceptions of the body that would have informed the medieval experience of moving through space and time. Next, I explore the sacrament of the Eucharist as a particularly potent example of the variety of conflicts regarding materiality and spirituality that informed medieval experience. As the names of my three chronotopes suggest, we may use various ways of thinking about the Eucharist as metaphorical markers that can describe theatrical experience. This is

appropriate because, as we shall see in this chapter, medieval experience was saturated with religious perception, and such religious perception also certainly informed theatrical perception as well, especially given the religious and/or moral nature of the majority of these performances. Finally, we shall discuss the nature of addressivity in medieval theatre as a way of examining the ties between performers, audience, and spiritual entities that shape all three medieval chronotopes of performance.

We may begin this discussion by focusing on two interpretive planes which intersect with all three chronotopes. The first of these interpretive planes involves the distinction between the “visible” or material and the “invisible” or spiritual worlds. Erickson argues persuasively that in contrast to our modern efforts to “equate realness with materiality,” medieval people “tended to perceive an all-encompassing, multifold reality” that included invisible spiritual entities, acts, and geographies (6-8). The second plane involves the distinction between what Diller calls the “first” and “second” worlds of performance (Middle English 10). The “first world” (the audience-sphere) is the “real world” of the audience and players; the “second world” (the play-sphere) is the metaworld invoked (or conjured?) by the performance.

### Spiritual and Material Worlds

Let us first consider the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual worlds in medieval England. Against those who believe “the events which occur in the course of a morality play to be not mimetic representations of life, but analogical demonstrations of what life is about,” Natalie Schmitt offers the following rebuttal:

The distinction, however, does not seem medieval. The world itself was a great analogy making manifest the otherwise invisible and only reality of God. The medieval artists were Realists; they believed that the world was

to be understood not in terms of operations and causes, but in terms of its meaning. (305)

Far from our skeptical modern empiricism, the Neoplatonic Realism Schmitt mentions here does not deny the ontological status of the invisible, but nonetheless active, world of the spirit. Meaning was to be found in examining the complex interaction between the material and spiritual worlds; meaning was found not in “operations and causes,” but in the search for Truth. Throughout most aspects of medieval culture and history, “Truth” was the truth of Christ’s suffering for (hu)mankind, and the ultimate “falsehood” was to deny the interaction of invisible Godly and demonic entities in the material world of the “quick.”

In terms of chronotopic consciousness, such interaction between material and spiritual worlds meant that physical geography was inextricably bound up with spiritual geography:

It was characteristic of that view that throughout the Middle Ages the earth was conceived as embracing the geographical locus of unseen truths. Shrines localized the virtues of a saint in the near vicinity of his or her remains. Pious journeys and later military expeditions to the Holy Land allowed medieval people to see and touch the sites where the bodiless reality of God became the embodied Jesus. And since ancient times dread and curiosity had brought many to the mouths of hell—the places, such as Lough Derg in Ireland, from which descent into the lower world was believed possible. (Erickson 6)

Not only was the world full of locations which provided access to the divine or the demonic; a potent animism also informed medieval geography, granting a sense of life to all objects: “Medieval cosmological ideas, undergirded by the Neoplatonic view that all things participate, however imperfectly, in the life of the creator led the medievals to attribute to natural and man-made objects a wide range of capabilities” (Erickson 19).

For some historians, this medieval mode of perception world has “evoked the epithets ‘childlike,’ ‘naive,’ and ‘popular,’ epithets which have served to mask by patronizing stereotypes rather than to explain” (Gibson 5). It would be easy to equate the presence of what Erickson calls the “enchanted world” of medieval Neoplatonism with a childlike world view to be eventually “corrected” by more objective world views. Yet as Schmitt notes, “the idea of objectivity, of the existence of things the identity of which can be known quite apart from ourselves, is a product of a scientific rationalist age; it is not a medieval idea. Medieval people consciously participated in what they perceived” (306). Medieval physics explained sight as a form of *contact* that linked perceiver and perceived: “Medieval viewers, following Augustine’s theory of vision as a ray projected onto the object that then passed into the viewer and bonded with the soul, understood themselves to be active agents in the visual experience” (Sponsler 122). Through the active facility of *looking*, the “outer” bonded with the “inner,” making such distinctions seem arbitrary.

Thus, our own limited concepts of what is “realistic” prevent us from seeing

that these plays which we call allegories are to a far greater extent than we have realized representations of phenomenological reality. Our application of anachronistic concepts has confused our reading of the plays and has removed us from the psychology which they express.  
(Schmitt 313)

Schmitt goes so far as to argue that the “conjunction of internal and external” so central to the medieval mind also characterizes modern phenomenological encounters:

“Experientially the distinction between the two [the internal and the external] is not easily made and disagreement on it exists in our own society” (308). Recent discoveries in the

world of physics, from Heisenberg's Uncertainty Theorem to quantum physics, express just such an interconnectedness of the perceiver and the perceived.

### An Ever-Present God Watching Over Ever-Present Sin

In the Middle Ages, however, the connection between the perceiver and the perceived came not through physics but through a personal relationship with the risen Lord. England, especially, felt its fate was linked to the fate of Christianity from at least the mid-ninth century onwards, as the English people suffered under the scourge of Viking attacks:

Why, Christians needed to know, had God allowed the Vikings to come to England "to ravage and burn, plunder and rob"? There could be but one answer: such events were, in the words of Wulfstan, archbishop of York (1002-23) "the wrath of God, made clear and visible towards this nation." (Leyser 178)

As Leyser notes, in the eleventh century two options for correcting England's relationship with God were generally debated. The first advocated a return "to the days of Archbishop Theodore and of Bede, to a supposed golden age when there were 'men of learning...throughout England,' and when wisdom and success in warfare had gone hand in hand" (178).

Many in England, especially the ruling feudal lords, found this reliance on education and clerical wisdom too stringent and preferred a second, and more severely penitential, course:

The wrath of God, provoked by the terrible sinfulness of his people, must be and could be assuaged by correct reparation. According to an edict of c.1009, "decreed when the great army [of Vikings] came to the country," the whole nation was to seek God's help to withstand the enemy. The Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Michaelmas were national fast-days; only bread, herbs, and water were allowed. Everyone was to go barefoot to church for confession and join in the processions of relics. (Leyser 179).

Such a course of reparations reminds us of the deeply rooted pagan impulses that, by the eleventh century, had been more or less successfully appropriated by Christianity. The impulse to sacrifice to the gods had moved from sacrificing animals and harvest fruits to self-flagellation and ascetic purification as a form of self-sacrificial martyrdom. In this dualistic, almost Manichean world view, God could be best appeased through the mortification of the body, since the flesh was the source of corruption for the human spirit.

This ascetic and penitential world view took on greater urgency in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries due to various religious movements, and due as well to the terrors of the plague. The most notable religious event of this period was the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215-1216, which institutionalized sweeping reforms of Church practice and theology:

In the annals of the history of the Catholic Church, this particular council holds a prominent position. Its place was secured not only by its regulations, which are binding even today, or by its statements concerning the holy war, which altered the course of medieval history, but also by the function assigned to it by Pope Innocent III—that is, “to eradicate vices and to plant virtues, to correct faults and to reform morals, to remove heresies and to strengthen faith, to settle discords and to establish peace, to get rid of oppression and to foster liberty, to induce princes and christian people to come to the aid and succour of the holy Land”[...]. (Kobialka This Is My Body 197)

Perhaps the two most prominent institutionalized changes to Church practice and theology to originate from this council were “its constitutions regarding confession and Communion that have been observed in the Catholic church since that time” (Kobialka This Is My Body 197). As a result of these constitutions, the doctrine of transubstantiation, that is of the wafer and wine becoming Christ’s flesh and blood when



blessed by priests for use in the Communion mass, became standard Catholic doctrine. Additionally, “after the Fourth Lateran Council all adult Christians were required to confess their sins privately to their parish priest at least once a year usually before they took communion at Easter” (Harris 84).

Embodied in both practices of confession and Communion is what Harris calls “an acute sense of sin” (81) and an extension of the practices of self-mortification that began in England with the Viking raids. To institutionalize such an acute sense of sin, priests were required to teach the laity of their sinfulness, to explain not only what thoughts and behaviors were now considered sinful but also to explain what Church rituals would serve as appropriate penance for these sins. As part of this process, “many books of penitential instruction—known as ‘shrift manuals’—were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and widely circulated in manuscript” (Harris 85). The language used by Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council to describe the new sacrament of confession employs metaphors of illness and recovery to locate the source of spiritual imperfection in the body:

Let the priest be discreet and cautious that he may pour wine and oil into the wounds of the one injured in the manner of a skillful physician, carefully inquiring into the circumstances of the sinner and of the sin, from the nature of which he may understand what kind of advice to give and what kind of remedy to apply, making use of different means to heal the sick one. (Shinners 10)

The language here also reminds us of Freud’s “talking cure” and of the importance of discursive practices in both naming and thus “curing” the newly identified sins. This “talking cure” relied on the sinner’s awareness of, and acceptance of, his or her guilt before the face of God.

Accompanying this new sense of sin was a renewed missionary zeal. Tydeman notes the importance of “the emergence, from the conflicts besetting the twelfth-century church, of the fraternal Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic [...] and the missionary zeal of their members in expounding the message of personal salvation to the lay individual” (“An Introduction” 19). Even prior to the Fourth Lateran Council, Leyser documents this impressive development: “The rise in the number of monasteries in twelfth-century England was certainly spectacular; more than 250 new houses were founded for men, and over 100 for women” (194). Predating the Fourth Lateran Council but participating in its spirit and urging the reforms made by that council, this monastic movement transformed the face of God and the follower’s relationship with God:

On the one hand, the God of the twelfth century was less terrifying than his earlier manifestations had suggested: his compassion and mercy were seen now to be as great as his power to punish and condemn. On the other hand, this “humanized” God was in some sense more demanding, for, wanting to be worshipped not in fear but in friendship, he could expect from each Christian a personal response rather than the gathering in of a debt that could be vicariously paid.[...] The monastic call to which so many responded in the twelfth century was the call to become Christ-like, to know, to love and to imitate God-as-man. (Leyser 194)

Living with Christ in the Middle Ages meant living with one’s sinfulness and thus living with how far one’s life was from the model of Christ.

In religious terms, then, for England this era was therefore

a restless and uncertain age, seeking the solutions to many pressing problems. Then, suddenly, on top of the turmoil created by the new sense of sin, dissatisfaction with the Church, growing heresy, crusades against heretics, the Inquisition, friars preaching hellfire sermons and a growing preoccupation with self-examination and purification, a final factor was superimposed that gave the whole process a new urgency—the shadow of the Black Death. (Harris 90)

The plague made terrifying images part of everyday experience: workers would struggle to get “rid of the plague-infested bodies, usually in mass graves with victims stacked like cordwood (or as a contemporary Italian writer remarked, like lasagna), five cadavers deep” (Cantor 81). Even more terrifying was that the plague seemed to have no cause—or rather, too many causes could be offered up, from demons to Jews to the apocalypse. The only protection from the omnipresent and mysterious plague came from faith. As a widely distributed plague tract of the late fifteenth century noted, “when thy soul is washed clean from sin, thus mayest thou preserve they body from this pestilential malady” (qtd. in Keen 36).

In the context of the medieval individual’s struggle with the forces of death and damnation, medieval Neoplatonism reassuringly “emphasized the primacy of noncorporeal forces; it was an all-embracing explanation which stressed the close links between all created things; and it strongly associated the creative principle with visual imagery” (Erickson 11). In other words, the individual could see, could perceive—and could thus participate in—the divine, the invisible, and could thus render the material world meaningful in terms of this grand cosmology. Through this perception and interpretation of Truth, one could obtain salvation.

The prime example of the link between the material and the invisible for the medieval mind was the incarnation of the divine spirit into the “man-God” Jesus. The “emotive spirituality” especially notable in medieval England from the twelfth century on “sought comfort in a personal religion grounded in the individual’s participation in Christ’s passion. It was a spirituality attentive to the humanity, more than the divinity of Christ, and to his physical sufferings as man and Savior” (Coletti 9). Thus, by the

fifteenth century, “the relevant central image for the Middle Ages is a suffering human body racked on a cross; the book [of hours] has become his body, its secrets red, fresh, and bleeding if still mysterious to the minds of man” (Gibson 6). By the fifteenth century, the incarnated Christ had become the perfect cipher for the blending of the material and invisible worlds.

The medieval world, then, was one where multiple “realities” coexisted, merging spirit and matter. As Gibson puts it, the “fifteenth-century commitment to the particularity of religious experience [...involves] a growing tendency to see the world saturated with sacramental possibility and meaning and to celebrate it” (6). But if medieval *space* was substantially different from our own, then it might follow that medieval perceptions of *time* also differed. And indeed, just as medieval thought perceived space as multiple and full to bursting with entities material and spiritual, so too did medieval thought regard time as multiple, with various eras touching upon and writing traces on each other in both forward and backward directions.

#### Figural Time in Medieval Chronotopes

The dominant mode of Christian historical thought throughout the Middle Ages involved figural interpretation. Figural interpretation began with efforts by the early Christian fathers to reframe the Old Testament as prefiguring the New Testament and the new faith of Christianity. In the earliest days of the Christian church, Paul and the other church fathers struggled to transform the Old Testament from a codification of the laws of the Jewish people to a historical prelude to the coming of Christ to save all people. Their goal was to “strip the Old Testament of its normative character and show that it is merely a shadow of things to come” (Auerbach, “Figura” 50). Figural interpretation of

the Old Testament as a series of events prefiguring Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and eventual return served key rhetorical functions in justifying the Christian faith and distinguishing it from its progenitor.

Medieval figural interpretation requires two (or more) historical events which, through a hermeneutic act of interpretation, can be seen to be informed by the same principle. For example, the story of Jonah trapped in the belly of a whale for three days can be read as prefiguring the death and resurrection of Christ after three days (Kolve 64). Likewise, many other figures such as Moses are identified by figural interpretation as spiritual precursors of Christ. A crucial point here is that both figure and fulfillment must be perceived as historical, not allegorical, for the *figura* to have substance:

Moses is no less historical and real because he is an *umbra* or *figura* of Christ, and Christ, the fulfillment, is no abstract idea, but also a historical reality. Real historical figures are to be interpreted spiritually (*spiritualiter interpretari*), but the interpretation points to a carnal, hence historical fulfillment (*carnaliter adimpleri*: *De resurrectione*, 20)—for the truth has become history or flesh. (Auerbach, "Figura" 34)

Figural interpretation, then, activates an odd kind of historicity. Eternal principles deriving from the will of God are embodied, given flesh, exposed to the operations of time, but inasmuch as time always repeats itself, events are bent towards each other, and are thus often shaped by the same principles into similar outer forms. Figural interpretation, then, "removes the concrete event, completely preserved as it is, from time and transposes it into a perspective of eternity" (Auerbach, "Figura" 42). In the process, two seemingly dissimilar phenomenal events can be seen to be informed by the same basic truth, granting the interpreter access to the *veritas* of God.

Figural interpretation can move not only between events in the Old and New Testaments, but also between current events and biblical ones. Indeed, figural thinking

collapses time, understanding past, present, and future as inextricably interrelated, even fused:

[T]he here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event. (Auerbach, *Mimesis* 74)

Events in the here and now are thus marked both by their prefigurations and by the End to which all events must lead. Within such a concept of history, no event is meaningless or insignificant, since every event touches scores of other events which have meaning and which share meaning amongst themselves.

A tempting misinterpretation of *figura* assumes that the relationship between a figure and its fulfillment moves in only one direction—that is to say, that the figure exists merely to prefigure its fulfillment, a fulfillment that is complete unto itself. Such a view of *figura* overlooks the way in which both figure and fulfillment point towards each other. Auerbach notes that even in its earliest usage, the term *figura* could substitute for *either* “model” or “copy,” thus suggesting that the term points both to progenitor and progeny (“Figura” 16). Yet terms like “progenitor” and “progeny” imply a linear causal sequence that is not at work in medieval figural interpretation. Instead, figural interpretation “establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first” (Auerbach, “Figura” 53). Thus, a given *figura* “may point forward or backward to divine events” (Heltermann 19), and the two phenomenal events are neither reducible either to each other nor to some overarching principle. While one event may be more spiritually

significant than the other—Christ’s passion clearly outweighs Jonah’s trip in the whale’s belly—both events point toward each other and require each other for completeness.

One difficulty of understanding medieval figural interpretation is that it assumes what Harris calls a “vertical” conception of time:

This idea can be best described by saying that medieval man saw time not as a straight line but as a rising spiral, so that history continually repeated itself as it progressed. A man could either look forwards and backwards along the curving line of time or behind him, in which case his point of view was essentially “horizontal” [or linear] like our own, or he could look straight up and down at the equivalent points on the many curves of the time-line directly above or below him, thus taking a “vertical” view. [...] This “vertical” view of time intimately linked together events of the past and the present. (101)

Thus while our linear, “horizontal” concept of time urges us to view events within a linear-causal structure, within the medieval “vertical” concept of history, two events can be real and historical, with phenomenal differences, while also being equivalent moments in time. One might say that figure and fulfillment share substance.

Importantly, however, we should note that the historical fulfillment of a figural urge involves an active and necessary *doing* rather than simply functioning as a return of that which already was. An essentially passive way of understanding the relationship between figure and fulfillment would be to see a given fulfillment as simply an atemporal return of that which always was and always will be. Such an understanding, however, fails to take into account the unique grounding in history that characterized the Catholic Church. Whereas many religious traditions construct a consciously acknowledged mythical past that does not necessarily connect to the time of those practicing a given faith, from the earliest development of its orthodox practices, beliefs, and institutions,

Christianity has consistently constructed itself as rooted in “our” historical time, as Elaine Pagels notes:

[O]rthodox tradition [...] maintained that human destiny depends upon the events of “salvation history”—the history of Israel, especially the prophets’ predictions of Christ and then his actual coming, his life, and his death and resurrection. All of the New Testament gospels, whatever their differences, concern themselves with Jesus as a historical person. And all of them rely on the prophets’ predictions to prove the validity of the Christian message. (132)

Figural thought, therefore, constructed a specific way of understanding relations between different events in time, but it did so without necessarily constructing time as “finished” or “already written.”

For example, the traditional medieval figural interpretation of Christ as the fulfillment of a long line of prophets starting with Moses does not reduce Christ to the status of “yet another Moses”—nor, for that matter, does figural thought construct Moses simply as “a paler shade of Jesus.” Within figural interpretation, Christ is much more than an “echo” of Moses and other Old Testament prophets, and Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is to be understood as unique, necessary, and not in any way inevitable. Although Christ’s life makes contact with and shares substance with other historical figures from Christian history, the tradition of figural interpretation did not view the fulfillment of various *figura* throughout history as being inevitable and thus essentially passive expressions of eternal impulses.

Figural thought did not aim to strip the contributions to Christian history by figures such as Moses, Abraham, David, and Jesus of their value as active, historically situated choices. Rather, we might say that figures such as Christ willingly and actively followed a set of behaviors and practices which had the consequence of fulfilling a



figural principle; without the individual's conscious choices, the figure would conceivably not have found its fulfillment. Medieval figural thought was not an expression of "predestination by other means." The importance of this detail lies primarily in the notion that while certain events, such as the Apocalypse, were regarded as inevitable, individual choices in the future were regarded as being essentially unwritten. The past would echo into the present and the future, but the bodies through which it echoed, and the choices those bodies made, were not predetermined within figural thought.

This interaction between past and present, material and invisible worlds, and the concomitant struggle of the perceiver to find/make meaning within these multiple realities, complicate the "game" of theatre that is so central to the notion of metatheatrical "play" referenced in my first chapter. Yet it is at this same point in the history of Western theatre that we find the notion of "game" returning to the forefront of performance. This leads into an exploration of the second interpretive plane common to all three chronotopes, the first-world/second-world plane.

#### Problems of Mimesis: The First and Second Worlds of Performance

In 1966, V. A. Kolve revolutionized the study of medieval theatre by taking seriously those contemporary references to vernacular theatre using words such as "ludus," "play," and "game" to refer to what we now call theatre. In the Middle Ages, "drama was conceived *as a game*," and such a conception of performance, Kolve argues, was "a change in the history of theatre" (14, emphasis in original). While Kolve may overstate the importance of this "change"—after all, the Latin terminology (*ludi*) reminds us that throughout the Classical period theatre was viewed as a form of play—Kolve's

primary insight has to do with how theatre as “play” and “game” changes the nature of performance in the Middle Ages. Hanning summarizes the importance of this change:

As distinct from the Latin liturgical drama, for which the usual nomenclature was *representatio*, the popular, vernacular cycles were clearly identified by means of a terminology which stressed the play-element of the drama—the creation of a self-contained world with its own rules, intended to entertain and instruct, but not able to be confused with or taken for “reality.” (140)

Whereas liturgical drama offered the congregation only one world—the “real world” of the ongoing religious ritual—Kolve argues that after much development through time, the Corpus Christi plays evolved a set of “rules” regarding the theatrical “game,” a game that created a world distinct from the experience of the audience.

In Diller’s terms, we have a distinction here between the “first world” of the audience and the “second world” constituted by the metaworld of the theatrical event. In the context of European theatre in the Middle Ages, such a distinction usefully differentiates Latin liturgical and vernacular theatre. Drawing upon Lukacs, Diller asserts that “the ‘world-creating’ capacity of the work of art” distinguished the two kinds of “theatre”: the ability to create an independent “second world” which confronts the “first world” of the audience “is exactly what the liturgical drama largely lacks and what we find in varying degrees in the vernacular plays” (Middle English 3).

Diller summarizes the importance of this “world-creating” power:

The two basic differences between liturgical and later drama concern time and space and the relationship between the “play” and those who watch it. While the true play has to “create” the time and place of the world represented in it, the liturgical ceremony finds them, as it were, ready-made by the liturgy: the altar suggests the sepulchre, Easter matins evoked the first morning after Christ’s resurrection [...] The play is also distinguished from the liturgical ceremony in that it presupposes an audience which it “confronts”; the ceremony knows only a congregation

consisting above all of participants; it may, but need not, include onlookers. (Middle English 4)

The creation of a “time and place” distinct from that of the audience represents for Diller a revolutionary artistic world view.

The larger issue at hand here is the development of a richer and more “play-ful” understanding of *mimesis* and representation as the Middle Ages progressed. The question at issue here is to what extent the representation of a thing equates to the substantive *becoming* of that thing. Camille documents the tension throughout the Middle Ages between *idolatria* and *latría*, between images as tools for idol worship and images as gestures of homage directed toward the divine (203-8). Early in its history, the medieval church’s deep fear of idolatry allowed images to do little more than point to the True God rather than incarnating God here on earth: “images were fine as long as they were only channels that diverted attention away from the materiality of the signifier and pointed the viewer to its transcendental meaning” (Camille 204).

Throughout the Middle Ages, theologians engaged in hair-splitting discussions of the relationship between image and referent, perhaps best summed up in the words of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) in his *Summa Theologica*:

[T]here is a two-fold movement of the mind towards an image: one indeed towards the image itself as a certain thing; another, towards the image in so far as it is the image of something else. And between these movements there is this difference; that the former, by which one is moved towards an image as a certain thing, is different from the movement towards the thing: whereas the latter movement, which is towards the image as an image, is one and the same as that which is towards the thing. Thus therefore we must say that no reverence is shown to Christ’s image, as a thing—for instance, carved or painted wood: because reverence is not due save to a rational creature. It follows therefore that reverence should be shown to it, in so far only as it is an image. Consequently the same reverence should be shown to Christ’s image as to Christ himself. (qtd. in Camille 207)

Such tortured logic actually represents in many ways a significant shift in the Christian interpretation of *mimesis*, since Aquinas finds grounds for responding to images as sources of spiritual engagement rather than rejecting images outright. But the continual effort to derive the power of the image from its “real” material/historical progenitor reflects the Neoplatonic viewpoint that images are useful only inasmuch as they point us back to the truth.

There is much danger in such a viewpoint when one is staging the events of the Bible. Kolve points out that the religious function of medieval theatre specifically brought to the fore the troublesome problem of representing the divine:

[A] player for the Waterleaders’ Guild in Chester could take the role of Noah without jeopardy: since Noah was a man and is to be acted by a man, the image and its referent are of the same nature. But a player for the Drapers’ Guild chosen to enact God ran a certain risk [...] . Here the image and its referent are so different in kind that blasphemy or sacrilege may be involved. (9)

Even as late as 1609, the “post-Reformation” Chester *Banns* went to great lengths to justify how a mere human could figure the face of God by offering an argument based largely on the function of the mask used by most performers who played God:

It is wrong, it [the Chester *Banns*] suggests, for any man to try to “act” or imitate God, because no human being can *proportion* the Divinity. But, it tells us, we can get round this problem if we think of the mask or gilded face as an equivalent to the modern cloud-machine which completely hides the actor, allowing a “voice of God” to speak. This comparison urges that the mask, like the cloud-machine, must be thought of as completely abolishing the man, the actor himself. We do not see him representing or pretending to *be* God, but only hear the voice speaking God’s words. (Twycross and Carpenter 173, emphasis in original)

Twycross and Carpenter here articulate how two dominant themes of medieval perception related to each other—the emphasis on sight or vision, and the iconoclastic

impulses to avoid representing God falsely. Note that the “loophole” which allows performers to play the role of God stems from the notion that these performers are (imaginatively) only *heard*, not *seen*. Representing the *voice* of God is acceptable within this perspective; the sin emerges when one tries to take on God’s *appearance*.

The problem of *mimesis* was not only an issue for the performers but also for the audience. As we noted in Chapter One, by witnessing Christ’s crucifixion during the various biblical pageant plays, audience members participated in that desecration by their inaction. Anne Higgins describes how the geography of medieval York could merge with the geography of the Bible. Discussing the fact that the Last Judgment in York was traditionally staged in The Pavement, an inner part of the city associated with the butcher’s trade where “traitors were executed, drunks pilloried, rogues whipped, kings and queens proclaimed, bulls baited,” she goes on to argue for the appropriateness of this location for the concluding play of the Corpus Christi pageant:

Where better to proclaim judgment and to exact punishment after separating the saved from the damned? But there’s more to the investing of this medieval space with cosmological meaning. Audiences all along the route were constantly brought into the play’s action, as nosy neighbors, as crowds screaming for Barabbas, as the saved and the damned.[...] So too the streets, houses, churches, and markets were employed in a specific, sophisticated, and concrete anachronism in order to bring home to the spectators the figural sense of the play’s representation of history. (Higgins 89)

In this sense, the pageants’ mimetic efforts transformed the entire community, folding time and space so as to allow past events to become present. But for audiences touching that past time and space, their souls were at stake in the performance as they explored multiple roles that they could play in biblical space and time. This transformation into

“the saved and the damned” could just as easily mean that one was damned as that one was saved.

In the earliest Christian explorations into theatrical representation, such problems of *mimesis* were solved by their function as ritual rather than “play”: “The Latin drama of the Church had avoided the Crucifixion and had little connection with game. The church and the liturgy were its natural milieu. It was simple, dignified, ritualistic, limited in its means” (Kolve 18-19). Latin liturgical drama therefore sidestepped the issue of *mimesis* by merely *celebrating* the fact of Christ’s death and resurrection rather than attempting to embody these events. But as performers continued to stage such dramatic and moving moments, interpretive theatrical codes were developed to signal that such representations were only “play” or “game”: “from a conception of drama as play and game—as something therefore not ‘in earnest’—a drama involving sacred personages and miraculous events could be born” (Kolve 17). Only when theatrical codes could signal the presence of a second world, a metaworld of “let’s pretend,” could the problem of *mimesis* be addressed so that divine stories could be told under the rubric of “play.”

Diller usefully contrasts the function of the imaginative second world of the biblical cycle plays (or “mysteries”) in vernacular English with the ritual practice of the Latin liturgical dramas:

In the vernacular drama [...], one was always aware of the difference between the representation and the things represented. In the mystery play the history of salvation is not “re-presented,” not “made present” again, but performed, told scenically. This changes the relationship between actor and role. “Re-production” is replaced by “showing.” Whereas the performer in a liturgical drama took his role upon him as a ritual task, the actor in the mystery play seems, so to speak, to step “alongside” his role. In contrast to the genuine liturgical performer, he is therefore able to talk about the actions and the motives of the character he represents as he would talk about a third person, he can describe what is difficult to see and

explain what is difficult to understand. In the later plays we will even find him responding to probable reactions of his audience. His theatrical style—as far as we can gather from the texts—thus resembles that of the epic theatre, where the actor is supposed to “narrate” his part. In the medieval theatre, however, where the audience is always present as a silent partner, the audience-address never brings about the destruction of a dramatic illusion (as do its modern counterparts). Such an illusion is not the intention of this drama[...]. (Diller, Middle English 112-113)

A certain reflexivity is created when one assumes that performance is not “in earnest,” and this reflexivity allows for the bodies of the performers to address the bodies of the audience and comment upon both the actions and the motives behind the actions of the characters in the play. A major focus of chapters three through five of this study will be to explore the degree and kinds of reflexivity each chronotope of performance allows for, as the distinction between the first and second worlds of performance is variously effaced, maintained, or transgressed.

### The Bodies Living the Chronotope

Our experiences of space and time, along with our social experiences of theatergoing, derive meaning in the context of our socially constructed bodies. In order to obtain a richer phenomenal understanding of medieval theatrical experiences, we should consider the various kinds of bodies that were routinely constructed, inscribed, negotiated, and renegotiated in medieval England. Throughout our explorations of various chronotopes of medieval performance, we will frame our discussion of bodies using Harald Kleinschmidt’s concept of heterodynamic and autodynamic bodies as well as Arthur Frank’s typology of “styles of body usage” (53). Kleinschmidt’s work offers a sociopolitical interpretation of why certain images of the body were popularized at various points throughout the Middle Ages, and Frank’s typology of body usage helps us to conduct a detailed analysis of “how the body is a problem *for itself*” (52, emphasis in

original) by exploring various ways one might come to terms with bodily issues of control, desire, other-relatedness, and self-relatedness (53). The combination of these two theoretical approaches will enable us to conceptualize how medieval bodies might have understood themselves and their relations with other bodies during theatrical performances.

Kleinschmidt argues that in medieval Europe, a shift occurred slowly but perceptibly over the centuries which involved a gradual, sociopolitically motivated transition from an emphasis on the body's *dependency* on other bodies to a new emphasis on a *self-sufficient* body. He describes this shift as "a change [...] from heterodynamic to autodynamic modes of behavior" (63). He defines the two body types in this way:

On the one side, persons can assume that their bodies are an autodynamic instrument which they can and ought to use in accordance with their own will, where they depend mainly on themselves and where the decision upon the success or failure of an action depends mainly on the intensity by which persons can act without the support of others. On the other side, the human body can also be perceived heterodynamically, namely in such a way that the willingness to act among persons and the initiative for interactions among persons, groups, and the physical environment are believed to originate in an external source outside a person's body and where the decision upon success or failure of an action or interaction depends mainly on the degree by which a person can avail him- or herself of the assistance of other human or non-human agents. (62-63)

We might describe the difference between these two bodies in ontological terms as an ontology of self-sufficiency as compared with an ontology of need. The heart of Kleinschmidt's discussion here is that the sociopolitically motivated construction of bodies as dependent upon each other shifted as we moved into the late Middle Ages to a conception of the body as complete in and of itself, at least in its ideal form.

Kleinschmidt argues for this transition in three stages. In the early Middle Ages, the generally risk-filled and contingent bodies of Europeans under early feudalism found



themselves threatened constantly by raids, dangerous animals, long migrations, and uncertain weather: “The human body was thus regarded as the recipient of various external influences and pressures, negative as well as positive in kind” (Kleinschmidt 63). The positive external influences that Kleinschmidt mentions here are natural and supernatural helpers; an individual body’s strength lay in the kind and number of helpers that body could obtain. In such conditions, the strength of an individual body was negligible; bodies were strong only in numbers, and then only if they cooperated with each other:

Group members conducted their lives under the impression that, whatever they could or ought to accomplish, was possible only insofar as each member acted in agreement with the behavioral and legal norms accepted by the group and with the stipulations which were taken to have been released by the divine agency or superhuman forces in the environment. (Kleinschmidt 63)

Within this heterodynamic mode of bodily usage, kinship ties and the continuity of the ruling lineage(s) provide the body with the greatest sense of stability; when such ties and continuity are threatened, the body finds itself alone and at risk (Kleinschmidt 64).

Kleinschmidt documents numerous early medieval, largely pre-Christian images where divine or supernatural forces are depicted as “victory helpers” that enable great warriors to be successful. Warriors “seem to have perceived themselves as being in need of more than technical skills and physical strength in the early Middle Ages” (Kleinschmidt 66). Success or failure for these warriors, who formed the basis of the leadership structures in early medieval feudalism, “depended upon the availability or the lack of availability of supportive superhuman forces” (Kleinschmidt 66). Of course, the early Middle Ages produced many images and tales of seemingly self-sufficient, even all-powerful warrior-kings, most notably Beowulf. But Kleinschmidt argues that these

largely mythical bardic figures were understood as “the most extraordinary people, predestined to become rulers or other persons of influence” (Kleinschmidt 68). Such extraordinary figures, in turn, were re-interpreted as external forces acting upon the bodies of the populace at large, working to mold the populace into a functional kinship unit: “the givers of support or pressure were the rulers, divine agencies or superhuman forces, and the recipients were the common people as the ruled” (Kleinschmidt 68).

As the Catholic Church grew in strength and importance in the Middle Ages, the image of the body as dependent upon superhuman forces for its survival proved a useful rhetorical tool, and the image of Jesus on the cross supplanted the pre-Christian “victory helper” images:

Following this legendary tradition, Christ came to be displayed on early medieval crucifixes as a winner who could convey safety and power to his followers[...]. In these as in other crucifixes, Christ is not represented as a human sufferer in great pain, but as the immortal divine triumphant victor of earthly struggles. Christ’s extraordinariness is displayed through his ability to accomplish deeds which ordinary human beings could not without fear of death. (Kleinschmidt 69)

In short, Christ was often represented as something like an even better Beowulf—He became the superhumanly powerful force that could guarantee victory and safety for bodies in a dangerously contingent world. In turn, early feudal leaders could derive some of the aura of invincibility that Christ and His Saints seemed to possess (by virtue of Church rhetoric which framed these figures as invincible) by becoming prominent patrons of this new religion. Thus the “spreading of Christianity was greatly eased among those of high rank whose task it was to display and radiate the physical strength which appeared as essential as a conveyor of energy for the ordinary people in their own daily struggles” (Kleinschmidt 72).

By aligning themselves with and publicly supporting this new religion, early feudal leaders could acquire, by association as it were, some of the aura of bodily invincibility associated with the Christian God and His Son. A second phase in the development of heterodynamic bodies occurred as Catholic officials realized the threat implicit in allowing feudal leaders to “borrow” the power of Christ: “the leading representatives of the universal Catholic Church had to cope with self-reliant, intrusive and power-acquiring particularistic local lay ruling elites who were themselves determined to take possession of and control church institutions” (Kleinschmidt 73). Rhetorically, the Church needed to construct its divine figures as the *only* self-sufficient sources of power; by doing so, it could resist the tendency for lay leaders to claim authority over Church properties and institutions.

As Christianity worked to assert its authority over secular organizations in the heart of the Middle Ages, then, the new image of leaders and saints alike became an impoverished and needy body, one that would be dependent upon God in Heaven for its strength. “Since the tenth century, the image of physical strength of the bodies of Christ and the saints gradually waned. The process first touched upon the representation of the bodies of royal saints, that is those saints whose kin group was royal or who had been kings themselves” (Kleinschmidt 73). Representations of these saints, both in visual art and in literature, came to emphasize their frailties rather than their strengths, showing them as dependent upon a higher authority: “Hence late tenth century hagiography emphasized physical suffering and reinstalled the ancient image of the saint as the victim rather than the victor” (Kleinschmidt 73).

Kleinschmidt observes that the “same process of devictorisation and the increasing sense of bodily frailty also became explicit in changes in the image of Christ at the same time” (75). Margaret R. Miles describes the dominant image of Christ prior to this shift, the image of Christ Triumphant whose victory outweighs his victimage:

Christ in Majesty, *Christus triumphans*, depicted in the half-dome of the apse *and* in the tympanum of the main portal of a Romanesque church informed the worshipper as she entered that the same Christ who presides over the cosmos is the “door” by which worshippers enter the liturgical gatherings of the faithful. (8, emphasis in original)

Yet as we move out of Romanesque art and architecture into the high Middle Ages (1000-1300), a whole new image of Christ and Christianity develops, an image expressed most profoundly in church art. Whereas “ecclesiastics wanted the traditional cross that symbolized Christ’s triumph and victory, rather than the new pathetic type that evinced his human suffering,” sculptors in the early 1300’s were “carving a ‘terrifying crucifix’ [...] with a yoked or Y-shaped cross” which for the lay populace was all the more appealing for its portrait of Christ’s embodied suffering (Camille 212). Indeed, in 1305 the bishop of London arranged for the secret removal and destruction of a “*crux horribilis*” that portrayed an emaciated Christ, his head drooping down as if contemplating his visible ribs, his arms and legs mere bones. The bishop may have arranged for the crucifix’s removal, not because it offended his sensibilities, but out of fear that this crucifix “excited too much devotion among the populace who flocked to the city to see it” (Sekules 99).

In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, the heterodynamic, desperately needy body formerly associated with the common populace became the fashion for all levels of society. As Christ transformed from *Christus triumphans* to *Christus patiens*, or

Christ the sufferer, the heterodynamic image of the body took even stronger hold in the public imaginary, emphasizing each individual's sinful frailty when judged from God's (and the Catholic Church's) perspective:

The new image was that of a Christ who was the pale, cadaverous bearer of earthly sins with profusely bleeding wounds. It entailed a perception of the human body as not only frail, but also as the sinful prison of the soul, and led to an asceticism among believers who sought to castigate their bodies in a Christ-like image with the ultimate goal of achieving a mystical union between themselves and Christ. (Kleinschmidt 75).

In this most extreme version of the heterodynamic body, corporeality is understood as the *source* of one's weakness—the body is reconfigured as “rotting, worthless and no more than the temporary earthen residence of the eternal spirit” (Kleinschmidt 75). In turn, each body becomes absolutely dependent upon others for moral support in overcoming its own corporeality—and, in a rhetorical sense, each body becomes dependent upon the Christian Church for its salvation from itself.

Not all members of medieval society were equally affected by this heterodynamic view of the body, however. Kleinschmidt argues that “during the high and late Middle Ages, there were two groups which were only marginally affected by the otherwise increasing mysticism and asceticism; they were the emerging military aristocracy of the knights and the urban patriciate of merchant traders” (76). As urban communities grew and developed a unique culture that differed more from rural culture with each passing year, the chief participants in this new urban culture—the merchants mentioned above, along with scholars and artisans—began to consider the body as a source of power, energy, and worth.

For instance, whereas natural disasters, which had visibly greater impacts on urban areas than on rural ones, had been for centuries regarded as proof of the body's

heterodynamic insufficiency, starting in the late Middle Ages, large communities found themselves using their exceptional bodily resources to recover from and move beyond such disasters:

Hence, much as the physical environment continued to be seen as a threat to human activity, the urban traders, artisans, and scholars, as the three major groups of inhabitants of urban communities, adopted an autodynamic mode of behaviour and accepted it as their task to use their own bodily energies and financial capabilities to overcome the disaster. (Kleinschmidt 77)

What marks such behavior as particularly autodynamic was that, although the community was still drawing upon multiple bodies for multiple resources as it had in a heterodynamic mode, those bodies were now regarded as being *productive* and *self-sufficient*. Political leaders, the Catholic Church, and divine figures were no longer conceived as necessary “victory helpers” who could provide energy to sustain and strengthen the common populace’s weak bodies; instead, those bodies became celebrated for being capable of taking care of themselves.

In a similar manner, the knightly class of necessity reconceptualized bodily might as a personal virtue, similar perhaps to the physical elements of *arête* associated with classical Greek warriors. For centuries, political leadership had come through physical prowess, and the bodies of feudal leaders were thus understood as being sources of compensatory bodily might which would protect the heterodynamically needy bodies of the common populace. But in the late Middle Ages, political power was only loosely based on physical might; political leaders largely *acquired* their military might by purchasing it from an expanding professional military class of knights:

[C]ontrary to the early Middle Ages, during the thirteenth, fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries physical strength no longer legitimised political power, but was then a condition for recognition as a member of a knightly

aristocracy. This aristocracy formed a social group of military professionals who were employed for military service by the rulers, who could themselves claim to be , but by no means always were, military professionals. Next to the merchant traders, it is within this social group of aristocratic military professionals that the autodynamic demand for the physical strength of the body, coupled with a sense of self-reliance, independence and competitiveness, was upheld against the ascetic image of bodily frailty. (Kleinschmidt 78)

These knights expressed and propagandized their autodynamic bodily sufficiency (and even bodily superfluity) at jousts and tournaments where they could both test and advertise their bodies as commodities. Indeed, their bodies were the knights' chief commodities, rather than being a source of shame or weakness as the heterodynamic view of the body would have them believe.

By 1500, as the knightly class began to train and study martial skills increasingly in cities, urban culture began to be dominated by autodynamic merchant, artisan, and knightly bodies:

While much of the traditional modes of behaviour continued among peasant farmers and the growing underprivileged groups of poor residents in the towns and cities well into the eighteenth century, the new demands [for autodynamic behavior] became accepted by political, military, ecclesiastical, trading elites and intellectual opinion leaders. From the beginning of the fifteenth century in southern Europe and elsewhere, eventually, around 1500, the majority of them underwrote the demand that everyone should use his or her own energies for the purpose of acquiring physical strength, intellectual skills and professional achievements. (Kleinschmidt 81)

In training manuals for martial arts, in images of leaders and religious figures, and in literary descriptions of the late Middle Ages, this autodynamic body came to dominate:

“The human body came to be depicted and described as energetic, enduring and as a source of original, not divinely ordained, creative activity” (Kleinschmidt 82).

In terms of how Kleinschmidt's theory of hetero- and autodynamic bodies will be used in the present study, two caveats must be kept in mind. First, as Kleinschmidt argues persuasively, the distinction between hetero- and autodynamic bodies cannot and should not be reduced to a distinction between collectivism and individualism:

While the concept of the autodynamic mode of behaviour focuses on specific interactions between the human body and the social or physical environment, the concept of individualism refers to a tendency of the individual to emphasise his or her own significance, wishes and desires *vis-à-vis* those of other group members. (Kleinschmidt 84)

In other words, while the collectivism/individualism continuum traces various efforts either to fit in and work with the group or to stand out apart from the group, the heterodynamic/autodynamic continuum traces the body's understanding of its need for others or its independence from them. One can be autodynamic and collectivistic at the same time—consider, for instance, the knight who trains his body to maximize his potential so that he may fight properly alongside his fellow warriors. Likewise, one may be heterodynamic and individualistic at the same time—consider, for instance, crusading church reformers like St. Francis whose ideas set them apart from others yet who conceived their bodies as being insufficient and in need of both temporal support from like-minded Christians and divine support from God.

Another temptation we must resist as we mobilize the hetero- and autodynamic modes of behavior to explore the bodies of medieval theatergoers is the temptation to view the movement from one kind of body to the other as an evolutionary transition where the autodynamic body eliminates the inferior or no longer functional heterodynamic body. In his research, Kleinschmidt essentially documents a shift in demographics, not an evolutionary replacement of one ontological mode by another. The



autodynamic body did not replace the heterodynamic body which, as mentioned earlier, continued to be the dominant mode of bodily perception for long after the medieval period. Instead, we might more accurately say that both body images co-existed throughout the Middle Ages, and the shift from heterodynamic dominance to autodynamic dominance reflected a shift in numbers and population rather than an evolutionary erasure of a mode of being.

While Kleinschmidt's theory of hetero- and autodynamic bodies helps us conceptualize certain aspects of medieval bodily experience, it is limited to a discussion of but one element of bodily experience—our sense of our bodily sufficiency or insufficiency. Arthur W. Frank offers a more detailed typology of body usage which can supplement and expand Kleinschmidt's two bodily modes. Frank examines body issues in terms of four problems that a body poses for itself—that is, a body's search for control, for the satiation (or endless replication) of its desire, for other-relatedness, and for self-relatedness. With regard to the issue of control, a body may regard itself as predictable (i.e., under its own control) or contingent (i.e., uncertain and tentative). With regard to the issue of desire, Frank argues that a body can construe itself as lacking (and thus in need of fulfillment) or producing (and thus blessed with abundance). With regard to its relation to others, a body may regard itself as monadic (singular) or dyadic (i.e., working in concert with others). Finally, with regard to the issue of its self-relatedness, a body may either consciously associate the self with the body or may experience a sense of dissociation of self from the body (Frank 51-52).

Some of the elements that Frank takes into account in his typology of bodily usage are similar to those considered by Kleinschmidt—in particular, the monadic-dyadic

binary resembles the autodynamic-heterodynamic continuum. Where Frank moves beyond Kleinschmidt is in his exploration of how four different kinds of bodies are constructed through various combinations of the four bodily problems described above. Frank describes the *disciplined* body as regarding itself as predictable, lacking, monadic, and dissociated from itself. The primary mode of expression for this body is regimentation. The *mirroring* body, by comparison, also regards itself as predictable and monadic but sees itself as producing rather than lacking and as associated with itself. The primary mode of expression for this body is consumption. The *dominating* body regards itself as contingent (i.e. unpredictable), dyadic, lacking, and dissociated from itself. The primary mode of expression for this body is force. The *communicative* body regards itself as contingent and dyadic but is producing and is associated with itself. The primary mode of expression for this body is recognition (Frank 53-54).

More will be said about these types of bodies in the chapters that follow. For now, it will suffice to observe that Frank's typology helps us to consider multiple dimensions of bodily experience, and by doing so it supplements Kleinschmidt's historically rooted observations about medieval bodily constructions. Taken in concert, the work of Frank and Kleinschmidt allows us to theorize in some detail about the bodily experiences of medieval theatergoers which, in turn, helps us "flesh out" the various chronotopes of medieval performance.

One final kind of body must be considered, however, in light of my use of Bakhtin's work on the chronotope. Although he explores a variety of kinds of bodies and their relations with each other, with words, and with time and space, perhaps the most famous kind of body Bakhtin discusses is the carnivalesque body. This body, while

discussed in other works by Bakhtin, is most associated with Rabelais and His World, a study which explores (among other things) the passage from medieval to Renaissance representations of the body. It would at first blush seem that the carnivalesque body would therefore be an appropriate body for our discussion of medieval chronotopes of performance. The carnivalesque body described in Rabelais and His World, however, is not consistent with the majority of Bakhtin's research on metalinguistics and the chronotope, and as such is of limited usefulness in the context of my research here.

Bakhtin describes the carnivalesque body in Rabelais and His World in terms that preclude both metalinguistic dialogism and chronotopic perception:

In grotesque realism [...] the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people. As such it is opposed to severance from the material and bodily roots of the world; it makes no pretense to renunciation of the earthly, or independence of the earth and the body. We repeat: the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. (19)

Such a body, as joyous, renewing, and utopian as it may be, is of necessity a *singular* body, that is, one body made up of the unity of "the people." A singular body cannot engage in dialogue, since it has no partner with whom to converse: "Whereas dialogue presupposes at least two responsible discrete selves, each outside the other, carnival strives everywhere toward *fusion*, which makes true dialogue impossible" (Morson and Emerson 227, emphasis in original). As we shall see shortly, the issue of how performance speech is *addressed to* different individuals in the first and second worlds as well as in the material and spiritual worlds will be a central concern for our study, and as

such the carnivalesque body's movement away from dialogic relations would weaken the current study rather than strengthen it.

Likewise, a singular body that encompasses "the people" has no specific, fixed place in space and time, and as such, it cannot participate meaningfully in any specific chronotope: "Inasmuch as the idea of the chronotope stresses the specific historically bounded time and space that enables individual acts, carnival could be understood as an *antichronotope*" (Morson and Emerson 228, emphasis in original). Rather than the encompassing, decrowning, orifice-obsessed carnivalesque body of Rabelais and His World, we will be better served to explore the specific needs of specific bodies who find themselves working and playing with, against, for, and alongside each other.

#### The Eucharist as Flesh and Metaphor

In a world where flesh and spirit are intertwined as they often were in medieval England, "flesh" included more than *human* bodies. Perhaps the most profound example of the struggle over the meaning of materiality, image, metaphor, and spirituality in the Middle Ages can be found in the enduring struggle over one short phrase: "Hoc est enim corpus meum," or "This is my body." One of the greatest successes of the early Church fathers in reifying Church doctrine in the early Middle Ages came in their efforts to legitimate the doctrine of transubstantiation—the belief that the bread and wine served at Eucharist, once properly consecrated, were literally transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. That this doctrine became standard throughout Western Christianity is a remarkable achievement of doctrinal "spin," as it were, given the various incongruities that such a doctrine brings to the fore—what Gallagher and Greenblatt have called the "threat that recalcitrant, ineradicable matter posed for eucharistic theology" (144). One

must chew the flesh of Christ; one must deal with the crumbs left behind, crumbs which may consecrate church mice who are blessed by receiving the Body of Christ as a surprise snack; one must solve the riddle of digestion—does the Lord pass through our entrails?

Despite this problem of “material residue,” as Gallagher and Greenblatt call it, the doctrine of transubstantiation became central to Catholic theology:

In fact, the Host can be described as the single most important image to Christians from the middle of the thirteenth century onward, perhaps even overtaking veneration of the cross. Unlike the latter, which was only a sign, the Host was a material substance that in countless places and at different times was capable of transforming into God’s flesh. (Camille 215)

Indeed, the elevation of the Host after its consecration became not only the most popular moment in the Mass, but became for some the only important moment: “In the cities people ran from church to church to see the elevated Host as often as possible, since they assumed that the more Elevations you saw, the more grace you would acquire” (Harris 75). Here we see in microcosm the problem that images, iconicity, and the materiality of existence posed for Christian faith: Material substance (bread and wine) is valuable, but only if it somehow “becomes real” in a spiritual sense through the act of worshipping the One True God. But in “becoming real,” material cannot transcend its materiality no matter how hard it tries—wine dribbles off lips and soaks into vestments; crumbs disappear into corners to be sought by less-than-devout creatures.

Hence one might argue that the generalized movement throughout the Middle Ages from a rejection of images, *mimesis*, and embodiment to an embracing of materiality and enfleshed spirituality was, to some extent, written into the contradictory qualities of Christian faith. Throughout medieval England, various pre- or proto-

Protestant impulses toward consubstantial doctrine urged participants to regard the Eucharist as a *metaphorical pointing to* a spiritual reality. This view of the Eucharist as representation can inform our understanding of the typical medieval distinction between Latin liturgical dramas that could *not* abide “illusionistic” *mimesis* and the Corpus Christi pageants that *could* represent embodied efforts to represent Christian doctrine as “mere play”—that is, as metaphorical rather than literal embodiment. In this sense, the two interpretive planes—spiritual/material and first world/second world—are inevitably intertwined. Whenever one addresses issues of the relationship between spirit and matter, one must also address issues of representation, since the representation of spirit can only come through matter. When seeking relationships between the spiritual and the material, we must always ask whether or not the spiritual entities we are referring to are metaphorical expressions of our religious imagination or whether those entities are part of the same world we live in, breathing the same air.

#### Addressivity and Theatrical Images

Bakhtin’s concept of addressivity allows us to consider in detail our relations with various entities—whether they be part of our religious imagination or possessed of some form of substance. Doing so will correct the tendency to view chronotopes as static givens with no motives or communicative intentions informing them. In Bakhtin’s view, all aspects of Being are addressed to me, as it were, and I must actively work to respond to events as they are addressed to me: “In other words, addressivity is [...] an activity, the dialogue between events addressed to me in the particular place that I occupy in existence, and my expression of a *response* to such events from that unique place” (Holquist 48, emphasis in original). Narratives, as events, are likewise marked as

utterances which are called into being as responses to other utterances and which in turn summon forth other utterances in response. Narratives, and the chronotopes that in-form them, are responses, not *a priori* givens. As such, any detailed discussion of chronotopes will be concerned with questions of motive and interaction—who is being addressed from within this chronotope, and why?

Bakhtin argues that the primary purpose of analyzing “utterances” rather than “language” is to focus on the ways in which language exists, not in and for *itself*, but within and for interlocutors to engage each other. “Thus, addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature of the utterance; without it the utterance does not and cannot exist” (Bakhtin, Speech 99). Or, as Morson and Emerson put it, “[D]ialogue is possible only among people, not among abstract elements of language. There can be no dialogue between sentences. An utterance requires both a speaker and a listener (or a writer and a reader), who [...] have joint proprietorship of it” (131).

Only by examining the influence of this “someone” that an utterance “turns to” can we offer a meaningful response to the utterance as critics: “Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance” (Bakhtin, Speech 95). Taking an addressee—or multiple addressees—into consideration in one’s analysis of an utterance can lead to several different kinds of messiness, but ultimately, each of these kinds of messiness in turn leads to a richer and more nuanced interpretation of the utterance. Indeed, Morson and Emerson argue that Bakhtin’s celebration of messiness as opposed to systematic theoretism is one hallmark of his theory of language and dialogue: “For Bakhtin, the

attempt to explain away messiness by postulating still more systems and the higher order of a system of systems is at best like adding epicycles to a Ptolemaic astronomy and at worst a wholly unjustified leap of theoretist faith” (144). Like children playing in a mud puddle, we cannot examine (or play with) utterances without getting messy.

One kind of messiness involved in taking addressees into account when examining an utterance is that doing so inevitably involves taking several aspects of the addressee and the addressee’s relation to the author/speaker into account. An utterance is, essentially, only one side of what can sometimes be a very complicated argument or discussion, and can anticipate responses from the addressee:

When constituting my utterance, I try actively to determine this response. Moreover, I try to act in accordance with the response I anticipate, so this anticipated response, in turn, exerts an active influence on my utterance (I parry objections that I foresee, I make all kinds of provisos, and so forth). When speaking I always take into account the apperceptive background of the addressee’s perception of my speech: the extent to which he is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies—because all this will determine his actively responsive understanding of my utterance.  
(Bakhtin Speech 95-96)

The mere fact that an utterance, including a given theatrical performance in medieval England, is uttered *to* and *for* someone introduces a meta-level of communication. The author is both framing his/her thoughts and framing responses to the addressee’s imagined responses in the same moment.

The fact that these anticipated responses from the addressee are for the most part imagined or anticipated leads us to another kind of messiness involved in taking addressees into account when examining an utterance. The addressee for a written work is often the product of the author’s imagination rather than being an actual, historical,



flesh-and-blood person. Of course, writers can and do take into account specific readers and their responses when crafting a narrative—they can imagine the responses of editors, patrons, friends, clerical superiors, other artists, and more in an attempt to craft their work to fit the demands of these readers. Even in this instance, though, the writer is largely taking into account, not an actual response from a reader, but rather an anticipated (and thus imaginary) response. This is not always true, of course—the writer may, for instance, listen to a patron’s comments about a first draft of a work and adapt the work based on those comments. Still, a certain messiness is inevitable when trying to identify the imagined interlocutors that writers and performers imagine they will be speaking to as they craft their narratives.

A third kind of messiness involved in taking addressees into account when examining an utterance is that an utterance can have multiple and even contradictory addressees, both actual and anticipated, real and imaginary. Writers and performers are not required to be consistent in how they envision their readers’ responses; indeed, careful and talented writers and performers will take into account the often contradictory responses that a diverse audience can produce. Such an awareness of the diversity of audience responses can lead to a more subtle, rich, and textured work. And in the case of medieval performance, as we have seen already, we must also consider spiritual entities as possible addressees. Spiritual entities in fact might in some ways be considered more significant addressees than human ones in medieval England, given that relatively few humans contribute to one’s fate in the afterlife while most if not all spiritual entities are conceived of as actively working to seal one’s fate either for Heaven or for Hell.

Of course, the responses of divine beings are likely to be quite different from human responses; spiritual entities seem likely to respond to an utterance either completely maliciously (working to twist your words at every turn) or completely benevolently (making sense of even those flawed or poorly phrased utterances that you hoped would be understood as you had intended them to be). Such thoroughgoing malice or benevolence rarely obtains with human beings, but spiritual entities seem capable of a kind of completeness or fullness of response that human addressees are not. In addition to actual and imagined respondents, Bakhtin argues that we must imagine another, special kind of interlocutor in order to examine addressivity fully. For although we craft utterances to and for people, we also realize that no “author (or speaker) can ever count on perfect understanding by his listener” (Morson and Emerson 135). Yet Bakhtin argues that we construct utterances in part with an eye toward this pure and perfect understanding: “This follows from the nature of the word, which always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)” (Speech 127, emphasis in original).

Bakhtin therefore describes another category of addressee, the *superaddressee*, in order to be able to discuss this hope-filled search for complete understanding that drives every utterance. Morson and Emerson offer one of the most detailed examples and definitions of the superaddressee available:

In everyday speech between two people, one might turn to an invisible third person and say about the person actually present, “Would you just listen to him!” Or one of the two may gesture: roll up his eyes or put his body into a questioning position, as if asking some invisible person for guidance in understanding the recalcitrant other. At times, we speak to someone as if our real concern is with a possible listener not present, one

whose judgment would *really* count or whose advice would really help us. Stated more positively, the superaddressee embodies a principle of hope. It is present, more or less consciously, in *every* utterance. (135, emphasis in original)

In medieval England, spiritual entities are likely to play the role of these superaddressees, although as Bakhtin is careful to emphasize, there is nothing particularly or specifically mystical or religious about the superaddressee, which is first and foremost a product of the hopeful nature of utterances (Speech 126-127). We can even qualify and extend Bakhtin's development of the concept of the superaddressee by noting that such voices can be imagined as responding with perfect understanding *or* with "perfect" (that is, demonic and maliciously thoroughgoing) *mis*-understanding.

#### Conclusion: Ownership and Ontology

Issues of addressivity lead us to questions of power and control over theatrical images as forms of discourse. Who is the image being produced for, and who holds what kind of authority over that image? Theatrical performance produces images, and with all images, one question we can ask would be, "What is my relationship to this image?" There are an almost infinite number of relationships one can have with a theatrical image, ranging from those of complete disinterest to those of intense longing, obligation, even need. Images can be phantasmal and thus relatively insignificant, or they can be "ghostly" in the medieval sense—that is, infused with the Holy Spirit—and thus come to possess ontological authority over those who view the images. Theatrical images can speak to us as ontologically equal, ontologically inferior, or ontologically superior entities. One can own the image, or one can be owned by the image. One of the major areas for exploration in this study, then, is the variety of ontological relationships that

medieval notions of spirituality and *mimesis* can bring into being in a theatrical context.

In other words, how do our bodies relate to divine images as representations?

Each of the three chronotopes to be examined in this study locates itself uniquely with regard to two interpretive planes, the spiritual/material plane and the first-world/second-world plane. The sacramental chronotope of early liturgical drama assumes a fundamental equation of the material and spiritual worlds while allowing for less distinction between the audience-sphere (first world) and the play-sphere (second world). In this sense, the sacramental chronotope collapses distinctions that modern theatergoers routinely make between what is “real” and “not real.” Within the context of such ritual performances, the supposedly or typically *imaginative* metaworld created in and through performance comes to acquire a greater ontological authority than the ontological authority of the performers and other participants in liturgical dramas.

In contrast, the consubstantial chronotope of the later morality plays and Tudor-era interludes such as Fulgens and Lucrez functions more comfortably (at least to modern minds) within the dichotomies of matter versus spirit, “real” world and “pretend” worlds that characterize much of our current theatergoing experience. The consubstantial chronotope thus assumes an almost absolute distinction between first and second worlds—a distinction strong enough to allow for the boundary-breaking violations of the “fourth wall” which often characterize modern metatheatrical play. This chronotope also begins to divide the material and spiritual worlds, which in turn usurps some of the power of the second world by severing its ties to the invisible world of the spirit.

Functioning as a sort of middle ground between the sacramental and consubstantial chronotopes is the transubstantial chronotope associated with the Corpus

Christi biblical pageants. This chronotope maintains the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual worlds while negotiating a tenuous and often-blurred distinction between the first world of the audience and the second world of the play. In the process, the transubstantial chronotope takes full advantage of the powerful connection between the invisible world of the spirit and the invisible “world” of the play to reach out to the visible world of the audience. As noted earlier in this chapter, then, in medieval experience it was fairly common to blur the distinction between what is real and what is imagined in such a way as to have each frame inform the experience of the other frame. In the process, the transubstantial chronotope grants a certain ontological authority *both* to the world of the audience and the performers *and* to the fictive metaworld created in and through performance, allowing each world to speak to and with the other.

An essential difference, then, between these three chronotopes is the way each constructs, enables, or denies the agency of the performative metaworld to claim ontological authority with regard to the performers and audience members in the moment of performance. We might say that different chronotopes construct the ontological substance of that performative metaworld differently. In our daily lives, we can regard various entities as either possessing Being and thus possessing the power to speak to and with us or as fundamentally lacking Being in the phenomenological sense that most entities, in our daily experience, are regarded as existing but not Being. For most of us, a tree in our front yard has existence but no Being, no capacity to challenge or contest our world views—a power which we routinely grant to the people in our lives whose views and concerns we value. Yet we might easily imagine a neo-pagan who worships trees and whose orientation toward the tree in his/her front yard is essentially the same as

his/her orientation toward the neighbor next door. In such a case, the neo-pagan actively “gifts” the tree with ontological substance, an ontological substance that it might not possess for you or for me.

By “substance” here, I refer not to any Aristotelian concept of fundamental reality, but rather to the more everyday notion of substance as something with weight, agency, and its own inertia. Relationally, a tree that I gift with ontological substance has become “weighty” for me, and I must take the tree into account as I go about interacting with the various Beings around me. In dialogical terms, I cannot simply “overlook” the tree or dismiss its concerns—I can try to silence the tree or to ignore its pleas for water and sunlight, but I cannot convince myself the tree is irrelevant. Once the tree acquires ontological substance in its relation to me, I can no longer walk past it without, as it were, at least waving “hello” in its direction.

The sacramental chronotope associated with Latin liturgical dramas grants the imaginative metaworld with a profound ontological substance—the divine world that the sacramental chronotope brings into contact with the participants in such dramas possesses ontological superiority in comparison to the merely human clerics worshipping in their meager way. The consubstantial chronotope, in contrast, actively denies the imaginative metaworld any ontological substance—performance creates only “the stuff of dreams,” and the world conjured in and through performance exists for my benefit rather than having a “life of its own.” The second world of performance, in such a view, is like any other object purchased for pleasurable or practical use, and it has no more ontological substance—and thus no more capacity to engage me in dialogue—than any other purchased object has, such as the computer I am writing on/with at this moment.

The third possibility for ontological substance, and the most intriguing one for me personally, is the possibility of the imaginative metaworld acquiring an ontologically *equal* footing with me in the moment of performance. In the transubstantial chronotope, as I will argue in Chapter Five, the second world achieves such an equal ontological footing. Such an ontological footing is functionally similar to the more dialogic impulses Bakhtin ascribes to the “serio-comical” genres which followed in the wake of the epic and which preceded the development of the novel:

The shift of the temporal center of artistic orientation, which placed on the same temporally valorized plane the author and his readers (on the one hand) and the world and heroes described by him (on the other), making them contemporaries, possible acquaintances, friends, familiarizing their relations [...], permits the author, in all his various masks and faces, to more freely enter into the field of his represented world, a field that in the epic had been absolutely inaccessible and closed. (*Dialogic* 27)

Just as the dialogic relations among author, audience, and created world that Bakhtin refers to here require an active *doing*, a creation born of effort, so too ontological substance is the result of effort and activity, something that is given or acquired or obtained rather than something that existed prior to the event of performance. And in the transubstantial chronotope, I would argue, the ontological substance of the imaginative metaworld has as much interactional weight as does our neighbor—but not nearly the interactional weight of an omnipotent God.

In the same manner that Kenneth Burke claims dramatism is not a metaphor for but is rather a *description of* symbolic action, I would argue that my use of the terms “transubstantial” and “consubstantial” here is not metaphorical—or, at least, I would argue that the metaphor extended so deeply into the experience of medieval theatergoers that it was no longer understood as a metaphor. In the transubstantial chronotope, infused

with *figura*, the word does indeed become flesh; just as bread and wine are transformed into the body of Christ, the metaworld of a mystery play is transformed by the transubstantial chronotope into an enfleshed historical reality as substantial as anything else in the medieval audience's reality. In the consubstantial chronotope, however, the relationship between substance and spirit is purely symbolic; in the Tudor era interludes of Henry Medwall, for instance, this sundering of substance and spirit transforms the theatrical metaworld into a dreamworld with less ontological substance than that of the audience. One might say, then, that a unique and powerful miracle occurs within the transubstantial chronotope—a miracle facilitated by figural interpretation in the Middle Ages.

By comparison, the term “sacramental” describes that particular chronotope of performance not simply because such performance occurred during or in association with Catholic sacraments during medieval church services. Rather, I wish to call upon the way sacraments are constructed as ritual conduits which temporarily connect the human and the divine. The sacrament of marriage, for instance, was (and in many cases still is) understood as an invitation or a plea for God to come down to earth and to grant his blessing and favor upon a given union. The sacrament of Extreme Unction beckons God down to bring aid, comfort, and/or spiritual guidance to one who is sick or near death. The sacramental chronotope, then, is one wherein symbolic action serves to bring the world of humans into contact with the world of the divine as opposed to serving as a tool for the creation of an imaginative metaworld.

The sacrament of the Eucharist, as we have seen, is a special sacrament in this sense because it involves a transformation of substance into spirit. The transubstantial



and consubstantial chronotopes, therefore, involve some sort of symbolic—and perhaps even material—*transformation* rather than the symbolic *instantiation* involved in what I call the sacramental chronotope. Through ritual *sacra*, the Latin liturgical dramas of medieval England connected a congregation to the world of the divine without moving a single step from the sacred space of the church, literally or figuratively. And it is to this chronotope, one which is paradoxically the most literal and at the same time the most spiritual, that we will turn our attention now.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SACRAMENTAL CHRONOTOPE

After this, any brother who is conscious of having committed some fault shall humbly ask forgiveness and indulgence. But a brother that is accused, no matter for what reason, by the abbot or by one of the senior officials, shall prostrate himself before speaking. And when asked by the prior the reason for this, he shall answer by admitting his fault, saying *Mea culpa domine*. Then, when bidden, let him rise. If he acts in any other wise he shall be deemed guilty. Thus whoever, when rebuked by a superior for anything done amiss in the workshops, does not immediately prostrate himself as the Rule ordains, must undergo the greater punishment.

--from the *Regularis concordia anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque* by Aethelwold, c. 970-973 A.D. (qtd. in Kobialka, This Is My Body 62)

This quote, taken from the same *Regularis concordia* containing the text of what has often been considered the first medieval English drama, suggests that the bodies of those religious who were both the performers and the primary audience members for Latin liturgical dramas of the high Middle Ages (c. 1000-1300) were highly disciplined bodies. Such discipline was provided both from without and from within; monastic practices provided a rigid chain of authority that commanded absolute obedience, just as God required such obedience from all His followers, and in turn monastic practice aimed to instill an inner discipline that would express itself in outward obedience. Christian humility, driven by a pious fear of God, required those who followed the monastic life to commit themselves to constant regulation and submission, as is reflected in the Rule of St. Benedict, written around 540 A.D.: “The first step of humility is attained by unhesitating obedience” (Herlihy 58). An analysis of the Latin liturgical dramas of medieval England—dramas which are frequently found alongside such strict monastic regulations—must take into account the technologies of discipline that were not only

written into monastic rules but also, and in the most thoroughgoing way, into all of the practices of a given monastery, including performance practices.

Mary Carruthers usefully describes monastic disciplinary practices as “orthopraxis,” that is, as an orthodox set of daily practices for becoming and remaining a monk. Her description of monastic training as orthopraxis helps us to understand the bodily technologies of teaching and learning discipline that dominated medieval monastic life:

Orthodoxy explicates canonical texts, whereas orthopraxis emphasizes a set of experiences and techniques, conceived as a “way” to be followed, leading one to relive the founder’s path to enlightenment. Because it seeks an experience, an orthopraxis can never be completely articulate; instead of ritualized dogma, it relies upon patterns of oral formulae and ritualized behavior to prepare for an experience of God, should one be granted. Like chance, grace also favors a prepared mind.[...] Monasticism is one such practice.[...] Any craft develops an orthopraxis, a craft “knowledge” which is learned, and indeed can only be learned, by the painstaking practical imitation and complete familiarization of exemplary masters’ techniques and experiences. Most of this knowledge cannot even be set down in words; it must be learned by practicing, over and over again. Monastic education is best understood, I think, on this apprenticeship model, more like masonry or carpentry than anything in the modern academy. It is an apprenticeship to a craft which is also a way of life. (Carruthers 1-2)

Monastic practice involved each young monk’s utter dependence upon masters of bodily practice who would (at least ideally) provide, through example and through physical training, initiation into a way of life. By following such practices of discipline, monks could manufacture, as it were, the most important product of monastic work: “Monastic meditation is the craft of making thoughts about God” (Carruthers 2).

One acquires such training communally, rather than through individual effort and learning: “In medieval monasticism, the individual always had his or her being within a larger community, within which a single life was ‘perfected,’ ‘made complete,’ by

acquiring a civic being and identity” (Carruthers 2). In such a context, most monks found themselves lacking in strength and meaning without the presence of others who could provide the leadership required to master the monastic life. In Kleinschmidt’s terms, these monastic bodies were driven by a heterodynamic sense of incompleteness and vulnerability, always reliant on others for power, safety, and comfort. For such bodies, meaning was authored largely, if not indeed exclusively, from above, both in terms of one’s earthly superiors and in terms of the ultimate superiority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In such a context, the notion that one can own or author meaning, or even that meaning is of necessity debated by ontological equals, was not necessarily in force at various times in various places in medieval England. While from our contemporary perspective, we often take for granted that we are in charge of the “care of souls” for ourselves, medieval culture was for the most part dominated by the notion that the individual could not produce meaning, could not author redemption, and could not make sense of the world without reference to an ontologically superior being. This chapter is an exploration of how an ontology of need might have informed the way participants in Latin liturgical drama made sense of theatrical representation. Theatrical representation means something very different if one thinks of oneself as author of one’s own meaning (or co-author of a co-constructed meaning) than if one thinks of oneself as ontologically incomplete and/or incapable of making meaning by oneself. In the latter case, the imaginative “second world” created in and through performance might come to possess an ontological superiority that we would likely find oppressive today precisely because we frequently strive to author our own interpretations. But the history of medieval

religious practices, from sacraments to sermons, suggests that the average person regarded him/herself as functionally incapable of the care of his/her own soul, and thus perhaps as being functionally incapable of making meaning out of existence.

Such people would look outside themselves for meaning, and they would find such meaning in the space and time around them. As was noted in the previous chapter, spiritual meaning was often localized in space and time, written into or “trapped” in specific sites such as churches, shrines, and other holy (or unholy) places. Likewise, the rhythms of monastic life assigned specific meanings to various hours of the day, to various days of the week, and to various calendrical holidays. Monastic bodies, therefore, moved through a powerfully ritualized space according to the rhythms of ritual time. In this performance context, space and time become infused, as it were, with divine meaning. The sacramental chronotope associated with Latin liturgical drama thus does not need to author a fictional “second world” which it then brings it into contact with the “first world” of the performers and audience. Instead, the sacramental chronotope, through religious ritual, opens a doorway to correspondences between the first world and the pre-existing and immanent divine world. The movement of liturgical dramas through church space and time was in this sense both a pointer to and reflection of the all-encompassing world of the spirit.

In this chapter, then, I will first describe the ontology of need that dominated the everyday experience not only of clerics in medieval England but also the everyday experience of most of the laity as well. From there, I move to recontextualize the texts of Latin liturgical dramas in light of their frequent inclusion in larger works describing monastic rules, regulations, and practices. A fuller appreciation of how Latin liturgical

dramas were understood chronotopically can be gained by describing in detail the disciplined bodies of those clerics who participated in the life of a monastery. The discipline of such bodies and their daily regimentation might make us question whether or not Latin liturgical dramas were understood as independent theatrical texts or “plays”; as a result, I will explore definitions of “theatre” and “drama” that informed medieval performers and audience members in the high Middle Ages. In the eyes of those engaged in producing Latin liturgical dramas, “theatre” was addressed to humans, while the dramas staged in monasteries to celebrate the love of Christ were addressed to God, thus making their dramas more holy than debased secular “theatre.” With this understanding in place, I end the chapter by discussing relations between the world of the spirit and the world of matter, as well as relations between the first and second worlds of performance, in the context of the religious rituals that we now call the Latin liturgical drama of medieval England.

### An Ontology of Need

The tenth century in England was an era of widespread monastic reform, where laws, rules, and regulations proliferated to provide the clergy with a strict hierarchy and a clear relationship with secular leaders:

The new monastic reform movement drew its inspiration from the leadership of a triumvirate: Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester, and Oswald, archbishop of York and bishop of Worcester. Backed by the king, they revolutionized the spiritual geography of England. New hierarchies were introduced. A special relationship was now seen to link Christ and his saints with the King and his monks. As Christ ruled in heaven, so on earth did [King] Edgar, the “vicar of Christ.” His monks meanwhile guarded the tombs of the saints and sought their spiritual support. (Leyser 179-180)

Significantly, all three of these monastic reformers were closely associated with the creation of the *Regularis concordia* that provides us with the text of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, which is often regarded as the first English medieval drama (Kobialka, This Is My Body 41). Equally significantly, we see here a relationship between the clergy and the King which demonstrates the heterodynamic neediness that Kleinschmidt argues was so prevalent in the high Middle Ages. The King relied on the Church for his status as the “vicar of Christ,” which provided him with divinely granted secular power; meanwhile, the Church relied on the King’s patronage to enforce its monopoly on spiritual practice.

Part of this mutual interdependence derived from Edgar’s project of uniting all of England into a single kingdom:

While in the past there had been times when kings and monks had been at loggerheads, jealous of each other’s power bases, partnership now seemed mutually advantageous. The monks gained endowments for their foundations, and the king, crucial support. The kings of Wessex, it must be remembered, were only newly kings of England. In the unification of England—in the surmounting of factional and local loyalties and rivalries—the monks of the new foundations had a major role to play. (Leyser 181-183)

The sweeping monastic reforms of the tenth century in England were in large part driven by efforts to centralize political control. Such extensive political control could only be achieved in the context of medieval culture if religious powers were granted to secular rulers while secular rulers equally enhanced the power and status of the church.

At the heart of these monastic reforms, therefore, was a centralizing impulse which expressed itself in monasteries as an almost iron-fisted effort to standardize monastic practices. Prior to these reforms, monastic practice in England had been characterized by a notable diversity and a lack of centralized regulation (Leyser 180). Aethelwold, Dunstan, and Oswald, working through King Edgar, changed all of this,

bringing monasteries to heel and requiring absolute adherence to a specific code of behavior:

The climax of the enterprise came with the issuing of the *Regularis Concordia* (“The Monastic Agreement”) at the synod of Winchester of c. 970. Summoning his bishops, abbots, and abbesses, Edgar “urged all to be of one mind as regards monastic usage...to avoid all dissension, lest differing ways of observing the customs of one rule should bring their holy conversation into disrepute.” All monks and nuns accordingly swore to live according to “one uniform observance.” Rejecting the overlordship of any layman, they yet accepted royal protection and gave to the king the right to control the election of their superiors. Every day, indeed eight times every day, their liturgy prescribed prayers for the king and queen (and unless there was some special need the king got a ninth prayer too). (Leyser 181)

Monastic practice, from this point on in medieval England, was defined by specific and uniformly observed rules that informed the lived experience of every cleric; these rules in turn required specific practices and observances which imposed physical and mental regulation on each cleric. Obedience became the watch word for monastic practice in England, as reflected in the Rule of St. Benedict:

With the prompt tread of obedience they follow in deeds the command of the superior. It is as if in one moment the command of the master and the completed work of the disciple are both of them rapidly executed together, with speed brought by the fear of God, by persons urged forward by the desire of attaining eternal life. (Herlihy 58-59)

Bodies in need of guidance and training in order to avoid the fires of Hell and attain the joys of Heaven were required to engage in a most thoroughgoing conformity to hierarchy and religious practice. I say “bodies” here because true discipline and obedience to Christ required a holistic transformation, as is reflected in the description of St. Francis of Assisi by Thomas of Celano as being changed “in mind, not in body” in the early (and thus incomplete) phase of his religious pursuits (Shinners 43). Both mental and bodily discipline were required as one sought the love of God.



The ontology of need so firmly established in monastic life came, in the early thirteenth century, to inform the lived experience of the laity as well. The year 1215 marks a watershed moment in the history of the Catholic Church:

In 1215 Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) gathered several hundred archbishops, bishops, abbots, and prelates from across Europe at Rome to discuss the state of the church. The decrees issued by this Fourth Lateran Council [...] defined the basic religious duties required of all Christians and established procedures for the administration of the church at the local levels of the diocese and parish. (Shinners 6)

The decrees passed during the Fourth Lateran Council defined spiritual practice in a way that paradoxically both uplifted the largely illiterate laity and at the same time placed that laity in a position of dire need. This council regularized and reformed certain sacraments, such as the sacrament of confession, and reified interpretations of previous sacraments, such as the doctrine of the living presence in the Eucharist—i.e., transubstantiation. The cumulative effect of these decrees was to focus the attention of the Church more squarely on the needs of the laity while defining spiritual practice in such a way that the laity would have a greater need for the Church.

Take, for instance, the sacrament of confession, which “obliged all adult Christians to make confession and receive holy communion at least once a year. This obligation, in turn, required priests themselves to be more meticulous in their exercise of the *cura animarum*, or care of souls” (Shinners 6). On the one hand, the decision to make confession a sacrament was a means of urging local clergy to take seriously their task of caring for the souls of their parishioners; on the other hand, making confession a sacrament created yet another ritual obligation for good Christians who wished to enter heaven. That sacrament of confession, in other words, enhanced the individual’s dependency on the Church for the care of his/her soul.

After the Fourth Lateran Council, priests became more active in their communities: “steps were taken to ensure that all priests were educated in pastoral care, trained not only to celebrate rituals correctly but also to preach to the people” (Leyser 189). This new preaching would be directed *at* the laity for the *benefit* of the laity. Likewise, in order to facilitate acceptance of confession as a sacrament, the Church began “the production of works telling people how and what to confess” (Pearsall 263). The increased emphasis on preaching skill following the Fourth Lateran Council might be best understood as a recognition of the importance of rhetoric and persuasion: parishioners had to be convinced that they needed to confess.

Before parishioners could confess their sins, they needed to know which sins they were expected to confess, what kinds of penance they could expect to receive, who exactly was authorized to hear their confessions, and, above all, what advantages would accrue to them from regular confession, and what punishments would be imposed on them if they remained unrepentant. (Harris 84)

In short, the laity had to be taught that they were sinners. And to teach them this, the Church found it necessary to speak directly to the laity.

On one level, the Church’s need to speak to the laity reflected its dependence on the laity for its survival. The Church’s dependency meant that the laity possessed some power and could influence, at least in small ways, the spiritual practices of the Church. On another level, however, the Church’s efforts to speak to the laity and to construct new, mandatory sacraments merely sustained an ontology of need that the Church held over the laity for hundreds of years. The reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council worked to define spiritual power as the ultimate power, one which reduced parishioners to beggars before the Lord—and thus beggars before the Church clergy. This ontology of need is best summed up in the “the doctrine of the power of the keys”:

[T]his was derived from a passage in the Scriptures where Christ delegated his authority to bind and loose all souls to St Peter, later the first leader of the Roman Church—that is, he symbolically gave Peter the keys to Heaven and Hell and the power to allocate people’s souls provisionally to one or the other in anticipation of the Last Judgement. This authority was now understood to apply to all anointed priests because they were St Peter’s direct successors. (Harris 84)

The Church reached out to the laity, but only to reinforce the laity’s dependence on Church officials, institutions, and practices.

For most of the Middle Ages, then, European women and men found themselves in an ontology of need in terms of their relationship to the divine. This profound sense of need and incompleteness informed medieval experience throughout the early Middle Ages, and the revisions to Church practice in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 reified and institutionalized this ontology of need by insuring that the only path to divine forgiveness passed through the hands of priests. With regard to the most fundamental of all questions—what is my standing with my God?—most members of the lay populace lived with a constantly present absence, with an ache that required others to address. And most of those clergy who were expected to address this yearning were likewise in need of both divine and temporal guidance in order to remain part of this special class of individuals who were both empowered and entrusted with the “care of souls.” Thus an ontology of need permeated church space in the high Middle Ages, with bodies seeking out other bodies in search of the means to save their souls.

#### Discipline and Monastic Bodies

The fact that such disciplinary practices were often encoded in the same monastic texts that contained Latin liturgical dramas tells us a great deal about how the performance of those texts was likely to have been understood. Since the foundational

work of E. K. Chambers in 1903, Aethelwold's *Regularis concordia* has typically been regarded as offering the first text of medieval "theatre" in Europe: the *Visitatio Sepulchri* intended as part of the Nocturns (or Matins) observance on Easter Sunday. "The *Regularis concordia* [...] is treated as the earliest medieval record of a theatrical representation in which a merger between some form of mimetic action, dialogue, and setting unequivocally take place" (Kobialka, "Staging Place/Space" 130). Often overlooked in the rush to identify theatrical origins, however, is the principal nature of the *Regularis concordia* as a consuetudinary (or "customary") which "presents us with a series of monastic codes" (Kobialka, *This Is My Body* 69). As we explore the sacramental chronotope associated with many Latin liturgical dramas (or "tropes") of the Middle Ages, we should note that these tropes are most frequently described in documents which function to discipline monastic bodies by establishing clear routines and rituals for every hour of every day. The *Regularis concordia* was not intended as an anthology of dramatic literature; it was designed instead as a regulatory tool—and a tool which had clear political functions, as we have already seen. Any performances arising out of it and other consuetudinaries must be understood in this light as political, ritual, and spiritual devices.

Consider, for instance, the bodily discipline imposed in the following passages from St. Aethelwold's work:

When the Chapter has been held, having taken off their shoes, they shall enter the Church and as an act of obedience wash the pavement thereof while the priests and ministers of the altar wash the sacred altars with holy water[...]. For the first three weeks of these days of Lent the brethren shall be unshorn; but in the middle of Lent the common duty of shaving shall be carried out and all excess of hair shall be utterly removed. (qtd. in Kobialka, *This Is My Body* 74)

Dicta such as these are the heart of the *Regularis concordia*; indeed, the consuetudinary describes the appropriate rituals and behaviors for each brother or sister in whatever rank he or she may fill, for the sick and for the healthy, for every day of the year, for all Holy Day celebrations, and for the changes in the seasons (Kobialka, This Is My Body 57). Indeed, the reader is even instructed in what actions to take upon rising and “having provided for the necessity of nature, if at that time he must” (Kobialka, This Is My Body 58).

The *Regularis concordia* was developed in response to several political exigencies in late tenth century England. Many religious institutions had at that time become almost entirely secularized and corrupt (Kobialka, This Is My Body 44). Led by St. Aethelwold and St. Dunstan, with the backing of the pope and King Edgar, zealous reformers staged a takeover of church institutions in England: “The [secular] canons were given an alternative: they could either give the place to the monks or take the monastic habit” (Kobialka, This Is My Body 44). After this takeover,

to prevent a great diversity of practice among the many religious houses that then existed in England, the need arose for the unification of the whole movement. This need for unification resulted in a call for a synodal council, which [...] produced the *Regularis concordia*. (Kobialka, This Is My Body 52)

The primary rhetorical function, then, of the *Regularis concordia* was to institute and reify a unified monastic code for England. The majority of the documents that provide us with the texts of Latin liturgical dramas are similarly crafted efforts to shape, re-shape, or concretize religious practice. Any discussion of the lived experience of participants in liturgical drama must begin with an understanding both of the degree to which the bodies

of these participants were regulated and the degree to which that regulation was a socio-political necessity.

We might describe these monastic bodies using both Kleinschmidt's heterodynamic bodies and Franks' disciplined bodies. We can observe, for instance, that King Edgar's rhetorical appropriation of the Church's approval of this leadership participated, in an ontological sense, in the medieval search for "victory helpers," or for divine powers to grant the ruler with the strength to protect and lead. As Kleinschmidt notes, the need kings had both for spiritual license and for spiritual strength to lead was eventually appropriated by Church authorities through a clever inversion of bodily images. In the early, pre- or partly Christian era of England's growth, leaders had been regarded as the sources of strength upon which the remainder of the people relied (Kleinschmidt 68). As the Church struggled to convert kings in what was developing into a unified and relatively large kingdom in the tenth century, the image of the human body—and thus, the image of the temporal ruler's body—was transformed:

[T]he leading representatives of the universal Catholic Church had to cope with self-reliant, intrusive and power-acquiring particularistic local lay ruling elites who were themselves determined to take possession of and control church institutions. Consequently, immediately after the conversion of the ruling elites, the Church had to make a difficult choice between its own acceptance of the superiority of the ruling elites and the delay of the conversion process. Initially, the Church opted for the first choice, but it later made extensive efforts towards regaining control of its own institutions and enforcing abidance by the universalistic beliefs which the Church took to be its major task to promote. These efforts included the revision of the bodily image of Christ and of the saints as the major ecclesio-gene symbols for modes of behaviour. Since the tenth century, the image of physical strength of the bodies of Christ and the saints gradually waned. The process first touched upon the representation of the bodies of the *royal* saints, that is those saints whose kin group was royal or who had been kings themselves. (Kleinschmidt 73, emphasis added)

What Kleinschmidt traces here is a political/rhetorical link between church-state relations and the images of bodily debasement, distrust, and disgust proliferated in the high Middle Ages. Such an image can be summed up in a famous medieval description of the human body as “a night soil pail with nine holes” (Kleinschmidt 75).

This debased image of the human body, combined with the belief that individuals were essentially incomplete and were dependent upon help from above and from other humans, provides a meaningful context for understanding the thoroughgoing, self-mortifying disciplinary practices observed in medieval monasteries, especially after the tenth century. As Frank notes, the contingent nature of the human body, so emphasized in the high Middle Ages—that is, the body’s unreliability and fallibility—is conceptually overcome through self-discipline:

With regard to control, the disciplined body makes itself *predictable* through its regimentation. So long as the regimen is followed, the body can believe itself to be predictable; thus being predictable is both the medium and outcome of regimentation. That this predictability may reflect an unconscious fear of the body’s real contingency is probable, but so long as the technique of the regimen is successful, the disciplined body consciously knows itself as predictable; what else could discipline be but predictability? (55, emphasis in original)

Discipline and self-mortification become means of control over the absolutely flawed human body, and monastic regulations and observances provided the orthopraxis necessary to attain such regimentation.

As a result, the disciplined body regards itself distantly, as it were: “the disciplined body is *dissociated* from itself. The ascetic can tolerate the degradation of her or his body because she or he only observes that body; the ascetic is in but not of the body” (Frank 56). Since the body is not the ultimate site of oneself, the *will* must also be disciplined, since will and motivation should be the ultimate rulers over the body. Thus

when fasting, what matters is not simply the mortification of the flesh but also the motives for such self-mortification: “Within the institutional church’s discourse of medieval theology, the contest was whether the source of the inspiration to fast was divine or demonic” (Frank 59). Hence both body and spirit must be trained to perform correctly and to perform for the correct reasons.

One might argue, however, that the creativity and aesthetic joy produced during Latin liturgical dramas could provide something of a carnivalistic release from bodily discipline. Certainly there must have been some bodily delight that both performers and audience members experienced during these performances, but their role within the liturgical structure of the church calendar was, I would argue, never forgotten. Take, for instance, this commandment from the Rule of St. Benedict to remember the holy function of all religious rituals:

The twelfth step of humility is attained if the monk not only in his heart but with his whole body is a lesson in humility to those who see him. We mean: in the performance of the liturgy [...] at church, in the monastery, in the garden, on the road, in the field or anywhere. Whether sitting, walking or standing he should lower his head, and keep his eyes cast downward. Every hour, thinking himself guilty of his sins, he should imagine himself brought before the awesome judgment of God. (Herlihy 63)

The joy of performance, in such a context, comes mainly from being able to continue to observe bodily discipline during these heightened moments of religious discourse. This desire to continue self-regimentation throughout even the most artistic and celebratory liturgical observances should make us call into question how the monastic bodies would have understood their performances—that is, we should wonder whether the participants in these liturgical rites would have regarded what they were doing as “theatrical.”



Addressing such concerns requires a detailed exploration of the concept of “theatre” as it was understood in medieval England.

### Theatre and Drama

In this light, it is helpful to return to that first example of Latin liturgical drama from the *Regularis concordia*, which will serve as the primary text for analysis in our discussion of the sacramental chronotope. This passage, quoted almost universally in analyses of Latin liturgical drama, merits the space needed here for us to reconsider the meaning of such performances in light of the regulated bodies of the performers and audience members. Imagine attending the first of the church offices of Easter morning in a cold cathedral when the following occurs:

While the third lesson is being said, let four brothers dress themselves, one of whom, dressed in an alb, as if for another purpose, shall enter and secretly go to the place of the sepulcher and there, holding a palm in his hand, sit quietly. And while the third respond is being spoken the remaining three shall follow, all dressed in copes, having censers with incense in their hands, and hesitantly, as if seeking something, shall come to the place of the sepulcher. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument, and of the women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When, therefore, the one sitting there shall see the three as it were wandering and seeking something, he shall begin in a low voice to sing sweetly: “Whom do you seek [*Quem queritis*] [in the sepulcher, companions of Christ?] When this is sung to the end, the three shall reply with one voice: “Jesus of Nazareth [the crucified one, O heavenly being.”] To which he [replies]: “He is not here. He has risen as he foretold. Go, announce that He has risen from the dead.” At the sound of this command the three turn to the choir, saying: “Alleluia. The Lord has risen.” This said, he who is sitting, as if calling them back, says this antiphon: “Come and see the place [where the Lord was laid, alleluia.”] Saying this, let him rise and lift up the covering and show them the place, with no cross, but with the linen cloth there in which the cross had been wrapped. When they have seen this let them put down their censers which they brought into the sepulcher, and pick up the linen cloth and open it before the clergy and, as if showing that the Lord had arisen and was no longer wrapped in it, they sing this antiphon: “The Lord has arisen from the sepulcher [he who hung for us on the wood [of the cross], alleluia!]

When the antiphon is finished let the prior, rejoicing in the triumph of our King, that having overcome death, He had arisen, begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus* [O God, we praise thee]; at the beginning of which all the bells shall ring together. (Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 82-83)<sup>3</sup>

Such a performance, one can easily imagine, would be powerfully moving, the medieval equivalent of a multimedia extravaganza, with candlelight, singing, sumptuous costumes, incense, and pealing bells. But it is questionable whether or not it would have been understood in any meaningful sense as “theatrical” in the context of medieval English monastic practice.

In fact, Lawrence Clopper has compiled significant evidence that such performances would not have been understood or interpreted as “theatrical.” In his recent book Drama, Play, and Game, he analyzes the competing and sometimes contradictory uses of Latin terms such as *theatrum* that modern critics typically translate as “theatre.” “[W]e have applied modern senses of theatrical terms to medieval texts and documents with the result that we have ‘theatricalized’—made into theater—activities that did not properly belong in that category as we understand it” (Clopper 4). After extensive examination of many descriptions of *theatrum* throughout the Middle Ages, Clopper comes to the conclusion that “Christian Europe in the later Middle Ages was able to develop a drama—an enacted and staged script—because most persons did not associate such dramas with the *theatrum* either in mode or in content” (Clopper 2).

For much of the Middle Ages, between the acceptable “theatre” of Terence and Plautus and the existing concepts and practice of *theatrum* lay an unbridgeable chasm. According to the dominant medieval understanding of theatre history, in the latter days of the Roman Empire, “legitimate drama was forced into retirement” according to John of Salisbury (c.1110–1180), to be replaced, as Clopper notes, “by undesirable persons who

inflamed the eyes and ears of the beholders” (30). The term *histriones*, often translated today as “actors,” therefore acquired multiple meanings beyond that of what we now consider an “actor” as the term moved from antiquity to the Middle Ages. John of Salisbury categorized *histriones* into three groups: 1) those who “transform and transfigure their bodies through foul movement and gesture or by baring themselves lewdly or by wearing horrible masks”; 2) those who “follow the courts of the great and amuse by satire and raillery”; and 3) those who “use musical instruments” (qtd. in Clopper 30-31). Of the musicians, John identified two kinds: those who “sing wanton songs at public drinkings and lascivious congregations” and “others who are called *ioculatores* who sing the deeds of princes and the lives of saints and give solace to men either in grief or anguish” (qtd. in Clopper 31). Of these *histriones*, all but the last group are “damnable unless they relinquish their office” (qtd. in Clopper 31).

Thus, in the medieval understanding of theatre history, reputable performers had been replaced by mostly disreputable *histriones* who practiced a myriad of performance forms in a variety of contexts, and many of those contexts would not be considered “theatrical” in modern terms. The words *ludus* and “play” possessed multiple meanings in the Middle Ages, involving not merely “an enacted and staged script” but any sort of communal physical recreation: “Both *ludus* and ‘play’ include all kinds of games and sports; in addition, a ‘player’ may not only be a participant in any of these activities but a musician or even a player at dice and cards” (Clopper 12). In this context, a “stage play is not necessarily a scripted drama; it may be a king game or some other rowdy entertainment used to raise money, which may account for the persistence of orders against *ludi* in churchyards” (Clopper 17).

In contrast to these rowdy and often secular forms of *ludi*, the *Visitatio sepulchri* described by Aethelwold seems to belong not only to another category, but almost to another world. The medieval “theatrical” term that most closely corresponds to the *Visitatio sepulchri* is perhaps “drama,” which in the early and high Middle Ages referred not to “a script for enactment by persons assuming roles; rather, we should think of it as a formal and visual representation of responding voices” (Clopper 9). The *Song of Songs* and the Psalms were the primary Biblical examples of what medieval thinkers regarded as “drama” because they understood that term almost exclusively as “one of three modes of narrative”: “The ‘dramatic’ mode is that in which the author or narrator is not represented in his own or narrative voice; instead, there are speakers alone” (Clopper 6). By “dramatic mode,” Clopper refers primarily not to spoken discourse, but rather to a *literary* mode such as is often taught in beginning performance of literature classes. What made a literary text “dramatic” for medieval thinkers was the visual alternation of voices in the absence of a controlling narrator voice, and the interchange of these voices was not necessarily intended to be staged by live performers.

The distinction Clopper offers between *theatrum* and drama in the Middle Ages is crucial for our understanding of how regulated monastic bodies would make sense of and respond to Latin liturgical drama. Clopper notes that dramatic discourse was also understood as a more sober and serious style of speech than theatrical discourse:

There is a formal similarity between the dramatic and the theatrical—persons sing or speak in response (without the intervention of the poet)—but there are also distinctions: psalms are not frivolous, as are comedies and tragedies; psalm singers do not simulate but express true devotion. (Clopper 8)

The *Visitatio sepulchri* clearly presents alternating voices designed to “express true devotion” and would be understood by the monks in Winchester Minster not as a disgraceful, secular/pagan “play” but as a holy, antiphonal drama. While the use of monk’s bodies and voices to stage such scriptural dramas was, no doubt, revelatory, exciting, and intriguingly different from traditional monastic practice, the decision to embody that discourse through multiple bodies engaging in dialogue with each other would not necessarily have been regarded as theatrical. Such staging practices were more likely to be understood simply as a bodily extension of the logic already present in the written texts of such dramas.

One useful way of exploring the differences in tone and purpose that characterized the Latin liturgical dramas as compared to the secular “theatre” that so disturbed the monks of medieval England would be to consider the addressivity of each performance form. As we saw in Chapter Two, texts and performances are always addressed to someone, and in general they can be addressed to actual human beings, to an author’s imagined vision of how humans might react to her or his work, and to the author’s ideal of a “perfect” audience who will understand the text or performance just as he or she would wish for it to be understood. While texts are inevitably addressed to a variety of addressees, and while this multitude of addressees usually if not perhaps always renders such addressivity “messy” and complex (often in fascinating ways), we can say at any given moment, a text has a *principal* addressee whose role in shaping the text is greater than that of other addressees. Perhaps the most important distinction between the drama staged by monks in church space and the crude and unsettling theatre those same monks condemned lay in the principal addressee that clerics understood was

addressed by the two distinct performance forms. For impure and sinful theatre, the addressee was understood to be the immediate audience, and the performers used every resource to appeal to that addressee, no matter how disgraceful the means, as John Bromyard, a fourteenth century friar, warns us: “Again, dancers are like that dancing daughter of Herodias [Salome], through whom John the Baptist lost his head; thus, through dancers, many lose their souls” (Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 260).

For the devout practice of Latin liturgical drama, however, performances were understood to be directed more to an ideal superaddressee, in this case God, than to the merely mortal addressees of those who participated in the dramas as performers or as audience members. The thirteenth century complaint of William of Wadington illustrates the difference between addressing performances theatrically to an audience and addressing liturgical drama to God:

Foolish clerks have devised another clear folly which are called “miracles.” These mad ones have disguised their faces in masks, which is forbidden by [church] decree; so much the greater is their sin. They may make representations—but let it be done reverently in the office of holy church when one performs the service of God—as when Jesus Christ the son of God is placed on the sepulchre, and the Resurrection, in order to increase devotion. (Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 116)

The theatrical appeal of masks, coupled with their capacity to hide the “truth” of the performer’s faces, made the “miracles” that William of Wadington objects to here sinful. Pope Innocent III condemned such behavior as a “playful spectacle” in 1207, thus explicitly connecting the sensual pleasures of spectatorship to the practice of theatre:

From time to time theatrical entertainments are put on in these same churches and not only are masked shows introduced into them as playful spectacles but also in three feasts of the year which follow directly after the Nativity of Christ, deacons, priests and subdeacons in turn, exercising their scandalous stupidities, through the obscene revellings of their

behaviour, make clerical dignity worthless in the sight of the people.  
(Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 114)

By virtue of its visual appeal for audience members, theatre was understood to be addressed to sinful humans rather than to the Holy Trinity. Such performances, even if executed by men of God (indeed, *especially* if executed by men of God), were regarded as being inevitably impure because performance must wade around in the sort of muck that human bodies find appealing.

In contrast, the performance of Latin liturgical drama reflected the hopeful intent that such performances would be understood “purely,” that is, would be understood and approved by God. Consider, for instance, Diller’s observations about the “purity” of the discourse in Latin liturgical dramas:

A “normal” conversation, whether on stage or in our daily lives, always reveals more than its words express. A competent observer can gather from it information concerning the social position, the mood, and the intentions of the interlocutors, even if these subjects are not overtly mentioned. In every conversation we assume a tacit substratum which we may interpret correctly or incorrectly but which we cannot ignore if we want to grasp the meaning of the conversation.

Such a tacitly assumed substratum is largely absent from the liturgical and by implication from the “hierarchical” dialogue. Relationships between interlocutors exist only to the extent that they are verbalized. This becomes evident in the formality of the addresses: *Christicolae, celicolae, socii, pastores*. Never do the sentences express anything beyond their overt function; they are always pure questions, pure answers, pure communications, pure commands. (Middle English 22)

Diller’s point here is that the general messiness we associate with everyday conversation—the rich complexity of social status, relational intonations and yearnings, rhetorical motives and techniques, and other socio-political aspects that inform the “substratum” of everyday conversation—is largely if not indeed entirely absent from Latin liturgical drama. The performances exist in a world alien to our prosaic world of

complex discourse, and they speak to, with, and for a divine realm of pure and perfect communication unhampered by such prosaic concerns.

Bakhtin describes the hopeful efforts of authors to speak with a superaddressee in terms that strongly resemble the “pure” discourse of Latin liturgical dramas. The superaddressee is someone

whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time[...]. In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assumes various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth).

The author can never turn over his whole self and his speech to the complete and *final* will of addressees who are on hand or nearby (after all, even the closest descendants can be mistaken), and always presupposes (with a greater or lesser degree of awareness) some higher instancing of responsive understanding that can distance itself in various directions. Each dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue (partners). (Bakhtin, Speech 126, emphasis in original)

The superaddressee that Bakhtin describes here is “a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance” (Bakhtin, Speech 126), and thus all utterances reflect this hopeful yearning for “true responsive understanding.” Nonetheless, most utterances are more prominently marked by the sorts of prosaic social markers Diller identifies, social markers that reflect the messy addressivity of everyday discourse. By comparison, the discourse of the Latin liturgical dramas of the high Middle Ages was directed more purely at the presumptive superaddressee of all Christian discourse, God.

Seen in this light, we can perhaps appreciate the distinction that most medieval clerics made between the spectacular, sensual appeal of “theatre” (as such clerics defined it) and the sober, “pure” discourse of religious ritual, to which Latin liturgical drama was



understood to belong, as is evident in the following quote from the local council of Sens in 1460:

Although, if they [church officials] seem to be putting on something as a remembrance of feasts and in veneration of God and the saints, according to the customs of the church, at the Nativity of the Lord, or Resurrection, let this be done with decency and peaceably without extending, hindering or cutting short the service, [without] masking and blackening of the face, by special permission of the ordinary and with the good will of the ministers of that same church, so that the improprieties of [these] games, especially around the Feast of the Innocents, prohibited in other of our provincial statutes (which prohibition we renew), may be contained, observing the order of the sacred council of Basel. (Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 117)

The carnivalesque “improprieties” of the Feast of the Innocents, also known as the Feast of Fools, were to be avoided in those religious performances around Christmas and Easter which were designed to speak for and with God. In this sense, Latin liturgical dramas were understood to speak to a whole different realm of experience than theatre.

Indeed, once we strip away our modern concepts of the “theatrical,” there appears to be little to distinguish the *Visitatio sepulchri* from other ritual observances described in Aethelwold’s *Regularis concordia*. As Kobialka notes:

The *Quem quaeritis* passage has been assigned a significant place in theater history because it contains extraliturgical elements that could be viewed as a theatrical description of a performance. These extraliturgical elements are not, however, present only in this passage, as they can be found in the documentation of other offices, for example, in [...] the *Cena Domini* celebrated on Maundy Thursday. Both texts [i.e., the *Quem quaeritis* and the *Cena Domini*] describe some form of movement and make use of what is specifically labeled as “outward representation.” During Nocturns [i.e., Matins] on Maundy Thursday, two children stand on the right-hand side of the choir and two of them are positioned on the left-hand side of the choir. During [the *Quem quaeritis* celebration held on] Nocturns on Easter Day, one of the brethren is seated near a “sepulchre” and three others approach him. Both of the offices make use of the antiphonally sung chant. (This Is My Body 81)

Descriptions throughout the *Regularis concordia* of the appropriate outfit for the celebrants, sometimes regarded as the “costuming” for the *Visitatio sepulchri*, would seem only to stipulate clerical garb, not “theatrical” costumes (Kobialka, This Is My Body 80). And the rubrics which suggest the attitudes, movements, and behavior of the four brothers in the *Visitatio sepulchri* such as “as if seeking something” and “as if calling them back” were not unique to this office; Kobialka identifies other offices which “refer to some form of imitation and representation” (This Is My Body 82).

This research is offered not to suggest that the *Visitatio sepulchri* was simply another monastic office which would have been experienced in the same ways as all the other offices, but rather to establish that there are far more continuities between the *Visitatio sepulchri* and other monastic offices in the *Regularis concordia* than discontinuities. Rather than being regarded as a rupture in the ritual rhythm of monastic discipline, the *Visitatio sepulchri* would first and foremost have been understood as an extension (albeit an especially exciting and intriguing one) of the technologies of bodily discipline that defined monastic practice throughout the Middle Ages.

A significantly unremarked aspect of medieval liturgical tropes is how they take for granted the reader’s familiarity with these ritual practices. Throughout the consuetudinaries one finds descriptions of antiphonal chants or responsorial readings similar to this one, taken from the *Regularis concordia*: “Then, as is the custom, a deacon shall bless the candle saying, in the manner of reading, the prayer *Exultet iam angelica turba coelorum*. Presently, on a higher note, he shall sing *Sursum corda* and the rest” (qtd. in Kobialka, This Is My Body 77). Two phrases here which are found frequently in monastic consuetudinaries are important: “as is the custom” and “and the

rest.” Both phrases, or highly similar ones, suggest the degree to which all members of the order would have been intimately familiar with the prayers, chants, gestures, and movements appropriate for each office.

The common practice throughout these consuetudinaries was to reference only part of chants and prayers and to assume the reader’s familiarity with the entire work. Consider, for instance, the frequent references to the remainder of antiphonal works which is translated here as “etc.” in these passages from the 14<sup>th</sup> century Easter ceremonies from Barking Abbey:

Then they still doubting the Resurrection of the Lord shall say mourning to each other: “Alas, misery etc.” Then Mary Magdalene sighing shall join in with: “I sigh for you etc.” Then on the left-hand side of the altar the *Persona* [representing Christ] shall appear, saying to her, “Woman why do you weep, whom do you seek?” She, thinking him to be a gardener, shall reply: “Lord, if you have carried him away etc.”  
(Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 86)

Monks, nuns, and other clerics would have regarded such “dialogue” as extensions of their everyday reading and singing activities, rather than as a new “script” for a theatrical performance.

### The Material and the Spiritual in the Sacramental Chronotope

In this context, we can begin to describe the sacramental chronotope in terms of the two axes of interpretation discussed in Chapter Two: the material/spiritual axis and the first world/second world axis. We will consider the material/spiritual axis first by exploring the various ways in which matter was infused with spiritual presence in the context of medieval church time and space. Both temporally and spatially, the participants in the *Visitatio sepulchri* and other Latin liturgical dramas would have understood these performances in terms of enduring, underlying spiritual

correspondences. Within a figural world view, any particular Easter celebration of Christ's resurrection in the tenth century would be understood as an umbral echo of the original Event itself. Moreover, the performance occurred within the ritual "body-clock" of the monastic participants, according to rhythms which had been long engrained into their bodies. Waking, reading, eating, working, singing, confessing, sleeping—all these activities and more were written into schedules on the tablets of the monks' and nuns' bodies, and while Easter celebrations might merit special excitement as a reminder of the Resurrection of Our Lord, they involved not a break from the great seasonal calendar of the monastery but rather an extension of its progression.

By participating regularly and willfully in such rituals, monks and nuns could delve the depths of their souls in a search for truth:

Every spiritual or temporal action was never haphazard but in accord with a new or existing monastic custom and began with a blessing. When a monk arose from bed, for example, he began with the sign of the Holy Cross and a prayer. The self-examination was thus directed inward toward the thoughts rather than toward physical, external actions. A prayer was to come "from the heart rather than the lips"[...]. This particular mode of operation and representation, furnished to expose and externalize thoughts, was present in all monastic actions throughout the day. (Kobialka, This Is My Body 64)

External acts within a monastic community, including participation in liturgical tropes, thus involved a corresponding internal, spiritual self-examination that was written into every daily activity. "For a monk, as the *Regularis concordia* asserts, the act of exploring the self, purification of the soul, and compunction of the heart provided the pardon for the sins, the grace of Christ, and, ultimately, the access to the divine light" (Kobialka, This Is My Body 64). Every movement through the day brought one, at least ideally, closer to the divine.

Likewise, movement through the sacred (if also material) space of the church grounds was fraught with underlying spiritual correspondences. The ground plan of most churches where liturgical tropes were performed, including the Old Minster in Winchester associated with Aethelwold and his *Regularis concordia*, was in the shape of a traditional Latin cross, with the length of the cross running west-east and the shorter transepts running north-south (Ogden 25-30; 41-57). Thus, as one entered through the main doors in the west, one moved through both the instrument of Christ's death and the symbol of His Resurrection.

The geographic arrangement of medieval church architecture was consciously symbolic as well. "Christian altars were always located at the eastern end of the church so that the congregation was facing the place of sunrise, which symbolized the Resurrection" (Harris 38). The eastern parts of the church therefore became associated with the most holy practices and objects. Likewise, the nave and "the great western doors through which most important people always entered the building became strongly associated with the non-spiritual, material world of mutability, or constant change, of which death was an important part" (Harris 39). Moving through the church doors was an admission, in this light, of one's own sinfulness, which would presumably be shed as one traveled from the sullied western space to the shining eastern parts of the church.

Similarly, the north and south sides of the church acquired spiritual significance, with the south—on the Bishop's (and thus God's) left hand—being "strongly associated with evil," while the north side (at God's right hand) was "associated with joy and good fortune" (Harris 25). Despite the fact that these spatial correspondences were "merely"

spiritual, clergy and members of the congregation arranged their bodies in accordance with the dictates of that underlying spiritual reality:

The women of the congregation invariably sat on the “good” side of the church and the men on the “bad” side—a practice explained by the argument that women, being the weaker sex, and more liable to temptation, as was shown by the behaviour of Eve, needed the protection of the “good” side of the church, while the men were strong enough to do without it. (Harris 25)

Movement through church space was thus influenced by underlying spiritual realities which took advantage of such natural rhythms as the rising and setting of the sun to shape perception and to move the spirit.

At times, these correspondences proved troublesome in the context of actual church practice, such as when the traditional pair of lecterns from which the Old and New Testaments would be read were reduced, for practical reasons, to a single lectern from which all Bible readings were conducted. This single lectern, as it turned out, was eventually located on the south side of the church, which presented a dilemma for those who wished to persist in the traditional interpretation of the stage left, or “sinister,” side of the church:

Why should the Gospel be read on the less honourable side of the church? Ivo of Chartres provided an acceptable explanation: it was the Jews who had originally been the “chosen people” of God, so the Jews should be seen as associated with the stage right of the altar, but they rejected Christ’s ministry, so he had to preach instead to the gentiles, who were *not* God’s “chosen people” and who should therefore be seen as associated with the altar’s stage left[....] In medieval terms, Ivo’s explanation makes good Christian sense, for Jesus said himself that he did not come to preach to the converted, but to call sinners to repentance, and symbolically sinners must surely be related to the dishonourable side of the church. (Harris 74, emphasis in original)

Here we see the time-honored medieval practice of engaging in tortuous thinking in order to reinterpret physical reality in light of spiritual correspondences rather than

reinterpreting spiritual truths based on material practices and facts. More importantly, we can see here an example of the pervasiveness of spatial and spiritual correspondences on medieval thought and practice even in the face of good reasons for abandoning or revising such thought.

Liturgical tropes staged in medieval churches participated in this pattern of spatial and spiritual correspondences. The most striking example of this may be the location of the “Hellmouth” that was used in many English churches for liturgical dramas and other purposes, a large set-piece often represented by a demonic face with a gaping open mouth waiting to receive damned souls. Appropriately, this Hellmouth was located in the south, where medieval practice taught that sinners would be located (Leacroft 3). Likewise, performances of liturgical dramas typically “invaded the nave,” located west of the altar, indicating

perhaps a desire to move these rather materialistic presentations of spiritual truths away from the altar [in the east] and its holy mysteries, perhaps a realisation that the congregation would see and hear better if the plays were nearer to them, and quite possibly an artistic realisation of the power of the symbolism of east and west and a desire to use it to underline aspects of the plays which the north-south symbolism could not cope with. (Harris 39)

Perhaps the most famous example of this use of geographic symbolism comes from the Easter Matins celebration at Barking Abbey in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the officiating priest hammered upon the western door chanting antiphons which referenced the Harrowing of Hell, taking advantage of the association of the western portion of the church with death. Katherine of Sutton, who wrote the description of this Matins celebration, made her symbolism explicit here: “This priest indeed shall represent the person of Christ about to descend to Hell and break down the gates of Hell” (Tydeman,

Medieval European Stage 84). The movement of this celebration, as was true for most medieval liturgical tropes, generally went from the debased west to the divine east, a progression from the material/corporeal realm to the realm of pure spirit.

#### First and Second Worlds in the Sacramental Chronotope

The sacramental chronotope of Latin liturgical drama is therefore marked by the collapse of or lack of motivation to maintain a division between the material and the spiritual. For the ritualized bodies participating these ceremonies, material and spiritual meanings were fused. Liturgical drama never left the space and time of the church, nor did it create a new space and time within the church. Instead, performances in the church space drew upon *preexisting* spiritual correspondences to enhance the experience of various performances. In this sense, the first and second worlds of performance might also be said to be fused in Latin liturgical dramas.

Diller's analysis of the "dialogue" in the *Visitatio sepulchri* demonstrates how the "characters" in this "play" stubbornly remain in the first world of the ritual rather than creating a more "realistic" second world. Taking note of the fact that the three women immediately celebrate the Resurrection without examining the tomb for proof, Diller observes, "Instantaneous jubilation is not in the gospels. And that the Women should report the Resurrection before looking into the grave is entirely without dramatic logic" (Middle English 16). Of course, within the context of a ritual celebrating the *fact* of Christ's resurrection, there is no need for recourse to a second world where that discovery is "made anew." The ritual is its own self-contained universe which draws upon the "finished" narrative of the gospels as merely one part of a larger church service.



As noted in Chapter Two, and as will be discussed in further detail in coming chapters, both Diller and V. A. Kolve identify the development of an imaginative “second world” created through the act of performance as one of the primary contributions of vernacular drama of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe. In contrast, Latin liturgical drama did not encourage or rely upon the creation of an imaginative second world: “The liturgical significance of the church building and of the time of the divine service remains too powerful to give much rein to the imaginative development of the forms of perception” that would allow for the creation of a metaworld (Diller, Middle English 65).

Examples of this dominance of the first world to the near-exclusion of a second world abound throughout the liturgical tropes. In Aethelwold’s *Visitatio sepulchri*, for example, the three women turn towards the *choir* to announce that the Lord has risen, even though the choir never participates as “characters” within the performance. Similarly, in the Barking Abbey version of the *Visitatio sepulchri*, the three sisters who are to play the Marys must stop before entering the stage and “say their confession [*Confiteor*] to the abbess, and, absolved by her, they shall take their stand in the appointed place with candles” (Tydeman, Medieval European Stage 85), thus reinforcing the distinction between the performers and the characters they portray. At the end of the *Visitatio sepulchri*, the prior, who has up to that point merely observed the ceremony, begins the *Te Deum laudamus*, emphasizing his role as leader of the ceremonial observance and diminishing the theatrical value of the three Marys and the angel, who virtually disappear from the ceremony at that point.

It is, however, unfair and simply inaccurate to argue that such performances could never conjure up a fictive metaworld. Medieval audiences, like audiences today, certainly responded to performances in multiple, contradictory, and “disencouraged” ways, and the sheer theatricality of these events would have inspired many to imagine the dusty streets of Jerusalem and the salt tears of the Marys even if such theatrical illusion was not intended to be evoked. So in what sense might we understand the relationship of the first world of the performers and audience to this imaginative second world that might arise out of this liturgical service?

Taking a cue from Richard Schechner, I would argue that the key issue regarding the fictive metaworld-in-performance of medieval theatre is not its “presence” or “absence” but rather is the *efficacy* of that metaworld within the context of religious ritual. As he works to differentiate ritual performance from theatrical performance, Schechner develops his “efficacy-entertainment braid,” arguing that the context and function of a performance helps determine the degree to which it might be “ritual” versus “theatre.” “If the performance’s purpose is to effect transformation—to be efficacious—then the [...] performance is a ritual” (120). Likewise, Schechner argues, if the primary purpose of the performance is entertainment—that is, if the performance lacks the transformative efficacy associated with rituals—then the performance can be considered theatre.

Schechner works to complicate this “efficacy-entertainment braid” in useful ways, noting that “[n]o performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment” (120). Professional theatre productions are indeed concerned with efficacy—filling the seats, for instance, making money, and perhaps even affecting substantive socio-political change—while on

the other hand, a ritual performance can potentially have more entertainment value than spiritual efficacy if the participants are not driven by spiritual concerns. Building on Schechner's vocabulary, then, we might observe that while *all* performances aim for efficacy, the *source* of efficacy differs for ritual performances as compared to theatre. And in this context, we can reconsider the function of the second world of performance in terms of its crucial function in the efficacy of theatre.

Broadly speaking, theatrical performances require the existence of a metaworld in order to be efficacious. To be understood as "theatre," at least in our contemporary Western context, a performance traditionally requires that the audience be able to perceive a world other than the world of the performers and audience. We must, for instance, be able to "look beyond" the two people we see onstage in The Temptation in order to "see" Christ and Satan instead, arguing in the wind-swept desert. As Bert States puts it:

If we approach theater semiotically we must surely agree with the Prague linguists that 'all that is on the stage is a sign,' and that anything deliberately put there for artistic purposes becomes a sign when it enters illusionary space and time. That is, it becomes an event in a self-contained illusion outside the world of social praxis but conceptually referring to that world in some way, if only in the fact that the illusion is *about* hypothetical human beings. (19, emphasis in original)

States spends the rest of his book Great Reckonings in Little Rooms tempering and complicating this early statement, arguing that theatrical signs "achieve their vitality [...] not simply by signifying the world but by being *of* it. In other words, the power of the sign [...] is not necessarily exhausted either by its illusionary or its referential character" (20, emphasis in original). But at the heart of the phenomenology of the theatre is a "dual

vision” wherein signs can and indeed must escape their purely referential/material qualities.<sup>4</sup>

By comparison, we might argue that most ritual performances do *not* require an imaginative metaworld in order to be efficacious. While it is certainly possible for a participant to escape to an imaginative metaworld during the Eucharist and to visualize Christ at the Last Supper, such dual vision is by no means necessary to the ritual. Indeed, the rhetorical and political function of the doctrine of transubstantiation was to unite the participant, not with some imaginative concept of Christ, but with His Body as transformed in the moment of partaking. In the process of *actual* (not imaginative) transformation lay the saving power of transubstantiation, as Paschasius Radbertus wrote in the early ninth century: “If the word had become flesh, and we truly consume the Word as flesh in the Lord’s food, how can it not be justly judged that He dwells in us by His nature[?]” (qtd. in Kobialka, This Is My Body 70).

Hence one might temper Diller’s observations by noting not the absence of a second world, but rather the relative unimportance of that world in the ritual performances of Latin liturgical drama in the Middle Ages. Any metaworld created during these performances would have been incidental, not essential. Yet it is clear that these performances did reference some “other world”—the performances were narratives, and they referred to events that were regarded at the time as historical facts. Moreover, one aspect of ritual performance in Schechner’s “efficacy-entertainment braid” is a “link to an absent Other” and the presence of “symbolic time” (120). Ritual performances connect participants to or with *something*, if not necessarily an imaginative metaworld. One way of getting at the “something” that Latin liturgical dramas connected their

participants to would be through a consideration of the medieval distinction between *res* and *verbum*.

### Words and Things in Latin Liturgical Drama

As Rainer Weiss notes, the scholastic philosophy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as illustrated in the works of the aforementioned John of Salisbury as well as Pierre Abelard (1097-1142), assumed a fundamental distinction between *res* and *verbum*, or “thing” and “word” (27). In the Neoplatonic “realism” of the Middle Ages, the goal of philosophy, understood as an adjunct to the search for God’s Truth, was to see “through” the symbolic, material, historical world of appearances to the thing itself, that is, the divine, eternal “real thing” underlying all transitory appearances. “Thus the word [*verbum*] in the philosophical statement can be only an adjunct, an accessory of the logically derived *res*” (Weiss 28).

The distinction between *res* and *verbum* is not merely a distinction between signifier and signified; it involves a more fundamental split between the material and the Ideal: “Corporeality, which is directly related to distance from God and imperfect contemplation of him, is not a norm of existence but an indication of inferiority on the [medieval] scale of creation” (Erickson 12). Macrobius, a scholar of the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D. whose thought remained influential throughout the high Middle Ages, described the link between the “pure” *res* and the material *verbum* in this way:

Accordingly, since Mind [*nous*] emanates from the Supreme God and Soul from Mind, and Mind, indeed, forms and suffuses all below with life, and since this is the one splendor lighting up everything and visible in all, like a countenance reflected in many mirrors arranged in a row, and since all follow on in continuous succession, degenerating step by step in their downward course, the close observer will find that from the Supreme God to the bottommost dregs of the Universe there is one tie, binding at every link and never broken. (qtd. in Erickson 12)

Of importance here is not only that the pure Ideal forms present in Mind degenerate as they pass through corporeal existence, but also that there *remains* an intimate connection between *res* and *verbum* despite their distance/difference. Whereas a more rigorously Platonic world view might more or less sunder words from their Ideal counterparts, the scholastic Neoplatonism of the Middle Ages saw correspondences as well as differences between Ideal Truth and the symbolic or material accidents we encounter in life.

So in a sense the scholastic philosophy of the age described a universe where there was always a “first world” of material experience and an underlying “second world” of eternal and Ideal forms. It would seem more accurate, then, to describe the “something” that Latin liturgical performances aimed to connect their audiences with as “thing”—that is, *res*, or the underlying reality reflected in a myriad of ways through the words, images, movements, and songs of the ritual performance. When one searches for Ideal reality through performance, *mimesis* becomes irrelevant, since (as Plato taught us) *mimesis* must inevitably lead us away from the real, rather than towards it. Thus medieval monastic practice turned away from *mimesis* and toward what Carruthers calls *mneme*:

Monastic art is, as monastic authors themselves talked about it, an art for *mneme*, “memory,” rather than one for *mimesis*. This is not to say that the aesthetics of “representation” were unknown to it, only that in it *mimesis* was less of an issue, less in the forefront of their conscious practice, than *mneme*.[...] The questions raised about a work by *mneme* are different from those questions raised by *mimesis*. They stress cognitive uses and the instrumentality of art over questions of its “realism.” (Carruthers 3)

Medieval monastic practice aimed to “re-member” the past, to bring the divine Truth of the past to the forefront of everyday experience, rather than to portray that past. In such a context, Latin liturgical drama did not seek out correspondences between the sense

objects of the past and the sense objects of the present—and such correspondences are part of “realism” or verisimilitudinous theatrical practices, evident in statements such as “the costumes didn’t fit the period” or “their accents sounded phony.” Rather, medieval monastic practices sought fundamental and nonsensuous correspondences between “then” and “now,” working towards ways in which the “now” *is* the past in some fundamental way.

In his analysis of the embodiment of iconoclastic controversies in Byzantine architecture, Andrzej Piotrowski offers a useful concept, “nonfigurative representation,” which describes how medieval thinkers might have understood this less literal connection between symbol and thing:

Figurative representation assures that a depicted form is recognizable as an appearance of something known from physical reality or as a figural form commonly associated with a particular interpretation. The concept of nonfigurative representation, which I would like to introduce, refers to the mode of representation that establishes the relationships between given material forms or visual phenomena and symbolic reality without resorting to specific figures and familiar appearances. (107)

Nonfigurative representation, in other words, is an artistic mode seeking to express relationships between Ideal and material reality more directly, not via an equation between image and referent but through an effort to trace back through the mirrored links between *res* and *verbum*.

Piotrowski’s most compelling example of nonfigurative representation comes in his description of the walls at Hosios Loukas, a Byzantine chapel built in Greece in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Due to the material used in many of these walls and due to its thinness, the “white marble is semitranslucent and even today, despite the artificially high intensity of the light in the interior, it is possible to observe that these

panels transmit daylight” (Piotrowski 112-113). The light shining eerily from within the solid walls functions nonfiguratively to represent the idea of the Ideal:

Because light glows from within its most solid parts, solid matter is presented as filled with this unusual light. This phenomenon can be seen as a physical analogue to John of Damascus’ idea that a material body can veil the soul. I believe that this interpretation, the possibility that the material form of a church could embody a sense of spiritual reality, was explicitly prompted by the designers of this church. (Piotrowski 115)

Rather than portraying human bodies with golden halos, the shining walls of Hosios Loukas conveyed the Truth of the Ideal contained within the material.

As an example of how nonfigurative representation might function in a Latin liturgical drama, we might consider how performances featuring a permanent sepulchre within the church architecture often took advantage of the sepulchre’s structure to create a sense of mystery and wonder. For instance, the Church of Gernrode in Germany, dedicated in 961, featured a sepulchre built against the southern wall near the transept that was used in performances of liturgical tropes. Significantly, the Marys’ encounter with the angel would have occurred in this hidden space:

Originally a window-like aperture in the north wall at about sarcophagus height opened into the church. It would emit candlelight from the grave into the nave, or from the nave one could see moving shadows and light and hear voices within the grave room. From outside in the nave one could peer in [...]. As in the case of other replicas [of sepulchres ...]—at Aquileia, Magdeburg, and Constance—in early times an onlooker from outside the sepulchre could make out something of whatever sights and sounds and odors were within. Perceived in this atmosphere, events taking place inside were rather hidden and thus mysterious. (Ogden 56)

We have here a clear violation of the contemporary theatrical emphasis on sight lines which works against figurative representation but which fits perfectly within the scope of nonfigurative representation. Whereas a figurative representation of the visit to the sepulchre would make certain that the audience could not only see the performers but



could also (and more importantly) see how closely the performers resembled the characters they portrayed, the nonfigurative representation aims at conveying the *experience* of the story on the level of spirit and mystery.

Conclusion: The Ontological Superiority of the Divine

Seen in this “light,” the sacramental chronotope forces us to reconceptualize *mimesis*, not as material/imaginative duplication, but as a nonfigurative, ritual heightening of existing correspondences between material and spiritual realities. While what we today typically call “theatre” visibly and purposefully authors a metaworld that audiences then engage with in multiple ways, the sacramental chronotope instead *points to* another world, one which none of the participants authored, but which was created by The Author, God. In terms of chronotopic consciousness, the space and time of the invisible spiritual world were always already co-chronotopic with the space and time of the visible material world, and the function of Latin liturgical dramas was to bring these two worlds more clearly and meaningfully into contact with each other. In other words, the efficacy of liturgical tropes lies not in the creation of a metaworld, but in their serving as a conduit that connects two ontologically real universes.

Thus, if we can imagine the material/spiritual axis and the first world/second world axis of interpretation as intersecting lines, the sacramental chronotope lies at the very heart of this cross, in a place where spirit and matter are so fused that the first world can, with artistic and philosophical skill, be made to reference an even more Real second world. The ontological substance of the world of ideas nonfiguratively represented through the sacramental chronotope is actually greater than the world of the performers and participants. Concepts such as a “willing suspension of disbelief” become heretical

in this understanding of theatrical performance, since what would otherwise be “disbelieved” is the ultimate reality of God’s divine realm.

The ontology of need that dominated the everyday experience of monks in medieval England thus informed the performance experience of the participants in Latin liturgical drama. Because heterodynamic monastic bodies used self-discipline to overcome their own fragility in order to be judged worthy of receiving strength from God, the “second world” they sought to experience through performance was a world which was ontologically superior to their own. From such a position of desperate need, there is no space for a dialogue between the first and second worlds of performance; instead, performance functions to bring the individual to a contemplative silence where he/she can reflect upon his/her connection to divine reality. Performance, in such a context, duplicated the ontological inferiority the most medieval individuals likely felt in their daily lives. Where Latin liturgical dramas served to inspire and reassure was in the way they brought strength from the divine realm to the bodies and souls of the worshippers who were present for the performance.

In the next chapter, we will make a 180 degree turn by exploring the consubstantial chronotope, where purely metaphorical links between first and second world allow the corporeal, material world of the performers and audience to retain ontological authority over the imaginative metaworld. While the world of the spirit in essence “owned” the participants in Latin liturgical drama, we will find that humans owned the divine as an object for their contemplation in the consubstantial chronotope associated with late medieval Tudor-era interludes.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONSUBSTANTIAL CHRONOTOPE

By the fifteenth century, however, the faithful were no longer going on pilgrimage in the numbers that they had [...One] reason for the change was that people were collecting their own relics. Sir John Fastolf put together a collection that included a relic of the true cross, an arm of St George, and a finger of St John the Baptist [...]. For the better-off, so it seems, by this period pilgrimage no longer mattered. The Fastolfs of this world had all that they wanted in their homes—not only relics, but bibles, psalters, books of hours, and smaller works of devotion as well; and, being literate, they could read them for themselves.

--Nigel Saul, "Medieval England: Identity, Politics, and Society" 17-18

As we saw in the last chapter, in the early and high Middle Ages in England, the divine was located somewhere else, somewhere one must travel to in order to have access to spiritual salvation and aid. This was true even for most but not all nobles, the wealthiest of whom might have chapels built specifically to meet the needs of their families. Building these private chapels involved enormous expenses, and certainly no one of less than the most noble birth had the wherewithal to purchase the divine, in essence, for home use. For the vast majority of those living in England during the high Middle Ages (1000-1300 A.D.), then, ownership of the Christian Divine was out of the question, and thus many souls found themselves reliant upon the kindness (and/or greed) of others (priests, nobles, high clergy) for the cure of their souls.

As the example of Sir John Fastolf demonstrates, however, religious relics, devotional aids, and images were increasingly construed as objects for private ownership, contemplation, and devotion as we move into the later Middle Ages in England (1348-1500). By exploring shifts in the relations between the religious image and its viewer during this period, we can begin to theorize how differing ontologies of power might

have informed the experience of theatergoers in medieval England. In turn, we can consider how an ontology of self-sufficiency—that is, an ontology which dictates that each individual has all that he/she needs in order to function in both the material and spiritual worlds—informs and shapes the consubstantial chronotope of performance.

This chapter begins by examining the shift from an ontology of need in the high Middle Ages to an ontology of self-sufficiency after the first plagues of the late Middle Ages. This ontological shift transformed both religious and representational practice, and we will consider the impact of some of these transformations by examining in detail the diverse functions of the illustrations in the Books of Hours that were extraordinarily popular in the late Middle Ages. From the orthodox practice of Books of Hours we move into a discussion of England's only major heretical faction, the Lollards, and how their theology represented an extreme version of the ontology of self-sufficiency that informed late medieval England. Lollard theology constructed both the Eucharist and theatrical practices as “consubstantial,” that is, as “real” only to the extent that the contemplator's meditative efforts made them real.

From our examination of these theological and representational disputes, we can piece together a continuum of ontologies of performance that can be described as various relations between the “mask” of performance and the performer who “wears” that mask. From there, we shift our focus from masks to bodies, exploring various aspects of the bodies constructed within the consubstantial chronotope. We conclude the chapter with an exploration of first-world/second-world relations and addressivity in the context of the consubstantial chronotope. To explore these issues of *mimesis* and addressivity in depth,

we will look at two Tudor-era interludes, Henry Medwall's Fulgens and Lucres and John Heywood's The Play Called the Four PP.

### The End of the Ontology of Need

The early and high Middle Ages were dominated by an ontology of need characterized by heterodynamic bodies that relied upon each other for survival. After the Black Plague of 1348, this situation began to change noticeably in England. The plague of 1348 and subsequent plagues affected the ontology of need in England in two ways. First, by reducing the number and quality of priests, the plague reduced the overall quality of the "care of souls." Second, the plague created labor shortages which distributed economic power into more hands, allowing commoners access to literacy and to devotional aids and relics that had once been the exclusive domain of the nobility and the clergy. The shift from a sophisticated and elite priestly class dominating a largely unlearned commoner class to an often inept, corrupt, or overtaxed priestly class being judged harshly by an increasingly sophisticated commoner class whittled away at the ontology of need that had defined medieval experience for centuries.

First, "the mortality among the priesthood as a result of the Black Death generated a crisis in the provision for the care of souls" (Keen 251). As the ranks of the everyday clergy, who were obliged to attend to the needs of the sick and dying and who thus became sick and died themselves, grew thinner, fewer and fewer replacements filled the ranks. In England, those interested in clerical employment who had either the money or the education (or both) to do so preferred to join the ranks of the "clerical elite" whose duties were largely administrative rather than priestly. Such occupations earned more money and were fast paths to political preferment. As a consequence, those few who

chose to perform the everyday role of caring for the cure of souls in the parish were often undereducated, underpaid, and under-inspired (Keen 248-260).

The decline in both the numbers and the quality of the everyday clergy in part explains the growing dissatisfaction with the clergy reflected in late medieval literary portrayals of corrupt, incompetent, lecherous, and lazy friars, chaplains, and priests. Such fictional portrayals were, in many cases, not far from the mark, as reflected in this excerpt from Hereford records of 1397:

The parishioners say the vicar of Langwardine is supposed to find two chaplains to take the services at St. Wenard's, but he does not; *item*, that Sir John the chaplain at St. Wenard's haunts taverns and there his tongue is loosed, to the great scandal of all; *item*, the said Sir John is incontinent with one Margaret, no one knows her surname; *item*, the common fame is that the said John is illiterate, and incapable of the cure of souls. (qtd. in Keen 257-258)

While not all parish clergy were so scurrilous, the general state of such thinly stretched clergy was poor: "It was unfair to blame on these counts men who through no fault of their own were not well off, had limited command of Latin and very limited access to books, and who had a ministry to discharge that was exacting" (Keen 258).

Unfair or not, the lay populace did blame such everyday clergy, and the growing literacy of the lay populace exacerbated the situation. At the same time as the ranks of the everyday clergy were growing smaller and less sophisticated, the church was faced with the problem of "the growing literacy and religious sophistication of the laity" (Keen 251). Such figures as the allegedly illiterate Sir John were losing credence "in the eyes of a laity of whom steadily more were coming to be able to read religious books and form their own religious attitudes" (Keen 259). In an indirect way, the Black Plague contributed to this increasing literacy and religious sophistication.

A rise of the merchant class occurred in the late Middle Ages in England and throughout Europe, due largely to the impact of the plague of 1348 on the available labor population and thus on labor practices (Keen 27-47; Dyer 163-4). Starting even before the plague and gaining steam as the reduced labor force gave commoners increased negotiation power for pay, a new distribution of wealth allowed those of common birth growing access to literacy and to devotional objects:

By the beginning of the thirteenth century there had been many changes and developments in society as a whole, very important amongst which for the arts of book production was the foundation of the earliest universities. A more general distribution of wealth at the higher end of the social scale and a gradual increase in the number of people with some claim to literacy led inevitably to a greater demand for books.[...] The gradual change in market was reflected in a corresponding change in emphasis in the types of book commonly produced. Fine liturgical books for public worship were still of course made, but liturgical books for personal use, such as the Psalter and the Book of Hours which was to supersede it, and works of scholarship and literature became more common. The Book of Hours was the greatest medieval and renaissance best-seller[...]. (Backhouse 9; see also Sponsler 54)

This shift in emphasis from books for public worship to private devotional aids brings us back to Sir John Fastolf and his collection of relics mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In the late Middle Ages, an increasingly dissatisfied lay populace began to reject the often corrupt and inept church functionaries and began to seek their own spiritual cures and answers in books, private devotional practices, and relics and religious art purchased for private home display and use.

#### Owning Divinity: An Ontology of Self-Sufficiency

Such ownership of the divine represented a major movement away from medieval England's dominant ontology of need. For most of England's history, the majority of the population found the divine *elsewhere*, not at home. One traveled to the church, to the

monastery, to the pilgrimage site, in order to reach the divine. Here we can fruitfully return to Erickson's quote mentioned in Chapter Two: "[T]hroughout the Middle Ages the earth was conceived as embracing the geographical locus of unseen truths" (6). For most of the Middle Ages, the divine was regarded as situated, that is, the divine was set or rooted in space and time. While wealthy nobles often purchased relics for devotional use throughout the Middle Ages, and while such noble patrons could also afford to build their own chapels—thus taking at least partial ownership of the divine by including it in one's own geographic sphere—for most medieval English people, the divine was something one traveled to, not something one owned.

This early and high medieval tendency to fix the divine in time and space can be most powerfully seen in the various cults of the saints, where the saints' power was presumed to be concentrated within the geography of the shrine and the surrounding church property. Such sanctified space became embodied, as it were, by the saints whose remains were interred therein:

The localism of medieval religion was powerfully reinforced by the cult of the saints. The secret of the saints' popularity in everyday piety was that they made the practice of religion accessible to people. The saints were patrons, protectors, mediators: people with whom ordinary folks could identify. Commonly they were perceived as a living presence. It was widely believed that they inhabited the places where their relics were preserved. St. Cuthbert was considered a living presence at Durham, St. Aetheldreda at Ely, and so on. (Saul 15)

The ontology of need that dominated the early and high Middle Ages was steeped in a chronotope of fixed divinity, a situatedness and groundedness of the spirit. Within such an ontology, the average person in medieval England occupied an almost powerless position regarding ultimate meaning—the divine called you to it, not the other way



around, and the only cure for your sinful soul (or, for that matter, for your sick body) was to seek out divine sites and sacraments administered by priests.

On a practical economic level, the practice of purchasing or securing rights for saints' bones and relics had been, for the most part, almost the exclusive privilege of the clerical estate in the early and high Middle Ages. By the late Middle Ages, this clerical monopoly on relics was no longer in force. Once one can as a private individual purchase the divine—including relics such as bones of the saints and devotional aids like the books of hours—and once one can possess the divine in one's home, an ontological shift occurs, as well as a shift in power relations. Does the relic command you, or can you achieve the power of the relic through your own command, i.e., through your ownership and contemplation of the relic? Such an ontological shift moves from locating spiritual power in a specific place and time to locating spiritual power in the act of contemplation of an owned object. "Along with such furnishings as the *prie-dieu* and the *petit tableau*, books of hours thus formed the centerpiece of a ritual of domestic, household devotion, part of a private culture of worship that focused inward on contemplation and meditation" (Sponsler 110). Following the plague of 1348, then, many English people moved from an ontology of need to an ontology of self-sufficiency.

#### Books of Hours: The Divine Cradled in One's Hand

As a case study to illustrate the importance of such an ontological shift, we can examine Claire Sponsler's research on the Books of Hours. As noted earlier, these books functioned as lay liturgical aids. They described prayers and other religious practices which the reader could engage in throughout the day, week, and year. Such books were also lavishly illustrated:

Books of Hours are splendid objects of art. For men and women of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries, however, they were also prayer books, and prayer was as central to medieval life as art was. Books of Hours tell us much about the art and material culture of the world that produced them, but for twentieth-century viewers they are also windows onto the interior, spiritual lives of ordinary lay people of the late Middle Ages. (Reinburg 39)

For these reasons, Claire Sponsler chose to focus on Books of Hours as exemplars of both the spiritual and socioeconomic transformations ongoing in late medieval England.

Sponsler begins her study of the Books of Hours by noting one of the most striking features of these books: “From royalty to anonymous bourgeois owners, those with the means to do so routinely had themselves painted into the books of hours they commissioned, claiming the book as their own and projecting themselves into its sanctified devotional space” (104). At the heart of her research is the argument that such books functioned to commodify the divine:

At the simplest level, having a self-portrait painted into the book was one way of taking possession of it. Like a signature, a nameplate, or scribbled marginalia, the portrait marked the owner’s presence in the book and ownership of it. One effect of this act of ownership marking was to confer commodity status on the book, reinforcing its position as an item of consumption and casting it as an object possessed by the owner rather than as a tool, an aid, or a mechanism that could be used to attain spiritual satisfaction. (Sponsler 113)

Sponsler goes on to offer a richer and more complex interpretation of this ownership, one that acknowledges that the Books of Hours could function *both* as spiritual aids and as commodities and/or technologies of commodification. She notes, for instance, that figures such as Henry VI, Margaret Beaufort, and Cicely, Duchess of York all consulted their books of hours daily and devoutly observed the liturgical practices found therein (110-111).

Despite the fact that these books were thus designed as “the lay equivalent of the monastic breviary” (Sponsler 110), their more prominent function in the increasingly commodity-conscious late Middle Ages was as status symbols and overt signifiers of piety:

The subjectivity staged in owner portraits was part of a general commodification of devotion in the late Middle Ages. As commodities that were bought and sold, bequeathed and inherited, books of hours were more than just devotional texts. Conspicuous consumption in fact figured prominently into their popularity as they became desirable props in a social drama of public exhibition and status display. (Sponsler 108)

Sponsler acknowledges the paradox inherent in the spectacular subjectivity of these books—purchasing and carrying them allowed one to perform both status *and* faith even though they were designed for *private* meditation and self-transformation, not public performance: “Needless to say, this situation was not without irony, given that the books of hours were supposed to encourage the user to *lose* him- or herself in the spiritual experience” (112-113, emphasis added).

By inserting themselves into books of hours specifically produced for them, the patrons who purchased these books transformed them and their associated practices/performances of faith into commodities. Equally importantly, the spectacular self-representation in these books functioned to turn the purchaser’s *self* into a commodity: “In these owner-portraits the devout worshiper’s body is taken as itself an object of consumption, something that could be contemplated—consumed without ever being used up—over and over again whenever the owner wished” (Sponsler 108). And completing a trinity of commodification, the divine itself becomes consumed along with the book and the purchaser: “As the owner was inserted into sacred scenes, witnessing the crucifixion, gazing at the virgin and child, or being presented to God, sacred space

was itself commodified, transformed into a devotional object that could be owned and consumed” (Sponsler 113).

Such an ontological shift in one’s relation to the divine participated in a general privatization of religion in the Middle Ages. Religious practice and religious thought underwent a general “laicization and privatization of religion in the late Middle Ages” (Sponsler 111; see also Keen 251-260). It would be an exaggeration, however, to view this laicization and privatization of religion as an abrupt and totalizing change in social consciousness in England. Rather than inferring what Bakhtin might call a “Galilean shift in consciousness” in the late Middle Ages regarding ownership of the divine, we might instead note a shift in demographics. Throughout the Middle Ages, there were always wealthy people who owned relics and devotional aids; moving into the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there were simply *more* of these people due to the rise of the merchant class. The shift from an ontology of need to an ontology of self-sufficiency was one of numbers; both ontologies existed throughout the Middle Ages, but as the population experiencing the former waned, the population experiencing the latter grew in numbers and in strength.

Ownership of devotional aids and sacred relics was not the only way in which the increasing popularity of an ontology of self-sufficiency expressed itself in late medieval England. At roughly the same moment in English history, the only major heretical movement to challenge the Catholic Church in England prior to Henry VIII arose and gained strength. This movement’s principal tenets regarding the need for lay literacy and the metaphorical function of the sacrament of the Eucharist extended the ontology of self-

sufficiency by offering theoretical justifications for religious beliefs and practices that were already present in late medieval England.

### Lollardy and the Ontology of Self-Sufficiency

At the same time as the rapidly expanding middle class made an ontology of self-sufficiency a more popular religious attitude, England experienced its most notable period of religious discord during the medieval era:

England underwent only one major outburst of heresy in the Middle Ages: the wave of Lollardy that swept through the country in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, partly inspired by the writings of the priest John Wycliffe (c. 1330-1384). (Shinners 491)

Wycliffe (or Wyclif), who had been a noted Oxford scholar, developed several religious tenets which were considered heretical by orthodox authorities but which nonetheless found widespread and fervent support from a populace frustrated by corrupt or incompetent everyday clerics, by a greedy and smugly self-confident clerical elite, and by an obfuscatory shield of Latin literacy that restricted access to the word of God (Leyser 195-199). Eventually, followers of Wycliffe's beliefs became known as "Lollards," who were "apparently named for a Dutch word for 'mumbler' (of prayers)," thus suggesting something of the ongoing, fervent dedication to prayer throughout the day exhibited by Wycliffe's followers (Shinners 491).

The new religious tenets offered by Wycliffe reflected an ontology of self-sufficiency, arguing that "church endowments should be pared down to the barest minimum," that "it was the duty of the king to reform the church and not vice-versa," and that "power was nullified unless exercised by the virtuous" (Leyser 197). As opposed to the traditional medieval hierarchy of power flowing from God to the Pope to the clergy, Wycliffe envisioned a spiritual meritocracy where virtue, not title or ordination, granted

one access to heaven: “the true pope, in consequence, was not necessarily the man with the title, but simply whoever happened to be the most righteous man on earth” (Leyser 197).

Building on Wycliffe’s ideas, Lollard followers developed even more radical tenets than Wycliffe might have himself supported, in particular arguing that “priests ‘in deadly sin’ had no sacramental powers and, conversely, that all true good Christians, men and women, were in fact priests” (Leyser 198). Such phrasing reminds us of the Protestant slogan that developed during the Reformation calling “every man a priest.” This attitude is demonstrated in court documents of eyewitness testimony from a 1429 Norwich heresy trial describing conversations with a suspected Lollard named Margery Baxter: “Margery told her [the witness] she had never done harm to any priest, so she had never wanted to confess to a priest or be obedient to any priest, since a priest had no power to absolve anyone from sins; in fact priests sinned more grievously every day than other people” (Shinners 495). While not desiring to start anything resembling the Protestant movement, which would develop out of broader sociocultural issues much later in England’s history due largely to King Henry VIII’s political exigencies and political might, the Lollard movement articulated a Protestant-like vision of one’s relation to the divine. Such a world view constructs the individual’s unique relationship with God as being of paramount—or perhaps even sole—importance.

Within the Lollard world view, each individual must strive to make him/herself right with God. As opposed to the communal, hierarchical, and situated faith that dominated much of the Middle Ages, this new individualistic vision gave each person the opportunity to author his/her own unique relationship to/with divinity, and to do so at a

time and place of his/her choosing. Given its emphasis on the individual, Lollardy demanded that the individual be able to read and to study scripture him- or herself. “Lollard theology was based on a belief in the supreme value of scripture—*sola scriptura*—and on the right of all Christians to be able to read and understand it” (Leyser 198).

Access to holy writ had been a major theological issue in England for some time even prior to the growth of the Lollard movement. As part of Catholic Church reforms following the Black Plague, Archbishop John Thoresby had for some time prior to the Lollard movement advocated lay literacy and use of the vernacular in sermons as tools for winning the hearts and souls of an increasingly cynical lay populace. In 1357, Thoresby introduced his *Lay Folks’ Catechism* in vernacular English as part of a broad effort to educate and involve the populace through literacy and use of the vernacular:

Thoresby issued his *Catechism* with the admonition that all clergy teach and preach “openly on Inglis opon sononndaires.” [...] By such means, Thoresby moved to correct those clergy whose piety was not always apparent and who were held in low estimation by the laity for their lack of learning and their excesses.[...] While Thoresby's doctrine was hardly new, since it was an extension of Archbishop Peckham's position of 76 years previous, it did reflect the idea of reform that was the countermotion of that period to abuses by the clergy. (Emblom 52)

Lollardy increased popular support for such reforms. Despite the fact that Thoresby himself was not a Lollard,

the presuppositions upon which Thoresby's original work was initiated were consistent with Wyclif's own beliefs and the beliefs of his followers: the common man was capable of learning what was necessary for his salvation if he were taught in English, and to that end, he should have available to him various simple statements of those beliefs as well as clergy who could explicate those beliefs in a tongue he could comprehend. (Emblom 53)

Lay literacy and use of the vernacular in worship, two key elements of spiritual self-sufficiency, thus became theological flash points in early fifteenth century England.

Indeed, only fifty-two years after Thoresby's English *Catechism* first appeared, a new Archbishop, faced with a Lollard movement which had moved far beyond Wycliffe's writings and which seemed determined to reject wholesale the most essential tenets of the Catholic Church, turned the Church *away from* lay literacy and use of the vernacular:

It was awareness of the crucial role [in the Lollard movement] played by the reading, memorizing, and discussion of such texts which led Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, to pass stringent laws controlling the production of vernacular literature, in his *Constitutions* of 1409. Vital though Arundel may have conceived these measures to be, it was bound to put a damper on what had up to then been the Church's own policy, those attempts spearheaded by the Lateran council of 1215 to educate the laity through the use of vernacular. Ironically, the very ability to say the Our Father, the Creed, or Hail Mary in English now began to arouse suspicions of heresy. (Leyser 198-199).

The efforts of Thoresby and others to make Christian scripture and teachings more accessible for the lay populace—efforts intended to reinvigorate the flagging health of the Catholic Church in England—had over the years become associated with the shocking and (for the Church) frightening notion that the individual should relate to/with the divine directly, without intervention from the Church hierarchy.

The tension created by the desire to increase the individual's access to the divine was felt by all clergy throughout England, and this tension sparked frustration not only in the hearts of Lollards but also in the hearts of staunch supporters of the traditional Church. Despite his many other contributions to Church doctrine and practice, Archbishop Arundel came to be remembered almost solely for



the rigour of his persecution of the Lollards, his banning of the reading by the laity of the Scriptures in English and his visitation of Oxford to purge it of Wyclifite heresy. This activity earned him sharp criticism, not only from heretics but from some orthodox churchmen too; to Gascoigne he was one who had “stopped the mouths” of good priests and worthy preachers. (Keen 255)

The fact that Arundel’s orthodox persecution of the Lollards was unpopular largely because it prevented the Word of God from being shared with the people in and of itself reflects the creeping failure of the medieval ontology of need in the face of a more popular ontology of self-sufficiency in the later Middle Ages.

Whatever the strength of the Lollard movement itself, and regardless of whether its effects were long-term or were simply a short-term by-product of dissatisfaction with Catholic clergy, the impulse to provide more widespread access to the divine word transcended boundaries of heresy and orthodoxy in England. By learning to read—which in most cases meant *purchasing* literacy training—and by having access to vernacular examples of religious learning, the expanding middle class in late medieval England came to “own” the catechism and other religious practices, came to be able to do for itself rather than having to seek out another temporally and spatially situated person (i.e., a member of the clergy) to engage in these practices. The Catholic Church in return began to stamp literacy and vernacularism as “heretical” precisely when such practices became a tool which released the individual from his/her ontology of need.

#### The Eucharist as (Mere) Metaphor

Perhaps the most devastating attack launched by Wycliffe and the Lollards upon the ontology of need in the Catholic Church, however, was their attack on the sacrament of the Eucharist, commonly referred to in England the “sacrament of the altar”: “By denying the doctrine of transubstantiation—claiming it to be an invention of the Lateran

council of 1215—and the need, prescribed by the same council, for oral confession, he [Wycliffe] had at once diminished priestly power” (Leyser 198). Wycliffe dismissed transubstantiation as a “philosophically untenable doctrine” (Leyser 197) in large part due to the practical and logical paradoxes that come from assuming that the true body of Christ is eaten.

Gallagher and Greenblatt describe the way the Catholic Church had tried to explain away the material messiness that develops when one eats Christ’s body. Their observations here merit extensive quotation in order to explore the range of intellectual, physical, and spiritual tensions produced by the material messiness inherent in the doctrine of transubstantiation:

Committed as they were to the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents, Catholic theologians had always recognized that there was in the Sacrament of the Mass a material residue, and committed as they were to a principle of exhaustiveness, they had vigorously debated its status. The issue of digestion was officially resolved by the argument that after the consecration, the bread was miraculously changed in substance into Christ’s body, but the appearance of bread, the accidents or species, was unchanged. The substance, Albertus Magnus declared, remained only as long as the form of the Eucharist continued intact; once the wafer was dissolved in the mouth (or, in Gratian’s formulation, once it was touched by the teeth) and was no longer Christ’s body. But this sophisticated doctrine did not entirely resolve the problem of the leftover [such as crumbs left in the wafer dish], even for church intellectuals, and heresy trials throughout the late Middle Ages, along with conflicting practices within the Church itself, suggest that it continued to be a vexing problem for a wide spectrum of people. The consecrated bread had been transformed by the touch of the transcendent, but its material accidents stubbornly persisted and were unnervingly subject to the disgraces to which all matter is vulnerable. (147)

In short, if the wafer becomes Christ from the moment of the blessing to the moment it touches the teeth, then what is the status of the leftover crumbs? What happens if a mouse eats one of those crumbs—is the mouse now blessed? Such questions were far

from playful issues in the late Middle Ages. Both life and afterlife were at stake in the debate over transubstantiation.

Lollard theology outright rejected the orthodox Catholic view of the Eucharist, as reflected in eyewitness testimony at the Norwich trial of Margery Baxter:

Then the witness said Margery asked her what she believed about the sacrament of the altar. And the witness answered her, so she said, saying she believed that after the consecration, the sacrament of the altar is the true body of Christ in the form of bread. Then Margery told her “You’re wrong to believe that. If every such sacrament were God and the true body of Christ, there would be an infinite number of gods since every day a thousand or more priests consecrate a thousand such gods, and then they eat these gods and, having eaten them, they excrete them from their rear ends into foul stinking privies where you can find these substitute gods if you want to poke around. Know for sure that, with God’s grace, what you call the ‘sacrament of the altar’ will never be my God because priests falsely and deceptively set up that sacrament in the church to lure simple people into idolatry since that sacrament is only material bread.” (Shinners 492)

Two aspects of Margery’s argument are notable here. First, she rejects transubstantiation on the grounds that such a belief cannot resolve the problem of “material residue.” She cannot mutely except the Church’s sophisticated efforts to explain away the material residue via ever-elaborate philosophical inventions. She cannot, in other words, accept by faith alone—faith in the Church’s hierarchy and its inherent wisdom—that which her senses perceive and which her own sense of reason cannot settle.

Second, Margery’s argument against transubstantiation implicitly constructs the Eucharist as a show, more specifically as an illusory show designed to lead followers away from the true faith of the true God. In Margery’s view, priests have “deceptively set up that sacrament in the church to lure simple people into idolatry”; the sacrament thus functions as a confidence game, stealing hearts and minds from God by having the people worship images and rituals rather than worshipping God himself. In Margery’s

view, and in the view of most Lollards, the Eucharist was the foremost of many performance tools used by the medieval Church to maintain an ontology of need at the expense of the people's relationship with Christ.

An iconoclastic note is sounded here; images, icons, and rituals are denied real power, as well as being denied real "substance" in an Aristotelian sense. Lollard theology generally repudiated "the veneration of saints and their images" (Shinners 491). The 1429 Norwich deposition of accused heretic William Colyn articulates the vehemence of this iconoclasm:

Also, when the churchwardens of South Creake church were asking the parishioners to contribute toward painting the images in the church, the said William Colyn told them that he would sooner give twelve pence to burn an image than a halfpenny to paint one. (Shinners 497)

Such iconoclasm is at the heart of the ontology of self-sufficiency and at the heart of the Lollard (and subsequent Protestant) attacks on the Eucharist. Within this ontology of self-sufficiency, the Eucharist, like other religious practices, is simply a means of spiritual meditation. Such iconoclasm does not deny the spiritual value of the Eucharist—or, for that matter, the spiritual value of other religious devotional practices, including the purchase of devotional aids or relics for the purpose of religious contemplation. Rather, the iconoclastic urge expressed by the Lollards refuses to accept that such practices or objects can be infused with a spiritual presence that grants the practice or object authority over and above the contemplator. Granting the Eucharist—or any other religious practice or object—power beyond the ability to encourage devout contemplation perverts that practice or object into an idolatrous "false god" of the sort Margery Baxter finds in the privy pits.

Lollard heretics resolved the problem of the material accidents left behind after transubstantiation by transforming the Eucharist into an act of “pure” representation:

For the Lollards, as later for Calvinists and others, the Supper of the Lord continues to include the ritual eating of the consecrated bread—the sign must pass into and through the body—but the ritual now eschews the miraculous transformation of matter. The emphasis is on remembrance through representation: the symbol enters into the body as an exalted mnemonic device (Gallagher and Greenblatt 146).

Such an approach to the Eucharist not only articulates a radical *theological* precept but also articulates a radical *theatrical* notion, since it offers a vision of representation as a tool for contemplation of the divine. Performance, in the form of ritual, no longer creates a divinity or brings one in contact with the divine; instead, performance is denied performativity and transformed from creative act to intellectual exercise. Rather than producing actual material change in the world, the sacrament of the Eucharist, within an ontology of self-sufficiency, becomes “pure” trope designed to encourage contemplation, and with this transformation we see a new attitude towards representation generally.

In a world where the Eucharist is a “mere” trope, performance makes or creates nothing of Aristotelian substance—instead, performance only encourages contemplation and remembrance. Whatever transformation a performance enacts on the hearts and minds of worshippers/audience members is enacted in/on their hearts and minds alone—nothing material is transformed; nothing “real” happens. Whatever sense of the divine is brought into being through the performance comes only from the individual’s contemplation; no actual divine presence is brought to earth and given flesh during the performance or as a result of the performance.

This attitude undergirds the Lollards’ iconoclastic attack on the veneration of images. Writing against such veneration, one Lollard tract ridicules the common folk for

believing that images and relics have any spiritual power: “For summe lewid folc wenen þat þe ymagis doun verreyly þe myraclis of hemsilf, and þat þis image of þe crucifix be Crist hymself, or þe seynt þat þe ymage is pere sett for lickenesse” (Hudson 87). (*“For some lewd folk believe that the images verily do the miracles of themselves, and that this image of the crucifix is Christ himself, of the saint that the image is there set for a likeness of.”*) In Lollard theology, God, Christ, and the Saints in heaven produce miracles—images are unnecessary and even deceitful, as they can fool us into thinking that they have the power to bring about real change in the material world.

From Ritual to Theatre, Medieval-Style: The “Tretise of Miraclis Playinge”

Lollard critics extended this kind of reasoning beyond religious ritual to address theatrical performance practices. The attitude toward performance that it creates nothing real lies at the heart of one of the most famous (or infamous) antitheatrical tracts of the Middle Ages, the Wycliffite “Tretise of Miraclis Playinge.” Despite the fact that it was most likely written by one of Wycliffe’s early disciples, the treatise is not necessarily representative of the views of most Lollards; the “subject of miracle plays is not one that seems to have attracted much attention from the Lollards” (Hudson 187). Wycliffe himself conceded “the usefulness of images to the illiterate laity” as tools of instruction (Hudson 181), thus holding to the conservative church line that argued images—especially performed images—could serve as living books for the illiterate. The treatise does, however, articulate an antimimetic argument which contrasts performance with “real works” and which, by doing so, constructs performance as inconsequential play—or, worse yet, as play that leads one away from one’s duty to care for others and to respect and fear God. Such an interpretation of mimesis, which harkens back to Plato’s

attacks on mimesis as a “lie twice told,” further undermines an ontology of need by denying religious performance any spiritual substance, that is, by denying the efficacy of religious ritual to render the divine incarnate.

The “Tretise of Miraclis Playinge” begins by contrasting the “effectual” miracles of Christ and his saints with the false “miracles” accomplished “in bourde and pleye.” The central difference between effectual and ineffectual miracles as described in the treatise lies in the earnest and serious character of true miracles: “Myraclis perfore þat Crist dude heere in erþe, ouþer in hymself ouþer in hise seyntis, weren so efectual and in earnest done þat to synful men þat erren þei brouȝten forȝyuenesse of synne, settinge hem in þe weye of riȝt bileue” (Hudson 97). (*“Miracles therefore that Christ did here on earth, whether in himself or in his saints, were so effectual and so earnestly done that to sinful men that err they brought forgiveness of sin, setting them in the way of right belief.”*)

In contrast, the performances of “miracle players” are done in a wrongful mind and spirit, and thus what appears as an outward show of piety and as a representation of God’s works is travestied in the playing:

Þanne, syþen myraclis of Crist and of hyse seyntis weren þus ef[f]ectual (as by oure bileue we ben in certeyn), no man shulde vsen in bourde and pleye þe myraclis and werkis þat Crist so ernystfully wrouȝte to oure helpe; for whoeuere so doþ, he erriþ in þe byleue, reuersiþ Crist and scornȝ God. (Hudson 97) (*Then, since miracles of Christ and of his saints were thus effectual (as by our belief we are certain), no man should use in play the miracles and works that Christ so earnestly wrought for our health; for whoever does so, he errs in the belief, reverses Christ, and scorns God.*)

The author of the treatise admits that travestyng Christ’s miracles through performance may “accidentally” convert those who need salvation, but that such accidents are still the

fruit of sin, which leads far more often to evil than to good: “myraclis pleyinge, al be it þat it be synne, is opere while occasion of conuerting of men, but, as it is synne, it is fer more occasion of peruerting of men” (Hudson 101). (“*Miracle playing, albeit is sinful, is otherwise an occasion for converting men, but, as it is sin, it is far more an occasion for the perverting of men.*”) As a consequence of this argument, even the productive aspects of religious performance lack Aristotelian substance, being mere accidents of an otherwise teleologically evil practice.

Performance, in this world view, produces nothing but bodily excitement, which leads inevitably to sin: “it makip to se veyne siztis of degyse, aray of men and wymmen by yuil continuaunse, eyþer stiryng opere to leccherie and debatis as aftir most bodily myrþe comen most debatis” (Hudson 99). (“*It makes visible sights of disguising, arrays men and women in evil countenance, either stirring others to lechery or to debates, as after most bodily mirth, debates will follow.*”) Such “bodily mirth” encourages a distinctly unsober attitude towards the works of God: “syþen þes miraclis playeris taken in bourde þe earnestful werkis of God, no doute þat þei scornen God as diden þe Iewis þat bobbiden Crist, for þei lowen at his passioun as þese lowyn and iapen of þe myraclis of God” (Hudson 99). (“*Since these miracle players take playfully the earnest works of God, there is no doubt that they scorn God as did the Jews that condemned Christ, for they laughed at his passion as these [players and audience members?] laugh and jape over the miracles of God.*”)

In the chronotope of performance constructed by Lollard theology, performance by its very nature provokes laughter and mockery inasmuch as it is inevitably “false.” Our bodies delight in this game of pretend because we know it to be inconsequential. Yet



Christ's passion was the most consequential act in the world within Lollard theology, and so those who became involved in miracle plays could be constructed within that theology as resembling the Jews, who were almost universally regarded by Christians in the Middle Ages as having condemned Christ without realizing the true consequences of their behavior. The references in the treatise to "disguising" by "evil countenance" suggest a consubstantial view of performance by implying that performance hides a true reality underneath of layer of pretend, be it a mask, a costume, or merely a trained performer's voice and body. Just as one must see "through" the bread and wine via active contemplation in order to perceive their spiritual equivalents, in performance one must see "through" the fictive metaworld to the real bodies of the performers who are ridiculing the miracles of Christ.

Of course, the main thrust of the Lollard argument here—that performance creates nothing real—can in turn be used as a justification for performance practice. After all, if performance creates nothing and does nothing, what harm can there be in a little entertainment? Yet at the heart of the Lollard rejection of performance is a broader rejection of bodily pleasure generally, which thus renders "a little entertainment" sinful in and of itself:

And 3if men axen what recreacioun men shulden haue on þe haliday after þeire holy contemplacioun in þe chirche, we seyen to hem two þingis: oon, þat, 3if he had verily ocupiede hym in contemplacioun byforn, neyþer he wolde aske þat question ne han wille to se vanyte; anoper we seyn, þat his recreacioun shulde ben in þe workis of mercy to his neyebore [...]. (Hudson 103) (*"And if men ask what recreation they should have on the holiday after their holy contemplation in the church, we say to them two things: one, that if he had verily occupied himself in contemplation before, neither would he ask that question nor would he want to see vanities; also we would say that his recreation should lie in works of mercy towards his neighbor[...]."*)

The good Christian body thus should be dedicated to good deeds, not to empty and unproductive play.

Yet even if one rejects this rather severe vision of the human body—even if one rejoices in bodily play—one can still detect a loss of ontological force as a result of the rejection of the “reality” of performance. Such a defense of performance—that it creates nothing and therefore can be of no harm—undercuts the ontological authority of performance. Within the consubstantial chronotope, performance only has power when the audience yields it power, that is, when the audience chooses to engage in the performance. Compare this lack of ontological force to the sacramental chronotope, wherein performance speaks directly to (and for) God, whether or not any audience is present, and whether or not the audience cares about or even attends to the performance.

By exploring the ontological consequences of Lollard thought, I do not mean to suggest that Lollardy was the only—or even the primary—religious movement of late medieval England, nor am I suggesting that England was somehow inevitably chugging along towards Henry VIII and the Protestant Reformation. I also do not mean to suggest that Lollardy provided anything resembling aesthetic theory for those in medieval England. Rather, I offer Lollardy as an exemplar of a broader socio-cultural shift from an ontology of need to an ontology of self-sufficiency. As England’s only major heretical faction, Lollardy offered/authored a distinct attitude towards the Eucharist and towards faith generally, one that differed greatly from the attitude towards faith that defines an ontology of need. This attitude toward faith, while by no means dominant or unchallenged in medieval England, indicates two tendencies relevant for this analysis.

First, there was a growing tendency in late medieval England to focus on the needs of the material world rather than on the “needs” and power of relics and images. Another Lollard treatise, one which argues against the veneration of images and relics, contrasts the money and effort spent on “dead images” with the good deeds and material aid that could result if the same money and effort were expended on the living: “And hereby þe rude puple tristus vtterly in þes deade ymagis, and louen God and hese comandementis þe lesse, for men skateren þere loue in siche stokkis and leeuen precious werkis of mercy vndone til here pore neȝeboris, whiche ben Cristis ymagis” (Hudson 87). (*“And thereby the rude people trust utterly in these dead images, and love God and his commandments all the less, for men scatter their love in such stock and leave precious works of mercy undone toward their poor neighbors, which are the [true] image of Christ.”*) Chronotopically, such arguments construct the imaginative metaworld conjured through art and performance as mere phantasm. Additionally, in political terms, Lollard iconoclasm refigures the phantasm of art and performance as a deceptive lure designed to steal attention and material support away from the real material needs of common people.

Second, there was a corresponding and interrelated tendency to see the spiritual as being located, not within a specific individual or at a fixed site, but rather in the act of contemplation and prayer. Chronotopically, the spirit now travels with the contemplator and lives in the act of contemplation rather than being grounded in a specific space and time that most medieval people had relatively limited access to. More importantly, within the consubstantial chronotope, individuals become empowered to author meaning themselves, in their private acts of contemplation, rather than relying on divine and temporal superiors to provide meaning for them. Just as the Host can be understood as

no longer containing God's flesh, but instead can be refigured as an opportunity for personal reflection on His Sacrifice, so too can we say that theatre might in a similar vein be understood less as a container or creator of a specific reality and more as an opportunity for individuals to contemplate an image of reality.

This shift from an ontology of need to an ontology of self-sufficiency had two main effects on the experience of theatergoing in late medieval England. First, as we saw in Sponsler's analysis of the ownership of Books of Hours, the shift to an ontology of self-sufficiency constructed a body that was accustomed to consumption and that viewed consumption in the material world as a reflection of the consumer's self. From within such a body, theatrical experience becomes less a communal celebration of (usually spiritual) belief than an ephemeral item purchased to display one's social status, one's values, and one's power. Second, as we saw in my analysis of Lollard theology, the shift from an ontology of need to an ontology of self-sufficiency transformed the perception of representation, locating meaning in the individual's interpretive act rather than in the spiritual reality contacted through religious performance. Whereas the sacramental chronotope constructs representation as a tool to contact an omnipresent divine realm—a realm that is in itself the “meaning” of the performed representation, and thus a realm that sanctions the performance from outside the sphere of the performers and audience—the consubstantial chronotope constructs representation as an exchange of ideas between performer and audience, locating the sanction for the performance in the pleasure that the audience derives from their personal, private acts of interpretation. Of these two main effects of the shift to an ontology of self-sufficiency, we will first explore the ontological implications of the assumption that performances are only as real as the audience makes

them through their interpretive acts. We will then describe the consumption-oriented bodies that purchased performances for their own consumption through contemplation.

### Mass and Masks: Diverse Ontologies of Performance

In their analysis of various traditions of masking in medieval theatre, Twycross and Carpenter explore a variety of functions of masks which can in turn help us to theorize about various relationships between image and observer and between image and performer. While masks can call attention to the gap between the “false face” and the performer, Twycross and Carpenter argue that the use of masks in the biblical cycle plays of late medieval England might have functioned differently:

Partly because of their popular, “native” element, and partly because of their religious material, they [the biblical cycle plays] come much closer to ancient traditions of masking such as we see in Greek, Roman, Oriental, Asian and African popular religious theatre. These traditions do not seem to encourage their audiences to look behind the mask, or recognize a tension between it and the actor. The concentration is on the character, often a god, mythical hero, or evil spirit, who is represented by the mask, not on its relationship to the wearer. Once the mask is on, the actor as an individual man simply disappears behind or into it: only the character is left. (175)

We might argue that within such traditions, the masks themselves are performing, not the performers “underneath”: “They demonstrate a character, or an idea: they do not conceal or disguise anything”—or anyone (Twycross and Carpenter 176). Such traditions thus render masks essential for performance; indeed, the performer is more dependent upon the mask than the mask is dependent upon the performer.

In this sense, as compared to an ontology of self-sufficiency, an ontology of need offers a unique conception of the power relations not only between the spiritual and the material, but also offers a different conception of the power relations between image and contemplator. Within an ontology of need, the sacred image has its own power, a power

localized in space and time and “owned” by the image itself. The contemplator of the image is subservient to the image itself. The wafer and wine become flesh and blood whether or not the worshiper believes in the transformation. Within the sacramental chronotope, the performer needs the mask, but the mask does not need the performer.

Within the consubstantial chronotope, however, the mask is a mere tool, a false face used by the performer to create a purely imaginative metaworld:

This interest in mask as concealment or disguise has persisted in the post-Renaissance European theatre, right through until the twentieth century. The interest seems most often to be in the relationship between the mask and the face behind it. This tends to encourage the audience to look behind the mask to try to discover the man beneath. (Twycross and Carpenter 175)

Just as within a consubstantial interpretation of the Eucharist, the wafer and wine remain wafer and wine and must be consciously read as *signs* (that is, as masks or representations) of Christ’s last supper, so too can performance be construed as “mere sign” superimposed over the visible bodies, set pieces, props, and so forth “underneath” the illusion.

In the consubstantial chronotope, it is these bodies and set pieces which, in their materiality, are real and have substance; the fictive metaworld has consequence only in the minds of the audience. Building on Christ’s declaration in Matthew 12:39 that the wicked seek miraculous *signs* of love but not *deeds* of love, the author of the Lollard treatise on miracle plays articulates just such a view of representation: “So siþen þise miraclis playenge ben onely syngnis, loue wipout dedis, þei ben [...] contrarious to þe worschipe of God, þat is boþe in signe and in dede” (Hudson 100). (“*So since this miracle playing involves only signs, love without deeds, such plays are [...] contrary to the worship of God, that is both in sign and in deed.*”) Rather than indulging in

inconsequential play, Lollards seek to move beyond signs into deeds, such as those implied in the Lollard dictum mentioned earlier that a man's "recreation should lie in works of mercy towards his neighbor" such as the giving of alms or the communal effort of helping others work their land.

As we shall explore in more detail in Chapter Five, there is yet one more relationship possible between performer and mask—one of interdependence and ontological equality. Twycross and Carpenter suggest that the presence of a mask can compel a performer to work *with* the mask, rather than viewing it as merely a tool or as an entity of greater communicative and ontological value (177). Such a relationship, as we will see, creates the grounds for a dialogue, in the Bakhtinian sense of the word, between the mask or representation and the performers who "wear" that mask. Yet for the purposes of the current discussion, it is enough to note that within the consubstantial chronotope, the performer and the audience have ontological authority over the mask—that is, the performed image—which is thus a tool and which has no Being other than that with which it is temporarily animated by the wearer.

In theatrical terms, we might say that within an ontology of need, a performance—as an image, an object of contemplation—has ontological superiority over the audience, as was the case in many of the liturgical dramas discussed in Chapter Three. The performance speaks "above" the audience, as it were, with no real need for any audience to be present. A sacred ritual is valid with or without an audience, yet within the ontology of need created by Catholic liturgical practices of the Eucharist and confession, the audience—that is, the laity trying to avoid an eternity in hell—desperately *needs* the ritual performance.

Within an ontology of self-sufficiency, however, the contemplator's own efforts at meditation and meaning-making assume priority over any "inherent" power the image, relic, or performance might seem to possess. Instead of conceiving the image or performance as possessing power independent of human acts and interactions, within an ontology of self-sufficiency the image is now powerful *only* in relationship to the observer's level of engagement with the image. In other words, representations become powerful—or, more accurately, are *made* powerful—only in the moment of interaction with the owners and viewers, and such representations have at best only "potential divinity" prior to or outside of that interaction. This attitude towards power over the relic is the essence of the consubstantial chronotope—the spirit now travels with the contemplator, neatly contained in the space of his/her mind.

#### The Constructed Body of the Consubstantial Chronotope

If the spirit is constructed as traveling with the contemplator, and if meaning is constructed as residing within the contemplator, then we must consider what sort of bodies are constructed within the consubstantial chronotope. Considering the bodies constructed within an ontology of self-sufficiency will help us move these bodies out of the church into the theatre—we can consider how a body constructed by shifts in religious ontology would behave in a secular environment. Or more accurately, we might say that we can explore how the same chronotopic and ontological forces expressed themselves not only in religious behavior but in secular behavior as well. For although it is tempting to argue that shifts in religious practice "gave birth to" an ontological shift in consciousness, it is perhaps more accurate to view the ontological shift in consciousness,



a shift driven by multiple forces, as expressing itself both in religious and in secular patterns of bodily action made meaningful within a specific chronotope.

The first observation that we might make about bodies within the consubstantial chronotope—especially the bodies of the secular and financial leaders of late medieval England—is that these bodies were strongly inclined toward Kleinschmidt’s autodynamic mode of being. Analyzing manuals for combat techniques and for dance from various periods throughout the middle ages, Kleinschmidt describes two very different sets of bodies. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, “the preferred aristocratic way of fighting was the straightforward, unilinear strike against the opponent, and the rules for the tournaments strictly prohibited bodily twists, turns, bents [*sic*] and feints” (Kleinschmidt 78). Combat on the battlefield was likewise linear, rigid, and straightforward: “military strategy consisted in the choice and preparation of the battlefield so that it was best suited to stand against the primal shock of the opponent” (Kleinschmidt 78).

Likewise, dance movements were similarly wooden:

In the course of the fourteenth century, dancing masters began to compose choreographies with precisely measured paces and sequences [...] and to train their aristocratic lords and urban customers in the art of enacting them. The preferred dances were slow and straightforward ceremonial step dances[...]. These dances were processions in the course of which the dancers were expected to observe meticulously the prescribed steps to the front or backwards or some little hops as they moved on.  
(Kleinschmidt 80)

Such simplified, straightforward uses of the body for combat and for dance reflected a more heterodynamic mode of the body moving in unison in a line with other bodies. The body employed in this manner was not understood as an expressive “free agent,” capable of exploring the full range of its possible motions. Instead, we might metaphorically

describe this heterodynamic body as something like part of a wave—working together, the bodies of those in the community move forward, their shared monodirectional force providing the might behind their action. Were these bodies to go spinning off wildly, twisting and bending as they pleased, the force of the wave would be dissipated.

Yet in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, fighting and dancing offer the body new realms of autodynamic self-expression:

Participants of many walks of life thus joined in displays of their bodily energies. In doing so they adopted equilibrium positions which allowed twists and turns into many different directions as well as jumps and other extravagant and energetic movements. Legs stretched out to the back and did not any more form a straight line with the upper parts of the bodies, which were kept upright and flexible. Dancers were trained not only to move forwards or backwards, but also to enact circular movements. Fencers and dancers tried to act independently and to keep as much space around themselves as possible so as to be able to move freely.  
(Kleinschmidt 87-88)

This autodynamic mode of bodily action views the body as an independent agent and as a source of energy from within. Bodies reach out to each other for pleasure or to cause pain, but they are no longer constructed as links in a chain—links which cannot move independently of each other. This self-sufficient body might *choose* to work with other self-sufficient bodies—or it might not. It might, instead, merely twist, twirl, and dance away, seeking to meet its own ends with its own forces.

In terms of Arthur W. Frank's typology of body use in action, the body that is constructed for interaction within the consubstantial chronotope at first resembles the "disciplined body" that was associated with the sacramental chronotope. The most notable resemblance between Frank's disciplined body and the bodies living within the consubstantial chronotope is the ascetic belief that bodies are not real but merely cover or hide the truth—the soul that lies "inside." The ascetic impulse in the consubstantial

chronotope relies upon a mind-body dualism which subordinates the body to the demands of the spirit: “the disciplined body is *dissociated* from itself. The ascetic can tolerate the degradation of her or his body because she or he only observes that body; the ascetic is in but not of the body” (Frank 56, emphasis in original). Within this chronotope, bodies are merely tools, tools which should be put to the best possible use. Within the strict Lollard vision of Christianity, providing this tool with pleasure through performance is a waste of energy and resources; instead, the body should service the needs of the soul as well as the needs of other bodies. Note here that the concern ultimately is with economics and consumption, however; the issue is not simply that a good Christian should help others, but also—and more importantly—that good Christians should not waste their resources in frivolous enterprises.

The same bodily discipline present in religious thought and Christian doctrine also pervaded secular treatises on proper moral behavior. The secular counterpoint to the Books of Hours would be the various conduct books that informed the growing upper class, largely composed of merchants, how to behave appropriately in polite society. Sponsler examines some of these medieval English conduct books in light of scholarly arguments that during the Middle Ages, “public control over the individual body was absolute and unquestioned” and that it was not until the early modern era that control of the body shifted “from a public to a private sphere” (52). Sponsler’s research suggests otherwise: “Despite the assumptions of Elias, Bakhtin, and Foucault about medieval bodies, these conduct books reveal that long before the sixteenth century the ‘civilizing’ work of bodily discipline was already well under way” (53).

The discipline of these consubstantial bodies, however, was far different from the monastic discipline exhibited in the sacramental chronotope. In the budding consumer culture of medieval England, one purchased a disciplined body—or the training required to obtain it—by purchasing conduct books. Rather than learning an orthopraxis through time-consuming acts of repetition and modeling, secular consumers of discipline in the late Middle Ages simply bought a book and read it. As such, discipline becomes reconstructed within the consubstantial chronotope not only as something *available* for purchase, but indeed as something *desirable* to purchase. Sponsler’s primary argument regarding medieval English conduct books is that they were rhetorically constructed to make discipline seem desirable, even pleasurable: “Conduct books work ideologically to make bodily control something the rational subject *wants*, even as they position that subject within the social order, working to create categories and hierarchies based on the marketing of acquirable traits such as manners” (57, emphasis in original). These books employ several rhetorical devices to transform discipline into pleasure. The two most significant of such devices for our analysis here are scare tactics and the promise of rewards. Fear appeals are evident in the conduct poems that Sponsler analyzes because they “frame their advice within a social world that is figured as hostile and threatening. The weapon to use against the dangerous world, the poems promise, is the well-governed body, which helps protect the vulnerable self and offers safety” (70).

Medieval conduct poems appeal to rewards in much the same way that “self-help” books today sell themselves on the premise that self-discipline and a “new” outlook on life will lead to extraordinary personal, social, and financial rewards:

Self-governance is [...] presented as the mechanism by which an individual can, through personal initiative alone, attain success and

happiness. The optimism and confidence of this position are breathtaking. Potential barriers—such as lack of wealth, absence of employment opportunities or marriage prospects, low social standing, or poor health—are never mentioned. Instead, the assumption is that learning to control one's own behavior is the definitive factor in determining one's happiness, with the individual's own enthusiastic participation as the only requirement. (Sponsler 71)

Sponsler's line of argument here suggests an interesting connection between Frank's disciplined body and his mirroring, or consuming, body. Medieval English conduct books construct discipline as a tool which can be consumed and which, once consumed, will lead to greater possibilities for consumption—that is, to increased status and wealth.

“If the disciplined body made itself predictable against an unconscious fear of its own contingency, the mirroring body is endlessly *producing* desires in order to keep its lack unconscious,” Frank tells us (62, emphasis in original). This endlessly produced desire in turn drives an endless consumption:

The mirroring body finds its paradigmatic medium of activity in consuming, but consumption is less about actual material acquisition than it is about producing desires. The paradox of the mirroring body's consumption is that it need not, as it were, be consummated. As the body see the object it immediately aligns itself in some fit with that object; its desire is to make the object part of its image of itself. Thus the object becomes a mirror in which the body sees itself reflected, but only [...] on its own terms. (Frank 62)

The seemingly disciplined body of the consubstantial chronotope functions, I would argue, more significantly as a *mirroring* body in the sense that its discipline is derived from consumption and maintained through consumption. Various laws such as Edward VI's sumptuary laws of 1463 provide some indication of how important consumption was for displaying the self-disciplined body's new status, as such laws articulated a straightforward connection between the clothing one could purchase and the appearance of possessing high social status. “Townsmen were sharply conscious of the stratifications

of wealth in their world, and had their own names for them, ‘men of degree,’ ‘honest commoners,’ ‘mere commoners’ and so on. In some towns [...] the gradations were reinforced by local sumptuary laws” which insured that one’s dress matched one’s social standing (Keen 98). The fact that such laws were created in the first place suggests that a frequent practice in late medieval England, especially in the larger towns, was to purchase clothing which would suggest that one was of a higher station than one had, in the eyes of the ruling elite, “earned.” Consumption of a material object becomes, in the context of such practices, a route for social advancement.

But material objects were not the only objects for consumption in medieval England. As ephemeral as they are, theatrical performances were perhaps the perfect example of an object for consumption under the paradigm of the mirroring body. Always disappearing in the act of consumption without being forgotten, always summoning forth desire for more productions (in both senses of the word) which in turn are consumed and then produced again, theatrical performances fit well with the mirroring body’s impulses. And in medieval England, there were a variety of consumers available for these performances.

For simplicity’s sake, we might divide theatrical consumers in late medieval England into five groups: the common folk paying to see a performance by a touring troupe (Bristol; Greenfield); the university dons watching children perform for their edification and entertainment (Nelson; Elliott, Jr.); the courtly class that sponsored performing troupes and commissioned entertainments (Parry; McLuskie and Dunsworth); the clergy who arranged for the ongoing religious drama within the church space (Wasson); and the townsfolk who watched guild-produced civic theatre (Higgins) and

civic spectacles (Kipling). The clerical audience has already been addressed in Chapter Three of this study, while the audience for civic theatre will be discussed in Chapter Five. All three of the remaining audience groups (commoners, university wits, and nobles) arguably functioned as mirroring bodies who viewed performance as a mirror—one that simultaneously reflected, demonstrated, and produced their refinement or tastes. A full discussion of the consumption practices of all three of these medieval theatre audiences is beyond the scope of the present study. In this chapter, therefore, we will focus on upper class theatre spectators—the newly wealthy merchants and the nobles who arranged for household performances. A wealth of dramatic texts designed for performance in these household entertainments gives us ample room to explore these consumers and the images they consumed.

As we move into an era where more and more wealthy individuals own relics, religious images, and devotional aids, we observe that the surviving theatre scripts are predominantly consubstantial in their approach to the “reality” of the fictive metaworld created in performance. As opposed to the interconnectedness of the Host and Christ in the transubstantial vision of the Eucharist, the consubstantial chronotope assumes a less literal, more metaphoric relationship between spirit and matter, and thus in theatrical terms assumes a *purely* metaphoric relationship between “play” and “reality.” In keeping with our discussion of the mirroring or consuming body, we might say that in the consubstantial chronotope, the theatrical spectator is merely “window-shopping” through the world of ideas being presented for his or her pleasure. A purely metaphoric relationship between play and reality therefore implies a very different relationship

between the first and second worlds of performance in the consubstantial chronotope than the relationship between those two worlds in the sacramental chronotope.

#### Consubstantial Phantasms: First and Second Worlds

Henry Medwall's Tudor-era interlude Fulgens and Lucres offers a useful example of the consubstantial chronotope in action, as it illustrates multiple ways in which the world of the performers and the audience interacted with the imaginative metaworld created in/through the performance. If the sacramental chronotope represents absolute indivisibility—the perfect unity of the church as the eternal locus of the divine—then the consubstantial chronotope might be characterized as absolute divisibility. The consubstantial chronotope assumes a clear division between the first and second worlds of performance while exploring various ways for those two distinct worlds to “play” with each other.

A late fifteenth-century play, Fulgens is in many respects a more or less secular version of the traditional morality play familiar to most theatre audiences in medieval England. Set in classical Rome, perhaps “during the closing period of the Republic” (Creeth 538), the main plot of Fulgens essentially presents “little more than a medieval *debat*, or disputation, on what makes a gentleman” (Holzknecht 2). A young daughter of a Roman senator is compelled to choose between two suitors for marriage—one who is of noble blood but of questionable morals, and one who is of common birth but is wise, trustworthy, and of sound moral character. Yet the play's comic sub-plot, which unusually surrounds the moral commentary of the main plot and frames it, is set not in classical Rome but in the “here-and-now” of Tudor England, and this allows for the play to become something much more than a mere *debat*. The first lines of this play



demonstrate a sophisticated manipulation of audience-performer conventions. “A,” an intentionally unnamed character masquerading as an audience member, begins the play by addressing the audience as if he were one of them:

A: For Goddis will,  
What meane ye, syrs, to stond so still?  
Have not ye etyn and your fill  
and payd nothinge therefore? (I.1-4; Creeth 5)

In his guise as a fellow member of the audience, “A” chastises them for their silence and (presumably) their decorum—the very silence and decorum we would expect at the start of a play.

The joke here works only if the audience knows how it is supposed to behave and in fact behaves with, if not decorum, then at least a dramatic shift in attention when the show begins. The joke, in other words, depends upon the audience possessing a certain theatrical sophistication; audience members must be refined consumers of theatre in order to enjoy these metatheatrical games, and by virtue of their laughter they in turn display their theatrical sophistication for other audience members. Throughout the play, “A” and his fellow-rogue “B” toy with the established conventions of the audience’s passive role by presenting themselves as mere audience members—but audience members who involve themselves actively in the work of the play. As we saw in Chapter One, “A” and “B” choose to become involved in the events of the play, with each becoming a serving-man to one of the suitors. Since “A” and “B” are established as coming from “our” world—the world of those in the Tudor banquet hall where the play is being performed—we are encouraged to think of “A” and “B” as our representatives within the metaworld of performance.

As Meg Twycross points out, it “is difficult to say how long this deception could have been kept up in practice—not for very long, one suspects, as genuine members of the audience do not usually speak in rhymed verse” (75). Indeed it would seem that this “deception” in fact is designed to fail from the start—after all, for the audience to be able

to attend to the first speech by “A,” they would have to be aware that “A” was functioning as a player. When “A” begins spouting rhyming verse, the audience’s suspicions would be confirmed. We may assume, then, that the audience is “in on the joke” when “A” questions the identity of “B”:

A: I trowe your owyn self be oon  
Of them that shall play.  
B: Nay, I am none.  
I trowe thou spekyst in derision  
To lyke me therto. (I.44-48; Creeth 6)

In fact, “B” *is* a player who nonetheless takes insult in being called a player; the audience’s awareness of this fact creates an ironic commentary of the perceived disreputable status of players.

Fulgens is in many ways a clear example of the consubstantial chronotope. Although there is much interaction between the first and second worlds in a performance of this play, in the end this interaction merely confirms their separation—the performance is pure theatrical gamesmanship based on the audience’s familiarity with their role as spectators. “A and B are not malicious, and their subversion of the rules seems to be done out of pure high spirits and opportunism. Medwall’s great tour de force with them is merely the logical extension of the audience game” (Twycross 75). And by showing how *well* they play this “audience game,” spectators in turn display their intelligence, wit, and sophistication for other audience members. In the rarified atmosphere of a wealthy Tudor banquet hall, impressing other spectators with one’s taste and wit offered real material rewards.

Yet this gamesmanship to some extent undercuts the ontological substance of the “second world” of performance. In Fulgens, various players offer disclaimers which suggest that their words are merely entertainment which have no authority over the spectators. As Twycross notes:

These polite disclaimers give one the sense that both author and actors are walking warily. At the very beginning of the play, B goes out of his way to point out that no one present is *personally* involved: “here is no man of the kyn or sede / of either partie” (Part I, lines 178-9), as of course they [the characters in the play] were all ancient Romans. The reminder that this is only a fiction keeps topicality at a safe distance, just as the generalizations of allegory (usually) protect the author and actors from the charge of slander. (78, emphasis in original)

Whatever moral commentary about the behavior of the nobility which might be offered by Medwall’s play is offered only as a “play-ful” suggestion. Granted, the play explores issues that were fiercely debated in late medieval England about the true nature of nobility by constraining the young gentlewoman Lucre to choose between either the nobly-born but morally suspect Cornelius or the common-born but virtuous Gaius for her husband. Yet A and B’s ironic metacommentary throughout the performance helps remind us that the long-dead world of Lucre, Gaius, and Cornelius has only as much substance and authority as the audience grants that metaworld. In the figural conception of time that informs both the sacramental and transubstantial chronotopes, past events are always “present,” and thus the past can always affect the present; in the consubstantial context of Fulgens and Lucre, however, past events are functionally “dead” and are relived only imaginatively and mostly (if not entirely) for the purpose of entertainment.

While concerns about slander remind us that plays such as Medwall’s posed a threat to those in power by virtue of their ability to comment on or satirize contemporary affairs, the threat here comes, not from the imaginative metaworld crossing a boundary into our “first world” of performance, but rather from the actors in the first world speaking lines that clearly have meaning and relevance in the first world. In other words, in the consubstantial chronotope the performers and author(s) can comment on the audience and the larger society, while the imaginative metaworld is purposefully distanced from the audience, set aside as a functionally insubstantial, phantasmic space and time. Ontological authority thus firmly remains the province of the first world of the audience and performers in the consubstantial chronotope.

The audience of such a consubstantial performance is in a sense window-shopping through the ideas portrayed onstage, sitting in ultimate judgment over the metaworld, a metaworld that they can choose to “buy” or not to buy. Medwall, as a shrewd salesman, has chosen well in constructing a metaworld that meets with the tastes, interests, and needs of his customers/patrons, as Creeth points out:

The problem *de vera nobilitate* was not merely academic in early Tudor England. Humanists [such as Erasmus] held the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-ruler but were ruled by an aristocracy based on heredity rather than on learning, the avenue to virtuous discipline. [...] One] means of improving the ruling class was to grant favor and place to the Tudor equivalent of Gayus Flamyneus. By leaving the choice of suitors up to the lady, Medwall was able [...] to imply the superiority of mere virtuous accomplishment over mere ancestors. (xiii-xiv)

Having shrewdly judged his audience, many of whom were either *nouveau riche* merchants or nobles who benefited from the new mercantile wealth, Medwall chooses to suggest that virtuous acts outweigh noble blood. Yet Medwall is always careful to give himself a “loophole” through which he can escape should the audience turn against him: “Medwall’s Lucres is careful to say that she is but a woman, that her decision offers no sort of general precedent, and that moreover the nobility which a member of the hereditary aristocracy can achieve if he will is beyond that accessible to any commoner” (Creeth xiv). Medwall knows who his buyers are, and he aims his discourse at those buyers with a thoroughgoing sensitivity to the full range of responses they might offer.

#### Addressivity in the Consubstantial Chronotope

In this sense, performance within the consubstantial chronotope is addressed directly to the audience, with all the messy communication problems implied by such addressivity. In Bakhtinian terms, while all utterances possess the “hope” of being understood “purely” by the superaddressee, utterances are also clearly marked by their efforts to communicate, however “impurely” or “messily,” with the actual audience present at the moment:

As the need to posit a category such as “super-addressee” outside the present moment makes clear, conditions for creating meaning in the present moment are not always the best. A dialogic world is one in which I can never have my own way completely, and therefore I find myself plunged into constant interaction with others—and with myself. (Holquist 38)

As we saw in Chapter Three, within the sacramental chronotope, every effort is made to focus the energy of the performance’s addressivity on the superaddressee, ignoring as much as is possible the messy realm of dialogue between human beings. The world addressed by the sacramental chronotope is not the ever-changing world of constant interaction with flawed human beings, but the perfect and eternal world of the divine, wherein understanding is ever-present and ever-true.

In the consubstantial chronotope, however, it is the human audience—what Bakhtin called the “second person”—toward which the utterance is primarily inclined. Of course, this “second person” is to some extent always a fiction in the mind of the “author” of the utterance, especially in the written discourse of the novels that Bakhtin sought to valorize. As I write a novel or a play, I have not an actual audience but rather an *image* of the audience members in mind, and I address that imaginative audience as I write. Unlike comments addressed to the superaddressee, however, the image that my writing yearns to speak with and to is not idealized and thus involves problematic or “impure” utterance. A superaddressee offers only one possible reaction—pure, ideal understanding. My imaginative interaction with the second person as I write a play is “impure,” messy, and hesitant, as I struggle with the possible reactions my second person(s) might offer. And in the consubstantial chronotope, the addressee of the utterance is primarily the living, breathing audience in our messy world.

Consider, for instance, one of the most popular forms of medieval theatre in the late middle ages, “a type of discursive comedy or farce similar to the medieval *debat*, or debate, [...which] was intended to amuse as well as, now and then, teach its audience”

(Gassner 231). In some ways, these discursive comedies, such as The Play Called the Four PP, resembled traditional moralities such as Wisdom and Everyman. Where the traditional morality debated issues of good and evil in the hopes of saving individual souls, however, discursive comedies like The Play Called the Four PP were aimed almost exclusively at entertaining crowds of sophisticated theatergoers with intellectual play: “Short on plot and long on discussion, the[se] interludes did not so much thrive on any public stage as appear as a form of private entertainment in the halls of great houses” (Gassner 231).

What strikes me most as I read and imaginatively attempt to re-create the experience of a medieval theatergoer watching one of these discursive comedies is how dependent such comedies are upon the presence of a large, lively, witty audience for their success. One can easily imagine that a traditional morality such as Everyman might be successfully performed for an audience of only one member, as the goal of such moralities was to save even one soul from hellfire. A discursive comedy such as The Play Called the Four PP, however, would be terribly boring and ineffectual without a boisterous audience present to enjoy the sheer rowdy play of ideas.

The “plot” of John Heywood’s The Play Called the Four PP, if it can be said to have one, involves the chance meeting of a Palmer (or pilgrim), a Pardoner, a Pedlar (or merchant), and a Potheary (or healer)—hence the title. Having stumbled onto one another in a space that is never differentiated from the space and time of the audience in the banquet hall, the four P’s decide to pass the time by debating the merits of their various callings in an effort to determine which calling is the most righteous and appropriate. The Pedlar, having perceived that the greatest skill the other three have in common is a talent for lying, proposes that they settle the argument with a contest to determine who can tell the biggest lie. After the Pardoner entertains those assembled, including the audience, by offering them holy relics to kiss such as the “great-toe of the Trinity” (l. 509) and the “buttock-bone of Pentecost” (l. 521), the tall tales begin.

It should perhaps not surprise us, given that many of these banquet-hall performances functioned as the medieval equivalent of an “old boys’ club” where influential men made contacts and arranged deals while ignoring the presence of any women (if indeed any women were present), that the tale each great liar tells is uniformly misogynistic. The Potheary tells the story of his curing a young woman by giving her an enema and plugging up her anus until the plug explodes from her and flies “ten mile long level” (l. 743) destroying two castles on its way. For his contribution, the Pardoner tells a tale of having descended into Hell to save the soul of a shrew who died without the benefit of the sacraments. After debating the Devil to a standstill, the Pardoner asks for the soul of the shrew, which is given up joyfully by the demons in hell who rejoice in the absence of her harsh tongue. The Palmer, who has been mostly quiet and demure throughout these rowdy tales, objects at this point to the Pardoner’s description of such a shrewish, mean-spirited woman. Referring to his wide travels and to the many souls he has encountered, the Palmer observes, “Of all the women that I have seen,/ I never saw, nor knew, in my conscience,/ Any woman out of patience” (l. 1002-4). To this claim of feminine gentility, the other P’s respond enthusiastically that this is, indeed, the single greatest lie they have ever heard.

Discursive comedies like Heywood’s The Play Called the Four PP are rowdy, playful, light entertainments that seek neither to save souls nor to damn them. They are not pious rituals of faith, like Latin liturgical dramas, nor are they moralizing treatises reaching out to save lost souls, like traditional morality plays. These comedies require the presence of a witty intellectual audience familiar with the practice of theatergoing, an audience that the plays clearly address themselves toward with all the messy and profane implications that typically marks such addressivity. And it is revealing that Heywood ends his interlude in a manner that anticipates Shakespeare’s epilogue by Puck in A Midsummer Night’s Dream:

And all that hath 'scaped us here by negligence,  
We clearly revoke and forsake it.  
To pass the time in this without offence  
Was the cause why the maker did make it;  
And so we humbly beseech you take it[.] (1230-34)

The caution that Heywood displays here is characteristic of much Tudor and Elizabethan theatre, where playwrights were careful to insure that their plays were taken as light entertainments—tongue-in-cheek phantasms with no ontological authority over their audience.

#### Conclusion: Divided Worlds

While theatre within the consubstantial chronotope can toy with the conventions of actor-audience relationships, playfully crossing the boundary between the first and second worlds such as when the audience of The Play Called the Four PP is invited to kiss various disgusting relics, in the end this boundary-breaking *reaffirms the division* between the first and second worlds of performance. This division lends itself to a hierarchy between the two worlds which subordinates the ontological status of the fictive metaworld. This is true not only for Medwall and Heywood's works, but for many other plays of the time, including some traditional morality plays that would otherwise seem to challenge the audience more directly and individually:

In Mankind and other late fifteenth-century as well as early sixteenth-century drama, audience addresses tend to be much more casual, more a matter of course than in [the Corpus Christi plays...]. In consequence of its reduced status the audience-address is used less for the expression of shared experience than for the verbalizing of stage business: the players announce that they must leave, or they ask for "room." (Diller, "Theatrical Pragmatics" 329)

Much of the audience address in the Tudor interludes, then, serves to highlight the subordinate status of the performers and, by extension, the subordinate status of the metaworld created by those performers. Calls to "make room" and similar references remind the audience that their agreement and/or acquiescence is required in order for the



metaworld to be brought forward; without the audience's support, nothing can happen in such plays.

What the consubstantial chronotope gains in terms of "a heightened degree of artistic self-consciousness" (Diller, "Theatrical Pragmatics" 330) therefore comes at the expense of the power of the "shared experience" of the transubstantial chronotope which, as we shall see shortly in our next chapter, is best illustrated by the Corpus Christi cycle of biblical plays. The consubstantial chronotope, working from within an ontology of self-sufficiency, authors a metaworld which is both consumed by and specifically addressed to an actual human audience; that same metaworld thus lacks ontological authority over the audience. In contrast, the ontology of community that informs the Corpus Christi cycles of biblical plays produces a transubstantial chronotope where the metaworld of performance can stand as an ontological equal with the audience, thus allowing for the imaginative second world of performance to enter into a uniquely persuasive dialogue with the first world of the audience and performers.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE TRANSUBSTANTIAL CHRONOTOPE

[T]he staging of the last [i.e., concluding] Last Judgment scene on the Pavement [in York] employed the durable and persistent tradition of positional symbolism. Such a staging would have made sense of the actual space: hell to stage left [and thus at the left hand of God], toward the stinking [butcher shops of the] Shambles, and paradise to the right [and thus at the right hand of God], near the church of all the saints, the burial place of the mayors. The fact that the episode's action calls for the crowd itself to be searched and divided into souls damned and saved may help, too, to explain why [seating] stations on the Pavement were not always rented, scaffolds not always built. Where, in good conscience, would one elect to sit?

--Anne Higgins, "Streets and Markets," 91

Higgins' description of the positional symbolism of the concluding Corpus Christi play in medieval York takes us into territory that at first seems familiar. After all, the sacramental chronotope associated with Latin liturgical drama drew heavily on positional symbolism, using the same notions of left and right—as well as compass-point associations—to enhance the spiritual and symbolic significance of action as it was performed. And although the audience was sometimes leery of the public and private difficulties of choosing to sit on either hand of God—after all, sitting on the left hand of God damned you, but sitting on the right hand of God was a public display of an unchristian arrogance—it is clear that stations on the Pavement for the final performance of the pageant were indeed rented and scaffolds were on occasion built. In this sense, we might see in Higgins' description a shadow of the consubstantial chronotope, where the Divine can be purchased for private ownership. At least some brave (or foolhardy) souls were willing to lay down good money to obtain a good seat, and one might imagine that a few purposefully chose to pay for a seat at the right hand of God.

To say, however, that the Corpus Christi pageants prevalent in northern England in the late Middle Ages were merely a bastardized gumbo of Latin liturgical dramas and the more rowdy, secularized, and consumption-oriented plays of the consubstantial chronotope would do the pageants a great injustice. What Higgins describes here borders on the surreal: a group of people who are consciously spectators of an imaginative theatrical experience who nonetheless see their town drawn into the symbolic action of the play and who find themselves struggling over their own salvation as they participate in the performance. Perhaps the simplest—and most comfortable—explanation for this behavior is that the audience for these pageants was largely populated with spectators unable to distinguish between the action of the performance metaworld and the action of the “first world” of the audience. If spectators were simply not sophisticated enough to be able to tell the two worlds apart, their moral dilemma over where to sit would seem sweet—and thus would not seem disturbing to contemporary interpreters of the texts of these plays.

What *is* potentially disturbing for us as modern interpreters of these plays is the thought that something more powerful than we typically experience in a theatre might have been going on as the clock raced toward midnight on the torchlit streets of York. What if these spectators were not naïve at all but were instead quite sophisticated, able to negotiate practical, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of meaning simultaneously, confronting their neighbors and the Risen Savior with the same glance, speaking to and with themselves and Satan at the same time? What if, in other words, the medieval audience (as Carolly Erickson so astutely put it in Chapter Two of this study) actually “saw more” than we are typically able to see in these plays? Are we able, from our

contemporary position, to experience something of the richness of what medieval audiences saw?

The transubstantial chronotope associated with performances like the York Corpus Christi pageants of the late Middle Ages is in many ways a more complex phenomenon of perception than the two previous chronotopes we have explored. To explore this chronotope fully, we must first explore the ontology of community that drove people to produce and participate in these immense theatrical spectacles. We must then consider the generative and lively bodies at work and at play within the transubstantial chronotope, after which we can explore the wide range of audiences being addressed by this performance discourse.

The multiple and complex forms of addressivity in the transubstantial chronotope leads us into the territory of what Bakhtin called “innerly persuasive discourse,” where we can explore how the various voices being produced by the performance discourse are given weight and agency. The transubstantial chronotope features a particularly active form of innerly persuasive discourse, and this comes in part from the figural concept of time which informs the transubstantial chronotope. Figural time allows performers and spectators to discourse in one and the same moment with the immediate present, the Biblical past, *and* the Revelation to come. I conclude this chapter with an imaginative re-creation of the medieval experience of the York Corpus Christi pageants in an attempt to evoke something of the transubstantial chronotope.

#### The Scope of the York Corpus Christi Cycle

Perhaps the most famous theatrical genre of England’s medieval period was the biblical cycle, often staged as a series of short plays which, additively, constituted a great

procession telling the story of Christianity from Creation to Last Judgment. In York and other northern English towns, these plays were regularly staged outdoors, and local townspeople designed and built the huge pageant wagons that would transport the performances from station to station along a predetermined route, made costumes and props for the plays, and were themselves performers in the plays (Harris 125-140). Of the four major Corpus Christi cycles from northern England to have surviving complete play texts—the York, Chester, and Wakefield pageants, and the “N-Town” plays associated with East Anglia—“York’s is the oldest and best preserved of the surviving English cycles” (Beadle and King ix). For this reason, we can productively narrow our discussion of Corpus Christi pageants to the Biblical cycle staged in York from roughly 1376 through to the late 1500’s.

The Corpus Christi festival, which was introduced into the Church calendar in 1311, existed for several years without any associated theatrical performances. The high point of the festival in its earliest stages was a procession of clergy carrying the Communion Host, which was eventually supplemented with static tableaux on floats designed to illustrate Biblical stories (Tydeman, “An Introduction” 20-21). It is difficult, given the limited nature of the surviving documentation, to assume an evolutionary movement from a simple clerical procession to static tableaux on wagons to the full-blown theatrical presentations of the York pageants. Nonetheless, an important step toward the production of fully theatrical pageants came when responsibility for the processional performances was assigned to the craft-guilds of “various trades or ‘mysteries’” (Bevington, Medieval Drama 227). These craft-guilds were formed to protect and promote specific trades, such as plastering, ironmongering, tilemaking,

armoury, and butchery; they also served administrative functions such as the collection of various taxes and fees required from trade members by the city, and they served social functions by bringing together artisans and merchants with similar interests and values (Dobson; Beadle and King xv). As Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King note:

At the earliest stage in the history of the York cycle a decision must have been taken to divide the long sequence of events stretching from the Creation to the Last Judgment into manageable units for the purposes of processional performance. Each of these units became a separate play, or, as it was then often known, “pageant,” and each was assigned to a particular craft-guild of the city. The craft-guilds therefore became responsible for furnishing the pageant-wagon on which the play was to be performed, and for finding suitable actors, properties, costumes, and so forth. It is also possible that the guilds commissioned scripts for their plays locally, but the names of the playwrights have not survived. Those sufficiently learned in sacred history are likely to have been clerics, such as parish priests, or perhaps members of the monastic or mendicant orders, who were strongly present in York. (xii)

As is clear from this description, although the pageants were produced (i.e., overseen) by the craft-guilds of York, a myriad of others were involved in the writing, planning, preparing, and performing of these plays.

The use of local, familiar, and largely secular space, time, and bodies to stage a massive performance portraying the eternal history of God implies a quite different set of principles informing the Corpus Christi pageants of medieval England than the informing principles of either the Tudor-era interludes or of the Latin liturgical dramas that we have previously examined. These pageants functioned as expressions not only of religious faith and identity but also—and perhaps more importantly—as expressions of civic identity and even civic pride. In almost elegiac terms, Higgins describes the late medieval transition from civic play to private spectacle, focusing on how the York

pageants were thoroughly infused with and informed by the life and livelihoods of the town and the people within it:

With the rise of performance in privately owned, not public, spaces, the rough equality of citizens in the streets of their own city, watching a play produced and largely performed by their neighbors, was lost forever. No longer would they see guildsmen whom they knew performing in plays using the tools and products of their daily work; no longer would they see the neighborhood changed for the nonce into Jerusalem, or heaven and hell. There was a time when townspeople owned their play, and they also owned the playing places. (91)

Higgins' tone here may be sentimental, but her observations are nonetheless both accurate and significant. The York pageants fed off of the resources of the entire city and its environs, and as such their performances were a way of enacting and embodying civic consciousness—a means of creating or instilling or reproducing civic virtues. The performances were *of* the community in the most thoroughgoing manner imaginable.

With the possible exception of large-scale parades for Mardi Gras and other holidays which involve individuals of all kinds throughout a city coming together to produce a major festival event, there are few if any contemporary equivalents for a live theatrical performance event as massively and thoroughly communal as the Corpus Christi processions staged in York. The term “community theatre” today often refers to either small amateurish enterprises or equally small social-political efforts at grass-roots community transformation. Yet as Beadle demonstrates, the sheer scale of the community's involvement in staging the 48 plays of the York Corpus Christi procession was extraordinary, involving most or even all of the citizens of York as well as a host of foreigners:

The script called for over 300 speaking parts, and there was an unknown but undoubtedly much larger number of supernumeraries—musicians, stagehands, and other assistants—required to mount the performance,

which normally took place annually on Corpus Christi Day, beginning at dawn and probably not ending until after midnight[...]. These immense physical demands in relation to a single artistic enterprise by one community have no significant modern analogue, and the practical conception answers to an equally significant grandeur and complexity of thought: the idea of a unified drama of the Fall and Redemption of mankind presented in such a way as to implicate the spiritual lives of the audience throughout. (88)

Both in terms of practical resources and intellectual scope, these Corpus Christi pageants were the grandest artistic enterprises of their day.

### Community and Contestation

The question now is how we might describe the ontology that informs the transubstantial chronotope of the Corpus Christi pageants. The sacramental chronotope was defined by an ontology of need, and the consubstantial chronotope was defined by an ontology of self-sufficiency. Perhaps the most obvious way of describing the ontology of the Corpus Christi pageants, given the holistic nature of the enterprise, would be to elaborate an ontology of *community*. Doing so, however, produces two difficulties. First, the concept of “community” in contemporary critical and cultural theory is multivalent, highly contested, and deeply ambiguous. Second, a unitary and monologic view of community is insufficient to describe the diverse groups of bodies that populated the post-plague medieval English city. We must first, therefore, find a definition of community that can accurately describe the Corpus Christi pageants as cultural, communal performances, and we must then describe the various competing communities at work in the rapidly developing English cities of the later Middle Ages.

A useful definition of community in the context of performance studies can be found in a 1995 study by Kirk Fuoss of the organized-labor social drama of sitdown strikes by Michigan autoworkers in 1936-37. Fuoss interprets these strikes as agonistic



performances where competing visions of community were articulated, re-articulated, and contested. In the context of such agonistic performance, community functions both to build coalitions and to articulate grievances and concerns, thus allowing for contestation both within and among communities:

The tendency to view community and contestation as oppositional social forces results, I believe, from the idealization of community and the demonization of contestation in much contemporary thought. For many persons, community is thought to involve sharing, similarity, cohesion, and camaraderie, while contestation is thought to involve conflict, difference, divisiveness, and enmity.[...] Far from being oppositional social forces, community and contestation are, I contend, intimate bedfellows, with each one incessantly producing and reproducing the other. (94)

As opposed to an idealized image of *communitas* as a meeting of true minds and hearts, Fuoss describes community as always and essentially *in process*—that is, a given community is understood as always engaging other communities while community norms and values are continually negotiated both by “in-group” and “out-group” members. Such a description, as we will see shortly, fits well with the multiple and often contestatory communities that worked to produce the York Corpus Christi pageants. Such a description also forces us to reconceptualize community “primarily as a symbolic construct rather than a social structure” (Fuoss 81-82). Community is not a *thing* but is rather an ongoing *doing*, and it is “done” at least in part by means of cultural performances.

While acknowledging that as “a result of the variety of interpretations afforded community, some scholars caution against its use,” Fuoss contends that community can be understood as *inherently and productively* multiple (81-82). Such an approach to the concept of community requires researchers to “recognize that different persons use the

concept differently and investigate what those differences reveal” (Fuoss 81). Analyzing and describing multiple and often competing interpretations of community within a specific historical context can thus transform what was a problem into its own solution given that “the obstacle to investigation—multiple interpretations of community—is reconceptualized not as an *obstacle to* but as the *object of* investigation” (Fuoss 81, emphasis in original).

Perhaps most importantly in the context of my analysis of the ontology of the transubstantial chronotope, Fuoss explicitly links cultural performances to the process of building and articulating communities, thus allowing us to consider the Corpus Christi pageants as community-producing, community-engaging, community-contesting cultural performances. As described by Fuoss, community both produces cultural performances and is produced by cultural performances. Cultural performances articulate communities “by inscribing particular interpretations of community in the cultural performances themselves and by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering for and participating in the cultural performances either as actor, audience member, or both” (Fuoss 82). Communities thus derive some of their meaning, substance, and effectivity from the process of their articulation through cultural performances.

Harald Kleinschmidt offers the means for us to begin discussing the multiple and contestatory communities that struggled to articulate themselves through cultural performances in medieval England. Rather than describing an evolution from small groups to larger societies in the Middle Ages, Kleinschmidt treats the development of larger-scale groups as a process of incorporation, absorption, and the removal of choice or options. He chooses to “focus on the problem of the processes that led to the

disappearance of the variety of groups to which a person could choose to belong” throughout the Middle Ages (92). Medieval Europeans generally experienced a shift from participation in a variety of small groups which could largely be entered into or left voluntarily to participation in two limited, limiting, and largely involuntarily major groups: political groups such as nations and social groups based on law, such as stratified social castes. “The shrinking size, reduced competence and declining autonomy of kin, neighborhood and contractual groups paved the way for the rising administrative and legal importance of political and social groups” (Kleinschmidt 119).

Throughout the Middle Ages, the size of one’s kinship group was systematically reduced, thus reducing the importance of such groups to the public life of a community. “Before the acceptance of Christianity, the most widespread rule of inheritance in the kin groups was double descent, which allowed the tracing of descent through the maternal and the paternal lines” (Kleinschmidt 92), thus creating large extended families which could effectively function as their own communities. In an effort to reduce the strength and power of such communities, the Church worked actively to shrink the size and importance of these kinship groups in public life by determining, among other things, how far removed one must be from one’s spouse in order to be married legitimately or even to bear legitimate children (Kleinschmidt 94). Through their continued redefinition of kinship, Church representatives managed to “acquire a position where they could authoritatively decide on the legitimacy of successors to rule” (Kleinschmidt 95). As a result, kinship groups went from being huge extended families with sizable political impact to less formal and less powerful groups made up largely of what we now call the “nuclear family.”

As the importance of kinship groups waned, so too did the importance of neighborhood groups, although for different reasons. By “neighborhood groups,” Kleinschmidt primarily refers to groups who have migrated together to new territory for the purpose of resettlement. These neighborhood groups came together out of a shared geographic and temporal past, a shared purpose, and a shared vision of their future together in a new place. Such migrations were a frequent occurrence in England from roughly 600 to 1050, after which most major territories of England had been settled (Dyer 140-142). As these migrant communities formed and developed a shared history, they could and often did “become instruments to articulate discontent through the submission of grievances and the organization of violent protest” (Kleinschmidt 102). Throughout much of England, the mass migrations that were the source of many neighborhood groups generally ceased around the eleventh century, and thus the importance of neighborhood groups declined, especially in rural areas.

In the cities, however, a sizable number of migrants came seeking their fortune as labor shortages created by the Black Plague of 1348 created exciting and unprecedented opportunities for social mobility (Keen 65-66). Such an influx of new laborers into an established city or town often intensified tensions rooted in economics and class:

The overall effect of this on the way in which things developed over the twenty to thirty years following the “first pestilence” was to generate a greater cohesion between the groups standing on either side of the great dividing line in society between those who worked for themselves and for others, and those who depended on the work of others to maintain them, and to exacerbate the natural tensions between them. (Keen 40)

As such, the communal outlet for grievances offered by neighborhood groups were all the more important

in the urban communities of towns and cities, where traditional kinship ties among double-descent kin groups played no role, [and thus] the settlement as a whole became the primary focal point of social organization and, hence, could absorb many of the tasks which the extended double-descent kin groups had been in charge of before[...]. (Kleinschmidt 103)

Such neighborhood-based grievances no doubt proliferated in medieval York, which was by all accounts one of the largest and most prosperous English towns of the period (Keen 79-80). The devaluing of such neighborhood communities that was simultaneously happening in the more rural areas most likely added to the sense of urgency that the more urban neighborhood groups felt about claiming their territory and their rights.

Perhaps the broadest group to experience a substantial decline in the late Middle Ages, however, were the various contractual groups that offered citizens choices that were not restricted by birth. Kleinschmidt identifies three major types of contractual groups in the Middle Ages: contractual relations between retainers and warlords; contractual relations between monasteries and those chosen to lead them; and contractual relations among merchant or craft guild members. Given the substantial involvement of guilds in the creation and maintenance of the Corpus Christi pageants, it is essential to note that in contrast to the other two forms of contractual groups, both of which diminished in importance throughout the Middle Ages, guilds actually “rose in significance with the spread of trading activities and the formation of urban communities in towns and cities” (Kleinschmidt 106).

The general tendency that Kleinschmidt observes for kinship groups, neighborhood groups, and contractual groups to shrink both in size and importance throughout the Middle Ages involved, he argues, a general loss of choice for most citizens of medieval Europe. Kinship groups could be voluntarily left (through

migration) and voluntarily joined (through marriage). Neighborhood groups could be voluntarily formed through new migrations. And of course contractual groups involved a notable degree of choice and opportunity. As these three types of groups began to lose strength and numbers, two group divisions rose to prominence, but these two types of groups were fundamentally static, involuntary, and assigned “from above.” Both political groups and social groups assigned individuals into involuntary categories based on geography and law rather than on voluntary relations.

What Kleinschmidt calls “political groups” are groups which initially formed out of some common purpose or history, such as kinship ties, migrations, and contractual obligations, but which eventually became associated strictly with geography. As geography began to define group membership, group structures based on “the land of the English” or “the land of the French” came to have more power and significance than the relatively smaller kinship, neighborhood, and contractual groups that had dominated social life in the early Middle Ages (Kleinschmidt 108-111). By the early sixteenth century, the principal vision of political relations between various groups had become reified: “Europe was viewed [...] as being composed of relatively stable sizeable territories, each under the control of a single ruler and inhabited by political groups” (Kleinschmidt 111).

What Kleinschmidt calls “social groups” might most easily be understood as what we today call socioeconomic classes, with the notable caveat that money was just one of many standards for categorizing classes in medieval England. Membership in these groups was assigned by a variety of laws and regulations, rather than being derived from interactions: “Social groups arrayed their members in accordance with economic, social

or legal criteria, such as wealth, professional identity or availability of the use of the means of production, but irrespective of contractual obligations, political traditions, kin affiliations or place of residence” (Kleinschmidt 111). The most famous of these social orders was known as the “three estates,” as throughout the Middle Ages in England

it was traditional wisdom that society was composed of three orders, functionally defined in their relation to one another: the clergy whose business was with prayer and spiritual well-being; the warriors who defended the land and people with their arms, and the labourers whose toil supported the other two “orders” or “estates.” (Keen 1-2)

Ideally, all members of a given society could be assigned to one and only one of these estates. While some choice and social mobility was possible within this classification system—one could, after all, join the clergy or be knighted for one’s service—functionally, one’s membership in one of these estates was involuntary, often being determined at birth. The three estates world view “was no warmer towards social mobility than it was to social equality. Principally because hierarchical ordering was seen in terms of divine intention, the relationship between the three orders was viewed in a static way” (Keen 3).

The simplistic notion of three distinct estates grew substantially more complicated after the Black Plague of 1348, when rapid depopulation created labor shortages that in turn created more social mobility for individuals, especially those individuals who lived in or near cities and towns. By the end of the fifteenth century, the increased wealth of the merchant class, the creation of a variety of new administrative and leadership posts, and the availability of good land for purchase created a variety of new professions and social ranks that did not fit directly into the three estates scheme. Rather than abandon the concept of the three estates, however, many medieval thinkers reacted by

multiplying the number of “degrees” or “estates” that must be fitted into their place in the body politic. The reaction to overt signs of changing conditions is not to conclude that the framework needs loosening, but almost the opposite, to seek to define more narrowly and relate more carefully functions and “degrees” within the social whole. (Keen 8)

Thus a bewildering variety of laws in late medieval England sought to establish equivalencies between relatively new social ranks such as mayors or lawyers and well-established social ranks such as knights or barons. By means of legislating what taxes each rank owed and what clothes each rank could wear, England’s ruling elites could maintain at least some semblance of a functional three estates classification system, as the three estates simply “branched out” to include further divisions within each of the three main orders (Keen 9-16). The effort required to maintain this social structure, however, was great, and social tensions abounded which required ever more legislation and social pressure to keep in check.

#### The Corpus Christi Pageants as Contested Cultural Performances

One might well imagine, then, that these social tensions between various communities might be reflected in the York Corpus Christi pageants, and indeed the pageants, as cultural performances, articulated and engaged communal tensions. Planning for the pageants was “top-down,” working from the highest levels of organization and wealth, but reaching down to include the lowest social levels. When one takes into account the “incidental” aspects of the performances, such as feeding the performers and the audience and making and selling paraphernalia associated with the performances, one must assume that not only the guild members but indeed most of the population of York was in some way urged to participate in the great event.



In the case of the York pageants, the control that was exerted from above likely represented an effort by cultural leaders to control a potentially riotous event:

It is now common ground among historians and literary critics alike that by the 1390's, when we first have a chance to glimpse the organizational framework of the York Corpus Christi play cycle as a whole, that cycle is clearly already being supervised and indeed directed from the mayor's council chamber, and by his common clerk. Whatever else the mystery plays might or might not have been intended to be, they have already by the year of the *Ordo Paginarum* (1415) become intensely regulated from above, a more or less deliberate exercise in social control upon the commons of the city by its governing elite. (Dobson 100)

Despite any desires to exercise control over the pageant (or perhaps *because* of these desires), the leveling nature of Christian doctrine, which assumes that all will be subject to God's judgment, meant that all pageant participants—audience and performers, elite and commoner—were embraced by the scope of the performance:

The market on the Pavement [where the Last Judgment was staged] was the place of business of the victualing trades, traditionally viewed as scarcely better than that of the butchers. These were also the trades most practiced by women[...]. Like Doomsday itself, the Pavement embraced all people, both the mayor's wife and foreign regrators [victual tradesmen]. Here York's merchants and artisans made their final statement to themselves and to outsiders about what kind of freedom theirs was. (Higgins 90)

The Corpus Christi performances at York were thus a source and a reflection of immense civic pride—as well as a source and a reflection of various civic tensions—due to the thoroughgoing community participation in the performances.

The movement of the Corpus Christi pageants through the streets of York was a cultural performance which most notably reflected tensions between religion and civic life. Perhaps the most striking performance evidence of this is the fact that the procession carrying the Communion Host—the likely source of the pageant procession—was eventually (between 1465 and 1476) separated from the plays and scheduled for the day

following the pageant procession (Beadle 90). Indeed, the two processions—one clerical and somber, the other commercial/civic and often rowdy—took similar routes through York *until they reached the minster*, at which point the clerical procession traveled on to St. Leonard’s Hospital, while the pageants proceeded to the mercantile and unsavory territory of the Pavement (Higgins 85).

There were frequent tensions between the Church and England in the Middle Ages, often based on control of land and economics (Keen 240-242), and these tensions were about to erupt into major religious and social change as Henry VIII battled the Catholic Church. These same tensions over control of land, workers, and other economic forces were at play in York, but this should not obscure the fact that religious and civic organizations had to cooperate as well in order for such massive productions to develop. Glynn Wickham neatly sums up how civic, commercial, and religious organizations cooperated to produce the pageants:

For a variety of reasons, both the driving force and the sheet anchor of the new drama resided in those distinctively medieval social units known as the guild and the parish[... W]here the parish was a topographical unit dominated by the church and the priest in charge, the guild was a social unit formed for a particular purpose which could be religious, charitable, artistic or commercial. If parishes, moreover, were principally administrative units encompassing towns and country districts without discrimination, guilds were just as self-evidently fraternal organizations self-consciously established to advertise, promote, and protect special interests[...]. Acceptance of the Feast of Corpus Christi as a new festival in the Calendar served to activate both of these units, guild and parish, since each parish had to determine for itself how the Feast was to be observed and every guild had to decide what contribution it could and should make to the festivities. (Medieval Theatre 67-68)

For these reasons, we might argue that the pageant performances constituted a nexus-point where religion, civic life, and theatre came together in a way that worked both to demonstrate and to obscure or assuage the tensions between various social forces.

We might therefore say that in comparison to the ontology of self-sufficiency that informs the consubstantial chronotope or the ontology of need that informs the sacramental chronotope, the Corpus Christi pageant plays were informed by an ontology of community. In this context, however, “community” must be understood as *both* a “coming-together” and a “struggling-with”—that is, diverse communities with multiple goals and values organized themselves to address the pageants, and the pageants, as a cultural performance, articulated both the celebration of these bodies coming together with shared purpose *and* the struggles within and between communities brought into proximity through the pageants. Unlike an idealistic vision of *communitas* as a perfect unity of purpose and heart, the ontology of community which informed the transubstantial chronotope of the Corpus Christi pageants offers a more “messy” ontology, articulating a space and time for bodies to engage differences as well as similarities.

Like an ontology of need, the Corpus Christi pageants created an awareness of interdependence and belongingness, but here interdependence is to be understood as something sought out for *shared pleasure* and *increased resources* rather than as a heterodynamic desperation for help-mates. The essentially negative angst for the other experienced in the heterodynamic bodies of the sacramental chronotope is born of a sense of *lack* and *deficiency*. In the ontology of community, however, this angst is re-figured as a celebration of togetherness, a positive embrace of the power that multiple bodies have to please each other and to enhance each other’s lives. In the chronotope of the Corpus Christi pageants, community members could come together to articulate shared grievances, and although contestation was an inevitable factor in the coming-together of

these bodies, contestation can be understood as celebratory and transformative in this context.

As Fuoss puts it, we should resist the tendency to equate contestation solely with “conflict, difference, divisiveness, and enmity” (94). While contestation within and between communities can bring all of these things to the fore, contestation can also be driven by strongly held shared beliefs that allow bodies who are moving together toward a goal to derive strength and purpose from each other. Thus, while a sort of quiet desperation characterizes the ontology of need which informs the sacramental chronotope, the ontology of community which informs the transubstantial chronotope derives additional strength from others, viewing cooperation not as necessary but as valuable.

Like an ontology of self-sufficiency, the bodies working together to produce the Corpus Christi pageant plays draw upon their own individual capacities and their own sense of self to construct the performances, but these bodies also revel in their communal interrelatedness. Rather than celebrating a purely autodynamic freedom from communal concerns, an ontology of community urges participants to co-create something larger than they could create from their own resources. Whereas the autodynamic body sees itself as the origin of its own power and value, within the ontology of community, bodies are constructed as *both* individually valuable *and* communally empowered to convey concerns, express shared values, and articulate a sense of communal identity.

A final element of the ontology of community worth mentioning here is the integration of religious faith into both civic and theatrical communal effort. The craft-guilds which produced the Corpus Christi pageants were not only mercantile but also

religious in nature. As Dobson notes, as craft-guilds moved from the high Middle Ages to the post-plague late Middle Ages, they developed an internal stability “provided by an apprenticeship system, control by their own masters and searchers, and religious cohesion focused around an altar or chapel” (Dobson 97). Many of these craft-guilds were explicitly devoted to the worship of Mary Mother of God or one of His Saints. Couple this with the likely help of clergy in writing the plays and one comes to the conclusion that these plays spoke for, with, and to a variety of spiritual elements and entities as well as speaking for, with, and to civic entities and institutions. As we saw in Chapter Two of this study, spiritual entities were considered as much a part of the medieval community as material entities were, and so spiritual entities can be understood as participating in an ontology of community. We will return shortly to the concept of multiple material and spiritual addressees in the performance of the Corpus Christi pageants; first we must explore the movement of the bodies within the transubstantial chronotope in more detail.

### Communicative Bodies

As we have seen, bodies within an ontology of community are characterized neither by the desperate anxieties that motivate Kleinschmidt’s heterodynamic bodies nor by the purely individualistic celebration of the capacities of one’s own body that drive Kleinschmidt’s autodynamic bodies. Perhaps Kleinschmidt’s categorization system, based on two mutually exclusive categories of heterodynamic and autodynamic bodies, can be seen here as too limiting. Implicit in the heterodynamic/autodynamic distinction is an assumption that bodies which derive power from their own resources cannot or do not derive *additional* power from cooperation, collaboration, and even contestation. Yet while it is clear that frail, needy heterodynamic bodies are *reliant upon* each other for

their survival, it is equally clear that strong, confident autodynamic bodies can derive *additional* strength not only from their collaboration but also from communal efforts of contestation.

We would benefit, therefore, from an intermediary category which can describe bodies who embrace the presence of others rather than being dependent upon the help of others. Arthur W. Frank's communicative body may provide us with a description of this intermediary form. As described by Frank, the communicative body is defined by four qualities. The communicative body is dyadic and other-related, reaching out to others for pleasure and for mutual benefit. It is also self-associated—that is, the communicative body is comfortable in its own skin, as it were, rather than experiencing body and self as two distinct entities. The communicative body also embraces its contingency; rather than fearing the potential for failure and mis-behavior inherent in our flawed flesh, the communicative body claims and even celebrates its contingency as a source of potentially positive change and growth. Finally, the communicative body produces desire rather than lacking it, and this desire is produced by its contingent, inspiring, and inspirational interactions with other bodies (Frank 79-89).

As Frank makes clear, the communicative body must be understood, in the end, as an idealized approximation of an idealized *praxis* (79). Though he struggles to convey this idealized form through examples based on dance and health care, Frank is forced to admit that neither example fully embraces the promise of the *praxis* inherent in the communicative body: “The essential quality of the communicative body is that it is a body *in process* of creating itself. Theory cannot describe such a body, nor can it prescribe it. The task is rather to bring together fragments of its emergence” (Frank 79,

emphasis in original). Nonetheless, Frank locates the medium of the communicative body “in what can loosely be called *recognition*, models of which may be shared narratives, dance, caring for the young, the old, and the ill, and communal ritual” (54, emphasis in original). As such, this communicative body offers the possibility of helping us to understand the bodies participating in the York Corpus Christi pageants. These bodies used performance to tell shared narratives in the context of a communal ritual which sought to heal, if not the bodies of the young and old, then certainly their souls.

Likewise, the Corpus Christi performances gave several groups—and individuals as well—a chance to be recognized and to recognize each other. Higgins suggests that the York pageant functioned, in part, as a way for various social groups to “beat the bounds” of their territory and to establish their ownership and rights. For example, once the religious procession began to travel one route while the pageant procession traveled a different one, the two groups implicitly sought recognition for their sometimes diverging, sometimes overlapping spheres of influence:

The religious procession ended up demarcating the religious liberties [that is, the religious territories] of York by visiting the three chief religious foundations. It claimed authority in the whole city by recapitulating the royal and civic routes up to the minster gates. On the other hand, the guild pageant route redefined the route of ancient royal and religious processions and then swung farther along [...] to the Pavement, to mark out boldly all the territory that was part of the mercantile and artisanal franchise. (Higgins 85)

From the earliest days of the festival, “the Corpus Christi procession and its tableaux vivants mapped out not just the city’s space but its ideal social and political hierarchies” (Higgins 84). As such, the great procession created a space where bodies could collaborate both to seek and to find recognition for their interests and rights, and it also

created a space where those interests could be contested, defined, and redefined in the public spaces of the town.

It would be idealistic and even naïve to attribute to the bodies of the York pageant participants the full range of qualities that Frank attributes to communicative bodies. These pageants were raucous and even sometimes violent, as large festival processions tend to be. Officials were aware of the possibility of an out-of-control audience during the pageants: “On the eve of Corpus Christi a proclamation of mayor and sheriffs forbade ‘distorbaunce of the kynges pees, and ye play, or hynderyng of ye processiou of Corpore Christi’” (Chambers 400). As Harris notes, the “calls for good order and the relinquishment of weapons were doubtless a necessary precaution when dealing with a rowdy, holiday-making and quite possibly drunken crowd” (135). At times, certainly, the bodies participating in the Corpus Christi pageants must have closely resembled Bakhtin’s grotesque carnivalesque bodies: “This body eats, drinks, laughs, and curses—but does not necessarily contemplate the world or hold dialogues with it” (Morson and Emerson 444). Indeed, there is even something of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque “decrowning” implicit in the Corpus Christi narratives: “There is little hesitation shown in deriding those authoritarian figures—emperors, kings, prelates, governors—who set themselves up in opposition to the Supreme Being or who seek to resist its mandate” (Tydeman, “An Introduction” 26).

Likewise, the pageant participants were often explicitly and sometimes boldly commercial in their planning of and conduct during the procession. We have seen one example of capitalism in action in the sale of seating stations,

where the corporation leased “performing rights” for each station to the highest bidder, the money taken going towards the cost of production.



The fact that the cost of such leases amounted to more than a month's wages for a skilled workman, and that they were acquired by bidding, means that this is unlikely to have been simply a way of raising extra money to support the plays; on the contrary, it implies that there was a good profit to be made by erecting stands to seat the spectators who could afford it [...]. (Harris 132)

Such mercenary impulses smack of the more "purely" autodynamic body, the body that grasps for what it can obtain by its own power for its own use.

Of course, the pageant participants were not always this carnivalesque or mercenary, especially given the sacred nature of the material being performed. We are still left to imagine, though, that the reality of the pageants probably fell at least something short of Frank's idealized bodily praxis:

What communicative bodies are about is the capacity for recognition which is enhanced through the sharing of narratives which are fully embodied. What is shared is one body's sense of another's experience, primarily its vulnerability and suffering, but also its joy and creativity. (89)

Yet the fact that the pageant bodies may have fallen short of an ideal should not blind us to the very real ways in which those bodies *strove toward* the ideal. After all, the York pageants were organized for the "sharing of narratives" which, as we will see shortly, were not only Biblical stories but were also stories of the lives and bodies of the people of York. These narratives were "fully embodied" not only by the performers but also by the audience, who were routinely drawn into the action of the play, serving as the damned and the saved in the Last Judgment, booing and hissing Herod, and witnessing the crucifixion and being indicted for their passivity as was described in Chapter One of this study. And in the stories of the Bible and the echoing stories of the town lurking "underneath" the Biblical narrative, the pageant participants experienced not only the "vulnerability and suffering" of others, but also shared their "joy and creativity."

### The Procession of the Host: Messy and Pure Addressivity

It is tempting to end the story of these bodies here, with passionate and communicative flesh reaching out toward other flesh, sharing pain and pleasure in a moment of communal creativity. To do so, however, would be to limit the addressivity of these plays to the human bodies present during the performances. Certainly these plays reached out to these audience members present, as William Tydeman argues:

These were plays for the public forum; they had to declare both openly and tacitly their affinities with the life of the market-place, the backstreet, the farmyard, and the language, both verbal and visual, had to convince onlookers that the men and women of the Bible looked, and, even more importantly, spoke as they did themselves. (Tydeman, "An Introduction" 27)

Yet given the spirit-soaked nature of medieval England, these plays also reached out to other entities, yearning (as was the case in the sacramental chronotope) for communion with the divine. The all-encompassing history of Christianity presented in the pageants invites audience members to contemplate the events which

constitute the central facts of their spiritual lives—the episodes where Christ, having come from instituting the Eucharist (literally, Corpus Christi), embarks upon the work of redemption in the Passion—and then his general judgment of all mankind at the end of time on Doomsday. (Beadle 108)

Such contemplation, in turn, would have urged pageant participants to seek out God, and to do so immediately, for fear of losing the opportunity to do so. "Only one medieval conception of present time had an affirmative tone, and its beginning is staged by the central story of the Corpus Christi cycle: whatever else 'now' might be, it was historically the time of mercy" (Kolve 102). We find here a desire to communicate with the ultimate superaddressee in the hopes of being understood "purely."

One way of coming to terms with the complex addressivity of the Corpus Christi pageants would be to consider the formative events that contributed to the development of the pageants in the first place. As we have seen in previous chapters of this study, the sacrament of the Eucharist inspired passionately held doctrines and was for most Christians (including the consubstantially oriented Lollards) the central rite of the Christian Faith. It should come as no surprise, then, that the festival which begot the Corpus Christi pageants was designed to celebrate the Eucharist. By exploring the messily divine history of the origins of the Corpus Christi festival, we can see that from its nascent days, the festival was addressed both to humanity and to God, speaking both to temporal and extratemporal concerns.

Glynne Wickham's description of the origins of the Holy Day of Corpus Christi offers a traditional, if only partial and somewhat misleading, interpretation of how Corpus Christi came to be:

If we seek the reason for this phenomenon we have first to consider the doctrine of transubstantiation instituted by the papacy in 1215; for this gave to the Eucharist a new importance—the status of a miracle on a par with those of virgin birth and resurrection from the dead[...]. The crucial link between this new drama [i.e., the Corpus Christi pageants] and the miraculous status accorded to the Eucharist by the doctrine of transubstantiation was the institution of a new Calendar Festival created for the specific purpose of celebrating its new significance in Christian worship[...]. Unlike Easter Sunday or Christmas Day, therefore, the prime purpose of this new festival was not to be commemoration of an historical event, but to give thanks for man's salvation through God's decision to become man and to pay the price, through Christ's crucifixion, of man's redemption from original sin. (Medieval Theatre 62-63)

Wickham goes on from here to offer a now-conventional argument that because the Corpus Christi festival lacked a specific event to celebrate (such as Christ's birth or resurrection), the organizers of the pageant felt urged to construct a festival which would

recognize the *entirety* of God's love for humankind. Hence, when plays developed to accompany (and eventually dominate) the festival, those plays were drawn toward an encompassing narrative moving from Creation to Last Judgment. Only such an utterly encompassing narrative, according to this line of reasoning, would be appropriate for celebrating the miracle that occurs as bread and wine become Christ's flesh and blood, shed for our ultimate salvation.

Such arguments make sense, and they at least partially explain why the pageants developed into such massive history-spanning affairs, although as other critics have pointed out, the lack of emphasis on the Last Supper in all the major Corpus Christi cycles undermines this whole line of reasoning somewhat (Tydeman, "An Introduction" 21). Nonetheless, it is clear that the pageants had their origin, at least in part, in a desire to look and speak heavenward, to address God and thank Him for His Gift:

The Eucharist serves to recall both the Last Supper and the flesh and blood of Christ offered on the cross—events about which it is possible to rejoice only when they are related to man's fall, Christ's Resurrection, and the Last Judgment[...]. To play the whole story, then, is in the deepest sense to *celebrate* the Corpus Christi sacrament, to explain its necessity and power, and to show how that power will be made manifest at the end of the world. (Kolve 48, emphasis in original)

This line of reasoning reminds us of another addressee for the Corpus Christi pageants: if they are designed to "explain" and "show how power will be made manifest," then they clearly also address the flawed human participants in the pageants, thus serving didactic and hortatory purposes.

Yet the story of the Corpus Christi pageants is more messy than it would at first seem if we were to stop our analysis, metaphorically, at the doors of the Church. The procession itself took to the streets, and it did so *even before* the pageant-plays

developed. We must, therefore, look beyond the rather pristine impulses to thank God, as a superaddressee capable of responding to the performance discourse “purely,” and we must look beyond the almost equally pristine hortatory impulses of the traditional “quick books for the unlearned” argument for the development of Biblical cycles as pedagogical and persuasive tools. As valuable as these insights about the addressivity of the pageants are, they serve to obscure the radical human messiness that may well have inspired the Church to consider creating a special Holy Day to celebrate the Eucharist.

John Wesley Harris offers an alternative interpretation of the origins of the Corpus Christi Holy Day, and this interpretation begins much further back in history than most such interpretations do. His central argument is that changes not only in creed (i.e., the reification and official acceptance of the doctrine of transubstantiation) but more importantly in the physical *practice* of administering the Eucharist created a need to solve a wholly human and messy problem. The problem began, according to Harris, in the ninth century, when priests who were increasingly worried over the fate of Christ’s flesh and blood in the Eucharist began to take steps to safeguard the precious Host. One step taken to safeguard the Host was to require those taking Communion to kneel so that the *priest* could serve them rather than allowing the unordained celebrant to contaminate the Host by touching it with his or her hands (Harris 71-72). In such a position, the celebrant is physically inferior to the priest, reduced to a reverent dependency.

In the twelfth century, priests went further to safeguard the wine through the theological argument that “Christ’s command to both eat *and* drink in remembrance of him was adequately satisfied by the communion of the priest alone, acting on behalf of the congregation—at least so far as the wine was concerned” (Harris 72, emphasis in

original). To provide some order to the procession of celebrants waiting their turn to kneel and receive their wafer, “the altar-rail sprang into existence” (Harris 72). Soon the altar-rail “began to be placed *outside* the rood-screen” which separated the congregation from the altar, “so that no profane feet might trespass upon the Holy of Holies” (Harris 73, emphasis in original). The consequence of these changes in Eucharistic practice was that the congregation was repeatedly pushed further and further away from the very object that they sought most to attain—the flesh and blood of Christ, which brings salvation to all who partake of it. “So the Mass became even more distanced from the people, and was increasingly treated as a mystery [...] which was not so much to be participated in as to be adoringly wondered at by ‘the simple folk’ and contemplated from afar” (Harris 73).

The bodies forced to contemplate the mystery of the Eucharist from afar began to contest this incessant effort to restrict public/secular access to the Host, and their contestation in turn forced the Church to reconsider the function and practice of the Eucharist. Harris’ description of this struggle is so clear and cogent that it merits extensive quotation here:

The distancing of the people from the Mass was now complete, and they saw it as a remote theatrical performance, replete with rich costumes, soft lights and sweet music, played against the backcloth of a decorated altar, far in the distance beyond the fretwork of the rood-screen[...]. Thus it came about, in the late Middle Ages, that the Consecration of the two species, which were both elevated, and particularly the Elevation of the Host itself—actions which were *visible* to the congregation—became the climax of the Mass[...]. To look upon the sacred Host while it was elevated by the priest became for many the be-all and end-all of the Mass, equivalent to the act of communion itself—in fact, much more important than the communion. At the Elevation, the Host had become the real body of Christ nailed high upon the Cross—see the body of Christ and be saved![...]

In the cities people ran from church to church to see the elevated Host as often as possible, since they assumed that the more Elevations you saw, the more grace you would acquire[...]. People started lawsuits to ensure that they obtained pews which provided a favourable view of the altar[...]. This scandalous situation greatly troubled the church authorities. It could obviously not be allowed to go on, and the first movement towards finding a remedy was advanced by Pope Urban IV in 1264. He proposed a new feast to celebrate the joy of the Passion, at which the Host could be carried around the town and publicly displayed to all the people—a kind of safety-valve, in fact. (Harris 75-76, emphasis in original)

It was not until 1311, however, that the Feast Day of Corpus Christi was incorporated into the Church calendar, falling on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, on what would be the equivalent on our contemporary calendar of anywhere from June 4 to July 6 (Bevington, Medieval Drama 230). In 1318, Corpus Christi Day began to be generally celebrated throughout England (Kolve 37). The first mention of pageants in York records occurs in 1376, although this date may not be the first year the pageant-plays were staged; the date of the first pageant-plays may be earlier, because so few reliable records on the subject exist prior to 1376, or it may be later, if the references to “pageants” in the 1376 York Memorandum do not in fact refer to pageant-plays based on an all-encompassing Biblical cycle of stories (Dobson 97).

What is important to draw out of this history is the clear implication that the Corpus Christi festival arose in part out of quite messy bodily concerns relating to various efforts and counter-efforts to control the meaning and practice of the Eucharist by limiting or granting access to the Host. As the priestly class distanced “the simple folk” from the miracle of the Eucharist, they also laid claim to the privilege of that form of contact with the Divine. In return, the secular townsfolk redefined *contact* with the Divine as *seeing* the Host being elevated, and as such they began the contestatory practice of taking great pains to observe the Elevation as often and as clearly as possible.

In a contestatory counter-move, the Church laid down strict regulations about the “proper” observance of Communion (Harris 76), while also creating a festival which would provide one day out of the year as an outlet for the congregation to engage in their rabid pursuit of the sight of the Elevated Host.

Yet even the development of this new feast day was delayed for decades. And once the feast day did begin to be celebrated, it was first celebrated as a reasonably refined and sober affair, a procession of clergy carrying the Elevated Host through the streets for people to adore—but not touch. One might argue, then, that the eventual development of the more theatrical, participatory, and secular/civic practice of staging a cycle of Biblical plays served, at least in part, to fulfill the urge of “the simple folk” to be active participants in this celebration. In these plays, not only the city’s craftsmen but indeed all the workaday folk of the city had an opportunity to come in contact with the Divine by embodying various roles from their spiritual history. Whether they were able to play “leading roles” such as God or Christ, or whether they were simply able to play the roles of the saved or the damned at the Last Judgment, the secular townspeople of York were now creating an opportunity to participate in divine space. It is in this context that we can understand Higgins’ claims that the divergence of the clerical procession route and the secular pageant route was a deeply symbolic split—the pageant route demarcated the space of the town in terms of civic, not Church, interests, in part by concluding at the profanized mercantile space of the Pavement (Higgins 86-87).

We must therefore take into account a variety of addressees as the pageants wend their way through the dusty early summer streets of York. These pageants spoke to the clergy, claiming certain religious rights (and rites) for the secular townsfolk. The



pageants also spoke to civic leaders about the value of the merchant practices that made York (and other larger northern England cities of the time) so successful. They spoke as well to the needs of a faith in crisis, a Christianity suffering under the weight of the plague of 1348 and the subsequent “fallen” state of the clergy that was discussed in Chapter Four of this study. And the pageants spoke, too, for bodies yearning to experience something of the Divine, bodies that sang their participation in the cosmic history encompassed by the story of God and his Risen Son.

#### Innerly Persuasive Discourse and the Transubstantial Chronotope

The multiple addressivity of these performances, however, complicates our understanding of the first and second worlds of performance. In the sacramental chronotope, the first world of the audience and participants in Latin liturgical dramas was brought into contact with an ontologically superior spiritual world through the act of performance. The most important—indeed, perhaps the *only* important—presence during the Latin liturgical dramas was the presence of God. The audience and participants in these dramas function virtually as accessories in both senses of the word—both as *helpmates* who bring the material world into contact with divinity, and as less-than-necessary *ornamentation* which glorifies and praises the holiest of holies.

In the consubstantial chronotope, the first world of the audience and performers occupies just the opposite ontological position. Rather than being inferior to the divine world brought into awareness through the Latin liturgical dramas, the first world of the consubstantial chronotope is ontologically superior to the second world created in and through the performance. By way of simplification (and perhaps over-simplification), we might say that in the sacramental chronotope, the faithful address the Divine, and thus the

first world addresses the second world; in the consubstantial chronotope, the performers address their acts to the consumers of the performance, and thus the second world addresses the first world. When considering addressivity, then, we must not only ask *who* is being addressed, but *with what authority* the different voices address each other.

By way of metaphor—and also by way of discussing medieval performance practice, given the use of masks in the Corpus Christi pageants and other medieval performances—we can return productively to the considerations about relations between performer and mask that we mentioned in Chapter Four of this study. As we noted there, one way of understanding a performer’s relation to the mask he/she wears in performance is to assume that the performer has complete ontological authority over the mask—the performer is real, not the mask. This is a consubstantial interpretation of the function of masking, where “reality” is located in *unmasking*. Perhaps a more radical approach to masking would be to regard the mask as ontologically superior to the performer. If the mask is somehow sacred, then in it resides the truth, not in the performer’s humble and profane body. This is a sacramental interpretation of the function of masking, where “reality” is located in the ultimate reality of the Divine.

There is, however, a third possible relationship between performer and mask—*each* can be regarded as ontologically substantial. In this view, the act of creation becomes an act of *co*-creation as mask and performer work together to bring life forth onstage. Such a view is deeply dialogic, in a Bakhtinian sense, for it situates both performer and mask on the same plane of authority and asks them to confront each other honestly. This, we can say, is the transubstantial interpretation of the function of masking, where “reality” is located in a conversation—an unfinalizable conversation that

must be engaged each and every time the mask is worn. In terms of our first world/second world distinction, neither the fictive metaworld nor the world of the performers and audience can trump the other, and thus both worlds address each other more or less as equals.

Bakhtin provides us with language that can describe the peculiar tensiveness of the transubstantial chronotope, where both image and audience struggle with each other for meaning and authority. In his effort to analyze the diverse relations among diverse voices that interanimate what would otherwise appear to be singular discourse, Bakhtin also investigates a range of ways in which the multiple voices within each person interanimates each seemingly singular consciousness. Part of Bakhtin's project in analyzing multi-voicedness therefore involves an exploration of the coming-into-selfhood that arises, at least ideally, out of the messy jumble of voices which informs our consciousness:

Bakhtin relocates the central opposition in language as it shapes the self in inner speech. He imagines the self as a conversation, often a struggle, of discrepant voices with each other, voices (and words) speaking from different positions and invested with different degrees and kinds of *authority*. (Morson and Emerson 217-218, emphasis in original)

Bakhtin identifies two distinct kinds of voices that exercise different kinds of authority within a given consciousness: "authoritative discourse" and "innerly (or internally) persuasive discourse."

Authoritative discourse, both in linguistic texts and within a given consciousness, is an essentially single-voiced form of discourse that retains utter semantic authority over itself. Such discourse "enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (Bakhtin, Dialogic 343). As

such, authoritative discourse resists dialogue in an attempt to maintain its own semantic authority:

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. (Bakhtin, Dialogic 342, emphasis in original)

The *a priori* quality of authoritative discourse holds that discourse “at arm’s length,” as it were, preventing a given consciousness from engaging the authoritative word in dialogue.

Authoritative discourse, then, works to cease the free play of voices dialoguing with other voices within texts or within an individual’s consciousness: “Demanding unconditional allegiance, authoritative discourse does not allow us to play with it, integrate it, or merge it with other voices that persuade us. We cannot select what we like from it or accept only a part of it; that would be heresy (in the root sense of *selection*)” (Morson and Emerson 219, emphasis in original). Such heresy—that is, metalinguistic play—is essential to dialogic relations; utterances must have the ability to challenge each other, to contest each other, to re-shape and accentuate each other, in order for those utterances to participate in a dialogue of different social voices. Yet the authoritative word “is by its very nature incapable of being double-voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions” (Bakhtin, Dialogic 344).

The sacramental chronotope articulates space and time in such a way as to render the first world of the participants subject to the authoritative word of the Divine. As monastically trained bodies moved through the symbolically charged space of the church to the rhythms of the monastic day and the church calendar, these bodies were

conditioned to regard the Divine as possessing the kind of certainty and single-voicedness which Bakhtin attributes to authoritative discourse. Consequently, the first world of performance, in the sacramental chronotope, functions as a recipient of the authoritative discourse of the spiritual world brought into contact with our space and time through the performance of Latin liturgical drama. The only options in the face of such a word are to accept it or reject it: “One can disobey authoritative discourse, but so long as it remains fully authoritative, one cannot argue with it. By definition, it precludes dialogic relations” (Morson and Emerson 219).

Innerly persuasive discourse, in contrast, allows for dialogic relations by allowing for what Bakhtin calls “assimilation” of the discourse:

[T]he unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others’ individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of *assimilation*—more or less creative—of others’ words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of “our-own-ness,” varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. (Bakhtin, Speech 89, emphasis in original)

Whereas authoritative discourse refuses to participate in metalinguistic play—refuses to be re-intonated or to be understood differently—innerly persuasive discourse attains its persuasiveness by surrendering some of its semantic authority over itself. It is precisely because such discourse becomes at least partially “mine” that it can begin to have agency within a dialogue of voices within a single consciousness. “When such an influence is deep and productive, there is no external imitation, no simple act of reproduction, but rather a further creative development of another’s (more precisely, half-other) discourse in a new context and under new conditions” (Bakhtin, Dialogic 346).

An experience many graduate students have had may help to illustrate how such discourse becomes internally persuasive. The movement from undergraduate studies to graduate coursework is, for many students, a movement away from the authoritative word of professors whose knowledge seems so prior and distant that it outstrips the student's capacity to respond to that word. In graduate school, students are challenged to contest their teachers' ideas, and it is in that very contestation that many ideas work their way insidiously into the students' consciousness.

Internally persuasive discourse—as opposed to one that is externally authoritative—is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with “one's own word.” In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions. (Bakhtin, Dialogic 345)

As the new graduate student experiences the play of various discourses within his/her consciousness—none of which establishes itself as semantically authoritative and finalizing—some of these discourses will eventually feel a little more than half “one's own word.” By allowing for dialogue, engagement, re-intonation, and metalinguistic play within the graduate student's consciousness, the freshly encountered innerly persuasive discourse of the student's coursework becomes assimilated into his/her consciousness.

Of course, the reverse may occur as well—by surrendering itself to metalinguistic play, the innerly persuasive word risks the possibility that it will *lose* its hold on the consciousness of an individual:

Much as authoritative voices may come to lose their authority, so innerly persuasive discourses can come to seem less persuasive, *more* than half “someone else’s.” When this happens, we typically begin to play with the discourse, make an objectified image of it, turn it into a “word of the second type,” or attach it to a specific other person one holds at some distance. (Morson and Emerson 222, emphasis in original)

Such innerly persuasive discourse has been, as it were, hoist on its own petard—having made itself accessible to transformation, it has become something of functionally *less* ontological value, an object of contemplation. This, I would contend, is what occurs in the space and time of the consubstantial chronotope, where the first world of the performers and audience *consumes* the second world created through the performance. We might say that the audience becomes the ultimate semantic authority over the metaworld in the consubstantial chronotope, as opposed to the tendency of the sacramental chronotope to assign utter semantic authority to the spiritual world experienced through the performance of Latin liturgical dramas.

By comparison, the transubstantial chronotope associated with the Corpus Christi pageants creates, I would contend, a space and time where the innerly persuasive discourse of the fictive metaworld can engage in dialogic play with the first world of the audience and performers. As a result, both the first and second worlds of performance are on an equal ontological footing, each capable of re-accentuating the other, each capable of re-writing the other. The second world of performance, like innerly persuasive discourse, becomes an essentially unfinished and unfinalizable entity, one that has the creative power to challenge the first world of the audience and performers:

We have not yet learned from it all it might tell us; we can take it into new contexts, attach it to new material, put it in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it, new insights into its meaning, and even wrest from it new words of its *own* (since another’s discourse, if productive,

gives birth to a new word from us in response). (Bakhtin, Dialogic 346-347, emphasis in original)

Significantly, implicit in Bakhtin's description of innerly persuasive discourse is the concept that such discourse has a creative agency which resides in the word itself, rather than in any of the bodies of various readers or performers or audience members. The word—or, in the case of the Corpus Christi pageants, the fictive metaworld—wrests from us new meanings, speaks to us in a voice something like our own.

What, then, is the ontological status of the imaginative “second world” of the performance if the pageants did indeed feature innerly persuasive discourse?

Ontologically speaking, that fictive metaworld is real—it possesses the authority and agency of any other legitimate voice. The dialogic impulse present in the Corpus Christi pageants cannot be sustained without each voice granting the ontological substance of the other. In other words, two voices cannot legitimately converse unless—and until—they first work from the presumption of each other's ontological substance, and as we wander through the streets of York encountering God and all His Creation, we may justly shudder at the thought of denying the substance of that story. Both performers and audience members would have been strongly inclined if not indeed compelled to orient themselves toward that imaginative metaworld as they would orient themselves toward any other Being endowed with ontological substance; such an endowed world would be able to speak to and with the participants in the performances.

#### Flesh and Spirit as One in the Corpus Christi Pageants

In the previous two chapters, we have explored two ways of understanding the portrayal of religious, ethical, and/or moral themes in medieval English theatre. In the sacramental chronotope, the religious, ethical, and/or moral themes conveyed during



Latin liturgical dramas were given flesh through a ritual act designed to bring worshippers closer to the Divine. Rather than creating an imaginative world through performance, the sacramental chronotope connects participants to an underlying spiritual reality which allows them to understand and to embody certain religious, ethical, and/or moral themes. We might say that the sacramental chronotope features the authoritative single-voiced discourse that Bakhtin called “direct, unmediated discourse”—the speech of one who does not brook the possibility of “the word” having more meanings than The Author has allowed.

By comparison, the consubstantial chronotope that we saw exemplified in Tudor-era interludes like Fulgens and Lucrez actively authors an imaginative space and time distinct from the space and time of the “real” spectators and performers. Yet while it is distinct from the space and time of the spectators and performers, the metaworld born of the consubstantial chronotope is in an ontological sense only real as ideas being contemplated by consumers of ideas. Such ideas may certainly have an impact on the world, and may change the world in powerful ways, but ontologically, the ideas are “owned” by their contemplators, by the “real” people who choose (consciously or unconsciously) to accept—and thus to consume—these religious, ethical, and/or moral precepts. It is the contemplator—and not the idea being contemplated—which possesses the ontological status of being “real.”

There is, however, a third possibility for the space/time constituted through the act of performance. Unlike the sacramental chronotope, which joins two pre-existing and ontologically substantial space/times through ritual performance, and unlike the consubstantial chronotope, which authors a temporary and ontologically insubstantial

space/time (or metaworld) for the audience's consumption, the transubstantial chronotope *constructs an ontologically substantial space and time* distinct from the "real" space and time of the audience and performers. By "ontologically substantial," I mean that the audience and performers in the transubstantial chronotope feel obligated to engage the metaworld brought into being during the performance as if it possessed all the requirements for Being, for "reality."

In this sense, the transubstantial chronotope might best be understood as a sort of middle ground between the sacramental and consubstantial chronotopes. Like the sacramental chronotope, the transubstantial chronotope assumes the fundamental interconnectedness of the material and spiritual worlds. Like the consubstantial chronotope, the transubstantial chronotope allows for a distinction between the first world of the audience and the second world of the play, although this distinction is often blurred by the interconnectedness of the material and the spiritual. While the transubstantial chronotope reflected in the Corpus Christi pageants displays an awareness of the distinction between the audience-sphere and the play-sphere, the ontological force of the constant spiritual presence in the play complicates the distinction between the "first world" and the "second world." Everyone—performer and audience alike—is subject to the will of God and has been saved by the blood of Christ, and no one—neither player nor spectator—can escape God's immanent (and imminent) judgment. Onstage acts can thus potentially acquire the force of God.

These Corpus Christi performances thus created a space and time where performers and audience alike could confront a spiritual reality and could engage that spiritual reality on an equal ontological footing. Such a strong assertion may seem

unwarranted to critics who find the Corpus Christi plays “naive” in their “unrealistic representations.” Yet as Gail M. Gibson notes:

What has too often been confused with the naive and the childlike, or has been dismissed as crudely popular because it had an afterlife in succeeding centuries in the cultural residue left to peasant culture, was in fact a deliberate and conscious effort to objectify the spiritual even as the Incarnation itself had given spirit a concrete form. (8)

What may seem unrealistic and naive to modern minds is the notion that Christ came to the Earth as God Incarnate. Working from the position that the Bible conveys the absolute history of the world and that Christ’s Passion was the perfect intermingling of matter and spirit, the transubstantial chronotope has its own rules of realism. “It is precisely this capacity of the drama to make visible the reality of the Passion and the Resurrection, to *represent* Christian truths in the here and now, that made it the object of such care and spiritual dedication on the part of its producers and its audience” (Coletti 9, emphasis in original). In other words, the very incarnational impulse of the Corpus Christi performances moves us into transubstantial territory.

As the Corpus Christi plays carried God and His Risen Son out into the world, they did so with a sense of the importance of the audience that Diller found lacking in Latin liturgical drama. “In contrast to the hierarchical situations of the liturgical drama, the Corpus Christi cycles know, and recognize, an audience; they are performed in the presence of a crowd which is not continuously drawn into the represented situation” (Diller, Middle English 75). Because this audience was largely free from the monastic discipline that characterized liturgical performance, they could actively step back from and engage the represented world. A liturgical “audience” is always part and parcel of

the church ceremony; the Corpus Christi pageants established a second, fictive metaworld which was ontologically distinct from the world inhabited by the audience.

Yet at the same time that a distance was created between the first and second worlds, the production circumstances of the Corpus Christi plays also worked to integrate the audience-sphere and the play-sphere. These guild-produced plays “used actors from the community who were known to the audience in real life” (Kolve 23). Although he admits that a “few records in York suggest that occasional performances were graced by actors imported from outside,” Kolve goes on to observe that “this was the exception, not the rule; local, familiar faces in biblical roles would have made any fully developed kind of theatrical illusion impossible” (24). The audience was, after all, watching a performance featuring, for the most part, the handymen of the town, and one saw these handymen onstage performing remarkably similar tasks to their workaday tasks—the Shipwrights built the Ark; the Fishers and Mariners oversaw the Flood; the Vintners brought forth the Marriage at Cana, where Christ turned water into wine; the Bakers prepared the Last Supper.

Not only did the audience watch familiar faces perform, they got to see these faces up close, creating an intimate and personal relationship between performers and audience. Although much of the action of the Corpus Christi plays took place on the pageant-wagons, a notable amount of action took place on the ground in front of, around, and through the audience: “The audience surrounded the playing area, as clearly visible to one another as the players were to them; occasional exits, entrances, and even dramatic action took place on street level in their midst” (Kolve 23). Frequently, when the action did descend to the audience’s level, it did so to frighten the audience (Herod descending

in rage), to indict the audience (Jesus descending to the ground during the Harrowing of Hell), or simply to have fun with the audience at their expense (Satan's minions descending with pitchforks, which could have been staged in either terrifying or playful ways). Regardless, the action that occurred amongst the audience was not *merely* metatheatrical; such action brought the audience into the same sphere of Being as the Divine and Damned—for at least a moment or two.

Additionally, the characters portrayed by these familiar faces spoke the same language as the audience, sometimes in a markedly anachronistic fashion: “Old Testament speeches liberally seasoned with oaths, ‘by Christ’ or by the saints or even ‘by Mahound’ [Mohammed], are undoubtedly the result of [...] a wish to write vivid colloquial dialogue” (Kolve 104). Peter Happe places this colloquial dialogue in its historical context:

The fourteenth century is the time of Chaucer, Langland, and the poetry of the north-west represented by *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* and *Pearl*. For the first time, if one may be permitted a generalization, the English language was a means of literary expression of the first rank[...]. The fact that the performance of the mystery cycles was in the hands of common labouring men meant that English had to be used there too. The language acquired a new status in the community, and there seems little doubt that the development of the cycles was part of this process. (“Introduction” 22)

Through means of this vernacularization, the various languages of the Bible (Aramaic, Greek, Latin) were brought into contact with the language of the audience, thus setting the stage for an innerly persuasive interplay of meanings within each participant's consciousness.

Taking the language of God into one's own mouth via one's own “tongue” is a particularly potent tool for urging metalinguistic, dialogic play between the past and the

present, creating a space for the Divine to speak with one's own voice. Bakhtin acknowledges the power of religious speech to encourage such an innerly persuasive dialogue:

Our motif [of innerly persuasive discourse] carries even greater weight in the realm of religious thought and discourse (mythological, mystical, and magical). The primary subject of this discourse is a being who speaks: a deity, a demon, a soothsayer, a prophet. Mythological thought does not, in general, acknowledge anything not alive or not responsive. Divining the will of a deity, of a demon (good or bad), interpreting signs of wrath or beneficence, tokens, indications and finally the transmission and interpretation of words directly spoken by a deity (revelation) or his prophets, saints, soothsayers—all in all, the transmission and interpretation of the divinely inspired (as opposed to the profane) word are acts of religious thought and discourse having the greatest importance. All religious systems, even primitive ones, possess an enormous, highly specialized methodological apparatus (hermeneutics) for transmitting and interpreting various kinds of holy word. (Bakhtin, Dialogic 350)

Through the hermeneutics of vernacularization in the Corpus Christi pageants, the Word of God was brought into the sphere of the Word of Man, so that each word spoke to the other.

Not only was the language of the Bible brought into contact with the vernacular language of the English, it is also clear that the “Holy Land” of the Corpus Christi pageants bore a striking resemblance to the lands near where the plays were performed: “Action itself told the story, and it happened *there* in England, in front of and amid the spectators” (Kolve 23, emphasis in original). Consider, for instance, Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King’s observations about the similarity between the Skinner’s play of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and the medieval tradition of entry processions for noble worthies who came to visit important towns like York:

Jesus must have ridden on the ass in the street amongst the audience, who were thus deftly drawn into the illusion of the play, and given a role as the crowd that lined the route into Jerusalem. The [...] tableau at the end,

with its ordered arrangement of formal greetings, suggests that the dramatist had in mind the conventions of the contemporary royal entry into the medieval town. In the last line of the play, the local audience must have had a strong sense that the King of Heaven was being welcomed as much to medieval York as to the biblical Jerusalem. (106)

The conclusion of the play—"Hail, whom all thing shall dread and doubt./ We welcome thee;/ Hail and welcome of all about/ To our city" (l. 541-544; Beadle and King 124)—thus neatly combines the metalinguistic and (for lack of a better word) the metaspacial elements of the Corpus Christi pageants. Christ's reception is both linguistically and spatially double-edged, referencing the colloquial and the eternal at one and the same time.

Such anachronistic layering of one time onto another brought God's history into contact with the audience's history. Throughout the Corpus Christi pageants, the frequent use of

dramatic anachronism involves conscious artistic intention. It is used, for instance, in the service of the medieval poor, registering the wrong they suffer within the context of an Advent that will ultimately damn their oppressors forever[.... T]he raging Herods and the proud high priests serve to image the sins of the contemporary rich and powerful. (Kolve 104-105)

The Eternal Story of God is thus embodied in the here and now to indict those present who have failed to heed Christ's call to care for those less fortunate than ourselves (Matthew 25:42: "For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat...").

Beadle offers a compelling and clever interpretation of just one short phrase in the York Moses and Pharaoh, a phrase that would be easy for us to overlook today but which would have resonated powerfully for the late medieval audience at York. The phrase is "great pestilence," and it is spoken by an Egyptian bemoaning the fate of his land to the Pharaoh: "My lord, great pestilence/ Is like full long to last" (l. 345-346; Beadle and

King 45). As Beadle points out, the phrase “great pestilence,” in the post-plague world of northern England, “had come to be the customary way of referring to the Black Death of 1348-9” (85). As such, the plague that doomed a Pharaoh had come, as well, to the time and place of the audience:

Upon hearing the grim words, the tyrannous and verbose Rex Pharaoh is immediately deflated, capitulates and orders the release of the Israelites—in performance, a moment of chill stasis after the pell-mell black comedy with which the reports of the preceding plagues of Egypt would have been presented. When the play was new, this may also have been a moment of remembrance for survivors of the Black Death and those born in the succeeding generation, for the York Hosier’s play of Moses and Pharaoh was probably composed when the memory of this, the most destructive of all the plague’s visitations, was still a living memory. (Beadle 85)

A moment of silence inspired by dramatic timing and powerful storytelling becomes, with just one slight phrase, a moment of silence as well for those who never had the chance to attend the performance the audience is now watching.

Higgins perhaps puts it best when she notes that the

Corpus Christi procession and play told the story of many bodies, from the body of Christ in life and in the Eucharist to the extended body of Christ in the corporate body of all believers[...]. When townspeople saw their own work and bodies dramatized in the history that the tableaux and plays represented [...] they also saw their towns so used. (79)

Thus a curious tension between the two aforementioned theatrical axes obtains wherein we achieve both maximal interpenetration and maximal distance. Although Geoff the mercer, a salesman of fine goods that many in his medieval audience may know personally, is clearly not Christ on the Throne of Judgment, he somehow echoes Christ in this communal religious act. The ground upon which demons tread is both Hell and the streets of York, and the play is set simultaneously in the distant past, the immediate present, and the foreordained future. The Corpus Christi pageants offer secular-produced



plays in the vernacular language that somehow participate in the world of the Spirit—scatology mixed with eschatology. In a sense that may be impossible to recapture fully in our time, the Corpus Christi plays were both “real” and “imaginary,” both “material” and “spiritual.”

### Figural Time in the Corpus Christi Pageants

As we saw in Chapter Two, the common medieval practice of viewing history through the lens of figural time meant that history was never “gone” but was, instead, always present. History recurred, so that (for instance) Jonah’s trip in the belly of a whale pointed to, and was remembered by, Christ’s three days before His Resurrection. Figural interpretation moves not only between events in the Old and New Testaments, but also between current events and Biblical ones. This is a crucial point for understanding the impact of figural thinking on the lived experience of a medieval townspeople watching a pageant play.

For instance, the character of Cain onstage was “typical of the tight-fisted Christian farmer who refused to give God his due—a tithe, or tenth, of all his earnings for the use of the Holy Church” (Harris 96; see also Kolve 105). Cain thus potentially prefigured the behavior of some audience members, moving via figural thinking from the metaworld of the play to the “real world” of the audience. Of course, within a figural worldview, the “metaworld” of the play is as “real” as the “real world” of the audience, possessed of its own ontological validity.

The concept of *figura* had a profound impact upon the development of the Corpus Christi pageant cycles. Figural interpretation provides much of the structure of the cycles. As Harris points out, the selection of which Biblical events would be staged in

the various plays of a given cycle (and thus which events would be left out) was driven in part by figural schema (94-5). Events were chosen because of their figural interrelatedness, and events which did not fit (or could not be creatively fit) into a teleological pattern of prefiguration were largely overlooked in the staging of the Corpus Christi cycles. This figural interrelatedness was then highlighted through performance. For instance, the story of Abel's murder prefigures the execution of Christ, "and in many performances of the play he was murdered on the very spot where he had [earlier] offered his lamb on the altar, thus becoming identified with the Paschal Lamb, or Christ in his sacrificial aspect—a vivid way of bringing the figure out" (Harris 96).

It is precisely because figural interpretation connects two real historical events that the metaworld of the Corpus Christi plays possesses ontological substance and even authority over the lived experience of the audience. Through *figura*, the two worlds of play and audience share substance, achieve contact; indeed, within a figural concept of time, the narrow streets of northern England can "touch" the dusty streets of Jerusalem. References to local English surroundings in the mystery plays, often mistaken by nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars for naiveté, become in the context of figural interpretation a sophisticated way of showing the links between then and now.

In the transubstantial chronotope of the *figura*, the word does become flesh; just as bread and wine are transformed into the body of Christ, the metaworld of a mystery play is transformed via the transubstantial chronotope into an enfleshed historical reality as substantial as anything else in the medieval audience's reality. In the consubstantial chronotope, by comparison, the relationship between substance and spirit is purely metaphorical. In the Tudor era interludes of Henry Medwall, for instance, the division of

substance and spirit transforms the theatrical metaworld into a dreamworld with less ontological substance than that of the audience. One might say, then, that a unique and powerful miracle occurs within the transubstantial chronotope—a miracle facilitated at least in part by figural interpretation in the Middle Ages.

As we have seen in Chapter Four, visual art in the Middle Ages also reflected this figural urge to implicate the spectator directly in the actions of the Divine. Pictures in the “Books of Hours” which served as prayer-books for the laity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries placed art patrons in the same visual frame as Christian figures: “The Hours of Mary of Burgundy contains a mysterious portrait of its owner in prayer before the Madonna,” and many other Hours included the patron in images of famous Christian events (Reinburg 39). While in some ways merely a reflection of the egotism of the rich and/or noble patrons of such art, the inclusion of contemporary figures in Biblical art also (and more importantly) reflects the blurring of boundaries between past and present, spiritual and material, that informed medieval visual interpretation.

Sylvia Tomasch examines another picture by the Master of Mary of Burgundy in terms of the many temporal and spatial frames it presents the viewer. At the heart of this image is Christ being crucified; surrounding and framing that action is a crowd of mostly disinterested or noncommittal folk; and most notably, framing both these images is a window clearly from the fifteenth century—the viewer is invited to look out of his/her window and see Christ’s crucifixion (81). Viewers must therefore negotiate the various frames, asking which frame demands their attention most. Is Christ at the center of their lives? Are they like the noncommittal crowd, passively watching Jesus die? Or is the

most important frame that of their own lives in the here-and-now, a frame that looks back on and derives strength from Jesus' death and His eventual resurrection?

Tomasch argues that a similar sort of framing occurs verbally in the Corpus Christi plays and that both visual art and theatre of this time refuse to allow the spectator to remain unindicted, disengaged spectators:

The audience's illusions of passivity and non-complicity must indeed be broken. While the establishment of individual frames may initially seem to set off portions of dramatic or artistic presentation as divided, potentially dissociated, worlds, the breaking of these separating frames redirects attention from past or future events to contemporary reality, bringing all worlds together in one significant present, one cohesive whole. (Tomasch 91).

The blurring of boundaries between "first" and "second" worlds that I have described in the transubstantial chronotope thus seems informed by medieval developments in visual art as well as developments in theatre. Through figural interpretation, medieval audiences were able to perceive their own space and time as sharing substance with/in the space and time of Biblical events, thus granting both frames ontological substance, creating the ground for a dialogue between the two worlds.

#### Interlude: The Last Judgment Comes to Town

It is some time around midnight on an early summer evening in the 1400's in York. After something like twenty hours of performance, the Mercer's pageant, The Last Judgment, arrives, and a gold-masked God takes us back to the where the story—and the day's performances—began, with the moment of Creation:

GOD: First when I this world had wrought—  
Wood and wind and waters wan,  
And all-kin thing that now is aught—  
Full well methought that I did then.  
When they were made, good me them thought;  
Sithen to my likeness made I man,

And man to grieve me gave he nought,  
Therefore me rues that I the world began. (l. 1-8; Beadle and King 268)

Our God here sounds surprisingly world-weary, an old man who has seen too much and has grown somewhat cynical—perhaps not unlike some of the folks seated in the audience might feel at this moment. God lays out the entirety of his grievances for the audience, reminding us of all that we have seen throughout the day—man’s fall; the arrival of Jesus to redeem the human race; the Passion, Harrowing of Hell, and the Resurrection.

He concludes his ponderous opening monologue with a grave threat:

GOD: In earth I see but sins sere [everywhere],  
Therefore mine angels will I send  
To blow their bemes [trumpets], that all may hear  
The time is come I will make end. (l. 61-64; Beadle and King 269)

Trumpets sound in the distance, their source unseen in the dense black night as yet, but moving closer. The time of Judgment has come.

As the play progresses, Christ comes down to “Earth” to judge all souls. As Meg Twycross notes,

Plays like the Creation or the Last Judgement represent events on a cosmic scale. Modern theatre directors tend to interpret this in terms of a sweepingly wide set and scores of actors. But this is unnecessary: it is all a matter of context. When you stand in the street in front of a Last Judgement pageant wagon, and your head tilts back to follow the angels climbing up to take their places on the Heaven deck among the rooftops [of the city], you get a real sense of height, and of hierarchy: the three layers—the highest of Heaven, the area “in the clouds above the earth” where God comes to judge and the ground where the dead rise and out of which the mouth of Hell opens. (48)

Torches light the stage—or are they hellfire? The “episode’s action calls for the crowd itself to be searched and divided into souls damned and saved” (Higgins 91), and as

Christ approaches, despite the fact that this isn't "real," one hopes to avoid being one of those chosen for eternal damnation.

The play—and thus the pageant, and thus the whole cycle of history as well—ends, however, not with a grieving and tired God but with Jesus, who rebukes the damned while he praises those about to be conducted to Heaven:

JESUS:       Caitiffs, as oft it betid [happened]  
                  That needful aught asked in my name,  
                  Ye heard them not, your ears ye hid,  
                  Your help to them was not at home.  
                  To me was that unkindness kid [showed],  
                  Therefore ye bear this bitter blame;  
                  To least or most when ye it did,  
                  To me ye did the self and the same.

                  My chosen children, come unto me,  
                  With me to won now shall ye wend  
                  There joy and bliss shall ever be,  
                  Your life in liking shall ye lend.[...]  
                  They that would sin, and ceased nought,  
                  Of sorrows sere now shall they sing;  
                  And they that mended them whilst they might  
                  Shall bield [dwell] and bide in my blessing.  
                  (1. 357-368 and 377-380; Beadle and King 279)

The stage directions here note, "And thus he makes an end, with melody of angels crossing from place to place" (Beadle and King 279).

The play is over; the audience is exhausted, but also now free to leave the space of Judgment for home. But "home"—the city, the familiar streets, places, and faces—has been somehow forever changed by this evening. Around the corner, one might meet Lucifer...or God...or Christ.

One wonders...what will Lucifer, or God, or Christ, say when meeting one face to face tomorrow in the sunshine of a new day?

### Conclusion: Back to the Future

We have now explored three distinct chronotopes of medieval performance, charting various relations of space and time, actors and audience, and spirit and flesh that informed a medieval theatergoer's phenomenal experience of Latin liturgical dramas, Tudor-era interludes, and the Corpus Christi Biblical cycles. What remains for us to do is to explore an as yet unmentioned genre of medieval theatre, the morality play, which employs a variety of chronotopes due in part to the diverse staging circumstances for these plays. We must also return to our own time so that we may consider how these chronotopes of performance might inform our own understanding of modern performances of medieval theatre. By doing so, we can look forward to some possible applications of these three chronotopes in the analysis of a variety of performance forms beyond those staged in medieval England.

## CHAPTER 6

### MORALITIES AND MODERN MYSTERIES

NOWADAYS:

Make room, sirs, for we have to be long!  
We will come give you a Christmas song.

NOUGHT:

Now, I pray all the yeomanry that is here  
To sing with us, with a merry cheer.

[*Sings*] It is written with a coal, it is written with a coal...

[*NEWGUISE and NOWADAYS make the audience sing after him.*]

NEWGUISE and NOWADAYS:

It is written with a coal, it is written with a coal...

NOUGHT:

He that shitteth with his hole, he that shitteth with his hole...

NEWGUISE and NOWADAYS:

He that shitteth with his hole, he that shitteth with his hole...

NOUGHT:

But he wipe his arse clean, but he wipe his arse clean...

NEWGUISE and NOWADAYS:

But he wipe his arse clean, but he wipe his arse clean...

NOUGHT:

On his breech it shall be seen, on his breech it shall be seen...

NEWGUISE and NOWADAYS:

On his breech it shall be seen, on his breech it shall be seen.

*Cantant omnes*

Holyke, holyke, holyke, holyke, holyke, holyke!

--from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century morality Mankind,

l. 332-343 (Lester 21-22)

This study has discussed and developed three chronotopes of performance—the sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial chronotopes—which informed the phenomenal experience of medieval theatergoers. In the sacramental chronotope, disciplined heterodynamic bodies sought contact with an ontologically superior divine realm through the *praxis* of ritual performance. The primary function of performance in the Latin liturgical dramas associated with the sacramental chronotope was to connect the “first world” of the ritual participants with the divine “second world” that was always already present. Just as the sacrament of the Eucharist within the doctrine of



transubstantiation was designed to unite the participant not with some imaginative concept of Christ, but with His Body as transformed in the moment of partaking, so too the sacramental chronotope took advantage of spatial and spiritual correspondences and the rhythms of monastic time to bring performers and other participants in Latin liturgical dramas into contact with the divine in the moment of performance.

The consubstantial chronotope, in contrast, functioned within an ontology of self-sufficiency sustained by autodynamic bodies that located the primary source of their power within themselves, rather than seeking such power from spiritual “victory helpers” or religious or temporal leaders. Locating power within oneself generally meant that the specific power to interpret and to author meaning could also be located within oneself, that is, the individual could author meaning in the act of contemplating a performance, a religious item, or any other life event. Ownership of divine relics and religious aids was an extension of this general logic, as bodies came to own the divine rather than feeling compelled to travel to locations where divinity was grounded, such as churches, shrines, and reliquaries. Just as the Eucharist in the always simmering but not quite yet articulated consubstantial interpretation of the Last Supper involved no substantive transformation of wafer and wine but rather served as an opportunity for private contemplation, so too in the consubstantial chronotope performance and representation generally came to be “owned” by the contemplator. Within this chronotope, no substantive or enduring transformation was understood to occur through performance; instead, performance constructed an imaginary second world that was ontologically inferior to the first world of the audience and performers. The second world existed *for* the audience and performers and *because of* the bodily and interpretive efforts of the

audience. Performance became, within this chronotope, an act of production and consumption by bodies that generally understood themselves as producers and consumers.

Finally, in the transubstantial chronotope, an ontology of community informed efforts to articulate communal identity and grievances through cultural performances, most notably the community-encompassing performance of the Corpus Christi pageants that were performed in Northern England. In an idealized *praxis*, these communicative bodies used performance to tell shared narratives in the context of a communal ritual which sought to strengthen, purify, and heal souls. The reality of these cultural performances was perhaps more contestatory and even hard-hearted than the idealized *praxis* that Arthur Frank associates with communicative bodies, however, as rivalries between church and civic authorities inflected and infected the staging of these performances. The openly contestatory quality of these pageants weakened any claim to authoritative discourse that such religious performances might have offered. Instead, the performance discourse of the Corpus Christi pageants opened itself up to dialogic play, allowing these performances to function as innerly persuasive discourse. The use of familiar space and time to stage the supposedly timeless mysteries of Christian lore strengthened the sensation of engaging in an innerly persuasive dialogue with the divine. As the first and second worlds of performance collided, mingled, struggled, and toyed with each other in the transubstantial chronotope, the discourse of the imaginative second world came to possess an unusually resonant linguistic agency that placed the metaworld on the same ontological plane as the world of the performers and spectators.

Throughout this study, therefore, we have examined a wide variety of medieval theatrical practices broadly associated with spirituality, ethics, and morality. The tactics available for addressing such concerns through theatrical means are impossible to catalog or describe in any comprehensive way, and the three chronotopes of performance here can at most serve as a starting point for exploring various relations among space, time, performers, and audience in the performance of medieval religious or ethical discourse. Hopefully, though, these three chronotopes create grounds for us to discuss productively even the most scatological and transgressive forms of medieval religious or ethical performance. As the opening quote of this chapter suggests, sometimes divine faith can be observed more in its breach than in its practice. In the midst of a supposedly sober morality play exploring Mankind's efforts to resist temptation in favor of hard work, the three vice figures of Nought, Newguise, and Nowadays tempt not only Mankind but also—and more importantly—tempt the audience as well. By giving in to the enticement to sing along with the vices, the audience is led straight into unforeseen temptation, singing a “Christmas song” that is shot through with what Bakhtin rather euphemistically calls the “material bodily lower stratum” (Rabelais 18-24). Thus, just like Mankind in the play, the audience discovers how easy it is to sin and how quick the desire for repentance can come on.

One can, of course, argue that the play functions in the exact opposite manner, inviting the audience to behave rudely and to identify with the more attractive vice figures. Of more interest in the context of this study, however, is the way that Mankind's ontological experience of temptation “crosses over” from the second world of the play to the first world of the audience. The audience's space and time collide with, and perhaps

even become coterminous with, the space and time of the imaginative metaworld.

Whether this crossing over leads to *identification* with the vices or *rejection* of the vices is less significant than the fact that such boundary-breaking (or boundary-blurring) moves us into the domain of the transubstantial chronotope. But can we say the same about the other morality plays of medieval England?

This study has explored three major forms of medieval performance—Latin liturgical dramas, Tudor interludes, and Biblical cycle pageants—but one of the most famous forms of medieval theatre has been absent from this study thus far: morality plays. Where do moralities such as Everyman, Mankind, The Castle of Perseverance, and Wisdom fit into our three chronotopes of performance in medieval England? The answer, as we shall see, is as complex as the various plays that make up the genre of English morality plays. Whereas the liturgical dramas, Tudor interludes, and cycle plays each featured distinct production circumstances that shaped perceptions of time and space throughout the performance, the production circumstances of the plays we now call moralities were quite diverse, making it difficult to categorize the genre as a whole into any one chronotope.

Still, one might wonder, in this postmodern/posthumanist age, if these chronotopes of medieval performance have any contemporary meaning and relevance. In an effort to locate something of the transubstantial in contemporary theatre practices, I will conclude this chapter, and the study as a whole, with an analysis of a recent production in the East End of London called Yimmimngaliso: The Mysteries. This production, staged in a ramshackle old nineteenth century music hall, evoked—for me, at least, and I imagine for others present on the night I witnessed the performance—

something of the transubstantial. The multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual cast from South America drew upon contemporary images and issues to connect the texts of several of the Chester mystery cycle plays to my own experiences and spiritual yearnings. The performance, too, tugged upon my own life experiences as a university student in the southern United States in the 1980's, pushing the performance to reach out to me in a particularly stirring, evocative, and I believe transubstantial way.

#### Multichronotopic Medieval Moralities

The five plays traditionally associated with the English medieval morality genre are The Pride of Life, The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind, and Everyman, all dating from the late fourteenth through the early sixteenth centuries. “The problematic 502-line fragment known as The Pride of Life” provides some material, especially in the Prologue, for one to speculate on the nature of the play as a whole, but such speculation must, perforce, be made with less than acceptable confidence (King 258). Because we cannot make detailed assumptions about the production circumstances of this play, and because we have so little of the play's text from which to speculate about the metaworld created through its performance, it is difficult to consider how the play might have constructed time and space for its audience during medieval performances. As such, The Pride of Life will not factor into our analysis of the morality genre.

Of the four remaining plays, each of which has survived more or less in its entirety, we can hardly find any points of connection at first blush. The dour and relatively unadorned Everyman, which is likely of Dutch origin, seems far different from Perseverance and its ambitious exploration of *Humanum Genus*' entire life span as well as its elaborate staging in the round. Neither play much resembles Wisdom at face value,

with its more rarified and intellectual *debat* format that seems more suited for university wits than common folk. And as the opening quote to this chapter suggests, the bawdy humor of Mankind seems completely removed from the more sober tone of the other four plays.

The plays do, of course, have certain thematic and dramatic similarities, but these similarities are textual and structural and do not take into account the plays' production circumstances in the Middle Ages. Pamela M. King has summed up these generic textual markers for us nicely:

What these plays have in common most obviously is that they offer their audiences moral instruction through dramatic action that is broadly allegorical.[...] The protagonist is generally a figure of all men, reflected in his name, Everyman or Mankind, and the other characters are polarised as figures of good and evil. The action concerns alienation from God and return to God, presented as the temptation, fall and restitution of the protagonist. (240)

While the presence of these qualities, shared across a variety of texts, does allow us to speak meaningfully of "moralities" as a genre, in terms of their production circumstances, the plays differ greatly. And for us to be able to speak meaningfully about space and time in the performance, some consideration of the production circumstances is necessary.

As Bevington notes,

In matters of staging, the morality play confronts us with a variety and uncertainty that calls into question the very concept of a single entity called 'the morality play.' Probably it is better to assume [...] that morality drama is of a piece with medieval drama generally and shares its diversity of staging methods. ("Castles in the Air" 100)

Some medieval English moralities were clearly intended for large-scale outdoor productions, while others could be and most likely were staged at a variety of locations,

making use of everywhere from church yards to cathedrals to town halls. Likewise, these moralities interact with their audiences in fundamentally different ways, crossing the divide between the first and second worlds of performance for different reasons using different techniques. Chronotopically, then, each play constructs time, space, and actor/audience relationships in very different ways.

While staging circumstances are not the only concern we have when considering the chronotope of a given performance—other issues such as tone, verbal imagery, the function of asides and audience addresses, and bodily training strongly influence chronotopic consciousness—we cannot afford to overlook completely production circumstances if we wish to conduct a full chronotopic analysis of a specific play text, performance, or genre. Consider, for instance, that one feature of Latin liturgical dramas which allows us to discuss these dramas as exempla of the sacramental chronotope is the consistent similarity of tone and production circumstances in virtually all of these performances. The sacramental chronotope can only be understood in terms of its participation in sanctified church space, its reliably sober tone, its use of monastically disciplined bodies, and its connection to the seasonal clock of the Church calendar. Likewise, the largely secular Tudor interludes are associated with the consubstantial chronotope due in no small part to their shared production circumstances in great halls for wealthy patrons exploring (and frequently exploiting) the power of their autodynamic bodies, often in rowdy and boisterous ways. In each case, it is not simply the text of the plays which moves them into one chronotope or the other (although textual features can certainly contribute to a given text's participation in a particular chronotope); additionally the specific shared production circumstances, including the use of specific kinds of

bodies in specific spaces at specific times, inflected (or infected) with a distinct intonation, moves us to associate certain plays with one chronotope or another.

We cannot, however, identify such similarities in the moralities of the later Middle Ages. Even the limited selection of the five moralities we have identified thus far demonstrates a variety of distinct production circumstances and the construction of a variety of different bodies in time and space. If we move to include other later moral interludes such as Hickscorner and Lusty Juventus, we find it even more difficult to identify a specific chronotope that adequately describes the experience of participating in these diverse moralities. More productive, perhaps, would be an effort to describe the chronotope of specific moralities, exploring how these very different plays moved through sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial space and time. Given the limited space of this chapter, we might usefully concentrate on the three so-called “Macro plays,” Perseverance, Wisdom, and Mankind, which were discovered together and which all date from roughly the same period, from around 1440 to 1465 or 1470 (King 243). Although all three plays “are of proven East Anglian provenance” and are roughly contemporaries of each other, they are at best distant cousins in terms of production circumstances, tone, actor-audience relationships, and other chronotopic markers: “On examination it becomes apparent [...] that each of the three plays belongs to a radically different theatrical context and, consequently, audience” (King 243-244).

Harris offers a useful categorization of the moralities in terms of both staging circumstances and theme:

In the later fourteenth century, “moral plays,” as they were called then, became so abundant that it becomes convenient to consider the different categories into which they fall [...]. In terms of physical presentation, to take that first, the plays can be clearly divided into two groups: large-



scale plays mounted by the community, in the same way as the mysteries; and small-scale plays, known as “interludes,” usually intended for production by companies of professional travelling players, often at a dinner or a banquet. These two groups can be sub-divided again according to their main subject, into what are called by modern critics “general moralities” and “specific moralities.” The general morality casts its net very wide and embraces the whole life-journey of man, often pursuing it through a series of “ages,” each of which has its associated vices, while the specific morality play deals either with the sins of one particular “age,” usually youth, or a particular problem of Christian life. (160)

In Harris’ terms, of the four moralities that we have complete texts of, only The Castle of Perseverance provides an example of a large-scale, outdoor production of a “general morality” portraying the entire life of its protagonist, *Humanum Genus*. In contrast, Wisdom and Mankind are interludes, both in terms of textual scope and production circumstances; both are capable of being staged indoors by traveling players. Wisdom and Mankind fit into Harris’ category of specific moralities, each exploring “a particular problem of Christian life”: maintaining intellectual discipline in the face of temptation in Wisdom, and remaining a diligent Christian worker despite the lure of a carefree reprobate’s life in Mankind. By examining the three plays in more detail, we can see that each play constructs the grounds for theatrical representation in time and space quite differently, and thus that each play participates in a different chronotope of medieval performance.

#### *The Castle of Perseverance: A Sacramental Morality*

The Castle of Perseverance dates from the early fifteenth century, and its “3,649 lines encompass several distinguishable plots joined in sequence: the struggle between the Virtues and Vices for Man’s soul, the coming of Death to Mankind, the debate of body and soul, and the parliament of heaven or the debate of the four daughters of God”

(Bevington, Medieval Drama 796). Perseverance is therefore remarkable in the way it employs four different morality plays themes—some of which, like the struggle between the Virtues and Vices as well as the coming of Death, are the subject of whole moralities in and of themselves—into one epic performance. By enacting this epic in a huge and rigorously symbolic outdoor setting, Perseverance moves the audience through space and time in a way that is remarkably similar to the movement of performers through space and time in the sacramental chronotope of the Latin liturgical dramas.

Designed as it is “to represent the whole life of a man from his birth until the day of his judgement before God’s throne” (Bevington, “Castles in the Air” 108), Perseverance was staged on the grandest scale of any of the surviving moral plays, using the full resources of the entire community in which it was staged:

The large-scale public moralities were very popular and were produced, like most cycle-plays, on an essentially non-commercial basis by groups of citizens—often quite large groups. Sometimes the audience had to pay to see them, but the intention was usually not to make a profit but simply to defray expenses, as happened with the large-scale continental mysteries and saints’ plays—after all, scenic units and costumes must have made considerable demands on the pockets of the producers in the case of plays like The Castle of Perseverance, and such costly pieces cannot possibly be intended for professional production. In an age when it was difficult to keep even a six-man troupe together, it would have been economic suicide for travelling players to risk mounting anything so enormous: if it had failed, they would have spent the rest of their lives in gaol for debt. (Harris 161)

We are fortunate to have a visual record of this costly and spectacular stage area. Figure 6.1 (see next page) shows a modernized version of the famous diagram from the Macro play manuscripts showing the playing area of The Castle of Perseverance (Bevington, Medieval 797).

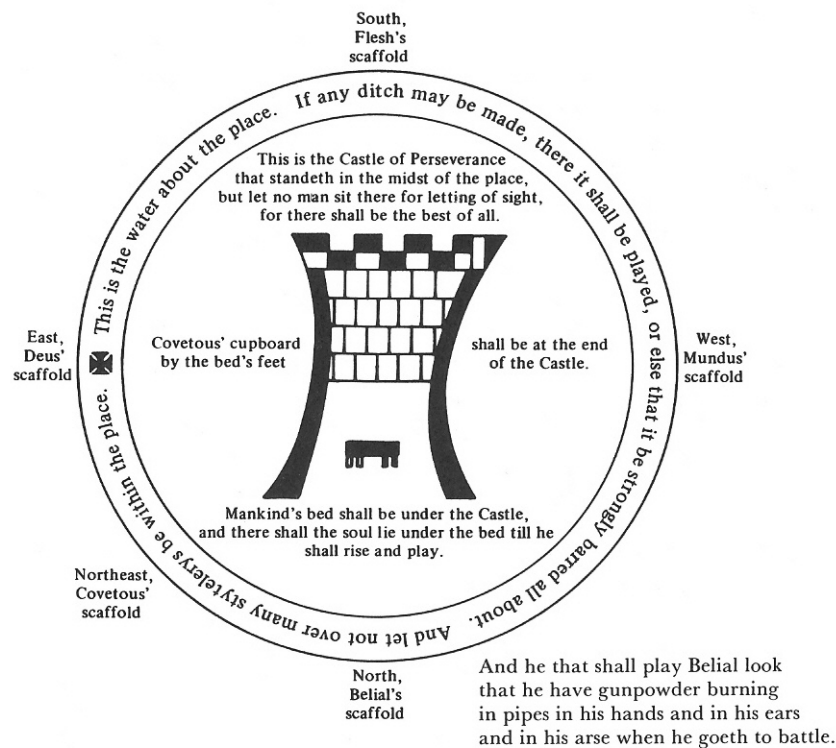


Figure 6.1: A modernized version of the illustration accompanying the Macro manuscript of The Castle of Perseverance (Bevington, Medieval 797)

As the figure demonstrates, the play used five scaffolds, four of which occupied the four cardinal compass positions that were regularly used symbolically in medieval churches. In the context of this stage arrangement, God is visually opposed to the traditional medieval “evil Trinity” of forces from whence spring the seven deadly sins: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. In the east is God’s scaffold, symbolically connected with the rising sun (and risen Son); directly opposite this is the World’s scaffold, reflecting the medieval convention of associating the west with materiality and impermanence. The north, we may remember from Chapter Three, was traditionally where women stood inside medieval churches; it should come as no surprise, given the

prevailing patriarchal interpretation that located demonized women in the north, that we find the Devil lurking there outside the Castle of Perseverance. To the south—traditionally the place where men stood in medieval churches—we find the temptations of the flesh that all men must so strenuously resist.

The location of Covetousness in the northeast seems at first odd, a violation of the compass point symbology. But Pamela King offers a compelling interpretation of the symbolic relevance of Covetousness' scaffold in the context of the play's action:

Destroying the familiar symmetry of the rest, Covetousness has a scaffold of his own, in the northeast. As Covetousness alone among the comprehensive scheme of sins that assail the protagonist in the play is the one that he will find irresistible, the diagram is effectively a map of the play's action. (King 245)

In other words, the audience is urged to read Covetousness as an especially significant sin given that his scaffold is visually a violation of medieval symbolic geography. Indeed, one can “read” not only the visual action but also most of the plot of Perseverance from this diagram alone, and this is an essential aspect of the play's communicative strategy. By examining the various relationships of the characters in space, the audience—despite possible difficulties hearing and understanding the action of the play at various points—would have little difficulty inferring the action from the underlying geographical symbolism of the stage area.

King offers a succinct summation of the action of the play:

Briefly, it offers a package of orthodox biblical doctrine as armament against the sin of covetousness.[...] Mankind [*Humanum Genus*], accompanied by his Good and Bad Angels, is subjected to various temptations by the forces of the World (*Mundus*), the Flesh (*Caro*), and the Devil (*Belial*). Backbiter eventually persuades him to join Covetousness, but he is retrieved by Penitence and Confession and enters the Castle of Perseverance. The forces of evil lay siege to the Castle, where Mankind is defended by an array of seven Virtues. Although the

Virtues win, Covetousness tempts Mankind to leave the Castle, offering him material success in the form of possession of the now vacant Castle. Death comes and Mankind's riches are seized by the enigmatic I-wot-nevere-Whoo, while his Soul is carried to Hell. The Four Daughters of God—Mercy, Peace, Righteousness, and Truth—hold a debate, which Mercy wins, freeing the Soul to ascend to Heaven. (244)

One can easily see from this description that most of the action of the play is illustrated through and rendered meaningful by Mankind's movement through stage space: the "major thematic movement of the play depends on the presentation of man's life as a journey [...] a pilgrimage, from birth to death, synonymous with the progress from flawed innocence to experience, and represented theatrically as a physical journey through a landscape" (King 244). Even the seemingly undifferentiated space of the ground in between the various set pieces assumes a symbolic function: "The play calls for a large *platea* or open space surrounded by scaffolds, with a castle in the center of the arena" (Bevington, Medieval Drama 798), and in the context of the performance, this "*platea* is a neutral ground, a place of moral change" (Bevington, "Castles in the Air" 109).

Natalie Schmitt's description of this stage layout is particularly chronotopic in its interpretation of the various movements through space and time in Perseverance:

The castle of man's soul is set at the center of the playing area which represents at once the universe and the self; the boundaries between the internal and the external are not clear. Ideally, man resides within the castle watched over by the powers of good and protected from the realms of the world, the flesh, and the devil beyond. Outside the castle man is in exile and wilderness. All is shown from the perspective in which the war for man's salvation is the central reality, a very inward view in which that which acts upon the embattled self—world, flesh, and devil—are things of equal reality. (Schmitt 306)

Just as church space was saturated with spiritual meaning in the sacramental chronotope, here the ground upon which Perseverance is performed acquires symbolic and spiritual

meaning both prior to and during the performance: “Fixed points on the play’s set, including the Castle, operate as ports of call on the journey, objectifying the moral state of the protagonist” (King 245).

Schmitt’s interpretation here (“Outside the castle man is in exile and wilderness”) recalls Victor Turner’s description of the function of an initiand’s movement into liminal space in various ritual contexts, where such movement is often a ritual requirement for initiation into a new rank in society or some other notable self-transformation (26). The various movements to and from the Castle at the heart of the stage area thus ritually initiate liminal moments of *Humanum Genus*’ separation from the comforts of civilization and serve as well to provide for his eventual return to those comforts and to the established social order represented by the Castle (Turner 41-42). Indeed, the liminal space associated with the five outer scaffolds of Perseverance often functions as the space of inversion and parody that Turner associated with liminal space (25-27). The Deadly Sins, for instance, offer a mock-heroic parody of chivalric ideals as they struggle to win access to the central Castle: “They boast of their prowess but are ignominiously overthrown in battle, at which point they turn on one another in the slapstick comedy of physical abuse. Their speech, often profane and scatological, proclaims them to be deplorable even if they are also amusing” (Bevington, Medieval Drama 798).

Thus the movement of the characters through the symbolic space of the set functions ritually to establish a centralized order which is then assaulted by centrifugal forces of disorder, and the chronotopic logic of the performance serves, like Turner’s liminal rituals, to reinforce beliefs about the value of the centralized, orderly structure of Christian life. In this sense, the performance functions not pedagogically, as a teaching

tool for those unfamiliar with Christian doctrine, but rather ritually, as a visceral reminder of the values of belonging to the fold of the saved:

Although these [morality] plays are often described as didactic, that term requires qualification. As is the case with the cycle plays, their orthodoxy serves to confirm and to celebrate rather than to argue. In fifteenth-century religious drama, the desired effect was concordance, achieved by a conspiracy of the verbal and the visual: diction, costume, placing and gesture all function as clear supportive signs of moral status. The dynamic nature of these plays lies not in internally contrived conflicts, but in the manner in which they generate pressure upon the audiences emotionally and physically, as well as intellectually. (King 243)

The passage through space and time in Perseverance, like the movement through church space and time in the Latin liturgical dramas of the sacramental chronotope, functions as an embodied orthopraxis of remembering and embracing the central truths of Christian life. The audience, having been urged by the logic of allegory to identify with *Humanum Genus*, shares in his ritual isolation and eventual re-integration into the society of God's Chosen.

But the audience does not merely experience *Humanum Genus*' fall vicariously; they also, and more importantly, move within the same space as the protagonist at times. In her interpretation of the diagram illustrated in Figure 6.1, King observes the likelihood that the scaffolds were located not *inside* the circular moat that defines the playing area, but *outside* that moat, thus giving the audience access to the outer edge of the symbolically charged performance space:

The scaffolds, strategically placed because their placing is vital to the symbolic action, but not drawn probably because they conform to some contemporary theatrical norm, do lie outside the circle.[...] The disposition of the scaffolds creates a symbolic universe, within which the audience would stand to watch the action. The spatial meaning of the created place [i.e., the *platea* area outside the circular moat] is akin to that of the church as traditionally used in, for instance, processions at Epiphany. As this space contains both play and audience, has fixed

coordinates which relate it to the entire universe and, at the same time, is not cut off from the “real” world by any architectural barrier, it suggests that the play world and the real world are one and the same. Consonant with this, the play contains no verbal references to any place not contained within this mimetic space. (246)

Significantly, the audience moved around and through the liminal space of the scaffolds, but the function of the moat, as clearly indicated in Figure 6.1, is to “strongly bar” the audience from crossing into the central playing area. Much debate has arisen as to the nature of this moat—was it a real ditch, perhaps full of water (which would require moving tons of dirt), or was it merely a scenic element suggested through presentational means rather than a literal ditch? Yet whether “real” or not, the moat functions as a barrier that *Humanum Genus* can cross, thus being symbolically cleansed of his sins, while the audience is forced to remain outside, desperately desiring access to this purgation: “To cross over water when entering the castle of the Virgin or of the soul is to experience a cleansing transformation,” a transformation that the protagonist experiences bodily, leaving the audience yearning for a similar experience (Bevington, “Castles in the Air” 101).

While *Humanum Genus* is granted access to the sacred area of the central Castle, the audience is moved around the symbolic space of the play following the action of the protagonist by ushers whose job was to discipline the audience’s bodies by insuring that they moved where and when such movement facilitated the performance:

Ushers, the “stytelerys” mentioned in the diagram, control the spectators sitting or standing on the level ground below the banked seats, in order to facilitate the many processions of this play from scaffold to scaffold and to provide room for the action immediately around the castle. (Bevington, “Castles in the Air” 100)



Thus the audience for Perseverance was moved around the symbolic geography of the playing space, following the action of the protagonist both literally, via movement, and vicariously, via synecdoche, where the protagonist “stands in” for the audience as a whole.

The movement through space and time in a medieval performance of The Castle of Perseverance is perhaps not “purely” sacramental, inasmuch as there are notable differences between the likely medieval experience of this play and the likely experience of the Latin liturgical dramas. Perseverance was staged on secular ground, probably by secular performers who addressed a mostly secular audience, and that audience is likely to have paid some fee to obtain admission to the performance, which was typically not the case in Latin liturgical dramas. The bodies of both the performers and the audience for Perseverance were not conditioned by monastic discipline, and the play was not specifically linked to the seasonal calendar of Christian holy days or to the monastic “clock” of *matins*, *tierce*, and so on, as was the case in Latin liturgical dramas.

Yet in performance, Perseverance managed to *create* a sacred symbolic geography, rather than “finding” that geography built into the structure of the church as a performance space. And the bodies of the performers and audience were disciplined, if not by monastic training, at least by several pragmatic forces: by the moat which restricted access to this performance’s equivalent of the “holy of holies”; by the “stytelerys” who shepherd the audience from one space to another; by the frequent long-winded philosophical digressions into sermoniac speech by the Virtues; and by the sheer length of the performance, which likely extended to five or more hours. Through these means, The Castle of Perseverance likely gave its medieval audience a taste of the

movement through symbolic, ritual space that monastic bodies experienced in the context of the sacramental chronotope of the Latin liturgical dramas.

In a sense, Perseverance demonstrates the fluidity of chronotopes—the way that a chronotope which developed in one spatial and temporal context (church space and time) could be adapted to produce similar effects on the bodies of theatergoers in a notably different spatial and temporal context. Whereas, for instance, the sacramental chronotope of Latin liturgical dramas drew upon more or less preexisting heterodynamic qualities of the bodies of the monks who participated in the performances, Perseverance found ways of instilling a certain heterodynamic quality in the audience's bodies regardless of whether those bodies arrived at the performance regarding themselves as needy and incomplete. Through their dependence on the “stytelerys” to move them through a symbolic geography, audiences for Perseverance were moved into the position of initiands in a ritual, being led by those who knew the ritual better than they through a sacred space and time that was created for this performance alone. What the Latin liturgical dramas found, The Castle of Perseverance *manufactured*, demonstrating that chronotopes are not “given” but are rather constructed in order to provide the grounds for a specific narrative representation.

*Wisdom: A Consubstantial Debat*

Another play which participates in the morality genre, Wisdom, constructs through performance a quite different understanding of time and space than that of Perseverance, borrowing many of the techniques associated with the Tudor interludes such as The Play Called the Four PP to urge spectators toward the consubstantial chronotope. In contrast to the elaborate and winding narrative line of Perseverance,

Wisdom tells a more focused story of the “specific morality” kind, portraying the efforts of Wisdom to keep the play’s heroine, Anima (or “Soul”), from being tempted by fiends such as Perjury and Gentle Fornication. Organized through the dominant metaphor of the Christian soul’s “marriage” to Christ in medieval theology (King 251-253), the central action of the play personifies specific aspects of the soul “as its own trinity of Mind, Will and Understanding” (King 252). This “holy trinity” of the Three Might is befuddled and eventually led astray by the tricks “of spurious likeness, disguise and deceit, as perpetrated by Lucifer” (King 253).

Yielding to temptation, the Three Might fall, and thus Mind is transformed into “Maintenance,” Understanding into “Perjury,” and Will into “Gentle Fornication.” It then remains for Wisdom to effect a re-conversion, largely by means of intellectual debate. In this sense, Wisdom employs a performance strategy similar to that of Heywood’s The Play Called the Four PP, where the play moves forward not by the strength of its narrative but rather by offering an entertaining and/or instructive debate. Wisdom can be further distinguished from Perseverance by its resemblance to the popular court masques of the Tudor era: “There are a number of mute persons attendant on the chief characters, whose coming and going, ‘dysgysyde,’ create scenic effects, as in a masque” (Chambers 438; see also Bevington, “Castles in the Air” 104).

David Bevington describes the environment of a 1984 performance at Trinity college in Connecticut of Wisdom which helps us visualize the more ornate and elaborate staging circumstances of that play:

The play was located indoors, in a college hall, and was surrounded with a series of ceremonial occasions[...]. A medieval banquet before the play added to the sense of festive occasion. Spectators were arrayed along both sides of the hall, with the king and his royal party on the dais at the lower

end of the hall. A small stage with rising steps stood at the opposite end, near the entrance doors. Ceremonial action, such as the exchanges between Wisdom and Anima, occurred usually on this stage, whereas the livelier action of the three Might's took to the floor among the spectators. ("Castles in the Air" 103)

This staging may have been influenced by earlier interpretations of the play as intended for a courtly London audience. More recent evidence has come to light which suggests that the play may instead have been designed for performance at the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, "one of the richest abbeys in England, one which, although nominally full of contemplatives, also owned and ran the prosperous cloth town in which it was situated" (King 253-254). Regardless of whether the play was designed for royalty or clergy, it was clearly intended for a more elite clientele than Perseverance, and Bevington's description of the 1984 staging of Wisdom is thus useful in helping us imagine the feel and flavor of the performance.

Merle Fifiield argues persuasively that Wisdom may be a remnant of an otherwise lost sub-genre of English morality play which relied almost exclusively on *debat* techniques rather than on the strength and evocative power of a narrative line:

There are [morality] plays which have no narrative, but which consist entirely of exchanges of speeches. These speeches, which sometimes approximate orations, need not clash; they may merely state the ideological position of the character speaking.[...] No pure examples of this form of morality survive in England, but [...] the Continental practice of this form may explain the often criticized verbiage of Wisdom Who is Christ. Though the narrative events of this play are structured according to a rhetorical organization which assigns the play to the most complex form of moralities, all meaningful narrative events result from expository dialogue and visual effects.[...] In contrast to the other English moralities of the medieval period, the enactment of the narrative events of Wisdom Who is Christ is restricted to dialogue and pageantry. (Fifiield 288-289)

While spectators of Perseverance were physically, viscerally drawn into the action of the play—moving from space to space, watching epic battles, and yearning to follow the

protagonist bodily across the purifying water of the “moat”—the audience for Wisdom was instead asked to appreciate the more rarified intellectual arguments that are the central feature of the performance. “Both The Castle and Mankind present a phenomenological, experiential account of the action of grace upon man. Wisdom is much more intellectually analytical” (King 251).

The spectator’s enjoyment of Wisdom, then, derives from contemplation of the sumptuous visual spectacle of the costuming, which was conspicuously symbolic of each character’s station and function in the play; from reflection on the elegant movement of the mute figures in the masque-like sections of the performance; and from contemplation of the various arguments and counter-arguments that make up the bulk of the play’s dialogue. Unlike Perseverance, which offers grace through the act of literal and visceral participation in the action of the protagonist, Wisdom offers grace through the act of visual and intellectual consumption. In this sense, Wisdom evokes the consubstantial chronotope’s ability to render the divine as an object from consumption and ownership.

Additionally, Wisdom’s similarity to court masques evokes the values and sensibilities of the courtly and upper-class autodynamic bodies that characterized the consubstantial chronotope. Pamela King makes an intriguing argument that begins with the observation that Wisdom consciously employs the language of this upper class:

Much of the topical reference material [in Wisdom] is relevant only to courtiers. Mind when he falls becomes Maintenance, or the practice of hiring surplus retainers who will bear arms on one’s behalf in return for protection. He has a reciprocal relationship with Perjury, Understanding’s fallen identity, as the chief protection offered in so-called bastard feudalism was protection for the law of the land, effected most simply by the bribing of jurors. (253)

Costuming in the play reinforces the assumption that the play is directed specifically at an empowered elite audience: “Wisdom and Anima, although their meaning is eternal, are clad in a manner of a contemporary monarch and his consort,” and “Mind/Maintenance’s masquers are dressed in a livery which parodies the ostentatious traffic in badges that characterised bastard feudalism” in late medieval England (King 254-255).

Moving on from these observations, King argues that the play, if it was indeed staged at the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds in East Anglia, would likely have served overt political purposes:

At the time around which it was likely that the play was written, the Abbey was busy ingratiating itself with the Yorkist monarch, Edward IV, having supported the defeated Henry VI[...], and the fall into sin within the play features contemporary issues concerning the abuse of authority. (King 254)

Performance of Wisdom at Bury St. Edmunds may, then, have served a similar function to that of Medwall’s secular interlude Fulgens and Lucres in that it may have exhorted nobles to behave more nobly:

The banqueters [attending the performance] become loyal subjects of the king and Wisdom. The fall of Will into the temptations of the flesh has a direct humorous analogue with the banquet context, whereas the fall of Mind and Understanding into political corruption reflects more darkly the crimes to which courtiers and their acolytes could be tempted in such turbulent times. (King 254)

Like other secular interludes of the late Middle Ages and early English Renaissance—most notably Gorboduc, which offers an overt call for Elizabeth to extend the line of succession by marrying and producing heirs (Creeth xxxix)—Wisdom in this light would seem to offer a metaworld that urgently begs the “first world” audience members to respond positively to the message of the performance. In such a context, the metaworld

of Wisdom, as in other consubstantial performances, lacks ontological authority over the audience-sphere.

Regardless of whether or not Wisdom functioned to accomplish some specific political end in light of East Anglian politics, it would seem likely that the play participates in a general trend that Harris identifies in later English moralities:

[I]t was not long before the inner struggle for man's soul was reflected far more aptly by the image of a court intrigue, where the Vices all indulged in hypocrisy, cunning, honey-tongued persuasion and constant back-stabbing—a much more valid image [than earlier personifications of Vice] in psychological terms, since people are very ready to persuade themselves that their own worst instincts are really nothing but good. This new development went hand in hand with the appearance of political allegory. (Harris 155)

The contemporary topicality of moralities like Wisdom moves the plays out of the “pure” space and time of the sacramental chronotope, dominated by thoughts of sacrifice and salvation, and into the more messy sphere of consubstantial negotiating, wrangling, and even bickering with the audience.

An example of this messiness comes in the form of the sumptuary laws popular in late medieval England. Designed to insure that class distinctions would remain visible by virtue of the types of clothing worn by each class, sumptuary laws paradoxically demonstrated the difficulty of keeping class distinctions stable in an era where wealth and status did not always go together (Sponsler 15-17). By “dressing the part” of a noble, members of the wealthy mercantile class could deceptively appear to be members of a station much higher than their own, a fact which is reflected in the narrative logic of Wisdom:

Garment change accompanies change of name to indicate change in moral status and identity. Appropriately, Lucifer, the prince of disorder, abuses

this language by disguising himself as a goodly gallant whilst remaining unchanged in his moral character. (King 254)

Wisdom thus comments metatheatrically on the power of the player to define himself and to “create” his social station, but in doing so it consigns such performativity to the schemes of the Devil. Wisdom is intended, then, for an audience consumed with practical political concerns of power, wealth, and status whose pursuit of the divine comes, not via physical or even vicarious participation in the action of the play’s protagonist, but rather through the purchase, contemplation, and consumption of a play whose argumentative logic matches the spectator’s own values.

Harris describes the messy consubstantial urges bound up into these smaller, more intimate moralities:

Because of the intimacy, the language too can be detailed, and there is a far greater emphasis [than in large-scale outdoor productions] not only upon wit and word-play, but also upon quite detailed argument and debate—usually involving a good and a bad character who each put their case to the audience, drawing forcible examples from the community they see around them, and who not infrequently get into a heated argument, ending up in a brawl. (178)

In this sense, Wisdom can be said to participate in the consubstantial chronotope. It may not end up in a brawl, but the tone and logic of the play is drawn from the secular, political concerns of the surrounding community, and play speaks more to contemporary needs than eternal truths.

The bodies seated in the banqueting hall awaiting a performance of Wisdom were clearly the confident, autodynamic bodies that Kleinschmidt associates with the late medieval merchants and knights who eventually came to dominate England economically. Performances of Wisdom were directly addressed to these confident, sophisticated consumers of theatre, who saw their desires mirrored in the play’s



cautionary tale. The third and final Macro play, Mankind, was often staged under similar conditions to those of Wisdom, and it is likely that many who came to see the play in performance did so with a similar expectation of being entertained by—but not challenged by—an ontologically inferior imaginative world of performance. A variety of metatheatrical tactics in Mankind, however, functioned to call the audience to task, to catch the audience in a moment of pleasure and then to have them contemplate the consequences of their own behavior. The second world created in and through performance in Mankind “crossed over” to the first world of the audience in some surprising sophisticated ways that evoke the power of the transubstantial chronotope.

*Mankind: Reaching for the Transubstantial*

Of all the Macro plays, Mankind is the most flexible in terms of its staging requirements and the variety of settings where it could be staged:

In direct contrast with The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind is a play of such evidently simple scenography that it can be played almost anywhere. In the absence of records or diagrams, a growing body of twentieth-century critical commentary has hypothesised about several eminently possible settings for the most portable English morality play, both indoors [...] and out [...]. The text includes references to a door, a yard, standing and seated audience members and a hostler. (King 247)

Most scholarly interpretations of Mankind tend to assume indoor performance in a great hall of some sort, not only due to the textual references to the door and the seated audience members, but also because the play is similar in temperament to other interludes staged indoors and because the play was likely staged during the cold season from Christmas to Lent. For the sake of convenience, and to provide a specific image of how the play functions in space and time, we may imagine the production as an indoor production either in a town hall or the great hall of some noble or wealthy patron's

manor. It is significant, however, that this play is, as King puts it, “portable,” because that portability was likely to have given Mankind the opportunity to address audiences more diverse than either Wisdom or Perseverance.

The play’s action concerns the fate of its namesake, Mankind, who is given the specific occupation of a farmer in order to illustrate the play’s main theme, which is the difficulty of remaining a diligent and hard-working Christian in the face of the temptation to take up the life of a good-for-nothing troublemaker who preys on others while producing nothing for the larger community. The play begins with a wordy, erudite, and somewhat somnolent monologue by Mercy, the Virtue who will bring Mankind to heel. After this theologically sophisticated, sometimes Latinate monologue, we find Mankind being harassed by a trio of minor vices, Newguise, Nought, and Nowadays, under the covert direction of the primary Vice figure, Mischief. After much merry-making, dancing, and taunting of Mankind and Mercy, the three minor vices of distraction are banished by Mankind’s swift spade.

In his continuing effort to cause Mankind to lose his faith in the value of his earthly good works, Mischief sets out to summon forth unholy aid for their venture:

When the temptation to give up his work and join in the fun has been so emphatically resisted by Mankind, Mischief has recourse to another ruse, one which moves the play right away from the personification allegory which it has nominally observed up to this point. In order to make Mankind’s work so hard that he gives up trying, Mischief, with the assistance of the other vices and members of the audience, calls up a real devil. Titivillus, although remaining invisible to Mankind, agrees to appear in corporeal form to the audience: “I com wyth my leggyis wvnder me,” he promises (line 454). He then puts a board under Mankind’s plot, so that it is too hard to dig, and sends a call of nature to divert him from his prayers, and the temptation is thereby effected. (King 249)

Importantly, in contrast to Mischief, Newguise, Nought, and Nowadays, Titivillus is a figure medieval theatregoers would have regarded as “real,” as he was not simply an allegorical personification of a vice but was instead an actual demon: “Titivillus, who also appears in the Towneley Last Judgement play and in the sermon collection Jacob’s Well, was traditionally responsible for idle gossip, collecting in his bag, for instance, all the words left out of the divine office by slovenly priests” (King 249).

Tempted away from his work by the difficulty of it, Mankind finds himself too tired (and slothful) to attend the Evensong service, and instead he begs Newguise, Nought, and Nowadays for forgiveness so that he may become their friend and learn how to live the reprobate lifestyle of petty thievery, drinking, and adultery they these vices lead. Borrowing from the familiar morality convention, as was seen in Wisdom, of using changes in costume to indicate changes in moral status, the three vices transform Mankind into a true rascal by helping cut his coat into a more fashionable one. In many morality plays,

a convention developed where a costume-shift showing a change of *character* took place *off* stage, while one showing a change of *heart* too place *on* stage in full sight of the audience—like the trimming-down of Mankind’s practical country gown to a tiny fashionable coat, which shows his moral decline. (Harris 175, emphasis in original)

Now dressed ridiculously, Mankind is led into a life of debauchery that leads him to despair. The three vices now close in for the kill, tempting Mankind to commit suicide. Mercy intervenes on Mankind’s unworthy behalf and (as is often the case in moralities) *talks* Mankind back to grace.

We can see that in terms of tone, Mankind is quite different from the other two Macro plays, and we can therefore productively view “Mankind as a product of medieval

Catholic culture, fully embracing *both* the secular and the spiritual, Carnival and Lent” (Bevington, “Castles in the Air” 97-98, emphasis added). The more rowdy tone of Mankind functions, on one level, simply to keep the audience’s attention, a reflection of the play’s function as an interlude that was most likely staged by traveling players:

The commercial nature of the interlude explains the difference between itself and the large-scale morality. The large-scale play aims to be vivid and instructive, but is always serious and restrained, whereas the interlude aims to amuse and is lively and often bawdy, particularly where the vices are concerned, because the audience needs to be entertained if it is going to pay; it also has many references to the spectators, to involve them in the action or, alternatively, to stop them crowding the entrances to the hall that the actors are using; and it contains a considerable amount of doubling of parts, so the play is constantly interesting, but does not involve sharing out the profits between too many actors. (Harris 161-162)

Yet the willingness to urge the audience to vice demonstrated in Mankind functions structurally to assist the play’s message: “Mankind contains various structural provisions for ensuring that the audience submit to its processes and become involved in the action, so that the moral lesson becomes as object lesson. The dramatist employs [these practices...] to stimulate responses in the audience that parallel those of the protagonist” (King 250).

Two key examples of this effect are when the audience is tricked into singing the profane “Christmas song” that I quoted at the beginning of this chapter and when the audience works together with the three vices and Mischief to summon Titivillus. In both cases, the fictive second world of the performance reaches out to the first world of the audience, inciting them to participate in the very sins being illustrated and condemned by the performance. Indeed, the summoning of Titivillus is accomplished by the audience actually *paying* for the privilege:

NEWGUISE:

Now ghostly to our purpose, worshipful sovereigns,  
We intend to gather money, if it please your negligence,  
For a man with a head that is of great omnipotence.

NOWADAYS:

Keep your tail in goodness, I pray you, good brother!  
He is a worshipful man, sirs, saving your reverence.  
He loveth no groats, nor pence of tuppence;  
Give us red royals [i.e., gold], if ye will see his abominable  
presence. (l. 459-465; Lester 28)

The audience understands, of course, that this is something of a sham—the players here are, in the context of the first world of performance, “simply” calling for payment for their performance—but the fact that such payment also supposedly summons a demon who is familiar to the medieval audience complicates this deceptively simple act.

Under such circumstances, the audience finds themselves behaving on two planes of action—the first and second worlds—where the behavior has one intonation in one world but a quite different one in the other world:

The motive for calling up a spectacular devil slips from the fictional one of destroying Mankind to the factive one of entertaining a paying audience.[...] The audience is faced with the clear proposition that the play cannot continue until they pay, the fiction is then re-established and it becomes apparent that the audience has participated in a black mass and enabled Mankind’s final downfall to be effected. They have done this for reasons of practicality, adopting the line of least resistance. This is also how Mankind will fall. (King 251)

The players’ playful threat to end the performance unless the audience contributes to the hat being passed around moves from being inconsequential and pragmatic to being blasphemous and utterly consequential as the audience shares in Mankind’s sins.

Although it employs vastly different production techniques than the biblical cycle pageants, Mankind manages to evoke something of the transubstantial in its slippery negotiation of the boundaries between “real” and “play,” and between “matter” and “spirit.” The audience’s laughter in this play is ultimately redirected inwards, at

themselves, transforming the laughter into both a guilty pleasure and a soul-scouring reality check. In the same way that someone watching the Crucifixion play at York can recognize both the “human” identity of the performer from the community who is playing Christ while at the same time feeling chastened by symbolically participating in Christ’s sacrifice, audience members in Mankind feel the pull of the spiritual in the strangest of places—in the call to play. Such play bridges the ontological gap between the first and second worlds of performance, moving Mankind into the territory of the transubstantial.

Just as the performance discourse of the Corpus Christi pageants opened itself up to dialogic play, allowing those performances to function as innerly persuasive discourse, so too does the boundary-crossing and boundary-blurring of Mankind allow the various moral messages of the play to become, in the minds and hearts of the audience, both “half someone else’s” and “half-mine.” Audiences for Mankind absorbed the discourse of the play experientially and experimentally, trying out the ideas embodied in the play and struggling to decide which impulse—the divine or the demonic—was stronger in their lives. As the first and second worlds of performance in Mankind rubbed elbows with each other in the transubstantial chronotope, the imaginative second world created in and through performance came to possess a linguistic agency that placed the metaworld on the same ontological plane as the world of the performers and spectators. And I would argue that such an experience of innerly persuasive discourse can be communicated through contemporary performance discourse designed to address contemporary issues of spiritual and ethical practice on a global scale.

### Modern Mysteries

I wish to demonstrate that such a transubstantial experience is possible in a contemporary setting by discussing a production called Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries, staged in Wilton's Music Hall in the East End of London in 2001-2002. Created by Mark Dornford-May and Charles Hazlewood and based on the text of the Chester Mystery cycle of biblical plays, this South African touring production used a variety of languages and performance styles and techniques to tell a very old story. By drawing upon the lives and experiences of its multiracial South African cast, Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries was able to link the ancient Mysteries to contemporary social, racial, and political concerns, yielding an unexpectedly moving and "modern" production.

To analyze this production, I will draw upon both my live experience of this production as I saw it in 2001 and my experiences watching the production again on the Heritage Theatre video recording of the show's final performances in 2002. My ability to review and closely examine minute segments of performance on the recorded version, coupled with high-speed access to the internet to answer my questions about South Africa's history, politics, and arts, allowed me to mine deeply the influences of apartheid on the various languages and performance techniques employed during the show. But what first gave me access to the uniquely layered sensation of many languages speaking with, against, to, and through the cast members' bodies was my experience as an audience member, an experience that I cannot recreate fully by watching the video. I do remember, however, something of that first experience even now, and by exploring how this performance spoke to me and to my experiences as a half-hearted apartheid protestor

in the mid 1980's, I can begin to articulate the way the production struck deeply for me and, I think, for others in the audience.

In the summer of 2001, my wife Jennifer and I were together in London as part of the Louisiana State University Study Abroad program in theatre. We were fortunate to see a variety of impressive theatre productions that summer, but easily the most compelling production we attended during that time was a performance of Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries staged in a ramshackle old Victorian music hall that was, at best, only partially restored. Wilton's Music Hall is located in the East End of London, so far east that most maps of London do not show its street location. Jennifer and I found ourselves wandering in territory vastly unlike the western and northern parts of London with which we were more familiar. A slight but insistent drizzle of rain chilled us even in July as we hurried down startlingly empty residential streets framed by unlit houses staring dully down at us. Occasionally we would see another pedestrian who would move off quickly upon seeing us, as if the town knew we were lost and had conspired to keep us lost in this strange twilight world.

We had arrived in this part of London with the intention of strolling casually to a local pub, grabbing dinner, and then meandering our way to the theatre. Instead, we found ourselves hurrying along the quiet streets, unable to find pub or grocery or newsstand or anywhere we might stop for food and directions. Finally we found a noisy, smoky, clearly "locals only" pub and ate quickly and ravenously. A pint or two of hard cider later, we left, having been unable to find a single person in the pub who knew where Wilton's Music Hall was located. We had a vague idea of which direction we should go, and we wandered forth into the deepening gray of the slow summer nightfall



in London. As grace would have it, we finally saw and successfully hailed the only taxicab we had encountered in this neighborhood, and the taxi driver informed us that we were but a stone's throw away from the theatre. Exhausted, we assured the driver that it would be well worth our money and time to have him drive us to Wilton's rather than trying to follow his directions.

As we went into the theatre, we found scuffed, dirty wooden floors, bare brick walls, and exposed light bulbs hanging from the high ceilings. We purchased our tickets and went into the small "bar" that had been thrown together for this production—nothing more than a plank resting on two stools and some canned drinks on ice. Soon we went into the theatre itself, a long but not very wide performance hall with two levels—a ground floor and a second level for more seating. This second level was unavailable to audience members, as much of it would be used during the performance. The audience instead sat on the ground level in plastic folding chairs—mine had a slight tear in the seat that made it even more uncomfortable than it might otherwise have been. The walls of the theatre, like the interior walls throughout the building, were made of exposed, dusty, multicolored brick.

The stage was raised roughly three feet off the ground, and the center portion of it extended well out into the audience as a sort of "runway" for actors to walk up and down. Like the rest of the building, the stage boards looked ancient, weathered, with that curious combination of strength and fragility that comes from surviving many years. The audience would learn during the performance that the stage had two trap doors—one used as the ground from which Adam arose as well as the tomb from which Lazarus also arose, and the other used most often as Hell, with flames that could erupt just in front of

the trap. At various points, water would rain down the back wall of the theatre, while at other points, flames burnt that same wall, which left black sooty marks that could be seen even before the performance began.

As I waited for the performance to start, I read through the program for the production carefully. As a scholar of medieval theatre, I had sought out this critically lauded performance because it was an adaptation of the Chester Mystery biblical cycle being performed by a South African troupe. I was surprised to learn that this multiracial cast, assembled largely through scouting trips to the amateur church choirs of small South African townships, would be speaking in four languages throughout the performance, as I discovered from the program notes written by Pamela M. King:

**THE MYSTERIES** uses the four main languages of South Africa and some of the less widely used. Of the four main languages:

**AFRIKAANS** has its roots in Dutch but has been influenced by English, Malay, German, French, Portuguese and some indigenous languages. It is an "official" language of South Africa and is the mother tongue of about 15% of the population.

**ENGLISH** is the language of government and the legal and educational systems. It has been spoken in South Africa since the 1790s and is understood by the vast majority of the population.

**XHOSA (SIXHOSA)**, originally the mother tongue of people in the former Transkei, Ciskei and Eastern Cape regions, is now the mother tongue of about 17.5% of the population. It is notable for its use of three distinct 'click' sounds - the dental, represented by the letter 'c', the palatal, represented by 'q' and the lateral, represented by 'x'.

**ZULU (SIZULU)** was originally the language of a prominent group of the Nguni people and is now spoken throughout South Africa. It is the mother tongue of about 22.5% of the population. Like Sixhosa, it has three 'click' sounds, represented by the same letters.

I found myself growing a little anxious. Despite my familiarity with the biblical stories as told in the various medieval cycle plays, I wondered if I would be able to keep up with the story as it unfolded in these four tongues.

Much could be productively said of the brilliant use of the four languages in the performance. A detailed Bakhtinian metalinguistic analysis would allow us to delve the multifold levels of meaning engaged when, for example, Cain spoke the English language used by the ultimate colonial conquerors of South Africa while Abel responded in one of the native African tongues. When God lost his temper for the first time and condemned Lucifer to Hell, he repeated the initial lines of the play—“Ego sum alpha et omega,/ primus et novissimus./ It is my will it should be so;/ it is, it was, it shall be thus”—but in this second enunciation, he spoke in Afrikaans, thus employing the language of the first colonizers of South Africa who had condemned the natives to the first of many exoduses that would follow. Examples of such metalinguistic play abound throughout the performance, but for brevity’s sake I wish to focus on four interrelated segments of the performance: Herod’s slaughter of the innocents; Christ’s childhood education from Mary; Christ’s temptation in the desert; and the woman taken in adultery. Through its forceful use not only of different literal languages but also—and more strikingly—it use of different “languages” of movement and scenic elements, Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries bridged the ontological divide between past and present, between spirit and matter, and between the imaginative metaworld of the play and the very real social and political concerns of South Africa and its “superpower” neighbors in the global economy—Britain and the United States.

Traveling from the familiar space of the London “tube” system to the unfamiliar territory of the East End, and from those alarmingly quiet streets to this tumbledown old music hall, was for me a profoundly liminal experience. I found myself profoundly unsettled, uncertain if I belonged here, and my experience of the performance was colored by this alienation. I was *open*—if not in the positive sense of being excited and eager to embrace a new experience, then at least in the sense that I felt vulnerable and exposed, raw and on edge.

The performance seemed to take advantage of this vulnerability to reach out to me. At first I found myself charmed by sight gags such as fake angel wings on baseball caps and silly red devil horns, as well as by pop-cultural references such as when Noah led the audience in a rousing chorus of “You Are My Sunshine” after the dove returned with the olive branch. But as I watched the muscular and commanding bald black man who played God throw both a white Adam and a black Eve out of Paradise, and as I watched an English-speaking Cain slay an African-speaking Abel, tension began to creep into my body.

This tension built to a head as I watched an Afrikaans-speaking Isaac devoutly offering himself (actually herself, as a female performer played this role) to an English-speaking Abraham for sacrifice to a black God. This scene was one of many where the choice of language shifted the play from ancient Middle Eastern lands to the contemporary time and space of South Africa. As we watched Isaac being prepared for sacrifice by Abraham, we saw a complete inversion of the actual history of South Africa, which was first colonized by the Dutch and then overtaken by the English, who conquered the Afrikaners in the Boer War at the start of the twentieth century. In this

retelling, the Afrikaners chose to sacrifice themselves to the will of the native population, and the English were chosen first to slay their colonizing bedfellows and then were granted a reprieve from that dreadful task by an African God who stayed the sacrificial hand, sparing both conquerors. To me, it became increasingly clear that this performance was about matters spiritual and political, ancient and fresh as new wounds.

This sensation increased as Herod, in his desperate bid to avoid being replaced by the coming “King of the Jews,” ordered his men to kill all the children under the age of two. Herod’s men were mostly black men dressed in black military uniforms with black berets; to me, they were reminiscent of Ugandan or Haitian terror forces, evoking images of the police as paramilitary thugs. Among other things, the thugs were a visual reminder the various native groups in South Africa who continue to “police” themselves through violent acts of vigilantism (Minnaar). Herod commanded the guards to slaughter the male children, and the guards dispersed into the audience. In their place came women, holding babies and singing a simple lullaby. I found myself wanting to warn the women what was to come; I wanted desperately to do something to stop what I knew would happen. I knew, however, that I could not stop this—it *has* happened; it *will* happen. But I wondered: can I do something to stop it from happening *again*?

The guards re-entered, thumping their nightsticks in rhythm to the lullaby. One particularly deep-voiced guard took over the song, wresting it from the women, perverting it. As the killing began, with children being beaten to death by black clubs, dancers onstage began rhythmically thumping car tires upon the stage, setting up a killing rhythm. Herod learned that his own child has been killed, and he confronted the nurse who was caring for the child, strangling her as the tires were again thumped onstage,

behind him, with Lucifer now orchestrating the rhythm. Herod was then dragged down to a flaming hell by bullhorn carrying toadies of Satan.

This was the first moment we encountered the use of tires onstage, and automobile tires had a special meaning in the context of a multiracial stage production that had originated in South Africa. Starting in the combustible environment of apartheid in the 1980's, the practice of "necklacing" involved torturing and killing opponents of one's political beliefs by binding the opponents, placing a tire around their necks, filling the tire with gasoline, and setting the tire—and the human inside the tire—on fire (Allie). While the practice was first brought to world attention as a result of its use by black South Africans to punish those blacks suspected of being "collaborators" with the whites-only government, some evidence exists suggesting the practice may have first been initiated by white police officers (Dixon, "South African Cops"). Rhetorically, the South African government used the practice to continue to justify apartheid, arguing that the rampant lawlessness of the black townships was most evident in their cruelty towards members of their own race. Regardless of the origins of the practice, necklacing continues in South Africa today (Allie; Minnaar), and it remains a profound source of terror, anger, and self-loathing for both black and white South Africans.

The presence of the tires thumping onstage thus acquired multiple levels of meaning as Herod was cast down into Hell. Notably, Herod was squeezed *in between* the demon-wielded tires behind him and roaring live flames in front of him. To some extent, this moment was a "sucker punch" for many of us in the audience. Up to this point in the performance, the cast had used only whistles, their own voices, and "found" objects to make sound and music for the production. Because one of these "music makers" had

been the drumming of tires, visible to the audience but clearly off stage, the tires initially read simply as sound-makers, yet they acquired new force and meaning once they were strategically used in the stage space.

After Lucifer loudly condemned Herod to Hell and eternal perdition, he left the stage, to be replaced by women who came softly humming the lullaby from earlier, looking to comfort those women who had lost their children. The stage was then completely taken over by women—their bodies, their voices. These women, led by the Virgin Mary, worked to comfort the mothers as best they could. Then all the women exited, singing; the lights faded to black, and the interval began.

When we returned from the interval, a woman sauntered onstage humming to herself while she began to fold clothes. She was Mary, Mother of God. Christ (played by the same muscular black actor as God) wandered up, bare-chested and wearing a native South African wrap like a skirt, and Mary stopped working. Rising, she sized up Christ. She then faced front and danced a complicated pattern of slaps and steps, after which she gestured to Jesus, instructing him to do the same. He gestured to himself, incredulous, and then awkwardly tried to duplicate the pattern, only to fail. Mary (and the audience) laughed at Jesus.

Mary then instructed Christ to watch her more closely while she repeated the pattern, ending with a flourish, dismissively turning away from Jesus. He tried the pattern again, only to fail again. He then examined the wrap bound tightly around him as if to blame the wrap for his inability to perform the dance steps. He unhooked the pin binding the wrap to his body, handing it to his mother. Caught wondering if Christ was going to strip naked, we found ourselves laughing as we discovered he was wearing a

pair of rolled-up blue jeans underneath his wrap. Free of the wrap, our very contemporary Christ was at last able to do the pattern correctly, if slowly and with some coaching from His Mother. On a second pass, Christ was able to add speed, repeating the pattern twice and even adding His Mother's flourish at the end.

Two aspects of this performance at the start of the second half of the show are significant. First, nothing resembling this sequence of narrative events occurs in any of the medieval biblical cycle pageants—or, for that matter, in any of the orthodox scriptural narratives of Christ's life, where Mary appears solely in her role as the Vessel for God's child. The audience was therefore left with the likely conclusion that the performers and the director, drawing upon their own talents for motives of their own, constructed this sequence themselves to accomplish their own special purposes. As a result, in this imaginative re-telling of the untold childhood days of Christ, Mary is given a unique significance in the Christian narrative. Here we see her, not solely as the "carrier" of Christ—a "mere" womb, with no value outside of that role—but rather as the *teacher* of Christ, the one who instills values in Christ which will carry on throughout the performance. In this sense, the opening sequence after the interval invoked something of the revisionist efforts of theologians such as Elaine Pagels to identify and give value to those elements of Christianity which had valued and embraced women in the earliest days of the Church.

Most prominently, however, the sequence of slaps and stomps that Christ learns reflects a South African dance tradition known as "gumboot dancing." Norm Dixon describes one typical cultural function of this dance in contemporary South Africa:

Within hours of touching down at Johannesburg airport, tourists on package tours to South Africa find themselves whisked by coach to a



nearby tourist attraction—a re-creation of a working gold mine. What is presented is a very sanitised version of the working and living conditions that millions of black South Africans were forced to endure for more than 100 years.[...] Part of the program is the “gumboot” dancers—half a dozen or so black men in overalls, hard hats and gumboots creating incredibly intricate rhythms by stamping their feet and slapping their boots, hats and bodies. To see all the dancers performing these feats in unison is an experience that few forget. (“Behind the ‘Gumboot Dance’”).

Like many slave traditions throughout the world, what once was a survival mechanism, a tool for communication and for inspiration to stay alive, has been appropriated as a cultural marker, a symbol of the exotic “entertainment” of South Africa.

Gumboot dancing began among African miners, working in the damp darkness of the gold mines that fueled South Africa’s economy from the 1880’s on:

Black labourers worked in total darkness for three months at a time in appalling conditions. They were chained to their work stations and were forbidden to talk to each other. They stood up to their knees in infected water causing skin diseases and ulcers resulting in lost time from work. The bosses discovered that it was cheaper to provide them with Gumboots (Wellington Boots) than to drain the mines. The miners used the Gumboots as a method of communication by slapping their boots and stamping their feet and rattling their ankle chains. Thus the miners['] uniform was created of Gumboots, jeans, bare-chest and bandanas to absorb eye-stinging sweat.[...] During their free time, the miners would sing and dance and drink together and remember their families a thousand miles away. The tradition of Gumboot dancing was born. (“Introduction to ‘Gumboots’”)

The history behind this dance form has, however, largely been stripped away by its contemporary practice: “Unfortunately, gumboot dancing, or *isicathulo*, has become something of a South African cliché. It is included in the repertoire of most South African dance groups that travel the world.[...] Few know about its origins as a response by mineworkers to their racial oppression under apartheid” (Dixon, “Behind the ‘Gumboot Dance’”).

By having Mary teach gumboot dancing to Christ, Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries re-conceived, or at least re-intonated, the entire story of Christianity. Not only was Christian practice rewritten as having been learned from a woman, it was also rewritten as the practice of an oppressed minority struggling to find self-expression. Interestingly enough, such rewriting was in the end fairly apt, given the nature of Jewish oppression by the Roman Empire during Christ's time. Christianity can be understood in this context as a faith of liberation from oppression, an intonation that Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries caught and intensified throughout the performance. Gumboot dancing would acquire an additional level of meaning later in the performance, when Christ teaches his disciples through this same medium of dance.

Before meeting the disciples, however, Christ first had to face the Devil's temptation in the desert. After teaching himself to play a tin whistle, Jesus sat and began tweeting out the tune of his mother's lullaby—the same lullaby we heard at the end of the first half of the performance. As Christ repeated the tune, Satan—a smallish, agile bald black man—entered, barefoot, dressed in red leather with Halloween costume red horns on his head, and began to tempt Christ. His temptation took the form of a rowdy, boisterous tune that he danced with some of his devils, loudly thumping on a cowbell. The dance was an exaggerated form of gumboot dancing, done this time as a *challenge*—can you do *this*? But Christ failed to take the bait. Instead, he began playing his mother's tune on the whistle again.

Furious, Satan returned to his clanging dance, but Christ turned away again, ignoring the temptation. As the oblivious and inobservant Satan began to march triumphantly offstage, convinced of his victory over the Son of God, Christ again played

his mother's tune, stopping Satan in his tracks. A third time, Satan and his devils danced their tempting dance—a dance I now began to find myself drawn into, wanting to participate in—and yet again Christ ignored and rejected them. Satan and his devils again attempted to leave the stage triumphantly, this time moving through the audience on a raised platform. Again, Christ calmly began playing his mother's tune. Not only furious but also shaken and distraught, Satan watched as his minions left him, one by one; he yelled at Christ, but to no effect. Christ's sweet tin-whistle music then drove Satan from the stage.

This scene was so interpretively rich that it can only be partly mined for resonances in the context of this chapter of my study. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Satan's temptation is that this sequence evoked how dance came to function, in apartheid-torn South Africa, as a form of combat, an aggression and a threat. In her review of the documentary film Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony, Gillian Slovo describes how the South African *toyitoyi* dance was used by apartheid protestors as a threat:

Watching the documentary [...] I was struck by the way I had, until that moment, only thought of *toyitoyi* from its inside. From its centre, it is a joyous, collective demonstration of togetherness. What had not occurred to me, however, was what it must have felt like from the outside. In the film a group of white security policemen are interviewed. Sitting around their braai (barbeque) these men, seemingly shell-shocked by what had happened to their country, describe how terrifying a chanting *toyitoyi* crowd was to young white soldiers, and how hard it was to get the raw recruits to stand their ground.

We should not assume, of course, that Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries consciously or even unconsciously worked to link these triumphant, resistant acts of *toyitoyi* dance with the Devil. Rather, through performance Satan's aggressive and violent dance contrasted

with the more collaborative, inclusive gumboot dance that Jesus learned from Mary and which he then taught his disciples.

As the disciples meandered onto the stage after Satan's exit, Christ greeted each one by name and danced a brief dance with each. Thomas—played by a white male—could not dance very well, but he was accepted by Christ and the other (mostly black) disciples anyway. Judas, a redheaded white man, danced aggressively, kicking out at the head of Jesus, who in turn kicked back. Fearful, Judas cowered away and trembled, but then Christ smiled and embraced him—it was just a joke, all in fun. Once again, violent dance was trumped by a playful and forgiving spirit, and Christ led all the disciples in a celebratory communal dance.

As this dance concluded, a young black woman howled in fear and raced onstage, a pack of vengeful pursuers on her heels. This was the famous story of the “woman taken in adultery,” the story made famous by Christ's command, “Let he who is without sin among you cast the first stone” (John 8:7). As the story is told in the Chester cycle—and as it was re-told in this production—Christ first offered his pronouncement against the stoning and then began writing something enigmatic on the ground. In the story as told in the Bible, Christ begins writing first, and only after some moments does he rise to address the woman's accusers, who leave mysteriously after Christ begins writing again on the ground. The Chester version of the story “cleans things up” by having each accuser see his/her own sins written on the ground and flee in terror of Christ's knowledge of their worst sins.

In Yiimimangaliso: The Mysteries, however, the pursuing mob came armed, not with stones, but with those same tires which provided the ominous background to

Herod's massacre of the children and his subsequent damnation. The mob seeking to stone the woman caught in adultery was almost exclusively black, pursuing a black woman whom they regarded as a sinner, and in performance they threatened her with tires that have been and continue to be used to punish "sinners" for their sins of collaboration with apartheid or for sins of petty crime in South Africa (Minnaar). The silence in the theatre that followed Christ's pronouncement about throwing the first stone was total—the air seemed to leave the place, at least for me. Christ was condemning "his own people" for their rush to judgment, condemnation, and murder, and he was writing their sins on the ground for all to see.

In a sense, just as medieval English folk walked through the liminal space of the dusty streets of Chester only to be confronted by Christ, in traveling to the East End of London, I had traveled my own liminal path to this moment, and I found myself confronted as well. In the mid to late 1980's, I was an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and, like many of my generation in America, I was confronted with the problem of determining the "proper response" to apartheid. Many of my friends participated vigorously in a variety of protest actions, and I vocally supported their efforts. But I didn't protest. I didn't make an effort to learn more than the slightest sliver of information about the history and practice of apartheid which the mainstream American media offered. In some vague, bland, upper-middle class WASP way, I assumed that apartheid was "just another kind of racism" that would melt away under the light of international condemnation. So I did my homework, kept my nose clean, and let things take care of themselves.

Fortunately for me, things did take care of themselves—at least in a way.

Yet as I sat on the torn seat of that plastic folding chair in this grotty old music hall, I found myself confronted with a spiritual vision. I remembered a sermon I had once heard on Revelation 3:16-17: “So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich: I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Quest Study Bible 1714). Here I was, confronted by a black Christ facing a white Judas without anger, faced with the very real practice of necklacing being transformed into the very real (and still ongoing) practice of stoning adulterous women, faced with a multiracial cast who had learned and mastered all the tongues of their native land so they could speak with each other and struggle with each other onstage. Here I was, faced with the simple thought that if these performers could accomplish this, then I could do more.

I am not sure how indicative my response was of the response others may have had at this performance. I can say, however, that as the performance ended with triumphant South African song and dance celebrating the power of redemption and resurrection—Godly and otherwise—the audience instantly stood and applauded with a force that resonated with more than simple appreciation for the aesthetic achievement of the experience. I can also note that most of the audience was about my age, in their mid 30’s to 40’s, mostly white middle-class Brits. One might well wonder how this performance might have bridged the ontological gap from second world to first world in the case of the British audience, who had their own unique relationship with apartheid as they had defeated the Afrikaners and absorbed South Africa into their Commonwealth.

In this sense, then, Yiimimangalis: The Mysteries was likely to have stirred other souls beyond mine to consider their “sins,” real or imagined. Boal’s critique of catharsis rings loudly in the back of my head, making me wonder if these performances merely release the audience from any sense that they would need to participate in substantive change (26-47). Yet as a scholar of rhetoric as well as performance, I admire the power such performances can have to author a positive vision of personal and social change. I can only assume that those attending the great biblical cycles of medieval England may well have experienced a similar ontological force hailing them through performance as the spiritual and the material, the “real” and the “play-ful,” merged in a moment that spoke to the past and present with both the voice of Christ and one’s neighbor. And it is my hope that the vocabulary of chronotopes created for this study will, in some small way, help move us toward meaningful discussions of such spiritual experiences so that we may more fully appreciate the experience not only of those long-dead souls from medieval England, but more importantly, so that we can begin to talk about our own contemporary experiences with these kinds of transformative performances.

#### Conclusion: Enduring Chronotopes

As part of his refutation of an evolutionary view of medieval theatre, Peter Happe notes, “History does not move exclusively in straight lines, nor in sharp changes, and often [...] things are recalled from the past in a circular fashion” (English Drama 2). One of the primary challenges for scholars of medieval theatre is to resist the tendency to create a grand narrative wherein medieval theatre merely represents the West’s first stumbling steps back from the death of theatre in the Roman empire. In a sense, we must

resist the tendency to view medieval theatre history through a figural lens; all too often, Shakespeare functions as the Christ of medieval theatre history—all things point to him and return to him. Medieval theatre possessed valuable qualities of its own which need to be understood in their original historical context. This historical understanding can then serve to enrich our understanding of contemporary performance practices and vice-versa.

In this sense, my study has continued in the footsteps of those scholars who have made significant efforts to “re-embody,” as it were, the practice of medieval theatre. Michal Kobiálka succinctly sums up the variety of positive effects produced from the recent scholarly emphasis on the corporeal and the material in medieval theatre:

The emphasis on the materiality and textuality of events and texts allows us not only to discuss them in terms of the circumstances of production, the modes of reception and dissemination, or as constructs of the theoretical and methodological traditions of each discipline. It allows us to alter the very manner in which we view the systems that made them appear in the past and that recognized them as historical records in the present. That is to say, on the one hand, medieval religion or social conditions can be treated as practices rather than theological doctrines or a set of legal dispositions, defined for, or within, textual and paratextual communities; on the other hand, the order of discourse, under the rubric of postmodern theory and practice, can be discussed in terms of its own historicity in the moment of its enunciation and utterance rather than in terms of a unified system of signification. (“Medieval Representations” 1-2).

Kobiálka argues that the work of “New Medievalists,” as he calls them, is primarily to articulate the richly messy and complex palette of discursive and embodied practices that informed medieval theatrical experience rather than searching for and constructing a “unified system of signification” that would largely eliminate such textured historical messiness. By describing the grounds for representability articulated in the sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial chronotopes of medieval performance, I hope to contribute to this New Medievalist effort to restore the gloriously muddled and often



contradictory embodied practices of medieval religious and social experience to our understanding of medieval theatrical practice.

Rather than assuming that all orders of medieval theatrical experience can be subsumed into one of the three chronotopes articulated here, my research has articulated diverse and often paradoxical embodied practices that might have informed the experience of participating in a theatrical performance in medieval England—and my research has articulated, as well, the ways in which these chronotopes may well have competed with, cooperated with, and otherwise interacted with each other in the experience of those watching and performing such plays. As such, my study represents the first sustained effort to develop and describe chronotopes beyond those already developed by Bakhtin. In the process, I hope I have demonstrated the utility of the chronotope as an investigative tool for scholars in performance studies.

Future performance studies research can productively build upon these findings by addressing with greater richness and depth what Bakhtin called the “complex problem of the listener-reader” (*Dialogic* 257) in specific situated performances. In Bakhtin’s original formulation, chronotopes were employed to explore various relations of space and time within the context of a given novel. As such, chronotopic analysis has often been used to describe the “second world” of a given literary, film, or theatrical text—that is, the imaginative metaworld conjured into being through performance. Bakhtin sought, however, to articulate not only chronotopic relations in this second world but also—and more importantly—to articulate how those chronotopes “within” the text related to the chronotopes of the “first world” of the “listener-reader,” in large part because it is these first and second world interactions which contain (or fail to contain) the various

sociopolitical tensions and forms of ideological mystification at work in the event of performance. The field of performance studies would benefit greatly from more extended discussions of how the chronotopes of the first and second worlds of performance interact with one another in the context of specific performances, both in the past and in contemporary performance practice.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of *medieval* theatre that we may appreciate through the lens of the sacramental, consubstantial, and transubstantial chronotopes, however, is that those of us in the West have a tradition of sacred and spiritual performance which in several ways mirrors non-Western traditions of performance such as Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatre, Indian *kathakali*, and the shadow-play of Javanese *wayang kulit* puppetry. These non-Western performance traditions construct a metaworld which, through its spiritual underpinnings, possesses for its audience an ontological substance traditionally denied to most Western forms of performance. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous declaration that theatre involves a "willing suspension of disbelief" reflects the Western notion that the world created through performance lacks ontological validity in and of itself and has authority and presence only to the degree that the audience grants it authority and presence. In such a view, all "stage presentations [...] are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is" (Coleridge 587).

This interpretation of the ontological substance of the metaworld created through performance is not a recent phenomenon in the West. At least since Plato's attacks on *mimesis*, performance has been viewed with suspicion in the Western tradition, regarded

as a creator of mere “shadows on the cave wall” which lack ontological substance—shadows which are deceitful, even if only in self-deceit. Analysis of the transubstantial chronotope in comparison with the sacramental and consubstantial chronotopes may help us to reconsider the pageant cycles as performances which resisted these attacks upon *mimesis*. Despite many official church pronouncements against *mimesis* during the middle ages, a performance tradition arose in England and Europe which found unique ways of equating spirit and matter, faith and performance, soul and body in a transubstantial act of theatrical transformation. In this sense, medieval pageant cycles constitute a potentially unique interface of spirituality and performance in the history of Western theatre.

If we are to avoid evolutionary thinking with regard to these three chronotopes, we must resist the temptation to view them as a linear, chronological progression. The sacramental chronotope did not “grow into” the transubstantial chronotope, and the transubstantial chronotope most certainly did not “grow into” the consubstantial chronotope. Instead, all three chronotopes of performance co-existed in the middle ages—as indeed, they co-exist today. For instance, one may work from within the sacramental chronotope while watching children sing in a church choir—children whose performance does not create a second theatrical world but which rather expresses something of the divine in their material existence within their role in the religious ritual. In a related vein, television shows like such as Highway to Heaven and Touched by an Angel which presume to offer religious content often render themselves as mere entertainment and thus consubstantially drain themselves of spiritual authority.

Finally, and in a very different light, we may consider the “Theater of the Oppressed” of Augusto Boal, a theatre which aims to reach the intangible world of ideas, hopes, and dreams through images in the physical body. The ontological status of the second world in a Boalian performance where peasants discuss how to solve land-ownership disputes is no “mere game,” and yet it *is* a game. In Boal’s theatre games, however, we can confront ourselves, challenge ourselves, in a way that is evocative of the transubstantial chronotope.

Similarly, the “Holy Theatre” of Jerzy Grotowski aims to attain the spiritual through disciplined training and use of the body, which (depending upon the relative importance of the audience’s role in the performance process) may be seen as exemplary of either the sacramental or transubstantial chronotopes. As his notion of “Holy Theatre” developed over the years, Grotowski began to place progressively less emphasis on the role of the audience and began to view the action of the performers as central, with or without the presence of an audience. Thus one might argue that for the late Grotowski, “Holy Theatre” functioned sacramentally, as an *instantiation* of spirit-in-flesh. The early Grotowski, however, might have regarded “Holy Theatre” as essentially transubstantial, as an effort to integrate the spiritual act of the performers with the spiritual involvement of the audience. We may, in short, still be in the presence of the “divine”—even though it is hard for us to see it.

A thorough understanding of the historical nature of the interpretive frames informing these three chronotopes of performance requires us to come to terms with minds very different from our own—minds rooted in an unrealistic “Realism” which sees everyday events in the light of God, minds accustomed to contemplating day-long

scholarly sermons in churches where demons and saints take on flesh. Yet in the final analysis, such an awareness of the distance between the middle ages and our own time may help us to see valuable aspects of contemporary performance practices, inviting us to reconsider the spiritual grounds which inform our performances today.

## ENDNOTES

### CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> Some may object to my inclusion of Tudor-era interludes in the historical period of the Middle Ages, arguing that fourteenth and fifteenth century dramas should rightly be called works of the Renaissance or works of “early modern” or “early English” theatre. Yet the issue of what name to ascribe to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and even sixteenth centuries in England is far from a settled matter. Of the three major contenders (Renaissance, medieval, and early modern/early English), the two that are most frequently used to describe fourteenth and fifteenth century English theatre in contemporary scholarship are medieval and early English, as a quick check of recent titles that address such drama reveals: A New History of Early English Drama (1997); The Theatre of Medieval Europe: New Research in Early Drama (1991); Contexts for Early English Drama (1989); Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends (2002); The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature (1999); The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre (1994).

The impulse driving scholars toward “medieval” even when describing works from the fourteenth, fifteenth, and in many cases sixteenth centuries stems primarily from a sense that perhaps these centuries do not represent a complete break from medieval thought and that perhaps there was as much continuity between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as there was change. The impulse driving scholars toward “early English” even when describing works from the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries stems from a sense that perhaps these centuries more closely resemble our own “modern” era in temperament and reasonability (or a lack thereof) than we would like to believe. Of these

two impulses, my study is more closely tied to the former impulse—that is, I am attempting to articulate points of connection between historical traditions of performance that began in the tenth century but which continued, in some cases unabated, up through to the fifteenth and even sixteenth centuries.

The unbroken line of these performance traditions can be most strikingly seen in the Biblical cycles of pageant plays staged to celebrate Corpus Christi day throughout northern England. We have documentary evidence for the staging of these processional plays from at least the early 1300's up through to 1656, when Sir William Dugdale described the Coventry pageants in his Antiquities of Warwickshire (Harris 125). Regardless of whether the socio-political milieu surrounding these seventeenth centuries performances was “Renaissance” or “medieval,” the performance traditions themselves were still clearly rooted in medieval thought and representational practices, anchored by centuries of more-or-less continuous theatrical practice. For this reason, I choose the term medieval to describe both the mindset which dominated the theatrical practices described in this dissertation and the actual practices themselves. We might say that the *chronotopes* which informed these performances were medieval regardless of what we might call the historical periods in question.

<sup>2</sup> The most popular English translations of Bakhtin's works consistently use the pronoun “he” as if it were generic. Additionally, many scholarly analyses of Bakhtin's thought, as well as many studies of medieval theatre, use “he” as if it were generic. To insert editorial comments or corrections to address this gender-inaccurate phrasing in every applicable quote throughout my dissertation would, therefore, become cumbersome

in the extreme for the reader. I encourage readers to insert their own editorial comments in response to these uses of the “generic he” as they see fit.

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>3</sup> In this quote, the material in brackets was added by the original translator, Dom Thomas Symons, and represents two distinct efforts on his part—first, to complete thoughts that were grammatically incomplete in the original (as in adding “replies” to “To which he”), and second, to offer what religious participants would have known to be the completion of the antiphonal chants mentioned. As will be discussed in more detail shortly, a noteworthy practice in the recording of almost all Latin liturgical dramas was the shorthand use of the first line of an antiphonal piece to stand in for the musical work as a whole. Among other things, this reminds us that the “dialogue” that the “characters” spoke in these performances came, in the majority of cases, from pre-existing songs or recitations from the monastic repertoire which were used verbatim in many of the “new” liturgical tropes.

<sup>4</sup> Much depends here, obviously, on one’s definition of “theatre” and what kinds of performances fit into that category. Do modern dance performances require a metaworld to be efficacious? Does performance art require a metaworld to be efficacious? Does Brecht’s “smoker’s theatre” require a metaworld to be efficacious? Yet these three examples, and many other performance movements that resist, contest, or complicate metaworld creation, all developed in part as a *response to* the assumption that theatre must “take you somewhere else.” In a sense, then, the presence of these contradictions in the category of “theatre” confirms the normative nature of metaworld creation in theatrical experience.



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## VITA

Gregory Lee Cavanaugh was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. After graduating from Shamrock High School, he moved to North Carolina, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in two majors, Radio/Television/Motion Pictures and English, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1987. He continued his education by pursuing and receiving a Master of Arts degree in speech communication with a concentration in rhetorical studies from UNC-Chapel Hill. After a year of doctoral education in communication studies at the University of Pittsburgh, he chose to pursue a career as a full-time faculty member at an institution of higher education. In 1992, he was hired by Nash Community College in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to teach oral and written communication skills.

While at Nash Community College, he served as president of the Faculty Senate from 1994 to 1997, helping to facilitate the school's transition from a quarter system to a semester system. In 1996, he was given a NISOD Excellence in Teaching Award by the University of Texas at Austin for outstanding teaching at Nash Community College. In 1997, he appeared in local theatrical productions in Rocky Mount, and these experiences reawakened his passion for performance. As a result, in 1998 he began studies at Louisiana State University toward a doctoral degree in the Department of Speech Communication (now the Department of Communication Studies), with a concentration in performance studies. At Louisiana State University, he directed three theatrical productions and performed in four, and he presented papers and performances at the National Communication Association, Southern States Communication Association, Louisiana Communication Association, and Popular Culture Association conventions. In

2001, he served as Dr. Andrew King's editorial assistant for the Quarterly Journal of Speech, and in 2002, he served as the Managing Director of the HopKins Black Box Theatre. He authored an essay deriving from research for this dissertation, "Flesh and Spirit Onstage in Medieval English Theatre," that will appear in volume 57 (2004) of Theatre Annual. On May 21, 2004, he will receive the Doctorate of Philosophy degree in communication studies from Louisiana State University.