

PERFORMING PIETY:  
PREACHERS AND PLAYERS IN EAST ANGLIA, 1400-1520

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DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

“Performing Piety” examines the interdependent relationship between medieval sermons and plays in late-medieval East Anglia, arguing that the mutual use of thematic divisions and *exempla* (moral tales) evinces the reciprocal interaction of preacher and playwright. By focusing on these common rhetorical strategies, I stress the medieval play’s confluence with preaching’s form, rejecting the critical assumption that drama depends on the sermon to instead demonstrate the two genres’ interactive creation of a regionally-inflected performance continuum. In East Anglia, preachers and players used the same spaces in the area’s numerous churches and churchyards, a circumstance that reinforced these rhetorical and generic continuities. My dissertation therefore reevaluates the regional specificity of East Anglian preaching and drama and, by emphasizing the mutual employment of *exempla*, reconfigures East Anglian devotional culture. An examination of the fluidity that embodied rhetoric affords to pious material in writing and performance reveals that drama’s employment of sermon rhetoric enables these plays to embody what they enact, transforming themselves into *exempla* that animate a path to salvation.

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## Introduction: East Anglian Drama and the Sermon

*Vanitas vanitatum*. Vanity of vanities. Alan of Lille cites this biblical authority from Ecclesiastes 1:2 in his late twelfth-century seminal treatise on preaching, the *Summa de arte predicatoria*, to begin his second chapter, “On Despising the World”: “If the preacher wishes to invite his listeners to despise the world, let him bring before them this text: ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!’ What authority so teaches the vanity of earthly things and the unworthiness of man as does this one? It shows that all things pass away and nothing endures.”<sup>1</sup> This citation also appears in the fifteenth-century morality play *Mankind*: “Vanitas vanitatum, all ys but a vanyte” (767) the cleric Mercy cries in criticism of his ward Mankind for straying from the virtuous path, choosing a life of ribaldry and sin to that of labor and prayer.<sup>2</sup>

While it may seem arbitrary to call attention to two instances of *vanitas vanitatum* in different genres across several centuries, the use of biblical citations in preaching literature and drama demonstrates not only that biblical material substantiates the moral program of sermon and play but also that their rhetoric is interrelated. As Marianne Briscoe explains, “[s]ermons and plays share the same matter: the moralized lives of saints, exhortations to repentance and good living, and the salvation history of the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>3</sup> She also concedes that “most critics...agree that...plays have instruction in faith and morals as a primary end,” just like “the sermons.”<sup>4</sup> Yet the degree to which medieval drama interacts with the rhetoric of the preacher and his sermon remains underappreciated. Seeking to rectify this oversight, “Performing Piety:

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<sup>1</sup> Alan of Lille, *The Art of Preaching*, Gillian R. Evans (trans.), (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1981): 22-3.

<sup>2</sup> Citations of *Mankind* are from Mark Eccles (ed.), *The Macro Plays*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 262 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> “Preaching and Medieval English Drama” in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldeway (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 151

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 151.

Preachers and Players in East Anglia, 1400-1520” places the edifying rhetoric of sermons in dialogue with the didactic discourse of plays to reveal the ubiquitous integration of the language of the preacher and the playwright. By focusing on sermons’ and plays’ common rhetorical strategies, this dissertation explores the mutual ethical concerns and interdependent performance modes of drama and preaching through the sustained consideration of sermonic techniques in East Anglian plays. In demonstrating these continuities, “Performing Piety” shows how the playwright appropriates the sermon form, not simply to reuse it, but more importantly to repurpose it for drama’s own didactic end. Recognizing the playwright’s deliberate repurposing of drama challenges critical tendencies to classify drama as the sermon’s debtor, where “the expanded vernacular play” is seen “to be little more than a dramatized sermon or set of sermons,”<sup>5</sup> and instead offers a new method for evaluating medieval dramatic composition that urges the reconsideration, even the redefinition, of current critical delineations of sermonic and dramatic generic boundaries. The investigation of the East Anglian dramatic corpus through the lens of medieval sermon theory reveals that sermons and plays were mutually constitutive in this region, and posits each as interdependent co-contributors to a dynamic continuum of performativity characteristic of and distinct to fifteenth-century East Anglian devotional culture.

East Anglia offers itself as a unique crucible in which to disclose these sermonic and dramatic dynamisms for several reasons. First and foremost, East Anglia boasts a diversity of extant dramatic sub-genres in the form of morality, miracle, saint, and Corpus Christi plays that no other region of medieval England can claim. Indeed, it is East Anglia’s relatively inward-looking attitude, its self-sustaining mercantile production, and its economic prosperity that

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<sup>5</sup> G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & of the English People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 547.

“[provided] the stimulus for a remarkable flowering of religious and devotional literature, especially of the communal literature of religious drama.”<sup>6</sup> In addition to the variety of its extant drama, East Anglia was known for the intensity of its religious devotion. Gail McMurray Gibson has documented how East Anglia’s booming economy enabled its “literary culture [to be] dominated both by the old monastic spirituality and by the new lay piety, wealth, and patronage of rural cloth merchants.”<sup>7</sup> She has even demonstrated that this convergence was markedly shaped by the presence of preachers:

The origins of this conscious effort [to objectify the spiritual] can probably be traced to the Franciscans and to their emphasis in both piety and preaching upon the human nature of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, to their organized effort to ‘keep always before their eyes an image of the crucified Christ in vivid verisimilitude.’ What began for the Franciscan preachers as an Incarnational aesthetic sustaining their spiritual vision of the world, had by the fifteenth century turned itself outward and transformed that world.<sup>8</sup>

The Franciscans, as well as the Dominicans, were a noticeable presence in East Anglia, in large and small towns alike.<sup>9</sup> What is more, the Franciscans “held categorical views on the merits of drama in religious observance.”<sup>10</sup> Despite the mendicant orders’ influence on East Anglian drama, scholars like Theresa Coletti acknowledge that dramatic scholarship leaves these connections underexplored,<sup>11</sup> as does the larger critical discussion of the sermon. Scholars addressing sermons, such as H. Leith Spenser, James J. Murphy, and Alan J. Fletcher, fail to consider the form’s regional identity and interaction with other local literatures, particularly

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<sup>6</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theatre, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 44.

<sup>10</sup> Briscoe, “Preaching and Medieval English Drama,” 151.

<sup>11</sup> *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints*, 44.

drama.<sup>12</sup> Overall, sermons are routinely studied and evaluated only in their capacity as sermons; that is, in the context of their delivery, in the relationship they bear to the words recorded and actually spoken in the pulpit, and to their faithfulness in following the guidelines of preaching manuals. This dissertation acknowledges these approaches but privileges instead the recyclable nature of sermon composition as a generative matrix for dramatic composition. Built upon a flexible framework of biblical citation and moveable *exempla* (moral tales), the thematic sermon employs series of short functional and episodic units to weave small sections of dialogue into a longer, codified discourse. Because of its mode of construction, the thematic sermon itself is a performative text, one whose performance is only enhanced as the preacher delivers it from the pulpit. How these sermonic discourses merge and interact with East Anglian drama is the question propelling this project's consideration of medieval preaching theory, and particularly of the *exemplum* and the thematic sermon's component parts.

A thematic sermon proposes to teach its audience by isolating a sentence, phrase, or word, typically from the Bible, as a Theme, and then expands upon its meaning through a series of rhetorical moves. In practice, these rhetorical moves can contain much variation, but a thematic sermon's principal components nevertheless develop according to the following scheme. First, a Protheme supplements the sermon's Theme, introduces a prayer, and offers the audience grace. Next the Theme is restated and three rhetorical strategies follow: the Introduction, the Division of the Parts, and the supporting Subdivisions. The Introduction explains the meaning of the Theme, the Division of the Parts provides proof for the meaning

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<sup>12</sup> H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); James J. Murphy, ed., *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Alan J. Fletcher, *Preaching Politics, and Poetry in Late-Medieval England* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).



ascribed to the Theme, and the Subdivisions confirm these proofs with additional proof. The proof preachers present in the Division and the Subdivisions often are verses from the Bible, called authorities, although there is no requirement that all forms of proof originate in this source. A sermon closes with a Conclusion, through which the preacher reviews his subject matter, says another prayer, and dismisses his audience.<sup>13</sup>

The thematic sermon marks a significant transition in the history of medieval preaching. Its invention denotes a shift not only in the theory, delivery, audience, and practice of sermon making,<sup>14</sup> but also in the medieval Catholic Church's emphasis on preaching to educate its faithful. Among the many changes that the Fourth Lateran Council implemented was the requirement of yearly confession, a requirement that necessitated an increased awareness of Church doctrine for the laity, and more importantly, for the priests whose job it was to absolve their parishioners' sins.<sup>15</sup> Before 1215 in England, little had been done systematically to educate the parish priest in his preaching duties,<sup>16</sup> but through a series of councils, statutes, and treatises establishing a minimum knowledge of the tenets of the Catholic faith in the decades following

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<sup>13</sup> For more detailed information about the construction of thematic sermons, see Ranulph Higden, *Ars componendi sermones*, Margaret Jennings and Sally A. Wilson (trans.), (Paris: Peeters, 2003); Leopold Krul, O.S.B., "Robert of Basevorn: *The Form of Preaching*," James J. Murphy (ed.), *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); and Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons: Edited from British Museum Ms. Royal 18 B.xxiii* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940). For discussions of the thematic sermon's impact on the practice of preaching more generally, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*; Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge* 61 (Turnhout, 1992), 1-76; G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c. 1350-140* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926); H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*; Alan J. Fletcher, *Preaching, Politics, and Poetry in Late-Medieval England*; Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); and Claire A. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Late Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> For discussions of the thematic sermon's impact on the practice of preaching, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*; Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, pp. 1-68; G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*; H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*; Alan J. Fletcher, *Preaching and Politics in Late Medieval England*; Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*; and Claire A. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*.

<sup>15</sup> Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> Fletcher, *Preaching and Politics in Late Medieval England*, 13

Lateran IV,<sup>17</sup> the thirteenth century produced a plethora of materials to aid the parish priest in his instructive tasks. Equally responding to the call to educate via preaching – and sometimes causing tension or even outright dispute in parishes as a result – were the Dominicans and Franciscans, whose orders came into existence within Church hierarchy in the thirteenth century in large part to preach, and who met the ever growing demand of preaching to urban populations.<sup>18</sup>

The solidification of the thematic sermon as such occurred under the aegis of the medieval university system,<sup>19</sup> in which a large number of mendicant preachers also received training in scholastic theory,<sup>20</sup> a type of pedagogy prevalent from the twelfth through sixteenth centuries that fostered critical thinking through dialectical reasoning. The masters of English and French universities, such as those at Oxford, Cambridge, and Paris, authored the foundational treatises of sermon composition,<sup>21</sup> of a genre that soon came to be called the *ars praedicandi*, or the art of preaching.<sup>22</sup> These works include Alan of Lille's *Summa de arte predicatoria*, Thomas of Chobham's *Summa de arte praedicandi*, Humbert de Romans' *De eruditione praedicatorium*,

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<sup>17</sup> See Phyllis Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 2002), 45; Fletcher, *Preaching and Politics in Late Medieval England*, 13-6; and Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 201-6. Spencer explains how the establishment of these basic tenets was not a straightforward process in England until Grosseteste's popular statute of around 1239 made the seven deadly sins, the Ten Commandments, the seven sacraments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ave the "standard" basis of knowledge. The Creed, Lord's Prayer, and the Ave were the three most essential of this grouping. Later writers added to this list as they saw fit.

<sup>18</sup> Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 59, 150-1; Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," 48; Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, 5; Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine Thompson, OP, "From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 2002), 28. For a discussion of the education practices of the Dominicans, see M. Michèle Mulchaney, *'First the Bow is Bent in Study...': Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> There are more than three hundred extant *artes praedicandi* from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries (Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," 46). For a detailed survey of these extant manuscripts, see Harry Caplan, *Medieval Artes Praedicandi: A Handlist* (Ithaca, 1934), and Harry Caplan, *Medieval Artes Praedicandi: A Supplementary Handlist* (Ithaca, 1936).

Thomas Waleys' *De modo componendi sermones*, and Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*.<sup>23</sup> These and other manuals sprang up with surprising speed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, finding additional supplementation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries through collections of *pastoralia* and *exemplaria*. These compilations became preachers' resources for composing sermons, providing everything from theoretical principles to lists of illuminating examples arranged alphabetically to sample sermons.<sup>24</sup>

Even though it may not always have been executed with all of the rhetorical flourishes that I have outlined above, the thematic sermon and its cadences were recognized by lay and clerical audiences alike. Writers of preaching manuals understood the thematic sermon to be a universally accessible form, as is witnessed by the sample sermons in Alan of Lille's influential *Summa de arte praedicatoria*: "Alan's range of audiences suggests that he sees no need to differentiate among various forms of sermon appropriate for this diversity of hearers [soldiers, orators or advocates, princes or judges, cloistered religious, priests, married people, widows, virgins, and finally...those whose souls need awakening]; he implies that the thematic sermons work for all."<sup>25</sup>

While the elaboration and codification of the thematic sermon undeniably rests in the universities, wherein yearly examination requirements assessed students' preaching abilities,<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In addition to treating the component parts of the thematic sermon and their composition, these treatises also address theories of preaching and the importance of the preacher's ability to construct a moral identity, or moral performance, through the quotidian experiences of his life. Works such as the Fourth Book of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* and Gregory the Great's *Regularis Concordia* inform the ideas of preaching theory and moral performance that Alan of Lille and later writers of *artes praedicandi* include in their manuals. For further discussion, see Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 2002), 95; and Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, 1-68.

<sup>24</sup> Roberts includes in these materials "Scripture with its glosses; collections of *exempla*, *florigeia*, *distictiones*, and *similitudines*, concordances, alphabetical lists of and topic charts to locate materials; and collections of model sermons" ("The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," 52).

<sup>25</sup> Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Roberts, 48.

the thematic sermon became a ubiquitous form, thanks mostly to its spread by the mendicant orders.<sup>27</sup> The influence of this type of sermon, especially because of the efforts of the mendicant orders' preaching practices, extended into the areas around university towns, such as in East Anglia, where Cambridge University finds its home. Already receptive to preaching and able to express its religious zeal materially,<sup>28</sup> East Anglia additionally was a region where preachers and players used the same spaces – in the area's numerous churches and churchyards – to perform sermons and plays, a circumstance that reinforces the rhetorical and generic continuities between sermon and drama, what I call East Anglia's performance continuum. I argue in the following chapters that the familiarity of the sermon form would predispose audiences in East Anglia to recognize its application to medieval dramatic compositions, whether that recognition were as refined as identifying a Protheme or as basic as noticing that a character's aureate diction made him sound like a preacher.

In Chapter One, I establish East Anglia's performance continuum through a focused case study of *Mankind*'s integrated dramatic and sermonic rhetoric. *Mankind* scripts its plot as two dueling thematic sermons through its use of biblical authorities, subtly employing sermon theory as the rhetorical underpinning for the foundation of drama. Battling with conflicting agendas, Mercy and Mischief assert their influence as preachers over Mankind, while Mischief systematically undermines and parodies Mercy's sermon and its themes. Whether this play can deliver a convincing representation of salvation to its titular character as well as to the audience is the issue propelling this chapter. When the sermon form and preaching's rhetorical devices are removed from their immediate religious context and made the allegorical guise of a play

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<sup>27</sup> Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, 28-9.

<sup>28</sup> Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 1-46.

proposing to lead its audience to salvation, can they in fact offer an improved didacticism? This chapter examines the extent to which a play's proactive and entertaining content has the potential to thwart its edifying intention by showing how sermons and plays are constantly in flux; how one form can enhance and affect another's delivery, presentation, and possibly audience reception; and how a play's moral focus aligns with the tropological goal of preaching to achieve its salvific message.

Chapter Two argues for the broader rhetorical engagement of sermons and plays by examining the Macro Manuscript in relation to the rhetorical principle of *memoria* (memory), one of the five fundamental parts of classical rhetoric applied to and taught in sermon manuals.<sup>29</sup> I demonstrate how the manuscript's three generically similar morality plays appropriate *memoria* as an ethical technology, teaching their audiences how to remember what they watch. Discussions of *memoria* in preaching literature debate whether the sequential arrangement (vice followed by virtue) or the overall intention of *exempla* cultivates memory more effectively. My analysis of the *Castle of Perseverance* shows how the playwright's methodical juxtaposition of vice-after-virtue and virtue-after-vice speech patterns replicates this tension, allowing the protagonist Humanum Genus to fall into sin twice to reinforce the importance of living virtuously. In *Mankind*, the vice-after-virtue sequence likewise threatens Mankind's salvation when he parrots Mischief's words, requiring the Latin of Mercy's reasserted sermon to serve as a mnemonic trigger for Mankind's repentance. *Wisdom* dramatizes the human soul numerologically first by embodying Anima's ability to remember in the three Might's – Mind, Understanding, and Will – and then by repeatedly multiplying Anima's states in virtue and vice

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<sup>29</sup> Murphy, *Three*, ix. Citing Murphy on the same page, "rhetoric's five parts are *inventio* (finding of material), *dispositio* (arranging of it), *elocutio* (putting words to invented material), *pronuntiatio* (physical delivery), and finally *memoria* (retention of ideas, words, and their order)."

by factors of three: Anima's nine requests to know God result in Lucifer's nine temptations of Memory which in turn provoke nine points of explanation in Wisdom's sermon. *Wisdom's* pattern of virtue-vice-virtue uses numbers to investigate how remembering and forgetting exponentially increase and decrease salvation.

The third chapter examines how preaching thematically integrates portrayals of gender in the disparate play groupings of the cycle drama known as *N-Town*. At the center of the manuscript's additions and revisions to its base group of plays are the preaching commentary and sermon that Contemplacio delivers in the second play grouping, the *Mary Play*. Mitigating the threat of Mary's feminine erudition to the masculine authority of preaching discourse, Contemplacio's preaching language contains Mary's body and transforms it into a sermon *exemplum*. Preaching in the *Mary Play* enacts the microscopic enclosure of Mary that the manuscript's organization repeats at the macroscopic level: the *Mary Play* itself is enclosed within two play groupings featuring male preachers, Moses, who emerges as the paradigmatic figure of the preacher in *N-Town's* first play grouping, and Christ, who assumes his role as exemplary preacher in the cycle's third play grouping. The late insertion of the *Mary Play* into *N-Town* and its physical location within the manuscript alert readers to *N-Town's* proclivity to repurpose drama through preaching rhetoric, reinterpreting characters and play groupings alike as sermon *exempla*. Contemplacio's return to introduce Christ's paradoxically silenced, and therefore feminized, preaching voice in *Passion Play II* – another late addition to the manuscript – similarly encloses Christ as a preaching *exemplum*, highlighting how gender informs the interpretative framework of *exempla* specifically and the rhetorical persuasion of sermon discourse generally.

My final chapter explores the role of sermon rhetoric in dramatizing the transformative process of conversion in two plays of the Digby Manuscript, *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene*. These saints' plays share the difficult task of authenticating the conversions of ostensibly reprobate characters: a Jew who persecutes Christians and a prostitute. This chapter contends that the titular characters' post-conversion sermons communicate their credibility and conviction as Christian preachers in relation to their previous sins. Using rhetorical invention (*inventio*) in his own preaching language throughout *St. Paul*, the emcee Poeta anticipates Paul's transformation from Saul, enabling Paul's single, extensive sermon on pride to reform his previous malicious language and implicitly cast himself as an *exemplum* of humility in the process. Similarly, Mary's two sermons emphasize her body, reconstituting the source of her prostitution as an instrument for conveying faith. By refashioning preachers' bodies as *exempla* for their own sermons, the Digby plays execute *exempla* as embodied and embodying language, effectively collapsing the generic distinction between preaching and drama.

Reading East Anglian drama through the sermonic lens offers both a new understanding of the play form itself and a new method for evaluating medieval dramatic composition. "Performing Piety" urges the reconsideration, even the redefinition, of current critical delineations of sermonic and dramatic generic boundaries; the project compels scholars to see not only how sermons infuse the actual structure of the medieval play, but also how the medieval play informs the execution of preaching language. By demonstrating how sermons and plays were mutually constitutive, and by positing each as interdependent co-contributors to a dynamic continuum of performativity, "Performing Piety" showcases drama as the robust amalgam of devotional culture that it is, specifically in late-medieval East Anglia, but also in the extant drama of England and Europe more broadly.

## Chapter 1: “I tell yow no fabyll, scrypture doth prove”: *Mankind* a Medieval Sermon

Scholarship has long acknowledged the influence that preaching theory and practice bring to bear on medieval drama,<sup>30</sup> but perhaps nowhere so concretely as in its discussion of the mid-to-late fifteenth-century morality play *Mankind*.<sup>31</sup> G.R. Owst first observed the play’s confluence with medieval preaching,<sup>32</sup> and since the studies of Sisters M. Emmanuel Collins and Mary Philippa Coogan, wherein Mercy was identified first as a priest and then as a Dominican friar,<sup>33</sup> critics have viewed *Mankind*’s didactic success as intertwined with its presentation of preaching discourse. Lynn Forest-Hill argues that “*Mankind* can, itself, be seen to preach a universal message of avoiding the sin of idle language.”<sup>34</sup> Focusing on Mercy’s and Mischief’s initial confrontation, scholars also discuss how *Mankind*’s sermon language invites parodic imitation: Kathleen M. Ashley, for instance, refers to Mischief as Mercy’s “rival preacher” who delivers “his mock Latin verse...[to] expound the mysteries of scripture,”<sup>35</sup> and Janette Dillon finds that Mischief’s Latin is “clearly written by someone familiar with the method of dividing a theme.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet critics go no farther than Mercy’s and Mischief’s initial encounter when exploring *Mankind*’s rhetorical underpinning, and have so far failed to consider how medieval sermon

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<sup>30</sup> For an overview of medieval drama’s association with preaching, see Marianne G. Briscoe, “Preaching and Medieval Drama,” Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (eds.), *Contexts for Early English Drama* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 151-72.

<sup>31</sup> *Mankind* survives in the Macro Manuscript, currently housed in the Folger Shakespear Library in Washington, D.C.

<sup>32</sup> G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 535.

<sup>33</sup> Sister M. Emmanuel Collins, “The Allegorical Motifs in the Early English Morality Plays” (Yale University, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1936), 8; Sister Mary Philippa Coogan, *An Interpretation of the Moral Play, Mankind* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1947), 1-6.

<sup>34</sup> “*Mankind* and the Fifteen-Century Preaching Controversy,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 15 (2003), 17-42, at 21.

<sup>35</sup> “Titivillus and the Battle for Words in ‘Mankind,’” *Annuaire Medievale* 16 (1975), 128-50, at 132-3.

<sup>36</sup> “*Mankind* and the Politics of ‘Englysch-Laten,’” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 20 (1994), 41-64, at 52.



theory infuses the principles of this play's entire rhetorical form. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Mercy's sermon language and Mischief's parodic imitations extend beyond *Mankind's* opening sequence: this play relies throughout on the structure of a sermon, and composes not one, but two, dueling thematic sermons as the foundation for the struggle over Mankind's human condition. This discovery reveals *Mankind's* highly sophisticated engagement with and appropriation of the sermon form, and allows this chapter in turn to reevaluate the didactic success of the play. I will show how *Mankind's* enticing language of sin complicates its allegorical promise to lead its audience to salvation by casting doubt on the efficacy of moral language, even the moral language of the sermon.

Historical distance makes it difficult to recognize the complexity of *Mankind's* formal structure – the very complexity that the sermon form introduces, but when attuned to medieval preaching's structures, the confluence between sermons and plays arises. *Mankind* offers a unique template to examine this complexity and generic fluidity because of its association with East Anglia, a region that, due to a tremendous influx of wealth from its booming wool trade in the fifteenth century, enhanced traditional devotional practices monetarily and affectively.<sup>37</sup> With this wealth and religious fervor came an increased demand for preaching, a demand met by the Dominican and Franciscan friars, making the sermon form – already present in the East Anglian university town of Cambridge – even more visible.<sup>38</sup> Composed in the East Midlands dialect, *Mankind* bears the mark of the region in which it circulated, as its references to historical figures

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<sup>37</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> The thematic sermon originated in the twelfth-century university system, in cities such as Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. A detailed description of the origin and practice of the thematic sermon can be found in Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, L. Genicot (ed.), *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 1-76.

in Cambridgeshire as well as to numerous East Anglian cities and towns betray.<sup>39</sup> And *Mankind* still emerges as a more robust amalgam of East Anglian devotional culture when its underlying sermon form is realized. This play allows scholars to see not only how sermons infuse the actual structure of the medieval play, but also how the medieval play informs the execution of preaching language.

### I. (Re)Writing Preaching: *Mankind*'s Sermon Form

*Mankind* presents a thematic sermon and its parody through a staged competition in which Mercy and Mischief battle as preachers asserting rivaling messages of virtue and vice. The thematic sermon begins when Mercy opens the play by addressing the audience; the sermon parody when Mischief announces his name at line 417. The chart below outlines *Mankind*'s unified sermon form (Mercy's sermon), its sermon parody (Mischief's sermon), and the location at which both sermons intersect in the play:

#### *Mankind*'s Thematic Sermon Form

##### Unified Sermon (Mercy's Sermon)

Theme: mercy (18)

Protheme: Mary's mediation to attain mercy (19-24)

Protheme's tripartite advice:

1. Good works (25-8)
2. Sight on the Savior (30-6)
3. Premeditation via corn and chaff (37-44)

##### Sermon Parody (Mischief's Sermon)

Restatement of the Theme: mercy (178)

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the historical figures in *Mankind*, see W.K. Smart "Some Notes on Mankind," *Modern Philology* 14 (1916), 45-58. East Anglian "[p]lace names given in the dialogue...include Fulbourn, Bottisham, and Swaffham to the east of Cambridge, and Suston, Hauxton, and Trumington south of Cambridge. Norfolk place names are Walton, Gayton, Massingham, and another Swaffham. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, is mentioned in line 274, which is significant because two of the early owners of the manuscript came from Bury: Reverend Cox Macro and Thomas Hyngham, a monk at the monastery there" (Kathleen M. Ashley, Introduction. *Mankind*, ed. Kathleen M. Ashley and Gerard NeCastro, (Kalamazoo: The Medieval Institute Press, 2010), 10). In addition to being one of its early owners, Thomas Hyngham may also have been the scribe, or one of the scribes, who transcribed *Mankind*. Jessica Brantley and Thomas Fulton address the issue of the play's transcription in "Mankind in a Year without Kings," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 (2006), 321-54.

Introduction and proof by reason: Vices as beasts (164-81)

Division of the Parts:

1. *Vita hominis est milicia super terram* (228)
2. 'Measure is treasure' and the horse (237-44)
3. *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut sibi placuit, ita factum est; nomen Domini benedictum!* (292)

First Division: *Vita hominis est milicia super terram*

Confirmed by two subdivisions

1. *Memento, homo, quod cinis es, et in cinerem reverteris* (321)
2. *Nec in hasta nec in gladio saluat Dominus* (397)

Theme: mischief (417)  
 Protheme: compassion for Vice (423-40)  
 Restatement: bodily harm (445)  
 Introduction: payment for Titivillus (453-61)  
 Proof for Intro: Titivillus' appearance (475)

Second Division: 'Measure is treasure' and horse

Confirmed by three subdivisions

1. *Ego sum dominancium dominus* = intersection =

Division: *Ego sum dominancium dominus* (475)

Confirmed by three subdivisions

1. Neck-verse (619)
2. *Blottybus in blottis, / Blottorum blottibus istis* (680-1)
3. Perverse Decalogue (702-18)

2. *Lex et natura, Cristus et omnia jura Damnant ingratum, lugent eum fore natum* (754-5)
3. *Vanitas vanitatum* (767)

Conclusion: suicide attempt (787-810)

Third Division: *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut sibi placuit, ita factum est; nomen Domini benedictum!*

Confirmed by four subdivisions

1. *Nam hec est mutacio dextre Excelsi; vertit impios et non sunt* (826)
2. *Nolo mortem peccatoris, inquit* (834)

3. *Vade et jam amplius noli peccare* (850)
4. *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis* (866)

### Conclusion

Summation: catalogue of vice reviewed (833-90)

Prayer: *Dominus custodit te ab omni malo*

*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen* (901-2)

Dismissal: Mankind departs (891) and the audience departs (908-14)

As this chart demonstrates, conflict in *Mankind* revolves around the implementation of its language as a legitimate or parodic sermon.<sup>40</sup> The play's sermon form simultaneously captures Mercy's austere diction and the Vices' irreverent exclamations, structuring their linguistic competition for Mankind in the recognizable discourse of the sermon Theme. The Theme of Mercy's sermon is mercy, a topic he situates within the Lord's greater salvific vision: "I haue be þe very mene for yowr restytucion. / Mercy ys my name" (17-8),<sup>41</sup> Mercy explains, formally introducing his Theme as he states his name. He transitions to his Protheme instantly:

Dyverte not yowrsylffe in tyme of temtacyon,  
 þat 3e may be acceptable to Gode at yowr goyng hence.  
 Þe grett mercy of Gode, þat ys of most preemynence,  
 Be medyacyon of Owr Lady þat ys euer habundante  
 To þe synfull creature þat wyll repent hys neclygence.  
 I prey Gode, at yowr most nede, þat mercy be yowr defendawnte. (19-24)

Mercy's words contain two elements found in sermon Prothemes: an expanded explanation of the Theme – in this instance, "mercy" (21) as it is acquired by the "medyacyon of Owr Lady" (22); and a prayer: "I prey Gode, at yowr most nede, þat mercy be yowr defendawnte" (24). The Protheme differentiates itself from the Theme of the sermon by offering Mary's intercession as

<sup>40</sup> Studies concerning the use of language in *Mankind* include Ashley, "Titivillus and the Battle," 128-50; Dillon, "*Mankind* and the Politics," 41-64; Forest-Hill "*Mankind* and the Fifteenth"; Rainer Pineas, "The English Morality Play as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Studies in English Literature* 2 (1962), 157-80; Paula Neuss, "Active and Idle Language: Dramatic Images in 'Mankind,'" Neville Denny (ed.), *Medieval Drama, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 16 (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1973), 41-68; and Kathy Cawsey, "Tutivillus and the 'Kyrkchaterars': Strategies of Control in the Middle Ages" *Studies in Philology* 102 (2005), 434-51.

<sup>41</sup> Citations of *Mankind* are from Mark Eccles (ed.), *The Macro Plays*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 262 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

an additional resource to secure God's mercy, and so enhances the sermon's Theme by describing another means available to the audience to receive mercy.

This Protheme also offers tripartite advice about the action necessary to attain mercy, thus further developing the sermon's overall Theme of mercy.<sup>42</sup> "[G]oode werkys" (25), sight "not...in thyngys transytorye" (30) but on "Owr Sauyowr" (34), and "premedytacyon" (44) on "such foode" (37) that can "preserue yow all at þe last jugement" (41) ensure mercy's procurement. Mercy vividly punctuates his last point about the Day of Judgment by stating that during that "streyt examynacyon, / The corn xall be sauýde, þe chaffe xall be brente" (42-3). This image of corn's separation from chaff posits the intellectual ideas of salvation and damnation in understandable terms for the audience.

Before Mercy can proceed to his Restatement of the Theme and Introduction, an unnamed speaker, who is identified later as Mischief, interrupts him and his sermon. This disruption and the ensuing disturbances by Newguise, Nowadays, Nought, and Mankind brilliantly foreground the dialectic nature of *Mankind's* dueling sermon form, illustrating how a speaker can refocus the content and message of both sermon and play. And Mischief's outburst does just this, presenting a challenge to the authority Mercy implicitly claims as guide to salvation, a challenge that calls attention to a speaker's intention to bias an audience through interpretation. Mischief unabashedly accuses Mercy of a deliberate contrivance: "I beseche yow hertyly, leue yowr calcacyon! / Leue yowr chaffe, leue yowr corn, leue yowr dalyacyon! / Yowr wytt ys lytyll, yowr hede ys mekyll, 3e are full of predycacyon!" (45-7). Akin to a dissenter at a

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<sup>42</sup> During the thirteenth century, a more complex Protheme developed that often contained its own tripartite division. See Phyllis Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 50.

real sermon, Mischief seemingly ignores the etiquette of Mercy's language; but, in actuality, Mischief skillfully counters the logic of his rival's Theme at the precise moment when Mercy tries to persuade the audience of his claim's validity, turning immediately to the corn and chaff, the image producing Mercy's interpretive control:

Ande 3e [Mercy] sayde þe corn xulde be sauýde and þe chaff xuld be feryde,  
 Ande he [Mischeff] prouyth nay, as yt schewth be þis werse:  
 'Corn seruit bredibus, chaffe horsibus, straw fyrybusque.'  
 Thys ys as moche to say, to yowr leude wndyrstondynge,  
 As þe corn xall serue to brede at the nexte bakyng.  
 'Chaffe horsybus et reliqua,'  
 The chaff to horse xall be goode provente,  
 When a man ys forcolde, þe straw may be brent,  
 And so forth, et cetera. (55-63)

Indeed, Mischief's disruption demonstrates his disturbing proficiency in the art of preaching: he presents a proof as if it were a biblical authority, moving through his sardonic Latin verse as methodically as Mercy. Mischief's tripartite evaluation even outdoes Mercy's interpretation by promising the audience immediate satisfaction: Mischief argues for the practical consumption of the corn as well as of the chaff that Mercy prefers to discard, reminding the audience through his literalization of Mercy's metaphorical language that there are beneficial and life-sustaining applications for the objects Mercy reserves as divine indicators of human behavior.<sup>43</sup>

The challenge that Mischief poses to Mercy attacks both his mode of presentation and his ability to communicate it unequivocally. Mischief focuses on a rhetoric privileging corporeal needs through witty banter; he calls Mercy's sermonizing "dalyacyon" (46), a word meaning either idle talk or solemn utterance,<sup>44</sup> and interprets the solemn utterance of Mercy's preaching

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<sup>43</sup> Mischief quite effectively reduces Mercy's "moral metaphor to rural concreteness, [obliterating] its theological overtones and didactic function, for the symbolism and the sacred teaching of the Church are irreverently confronted by a new...empirical experience of the world" (Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978), 120).

<sup>44</sup> Dillon, 51.

as vapid speech. Mischief's well-timed interruption exposes how a speaker's interpretation can manipulate moral language, "[demonstrating] the absence of any metaphysical underpinnings to language, which is merely free-floating and subject to its user's intentions."<sup>45</sup> Mischief's disturbance therefore becomes a critical commentary disputing clerical presentation at the same time that it displays the mutability of a speaker's power – indeed the inability of a speaker – to regulate the reception of a moral message. The stakes of preaching's efficacy, the control a sermon imparts, and the anxiety about these subjects that *Mankind* stages hinge as much on an audience member's interpretation as they do on a speaker's intention.<sup>46</sup>

The appearance of New Guise, Nowadays, and Nought (the three N's) completes Mischief's interruption. A visual and physical representation of the three-part division preachers use in sermons, the three N's literally embody preaching's rhetorical tactics, an embodiment that compromises Mercy's language:

NOUGHT: But, ser, I trow of ws thre I herde yow speke.

NEW-GUISE: Crystys curse hade þerefor, for I was in slepe.

NOWADAYS: And I hade the cuppe in my honde, redy to goo to met.  
Therfor, ser, curtly, grett yow well.

MERCY: Few wordys, few and well sett!

NEW-GUISE: Ser, yt ys the new gyse and þe new jett.  
Many wordys, and schortely sett. (98-104)

Mercy is completely overpowered by this fast-paced badinage, and the deliberate style of his composition causes the command he once held to slip tantalizingly out of his grasp: he becomes

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<sup>45</sup> Michael T. Peterson, "Fragmina Verborum: The Vices' Use of Language in the Macro Plays," *Florilegium: Papers on Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 9 (1987), 155-67, at 163.

<sup>46</sup> Forest-Hill, 29.

an object of derision as the three N's dance around him and trip him, "Lo, take yow here a trepett" (113). These actions serve as physical representations of Mercy's rhetorical ineffectiveness: Mercy can use language neither to subdue nor to master these three unruly bodies steeped in sins of sloth (99) and gluttony (100). Strikingly, the three N's even make Mercy's linguistic powerlessness extend to his own body when they trip him on stage.

The Vices' ability to embody preaching discourse as a tripartite division hindering Mercy challenges the efficacy of *Mankind's* sermon language by reducing its allegorical representative to a physical, uncontrollable body. This reality deflates the illusion that the metaphorical quality Mercy ascribes to preaching language resists a corporeal understanding. The Vices' presence confirms that Mercy, as both character and Theme, is as much a material obstacle to the metaphorical meaning of his sermon language as the Vices are. Whether a preacher's intention can nullify this obstacle is the question that the remainder of the play explores, posturing Mercy's sermon as a source of corporeal discipline to save the soul and the Vices' as a source of corporeal license to condemn it.

After the Vices' disturbance, Mercy resumes his sermon by delivering the Restatement of the Theme and the Introduction, confirming both with an argument through reason: "I preue by reson þei[the Vices] be wers then bestys" (165). This rhetorical tactic, applied at the expense of the three N's, explains why their behavior is inappropriate:

They know full lytyll what ys þer ordynance.  
I preue by reson þei be wers then bestys:  
A best doth after hys naturall instytucion;  
Ȝe may conseque be there dysporte and behauour,  
Per joy ande delyte ys in derysyon  
Of her owyn Cryste to his dyshonur.  
Thys condycyon of leuyng, yt ys prejudycyall;  
Be ware þerof, yt ys wers þan ony felony or treson.  
How may yt be excusyd befor the Justyce of all  
When for euery ydyll worde we must ȝelde a reson? (164-73)



Mercy demonstrates his prowess as a preacher by making a negative didactic example out of the three N's. Casting their behavior thus, Mercy reinterprets their interruption in a persuasion consistent with his point of view. He explains that the "joy and delyte" (168) that the three N's experience as they "dyshonur...Cryste" (169) is "prejudycyall" (170) because it negates virtuous action and contemplation, the routes to salvation Mercy seeks to ensure. Mercy's rhetorical sophistication recalls his earlier warning about the Last Judgment, reminding the audience of a context in which the three N's inability to account for their "ydyll worde[s]" (173) will result in their damnation. After this denunciation, Mercy further elucidates his Theme by restating his name (178) and describing the ramifications of losing his advocacy:

But how þen when the angell of hewyn xall blow þe trumpe  
 Ande sey to þe transgressors þat wykkydly hath wrought,  
 'Cum forth onto yowr Juge and zelde yowr acownte'?  
 Then xall I, Mercy, begyn sore to wepe;  
 Noþer comfort nor cownsell þer xall non be hade;  
 But such as þei have sowyn, such xall þei repe.  
 Þei be wanton now, but þen xall þei be sade. (175-81)

As Mercy concludes his Restatement of the Theme and Introduction, he establishes his role in humankind's salvation, a role that each woman's and man's actions will determine. Mercy explains that each will "repe" what s/he has "sowyn" (180), astutely employing an agricultural image that complements his earlier reference to corn and chaff in order to remind his listeners that their use of language will influence the severity of their Judgment. The deployment of this image reinvests the play's preaching discourse with a figurative meaning, and so enables Mercy's Introduction to recuperate the metaphorical understanding his sermon ascribes to preaching language.

As Mercy concludes his Introduction, his sermon is again interrupted, but this time by Mankind, whose entrance confirms humanity's great need for mercy/Mercy: "My name ys

Mankynde. I haue my composycyon / Of a body and of a soull, of a condycyon contrarye. / Betwyx þem tweyn ys a grett dyvisyon” (194-6). This division causes Mankind’s “flesch of [his] soull to haue gouernance” (199). Mankind’s contrary carnal and spiritual composition unexpectedly parallels the conflict into which he unknowingly steps: before his entrance, Mercy’s and Mischief’s explications offered clashing but independent modes for interpreting preaching language, where Mercy represents its reflective and spiritual reward and Mischief its immediate and corporeal referentiality. As soon as Mankind explains what he means by his ‘composition,’ however, these separate modes collapse, and as one, become embedded in his body: “O thou my soull, so sotyll in thy substance, / Alasse, what was þi fortune and þi chaunce / To be assocyat wyth my flesch, that stynkyng dungehyll?” (202-4). Mankind’s scatological self-understanding inadvertently challenges Mercy’s presentation of the body as a vessel lifting its “ey wppe” (31) to glorify God, and, even more problematically, aligns him with the Vices. Earlier, Mischief and the three N’s not only insisted that Mercy use his “Englysch Laten” (124) to translate their verse – “I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys, / Ande I haue schetun yowr mouth full of turdys” (131-2) – but also brashly employed his authoritative diction to express their own low desires in Latin: “Osculare fundamentum!” (142), kiss my ass, Nowadays tells Nought.<sup>47</sup> Through Mankind, the playwright subtly revisits the anxiety surrounding the embodiment of preaching language that the virtuous intention of Mercy’s reasserted sermon should contain. Mankind’s self-description unexpectedly reignites the corporeal and material threat that the Vices’ presence sparked in preaching discourse, highlighting the roles that interpretation and

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<sup>47</sup> The Vices make several more scatological references throughout the play, all of which catalogue ways in which the body can sin: the Christmas song (335-44), New Guise’s suggestion that Mankind marry his mouth to his anus (345-7), Nought’s advice that Mankind defecate on his crops (374-5), Titivillus’ order that Mankind shit lies (568), and Nought’s action of defecating on his shoe (783-6).

intention have in the remainder of the play: Mankind has a choice about which aspect of his dual composition to enact, or, as this play portrays it, which type of preaching discourse – literal or metaphorical, vicious or virtuous, mischievous or merciful – he will voice.

Despite the implicit tension Mankind's presence produces, Mercy offers his assistance, acknowledging that "þer ys euer a batell betwyx þe soull and þe body" (227), and resumes his sermon to advise Mankind through the Division of the Parts. This Division rests upon the following authorities and proofs: the first a biblical quotation, "Vita hominis est milicia super terram" (228);<sup>48</sup> the second a maxim and supporting image "Mesure ys tresure" (237), illustrated by "an hors" (241); the third another biblical quotation: "Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut sibi placuit, ita factum est; nomen Domini benedictum!" (292).<sup>49</sup> Mercy provides this tripartite Division but withholds its Confirmation, the Subdivisions, until later. This Division summarizes the action remaining in the play. The authority forming the First Division speaks of man's life on earth as a battle, and the fight Mankind has with the three N's as he tills the land suggests no less. The Second Division materializes in Mankind's temptation by Titivillus and his sinful dalliance with the three N's, activities instigated by references to horses. Mercy's prolonged plea to Mankind to accept God's grace through mercy constructs the Third Division about the power the Lord wields to reward his faithful.

Mercy frames the battle of his First Division as one requiring active combat as "Crystys own knyght" (229), a call to knighthood Mankind realizes when he offers the first subdivision for this Division: "Memento, homo, quod cinis es, et in cinerem reuerteris" (321).<sup>50</sup> This is a

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<sup>48</sup> "The life of man upon earth is warfare." All Latin translations are my own.

<sup>49</sup> "The Lord gave, the Lord took away; just as He pleases, so it is done; let the name of the Lord be blessed!"

<sup>50</sup> "Remember, man, that you are dust, and into dust you will return." W.K. Smart explains that the use of this authority heightens *Mankind's* tie to the preaching tradition because it is "the central text of the services for Ash Wednesday, being pronounced by the priest at the time of the sprinkling of ashes" ("Some Notes on *Mankind*," 46).

biblical authority Mankind “[tytylls] in þis paper” (315) and, as the heraldic symbol of his service as knight, “[bers] on [his] bryst [as] þe bagge of [his] armys” (322). Dressed appropriately for combat in Mercy’s rhetorical persuasion, Mankind withstands the temptations of the three N’s, striking New Guise in the “jewellys” (381), Nowadays with a strong “buffett” (382) to his head, and Nought “in [his] arme” (390). Mankind affirms the rectitude of his behavior and ingenuity in employing his spade to repel Vice/vice in the second subdivision: “Nec in hasta nec in gladio saluat Dominus” (397).<sup>51</sup> Mankind mimics Mercy’s virtuous use of language in his two subdivisions, and especially recalls Mercy in the second when he proceeds to interpret his authority for the audience before departing to “go fett corn for [his] londe” (411). Mankind’s explanation and action, like Mercy’s, associate the image of corn with productive activity that prevents reckless idleness and damning speech. By the end of the First Division, Mercy and Mankind demonstrate the validity of Mercy’s interpretation to the audience as it both watches Mankind physically defeat the three N’s and hears the skillful unfolding and deliberate placement of Mercy’s (and Mankind’s) rhetoric and images. To this point, Mankind preserves Mercy’s metaphorical use of language.

While the sermon form strengthens Mercy’s authority as speaker and interpreter, it nevertheless remains a form highly mutable and susceptible to parody, as Mankind’s

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Coogan adds that other citations in the play – including the authority *Vita hominis est milicia super terram* – come from Lenten liturgies (*An Interpretation*, 10-11).

<sup>51</sup> “Neither with a spear nor with a sword does the Lord save.” Between Mankind’s delivery of the first and second subdivisions in this Division, the three N’s cite the following Latin quotation: “Cum sancto sanctus eris et cum perverso perverteris. / ‘Ecce quam bonum et quam jocundum,’ quod the Devll to the frerys, / ‘Habitare fraters in unum’” (324-6, With the holy you will be holy and with the perverse you will be perverted. / ‘Look how good and how funny a thing it is’ said the Devil to the friars / ‘that brothers live together’). They also lead the audience in singing the scatological “Crystemes songe” (332). Even though the three N’s are not yet successful in distracting Mankind from his labor, their use of Biblical citations and the song recalls Mischief’s previous interruption and anticipates the authoritative use of sermon rhetoric they will soon employ. This particular Biblical quotation draws attention to the compounding problem in the play of the failure of external markers, such as the Latin language and sermon rhetoric, to serve as accurate indicators of virtuous intent.

subdivisions, and the Vices' earlier disturbances, have shown. The victory Mercy claims, and the visual success Mankind displays, come under scrutiny when Mischief suddenly reappears, lamenting his rhetoric's failure to entangle Mankind:

Alas, alasse, þat euer I was wrought!  
 Alasse þe whyll, I wers þen nought!  
 Sythyn I was here, by hym þat me bought,  
 I am wtterly ondon!  
 I, Myscheff, was here at þe begynnyng of þe game  
 And arguýde wyth Mercy, Gode gyff hym schame!  
 He hath taught Mankynde, wyll I haue be vane,  
 To fyght manly ageyn hys fon. (413-20)

Mischief now raises the stakes of his parodic engagement by launching into a fully developed sermon parody. He expresses his pain with the words “wrought” (413), “nought” (414), and “bought” (415), words that repeat, as they mock, what Mercy declared when he began his sermon: it is for humankind's “redempcyon” that God “sett Hys own son at *nought*. / Yt may be seyde and veryfyede, mankynde was dere *bought*. / ... / He was purgyde of hys defawte þat wrechydly hade *wrought*” (7-8, 10, my emphasis). Mischief next states his name (417), as did Mercy (18), both to identify himself as the earlier dissenter and to establish the Theme of his sermon: mischief.<sup>52</sup> The deliberate withholding of Mischief's name until this point in the play, coupled with his mimicry of Mercy's opening lines, catalyzes his threat both as character and Theme to be expounded, a threat that the expert execution of his Protheme underscores. Mischief first reminds the audience what mischief is, that is, to “haue grett pyte to se þem[the three N's] wepyn” (423), then invokes the perverted mediation of Mary – “Lady, helpe! sely darlynge, ven, ven! / I xall helpe þe of þi peyn; / I xall smytt of þi hede and sett yt on agayn” (433-5) – a

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<sup>52</sup> Coogan notes that “[i]n vernacular sermons, the word[mischief] appears with surprising frequency in contexts involving man's state of soul after he has fallen in serious sin” and, citing the *New English Dictionary*, that this word “had a much more serious meaning in earlier times than it does today: it meant, frequently, grave danger or calamity” (*An Interpretation*, 59).

statement that finally forces Nought to cry out “Ȝe pley in nomine patris, choppe!” (440).<sup>53</sup>

Nought’s exclamation imitates the blessing that closes a prayer, and thus Mischief demonstrates his dexterity in delivering a Protheme that defines mischief as compassion for vice, explains it perversely through the intervention of Mary, and concludes with words of prayer.

Mischief’s sermon parody reconfigures the concept of mercy, replacing its figurative and spiritually rejuvenating meaning with a literal understanding predicated on bodily dismemberment. Mischief’s emphasis on the word “bought” clarifies this destructive corporeal focus: “Sythyn I was here, by hym þat me bought, / I am wtterly ondon” (415-6). Christ’s death on the cross paid for humankind’s, and by extension Mischief’s, debt of original sin, a concept which Mercy’s opening words made clear; however, in his sermon parody, Mischief strips Christ’s body of its salvific function, an interpretative move that denies Mercy’s explanation of redemption and leaves Mischief’s body undone in a state of sin. Mischief’s corporeal emphasis foregrounds the ruinous nature of his brand of ‘mercy,’ which will produce not only spiritual death but also physical violence and bodily harm as his sermon unfolds.

Mischief’s continuing corporeal threat to “choppe yt[body parts] of[off] and make yt agayn” (445) serves as the Restatement of his Theme, and his command to “Blowe apase, and þou xall bryng hym in wyth a flewte” (453), “hym” being the as yet unnamed devil Titivillus, functions as the Introduction to his sermon. Mischief’s Introduction is in fact also a literal introduction, as the reward for the audience’s payment is the chance to make Titivillus’ acquaintance. The Vices announce this introduction with the phrase “gostly to owr purpos” (459), “a formulaic [expression] borrowed from contemporary preaching” that serves the purpose

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<sup>53</sup> “You play in the name of the father, chop!”

of “drawing the attention of a congregation to something offered for its spiritual profit.”<sup>54</sup> It also “was commonly used as a way [to introduce] the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.”<sup>55</sup>

*Mankind* rather employs this phrase to embody Titivillus, heightening the literal meaning and corporeal emphasis of Mischief’s sermon, and therefore denying the audience any spiritual profit or allegorical insight. This action allows the Vices to use the collection sequence to perversely reinterpret Christ’s sacrificial purchase of humankind. The audience’s payment for Titivillus’ entertainment reverses the idea that one body – Christ’s – bought the corporate body of humanity and instead forces the corporate body of humanity – that is, each iteration of the play’s audience – to buy one body: the devil’s. Titivillus’ body dramatizes the metaphorical and literal meanings of mercy over which the play’s two sermons are competing: Mercy’s highlights Christ’s body as salvation for the human soul, Mischief’s the audience’s sacrifice for the well-being of the actors whose bodies presumably will be fed by the money the collection gathers.

Mischief’s Introduction thus illustrates the crux behind the efficacy of preaching language by merging the practical need to pay to see the rest of the performance with the play’s moral message to avoid sin at all costs (pun intended). The Vices’ language is so mischievous and particularly effective because it holds hostage the conclusion of the play and the continuance of Mercy’s sermon, which is posited as the allegorical guise to redemption. The collection of money also highlights language’s materiality, for, by placing a pecuniary value on the words to come, the Vices quantify language as a commodity of exchange. The salvific function preaching language maintains throughout Mercy’s delivery suddenly changes, and the sermon form now becomes the means to reinforce sin, because it is through this form that humankind falls, as the

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<sup>54</sup> Alan J. Fletcher, “The Meaning of ‘Gostly to owr purpos’ in *Mankind*,” *Notes and Queries* 229 (1984), 301-2.

<sup>55</sup> Spencer, 116.

audience does when the hat *continues* to be passed after the initial payment for Titivillus to appear.

The audience's voluntary payment serves a further thematic function, however. Responding to Titivillus' question about how much money he has, Nought says "Þe Deull may daunce in my purse for ony peny; / Yt ys as clen as a byrdys ars" (488-9). Nought aligns the audience's desire to see Titivillus with the anus, correlating its status in sin with the stinking dunghill of Mankind's body, and again stressing the Vices' emphasis on corporeality.<sup>56</sup> The collection therefore presents each audience member with a choice as to whether s/he will continue to watch the play in idle amusement or return to the productive work of laboring. By deciding to remain, the audience's behavior readily anticipates and parallels Mankind's upcoming temptation and fall. The audience even compounds its complicity in sin by entering into three tacit agreements with Titivillus to deceive Mankind: "Yondyr he commyth; I prey of cownsell" (539); "Qwyst! pesse! I xall go to hys ere and tytyll þerin" (557); and, "Ande euer 3e dyde, for me kepe now yowr sylence. / Not a worde, I charge yow, peyn of forty pens" (589-90). Promoting the language of sin, the members of the audience are no longer meditating on mercy.

Titivillus confirms Mischief's Introduction when he appears before the audience proclaiming "Ego sum dominancium dominus, and my name ys Titivillus. / 3e þat haue goode hors, to yow I say caueatis! (beware) / Here ys an abyll felyschyppe to tryse hem out at yowr gatys" (475-7).<sup>57</sup> This statement serves two purposes in the dueling sermons about mercy and

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<sup>56</sup> In fact, scatology was often linked to the devil in the medieval period (John W. Velz, "Scatology and Moral Meaning in Two English Renaissance Plays," *South Central Review* 1 (1984), 4-21).

<sup>57</sup> "I am the Lord of Lords and my name is Titivillus." There is much debate about whether the actor playing Mercy or Mischief doubles for Titivillus. Either choice carries relevance to the play's moral message: if it is Mercy, his character becomes a hypocritical preacher; if it is Mischief, his character continues to deliver the sermon he began. For an argument in favor of Mercy as Titivillus, see David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 17. For an



mischievous so far staged. It is not only the first and lone Division of Mischief's sermon but also the first of three subdivisions for the Second Division of Mercy's sermon. This quotation therefore marks the intersection of *Mankind's* sermon parody (Mischief's sermon) with the unified sermon (Mercy's sermon) underwriting the play. It illustrates how the same citation produces different interpretations based on its parodic or legitimate use. As sermon parody, this statement makes Titivillus lord of lords and perverts the respectable portrayal of God that Mercy's sermon teaches; as parody, it becomes a mischievous reinterpretation of the relationship that the audience should foster with the Lord.<sup>58</sup> Now cavorting with a devil, the audience denies itself the promise of a divine relationship, the play delivering a visual representation of the audience's verbal fall into sin.

When interpreted as the first subdivision of Mercy's Second Division, however, the statement *Ego sum dominancium dominus* explores how Mankind should approach the relationship he cultivates with the Lord. The Second Division takes the maxim 'measure is treasure' and illustrates this proof with a horse, the very animal Titivillus threatens to steal in his opening proclamation (476-7). Earlier, in his Division of the Parts, Mercy explained that

Yf a man haue an hors and kepe hym not to hye,  
He may then reull hym at hys own dysyere.  
Yf he be fede ouerwell he wyll dysobey  
Ande in happe cast his master in þe myre. (241-4)

Control of the horse, Mercy suggests, is maintained as long as its master is not overindulgent, and the call to till the land in which Mercy educates Mankind certainly teaches frugality.<sup>59</sup> But

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argument in support of Mischief playing Titivillus, see *The Macro Plays*, F.J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard (eds.), EETS e.s. 91 (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Using Scripture to draw similarities between the devil and the Lord was considered poor preaching etiquette (Spencer, 106-7).

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of labor in *Mankind*, see Kellie Robertson, *The Laborer's Two Bodies: Literacy and Legal Productions in Britain, 1350-1500* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 153-82.

Mercy is not Mankind's only master, and as governed by his appetite as a horse, Mankind quickly succumbs to the abundance and ease that sin and Titivillus offer him. In Mercy's absence, the Vices are able to change the meaning and direction of his sermon by saddling Mankind with their spurious interpretations.

Emphasis on horses drives the Division in which the Vices acquire Mankind. Titivillus first incites the three N's to find a horse in the countryside (495) before he frustrates Mankind's labor and whispers a lie in his ear as he falls asleep:

Alasse, Mankynde, alasse! Mercy stown a mere!  
 He ys runn away fro hys master, þer wot no man where;  
 Moreouer, he stale both a hors and a nete.  
 But ȝet I herde sey he brake hys neke as he rode in Fraunce;  
 But I thynke he rydyth on þe galouse, to lern for to daunce,  
 Bycause of hes theft. (594-9)

According to Titivillus, Mercy's crime of stealing a horse, in addition to a mare and cow, results in his hanging as a convict on the gallows. A perversion of the truth, as the Vices' language always is, the real 'horse' that has been stolen is Mankind, and Titivillus and his mischievous gang the actual culprits. The Vices' theft realizes Mercy's earlier warning to Mankind that if he strays from God "Myscheff wyll be redy to brace [him] in hys brydyl" (306).

The subdivisions that the Vices use to confirm their Division of *Ego sum dominancium dominus* further misconstrue moral language. The first subdivision references, but does not quote, the neck-verse: "Myscheff ys a convicte, for he coude hys neke-verse" (619). This verse is the fifty-first Psalm, "the recitation of which in court enabled a defendant to claim right of clergy and so avoid the gallows."<sup>60</sup> The claim of the neck-verse, while fraudulent, proves that Mischief,

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<sup>60</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 922. For further discussion on this subject, see Leona C. Gabel, "Benefit of Clergy in England in the Later Middle Ages," *Smith College Studies in History* XIV (1929), 1-145; and J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (London: Butterworths LexisNexis, 1979), 422-4.

who is not a member of the clergy, nonetheless understands that language can protect the actions that bodies perform. Mischief's citation recalls Mankind's *Memento* badge in its protective, corporeal capacity, the playwright now depicting two successful instances of this phenomenon of language, one virtuous and one mischievous. Yet it is New Guise who reports the activities in which Mischief has been involved, and, what is more, the New Guise who appears proclaiming these deeds looks surprisingly like the picture of Mercy that Titivillus painted for Mankind as he slept:

I was twychyde by þe neke; the game was begunne.  
 A grace was, the halter brast asonder: ecce signum! (behold the proof)  
 The halff ys abowte my neke; we hade a nere rune!  
 ...  
 Myscheff ys a convicte, for he coude hys neke-verse.  
 My body gaff a swynge when I hynged uppon the casse.  
 Alasse, he wyll hange such a lyghly man, and a fers,  
 For stelyge of an horse, I prey Gode gyf hym care! (615-7, 619-22)

New Guise embodies the language of Titivillus' lie, a lie that functions for Mankind as Mercy's "premedytacyon" (44) did for the audience, predisposing him to interpret the action he encounters after he wakes in agreement with Titivillus' persuasion. When Mankind falls asleep, his closed eyes literalize his blindness to sin. Mankind should be able to see that New Guise is the criminal who stole a horse, not Mercy, but he is blind to the truth because he cannot interpret the language misleading him – he relies on Titivillus to perform that service for him. Mankind does not realize that the Vices malign Mercy's good name with the very actions that they themselves perform.

Bereft of his guide and interpretive cognition, Mankind interrupts the Vices' sermon when he falls to his knees (661) and "[askes] mercy of New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought" (650), repeating a second time his "crye" to them for "mercy of all þat [he] dyde amysse" (658). Mankind's cry confirms the reinterpretation of mercy that Mischief's Protheme provides, for

now Mankind has compassion for Vice and perverts the meaning of mercy by asking for it from the wrong source. Delighted by his newfound allegiance, the Vices set up a mock courtroom to enter “Mankyndys name in [Mischief’s] bok” (663) and instruct him in a series of activities mimicking the Decalogue (702-718). The language of these two scenes resumes the remaining two subdivisions in Mischief’s sermon. In the mock courtroom, Mischief offers the second subdivision by spouting off some nonsense Latin: “blottybus in blottis / Blottorum blottibus istis” (680-1). This sentence represents Nought’s best attempt at recording Mankind’s name in Mischief’s book.<sup>61</sup> The action of writing not only makes language material but also recalls Titivillus’ function in sermons of recording pieces of speech: also known as the recording demon Tutivillus, this devil writes down the remiss and idle language of church- and sermon-goers on a scroll, or, in other versions, gathers words carelessly spoken during the Mass in a cumbersome sack on his back.<sup>62</sup>

In the third subdivision, New Guise, Nowadays, and Mischief educate Mankind as to how a Vice behaves, covering everything from adultery (704) to robbing and killing (709) to gluttony (711) and forgoing prayer (712). After each catechetical instruction, one of the Vices says “‘I wyll,’ sey 3e” (705, 710, 715, 720) to which Mankind responds “‘I wyll, ser” (706, 711, 716, 721). This sequence parodies one of the most important functions preachers had, the reiteration of the Ten Commandments, along with the Lord’s Prayer, Ave, and Creed, as Themes in sermons; in fact, these are the topics *pastoralia* encourage medieval preachers to repeat in

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<sup>61</sup> For more information about *Mankind*’s implementation of legal rhetoric, see Jessica Brantley and Thomas Fulton, 321-54.

<sup>62</sup> The definitive study on Titivillus is Margaret Jennings, “Tutivillus: The Literary Career of the Recording Demon,” *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977), 1-93. Coogan states that the Titivillus in *Mankind* is a composite of his earlier literary iterations (*An Interpretation*, 71-3).

sermons until the laity understands them.<sup>63</sup> By educating Mankind in a perverse version of the Decalogue, the Vices intentionally mock a preacher's instructive service and his use of the sermon form to deliver penance: "Preaching penitence occupied much of the medieval preacher's efforts, and repentance figures prominently as proof of the sermon's efficaciousness."<sup>64</sup> The Vices' appropriation of the sermon form therefore challenges sermon discourse by making Mankind's repetition of 'I will' a hindrance to moral efficacy. This phrase literally catalogues Mankind's linguistic vulnerability to sin, an action that, first, vocalizes the audience's earlier silent agreement with Titivillus and, second, draws a sharp contrast to Mankind's initial relationship to language. Previously in the play, Mankind used the *Memento* quote to shield himself from Vice/vice. His linguistic trappings as Christ's knight now dissolve as language completely loses the metaphoric meaning with which he once invested it, utterly failing to afford him any protection from sin.

In case the linguistic register plotting Mankind's fall were too subtle, the Vices also represent Mankind's verbal demise visually in these two subdivisions by shortening the length of his jacket. Mankind's jacket formerly bore his *Memento* motto, which Mankind called "the bagge of [his] armys" (322), and so his jacket was *his* visual, as well as verbal, representation of performing good works. The shortened jacket now portrays Mankind's willing negation of his former verbal parody of and allegiance to Mercy, and so becomes the visual representation of the words he will have to justify as idle and condemning at his Day of Judgment. The jacket

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<sup>63</sup> Peter A. Dykema, "Handbooks for Pastors: Late Medieval Manuals for Parish Priests and Conrade Porta's *Pastorale Lutheri* (1582)," Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow (eds.), *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late-Medieval and Reformation History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 158.

<sup>64</sup> Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record," Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 116.

materializes the dialectic inherent to the intentions motivating *Mankind*'s preaching discourse by simultaneously representing its capacity to support virtuous and vicious language and behavior.

Now that the Vices' subdivisions have infused *Mankind*'s preaching language with an irresolvable materiality, the only part left in Mischief's sermon is its Conclusion. But Mischief's sermon is suspended temporarily so that Mercy can reappear to complete the subdivisions for his Second Division. Distraught over Mankind's "flexybull" (741) and "onkynde" (742) nature, Mercy in turn condemns Mankind with the authority – "Lex et natura, Cristus et omnia jura / Damnant ingratum, lugent eum fore natum" (754-5)<sup>65</sup> – and his sinful actions with the authority, "Vanitas vanitatum" (767).<sup>66</sup> These two citations, along with Titivillus' brash *Ego sum dominancium dominus*, are the three subdivisions confirming the Second Division's 'measure is treasure' maxim and horse image. These three authorities do suggest that 'measure is treasure' were moderation followed. The play, however, does not stage Mercy's call to moderation over the course of this Division; it rather depicts Mankind's indulgence in and overabundance of sin. Mercy's Second Division therefore illustrates how 'measure is treasure' through a negative example; that is, it illustrates the desirability of moderation by depicting its opposite, excess.

The interpretive truth inherent in Mercy's two subdivisions surfaces immediately when the Vices' sermon resumes with Mischief's Conclusion. The Vices selfishly try to convince Mankind to commit suicide. And Mankind almost does – asking for a rope (800) – just as Mercy returns. Unfortunately for New Guise, Mercy appears as he demonstrates how one hangs himself (804-5) and literally is left hanging (808-10) after Mercy scares his compatriots away. As this action closes Mischief's sermon, it simultaneously depicts a Vice being hanged for stealing a

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<sup>65</sup> "Law and nature, Christ and all laws / Condemn the ungrateful man, they mourn that he will be born."

<sup>66</sup> "Vanity of vanities."

horse, the figurative horse Mankind, that is, and visually recalls Titivillus' earlier lie about Mercy expiring on the gallows. This image reinforces bodily harm and spiritual death as mischief's chief end, exactly what Mischief's Conclusion tries to grant Mankind.

Mercy and Mankind remain on stage as Mercy recovers his sermon and delivers the subdivisions of the Third Division, subdivisions dedicated to the difficult task of teaching Mankind repentance. Mercy begins by explaining the expression of contrition: Mankind must "aske...mekly" (816), "Ȝelde...[his] humbyll obeysyance" (817), and give the "voluntary sujeccyon of [his] hert" (818) to Mercy and God. Mankind brashly dismisses Mercy, however, forcing Mercy to cite an authority – "Nam hec est mutacio dextre Excelsi; vertit impios et non sunt" (826)<sup>67</sup> – that confirms how Mankind's "obstinacy wyll exclude [him] fro þe glorius perpetuite" (829). Mankind counters by arguing that God's "justyse" (831) will not allow his restitution, an assumption Mercy corrects with his second subdivision: "The justyce of God wyll as I wyll, as hym sylfe doth precyse: / Nolo mortem peccatoris, inquit, yff he wyll be redusyble" (833-4).<sup>68</sup> Mankind of course is not entirely wrong: God's justice would demand his damnation, but fortunately for Mankind, he is speaking to Mercy, not Justice. Mercy's second subdivision teaches Mankind that Mercy's will to redeem a sinner is what counts; that mercy will overcome God's unbending justice. Partially swayed, Mankind cries "Pan mercy, good Mercy!" (835) and hears Mercy out as he delivers his third subdivision about the woman of Canaan (848): "Vade et jam amplius noli peccare" (850).<sup>69</sup> A version of "the immensely popular *exemplum* known as the 'Repentant Harlot,'" this subdivision invokes the "intimate connection between preaching and

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<sup>67</sup> "Now this is changed through the Lord's right hand; it turns away the impious and they do not exist."

<sup>68</sup> "I do not want the death of the sinner, he said, if he will be repentant,"

<sup>69</sup> "Go and sin no more now!"

penance” to show “that the purpose of sermons was to stir the hearers to contrition.”<sup>70</sup> This citation confirms that Mercy plays to Mankind’s emotions as much as to his reason in trying to teach him the error of his ways. It also recalls Mankind’s former behavior as Christ’s knight, as Mercy explains this authority through a chivalric relationship:

Synne not in hope of mercy; þat ys a cryme notary.  
 To truste ouermuche in a prince yt ys not expedient.  
 In hope when 3e syn 3e thynke to hawe mercy, be ware of þat awenture.  
 The good Lord seyde to the lecherus woman of Chanane,  
 The holy gospell ys the awtorite, as we rede in scrypture,  
 ‘Vade et jam amplius noli peccare.’  
 Cryst preserwyd þis synfull woman takeyn in awowtry;  
 He seyde to here þeis wordys, ‘Go and syn no more,’  
 So to 3ow, go and syn no more. Be ware of weyn[vain] confidens of mercy;  
 Offend not a prince on trust of hys fauour, as I seyde before. (845-54)

Mercy encircles this subdivision’s authority with warnings about acquiring mercy and relying on worldly princes (845-6, 853-4). This rhetorical move defines the term “awenture” (847) as the expectation of automatically attaining mercy in order to correct this faulty assumption: the risk of losing mercy always is present, especially if one asks for it insincerely.

This subdivision offers some insight into the material use of language seen through Mankind’s *Memento* badge as well as through his responses of “I wyll” in the Vices’ perverse catechism. In each instance, Mankind’s intentions do not stem from his own convictions, but rather result from Mercy’s and the Vices’ instructions respectively. Mercy’s present lesson about coming to God willingly therefore clarifies Mankind’s previous mistake: intention and action must agree and be self-motivated for moral language to be effective. Mischief, Titivillus, and the three N’s succeeded in distracting Mankind because his intentions were not properly premeditated, a point that the playwright slyly stages by having Mankind write down his

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<sup>70</sup> Spencer, 102.



*Memento* verse instead of “[setting]” Mercy’s “wordys in herte” (259). Mankind’s action externalizes language as a material object rather than internalizes it as an intangible, figurative concept. Now that he has presented mercy in terms that Mankind understands, Mercy states his last authority – “Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis” (866)<sup>71</sup> – and confirms that Mankind can acquire the “joy of hewyn... / Wyth mercy” (869-70). Ecstatic, Mankind asks for mercy and repents.

His goal accomplished, Mercy offers the Conclusion to his sermon by chastising Mankind and commenting upon the company he kept:

3e have thre aduersaryis and he ys masyter of hem all:  
 That ys to sey, the Dewell, þe World, þe Flesch and þe Fell.  
 The New Gyse, Nowadayis, Nowgth, þe World we may hem call;  
 And propyrly Tituillus sygnyfyth the Fend of helle;  
 The Flesch, þat ys þe unclene concupissens of 3our body.  
 These be 3our thre gostly enmyis, in whom 3e hawe put 3our confidens.  
 Þei browt 3ow to Myscheffe to conclude 3our temporall glory,  
 As yt hath be schewyd before þis worscheppyll audiens. (883-90)

Mercy reviews the list of adversaries who befriend Mankind during the course of the play in order to categorize them as types of sin. This catalogue revisits the sinful pleasure the play presents as it educates Mankind and the audience about the damning nature of the Vices/vices. Mercy’s explanation not only reinterprets the action that the audience witnesses in accord with his persuasion, leaving it to consider his interpretation as the only viable path to mercy, but it also reclaims the metaphoric language of his sermon.

“Remembyr how redy I was to help 3ow” (891), Mercy says as he dismisses Mankind and offers him a prayer: “Dominus custodit te ab omni malo / In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus

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<sup>71</sup> “Behold now is the appropriate time, behold now is the day of salvation.”

Sancti. Amen!” (901-2).<sup>72</sup> Mankind exits, leaving Mercy to reiterate the importance of memory in mercy’s attainment to the audience:

Serge 3our condicyons wyth dew examinacion.  
Thynke and remembyr þe world ys but a wanite,  
As yt ys prowyd daly by diuerse transmutacyon.  
Mankend ys wrechyd, he hath sufficyent prowē.  
Therefore God grant 3ow all per suam misericordiam (through his mercy)  
Þat ye may be pletyferys wyth þe angellys abowe  
And hawe to 3our porcyon vitam eternam. Amen! (908-14, eternal life)

Mercy’s advice to the audience to “Thynke and remembyr” (909) recalls his initial injunction to hold his words in “premedytacyon” (44).<sup>73</sup> Mercy therefore restates his Theme – *misericordiam* (912)<sup>74</sup> – by skillfully invoking the correlation between memory and mercy with which he began his sermon. Finally, the last three lines of his speech function as a dismissal and prayer in their own right, showing that Mercy omits no details as he and his sermon decisively close.

## II. Didactic Success

The underwriting structure of *Mankind* is the sermon form, and as I have demonstrated, the play stages a sermon internally dueling over the interpretation of mercy in an attempt to explain this Theme and to deliver its successful allegorical representation. The Second Division, through its intersection of unified sermon and sermon parody, is the key to revealing the playwright’s anxiety over preaching’s efficacy. Viewed in its entirety, Mercy’s sermon exhibits a progression of confirmations, as the subdivisions in each of his Divisions become increasingly longer: the First Division uses two subdivisions, the Second Division three, and the Third Division four. This pattern underscores how the need for mercy increases as the play progresses:

<sup>72</sup> “The Lord protects you from all evil / In the name of the father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>73</sup> Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 111.

<sup>74</sup> “Mercy.”

Mankind's fight with his spade, his fall into sin, and his education in repentance make the play's delivery of mercy increasingly fraught and necessary if the titular character is to find redemption. But Mercy's Second Division defies this tidy progression by having six, not three, subdivisions. The Vices overtake Mercy's sermon in the Second Division and deliver three of their own subdivisions. This interrupts the otherwise consistent linear pattern of Mercy's confirming subdivisions with a pyramid structure of subdivision.<sup>75</sup> The pyramid structure betrays the careful attention the playwright paid not only in manipulating *Mankind's* sermon form but also in realizing the interpretive difficulty inherent to presenting mercy as allegory: Mercy's Second Division relies on the image of the horse as verification for his authority, but the explication of this image and the metaphoric understanding it imparts to Mercy's sermon are lost to him when the Vices appropriate image and sermon to acquire Mankind. This interference highlights Mercy's lost rhetoric and eliminates his role as interpretive guide as sermon, and play, veer out of his control.

While Mercy later counters the Vices' subdivisions in his Third Division, he is powerless to remove them from *Mankind's* unified sermon form. Mercy's authority citing the woman of Canaan is a case in point, as it attempts to undo Mankind's earlier confession to the Vices and the lessons of their subversive catechism by modeling a proper form of emotive contrition. Yet the precarious success of this *exemplum* reveals the predicament that *Mankind's* unified sermon form, as one sermon within another, sustains. Mercy's sermon cannot linguistically overcome the detrimental intention and interpretations with which the Vices infuse his language because his

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<sup>75</sup> A linear pattern for the subdivision means that a preacher states his authorities one after the other in a 'straight' line. A pyramidal pattern reflects the 'funneling' effect from a wide base to a point that the reduction of authorities produces. This pattern uses three quotations for the first part of the subdivision, two in the second, and one in the third (Krul, 16).

sermon cannot stand as a complete composition without the authority *Ego sum dominancium dominus*. The sermon parody that the Vices produce on the other hand, even in spite of its intersection with Mercy's sermon, can be excised as a fully intact thematic sermon in its own right. In its entirety, Mercy's sermon is crippled because its virtuous message remains dependent on vice. Nonetheless, as the longer sermon, Mercy's sermon encapsulates that of the Vices, and has the privileged position of concluding the play, of having, so to speak, the last word. This reality enables Mercy to reestablish the virtuous and metaphoric language that the Vices squash. By the end of the play's unified sermon, then, Mercy restores the figurative understanding with which he began. This restoration does not announce the success of the play's allegorical message, however; it suggests only that it is possible to preserve the play's allegorical meaning. *Mankind's* unified sermon form forces the play's allegorical message to vacillate continually between the efficacy and the materiality of its speech, disclosing how its dueling sermons infuse its salvific language with an irresolvable dialectic. *Mankind's* playwright introduces Mankind and his double composition just as the allegorical message of his play wavers, making Mankind's appearance a truly ingenious rhetorical placement in itself. Mankind's presence realizes the dialectic tension innate to interpreting *Mankind's* preaching language with the strategy – the Division of the Parts – that presents the conflicting intentions of Mercy's and Mischief's sermons.

The Division of the Parts, through the interplay of the First and Second Divisions it allows, employs Mankind to highlight how the interpretation of the play's sermon form hinders its successful representation of salvation. Mankind acquires the responsibility of delivering the two confirming subdivisions in the First Division because Mercy leaves the stage. As Mankind animates the citation announcing the First Division – *Vita hominis est militia super terram* – as

well as its subsequent subdivisions,<sup>76</sup> he assumes the role of a living, breathing authority.<sup>77</sup>

Mankind embodies language like Mercy and the Vices, a point he visually reinforces by pinning the *Memento* verse onto himself. The implication of Mankind as biblical authority heightens in the Second Division when he begins to sow his corn, “a conventional allegory for the word of God”: “Mankind’s virtuous work of sowing corn is...itself an allusion to preaching, which he rejects when the work becomes disrupted and difficult.”<sup>78</sup> As preaching language materialized, Mankind becomes his own obstacle to the ‘higher understanding’ allegory imparts: Mankind is after all the preacher who abandons the produce of words, the horse whom the Vices overfeed, and as Titivillus’ presence makes clear, the quantified piece of speech – the animated and idle *exemplum* – gathered into the recording demon’s sack. The appearance of Mankind’s name in Mischief’s courtroom book only confirms Mankind’s materiality as embodied speech, a collectable and collected commodity. By the end of the Second Division, Mankind is the preacher – the sower of words – confounded by the devil who gathers speech.

Throughout the course of the First and Second Divisions, *Mankind*’s playwright stages the building block of the sermon form – the biblical authority as Mankind embodies it – literally led astray through misinterpretation. The Second Division illustrates how the efficacious interpretation of the First Division is susceptible to falter, how it does falter, as the wholesome ‘preacher’ Mankind, who once explicated his subdivisions for the audience, becomes the ensnared horse wandering away from the field of virtuous language he once tended: “Of labure

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<sup>76</sup>The first subdivision is the *Memento* verse and the second is from the Book of David: *Nec in hasta nec in gladio salvat Dominus*. Lorraine Kochanske Stock suggests that the playwright uses these authorities to “consciously [link] David and Job as examples of *milites Christi* to Mankind who is now also Christ’s knight” (“The Thematic and Structural Unity of *Mankind*,” *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975), 386-407, at 401).

<sup>77</sup>Waters cites Thomas of Chobham who states that a preacher is “a living ‘book’ for his congregation” (48). The presentation of Mankind as a living *exemplum* thus is consistent with descriptions found in medieval preaching texts.

<sup>78</sup>Forest-Hill, 25.

and preyer, I am nere yrke of both; / I wyll no more of yt" (585-6). The thematic risk of misinterpretation innate to *Mankind*'s sermon form and allegory manifests in these two Divisions and proves the language of biblical authorities, the play's mechanism conveying its moral and allegorical messages, to be intrinsically material and thereby irrevocably fallen.

*Mankind* instead delivers its audience a complex commentary on the role interpretation serves for the preacher and the participant. The members of the audience have the ultimate power to interpret Mankind's confession sequence for themselves. By staging language's materiality as virtue (the *Memento* badge in the First Division) and as vice (Mischief's neck-verse in the Second Division), the play presents the audience with the opportunity to decide for itself what the state of language's materiality, and by implication Mankind's confession, is in the contrition sequence, what I call the Third Division. I have already suggested one, and what I feel is the popular, interpretation of this sequence: Mankind honestly repents and receives God's mercy. This interpretation assumes that "an inward act of contrition made 'outward' or 'uttered' in confession" enables "the material substance of the punishment-exacting words [to vanish] in the grace of God's mercy."<sup>79</sup> This equation is precisely what *Mankind*'s playwright questions through the sermon form, however. *Mankind* could be seen as a tongue-in-cheek exposition on the utility of preaching discourse by an audience member educated in preaching, which, in light of this play's connections to Cambridgeshire and Cambridge's status as a university town training future clergymen, is a real probability.<sup>80</sup> The choice that the play extends to the audience

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<sup>79</sup> Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>80</sup> Lawrence Clopper argues that the playwright's use of Latin, which "is not merely rhetorical but essential" to understanding the play's moral message, suggests "a primarily educated audience" ("*Mankind* and Its Audience," Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe (eds.), *Drama in the Middle Ages, AMS Studies in the Middle Ages* 18 (New York: AMS Press, 1991), 243.

to come to grips with the disparity in preaching language enacts, as it realizes, the tension that the play stages in its final interaction.

The Third Division, through its concluding penitential sequence, I argue, offers a more dubious interpretation of contrition and confessional language. The action of this sequence tries to deny language's fallen and material state, but this series of subdivision is where Mercy struggles the most to convince Mankind of the validity of his authorities. Mankind flatly refuses Mercy's first subdivision – wherein he is told to prostrate himself meekly and obediently – causing Mercy to ridicule his lack of trust as a “lamentabyll excuse” (823). Mercy next forcibly reinterprets the concepts of justice and chivalry, but the execution of these two subdivisions betrays fissures in Mercy's logic; for, even though he clarifies that mercy always will trump justice in the second subdivision, the third subdivision suggests that mercy's attainment is not guaranteed, even by the Prince of Heaven: “Mercy's odd warning...implies that God is *like* an untrustworthy prince. Mercy twists the analogy upon itself, likening the God who may not forgive a premeditated sin to an earthly prince who may not be trusted.”<sup>81</sup> These three subdivisions reveal that mercy's acquisition depends upon the intention – the honesty in the cry for mercy, the alignment of inward and outward thought – that the speaker expresses; that is, the very uncertainty the sermon form entertains. In the end, Mercy's fourth subdivision earns him, at best, a doubtful cry for repentance from Mankind: “O Mercy, my suavius solas and synguler recreatory, / My predilecte spesyll, 3e are worthy to hawe my lowe!” (871-2). Mankind replies as if the point were whether Mercy is worthy of him! Mankind no longer portrays himself as the one in need of mercy, an attitude toward Mercy/mercy that is both surprising and strangely self-absorbed. In addition, the ‘confession’ Mercy prompts from Mankind does not verbally echo the

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<sup>81</sup> Brantley and Fulton, 344.

one Mankind performed for the three N's, during which he directly asked for mercy. Mankind is suddenly "incapable of repeating [the] words" that he "was only too happy to parrot" for Mercy at the beginning of the play.<sup>82</sup> Now before Mercy, Mankind rather refuses to "aske mercy 3et onys agayn" (819) and to "rehers [his] iterat transgrescion" (821), claiming that "[e]wyr to offend and euer to aske mercy...ys a puerilite" (820) and that he is "not worthy to hawe mercy be no possibilite" (822). Mankind brashly transforms his expected contrition into despair, and exposes the climactic act of penance as a façade: it is meaningless from repeated rehearsal. Mankind interprets language as the material artifact that, in his opinion, it has become: "the relationship between inward contrition and the exteriority of language [is] antithetical – unless ritually efficacious language is tied to the heart's intention in the moment of utterance, it is 'false'" and "[acquires] material weight."<sup>83</sup> Mankind displays the contradictory status of his inward thought and outward speech. His perception is irreconcilable with Mercy's insistence that language expresses a metaphorical quality or spiritual grace.<sup>84</sup>

The confession sequence in the Third Division therefore thwarts the unequivocal success of the play's ability to rectify man and his fallen condition by problematizing the crucial moment in which Mankind must demonstrate his contrition. In this manner, the playwright at once preserves equally viable literal and figurative registers of meaning for the play, making it difficult, nay impossible, to know with which register, and to what degree, a medieval audience would internalize *Mankind's* sermon rhetoric. Historical distance occludes what the common experience of sermon culture was, and how an audience member might fill in the gaps mentally

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<sup>82</sup> Robertson, 181.

<sup>83</sup> Hutson, 28.

<sup>84</sup> As Waters states, "The insistence on preaching both in word and in deed does more, that is, than assert that word and deed must be congruent; it expresses the limitations of words alone in convincingly portraying salvific doctrine" (40).



for a particular sermon or preacher.<sup>85</sup> What can be said certainly is that different people, even within the traditional learned and unlearned divide of clergy and laity, had different levels of knowledge about sermons and their rhetoric. If the members of *Mankind*'s audience understood sermon rhetoric and Latin, perhaps they would see more failure than success in the sermon that the play delivers; if they did not know the intricacies of sermon discourse, perhaps that level of engagement that the play offers would escape them, and the success of the contrition sequence go unchallenged. The playwright thus allows for his audience to fracture quietly into a group 'in-the-know' and 'not-in-the-know,' with some members recognizing how the sermon form intersects and interferes with the execution of the play's allegory, and others not.

The varying registers of meaning that *Mankind* maintains effect the understanding of Mankind's status as animated *exemplum* and his disagreement with Mercy in the contrition sequence. Mercy's language is so troubling, and Mankind's contestation so crucial, because the playwright portrays Mercy attempting to convince Mankind of his sermon's efficacy with the same citation that his rival preacher Mischief has already used: Mercy says, just before confirming mercy's triumph over justice, "3et for my lofe ope thy lyppys and sey 'Miserere mei, Deus!'" (830).<sup>86</sup> "Miserere mei, Deus" are the first three words of the neck-verse, of the moral language that Mischief misappropriates and strips of figurative meaning to escape hanging on the gallows. To those audience members 'in-the-know' who recognize the contradictory use of the neck-verse, this moment of the contrition sequence may betray the inefficacy of *Mankind*'s sermon language, because the playwright in effect portrays Mercy as a physical body impeding the salvific concept that he represents. Presenting Mercy and his sermon as an intrinsic part of

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<sup>85</sup> Augustine Thompson, O.P., "From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event," Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 20.

<sup>86</sup> "Have mercy on me, God!"

the material world, *Mankind* provides no means by which its own language can be transcended. The language of Mercy's reasserted sermon remains as materialistic as the Vices', a commodity fallen at the play's conclusion, as Mercy himself even confirms when he correlates the words of his sermon with money: "But whan 3e be go, vsque ad minimum quadrantem 3e schall rekyn 3our ryght" (862).<sup>87</sup> In the end, Mercy's rhetoric does not escape the meaning with which the Vices infuse his language, and so *Mankind*'s rhetoric of redemption activates and sustains the vice that its generic expectations as a morality play should otherwise contain. Conversely, because Mischief does not actually utter the Latin of the neck-verse earlier in the play, perhaps Mercy's Latin citation in this sequence does transcend the material quality of Mischief's language, thereby reestablishing the allegorical meaning of Mercy's sermon and reinstating his language as efficacious. The structure of the play, built on the thematic sermon itself, obscures this interpretative uncertainty.

The thematic sermon informing *Mankind*'s dramatic structure nonetheless highlights this play's ability to assimilate Latin and vernacular diction into sermon rhetoric. This versatility enables *Mankind* to support coexisting but conflicting messages about the intention motivating sermon explication, a tension that its rhetorical form continually captures through the play's composition as complete thematic sermon containing a shorter, competing sermon parody. While *Mankind*'s rhetoric and form claim to rectify man and his fallen state, these means simultaneously complicate the path to salvation. *Mankind* portrays even moral language – fashioned as the means to redemption – as the culprit for humanity's fall, and exposes the struggle for faith as it is hindered by the materiality of language, specifically the materiality of the language of sermons. Yet it is through the vacillation of its sermon language that *Mankind*'s

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<sup>87</sup> "But when you are gone, continuously to the least coin you shall calculate your reward."

success as a performance emerges. For only when language's inefficacious and material state is revealed can Mercy's initial injunction to hold mercy in "premedytacyon" (44) be fully understood: the act of premeditation utilizes unspoken language, and so Mercy's admonition delicately eschews the materiality of the language of his sermon and the play, enabling the audience to depart remembering this point in order to find a real form of grace that will lead it to salvation.

## Chapter 2: Remembering How Not to Forget: *Memoria* in the Macro Manuscript

As my discussion of *Mankind*'s integrated form in Chapter One highlights, drama and sermons are co-contributors in the creation of East Anglia's performance continuum. This chapter broadens the examination of East Anglia's performance context by investigating the confluence that *memoria* (memory) perpetuates between medieval plays and preaching. *Memoria* is one of the five fundamental parts of classical rhetoric that *artes praedicandi* (the arts of preaching) teach,<sup>88</sup> and I will explore how the plays of the Macro Manuscript – *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle of Perseverance* – incorporate its directives as sermons do. I hold that this rhetorical principle lends a coherent rationale to the manuscript's compilation and that disclosing *memoria* and memory's presence in each of the Macro plays affords new insight into how they work as didactic pieces of literature.

Critics discuss the Macro Manuscript from a variety of perspectives, including the watermarks in the codex, the various hands of the scribes, and the manuscript's provenance and ownership,<sup>89</sup> but seldom offer a thematic rationale for the binding together of these three generically similar morality plays. This omission may perhaps be due to the somewhat roundabout way in which the manuscript came together. *Mankind* and *Wisdom* were composed in

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<sup>88</sup> The five rhetorical principles are "*inventio* (finding of material), *dispositio* (arranging of it), *elocutio* (putting words to invented material), *pronuntiatio* (physical delivery), and finally *memoria* (retention of ideas, words, and their order)." *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, James J. Murphy (ed.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), ix.

<sup>89</sup> See Stephen Spector, "Paper Evidence and the Genesis of the Macro Plays," *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 217-32; Richard Beadle, "Monk Thomas Hyngham's hand in the Macro Manuscript," Richard Beadle and A.J. Piper (eds.), *New Science Out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honor of A.I. Doyle*, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995), 315-41; Jeremy Griffiths, "Thomas Hyngham, Monk of Bury and the Macro Play Manuscript," Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (eds.), *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, Volume 5, (New York: Blackwell, 1988), 214-9; and Richard Beadle, "The Scribal Problem in the Macro Manuscript" *English Language Notes* 21 (1984), 1-13.

the mid-to-late decades of the fifteenth century. Based on references to coins in *Mankind*, a composition date between 1465 and 1470 is regularly assigned to it.<sup>90</sup> *Wisdom* was written between 1460 and 1463.<sup>91</sup> In addition to its appearance in the Macro Manuscript, the first 752 lines of *Wisdom* also survive in a manuscript called Digby 133,<sup>92</sup> a manuscript that I will discuss in Chapter Four. *Mankind* and *Wisdom* have been transmitted together since the late fifteenth century, a circumstance confirmed by “the same revealing signature of an early owner:

O liber si quis cui constas forte queretur  
 Hynghamque monacho dices super omnia consto.  
 [O book if anyone shall perhaps ask to whom you belong,  
 You will say, ‘I belong above everything to Hyngham, a monk.’<sup>93</sup>

Hyngham was probably Thomas Hyngham, a monk living in Bury St. Edmunds in East Anglia around 1475, and “it seems likely that he was not only the owner, but also one of the scribes of both plays.”<sup>94</sup> After Hyngham, *Mankind* and *Wisdom* passed through the hands of several owners, including Robert Oliver in the sixteenth century, the Reverend Cox Macro, Macro’s relation John Patterson, and “in 1820 was sold to the Gurney family of Keswick Hall, Norfolk, who put the three morality plays into a separate volume.”<sup>95</sup> As the date of 1820 suggests, *Castle*’s transmission history with *Mankind* and *Wisdom* began only after the medieval period. Written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century,<sup>96</sup> *Castle* “was copied by a single scribe

<sup>90</sup> Kathleen M. Ashley, ed. *Mankind* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Eccles ed., *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), xxx. Citations of the plays are from this volume.

<sup>92</sup> David N. Klausner, ed. *Two Moral Interludes: The Pride of Life and Wisdom* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), 4.

<sup>93</sup> Jessica Brantley and Thomas Fulton, “Mankind in a Year without Kings,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36:2 (2006), 321-54, at 326.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>95</sup> Ashley, 11. The three plays were actually “first bound together along with three other manuscripts in 1819, and then in the following year [1820] were rebound in a volume containing only the three plays” (David N. Klausner, ed. *The Castle of Perseverance* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 5.).

<sup>96</sup> Eccles, xi.

around 1440” who was “without question working from a previous manuscript.”<sup>97</sup> The Macro Manuscript, the name given to the volume containing *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle* in 1820, arrived at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C., in 1936. It resides there currently.

The late date of *Castle*’s addition to *Mankind* and *Wisdom* does not deter a thematic rationale, and at that, a medieval thematic rationale, for binding these plays together in the early nineteenth century. These plays demonstrate a proclivity for the faculty of memory, the act of remembering, and mnemonic techniques associated with the teaching of *memoria*. Since the techniques used for memory training in the medieval period were employed continuously into the nineteenth century,<sup>98</sup> *memoria* offers itself as a legitimate reason even in 1820 to bind together *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle*, three plays already of similar dialect and provenance.

*Memoria* is a technical as well as cultural concept. In terms of rhetoric and debate as they were taught in the classical and medieval periods, *memoria* refers to the technical aspect of remembering the words of a composition so that it can be delivered before an audience. But the principles of *memoria* as a cultural concept involve more than the simple regurgitation of sentences stored in the memory. As Mary Carruthers explains, *memoria* is ethical, “an integral part of the virtue of prudence, that which makes moral judgment possible. Training the memory [is] much more than a matter of providing oneself with the means to compose and converse intelligently when books were not readily to hand, for it [is] in trained memory that one [builds] character, judgment, citizenship, and piety.”<sup>99</sup> *Memoria* serves a social function within medieval culture because *memoria* is the process through which an individual internalizes the learning and

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<sup>97</sup> Klausner, 5.

<sup>98</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-45.

<sup>99</sup> Carruthers, 9.

morality of other thinkers and writers: “A work is not truly read until one has made it part of oneself...Merely running one’s eyes over the written pages is not reading at all, for the writing must be transferred into memory, from graphemes of parchment or papyrus or paper to images written in one’s brain by emotion and sense.”<sup>100</sup> *Memoria* gives meaning to the self, and it is from the cultivation of a firm memory that an individual’s sense of self emerges through the new insights and associations that ruminating over memorized knowledge enables. There are of course numerous mnemonic devices and strategies to achieve this end, but one of the essential marks of a well trained memory, as Carruthers suggests, is its ability to transpose text and picture as mnemonics for the same information.<sup>101</sup> Texts and pictures are two different expressions of the same process that produces *memoria*: a picture offers a narrative like a text does, just as a text paints a picture like images do, and being able to internalize, cross-reference, and recollect each is where the value of both lie for the memory’s ethical development of character.

Drama affords an opportunity to examine the interplay of text and picture not only as the relation between play script and performed scene but also as the transformation of theological doctrine into didactic entertainment. Plays are pictorial images of Church texts but so too are Church texts pictures, as the *exempla* in sermons betray. *Mankind*’s sermon structure and use of Mankind as an *exemplum* for preaching captures this very dynamism. Through the mutual employment of *exempla*, plays and sermons enact the confluence innate to *memoria*, the *exemplum* serving the same ethical, moral, and social purposes in drama and sermons that a trained memory does in society for an individual’s character. The Macro Manuscript offers a unique space in which to disclose this fluidity because its plays are didactic not only in their

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>101</sup> See Carruthers, 274-338, for a detailed discussion of this process.

presentation of protagonists who fall from and return to grace but also in their fundamental incorporation of mnemotechniques that *actually teach* the audience how to remember elements like theme and plot. *Mankind*'s sermon form is, and should be understood as, a mnemotechnique that teaches members of the audience how to remember the play's allegorical message of mercy: its Latin marks the divisions of the sermon that compartmentalize the play's action into short segments for the memory to store. Similarly, the procession and dance sequence that *Wisdom* builds into its plot function similarly to the sermon divisions in *Mankind*, partitioning the action of the play into virtue and vice (and I note that, even though *Wisdom* does not incorporate the sermon form as *Mankind* does, it nevertheless appropriates sermonesque language and rhetoric).<sup>102</sup> The procession in the first segment concludes Anima's catechism and depicts Wisdom, Anima, her three Mightes, and the five virgins (Anima's five wits) gracefully singing "Tota pulchra es," "You are entirely beautiful," as they exit (sd 324). This scene, with the pause in action it allows, becomes a tableau, or ekphrasis, upon which members of the audience can meditate, the fluidity of *Wisdom*'s 'text as picture' and 'picture as text' serving as a mnemotechnique.<sup>103</sup> *Castle* can also be separated into distinct units as *Mankind* and *Wisdom*, but *Castle* achieves its segmentation through repetition. The repetition of images, speech patterns,

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<sup>102</sup> The catechism between Wisdom and Anima in the first segment and the sermon Wisdom delivers in the third segment of the play are overt incorporations of preaching techniques. Ralph Louis Mastriani makes a study in an unpublished dissertation of *Wisdom* as a sermon, and while his primary claim that it is a sermon is inaccurate, the many preaching devices that he uncovers the play employing are useful. These devices include "interpretation of a name, multiplication of authorities, metaphor, comparison and contrast, discussion of / natural qualities, and repetition" (Mastriani, 14-5). For a full discussion of the subject, see Ralph Louis Mastriani, *Wisdom, Who Is Christ, and Its Relationship to the Medieval Sermon*. Dissertation (St. Louis University: 1977).

<sup>103</sup> Since the text of *Wisdom* is heavily indebted to Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, a mystical text dealing in part with the soul, I would go so far as to conjecture that *Wisdom* as a play is the picture of the words that Hilton's text paints. Considered in this way, *Wisdom* actually performs the very mnemonic service that it also conveys to its audience.



and of the protagonist's double fall into sin performs the mnemonic function of ingraining information in the memory.

The mnemotechniques that *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle* incorporate are so foundational to their didacticism that they almost act as subliminal advertisements of *memoria*, influencing what they want their audiences to remember without the audience realizing why and how it retains the information. The thematic proclivities for education that these plays demonstrate employ, as they disguise, the plays' mnemonic devices in the language of competing rhetoricians: in *Mankind*, Mercy and Mischief contend over the figurative and literal meanings of mercy, Mercy directing Mankind towards God for its acquisition and Mischief towards Titivillus and the three N's; in *Wisdom*, Wisdom and Lucifer battle over the soul's knowledge of the *vita contemplativa*, Wisdom telling Anima/Mind that it brings her/him to God and Lucifer to the world; finally, *Castle* presents three sets of rhetors influencing Humanum Genus (HG): Malus Angelus, the Vices, and Truth and Justice fight with Bonus Angelus, the Virtues, and Mercy and Peace over the implications of Christ's crucifixion. Each play uses the conflicting perspectives of its rhetoricians to place its protagonist's memory on display, making the way in which language influences the memory of prime importance. *Mankind* and *Wisdom* explore how different aspects of language, as a spoken process in *Mankind* and as a meditative process in *Wisdom*, affect Mankind and Anima. Thus Mercy teaches Mankind through the specific Latin authorities of his sermon whereas Wisdom guides Anima towards the experience of knowledge:

The hye worthynes of my loue  
 Angell nor man can tell plainly.  
 Yt may be felt in experyens from aboue  
 But not spoke ne tolde as yt ys veryly. (61-4)

*Wisdom*'s meditative process removes memory from the body and embeds it in the cognitive process of the soul's Mind, while *Mankind*'s spoken process embeds memory in the actions of

Mankind's body. Both Mankind and Mind fall into sin when the internal process of their memories become embodied externally, locating the body as the source hindering the soul in *Mankind* and the soul as the source of its own hindrance in *Wisdom*.

Unlike *Mankind* and *Wisdom*, *Castle* does not embody its protagonist's memory. HG decides rather quickly to lead a life of sin in the world, and the conflict of the play's three sets of rhetors examines how rhetorical ploys work externally on the memory. The siege of the Castle, where the Vices present reasons for HG to leave and the Virtues reasons for him to stay, is the most obvious example of how the play employs rhetorical options to influence HG's forgetfulness and remembrance of God. *Castle's* external examination of language's influence on the memory allows its mnemotechniques to be more recognizable to the audience, perhaps because HG's repeated fall into sin sparks more of an emotional response from the audience than Mankind's and Anima/Mind's single fall. And this element of *Castle*, as well as of *Mankind* and *Wisdom*, should not be overlooked: each of these plays stimulates its audiences' emotions and memories through the staged successes and failures of their protagonists' ability to remember God. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, *Mankind's*, *Wisdom's*, and *Castle's* engagement with memory and mnemotechniques heightens the didacticism already present in them, showing that there is more to remember than the simple fall and redemption of a protagonist and more ways with which to remember it than the action of the play alone.

### I. Writing a Memory of the Self: *Memoria* in *Mankind*

The connection between memory, mercy, and a protagonist's salvation is staged nowhere more effectively than through *Mankind's* sermon structure. The sermon that Mercy delivers in *Mankind* attempts to guide its titular character towards salvation by offering him linguistic

fortification against sin. Mercy uses the sermon form continually to emphasize to both Mankind and the audience the necessity of remembering: Mercy's call to "premedytacyon" (44) in the Protheme, to "[t]hynke on [his] doctryne" (258) in the Division of the Parts, and to "[r]emembyr how redy [he] was to help" (891) in his Conclusion are but a few of the many examples of how his sermon calls on memory to combat vice. This section briefly reconsiders the discussion of *Mankind's* sermon structure that I uncover in Chapter One in order to examine how memory, working in conjunction with the sermon form, accentuates the play's allegorical presentation of salvation.

The challenge that the Vices present to the efficacy of *Mankind's* sermon language revolves around their ability to simultaneously infuse and replace its figurative meaning with an embodied corporeality. In his initial confrontation, Mischief challenges the understanding Mercy imparts to corn and chaff as representatives of salvation and damnation respectively. The three N's compound this challenge when they embody language to render Mercy's "few and well sett...wordys" (102) an ineffective means of control, dancing around him and tripping him. The Vices' contestation of language at the outset of *Mankind* becomes the basis for the ensuing interpretative struggle over the sermon form that the play delivers. Memory informs the dramatist's execution of the play's sermon form most noticeably in the first and second Divisions wherein Mankind must remember the lessons he learns. In the first Division, Mankind writes down what Mercy teaches him in the form of the *Memento* verse, an authority aptly reminding him to remember. His action shows that he listens to Mercy's advice, especially when he labors productively and fights off Vice with his spade. In the second Division, Mankind is subsumed into the play's cohort of Vice as a result of the lie Titivillus whispers in his ear. This lie causes Mankind to think that Mercy is dead, and so he follows Titivillus' advice to ask for mercy from

Mischief and the three N's. Mankind proves himself an adept student in these Divisions, equally capable of receiving instruction toward virtue and vice. What the second Division dramatizes then is the interpretative difficulty inherent to language; for, in this Division, Mankind simultaneously remembers and forgets: he remembers Titivillus' lesson and forgets Mercy's, and whether his memory serves him properly is simply a matter of whom he perceives the correct teacher, and what he understands the right lesson, to be. In contrast to the first Division wherein Mankind only has Mercy to follow, in the second Division, he actually has to choose between discourses, a choice which exposes language's inefficacy as a salvific instrument in and of itself.

The interplay of the first and second Divisions reveals that *Mankind* represents memory in capacities helpful and harmful to its protagonist's salvation, a dichotomy that the portrayal of Latin reinforces. Mankind's attempt at remembering happens through Latin: he cites the authority, "Memento, homo, quod cinis es et in cinerem reuerteris" (321).<sup>104</sup> However, it is the Vices, not Mercy, who speak Latin first in the play, as Mischief's nonsense verse mocking Mercy, "[c]orn seruit bredibus, chaffe horsibus, straw fyrybusque" (57), confirms. Mischief's sentence destabilizes Latin's authority, not only as the language of the Church but also as a comprehensible language: entirely made up, Mischief's words innately lack a legitimate coherent meaning and sense-producing quality. The manner in which the Vices contend with Mercy over Latin is crucial to understanding how memory influences the play's titular character, as Newguise's "[p]rauo te" (124), "I curse you," the next snippet of Latin directed at Mercy, reveals:

NEW GYSE: Ey, ey! yowr body ys full of Englysch Laten.

I am aferde yt wyll brest.  
'*Prauo te*,' quod þe bocher onto me

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<sup>104</sup> "Remember man, you are dust, and into dust you will return." All Latin translations are my own.

When I stale a leg of motun.  
 Ze are a stronge cunnyng clerke.

NOWADAYS: I prey yow hertyly, worschyppull clerke,  
 To haue this Englysch mad in Laten:

‘I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys,  
 Ande I haue schetun yowr mowth full of turdys.’  
 Now opyn yowr sachell wyth Laten wordys  
 Ande sey me þis in clerycall manere! (122-34)

After accusing Mercy of being “full of Englysch Laten” (122), Newguise goes on to place a short Latin phrase in the mouth of a butcher, that is, in the mouth of a man whose profession involves dismemberment. The butcher is an intriguing illustrative choice given that the Vices’ appearance on stage starts with concern over Nought “[breaking his] neke” (74), that they imperil Mercy’s body with a trip, and that Mischief’s sermon will deliver threats of bodily harm to the three N’s and Mankind alike. The physical violence that the butcher underscores and that the Vices’ presence actually creates results from their ability to dismember the figurative meaning Mercy imparts to his sermon language, and especially to the Latin he quotes to lend his sermon authority. In fact, Nowadays demystifies Latin’s transcendent authority before Mercy can even establish it through his insistence that Mercy translate his scatological taunt into “Laten wordys”: “‘I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys, / Ande I haue schetun yowr mowth full of turdys’” (131-2). Nowadays transforms the food, or “curdys” (132), in his example into feces, human refuse devoid of all nutritional content. And his scatological provocations go one step further when he employs Latin to harass Nought: “Osculare fundamentum” (142), “kiss my ass.” The Vices’ engagement with Latin extracts its figurative meaning, that is, the spiritual sustenance Mercy ascribes to it, leaving Latin a useless, material product, as equally soiled as the voice of the preacher who attempts to convey its higher meaning.

Mankind heightens the tension of language's authority and embodiment when he appears, lamenting how his double composition "[o]f a body and a soull, of condycyon contrarye" (195) afflicts his memory:

Thys ys to me a lamentable story  
 To se my flesch of my soull to haue gouernance.  
 Wher þe goodewyff ys master, þe goodeman may be sory.  
 I may both syth and sobbe, þis ys a pytuose remembrance. (198-201)

Mankind's memory of his carnal condition literally impedes his soul; and, calling his flesh a "stynkyng dungehyll" (204), Mankind's use of scatology problematically aligns him with the Vices as well as with an understanding of language that is entirely corporeal and embodied.

Mercy attempts to mitigate Mankind's innate corporeal and linguistic alignment with Vice by educating him about God through his sermon, a form of language that reinvests Latin with authority. Mercy speaks Latin for the first time in the play when he delivers the Division of the Parts of his sermon. References to memory connect the presentation of Mercy's authorities, uniting the first Division's Latin authority of "*Vita hominis est milicia super terram*" (228)<sup>105</sup> with the second Division's authority of "[m]esure is tresure" (237) and ensuing horse image:

The temptacyon of þe flesch 3e must resyst lyke a man,  
 For þer ys euer a batell betwyx þe soull and þe body:  
 '*Vita hominis est milicia super terram.*'

Oppresse yowr gostly enmy and be Crystys own knyght.  
 Be neuer a cowarde ageyn yowr aduersary.  
 Yf 3e wll be crownyde, 3e must nedys fyght.  
 Intende well and Gode wyll be yow adjutory.

Remember, my frende, þe tyme of contynuance.  
 So helpe me Gode, yt ys but a chery tyme.  
 Spende yt well; serue Gode wyth hertys affyance.  
 Dystempure not yowr brayn wyth goode ale nor wyth wyn.

Mesure is tresure. Y forbyde yow not þe vse.

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<sup>105</sup> "The life of man is a battle upon the earth."

Mesure yowrsylf euer; be ware of excesse.  
 Þe superfluoue gyse I wyll þat 3e refuse;  
 When nature ys suffysyde, anon þat 3e sese.

Yf a man haue an hors and kepe hym not to hye,  
 He may then reull hym at hys own dysyere.  
 Yf he be fede ouerwell he wyll dysobey  
 Ande in happe cast hys master in þe myre (226-44)

Mercy's call to remember comes in the same breath as the reminder about Mankind's looming Day of Judgment, a Day upon which writers of *artes memorativae* (the arts of memory) recommend meditating to strengthen the memory and the awareness of humanity's debt to God.<sup>106</sup> Mercy advises Mankind to prepare for his Judgment both as a knight and a man of moderation, applying what he means by moderation to Mankind figuratively with an image of a horse. But at this point, Newguise yells from offstage, interrupting Mercy's figurative exposition in order to replace it with a literal and carnal meaning:

3e sey trew, ser, ye are no faytour.  
 I haue fede my wyff so well tyll sche ys my master.  
 I haue a grett wonde on my hede, lo! and theron leyth a playster,  
 Ande anoþer þer I pysse my peson.  
 And my wyf were yowr hors, sche wold yow all to-banne.  
 3e fede yowr hors in mesure, 3e are a wyse man. (245-50)

Newguise reinterprets the horse image as a corporeal relationship between him and his wife, a relationship that, subsequently, results in bodily harm: Newguise's head has a "playster" (247) on it and he apparently is frightened enough to "pysse [his] peson" (248), or wet his pants. Newguise's marital relationship even complements Mankind's self-understanding, wherein Mankind explained his double composition as an imbalanced marriage: "Wher þe goodewyff ys master, þe goodeman may be sory" (200). Newguise destabilizes the language and meaning that

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<sup>106</sup> Kimberly A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 138.

Mercy's reasserted sermon form tries to stabilize, his interruption underscoring the susceptibility of Mankind's memory to virtuous and vicious lessons. The subversive alignment of Mankind's body with the Vices now occurs even while Mercy is present.

In spite of Newguise, Mercy again bridges his second and third authorities through memory, invoking it twice: "Thynke on my doctryne; yt xall be yowr defence. / Learne wyll I am here, sett my wordys in herte" (258-9); and then, "Thynke well in yowr hert, yowr name ys Mankynde; / Be not wnkynde to Gode, I prey yow be Hys seruante" (279-80). He then states the third authority in Latin: "Ande sey as he[Job] seyde in yowr trobyll and aduersyte: / 'Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut sibi placuit, ita factum / est; nomen Domini benedictum!'" (291-3). Mercy's advice to recite Job's words whenever Mankind faces a difficult situation suggests that Mankind must meditate on the lessons that Mercy teaches him. Indeed, *artes memorativae* encourage mumbling and moving the lips during reading and meditation to enhance the memory's focus.<sup>107</sup> Mercy also implores Mankind to learn his words by heart, advice which again underscores that Mankind must memorize these lessons; that is, he must internalize these words and make them a part of himself: "Gregory the Great writes, 'We ought to transform what we read within our very selves, so that when our mind is stirred by what it hears, our life may concur by practicing what has been heard.'"<sup>108</sup> Mankind needs to meditate upon Mercy's doctrine if he is to incorporate it into himself, for, as Carruthers explains, "[r]eading is to be digested, to be ruminated," and to be "[built] upon during meditation; this phase of reading is ethical in its nature".<sup>109</sup> Internalizing what one reads builds virtue and ethical character, not to mention fortitude against vice. Mankind fails to make Mercy's doctrine a part of himself and to

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<sup>107</sup> Carruthers, 164.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 205.



secure his virtuous nature, however, because, in the first Division, in order to have a “memory of [himself]” (319), Mankind writes down the words of the *Memento* verse on a piece of paper instead of keeping them “in [his] herte” (259, 279):

Her whyll I sytt and tytyll in this papyr  
 The incomparable astat of my promycyon.  
 Worschypfull souerence, I haue wretyn here  
 The gloryuse remembrance of my nobyll condycyon.

To haue remos and memory of mysylff þus wretyn yt ys,  
 To defende me from all superstycyus charmys:  
 ‘Memento, homo, quod cinis es et in cinerem reuerteris.’ (315-21)

Deeply ironic, the act of writing down the language Mankind is supposed to remember is what eventually causes his forgetfulness. By visually pulling the Latin words of the *Memento* verse out of his head, the place where memory works internally, and making them external to himself, Mankind offers his memory and himself as material objects for the Vices to manipulate.

The “crystemes songe” (332)<sup>110</sup> that the Vices now lead the audience in singing investigates the ramification of Mankind’s act of writing by exposing the ease with which the Vices are able to manipulate material bodies:

NOUGHT: Now I prey all þe yemandry þat ys here  
 To synge wyth us wyth a mery chere:  
 Yt ys wretyn wyth a coll, yt ys wretyn wyth a cole,

NEW GYSE & NOWADAYS: Yt ys wretyn wyth a colle, yt ys wretyn wyth a colle,

NOUGHT: He þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll, he þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll,

NEW GYSE & NOWADAYS: He þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll, he þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll,

NOUGHT: But he wyppe hys ars clen, but he wyppe hys ars clen,

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<sup>110</sup> The title of this song is misleading, denoting only that it is a “rowdy song [that] is part of seasonal revelry” (Ashley, ed., *Mankind*, 51).

NEW GYSE & NOWADAYS: But he wypppe hys ars clen, but he wypppe hys ars clen,

NOUGHT: On hys breche yt xall be sen, on hys breche yt xall be sen,

NEW GYSE & NOWADAYS: On hys breche yt xall be sen, onhys breche yt xall be sen.

*Cantant Omnes*: Hoylyke, holyke, holyke! holyke, holyke, holyke! (333-43)

Since the subject of this song is scatological, when the audience sings it with the Vices, it transforms itself into a “stynkyng dungehyll” (204); that is, into a body whose self-understanding, like Mankind’s, is only carnal and corporeal. The Vices reinforce the literal meaning of language and the divested authority of Latin with their final line, as the scatological pun on on *holyke* – hole-lick – conveys.

Even though Mankind does not properly internalize the *Memento* quote, he succeeds in repelling the Vices during the first Division because he keeps the written record of his memory with him, pinned to his jacket. Mankind’s avoidance of vice in this Division confirms his defense of language’s figurative meaning, as Newguise’s first taunt betrays:

Ey, Mankynde, Gode spede yow wyth yowr spade!  
I xall tell yow of a maryage:  
I wolde yowr mowth and hys ars þat this made  
Wer maryede junctly together. (344-7)

Since the act of sowing corn is often interpreted as a metaphor for preaching, when Newguise’s jab unites Mankind’s mouth with the Lord’s anus, he attempts to impart a literal and corporeal meaning to the spiritual work Mankind conducts. Nought also capitalizes on the opportunity to alter the meaning of sowing seed by suggesting that Mankind “geett...a wyffe” (359), to which Newguise lasciviously adds: “Ey, how 3e turne þe erth vppe and down! / I haue be in my days in many goode town / 3ett saw I neuer such another tyllynge” (361-3). Nought then typifies the threat that the Vices’ corporeality bears to preaching:

Here xall be goode corn, he may not mysse yt;  
 Yf he wyll haue reyn he may ouerpysse yt;  
 Ande yf he wyll haue compasse he may ouerblysse yt  
 A lytyll wyth hys ars lyke. (372-5)

Nought makes the end products of corporality, human waste, the matter from which preaching derives its sustenance. The three N's attempt to completely dismantle the sanctity of preaching language, and their disrespect, though admittedly hysterical, earns them a sound beating from Mankind's spade, the symbol of his power as sower of seed and preacher of the word. Mankind's self-memory allows him to re-member the figurative language that the Vices attempt to dismantle, the re-membering of Latin remaining in opposition to the dismemberment of Vice.

Titivillus' arrival marks the start of the second Division, the Division in which Mankind's memory of Mercy wavers. Titivillus is a demon intimately connected with memory: he gathers mispronounced Latin in a sack or writes down the idle words of gossips; that is, he is a demon who damns clerics who have faulty or lazy memories and sermon-goers who forget that they will have to account for every spoken word at Judgment Day. Through his proclivities for gathering language, Titivillus actively creates a memory, as a written record, of the words that condemn men and women. In *Mankind*, Titivillus serves as a marker of Mankind's memory, which also exists as a written record. In the second Division, Titivillus makes material the competing lessons that Mankind encounters, Mankind choosing to remember Titivillus' and to forget Mercy's. After Mankind discards his spade "for now and for euer" (548), Titivillus approaches "hys ere and tytyll[s] þerin" (557), testing Mankind's memory of Mercy by telling him to leave his prayer and relieve himself; after all, "[n]ature compellys" (560). Mankind exits the stage to void his bladder, and while he is gone, Titivillus gloats over his ability to send Mankind "forth to schyte lesynges" (568). Mankind performs the very actions of corporeal purgation that Nought earlier recommended would aid his crops. The rejection of figurative language that Mankind

began by throwing away his spade now materializes as the waste of his body, and Mankind's inability to remember how to interpret figurative language casts him into sin. Returning to the stage, Mankind falls asleep, a situation that prompts Titivillus to whisper a lie about Mercy and tell Mankind to "[a]ryse and aske mercy of Neu Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought" (602). Mankind quickly does so, enacting mercy's literal meaning of forgiveness from the people he previously attacked instead of preserving mercy's spiritual acquisition from God.

Though incorrect and acting in sin from Mercy's perspective, Mankind nevertheless successfully remembers the lessons that the Vices teach him. What makes the Vices' sermon so threatening and, arguably more successful than Mercy's, then, is Mankind's ability to internalize its message more easily. When Titivillus approaches the already frustrated Mankind to make him void his bladder, all he has to do is "tytyll" in his ear (557). This action, in addition to the lie Titivillus whispers while Mankind sleeps, depicts the Vices directly implanting their lessons into Mankind's head, the source of his memory. Mankind absorbs their message quickly and internally. This facility with memory is what hampers Mankind with Mercy: he cannot internalize Mercy's lesson properly, a point which the playwright's use of the word "tytyll" fittingly highlights: Mankind "sytt[s] and tytyll[s] in þis paper" (315), that is, writes down the *Memento* verse. Since Mankind displays his memory as physical letters, he comes to embody the literal representation of what memory is, the actual letters of language, rather than the substance of memory, the figurative meaning of the letters and words that create a person's virtue: "Writing itself, the storing of information in symbolic 'representations,' is understood to be critical for knowing,"<sup>111</sup> but "writing was always thought to be a memory aid, not a substitute for it,"<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Carruthers, 30.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 156.

because the “trouble with a written composition is that it becomes detached from its author.”<sup>113</sup> And this is exactly what happens to Mankind – Mankind becomes detached from Mercy and, more importantly, from the written record and memory of himself: the *Memento* verse is lost to Mankind when the Vices shorten his jacket. Mankind brazenly volunteers his self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-memory of God when he offers his jacket to the Vices to tailor. Bereft of the memory of his self-identify, Mankind falls into sin and the clutches of Vice. Mankind’s separation from his virtuous and ethical self reflects the cultural distrust surrounding writing in the medieval period, offering perspective on why “the devil [becomes] a writer,” as Titivillus does, in the sermon *exempla* of this period.<sup>114</sup> Mankind’s failure to remember Mercy also suggests that Titivillus’ *exemplum* of Mercy expiring on the gallows is more striking, and therefore more effective mnemonically, than Mercy’s corn and chaff *exemplum*.

Mercy of course returns in the third Division of the play to pick up the broken pieces of Mankind and his memory that the Vices leave behind, because both Mankind and his memory must be reassembled if he is to achieve God’s mercy. Regardless of whether *Mankind*’s sermon language succeeds linguistically in its representation of salvation, the Conclusion of Mercy’s sermon does reinstate memory as the tool necessary to procure redemption. Mercy reiterates again and again the role that remembering plays in promoting activity that avoids sin: he tells Mankind to “thynke on þis lessun” (865), chides him for being “obliuyows of [his] doctrine monytorye” (879), and reminds him to “[r]emembyr how redy [he] was to help” (891), before turning explicitly to the audience and advising it to “[t]hynke and remembyr þe world ys but a wanite” (909). Mercy preserves memory’s salvific purpose, even if Mankind does not properly

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>114</sup> M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*. Second Edition (Malden, M.A.: Blackwell, 1993), 193.

use it throughout the play. *Mankind* suggests that internal language, when properly memorized and meditated upon, sidesteps the hindrances to which spoken and written language are vulnerable. The question of meditation's success, however, is the subject that *Wisdom*, *Mankind*'s companion play, explores in detail.

## II. Meditating through Numbers: Mind as Memory in *Wisdom*

Meditation enables the soul to attain divine companionship, and the achievement of this goal is the first image that *Wisdom* presents: Wisdom, Who is Christ, stands before the audience reminding it that a memory trained in the knowledge of Christ unites the soul with him as bridegroom. *Wisdom*'s drama therefore involves Anima's ability to maintain the cleanliness and perfection with which she begins, a drama which is depicted through the part of her soul that is responsible for meditation upon God. Called the three Mightes, Mind, Understanding, and Will face temptations that test their self-knowledge, and especially through Mind, whose chief responsibility is to remember God, memory itself is examined as a source leading to sin. In addition to depicting the memory at work, *Wisdom* incorporates numbers as a mnemotechnique to aid the audience in remembering the play's moral of uniting the soul with God. The three Mightes are at the center of the painstaking attention *Wisdom* pays to numerology, making their crucial function of remembering Anima's salvation the gateway for virtue and vice to enter the soul.

Since *Wisdom*'s numerology is quite intricate, it is necessary first to discuss the composition of the soul and the series of associations that its composition invites. As I have already stated, *Wisdom*'s numerology stems from the soul's composition, which, while a single and complete entity in itself, can be broken down into component parts. Its first division is bipartite, consisting of a higher, rational half and a lower, sensual half. The Mightes comprise the

former, and are themselves in a hierarchical relationship: Mind is the superior reason, Understanding the inferior reason, and Will the logical conclusion. The sensual half of the soul consists of the five wits, which are in need of governance by the Mightes.<sup>115</sup> The division of the soul into several parts signals that tension exists within it, because, while three is a perfect number, two is less perfect, and this aspect of the soul's bipartite composition disposes it towards sin.<sup>116</sup>

Anima's success in uniting with Christ as his bride depends on the ability of her three Mightes to embody the psychological capacities they signify: Mind is the self-knowledge that constantly thinking about God acquires, Understanding is the result of what self-knowledge and self-study in the image of God creates, Will is the feeling of love for God and charity for man that understanding produces.<sup>117</sup> Mind, Understanding, and Will, then, are the memory of, the meditation upon, and the love for God. To hinder any part of this system is to jeopardize Anima's state of grace and her union with Christ; for, it is through the three Mightes that each soul maintains its purity and gains its approximation to God, as Wisdom explains:

Lo, thes thre myghtys in on Soule be:  
 Mynde, Wyll, and Wndyrstondyng.  
 By Mynde, of Gode þe Fadyr knowyng haue ye;  
 By Wndyrstondyng of Gode þe Sone ye haue knowyng;  
 By Wyll, wyche turnyt into loue brennyng,  
 Gode þe Holy Gost, þat clepyde ys lowe[love]:  
 Not thre Godys but on Gode in beyng.

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<sup>115</sup> The division and subdivision of the soul into component parts is reminiscent of the thematic sermon's organization. Wisdom explains this composition in detail in the play (135-60). I would like to linger over the tripartite division of Anima's soul into Mind, Understanding, and Will for a moment because it is intriguing that these divisions and subdivisions result in three characters who end up leading Anima down a path of sin. The same situation occurs in *Mankind*, when, after Mercy and Mischief battle over the interpretation of corn and chaff, the three N's appear on stage as a corporeal embodiment of the three part explanation for chaff's utility that Mischief just offered.

<sup>116</sup> Michael R. Kelley, *Flamboyant Drama: A Study of The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind, and Wisdom* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 108.

<sup>117</sup> For a more thorough explanation, see Rev. John Joseph Molloy, O.P., *A Theological Interpretation of the Moral Play, Wisdom, Who Is Christ* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 36-45.

Thus eche clene soule ys symylytude of Gode abowe. (277-84)

Each soul is a microcosmic construction of the Trinity, of which Wisdom as Christ is a part and himself represents (1-16). The correlation between the three Mightes and the Trinity reveals one way that *Wisdom* employs numerology – to draw parallels between different groups of three. As soon as one association is made, such as that between the Mightes and the Trinity, another is built upon it. Wisdom continues:

By Mynde feythe in þe Father haue we,  
Hoppe in our Lorde Jhesu by Wndyrstondynge;  
Ande be Wyll, in þe Holy Gost, charyte:  
Lo, thes thre pryncypall wertus of yow thre sprynge.  
Thys þe clene soule stondyth as a kynge;  
And abowe all þis 3e have free wyll;  
Off þat be ware befor all thyng,  
For yff þat perverte, all þis dothe spylle. (285-92)

Faith, Hope, and Charity are the three theological virtues. Their expression becomes known to the soul when the Mightes' behavior remains holy and so approaches the Trinity. The correlation of the Mightes, the Trinity, and the theological virtues stresses that Anima's education in virtue brings her progressively closer to uniting with God. Didactic in function, *Wisdom's* numerology also cautions against vice:

Ye haue thre enmyes; of hem be ware:  
The Worlde, þe Flesche, and þe Fende.  
...  
Wan suggesyston to þe Mynde doth apere,  
Wndyrstondynge, delyght not 3e þerin;  
Consent not, Wyll, yll lessons to lere,  
Ande than suche steryngys by no syn.  
Thei do but purge þe soule wer ys such contrauersye. (293-4, 301-5)

As these parallels reveal, the soul has three enemies that will attack the psychological faculties for which Mind, Understanding, and Will are responsible through the threefold ploy of suggestion, delight, and consent. Suggestion is what Mind does to remember the Lord, delight is



what Understanding feels in meditating upon the Lord, and consent is what Will expresses to love the Lord. If any of the three enemies turn the suggestion of the Mind from God, Understanding will follow by delighting in its new focus, as will Will by consenting to behave as the Mind and Understanding direct. This tripartite association reveals that the faculties performing Anima's knowledge of God are equally capable of knowing vice.

The series of associations that *Wisdom's* numerology constructs is itself a mnemotechnique that teaches the audience how to remember several disparate but parallel correlations: "The crucial task for recollection is the construction of the orderly grid of numbers which one can see in the memory."<sup>118</sup> Using numbers to catalogue information is a strategy that writers of *artes praedicandi*, for example, employ to remember their sermon divisions and subdivisions: "Whatever the number of one's sermon division, Robert of Basevorn recommends attaching a set of symbols or markers that incorporate that number and can be used as a mnemonic for the subdivisions. For example...the seven mercies of God, the eight Beatitudes, the nine orders of angels, the Ten Commandments, the twelve hours of the day"<sup>119</sup> help a preacher to remember the number of his divisions by association. A similar strategy is at work in *Wisdom*. The number three enables the audience to group what it learns in related but distinct categories, like a drawer containing individual folders in a filing cabinet. Recollecting the number three will produce a memory of the rational half of the soul, the Trinity, the theological virtues, the enemies of humankind, and the mental faculties through which the three Might's operate. Once these topics have been catalogued under the number three, associations between them can

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<sup>118</sup> Carruthers, 82.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 107.

emerge through meditation. For instance, one might realize that three represents a way to remember how virtue and vice can enter the very fabric of the soul:

<u>Virtue</u>	<u>Vice</u>
3 Might (as Mind, Understanding, Will)	3 Might (as Maintenance, Perjury, Lechery)
3 person Trinity	3 enemies
3 theological virtues	3 part temptation of mental faculties

The number three serves as a type of shorthand for the memory; it reminds the individual that there are three topics, each topic of which consists of its own set of three, and that these three's lead to the soul's virtuous or vicious behavior.

But *Wisdom's* engagement with numerology is more complex still; for, it uses the number three as a starting point from which to multiply the soul's expression of virtue and vice.<sup>120</sup> For example, Anima makes nine catechismal requests of Wisdom for her Mind to gain self-knowledge and Lucifer tempts Mind's self-knowledge with nine reasons to turn away from God.<sup>121</sup> *Wisdom* communicates the parallel activities of the soul's education and temptation, the two moments when it gathers knowledge about salvation and sin, as numerically equal events that are multiples of the number three. *Wisdom's* numerology and mnemotechniques therefore begin in the Might who embody humanity's predisposition toward grace and damnation.

The dances in which the Might participate when they choose to forget God systematically illustrate how they multiply vice in the play. There are three dances, in which each Might has six dancers, making eighteen dancers in total. Each Might's sin multiplies by a factor of six (three doubled), exponentially increasing the number of bodies representing sin on stage. When the Might join their respective dance troupes, the number of the troupe increases to

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<sup>120</sup> See Appendix A for a full description of the numbers in the play.

<sup>121</sup> Kelley, 107-11. I am indebted to Kelley's observation of the precise nature of *Wisdom's* engagement with numerology. In this and the following paragraph, I apply what Kelley uncovers to *memoria*.

seven, “a numbyr of dyscorde and inperfyghtnes” (697), which Mind, now as Maintenance, says. When the Mightys dance with their troupes, twenty-one bodies express sin on stage.<sup>122</sup> The mutation of the soul from grace to sin is reflected numerologically through the shift from multiples of three to multiples of seven, seven of course also being the number of Deadly Sins.<sup>123</sup> Significantly, the soul’s redemption at the end of the play returns it to behavior that occurs in three’s and multiples thereof. The soul is restored to grace through the three part process of penance (contrition, confession, satisfaction), the nine part sermon Wisdom delivers, and the nine pleas Anima makes for forgiveness. The numbers three and seven, as well as their respective multiples, help the audience categorize and remember the play’s action as virtuous and vicious.

In addition to deploying a subtle and nuanced mnemonic for cataloguing behavior, *Wisdom* also exposes the cognitive process of memory at work through Mind. Even though *Wisdom*’s playwright dubs him “Mind,” the faculty that Mind represents is just as often called “memory” in patristic writings and preaching materials. In *De Trinitate*, the text from which the medieval understanding of the soul as an analogy for the Trinity derives,<sup>124</sup> Augustine enumerates the three Mightys as memory, intellect, and will.<sup>125</sup> In the thirteenth century, the Franciscan David von Ausburg treats the faculties of the soul at length in his *De externis et internis hominis compositione*, calling them memory, understanding, and will.<sup>126</sup> The *Fasciculus*

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<sup>122</sup> The product of six times three, eighteen, also results from nine times two. While nine and two do not directly relate to the circumstances of the dances and the dancers, they nonetheless hearken to earlier numeric themes in the play, nine recalling Anima’s catechismal requests and Lucifer’s temptations, two the imperfect bipartite composition of the soul predisposing it towards sin.

<sup>123</sup> There are more associations with the number seven than just the Deadly Sins, such as the seven virtues.

<sup>124</sup> Walter H. Principe, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), 87-8.

<sup>125</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, Stephen McKenna (trans.), *Fathers of the Church* 18, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), Book X.

<sup>126</sup> Rivers, 126. For detailed discussion of this treatise, see Rivers, 125-46.

*Morum*, a fourteenth-century *exemplaria* manual for preachers, also discusses the soul's trinitarian associations in terms of memory:

For just as in the Blessed Trinity there are three persons and yet only one God, where to the Father is attributed power, to the Son wisdom, and to the Holy Spirit mercy, thus there are three corresponding faculties in the soul, namely memory, intellect, and will, and yet there is only one soul. Let us then imagine that the human soul is like a fitting place in which the dwelling of the Holy Trinity can be built...Therefore, in order to receive him it is necessary to divide the field of our soul as it were into three areas and shares, namely into memory of the Father, intellect for the Son, and will for the Holy Spirit...[F]irst we have to build the tabernacle of faith in the lot of our memory, with respect to the power of the Father; second we have to build the tabernacle of hope in the lot of our intellect, with respect to the wisdom of the Son; and third we have to build the tabernacle of charity on the lot of our will, with respect to the mercy of the Holy Spirit.

The *Fasciculus Morum* treats the three Might, Trinity, and theological virtues in the same progression that *Wisdom* does, making it clear that Wisdom's character "Mind" is in fact memory.

When Mind introduces himself to Anima and the audience in *Wisdom*, he describes the cognitive process he performs. This process is memory, as is evident by the ease with which the word 'memory' can be substituted for "mynde" each time it appears:

I am Mynde, þat in þe soule ys  
 The veray fygure of þe Deyte.  
*Wen in myselff I haue mynde* and se  
 The benefyttys of Gode and hys worthynes,  
 How holl I was mayde, how fayere, how fre,  
 How gloryus, how jentyll to hys lyknes,

*Thys insyght bryngyt to my mynde*  
 Wat grates I ough to God ageyn,  
 Pat this hathe ordenyde wythowt ende  
 Me in hys blys euer for to regne.  
 Than myn insufficyens ys to me peyn,  
 That I haue not werof to yelde my dett,  
*Thynkyng myselff* creature most veyn;  
 Than for sorow my bren I knett.

*Wen in my mynde I brynge togedyr*

Pe yerys and dayes of my synfullnes,  
*The vnstabullnes of my mynde hedyr and thedyr,*  
 My oreble fallynge and freellnes,  
 Myselff ryght nought than I confes;  
 For by myselff I may not ryse  
 Wythowt specyall grace of Godys goodnes.  
 Thus *mynde makyt me myselff to dyspyse.*

I seke and fynde nowere comforte,  
 But only in Gode, my Creator.  
 Than onto hym I do resorte  
 Ande saye, '*Haue mynde of me, my Sauowr!*'  
*Thus mynde to mynde bryngyth þat fawowre;*  
 Thus, *by mynde of me*, Gode I kan know.  
*Goode mynde of Gode yt ys þe fygyre,*  
*Ande thys mynde to haue* all Crysten ow. (183-212, my emphases)

It is through Mind's memory of his unfilled debt to God that he learns to know himself and God:

"Thus, *by mynde of me*, Gode I kan know" (210). Mind's acknowledgement of his debt is what defines his faculty of memory. His task is to meditate upon this memory of God constantly.

Lucifer's temptation of Mind directly targets his ability to remember God. In fact, when Lucifer approaches him, Mind is embodying himself by cultivating an active memory of God:

My mynde ys euer on Jhesu  
 That enduyde us wyth wertu;  
 Hys doctrine to sue  
 Euer I purpose. (381-4)

Lucifer interrupts Mind's meditation by suggesting the lack of utility in such a pursuit:

LUCYFER: Vt quid hic statis tota die ociosi?<sup>127</sup>  
 Ȝe wyll perysche or Ȝe yt aspye.  
 The Dewyll hath acumberyde yow expres!

Mynde, Mynde, ser, haue in mynde thys!"

MYNDE: He ys not ydyll þat wyth Gode ys. (394-8)

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<sup>127</sup> "Why do you stand the whole day here in idleness?"

The purpose of Lucifer's suggestion is to redirect Mind's memory, to "have" something else other than God "in mynde" (397). Mind rejects Lucifer's assault, replying that his activity of meditation is "not ydyl" (398) because it brings him closer to God. Since Mind upholds the value of the *vita contemplativa*, Lucifer nuances his temptation by championing the *vita activa* and/or the *vita mixta*:

Here ys a man that lywyt wordly,  
 Hathe wyffe, chylderne, and serwantys besy,  
 And other chargys þat I not specyfye!  
 Ys yt leeffull to þis man  
 To lewe hys labour wsyde truly,  
 Hys chargys perysche þat Gode gaff duly,  
 Ande yewe hym to preyer and es of body?  
 Woso do thus wyth God ys not than.

Mertha plesyde Gode grettly thore. (405-413)

Lucifer's temptation misdirects Mind's thought process, applying the question of Mind's behavior as an abstraction to a physical person's situation. The abstract is therefore questioned through the concrete, the soul made to ponder its corporeal existence as a body. To make his argument appear more valid, Lucifer uses Christ as an example of embodiment to confuse Mind's understanding of the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa/mixta*:

LUCYFER: For God hymselff, wan he was man borre,  
 Wat lyff lede he? Answer þou now.

Was he euer in contemplacyon?

MYNDE: I suppos not, be my relacyon.

LUCYFER: And all hys lyff was informacyon  
 And example to man.  
 Sumtyme wyth synners he had conversacyon;  
 Sumtyme with holy also comunycacyon;  
 Sumtyme he laboryde, preyde; sumtyme tribulacyon;  
 Thys was *vita mixta* þat Gode here began;

Ande þat lyff xulde ye here sewe.

...  
 Lewe, lewe, suche syngler besynes.  
 Be in þe worlde, vse thyngys nesesse. (419-29, 441-2)

Because Christ is the Word of God embodied, there is no discontinuity between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa/mixta* in his actions. It is only in the soul – the imperfect reflection of God – that contemplative and active lifestyles come into conflict. Mind does not realize the nuance that Lucifer’s persuasion overlooks. Instead, Mind considers trustworthy the knowledge that Lucifer places before him – Christ as human body, active in the world. As a result, Mind is swayed:

MYNDE: I kan make no replicacyon.  
 Your resons be grete.  
 I kan not forgett þis informacyon.

LUCYFER: Thynke þerwppon, yt ys yowr saluacyon! (447-50)

Mind marks his fall into sin by saying that he will “not forgett this informacyon” (449), acknowledging that he replaces the memory of God with other information. Lucifer creates a new memory for Mind to meditate upon, as his directive to “thynke þerwppon” (450) underscores. Lucifer’s claim that this perspective will bring him to salvation is in fact a perversion of that end. Understanding and Will fall quickly after Mind accepts Lucifer’s suggestion, Understanding delighting in it – “I fele in manere of dylectacyon” (462) – and Will consenting to it: “Yt semyth yowr resons be goode” (480). Lucifer turns Understanding from studies, prayers, and penance (470-1), from those things which encourage meditation upon God and tells Will to “trust not þes prechors, for þey be not goode, / For þey flatter and lye as þey wore woode” (488-9), again steering Will away from any rhetoric that would assist his love for God.

The fall of the soul in *Wisdom* results directly from a loss of memory: Mind fails to perform his cognitive function of remembering God. Lucifer's temptation convinces the Mightes to refocus their self-knowledge of God into a self-knowledge of the world. This change of perspective refashions the Mightes as Vices, causing them to embody the sins that they previously opposed. Each Might announces his new embodiment: Mind as Maintenance (695) supports false knowledge instead of truth, Understanding as Perjury (732) supports duplicitous knowledge instead of singular knowledge in God, and Will as Lechery (746) experiences love carnally instead of spiritually. As Maintenance, Perjury, and Lechery, Mind, Understanding, and Will become the sins of Pride, Covetousness, and Lust, respectively.

Lucifer's temptation succeeds because it makes an interpretation that is not legitimate appear legitimate, suggesting that, as in *Mankind*, a speaker's intention can manipulate moral language. Wisdom and Lucifer indeed are battling rhetoricians in *Wisdom*, as each appeals to knowledge, salvation, and preaching to direct Anima and her three Mightes. Knowledge is the primary tool that the soul needs to unite with Christ, as Wisdom explains:

By knowynge of yowrsylff 3e may haue felynge  
 Wat Gode ys in yowr sowe sensyble.  
 The more knowynge of yowr selff passyble,  
 Be more verely 3e xall God knowe. (95-9)

Lucifer's temptation changes the self-knowledge of the soul, shifting its spiritual focus to a corporeal one: Lucifer twists the image of Christ so that Mind considers self-knowledge something he can acquire only by participating in the world. Will's eventual embodiment of Lechery, a manifestation of carnal knowledge, confirms how Lucifer perverts Mind's pursuit of self-knowledge as the soul's union with Christ. The "saluacyon" (450) Lucifer offers to Mind after his temptation reinforces this idea of carnal self-knowledge, for Lucifer's brand of "redemption" brings Mind farther and farther from the salvation Wisdom promises through



himself: “Thus in me, Wysdom, yowr werkys begynne. / Fyght, and 3e xall haue the crown of glory, / That ys euerlastynge joy to be parteners þerinne!” (306-8). That Wisdom and Lucifer are rhetoricians competing over language’s interpretation is nowhere more evident than in Lucifer’s remark to Will to “trust not þes prechors” who “flatter and lye” (488, 489). Lucifer’s comment pinpoints exactly what it is that he is doing – flattering and lying to the Mightys – but does so by projecting his false intentions onto a class of men whose intentions are true, at least as Wisdom, Who is Christ, represents them in the play. Wisdom’s catechismal interaction with Anima and the sermon he delivers on the nine articles of faith during her redemption confirm his role as preacher safeguarding the soul’s salvation.

In addition to contending over the interpretation of similar concepts, *Wisdom’s* rhetoricians also use similar images, the most obvious of which is light, to make their points more persuasive. Wisdom explicates himself through a Latin authority that involves light:

Sapiencia specialior est sole.<sup>128</sup>  
 I am foundon lyghte wythowt comparyson,  
 Off sterres aboue all þe dysposicyon,  
 Forsothe of lyght þe very bryghtnes,  
 Merowre of þe dyvyne domynacyon,  
 And þe image of hys goodnes. (27-32)

Wisdom is the source of light, an eternal source, which is so bright that it outshines the brightest light known to humanity, the sun. Light is the image of God’s goodness which God makes available to humankind so that it can begin to perceive and understand Him. Light is therefore an important element in humankind’s self-knowledge and self-memory, as Anima learns from Wisdom. In fact, Anima remembers the relationship she cultivates with Wisdom through images

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<sup>128</sup> “Wisdom is brighter than the sun.”

of light, explaining that she has “louyde Wysdom as for [her] lyght” (22) and that “hys benygnyte inspyryt all soullys wyth lyght” (260).<sup>129</sup>

Like Wisdom, Lucifer is also an embodiment of light. Lucifer’s name after all means “light-bringing” in Latin.<sup>130</sup> Yet, Lucifer represents a perverse meaning of light, because, after his fall, he no longer shines brightly: “I was a angell of lyghte” (333). Lucifer nonetheless still grasps at the light he once knew and possessed, trying to disfigure it as he has disfigured the light within himself by tempting the human soul to sin. Lucifer, a perverted representation of light, manipulates the meaning of light as the soul’s self-memory of God when he disguises himself to tempt the Mightys, saying

For, for to tempte man in my lyknes,  
Yt wolde brynge hym to grett feerfullnes,  
I wyll change me into bryghtnes,  
And so hym to-begyle (373-6)

Lucifer changes his devil’s costume for the costume of a “goodly galont” (sd 380), taking the disguise of a common man in the world to tempt the Mightys and Mind in particular. Lucifer’s change of clothing, or “change...into bryghtnes” (375), perverts the meaning of light that represents the spiritual connection between the soul and Christ by applying it to a corporeal body. Lucifer’s changing into brightness, that is, taking on the form of a man, is also a perversion of what Christ did at the Incarnation, when he clothed himself in human flesh for humanity’s salvation, because Lucifer now acts with the intention of damning humankind. Furthermore, as Anima has clarified, “brightness” resides within the soul when it knows God, not in the body, so Lucifer’s alignment of his body with brightness is a deliberate misrepresentation, revealing again that his evil intentions are made to look similar to Christ’s

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<sup>129</sup> After Anima is shriven of her sins, she exclaims “[t]he lyght of grace I fele in me” (1072).

<sup>130</sup> “Lucifer, fera, ferum,” *A Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 1080.

selfless actions. Lucifer's embodiment of brightness evokes Christ's Incarnation, but in contrast to Christ's legitimate corporeal embodiment, Lucifer's is false and causes the self-deceit of the Might. From this vantage point, Lucifer becomes the preacher he cautions Will to avoid, himself acting as the perverted example of Christ that he employs to beguile Mind.

The temptation and fall of Mind in *Wisdom* reveals the importance of the memory in maintaining a path of righteous behavior at the same time that it reinforces the effect that a rhetorician's intent has on his audience's memory. Wisdom and Lucifer fight for the soul through competing interpretations of self-knowledge, and in particular, to the end where self-knowledge leads the soul, that is, to salvation or to sin. Thus Wisdom cautions Anima about the overabundance of knowledge at the outset of her catechism:

Dyser not to sauour in cunnynge to excellent  
But drede and conforme yowr wyll to me.  
For yt ys þe heelfull dyscyplyne þat in Wysdam may be,  
The drede of God, þat ys begynnyng.  
The wedys of synne yt makyt to flee,  
And swete wertuus herbys in þe sowll sprynge. (87-92)

Wisdom, like Mercy who discusses corn and chaff, advises Anima about vice and virtue with an agricultural image, likening vice to weeds and virtue to herbs. The choice as to which to cultivate is hers, for self-knowledge through the use of her memory is equally capable of bringing her to the world as it is to God, a topic which the Vices and Virtues in the *Castle of Perseverance* vividly bring to fruition.

### III. Order, Order in the Castle and Court: Patterned Memory in the *Castle of Perseverance*

Similar to Anima and Mankind, Humanum Genus needs to train his memory. Shortly after his birth and baptism in *Castle*, HG simply does not know what to do: "A, Lord Jhesu, wedyr may I goo? A crysme I haue and no moo. / Alas, men may be wondyr woo / Whanne þei

be fyrst forth browth” (323-6). To alleviate HG’s uncertainty and provide him with a purpose, Bonus Angelus recommends that he “serve Jhesu, heuene kynge” (332), explaining how

Pat Lord þi lyfe hath lante.  
 Haue hym alwey in þi mynde  
 Pat deyed on rode for Mankynde  
 And serue hym to þi lyfes ende  
 And sertys þou schalt not wante. (335-9)

Bonus Angelus’ advice offers HG a technique through which he can build his memory. By constantly employing his mind to think about the Lord, HG will create a mental image of Christ’s suffering on the cross, an image which he will slowly build and strengthen the more often he meditates upon it.<sup>131</sup> HG’s ability to find his true reward in the Lord therefore depends upon his success in cultivating an active memory of the debt he owes to Christ. The vigilance and mental rigor to which Bonus Angelus calls HG, however, are decidedly less appealing than the opportunity to serve the World, the option that Malus Angelus next proposes (342). Bonus Angelus counters this enticing but transient offer by reiterating to HG the need to remember the end of his life, wherein his salvation lies:

Man, þynke on þyn endynge day  
 Whanne þou schalt be closyd vndyr clay,  
 And if þou thenke of þat aray,  
 Certys þou schalt not synne.

Homo, memento finis et in eternum non peccabis.<sup>132</sup> (407-11)

Bonus Angelus again advises HG to think and to foster a memory, this time of his Judgment Day, even citing Ecclesiasticus 7:40 to confirm the gravity of HG’s behavior. By offering HG this Latin authority, Bonus Angelus places another mnemonic strategy at HG’s disposal; that is,

<sup>131</sup> Guibert de Tournai states in the *De modo addiscendi*, a thirteenth-century *ars memorativa*, that the “best type of memory practice is meditation, because it fixes the intention of the mind on a subject” (Rivers, 114).

<sup>132</sup> “Man, remember the end and you will not sin eternally.”

Bonus Angelus gives HG a context in which he can locate the mental image of Christ that he is supposed to maintain. That context is the Bible, the verses of which medieval writers of *artes memorativae* and *artes praedicandi* recommend using to train the memory.<sup>133</sup> Prudent as Bonus Angelus' admonition to avoid sin by developing a firm memory is, it is not enough to persuade HG, who eagerly leaves to serve the World, and soon thereafter, the Devil and the Flesh.

As the *psychomachia* framing HG's introduction testifies, conflict in *Castle* revolves around memory, both as the mind's ability to remember what it learns and as the technical art of *memoria*. *Castle*'s engagement with memory starts somewhat ironically with HG's refusal to let Bonus Angelus help him train his memory of the Lord. But even if HG wanders from God, *memoria*'s role in finding salvation for this protagonist is not lost in the play. *Castle*'s consistent emphasis on sequenced patterns, on a line-by-line and a speech-by-speech basis, develops its auditors' memories through practices in keeping with medieval techniques of developing the memory through consistent order and constant repetition.<sup>134</sup> In addition to its acute focus on speech patterns, *Castle* also executes mnemotechniques through its double plot structure, a sequenced repetition that depicts HG's fall into sin *twice*, a circumstance which differentiates this play from *Mankind* and *Wisdom* and all other extant medieval drama.

*Castle*'s preoccupation with memory and employment of mnemotechniques occurs most noticeably in the battle between the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Virtues, a battle which sets up the play's double plot structure and HG's second fall. The battle itself is an enactment of the status of HG's memory, pitting HG's loss of memory (his potential for leaving the Castle and forgetting God) against the activation of his memory (his potential for staying in the Castle and

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<sup>133</sup> Carruthers, 80-121.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 80-155.

meditating upon God). The tension located within the battle sequence captures an anxiety found within preaching literature, wherein there is consideration as to whether the sequential arrangement or overall intention of *exempla* cultivates memory effectively. The *Fasciculus Morum* addresses this concern:

As is said in the Rule of blessed Father Francis and has also been decreed elsewhere, we are held to show and to preach to the people, in short words, the vices and virtues, punishments and glory. Hence we must begin with the description of the vices and end with the virtues, first in a general way and then in particular. But since I consider seven chief vices and seven virtues that are opposed to them, this treatise is entitled *Fasciculus morum* and divided into seven parts. In each of them, after the description of a vice there follows in the end a virtue, as a force that uproots every evil; for that whose end is good is itself wholly good.<sup>135</sup>

This author suggests that, because virtue “is a force that uproots every evil,” the temporal placement of virtue after vice will erase any negative impressions that the discussion of vice may implant in a reader’s or auditor’s mind. And indeed, temporal sequence provides one way to understand the final sentiment of this paragraph: when virtue follows vice, it is literally the end of speech, and so makes the conclusion of a composition, despite its engagement with vice, “wholly good.” Yet the assertion that a composition “whose end is good is itself wholly good” flags a degree of uncertainty about handling vice; for, as this clause admits, perhaps a virtuous *exemplum* is not enough to cancel the advertisement of vice in a composition, and if it is not, then hopefully the overall intent found in a good end will counteract the earlier portrayal of vice. The *Fasciculus Morum*’s introductory paragraph highlights that tension exists within a composition, and especially in its order of presentation, once vice is introduced.

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<sup>135</sup> Siegfried Wenzel, ed. and trans., *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteen-Century Preacher’s Handbook*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 33.

Despite the discrepancy within its opening paragraph, the *Fasciculus Morum* overtly discusses the reasoning behind placing virtue after vice that so many preaching aids and manuals implicitly incorporate. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*,<sup>136</sup> for instance, and literature deriving from it such as *Jacob's Well*,<sup>137</sup> discuss vice before virtue. *Artes praedicandi* also follow this general schematic, as the perusal of their chapter headings attests. In Section Six of his *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, for example, Thomas of Chobham discusses the following topics:

VI. About which things preaching must concern

1. About the hatred of vices
2. About the commendation of virtues
3. About the theological virtues
  - 3.1. About faith
  - 3.2. About hope
  - 3.3. About charity
4. About the cardinal virtues
  - 4.1. About prudence
  - 4.2. About justice
  - 4.3. About fortitude
  - 4.4. About temperance<sup>138</sup>

Thomas emphasizes first that vices should be detested before focusing detailed attention on each of the virtues. Alan of Lille's *Art of Preaching* proceeds similarly: after discussing preaching generally in the first chapter, chapters two through twelve treat vice broadly and specifically conceived, while chapters thirteen through twenty-five treat virtue in the same fashion. Chapters twenty-six through twenty-eight return to vice and chapters twenty-nine and thirty to virtue,

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<sup>136</sup> "The Book of Vices and Virtues is a fourteenth century Midland translation of the *Somme des Vices et des Vertues* or *Somme le Roi* of Lorens D'Orléans, a thirteenth-century Dominican friar...The principle reason for the multiplicity of translations of this text, as well as for the wealth of similar works produced during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is to be sought in the Church's requirements concerning lay education during the period" ("Introduction," *The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth-Century English Translation of the Somme Le Roi of Lorens D'Orléans*. W. Nelson Francis (ed.), (London: EETS, 1942), ix).

<sup>137</sup> "Preface," *Jacob's Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Consciousness*. Arthur Brandeis (ed.), (London: EETS, 1900), vi.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas de Chobham, *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Franco Morenzoni (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum* 82, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 379-80. The chapter headings are as follows: "VI. De quibus sit predicandum; 1. De detestione uitiorum, 2. De commendatione uirtutum, 3. De uirtutibus theologicis, 3.1. De fide, 3.2. De spe, 3.3. De caritate, 4. De uirtutibus cardinalibus, 4.1. De prudentia; 4.2. De iustitia, 4.3. De fortitudine, 4.4. De temperantia."

chapter thirty being the original conclusion to the treatise. The added chapters, thirty-one through forty-seven, all treat positive aspects of preaching.<sup>139</sup> Thomas and Alan are the two earliest writers of the genre that came to be called the *artes praedicandi*, and the organization of their treatises is particularly insightful when considering sequences involving vice and virtue because, as the *ars praedicandi* became an established genre, authors dealt increasingly with the nuances of sermon execution only.<sup>140</sup>

According to preaching literature then, the effective communication of virtue depends on the memory's ability to retain temporal sequence. *Castle* employs temporal sequence to explore this very point: in HG's fall in the opening sequence, Bonus Angelus always speaks before Malus Angelus, creating a vice-after-virtue speech pattern inconsistent with theories of proper sermon construction and memory retention. HG falls because an *exemplum* of vice – Malus Angelus – is the last to influence his memory. In juxtaposition to this order is the virtue-after-vice speech pattern employed during HG's residence in the Castle, a pattern underscoring the safety that the Castle provides through its prudent incorporation of a mnemotechnique. Yet, as HG's decision to leave the Castle and resume a life of sin suggests, the proper execution of temporal sequence is not enough to train the memory to always avoid sin. *Castle* therefore maintains the tension found within sermon discourse concerning sequence and intent, ultimately locating it within the play's concluding argument among the four daughters of God – that is, as in preaching manuals like the *Fasciculus Morum*, among the presentation of virtue whose end is in itself wholly good.

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<sup>139</sup> Alan of Lille, *The Art of Preaching*, Gillian R. Evans (trans.), *Cistercian Studies Series*: 23, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1981).

<sup>140</sup> Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, L. Genicot (ed.), *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 1-76, at 26.



The battle for HG while he resides in the Castle is portrayed systematically. It takes place in three segments, the first two of which are strikingly similar to each other, and the third of which departs significantly from the pattern of the previous two. Malus Angelus introduces all three fight segments (1969-94, 2226-34, 2405-13) and each of humankind's three enemies reiterates his promptings: in the first segment, Belyal encourages his retainers Pride, Envy, and Wrath (2060-8); in the second segment, Flesh rallies his knights Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery (2235-47); and, in the third segment, World inspires his soldier Covetous (2414-26). In each segment, the individual Vices then face their opposing Virtues, a Vices' one stanza verbal onslaught always countered by a Virtues' two stanza rebuttal containing at least one biblical authority.<sup>141</sup> After each of the first two segments, Belyal and Flesh join their respective toadies to fight and afterwards lament their defeat. The third segment differs from the previous two because, after his confrontation with Generosity, Covetous succeeds in removing HG from the Castle, claiming victory for himself, and the World he serves, by reacquiring HG.<sup>142</sup>

The verbal sparring found within the rhetoric of the individual Vices' and Virtues' confrontations serves as a visual representation of how virtuous *exempla* defeat vicious, planting the success of virtue in uprooting vice in the memory of the audience watching the play. Pride is the first vice to attack, and as he does so, he calls attention to the banner he flies:

As[At] armys, Mekenes! I brynge þi bane,  
 Al wyth pride peyntyd and pyth.  
 What seyst þou, faytour? be myn fayr fane,

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<sup>141</sup> Marianne G. Briscoe, "Preaching and Medieval English Drama," Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (eds.), *Contexts for Early English Drama*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 151-72, at 160. Briscoe, despite her observation of this structure, claims that this "[example] of sermon influence... actually [interrupts] the flow of dramatic action," an assessment with which I disagree.

<sup>142</sup> This sequence of three, wherein the third episode breaks the pattern of the two previous, is reminiscent of a strategy seen in the genre of romance. Given *Castle*'s use of chivalric language, the presentation of knights with banners, and the bequeathing of fiefs, the playwright may be deliberately employing this strategy to evoke the romance genre and heighten this climatic battle sequence. The rule of three, however, is also a basic and nearly universal device for structuring compositions from fairy tales to rhetoric and public speaking.

Wyth robys rounde rayed ful ryth,  
 Grete gounse, I schal þe gane.  
 To marre þe, Mekeness, wyth my myth,  
 No werldly wyttys here ar wane.  
 Lo, þi castel is al beset!  
 Moderys, whov schul 3e do?  
 Mekeness, 3elde þe to me, I rede.  
 Myn name in londe is precyous Prede.  
 Myn bolde baner to þe I bede.  
 Modyr, what seyste þerto? (2069-81)

Pride's banner presents a picture of lush robes and lavish gowns, an image of extravagant clothing that denotes his status in sin.<sup>143</sup> As he is a Vice, it is of little surprise that Pride boldly and attractively advertises his shortcomings.

In the first stanza of her two stanza rejoinder, Humility counters Pride's banner with one of her own:

Ageyns þi baner of pride and bost  
 A baner of mekeness and mercy  
 I putte ageyns pride, wel þou wost,  
 Þat schal schende þi careful cry.  
 Þis meke kynge is knowyn in euery cost  
 Þat was croysyd on Caluary.  
 Whanne he cam doun fro heuene ost  
 And lytyd wyth mekeness in Mary,  
 Þis lord þus lytyd lowe.  
 Whanne he cam fro þe Trynyte  
 Into a maydyn lyted he,  
 And al was for to dystroye þe,  
 Pride, þis schalt þou knowe. (2082-94).

Humility's banner portrays an image of Christ crucified. She explains the last and first actions of Christ as a man – his crucifixion and Incarnation – as acts of meekness, applying the virtue she embodies to the banner she carries. The Incarnation is particularly apt for Humility to discuss

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<sup>143</sup> Milla Riggio, "The Allegory of Feudal Acquisition in *The Castle of Perseverance*," Morton Bloomfield, (ed.), *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol*, *Harvard English Studies* 9, (1981), 194-8.

because this is the moment in which Christ takes on human flesh, in which he attires himself in the clothing of humankind. Humility's banner therefore champions a selfless and humble mode of dress in contrast to Pride's banner of selfish excess.

The banners Pride and Humility hoist pay homage not only to the chivalric tradition but also to the *ars memorativa*. To remember and find information more readily on a page, "attempts were made from the end of the twelfth century to convert the use of visual signs into a system for classifying subject matter."<sup>144</sup> Matthew of Paris, for example, was the first to use shields in his system, and "[i]n England heraldic shields are first found depicted in a series on the pages of a Psalter," probably from the 1230s.<sup>145</sup> Carruthers observes that images like this decorate the borders of pages<sup>146</sup> and that they are also "in late medieval vernacular manuscripts produced by lay scribes."<sup>147</sup> The unexpected heraldic images of robes and Christ crucified that Pride and Humility fly are meant to stimulate the audience's senses, and like "a golden circle, or a fiery dragon on a knight's shield [prove] memorable primarily because it [is] mysterious and striking."<sup>148</sup> As the image on Humility's banner will be explicated by her and the other Virtues in turn, her banner signals the association between image and memory that meditation in the tradition of the *ars memorativa* encourages. Even though the image of Christ crucified will be discussed multiple times throughout the battle, there is no guarantee that Humility's banner will be more memorable than Pride's, nor that HG nor the members of the audience will remember it more vividly even though it is the second banner seen. These competing heraldic symbols therefore suggest the difficulty in keeping the mind engaged in meditation even with the correct

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<sup>144</sup> Clanchy, 175.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>148</sup> Clanchy, 174.

deployment of rhetoric. As long as vice and virtue are each capable of representing itself with a mnemonic image, so too is it able to use images and language, as in *Mankind* and *Wisdom*, to direct the memory towards sinful and beneficial outcomes. The banners Pride and Humility raise visually represent the similarity between expressions of vice and virtue. Both can construct enticing rhetorical ploys, but only virtuous language has salvation at its end.

Humility demonstrates the salvific quality of her rhetoric after raising her banner by explicating its meaning through the same image that Bonus Angelus used when he first confronted HG, the image of Christ on the cross. The image of “the crucifix,” as Rivers notes, “does not signify simply Christ on the Cross but the whole story of the / events of the Passion,”<sup>149</sup> a point which is significant for cultivating memory because meditation on the Passion was extremely prevalent in the medieval period, and was even considered “a way to drive away depraved thoughts.”<sup>150</sup> In this regard, the Virtues’ choice of weapon complements their rhetoric: they use rose petals to repel the Vices, flowers which represent Christ’s Passion. The moment in which each Virtue combats her opposing Vice incorporates rhetoric and object, or text and image, through the two stanza rebuttal and rose, to safeguard HG and his memory of virtuous living. The repetition of the image of Christ’s crucifixion as well as of the roses, and of the Passion that both image and roses evoke, facilitates HG’s and the audience’s memories and meditations more readily because of its familiarity.

The retort of Humility’s second stanza complements the mnemotechnique of placing virtue after vice that preaching literature discusses:

For whanne Lucyfer to helle fyl,  
Pride, þerof þou were chesun,  
And þou, deuyll, wyth wyckyd wyl

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 174-5.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 129. For Rivers’ full discussion of memory and the Passion, see 126-39.

In paradys trappyd us wyth tresun.  
 So þou us bond in balys ille,  
 Þis may I preue be ryth resun,  
 Tyl þis duke that dyed on hylle  
 In heuene man myth neuere han sesun;  
 Þe gospel þus declaryt.  
 For whoso lowe hym schal ben hy,  
 Þerfore þou schalt not comen us ny,  
 And þou þou be neuere so sly,  
 I schal felle al þi fare.  
 Qui se exultat humiliabitur et cetera.<sup>151</sup> (2095-107A)

Humility's stanza progresses from a discussion of evil to goodness via concrete depictions, first of Lucifer, Hell, and pride, and then, of the Lord, Heaven, and humility. Both of Humility's stanzas illustrate the abstract concepts of pride and meekness concretely, using examples from Christ's life – the crucifixion, Incarnation, and defeat of the devil – to communicate how virtue trumps vice. By portraying meekness through this tripartite exposition, Humility shows that Christ practiced this virtue throughout his life. Concluding with the battle between Christ and the devil enables her not only to underscore the contentious relationship in which she and Pride currently find themselves but also to make the struggle between them more applicable to the lives of the audience. This applicability makes Humility's interaction with Pride more vivid, and therefore easier, for members in the audience to remember.

Patience follows Humility's lead in turning to Christ's life, and specifically to the image of his crucifixion, to repel Anger:

For Marys sone, meke and mylde,  
 Rent þe up, rote and rynde,  
 Whanne he stod meker þanne a chylde  
 And lete boyes hym betyn and bynde,  
 Þerfor, wrecche, be styлле.  
 For þo pelourys þat gan hym pose,  
 He myth a dreuyn hem to dros,  
 And 3yt, to casten hym on þe cros,

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<sup>151</sup> "He who praises himself will be humiliated, et cetera."

He sufferyd al here wylle.

Powsentys of aungellys he myth han had  
 To workyn hym þer ful 3erne,  
 And 3yt to deyen he was glad  
 Us pacyens to techyn and lerne. (2125-37)

By acknowledging Christ's meekness first, Patience reviews the context in which HG and the audience understand the image of the crucified Christ before adding the new interpretation of patience to the same image. Building new meanings off of one image in this way is a mnemotechnique: "a diagram-like 'picture' is created mentally which serves as the site for a meditational *collatio*, the 'gathering' into one 'place' of the various strands of a meditational composition."<sup>152</sup> Patience therefore skillfully nuances an image already familiar to the audience in order to make the concept she represents easier for it to imitate and remember.

Charity also builds on the image of Christ's crucifixion to refute Envy, but now that this image is familiar to the audience, Charity details her description by picking up on the imagery of Christ's buffeting and scourging that Patience already presented:

Oure louely Lord wythowtyn lak  
 3af example to charyte,  
 Whanne he was beytn blo and blak  
 For trespas þat neuere dyd he.  
 In sory synne had he no tak  
 And 3yt for synne he bled bloody ble.  
 He toke hys Cros upon hys bak,  
 Synful man, and al for þe. (2173-80)

By latching on to different moments of Christ's Passion and stressing the same event of the crucifixion through the insight that each of their virtues affords, Humility, Patience, and Charity cultivate the audience's memory effectively; for, its members only have to recall one incident in Christ's life to remember three virtues. This type of mental cataloguing is a mnemonic that

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<sup>152</sup> Carruthers, 123.

*Wisdom* also employs, but whereas *Wisdom* used numbers, *Castle* uses an image to achieve the same end. Robert of Basevorn recommends this technique in the *Forma Praedicandi*, suggesting that if the division is to be into five parts, the five wounds of Christ could be used to recall the divisions, or if into six, then the six musical notes *ut, re, mi, fa, so, la* can be employed.<sup>153</sup> Francisc Eiximenis suggests a similar mnemonic in his fifteenth-century *Ars praedicandi*, wherein the “seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven virtues and vices, the four causes and the like are explicitly mentioned...as ordering devices for generating and remembering preaching material.”<sup>154</sup> By employing this technique, Christ becomes the unifying *exemplum* enacting *Castle*’s presentation of *memoria* through the defense of HG in the Castle. Considering that all the Vices in this segment are mustered by the devil Belyal, the Virtues’ choice of Christ as *exemplum* to fortify HG is appropriate because the Virtues reenact for him and for the audience the devil’s many failed attempts at distracting Christ from remembering the purpose of his life’s end.

The next segment of the battle pits Flesh with his cronies Gluttony, Lechery, and Sloth against Abstinence, Chastity, and Busyness. The first clash between Gluttony and Abstinence in this segment mirrors the one between Pride and Humility that started the previous segment by presenting a common image to which both Vice and Virtue lay claim. Where Pride and Humility flew competing banners, Gluttony and Abstinence contest the explication of food. These common images serve as “hooks” to encourage the memory. Hooks are visual marks and images that cue the mind to remember the location of a passage, cross-reference it with other passages,

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<sup>153</sup> Leopold Krul, O.S.B., “Robert of Basevorn: *The Form of Preaching*,” James J. Murphy (ed.), *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 111-215. Carruthers also talks about this passage extensively in *The Book of Memory*, 104-7, as does Rivers from 181-2 of *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice*. Rivers also cites another *artes praedicandi* author named Michael Menot who recommends the use of musical notes at 180.

<sup>154</sup> Rivers, 162.

and so meditate upon it. The use of hooks is basic to all memory training, but it is not a universal system: individuals developed their own series of images to use.<sup>155</sup> The first “hook” in *Castle* is Humility’s banner depicting Christ’s crucifixion, the image upon which each virtue elaborated in the first battle segment. While the Virtues in the second battle segment continue to build upon this image, they distinguish this segment from the first by showing the difference between the literal and figurative use of language. Gluttony and Abstinence’s competing explanations of food is the “hook” that signals this shift in analytical discourse. Food is an appropriate image with which to signal this shift not only because “digestion” is a “model for the complementary activities of reading and composition, collection and recollection”<sup>156</sup> but also because “vices like gluttony are about the mind,” suggesting “that one has to reform the mind” through meditation to avoid sin.<sup>157</sup>

As with Pride and Humility, the “hook” setting up Gluttony’s and Abstinence’s confrontation shows that the same language can signify differently, a realization that heightens the tension of the individual battles in the second segment of the Castle’s besiegement. The “goode metys and drynkys” (2258) Gluttony provides for nourishment are reinterpreted by Abstinence as the “bred þat browth us out of hell / And on þe croys sufferyd wrake: / I mene þe sacrament” (2267-9).<sup>158</sup> Abstinence reinterprets Gluttony’s literal meaning of food as the figurative understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the food saving humanity through Christ’s sacrifice. She unfolds this figurative meaning more thoroughly with Christ’s crucifixion, an image with which the audience is already well acquainted, linking it now to abstinence:

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<sup>155</sup> Carruthers, 163-4, 274.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>157</sup> Rivers, 143.

<sup>158</sup> O.S. Pickering, “Poetic Style and Poetic Affiliation in the *Castle of Perseverance*,” Catherine Batt (ed.), *Leeds Studies in English 29: Essays in Honor of Peter Meredith*, (Leeds: School of English, 1998), 275-92, at 285.



Pat iche blysfyl bred  
 Pat hounge on hyl tyl he was ded  
 Schal tempere so myn maydynhed  
 Pat þi purpos schal be spent.

In abstynens þis bred was browth,  
 Certys, Mankynde, and al for þe.  
 Of fourty dayes ete he nowth  
 And þanne was naylyd to a tre. (2270-7)

Abstinence's presentation of Christ as a piece of bread nailed to a tree explains the complex transformation Christ empowers: the bread becomes his body during the consecration of the Eucharist; bread is no longer only bread, but salvific nourishment. By rebutting Gluttony's literal interpretation of food, Abstinence performs the didactic, interpretative function *exempla* require. Meaning exists on multiple levels, and a preacher's task is to make these meanings available to his audience. Abstinence's decision to illustrate the Eucharistic sacrament through Christ's crucifixion offers new insight to this image. This overlap again fosters memory readily and easily by stressing different aspects of the same *exemplum*. The continued focus on Christ creates a concordance in the Virtue's rhetorical defense of HG, not only among their individual speeches but also between the two battle segments. Verbal concord is a rhetorical flourish *artes praedicandi* encourage preachers to incorporate in their sermons to facilitate connections and meaning across sermon divisions.<sup>159</sup> Reminiscent of divisions in sermons, these two battle segments, working in conjunction, therefore reflect another way in which the play creates meaning across its several segments as a sermon does across its many parts.

The remaining two battles in this segment interpret the virtues of Christ's chastity and busyness through his mother, the Virgin Mary. Before transitioning to Mary, Chastity foregrounds her explanation in the image of Christ's Passion:

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<sup>159</sup> Krul, 188-9.

Our Lord God made þe[Lechery] no space  
 Whanne his blod strayed in þe strete.  
 Fro þis castel he dyd þe chase  
 Whanne he was crounyd wyth þornys grete  
 And grene. (2304-8)

She also introduces the image of Mary:

Maydyn Marye, well of grace,  
 Scal qwenche þat fowle hete.  
 Mater et Virgo, extingue carnales consupiscentias!<sup>160</sup>  
 .....  
 At Oure Lady I lere my lessun  
 To haue chaste lyf tyl I be ded.  
 Sche is qwene and beryth þe croun,  
 And al was for hyr maydynhed. (2302-3, 2313-6)

By explicating chaste living through Mary, Chastity nuances the understanding of this virtue.

Indeed, an important function sermons serve, especially in their Prothemes but also in the proof of their subdivisions, is to provide alternative meanings for the Themes they discuss. Chastity first explores Christ as the *exemplum* of chaste living, and, since this image is now familiar to the audience, she can expand upon it, and offer additional insight into the nature of Christ's chastity by locating its derivation in his mother, Mary. Chastity's discussion of Mary even creates a link with Humility's banner by recalling that it was Mary, during the Annunciation, who gave Christ his clothing in human flesh.

Busyness focuses exclusively on the Virgin, invoking "þe helpe of heuene emperesse" (2357) to combat Sloth "[w]yth bedys and wyth orysoun[prayer] / Or sum oneste ocupacyoun, / As boke to haue in honde" (2362-4). Busyness provides activities that occupy the mind and thus control the memory so that it does not stray from meditation on the images of Mary and Christ. In fact, the first step in training the memory is "to think about God through the spiritual exercises

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<sup>160</sup> "Mother and Virgin, extinguish carnal lusts!"

of prayer, reading, and the like,”<sup>161</sup> exactly what Busyness recommends. Busyness’ speech also recalls Bonus Angelus’ advice to HG to maintain mental vigilance, advice which Busyness, the only virtue to address the audience directly, now applies to it:

A, good men, be war now all  
 Of Slugge and Slawthe, þis fowl þefe!  
 To þe sowle he is byttyrer þanne gall;  
 Rote he is mekyl myschefe.  
 Goddys seruyse, þat ledyth us to heuene hall,  
 Þis lordeyn for to lettyn us is lefe. (2339-44)

Busyness’ warning, combined with the objects she offers humanity, reveal that the Virtues provide practical advice to the audience to keep it from sin; they actively teach the audience through their *exemplum* of Christ to remember what virtuous living is and how to practice it. This is a timely admonition because Sloth has damaged the Castle’s moat: “Gostly grace I spyllle and schade; / Fro þe watyr of grace þis dyche I fowe[empty]” (2328-9). Busyness acknowledges the breach:

Perefor he makyth þis dyke drye  
 To puttyn Mankynde to dystresse.  
 He makyth dedly synne a redy weye  
 Into þe Castel of Goodnesse. (2352-5)

Her words reveal that the audience, and its dramatic representative HG, must employ memory in order to decrease the vulnerability toward sin. Like Gluttony and Abstinence who offered clashing interpretations of food earlier in this segment, the image of water unites Sloth’s and Busyness’ confrontation. But Busyness’ explanation, unlike Abstinence’s, does not transform the meaning of water from that which literally sits in a castle’s moat to the figurative water of rejuvenation baptism provides, for example. Her reticence to do so suggests that the audience must make this metaphorical connection for itself; it must enact what it has learned by watching

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<sup>161</sup> Rivers, 127.

the Virtues, and use the beads and books Busyness puts at its disposal to meditate on Christ and avoid Sloth and sin in general.

By the end of the second battle segment then, the playwright scrutinizes whether HG, and by extension the audience, have internalized the mnemotechniques and sermonesque language of the Virtues. The playwright of course stages the protagonist's failure to remember Christ as *exemplum* because HG eventually decides to leave the Castle. Even though the Virtues do execute the *exemplum* of Christ effectively, and suggest the viability of the virtue-after-vice presentation sermon discourse recommends, it still is not enough to prevent HG from falling back into a life of sin. HG's first fall occurred after his baptism at the beginning of the play, and interestingly, the idea of baptism informs his second fall. Since the Castle is surrounded by a moat, when HG enters it and commits to living virtuously, he in effect renews his baptismal promise to serve the Lord. When Sloth drains the moat, turning its "watyr of grace" (2329) into dust, he questions HG's renewed baptismal commitment to follow the example of Christ's life. Sloth sparks afresh the options HG considered before Malus Angelus and Bonus Angelus, options which he interestingly weighs through water imagery: "I wolde be ryche in gret aray / And fayn[gladly] I would my sowle saue. / As wynde in watyr I wave" (377-9). Covetous' success in recapturing HG after the moat dries confirms man's continual susceptibility to sin, even with the safeguards of virtuous language and action.

The spiritual damage that Sloth's physical destruction of the moat produces manifests immediately in the third segment of the battle when Covetous, after the World presents him as his fighter, gains access to HG. Because of the moat's breach, Covetous is able to break the pattern of a Vice addressing a Virtue, as he ignores Generosity and instead speaks directly to HG:

How, Mankynde! I am atenyde [troubled]  
 For þou art þere so in þat holde.  
 Cum and speke wyth þi best frende,  
 Syr Coueytyse, þou knowyst me of olde. (2427-30)

Although Generosity responds to Covetous, she knows how vulnerable she and the Castle are, as her reproach starts by acknowledging her helplessness – “A, God helpe!” (2440) – and ends with a petition to Christ:

Swete Jhesu, jentyl justyce,  
 Kepe Mankynde fro Coueytyse,  
 For iwys he is, in al wyse,  
 Rote of sorwe and synne. (2462-5)

Generosity is the only Virtue who does not describe the beneficial qualities innate to her character and only mentions the image of Christ as the “Lord þat restyd on þe rode” (2451) in passing. Sensing his advantage, Covetous taunts Generosity – “What eylyth þe, Lady Largyte, / Damysel dyngne[worthy] upon þi des?” (2466-7) – before utterly disregarding her in his pursuit and temptation of HG:

And I spak ryth not to þe,  
 Þefore I prey þe holde þi pes.  
 How, Mankynde! cum speke wyth me,  
 Cum ley þi love here in my les.  
 Coueytyse is a frend ryth fre,  
 Þi sorwe, man, to slake and ses. (2468-73)

To his credit, HG resists Covetous for several stanzas, but in the end, promises to do his “byddyng” (2533) and “forsake þe Castel of Perseueraunce” (2534).

Despite its reinforcement through sequenced patterns of virtue-after-vice, the linguistic and mnemonic protection good offers from evil fails to remind HG of his commitment to Christ. This failure brings the status of HG’s free will under consideration in relation to *Castle*’s speech patterns. As I discussed earlier, during HG’s initial temptation scene, Malus Angelus always speaks after Bonus Angelus, and his success in convincing HG to lead a life of sin realizes the

threat of vice overcoming virtue through the temporal sequence of their discussion.<sup>162</sup> The virtue-after-vice order of speech that the battle sequence employs then can be understood as an attempt to counteract the vice-after-virtue order of speech that the playwright previously used, highlighting preaching discourse's more successful method, for repelling vice from the memory. On this point, *Castle*'s playwright is in accord; for, while the initial vice-after-virtue pattern immediately results in HG's fall into sin, the later virtue-after-vice model succeeds for a time, and the limit of that time involves HG's free will. The Virtues can protect HG only as long as he desires their protection, and when he no longer wants it, they are powerless to persuade him to stay. Thus to Bonus Angelus' plea – "A, ladyse, I prey 3ou of grace, / Helpyth to kepe here Mankynne" (2544-5) – Humility responds with resolved acceptance:

Good Aungyl, what may I do þereto?  
 Hymselfe may hys sowle syplle.  
 Mankynd to don what he wyl do,  
 God hath 3ouyn hym a fre wylle. (2556-60)

Indeed, each Virtue weighs in on the discussion of free will, and on the idiocy of HG's decision to leave, as he walks out of the Castle.

HG's decision to depart marks his second fall into sin in the play, and so reveals the playwright's interest in staging the cyclic nature of sin humanity experiences.<sup>163</sup> Unlike *Mankind* and *Wisdom*, wherein the protagonist falls only once, *Castle* stages HG falling twice. This double fall distinguishes *Castle* from all extant East Anglian drama, and denotes what I see as the playwright's desire to portray sin generally and particularly, as the author of the *Fasciculus*

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<sup>162</sup> The characters speak in the following order after HG identifies himself (275-326): Bonus Angelus (327-39), Malus Angelus (340-8), BA (349-61), MA (362-74), HG (375-83), MA (384-92), HG (393-401), BA (402-410), MA (411-9), HG (420-8), MA (429-37), HG (438-46), and BA (447-55). Bonus Angelus' last speech in this sequence laments his loss of HG; it is not a further attempt to convince him to serve the Lord, and Malus Angelus does not need to speak after him to rebut him.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Proudfoot, "The Virtue of Perseverance," Paula Neuss (ed.), *Aspects of Early English Drama*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), 92-110, at 101.

*Morum* and the writers of *artes praedicandi* do. The battle between the Vices and Virtues represents the playwright's interest in exploring the topic particularly, and now that he has done so, he employs the second fall to examine it generally. *Castle* has a double plot structure with parallel action, wherein the second half of the play raises the stakes of HG's decision to live in sin. The play's double plot structure can be mapped as follows:

HG's birth and choice of sin	HG's old age and choice of sin
Fiefdom in sin	Re-fiefdom in sin
Penance	Death
Confession	I-Wot-Nevere-Who/Anima
Fight against the Castle	Fight among the 4 daughters of God
Virtues' exposition on free will	God's expository concluding words

The double structure of the play reveals the playwright's concern with sequential order on a macroscopic level, not only at the microscopic level of speech patterns. By presenting the same sequence twice but under different conditions, the playwright encourages his audience to train its memory: first, the overlap enables the audience to remember both parts of the play more readily; second, the overlap reinforces the gravity of sin by exploring it in two separate ways; third, the overlap produces parallels between HG's early life and late life, making the play's moral applicable to any person in the audience.

This double structure depends in great part on the status of HG's free will, because without it, HG's decision to go back to a life of sin could not be made. Despite Humility's refusal to retain HG in the Castle, the status of his free will nevertheless remains uncertain. HG is certainly allowed to leave the Castle of his own accord, but whether he entered it of his own free will is a more vexed question. It is to Bonus Angelus' cry of pain and mercy, not HG's, that Confession responds earlier in the play in order to initiate HG's repentance:

BONUS ANGELUS: Alas, Mankynde  
 Is bobbyd and blent as þe blynde.  
 In feyth, I fynde,

To Crist he can nowt be kynde.  
 Alas, Mankynne  
 Is soylyd and saggyd in synne.  
 He wyl not blynne[cease]  
 Tyl body and sowle parte atwynne.  
 Alas, he is blendyd,  
 Amys mans lyf is ispendyd,  
 Wyth fendys fendyd.  
 Mercy, God, þat man were amendyd!

CONFESSIO: What, mans Aungel, good and trewe,  
 Why syest þou and sobbyst sore?  
 Sertys, sore it schal me rewe  
 If I se þe make mornynge more.  
 May any bote þi bale brew  
 Or any þynge þi stat astore?  
 For all felechepys olde and newe  
 Why makyst thou grochyng vndyr gore  
 Wyth pynyng poyntys pale?  
 Why was al þis gretynge[weeping] gunne  
 Wyth sore syng vndyr sunne?  
 Tell me and I schal, if I cunne,  
 Brewen þe bote of bale. (1286-1310)

Confession is upset by Bonus Angelus' grieving and wants to remedy it. HG is the obvious source of Bonus Angelus' pain, but HG is a separate entity instilled with free will, and when confronted by Confession, HG resolutely rejects help twice, telling Confession that "Þou art com al to sone. / ... / Tente to þe þanne wel I may; / I haue now ellys to done" (1350, 1353-4), and again "Þerfore, syre, lete be þy cry / And go hense fro me" (1375-6). But Confession and Bonus Angelus do not heed HG's refusal; instead, Penance appears to soften HG's heart:

Wyth poynt of penaunce I schal hym prene  
 Mans pride for to felle.  
 Wyth þis launce I schal hym lene  
 Iwys a drop of mercy welle.  
 Sorwe of hert is þat I mene.  
 ....  
 Þerfore, Mankynde, in þis tokenynge,  
 With spete[point] of spere to þe I spynne,  
 Goddys lawys to þe I lerne.  
 With my spud[dagger] of sorwe swote



I reche to pyne hert rote.  
 Al þi bale schal torne þe to bote.  
 Mankynde, go schryue þe 3erne[quickly]. (1377-81, 1396-1402)

HG does not come to Penance of his own accord; rather, Penance comes to him and dictates the terms of his contrition, a contrition HG never wanted nor would have felt had it not been for the prick of Penance's intrusive dagger. What is more, Penance must even spur on HG's confession, telling him to "go schryue þe 3erne" (1402). If HG were truly contrite, he would employ the tools of his redemption, and approach Confession willingly and with an open heart, actions that he chose not to perform twice previously. HG's three interactions with Confession, in which two are the same and the third differs, parallels the repetition of three's in the battle sequence, especially as each sequence employs the breach of an entity – HG's heart with Penance and the moat in the battle scene.

Placing the troubled delivery of penance and HG's free will to the side, once Penance has pierced him, HG seems sincere in the expression of his sin. He cries out for God's mercy several times (1408, 1414-5, 1484), acknowledges his misdeeds – "I wyl now al amende me. / I com to þe, Schryfte, alholy[entirely], lo! / I forsake 3ou, synnys, and fro 3ou fle" (1445-7) – and agrees to live in the Castle based on Confession's advice (1546-71). Intriguingly, once HG agrees to dwell in this strong hold, Malus Angelus appears to protest his decision, to which Bonus Angelus responds by encouraging HG (1572-97). This twenty-five line exchange is the only time in the entirety of *Castle* that Bonus Angelus speaks after Malus Angelus, and so anticipates the virtue-after-vice order of speech that the battle in the Castle will unfold. The inverted order of the two angels' normal speech pattern in this moment is a subtle marker of the play's use of memory and education in virtue, exactly what HG employs and receives through his penance, confession, and entrance into the Castle.

Once HG is inside the Castle, the Virtues educate him and train his memory for the looming battle against the Vices. Strikingly, each Virtue employs the very same images used in the battle sequence in order to impart knowledge of her character to HG:<sup>164</sup> Charity, for example, speaks of the crucified Christ – “So dyd thi God whanne he gan blede; For synne he was hangyn hye” (1607-8) – Abstinence of eating and drinking food (1616, 1619, 1625), Chastity of Mary, and Busyness of “bedys” (1649) and reading and writing (1650). HG repeats these lessons after the Virtues finish, and enumerates which Vice opposes each Virtue, concluding that

[p]is is a curteys cumpany.  
 Whay schuld I more monys make?  
 Þe sevene synnys I forsake  
 And to þese sevene vertuis I me take.  
 Maydyn Meknes, now mercy! (1688-92)

HG’s education, when understood in light of the battle that follows, shows that the battle is actually a review of the material that he has already learned in the Castle, making it a test of his and the audience’s memories. The battle should therefore reinforce HG’s memory of virtue and keep him from sin, but, frustratingly, it does not. HG’s entrance into the Castle, however temporary, reflects his acceptance of a life of contemplation, not activity in the world,<sup>165</sup> which is crucial if he is to have a chance to train his memory of Christ. His residence in the Castle also undoes the World’s earlier “[fieffing of]...fen and felde / And hye hall” (740-1) to him. HG has no need of a worldly castle to protect him when he has the spiritual fortification of the Castle. The lessons HG learns within the Castle allow the Castle itself to function as the positive *exemplum* following the negative *exemplum* of HG’s life in sin. This complements the vice-after-

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<sup>164</sup> A folio is actually missing from the manuscript at this point. Humility and Patience must speak to HG in the lost folio because HG cites “Dame Mekness” (1671) and “Paciens” (1674) when he repeats the lessons that he has just learned.

<sup>165</sup> Clifford Davidson, *Visualizing the Moral Life: Medieval Iconography and the Macro Morality Plays*, (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1989), 66.

virtue and virtue-after-vice speech patterns that the playwright respectively employs with Bonus and Malus Angelus' and the Vices' and Virtues' speech patterns. But HG missteps during the Castle's besiegement by ignoring Busyness' call to pray and read; he fails to recognize the figurative wealth that the Castle bestows through thought and meditation on Christ and God's goodness. HG trades this figurative wealth for the literal wealth Covetous promises: "Markys, poundys, londys and lede[servants], / Howsys and homys, castell and cage" (2494-5). Indeed, the first action Covetous performs when HG leaves the Castle is to "feffen... þe...ful of store" (2710); that is, to give him residence again in a literal castle. The factor swaying HG to leave the Castle is his age, because, as an old man, he thinks he needs material possessions to comfort his failing body. His assumption is proved wrong when HG cannot bequeath his possessions to his kin but rather loses them to a stranger, I-Wot-Nevere-Who (2943-4). The positive *exemplum* of the Castle as spiritual solace is only able to uproot the negative *exemplum* of worldly comfort while HG's free will permits it.

The return of HG to a life of sin marks the cyclic struggle of the human condition to avoid vice, sometimes succeeding, and at other times failing. The moment of HG's departure from the Castle and re-fiefdom by Covetous acts as a hinge dividing *Castle*, revealing the double plot structure diagramed above. The correspondences that this mapping discloses are telling. For instance, Death, like Penance, is an unwelcome visitor who nonetheless imposes himself on an HG who lives in sin. Just as Penance, Death penetrates HG's heart with a sharp prick:

To Mankynde now wyl I reche;  
 He hath hoe hys hert on Coveytyse.  
 A newe lessun I wyl hym teche  
 Pat he schal bothe grwcchyn and gryse[tremble].  
 No lyf in londe schal ben hys leche;  
 I schal hym proue of myn empryse;  
 Wyth þis poynt I schal hym in broche  
 And wappyn[strike] hym in a woful wyse.

Nobody schal benn hys bote.  
 I schal þe schaypn a schenful schappe.  
 Now I kyllle þe wyth myn knappe!  
 I reche to þe, Mankynd, a rappe  
 To þyne herte rote. (2830-42)

Both Penance and Death bring HG down paths that he does not expect to take, but the ramifications of Death's arrival are far more severe, both for HG as he lingers in death's throes and for his soul. From his interaction with I-Wot-Nevere-Who, who also serves the World (2937-8), HG finally realizes that the material wealth he sought does not bring comfort (2970-81). Like Confession, I-Wot-Nevere-Who teaches HG what the proper course of his actions should have been; but unlike Confession, I-Wot-Nevere-Who does not give HG a second chance to correct his mistake. HG is left to lament helplessly that the "Werld hathe ordeynyd of hys entale / I Wot Neuere Who to be [his] eyr" (2993-4). Bereft of all the sources that once gave him comfort, HG uses his last breath to "putte" himself "in Goddys mercy" (3007), a cry which Anima, his soul, reiterates:

'Mercy,' þis was my last tale  
 Þat euere my body was abowth.  
 ...  
 I hope þat God wyl helpyn and be myn hed  
 For 'mercy' was my laste speech. (3008-9, 3027-8)

HG's and Anima's double plea for God to ease their distress evokes the lost reward of Christ that HG's failure to cultivate his memory for the majority of *Castle* produces. Confession in the first half of the play, and the pairing of I-Wot-Nevere-Who and Anima in the second half of the play, therefore serve as catalysts for the reactivation of HG's memory. Yet HG seems to grasp the importance of remembering his lessons only when it is almost too late.

Whether Anima will receive the mercy for which she and HG cry becomes the issue that the four daughters of God debate. Mercy and Peace of course argue for the salvation of HG's

soul while Truth and Justice insist on its relegation to hell. *Castle*'s playwright employs this argument ingeniously, removing it from its usual context of the Last Judgment to foreground its discussion in the damnation of an individual soul.<sup>166</sup> In this way, the debate sparked amongst the four daughters continues the tension found within both the battle scene and Bonus and Malus Angelus' confrontations, not because the daughters' disagreement pits vice against virtue, but because it reveals the fissures in virtue's expression where HG's free will is involved, fissures which were responsible for the Castle's abandonment.

*Castle* presents two debate sequences between the four daughters of God, paralleling the two opportunities the Virtues undertake to educate HG, first when he enters the Castle and later during the battle itself. The daughters' first debate occurs only amongst the four of them, the second when they decide to bring their suits before the Lord. Mercy begins the first debate when she takes the stance that "[p]rowe vertu of [Christ's] passion, / To no man schuld be seyde nay" (3140-1) if he asks for mercy. She even justifies mercy's attainment through the image of Christ's crucifixion:

For þe leste drope of blode  
 Þat God bledde on þe rode  
 It hadde ben satysfaccion goode  
 For al Mankyndys werke. (3147-50)

By revisiting this image, the playwright uses Mercy to build the audience's memory of Christ by adding yet another association (the debate of the four daughters) to it. In contrast to Mercy, Justice and Truth, the next two daughters to offer opinions, ignore Christ's crucifixion and focus instead only on the moment of humankind's death and judgment. Justice argues that simply asking for mercy does not make a person worthy of it:

Trowe 3e þat whanne a man schal deye,

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<sup>166</sup> Proudfoot, 100.

Panne þow þat he mercy craue,  
 Pat anon he schal haue mercy?  
 Nay, nay, so Crist me saue! (3164-7)

Truth also approaches humanity's end dispassionately:

Whanne body and sowle partyn atwynne,  
 Panne wey I hys goode dedys and hys synne,  
 And weydyr of hem be more or mynne  
 He schal it ryth sone fynde. (3186-9)

This first debate carries over the tension from the battle scene by presenting an argument in which one side upholds Christ's sacrificial actions to reject an onslaught that ignores the gravity of His death. That is not to say that Justice's and Truth's positions are sinful like the Vices' are, just that their dispassionate views maintain tension within the virtuous discourse of reward found in this sequence. The order in which the daughters speak even heightens this tension: Justice and Truth speak after Mercy, making their stance on humanity's damnation appear more credible since it is repeated twice. Distraught over their disagreement, Peace points out that humankind "is on kyn tyl vs thre" (3207) and, because of the crucifixion, should be saved: "For hys loue þat deyed on tre, / Late saue Mankynd fro al peryle / And schelde hym fro myschaunsse" (3209-11). Peace concludes the first debate amongst the daughters, producing a new speech pattern in the play of virtue-vice-vice-virtue (and I use the designation of vice loosely here to denote Truth and Justice's speeches because Truth and Justice, by upholding a dispensation that has been superseded by Christ's sacrifice in the Cross, occupy the position of contestation in this portion of the play that the Seven Deadly Sins did earlier).

In the second debate before God, each daughter stays consistent in her reasons for humankind's salvation or damnation. First to speak in this debate, Truth validates her stance of damnation by reminding the Lord that she defines Him as He defines her:

For in all trewthe standyth þi renowne,

Þi feyth, þi hope, and þi powere,  
 Lete it be sene, Lord, now at þi dome,  
 Þat I may haue my trewe prayere  
 To do trewþe to Mankynd.  
 For if Mankynd be dempte be ryth  
 And not be mercy, most of myth,  
 Here my trewth, Lord, I þe plyth,  
 In presun man schal be pynynd. (3253-61)

Truth's desire to punish humankind appropriately for its actions stems from her concern to preserve God's teachings. She goes on to explain quite logically that

[l]ate repentaunce if man saue scholde,  
 Wheþyr he wrouth wel or wyckydnesse,  
 Þanne euery man wold be bolde  
 To trespas in trost of forþevenesse. (3275-8)

And indeed, when it is her turn to speak, Justice picks up on the risk of asking for forgiveness selfishly that Truth here identifies by reminding God of all the ways in which humanity forgets Him and His laws:

To kepe þi commandementys he schuld not irke,  
 Sicut iusti tui.<sup>167</sup>  
 But whanne he was com to mans astate  
 All hys behestys he þanne forgate.  
 He is worþi be dampnyd for þat,  
 Qui oblitus est Domini creatoris sui.<sup>168</sup>

For he hathe forgetyn þe þat hym wrout (3399-405)

Justice proceeds to give an accurate account of the actions HG performs throughout *Castle*, citing his compliance with "þe Develys trase, / Þe Flesch, þe World" (3410-1), how he "forsake / ...hys Good Aungels gouernaunce" (3418-9), and even how he chose to leave the Castle: "Vertuis he putte ful evyn away / Whanne Coveytyse gan hym avaunce" (3422-3).

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<sup>167</sup> "Just as in your laws."

<sup>168</sup> "He who has forgotten his creator."

The picture that Truth and Justice paint of HG's actions certainly is condemning. But in the debate before God, unlike the one amongst themselves, Mercy speaks twice, once after Truth and then again after Justice, countering each of their arguments with persuasive testimonies of her own. By giving Mercy two speeches and letting her speak after both Truth and Justice, *Castle's* playwright presents the daughter advocating on humankind's behalf speaking after the daughters demanding its damnation, again exploring a virtue-after-vice speech pattern: vice(Truth)-virtue(Mercy)-vice(Justice)-virtue(Mercy). This pattern reverses that of the first debate wherein Mercy spoke first and reinforces the virtue-after-vice speech pattern of the *Castle's* besiegement. To Truth, who argues that late repentance undoes God's laws, Mercy responds that it is God's own law that makes any and every cry for mercy legitimate:

Lord, þou þat man hathe don more mysse þanne good,  
If he dey in very contricioun,  
Lord, þe lest drope of þi blod  
For hys synne makyth satysfaccioun. (3366-9)

Mercy grounds her claim in the action of Christ's sacrifice. She reminds God and the audience throughout her rebuttal of Truth about Christ's conception (3331-4), His Passion (3344-65), and His death (3370-1), stressing twice how Christ was "on þe rode" (3347) and "henge on þe Croys" (3349) for "[m]ans helthe" (3351).

To Justice, who outlined how HG forgot God, Mercy explains that, by assuming the role of humanity's teacher, she compensates for its forgetfulness:

To me he[God] gan hym betече,  
Besyde al hys ryth.  
For hym wyl I prey and preche  
To gete hym fre respyth,  
And my systyr Pese.  
For hys mercy is wythout begynnyng  
And schal be wythoutyn endynge (3461-7)



Since mercy is without an end or a beginning, Mercy can continually teach humanity to rectify its fallen condition. Mercy's self-presentation as teacher highlights the didactic service that the Virtues in the Castle and Mercy in the two debates sequences perform for humankind. Taken together, Mercy's rebuttals of Truth and Justice show that HG's action of leaving the Castle was wrong, and that only God's grace in the form of mercy will save him and his soul. Mercy therefore encourages the members of the audience to remember how and why HG sinned so that they will not do the same themselves. Mercy's focus on Christ's life strengthens this *exemplum* as an apparatus enhancing memory's cultivation within the play as well as within the world at large.

When Mercy finishes, Peace solidifies any lingering dissension amongst the daughters with a call that they "stonde at on acord, / At pes wythowtyn ende" (3537-8), reinforcing the unity that Mercy's didactic arguments create through Christ's Passion:

Lord, for þi pyte and þat pes  
 Pou sufferyst in þi pasioun,  
 Boundyn and betyn, wythout les,  
 Fro þe fote to þe croun,  
 Tanquam ouis ductus es<sup>169</sup>  
 Whanne gutte sanguis ran adoun,  
 Ȝyt the Jves wolde not ses  
 But on þyn hed þei pryst a croun  
 And on þe cros þe naylyd.  
 As petously as þou were pynynd,  
 Haue mercy of Mankynd,  
 So þat he may fynde  
 Oure preyer may hym avayle. (3548-60)

This final presentation of Christ as *exemplum* reminds the four daughters of the role that their concord serves in delivering salvation to humankind. As a unifying example, the image of

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<sup>169</sup> "Just as a sheep you were led."

Christ's Passion and particularly of his crucifixion allows these words Peace speaks to complement her original point that, since the daughters and humanity are of the same kin, they should not seek humankind's damnation.

Concluding the debate sequence and the play, God's last words emphasize the role of memory. The Lord thus invokes the source of tension informing the battles that the play stages for HG both outside and inside the Castle as well as amongst the four daughters when he says, "[t]o saue 3ou fro synnyng / Evyr at þe begynnyng / Thynke on 3oure last endyng!" (3646-8). Like God's unending mercy, *Castle*'s engagement with *memoria* bends back on itself, ending with God where it starts with Bonus Angelus, by imploring humankind to remember.

#### IV. *Memoria* in Text and Picture

By depicting images that the members of its audiences can remember, the plays of the Macro Manuscript create opportunities for viewers to build their memories by thinking about and meditating upon what they have seen. The visual images that these plays present therefore become 'readable' texts in their own right: "Images are themselves words of a sort, not because they represent words in our sense of 'represent,' but because, like words, they recall content to mind."<sup>170</sup> While this argument certainly could be made for the images in most any extant medieval play, it particularly suits the scenes of *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle*, wherein demands to remember are constantly placed on protagonists and mnemotechniques abound. By way of conclusion, then, I would like to consider how the texts of each of these plays create 'readable' pictures, starting with an actual picture, that is, with the diagram at the end of *Castle*.<sup>171</sup> This

<sup>170</sup> Carruthers, 276. For a detailed discussion of the interaction of picture and text, see Carruthers, 274-337.

<sup>171</sup> For a picture of this diagram, refer to Appendix B.

diagram comes after the text of the play, and even though it has been described as an invaluable asset for the staging of medieval drama,<sup>172</sup> the information that it provides is by no means straightforward. Alan J. Fletcher grapples with the difficulty of trying to understanding the four lines of text on either side of the picture of the Castle in the diagram; for, the meaning that the phrases convey when transformed into a ‘sentence’ changes depending on whether it is read from the left to the right vertically or horizontally.<sup>173</sup> These phrases read as follows:

Coveytyse’ copbord	schal be at þe ende
by þe beddys feet	of þe castel

The option to read vertically or horizontally evokes medieval diagrams of Wheels of Sevens.<sup>174</sup> These wheels contained seven topics, each topic of which consisted of seven component parts (such as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven vices, the seven virtues, etc.) and arranged each topic’s component parts in circular, horizontal planes. But these wheels were meant to be read horizontally and vertically, so that all the virtues, for example, could be contemplated together in the wheel’s horizontal plane but also so that the first virtue could be contemplated in relation to the first vice and the first gift of the Holy Spirit, and so on through the vertical columns that the wheel’s arrangement created.<sup>175</sup> As a result of the multiple options they offer for placing topics together, these wheels provide the opportunity to construct rich webs of association through meditation, and I argue that the four phrases wrapping around the picture of

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<sup>172</sup> Alan J. Fletcher, “‘Coveytyse Copbord Schal be at þe Ende of þe Castel be þe Beddy Feet’: Staging the Death of Mankind in *The Castle of Perseverance*,” *English Studies* 4 (1987), 305-12, at 305. Fletcher also discusses the controversy about how to stage *Castle* that this diagram sparks, citing R. Southern, *The Medieval Theatre in the Round* (London, 1957); N.C. Schmitt, “Was There a Medieval Theatre in the Round?: A Re-examination of the Evidence,” *Theatre Notebook* 23 (1969), 130-42; S.I. Pendersen, “The Staging of *The Castle of Perseverance*: A Re-analysis,” *Theatre Notebook* 39 (1985), 51-62, and his “The Staging of *The Castle of Perseverance*: Testing the List Theory,” *Theatre Notebook* 39 (1985), 104-13. I add to the list Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 148-63.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 306-8.

<sup>174</sup> See Appendix C for a picture of a Wheel of Sevens.

<sup>175</sup> Lucy Freeman Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert De Lisle in the British Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 52.

the Castle function no differently, as they force the reader to meditate upon the associative meanings that the various placements of the cupboard can create. It is particularly fitting that Fletcher resolves to read the lines cyclically: “Coveytyse’ copbord schal be at þe ende of þe castel by þe beddys feet,” moving around the circle that these phrases construct first horizontally, then vertically, and then horizontally again. By arranging the phrases in such an order, Fletcher creates meaning through the continuous associations of the horizontal and vertical columns as one could when reading a Wheel of Sevens. What is more, the visual similarities between Wheels of Sevens and *Castle*’s diagram are striking: the Wheel of Sevens in the De Lisle Psalter, for example, has a picture of Christ at its center positioned similarly to the picture of the Castle in the *Castle* diagram; circles containing text read in a cyclic fashion encapsulate the central picture in both instances, the De Lisle Psalter portraying eight such circles and the *Castle* diagram one; and, both Psalter Wheel and *Castle* diagram have explanatory text – as words and pictures in the Psalter and as words alone in the diagram – outside of the circles that simultaneously complement the content of Wheel and diagram but also propel the contemplation of each forward with new content: in the case of the Psalter with images of the Visitation and Annunciation and in *Castle*’s case with a description of the four daughters of God.

Since the crux of *Castle*’s action is the battle between the seven Vices and the seven Virtues, I contend that the diagram at the play’s conclusion is a deliberate evocation of diagrams of Wheels of Sevens that were used to train the memory. And not only Wheels of Sevens, but other mnemonic wheels such as those depicting the Ages of Man, are relevant to *Castle* and its diagram because *Castle* also portrays HG’s lifespan from birth to death.<sup>176</sup> The Wheel of Ages

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<sup>176</sup> See Appendix D for a picture of a Wheel of Ages and Fortune.

and Fortune in MS 330 in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge is again striking in the visual parallels it affords to *Castle*'s diagram, particularly in its location of a central picture and in the location of four pictures that protrude from the circumference of its main circle. These four circles are evocative of the placement of the five explanations of the scaffolds around the circumference of the *Castle*'s diagram. In both Wheel and diagram, the central pictures and protruding images/texts offer opportunities for meditation on the associations between center and periphery. The value of *Castle*'s diagram therefore is not simply that it affords a lens into medieval staging practices but that it affords a sketch of how principles of *memoria* inform the production of plays, and, in turn, how plays act as images which organize, catalogue, and cross-reference information in the memory.

*Castle* does not need a diagram to stimulate its audience's memory, however. As I have discussed, the play employs vice-after-virtue and virtue-after-vice patterns of speech and a double plot structure. In terms of its plot sequence, *Castle* presents a vice-virtue-vice-virtue pattern, with HG living in the world, in the Castle, in the world again, and finally (through his soul) in Heaven with God. This temporal sequence breaks the play into distinct, segmented scenes, each of which provides images upon which to meditate. *Mankind* and *Wisdom* function similarly, employing a pattern of innocence, fall, and redemption, or virtue-vice-virtue, for their respective protagonists. And as a more detailed consideration of both *Mankind*'s and *Anima/Mind*'s falls reveal, vice-after-virtue patterns clinch their sins: Titivillus whispers a lie in *Mankind*'s ear that replaces his memory of Mercy as does Lucifer suggest misinformation to *Mind* that derails his memory from God. Temptation in the Macro plays always follows a temporal sequence of vice-after-virtue, a situation that repeatedly emphasizes the centrality of memory if virtuous living is to be achieved. It is not coincidental, then, that all three plays

conclude with the characters who represent memory: Mercy and Wisdom teach Mankind and Anima/Mind how to remember God again after their falls as does the debate among the four daughters recall the memory of why Christ sacrificed himself for HG. As a result of temporal plot sequences that always end in virtue, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Castle* close portraying mercy, wisdom, and God, all images of virtue worthy of remembering.

### Chapter 3: Preaching Mercy through *Exempla*: Contemplacio, Christ, and Mary in N-Town

The didactic success that *memoria* lends to the Macro Manuscript results from the repetition in which it forces its audiences to engage; for, through repetition comes the opportunity to review and ruminate upon edifying material. Like the Macro Manuscript, the compilation of plays known as N-Town also deals with the interrelated issues of preaching and memory, but in N-Town, these issues merge through the *exempla* that the expositor figure Contemplacio offers for meditation. Peter Meredith summarizes the various roles critics have assigned to Contemplacio, saying he is “the introducer, expositor, continuity man, and concluder...the character who binds...episodes together and creates...integrity,” showing that the critical interest this character generates stems from our inability “to know what text is appropriately his. Add some or take some away and his role and character changes.”<sup>177</sup> To understand what Contemplacio does in N-Town, then, is to understand the problem that this manuscript presents as a compilation of independent plays and play groupings fitted together into a complete cycle: “transcribed between c. 1468 and the early years of the sixteenth century,”<sup>178</sup> N-Town consists of a base group of plays that have been supplemented by three play groupings – the *Mary Play*, *Passion Play I*, and *Passion Play II* – as well as by individual plays, such as the “Assumption of Mary.”<sup>179</sup> Since N-Town’s folios still bear the marks of its many steps of

<sup>177</sup> “Establishing an Expositor’s Role: Contemplacio and the N-Town Manuscript,” Philip Butterworth (ed.), *The Narrator, the Expositor, and the Prompter in European Medieval Theatre* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 289-306, at 292 and 289. Contemplacio has also been called an interpreter: “Contemplacio...preemptively interpret[s] the sacred stories on stage in order to safely insulate the plays against audience misapprehension” (William Fitzwilliam, “The N-Town Plays and the Politics of Metatheater,” *Studies in Philology* 100 (2003), 22-43, at 27).

<sup>178</sup> Stephen Spector, *The N-Town Play, Volume I*, EETS s.s. 11 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xvi. Since

<sup>179</sup> K.S. Block, *Ludus Coventriae, or the Plaie Called Corpus Christ*, EETS e.s. 120 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), xi-lx. The manuscript consists of at least four scribal hands, was composed in East Anglia, most likely in Norfolk, and contains numerous interpolations and revisions in addition to the *Mary Play*, *Passion Plays*, and the

revision, scholars debate the completeness and unity of its thematic program,<sup>180</sup> and, as a result, have allowed this scribal practice to obscure Contemplacio's function. Despite his many appellations, Contemplacio has never been called a preacher,<sup>181</sup> nor have the revisions at the heart of the compilation been considered from the perspective of medieval sermon theory. Because the majority of N-Town's revisions center on Contemplacio, this chapter contends that he is the character who signals an intention to actively reshape the material of this manuscript into the discourse of the preacher. Understanding first of all that Contemplacio uses sermon language and secondly that he does so with the targeted purpose of negotiating Mary's presence in the cycle enables the Christological focus of N-Town's preaching program to emerge.

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"Assumption of Mary" (Spector., xiii-xlv). Evidence internal to the manuscript gathered from paleography and scribal proclivities, watermarks, and versification identifies the *Mary Play*, *Passion Plays I and II*, and the "Assumption of Mary" as later additions to the manuscript. For detailed studies of these material aspects of the manuscript, see W.W. Greg, *Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Cycles* (London: Alexander Moring LTD, 1914), 108-43; Esther L. Swenson, "An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of *Ludus Coventriae*," *Studies in Language and Literature* 1 (1914), 1-83; R.T. Davis, *The Corpus Christi Play of the English Middle Ages* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972); Peter Meredith and Stanley J. Kahrl, *The N-Town Plays: A Facsimile of British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D VIII*, *Leeds Texts and Monographs: Medieval Drama Facsimiles IV* (Ikeley: The Scholar Press LTD, 1977).

<sup>180</sup> Addressing N-Town's composite status, Rosemary Woolf writes that "[t]he nature of the manuscript allows us to observe rough joins between different parts of the cycle, but it does not follow from this that the cycle is a rather crude piecing together of stretches of plays written by different hands. This would be an inevitable inference only if we held to the assumption that an author and revisor cannot be one and the same person" (*The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1972), 309). Several scholars view N-Town as incomplete, claiming that it "is a manuscript in the process of being made, not the finished article" (Meredith, "Establishing an Expositor," 290). As a result, there has been an effort to remove play groupings from N-Town. Meredith, for instance, extracts the *Mary Play* as well as both *Passion Plays* and edits them in separate editions, explaining that his "basic aim in the editions of the *Mary Play* and the *Passion* has been to present a text as uncluttered as possible by the later additions and alterations present in the manuscript" (*The Passion Play: From the N-Town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1990), vi). In opposition to scholars who regard N-Town as a patchwork, there are those who see the cycle as a unified whole. Martin Stevens argues that "we should regard the cycle as a product rather than a process" so that the "rich tapestry of scenes that are designed to merge into one another on an ever-expanding multiple stage" emerge (*Four Middle English Mystery Cycles: Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 181-257, at 184 and 187, respectively). Stevens assesses N-Town's unity through its consistent deployment of typology. Stevens follows the lead of other scholars who find coherence in the cycle, notably Timothy Fry who argues for the patristic theory of the Redemption and Katheeln M. Ashely who argues for wit and wisdom as unifying themes. See Timothy Fry, O.S.B., "The Unity of the *Ludus Coventriae*," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951), 527-70, and Kathleen M. Ashley, "'Wyt' and 'Wysdam' in N-Town Cycle," *Philological Quarterly* 58 (1979), 121-35.

<sup>181</sup> A handful of scholars suggest that Cotemplacio may be a priest. Gail McMurray Gibson, for instance, conjectures that Contemplacio would "have been garbed...as [a] religious contemplative, as a monk" (*The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 130).



Gender is a central issue that preaching must tackle in N-Town because of its typological presentation of Christ. For instance, N-Town employs traditional type-antitype relationships between characters such as Isaac and Christ, but it also uniquely portrays Mary's life as a template for her son's: "The text of the N-Town cycle shows an awareness of the interpretive tradition which found Christological meanings in the activities / of the Virgin before the birth of Christ."<sup>182</sup> N-Town therefore anticipates Christ's actions and repeats them through different registers, through both the masculine and feminine childhoods of Isaac and Mary in the compilation's respective first and second play groupings, the Old Testament plays and the *Mary Play*. But its typological presentation is more complicated still because N-Town also uses this ideology to portray its preachers: Moses in the Old Testament plays and Contemplacio in the *Mary Play* announce themselves as preachers whose language foreshadows Christ's preaching, Moses by reconfiguring father-son teaching relationships in a Latin sermon and Contemplacio by re-presenting Mary's Latin teaching expositions as *exempla* in his own sermon. Additionally, both Moses and Contemplacio preach about mercy, the Theme of Christ's sermons.<sup>183</sup> In his capacity as a preacher who discusses mercy in relation to Mary, Contemplacio mitigates and reclaims as masculine the erudition that the perspicacious Mary displays. Mary's presentation must be managed carefully so as to not compete with the teaching and authority that Christ as preacher will later claim, not only because she remains a constant presence in the cycle, but more importantly because "her special quality of perpetual virginity...identifies her much more closely

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<sup>182</sup> Theresa Coletti, "Devotional Iconography in the N-Town Marian Plays," *Comparative Drama* 11 (1977), 22-44, at 23-4).

<sup>183</sup> Fry notes that there are "many cries for mercy in the play of Moses" and that "Moses asks for 'mercy sone,'" pleas which "become important in linking this Old Testament play to the theme of the Redemption in the cycle" (542-3). Fry does not explore mercy as a sermon's Theme, as I will in this chapter, but he is certainly right to identify it as a concept providing cohesion in the manuscript.

with masculine hegemony than with the other daughters of Eve.”<sup>184</sup> Contemplacio’s presence therefore asserts the authority of the masculine preaching voice over Mary’s doctrinal explications, serving as a place holder for the role that Christ himself will later occupy in the plays of his childhood, ministry, and Passion.

As his name underscores, Contemplacio is perfectly poised to delve into the tensions that gender introduces to preaching in this manuscript: the word *contemplacio* is a feminine, Latin noun meaning ‘contemplation,’<sup>185</sup> and like Mercy in *Mankind* and Wisdom in *Wisdom*, N-Town costumes this abstract, feminine concept as a male preacher on stage. The concerns over gender that Contemplacio manifests in N-Town run deeper than the simple juxtaposition of an abstract, feminine idea with a masculine actor’s body, however, because this feminine connotation does not point to the typical, historical situation of a man playing a woman’s role on stage. Rather, Contemplacio is a man, and specifically a preacher, a reality that the close examination of his language will confirm. What Contemplacio’s name intimates, then, is the opportunity for rumination that preaching’s *exempla* and sermon divisions offer, that is, an opportunity to internalize a visual image of Mary and to reflect upon the connections that this image creates with Christ as child and preacher.<sup>186</sup> Mary participates in N-Town’s typological presentation of Christ, but it is Contemplacio’s preaching rhetoric and his particular ability to transform her into

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<sup>184</sup> Merrall Llewelyn Price, “Re-membering the Jews: Theatrical Violence in the N-Town Marian Plays” *Comparative Drama* 41 (2008), 439-63, at 452.

<sup>185</sup> A more complete definition of *contemplacio*, or *contemplatio*, is ‘an attentive considering, a viewing, surveying, contemplation.’ For the full definition, see the entry *contemplatio* in Lewis and Short’s *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 445.

<sup>186</sup> One of N-Town’s sources is Nicholas Love’s *Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, “which was written in the early fifteenth century, [and] was essentially a meditational guide” (Stevens, 192). Indeed, within N-Town, Mary is constantly praying inside the temple and reading the Psalter, her metaphorical connection to Contemplacio clearly resonating throughout the *Mary Play* as she enacts the *via contemplativa* (Stevens, 218-20).

a sermon *exemplum* that makes her both a character in, and a rhetorical manifestation of, N-Town's didactic preaching program.

A pivotal figure in the cycle's presentation of preaching, Contemplacio establishes preaching's centrality in N-Town, a centrality that unifies all of the compilation's play groupings through preachers such as Moses, John the Baptist, Peter, and several other minor figures like Episcopus in the *Mary Play* and Doctor in the "Assumption of Mary." All of these figures shape N-Town's gendered understanding of preaching, and, in different ways, contribute to the manuscript's ultimate focus on Christ as preacher. Christ is the manifestation of the Word made Flesh, and he explicates himself as an *exemplum* in his own sermons to demonstrate the harmony of a preacher's words and deeds. Casting himself in the positions of masculine sermon-maker and feminine subject of sermon, Christ complicates and challenges the gendered presentation of preaching by showing how masculine preaching voices validate their own authority through the depiction of women as *exempla* in sermons. N-Town's portrayal of this gender dynamic begins with Contemplacio and Mary, and in order to understand how Contemplacio implements Mary's double typological representation as character and rhetorical preaching strategy, it is first necessary to consider how N-Town depicts preaching through Moses in its initial play grouping. By establishing Latin as a language of divine investiture and the preacher as its interpreter, N-Town's Old Testament play grouping locates the authoritative voice of the preacher firmly in the masculine. Invested in Moses, this divine rhetoric will pass to Contemplacio and to Christ in turn, lending the preacher's voice a ubiquity and timelessness throughout the cycle.

## I. The Old Testament Plays: Male Teachers in N-Town

In N-Town's first seven plays, Moses emerges as the paradigmatic figure of the preacher when his sermon on the Decalogue transforms the teaching of the patriarchs into divinely sanctioned preaching language. Moses' sermon is the culmination of the prevalent emphasis that N-Town's first play grouping places on father-son teaching relationships, namely, those of Adam, Abel, and Cain; Noah, his three sons, and their families; and Abraham and Isaac. Moses' sermon reconfigures these relationships in a twofold manner, first by applying their familial undertone to the preacher who teaches his congregation as a father-figure, and second, by changing the language of instruction from the vernacular to Latin. This shift in the language of divine investiture requires the preacher to translate and interpret divine meaning for the audience, an additional, intercessory function that fathers teaching their sons do not perform. In contrast to these paternal lessons of love and worship, when Moses delivers his sermon, he systematically states the Latin of each commandment, offers an English translation, and explicates its meaning for the audience. Were he not a preacher, Moses would not be able to communicate the Lord's Ten Latin Commandments to the audience. Bequeathing Latin to Moses distinguishes his voice as preacher from the masculine discourse of teaching already present in the Old Testament plays.

The use of Latin before the "Moses" play is a subtle indicator of how N-Town's first play grouping culminates in the rhetoric of the preacher. In the two plays in which it appears, Latin represents divine power, as the opening line of "Creation of Heaven; Fall of Lucifer" announces: "Ego sum alpha et oo, principium et finis" (1.1).<sup>187</sup> The Lord immediately demonstrates the omnipotence that this citation invokes by creating the world. The second Latin citation functions similarly in the "Noah" play, when God laments his need to destroy his creation: "Fecisse

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<sup>187</sup> "I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end." All Latin translations are my own. Citations of N-Town are from volume 1 of *The N-Town Play*, edited by Stephen Spector. Citations consist of play number and line number(s).

hominem nunc penitet me” (4.105).<sup>188</sup> Both of these quotations portray God’s respective constructive and destructive power rhetorically, and their delivery in Latin differentiates them from and makes them more impenetrable than the Middle English surrounding them: “Vernacular words in the texts of the medieval English biblical plays were...second to any words of Latin liturgy and Latin scripture, which, as in the East Anglian N-Town cycle, were often left conspicuously untranslated, to function as [an] ‘intrusive sacred sign,’ a kind of visual icon of the revealed wisdom of God.”<sup>189</sup> Indeed, while the sense of these two initial Latin quotations is rendered somewhat into English, there is no indication to the audience that they have been translated. The Latin citations therefore invoke the language of the preaching tradition but refuse to offer that tradition’s interpretative didacticism until Moses accepts his charge to preach from the Lord:

DEUS: Com nere, Moyses, with me to mete.  
 These tabellis I take þe in þin honde,  
 With my fynger in hem is wrete  
 All my lawys, þu vndyrstonde.  
 Loke þat þu preche all abowte:  
 Hooso wyll haue frenshipp of me,  
 To my laws loke þei lowte,  
 Þat þeu be kept in all degré.  
 Go forth and preche anon, let se;  
 Loke þu not ses nyght nor day.

MOYSES: Ȝoure byddyng, Lord, all wrought xal be,  
 Ȝoure wyll to werk, I walk my way.  
*Custodi precepta Domini Dei tui: Deutronomini vj.*<sup>190</sup>  
 The comaundment of þi Lord God, man, loke þu kepe  
 Where þat þu walk, wake, or slepe. (6.37-50)

<sup>188</sup> “Now I’m sorry that I made man.”

<sup>189</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson, “Writing before the Eye: The N-Town ‘Woman Taken in Adultery’ and the Medieval Ministry Play,” *Comparative Drama* 27 (1994), 399-407, at 401.

<sup>190</sup> “Guard the precepts of your Lord God.”

By writing down and giving his commandments to Moses, God makes his law, and more importantly, the Latin language expressing his law, accessible to humankind. Moses cites, translates, and interprets Latin for the audience; as a preacher, his fluency with Latin places him between the divine and the human, making him the figure with one face towards God and one towards the people whom he must educate.<sup>191</sup> Moses' response in these lines emphasizes the mediating work preaching accomplishes: the Latin authority Moses pronounces (6.48) literally positions him between God and the people, as he address the "Lord" (6.46) and "man" (6.49) in turn; his use of Latin separates the acknowledgement of his charge from God to preach and his execution of that charge to the audience.

Moses' investiture with the divinely sanctioned language of Latin replays the linguistic vernacular investiture from God that Adam received in "Creation of the World; Fall of Man." During his interaction with Adam, God bestows the authority of His rhetoric: just as God creates the world through verbal commands, so too does He empower Adam to create meaning by naming the objects in Eden:

Bothe fysche and foulys þat swymmyn and gon  
To everych of hem a name þu take;  
Bothe tre and frute, and bestys echon,  
Red and qwtie, bothe blew and blake,  
Þu ȝeve hem name be þiself alon,  
Erbyss and gresse, both beetys and brake;  
Þi wyff þu ȝeve name also. (2.20-6)

God's gift of language makes Adam His heir as "prynce in place" (2.57); that is, the prince of the physical location of Paradise as well as the prince in Paradise in lieu of God who returns to heaven: "to hefine I sped my way" (2.58). Adam acknowledges his linguistic superiority in Eden

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<sup>191</sup> Claire M. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 39-50.

by calling himself “a good gardenere” (2.69), equally tending to the produce and the promise empowering him:

Euery frute of ryche name  
I may gaderyn with gle and game.  
To breke þat bond I were to blame  
Pat my Lord bad me kepyn here. (2.70-3)

Adam locates the authority he receives in the fruits he names and nurtures. They are the physical manifestations of Adam’s verbal covenant with God.

The relationship that Adam and the Lord share stems from their ability to create reality through rhetoric. The use of language to attribute and explain meaning connects Adam to God as it later connects Moses to the deity. Language is the bridge between the Father and the Son, the inheritance that God passes to his creation to teach the generations to come.<sup>192</sup> And indeed, as mentioned above, N-Town’s postlapsarian plays go on to explore how, and how successfully, fathers teach their sons. An uneducated but eager Abel opens “Cain and Abel” by saying

I wolde fayn knowe how I xuld do  
To serve my Lord God to his plesyng.  
Perfore, Caym, brother, lete us now go  
Vnto oure fadyr withowte letting. (3.1-4)

Adam immediately identifies Cain and Abel as the “fyrst frute of kendely engendrure” (3.33), a verbal echo that reconstrues his responsibility to tend to the fruits of Paradise as an obligation to teach his sons in the postlapsarian world. Cain and Abel are the ultimate manifestation of Adam’s linguistic investiture: they represent Adam’s ability to imitate his Father’s example of

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<sup>192</sup> “Language for medieval thinkers was far from being a merely utilitarian issue, a channel suited to the exchange of information, but was rather both symbol and agent of divine and human order alike...human history was in medieval thought a text written by God: ‘Did not God bring all things into existence simply by calling their names? We are words spoken by the Lord, and our mottled history [is] built upon the conflict of good and evil...’ (Augustine),” (John F. Plummer, “The Logomachy of the N-Town *Passion Play I*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 88 (1989), 311-31, at 314).

creating man. The image of fruit invokes the Lord's paternal-filial bond with Adam and infuses his speech with the authority of a paternal educator:

Fyrst, I 3ow counseyll most syngulerly  
 God for to loue and drede.  
 And suche good as God hath 3ow sent,  
 The fyrst frute offyr to hym in sacryfice brent,  
 Hym evyr besechyng with meke entent  
 In all 3oure werkys to save and spede. (3.39-44)

Adam teaches his sons that they should offer their first fruit to the Lord, a lesson that he himself enacts by dedicating his first fruits – that is, his sons – to the Lord's service.

Despite Adam's best intentions, only one of his sons internalizes his lesson: Abel sacrifices the best "lomb" (3.68) in his flock but Cain instead "tythe[s] þis vnthende sheff" (3.101), the worst portion of his produce.<sup>193</sup> Cain reinforces his disregard for his biological and earthly father by failing to express his love for his spiritual and heavenly Father properly. Strikingly, Cain is the only son in N-Town who does not properly internalize his father's lessons, his sin manifesting in his inability to place God before himself. Cain behaves as a petulant child towards both Adam and God, his ingratitude towards his Creator recalling Lucifer's: in the cycle's first play, Lucifer challenges God's power by usurping the sign of His authority, first by sitting in "Goddys se" (1.56) and then by demanding that the other angels "wurchyp [him] for most mythy" (1.59).

"Noah" and "Abraham and Isaac" nuance the trope of paternal education that Adam and his sons introduce. "Noah" immediately refocuses Cain and Abel's disparate responses to Adam's lessons macroscopically: God stands poised to destroy humankind because, like Cain, it

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<sup>193</sup> Abel is also a typological figure of Christ in this play, as he will become a sacrificial lamb like Christ.



disregards His lessons. Noah's family alone praises the Lord, a devotion learned from Noah's commitment to teaching:

I warne ȝow, childeryn, on and all,  
Drede oure Lord God in hevyn hall  
And in no forfeite þat we ne fall,  
Oure Lord for to dysplese. (4.49-53)

"Abraham and Isaac" reconfigures Abel's murder in "Cain and Abel" and the genocide in "Noah" within the context of the father-son relationship. Abraham thanks the Lord for his son throughout his opening speech, and willingly takes it upon himself to teach Isaac:

Now, Isaac, my sone so suete,  
Almyghty God loke þu honoure,  
...  
Loke þat þin herte in hevyn toure  
Be sett, to serve oure Lord God above.  
In þi ȝonge lerne God to plese,  
And God xal quyte þe weyl in þi mede. (5.33-4, 39-42)

Abraham educates his son in faithful obedience so that he will one day be able to reap his due reward. The irony of Abraham's advice is that his son's lesson, as well as Abraham's own role as teacher, will soon become the basis for testing both of their convictions to serve the Lord. Isaac is Abraham's only son, and as such, is his first fruit, the first of many kings in Abraham's masculine lineage. This play therefore revisits the status of Cain and Abel as the first fruits of Adam as well as of Cain's refusal to sacrifice the best portion of his first fruit in order to reinforce the selflessness involved in worshiping the Lord.

Abraham's success in teaching his son surfaces when Isaac learns that "[w]ith þis fyre bryght [he] must be brent!" (5.141). Isaac responds to this trying news by saying,

Almyghty God of his grett mercye,  
Ful hertyly I thanke þe, sertayne.  
At Goddys byddyng here for to dye,  
I obeye me here for to be sclayne.  
I pray ȝow, fadyr, be glad and fayne

Trewly to werke Goddys wyll.  
 Take good comforte to 3ow agayn,  
 And haue no dowte 3oure childe to kyll. (5.145-52)

Isaac willingly accepts his place in the Lord's plan, convincing his father that his actions are just and necessary. Abraham and Isaac's complete trust in the Lord earns them their true reward, the preservation of Isaac's life: "God hath sent þe word befor, / Þi seed xal multiplye wherso þu duelle" (5.215-6). The reference to "seed" continues Adam's analogy of children as fruit who are gifted from a divine father to their earthly fathers.

The image of fruit that Adam uses to explain his obligation to educate his sons marks him as participant in a lineage of teachers originating in God whose lessons in N-Town first culminate in Moses' sermon and ultimately in Christ's voice as preacher. In this manner, Abraham and Isaac's father-son relationship anticipates the Lord's with Christ, as He will send and sacrifice his only son to show his power rhetorically on earth to humankind: Christ's incarnation in Mary's womb and death on the cross result directly from the Word of the Lord. Moses' sermon is an important intermediary between Christ as preacher and the father-son teaching relationship in N-Town's first play grouping; it demonstrates how Adam, Noah, and Abraham's lessons transform into a preacher-congregation relationship through the introduction of Latin as the language of teaching. Moses' "[c]ustodi precepta Domini Dei tui: Deutronomini vj" (6.49) is the first Latin citation in N-Town not spoken by the Lord. God invests Moses as a preacher with a language heretofore reserved only for divine utterance. Adam, Noah, and Abraham all directly inherit and are empowered by language from God; yet, Latin is a language with which none of these patriarchs engage. The Latin words of biblical authorities and the sermon rhetoric they construct change how language functions as a divine inheritance when it is bestowed on Moses. Latin requires the preacher's mediation and interpretation to communicate

God's inheritance as it is given to humankind for humankind. The Latin emphasis of Moses' preaching language reinterprets the relationship that the Lord fosters with humankind as the formal, recognizable discourse of the sermon.

In control of his rhetoric and the power it grants him, Moses describes how preaching redefines the Lord's teaching, laws, and authority:

*Custodi precepta Domini Dei tui: Deutronomini vj.*<sup>194</sup>  
 The comaundment of þi Lord God, man, loke þu kepe  
 Where þat þu walk, wake, or slepe.

Euery man take good hede,  
 And to my techynge take good intent,  
 For God hath sent me now indede  
 3ow for to enforme his comaundment.  
 3ow to teche, God hath me sent,  
 His lawys of lyff þat are ful wyse.  
 Them to lerne be dyligent;  
 3oure soullys may þei save at the last asyse.

The preceptys þat taught xal be,  
 Be wretyn in pese tablys tweyn. (6.48-60)

Moses has the ability to teach the precepts that are written down and that will ensure the salvation of the audience members. Moses' role as preacher is crucial because, as he goes on to reveal, these precepts are written in Latin, and are in need not only of translation but also of interpretation. Moses' sermon therefore transforms N-Town's presentation of teaching language by expressing it as the Church's educational mission to preach.<sup>195</sup> In fact, preaching the Decalogue was one of the most important topics medieval preachers addressed in their

<sup>194</sup> "Guard the precepts of your Lord God. Deuteronomy 6."

<sup>195</sup> H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 211-5.

sermons.<sup>196</sup> This play participates in that educational program by depicting sermon language with its most didactic intent.

Moses' explication of the Fourth Commandment provides an example of the preacher's interpretative guidance. Moses explains the importance of honoring one's parents through the familiar concepts of wealth and poverty:

*Quartum mandatum: honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.*

...

He byddyth þe euyrmore with hert bent  
Both fadyr and modyr to wurchep alway.  
Thow þat þi fadyr be pore of array,  
And 3ow neuyr so rych of golde and good,  
3itt loke þu wurchep hym nyght and day  
Of whom þu hast both flesch and blood. (6.114, 117-22)

By focusing on the "pore...array" (6.118), or clothing, of one's parents, Moses stresses the rectitude of parental respect despite monetary circumstance. Yet Moses' literal discussion of parental poverty takes on an anagogical meaning as his explanation proceeds, for any parent can be seen as impoverished by comparison to the spiritual wealth that God and the Church offer:

In þis comaundmente includyd is  
Þi bodyli fadyr and modyr also.  
Includyd also I fynde in þis  
Thi gostly fadyr and modyr þerto.  
To þi gostly fadyr evyr reuerens do;  
Þi gostly Modyr is Holy Cherch.  
These tweyn saue þi sowle fro woo;  
Euyr them to wurchep loke þat þu werch. (6.123-30)

Honoring one's father and mother means not only paying respect to biological parents but also to those parents, the Lord God and Holy Church, in whose care rests the salvation of the soul.

Moses' interpretation of "fadyr and modyr" (6.124) transforms literal poverty into figurative

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<sup>196</sup> Peter A. Dykema, "Handbooks for Pastors: Late Medieval Manuals for Parish Priests and Conrade Porta's *Pastorale Lutheri* (1582)," Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow (eds.), *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late-Medieval and Reformation History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 158.

poverty by the end of his explication, for failing to honor God and Holy Church as father and mother denies spiritual growth. By infusing his discussion of the Fourth Commandment with multiple levels of meaning, Moses highlights how important a preacher's interpretation of source material is if his audience is to receive a complete understanding of doctrine. Through explanations like these, Moses' sermon language extends N-Town's depiction of father-son teaching relationships to the Church at large, a depiction which the remainder of the compilation will advance continuously through its presentation of exemplary figures and preachers, but most especially through the human embodiments of these concepts via Mary, the Mother of God, and Christ himself.

When Moses arrives at the conclusion of his sermon, he reminds the members of the audience of the active role they have in internalizing the Decalogue, a role which not only encourages them to act as Abel and Isaac but also demonstrates how preaching discourse unites past and present expressions of teaching:

Frendys, þese be þe lawys þat ȝe must kepe.  
 Therefore every man sett well in mende,  
 Wethyr þat þu do wake or slepe,  
 These lawys to lerne þu herke ful hynde,  
 And Godys grace xal be þi frende.  
 He socowre and saue ȝow in welth fro woo.  
 Farewell, gode frendys, for hens wyll I wende;  
 My tale I haue taught ȝow, my wey now I goo. (6.187-94)

The conclusion of Moses' sermon identifies disregard for teaching and the active negligence of doctrine as the sins and even sacrileges they were considered to be.<sup>197</sup> Moses insists that the audience "lerne" from the "tale [he has] taught" (6.190, 194), calling attention to the didactic function of preaching. Moses therefore includes himself in the parent-child teaching relationships

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<sup>197</sup> Spencer, 197.

that the earlier plays of the Old Testament depict as he changes that relationship by assuming the role of the preacher whose sermon language teaches the members of the audience.

“Root of Jesse,” the final play in N-Town’s initial play grouping, explores the authority of sermon rhetoric that the “Moses” play establishes in a more abstract manner. Ysaías and Radix Jesse, the first two characters to speak, each confirm their prophetic announcements with a biblical authority: “quod virgo concipiet / Et pariet filium, nomen Emanuel” (7.9-10) and “Egredietur virga de radice Jesse, / Et flos de radice eius ascendet” (7.17-8).<sup>198</sup> As these citations suggest, the action of “Root of Jesse” relies entirely on its rhetoric, for this play is simply a series of speeches delivered by kings and prophets: twenty-seven different speakers announce various aspects of Mary’s purity and virgin birth as well as of Christ and his ministry. The quick pronouncements of so many figures underscore the rapid dissemination of preaching in time and place, making the voice of the preacher ubiquitous in its guiding cry towards Mary and Christ, both prominent characters in N-Town’s remaining play groupings. N-Town’s Old Testament plays therefore highlight the timeless continuum that preaching creates through its divine investiture in paternal teaching relationships, using the discourse of Moses’ sermon to retroactively reevaluate the teaching of the patriarchs and the prophetic announcements in “Root of Jesse” as preaching discourse. The voice of the preacher always already exists, and by locating its origin in God in the Old Testament play grouping and constantly revisiting that voice throughout the cycle, N-Town portrays preaching as the discourse uniting salvation history. I turn now to the *Mary Play* (plays 8-11 and 13) to investigate how the presentation of Mary, who

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<sup>198</sup> “The virgin will conceive / And will bear a son named Emmanuel” and “A branch will come out of the root of Jesse, / And the flower will ascend from his root.”

also speaks Latin, complicates the gendered presentation of preaching in N-Town's Old Testament plays and necessitates the intervention of Contemplacio's masculine preaching voice.

## II. Preachers, Teachers, and Gender in the *Mary Play*

The emphasis that "Root of Jesse" places on Mary and Christ looks forward to N-Town's second play grouping, the *Mary Play*,<sup>199</sup> by connecting the role that Mary will perform as Mother of God not only to the Old Testament plays' tropes of childhood and father-son teaching relationships but also to the sermon delivered in the "Moses" play. Teaching as preaching, and its ultimate authoritative investment in the sermon form, manifest explicitly in the *Mary Play* through Contemplacio. Contemplacio serves several functions in the *Mary Play*: he opens and closes the play grouping as a whole, he introduces and concludes plays 9 and 13, and he delivers the opening address in play 11.<sup>200</sup> In these several appearances, Contemplacio performs two different preaching roles. First, as the voice that brackets the entire play grouping as well as plays 9 and 13, he functions as a meta-preacher delivering the framework of a meta-sermon for which the individual plays of the *Mary Play* serve as sermon *exempla*. In his role as meta-preacher, Contemplacio lends cohesion and unity to the *Mary Play*. Contemplacio's second role as preacher occurs in play 11 when he temporarily discards the status of meta-preacher to become a character who articulates the first four stanzas of a sermon capturing humanity's cry for mercy. In this role, Contemplacio underscores the preacher's status as mediator between God and humanity in the cycle's presentation of father-son teaching relationships. As I will show in

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<sup>199</sup> The *Mary Play* was originally an independent play grouping that was subsequently integrated into the N-Town manuscript and reworked in certain parts. See Meredith and Kahrl, *The N-Town Plays*, vii, and Peter Meredith (ed.), *The Mary Play: From the N-Town Manuscript* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997), 1-22.

<sup>200</sup> Since play 13 is the last play, when Contemplacio concludes it, he also concludes the play grouping as a whole. He therefore makes six appearances in the *Mary Play*. Contemplacio also returns to introduce the second Passion sequence, *Passion Play II*, later in the manuscript.

this section, what scholars have previously described as either Contemplacio's introductory and concluding narratives or content-bridging words across the individual pageants of the *Mary Play*<sup>201</sup> actually are the structural framework of a sermon.

Whether as a meta-preacher providing the connective tissue of a sermon's form or as a preacher delivering a sermon in a play, Contemplacio is preaching throughout this entire sequence of plays, and his several, strategic appearances enable Mary to function as both a character and a sermon *exemplum* in N-Town's typological depiction of Christ. Contemplacio's preaching rhetoric constructs a meta-sermon over the course of the *Mary Play* that explicates the Theme of Mary as the "Modyr of Mercy" (8.9) from the different perspectives that each individual play affords. This preaching framework simultaneously carries over Moses' masculine voice from the Old Testament plays and contains Mary's feminine erudition without stifling it. Mary's learning promotes the meditative connections to Christ that Contemplacio's name signals, and so it becomes necessary to depict her erudition in order to highlight Christ's wisdom and his existence as Wisdom, the second person of the Trinity. The difficulty is how to portray her learning without letting it either compete with or become more memorable than what it foreshadows, that is, Christ's knowledge: "while Mary is significant because of her Christological role, Christ is powerful because he shares her sinless flesh. The latter reason is often ignored because it argues for an equivalency between Mary and Christ in terms of the conditions necessary to achieve salvation."<sup>202</sup> Contemplacio's presence solves this problem by using the sermon form to display Mary's body as a text and her erudition as language firmly within the presentational control of the masculine discourse of preacher and Church. In other

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<sup>201</sup> Meredith, "Establishing an Expositor's Role," 289-306.

<sup>202</sup> Matthew J. Kinservik, "The Struggle over Mary's Body: Theological and Dramatic Resolution in the N-Town Assumption Play," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 95 (1996), 190-203, at 196.



words, the display of Mary's knowledge is ultimately a display of the male preacher who conveys it through the recognizable discourse of the sermon. Mary thus anticipates Christ as Isaac and Moses did, in her capacity both as an exemplary child like Isaac and as a body, which, once pregnant, becomes invested with divine rhetoric like Moses'.<sup>203</sup> I turn now to a sequential discussion of the *Mary Play* to reveal how Contemplacio's preaching rhetoric regulates the presentation of Mary as *exemplum* to mitigate the potential subversion that her body, learning, and teaching introduce into the cycle's presentation of preaching.

Contemplacio opens the first pageant of the *Mary Play*, "Joachim and Anne," with a three stanza address heavily indebted to sermon language, the first stanza of which uses rather Latinate syntax to address the audience as a "congregacyon" (8.1) and offer a prayer for safety and clairvoyance:

Cryst conserve þis congregacyon  
 Fro perellys past, present, and future,  
 And þe personys here pleand, þat þe pronunciacyon  
 Of here sentens to be seyde mote be sad and sure,  
 And þat non oblocucion make þis matere obscure,  
 But it may profite and plese eche persone present  
 From þe gynnyng to þe endyng so to endure,  
 Þat Cryst and every creature with þe conceyte be content. (8.1-8)

Contemplacio formulates the first stanza of his meta-sermon as a blessing. He consecrates the audience, the actors, and the words the actors pronounce, hoping that this benediction will prevent erroneous interpretations and bring profit and pleasure, both spiritual and immediate, for the duration of the performance. This type of general blessing, wherein grace is extended to the

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<sup>203</sup> Moses' investment occurs as a result of his sight of the burning bush, an event which medieval theologians interpreted as a type for Mary's pregnancy (Meg Twycross, "Kissing Cousins: The Four Daughters of God and the Visitation in the N.Town Mary Play," *Medieval English Theatre* 18 (1996), 99-141, at 100).

preacher and his words as well as to the congregation and their attention, is common in sermons.<sup>204</sup>

In his second stanza, Contemplacio outlines the subject matter of the plays to come, framing their focus on Mary as “þe Modyr of Mercy” (8.9) as the Theme of his meta-sermon. Indeed, a Division of the Parts even follows, as Contemplacio lists the subject matter of the plays that will illuminate his Theme of Mary as Mother of Mercy:

This matere here mad is of þe Modyr of Mercy:  
How be Joachym and Anne was here concepcon  
Sythe offred into þe temple, compiled breffly ;  
Than maryed to Joseph; and so, folwyng, þe Salutacyon,  
Metyng with Elyzabeth, and þerwith a conclusyon,  
In fewe wurdys talkyd, that it xulde nat be tedyous  
To lernyd nyn to lewd, nyn to no man of reson.  
This is the processe, now preserve 3ow Jesus. (8.9-16)

That the *Mary Play* is firmly within the presentational scope of sermon language is made clear in the word “processe” (8.16), a word that writers of *artes preadicandi* often used to refer to the parts of a sermon following the Introduction.<sup>205</sup> The promise that these plays’ subject matter will be delivered in “fewe wurdys” so as to avoid being “tedyous” (8.14) also parallels advice directly taken from sermon manuals,<sup>206</sup> as does the division into learned and unlearned reflect concerns about an audience’s ability to understand a sermon’s topic.<sup>207</sup>

Contemplacio concludes the opening address of his sermon by offering a second prayer. Preachers often include prayers in their opening addresses to ensure that they and audience members are in a proper state to deliver or receive the message of a sermon:<sup>208</sup>

Perfore of pes I 3ow pray, all þat ben here present,

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<sup>204</sup> Spencer, 92.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>206</sup> Robert of Basevorn, ‘The Form of Preaching’, Leopold S. Krul, O.S.B., (trans.), James J. Murphy (ed.), *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (Berkeley, 1971), 114-215, at 120.

<sup>207</sup> Spencer, 196-8.

<sup>208</sup> Robert of Basevorn, 148-50.

And tak hed to oure talkyn[g], what we xal say.  
 I betече 3ow that Lorde that is evyr omnypotent  
 To governe 3ow in goodnes as he best may,  
 In hevyn we may hym se.  
 Now God þat is Hevyn Kynge  
 Sende us all hese dere blyssynge,  
 And to his towre he mote vs brynge.  
 Amen for charyté. (8.17-25)

Contemplacio's prayer – "of pes I 3ow pray" (8.17) – of course does double duty in this stanza, asking both for God's peace to be granted to the audience and for the audience to be quiet.

Contemplacio prays that the actors' "talkyn[g]" (8.18) will help bring the audience closer to God and to heaven, a hope that he fittingly ends with an "[a]men" (8.25).

After Contemplacio's introduction, "Joachim and Anne" continues to foreground the Old Testament plays' concern with children as dedicatory first fruit. Mary's mother Anne explains that

A woman xulde bere Cryst, þese profecyes haue we;  
 If God send frute, and it be a mayd childe,  
 With all reuerens I vow to his magesté,  
 Sche xal be here footmayd to mynyster here most mylde. (8.70-4)

Anne's vow "[carries] forward...the tree and fruit metaphor" from the Old Testament plays but does so now "in terms of a paradox that dominates the cycle: the capacity of the barren tree to be fruitful."<sup>209</sup> Indeed, Mary's birth appears doubtful not only because of Anne's age but also because Joachim is forced to leave her and live among shepherds whose sheep, in humorous contrast to himself, are "lusty and fayr, and grettly multiply" (8.136). Nevertheless, an angel eventually brings Joachim good news in an announcement that both emphasizes the matrilineal

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<sup>209</sup> Stevens, 242. Stevens also notes that the "birth of a child to a barren mother...is of course finally the fulfillment of the fruit-in-paradise figure. As that first fruit was plucked from a living tree, so now the second fruit will grow on a dead tree" (243).

descent of the Christ child and places the female reproductive system in the firm control of the Lord. This announcement begins the *Mary Play*'s negotiation of gender by simultaneously upholding and limiting feminine exemplarity. In this case, women bearing sons who serve God are worthy of praise, but this praise depends on the prior expression of an authoritative, masculine voice: these female bodies only become pregnant *when* God deems it appropriate. Powerful in its ability to conceive, the female body nevertheless remains powerless before masculine rhetoric, as it is an object only able to respond to God's "myth" and "mercy" (8.180):

Whos womb þat he[God] sparyth and makyth barreyn her  
He doth to shewe his myth and his mercy bothe.

Thu seest þat Sara was nynty 3ere bareyn;  
Sche had a son Yssac, to whom God 3aff his blyssynge.  
Rachel also had þe same peyn:  
She had a son, Joseph, þat of Egypt was kynge.  
A strongere þan Sampson nevyr was be wrytynge,  
Nor an holyere þan Samuel, it is seyde thus;  
3ett here moderys were bareyn both in þe gynnyng.  
Be concepcon of all swych, it is ful mervelyous!

And in þe lyk ewyse, Anne, þi blyssyd wyf,  
Sche xal bere a childe xal hygth Mary.  
Which xal be blyssyd in her body and haue joys fyff,  
And ful of the Holy Goost inspyred syngulyrly,  
Sche shal be offryd into þe temple solemply  
Þat of her non evyl fame xuld sprynge thus.  
And as sche xal be bore of a barrany body,  
So of her xal be bore without nature[intercourse] Jesus,

That xal be Savyour vnto al mankende. (8.179-96)

Anne's barren and fruitful states are direct manifestations of the will of God, making Mary's conception, in addition to the conceptions of the many barren mothers mentioned above, a direct result of God's authoritative word. Just as the masculine bodies of the patriarch teachers (Adam, Noah, and Abraham) and preacher (Moses) were invested with divine rhetoric, so too does the feminine body in its role as mother make manifest the Lord's word; male or female, the human

body is an instrument representing the power of divine rhetoric.<sup>210</sup> The difference, however, is that the male body derives independent power from the Lord's rhetoric whereas the female body remains dependent upon it. The angel's pointed remark that Mary will "be blyssyd in here body" (8.191) emphasizes her power as mother in the matrilineal descent of Christ, a power that directly connects her to God like the children in the Old Testament plays who were portrayed as direct inheritances from God to their parents. Yet the Lord's powerful language will imbue Mary's body in a way that previous women and children have not experienced: her body will itself become a temple of and for the Word of God.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, it is Mary's body, and not her mother Anne's, which remains the point of focalization as "Joachim and Anne" concludes: "A, Anne, blyssyd be þat body of þe xal be bore" (8.204), Joachim exclaims. When the angel next appears to Anne, Anne also focuses on Mary: "I to bere a childe þat xal bere all mannys blys, / ... / No creature in erth is grauntyd more mercy, iwys" (8.233, 235).

Through its emphasis on Mary as the first fruit dedicated to the Lord, "Joachim and Anne" recontextualizes Adam's dedication of his sons as the dedication of a daughter to the Lord's service. The presentation of the Lord's language infusing the human body with divine

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<sup>210</sup> The preservation of Christ's patriarchal and matriarchal descent in N-Town is significant. I argue that N-Town is attempting to preserve and blend both through the voice and presentation of the preacher as a unifying force in the manuscript, the patriarchal through "Root of Jesse," a play that also heavily emphasizes Mary's virginity in this cycle, and through "Joachim and Anne," where the matriarchal descent is explicitly stated and, as I have discussed, accounts for the masculine control of the feminine body. Traditionally, Mary is seen as the source for competing claims to Christ's descent: "Mary's virginity, established as doctrine as early as the Second Council of Constantinople of 381, very quickly became a cornerstone of medieval Christian belief, and, in several ways, represented a significant break between Christianity and Judaism. The doctrine undercut those orthodox and apocryphal Christian texts that went to elaborate lengths to emphasize the Jewish heritage of Jesus, such as the Gospel of Matthew, which traces the aristocratic lineage of Joseph back through David and to Abraham, thus identifying Jesus as the long-predicted branch of the tree of Jesse. Ironically, while under Second Temple law Jewish identity follows a line of matriarchal descent, Mary's virginity, implying the invalidation of Joseph's royal lineage, severs the historical connections between paternal Judaism and newly born Christianity" (Price, 455).

<sup>211</sup> Mary's body is empowered to carry the incarnate Christ because it, like Christ, is free of original sin. Mary's own conception in "Joachim and Anne" provides parallels and meditative links to Christ's conception: "prior to Christ's conception, the dramatization of Mary's own miraculous conception when Joachim and Anne kiss at the Golden Gate suggests the sinless nature of the body she shares with Christ" (Kinservik, 193).

power broadens N-Town's emphasis on the father-son teaching relationship to include those in which women can also act as educators, as Mary will, in both her childhood and motherhood. Anne's impending motherhood in this play, and Mary's to come, also recast the presentation of human reproduction found in the Old Testament plays. In N-Town's first play grouping, reproduction was assigned only to Adam's verbal imitation of God: no mention is made of Eve or of any other patriarch's wife in relation to the role their bodies play in childbearing. The *Mary Play* therefore revisits and redefines the masculine portrayal of childhood and parenthood that teaching to this point in the compilation communicates. The father-son teaching relationship now anticipates a mother-son teaching relationship, infusing tropes of education and divine empowerment with a distinctly feminine, and therefore potentially subversive, perspective as Mary grows and teaches the audience over the course of the *Mary Play*.

Contemplacio's timely reappearance at the start of the *Mary Play*'s second play, "Presentation of Mary in the Temple," is not coincidental. In this two stanza address, Contemplacio first reviews the subject matter of the previous play and then previews the action of the play to come:

Sovereynes, 3e han sen shewyd 3ow before  
 Of Joachym and Anne here botherys holy metynge.  
 How oure Lady was consevid, and how she was bore,  
 We pass ovyr þat, breffness of tyme consyderynge,  
 And how oure Lady in her tendyr age and 3yng  
 Into þe temple was offryd, and so forth proced.  
 Þis sentens sayd xal be hire begynnyng.  
 Now þe Modyr of Mercy in þis be our sped.

And as a childe of iij 3ere age here she xal appere  
 To alle pepyl þat ben here present.  
 And of here grett grace now xal 3e here,  
 How she levyd evyr to Goddys entent  
 With grace.  
 That holy matere we wole declare,  
 Tyl fortene 3ere, how sche dyd fare.

Now of ȝoure speche I pray ȝow spare,  
 All þat ben in þis place. (9.1-17)

Commonly seen by scholarship as an unproductive plot summary, these words recast the mother-son teaching relationship that “Joachim and Anne” promises as an *exemplum* in Contemplacio’s meta-sermon. Like the angel whose announcement clarified that female reproductivity is subject to God’s word, Contemplacio’s sermon rhetoric here claims the imminent depiction of Mary’s body and learning as objects under the presentational control of the male preacher. Whatever Mary does, she does in affirmation of the masculine preaching voice that already surrounds her. In this manner, Contemplacio defuses the potential challenge that her body and erudition pose to the cycle’s masculine sermon discourse.

These two stanzas also have a formal rhetorical purpose in Contemplacio’s meta-sermon. They serve as his Restatement of the Theme and enable Contemplacio to remind the audience of his topic of Mary as “þe Modyr of Mercy” (9.8). Providing an overview of thematic content and reviewing a sermon’s Theme are rhetorical strategies commonly employed by medieval preachers to ensure that any latecomers to a sermon would know its subject matter.<sup>212</sup> Contemplacio’s presence shows that preaching language has an important role in uniting the material of these plays and in moving them forward cohesively, points that N-Town’s continued emphasis on the dedication of the first fruit to the Lord’s service further underscores. When Contemplacio finishes speaking, Joachim immediately reminds Anne that “we made to God an holy avow / Þat oure fyrst childe, þe servaunt of God xulde be” (9.20-1), a comment which prompts Anne to turn to the three year old Mary to ask

Wole ȝe go se þat Lord ȝoure husbond xal ben  
 And lerne for to love hym and lede with hym ȝoure lyff?  
 Telle ȝoure fadyr and me her ȝoure answeere, let sen.

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<sup>212</sup> Robert of Basevorn, 155.

Wole 3e be pure maydyn and also Goddys wyff? (9.30-4)

The expectation of Mary's service as "maydyn" and "Goddys wyff" is all encompassing and much more extensive than that of any child or parent previously portrayed in N-Town: where Cain and Abel sacrificed their produce and Abraham only suffered the threat of losing his son, Mary is asked to devote her entire body to God and her parents to give her up for the duration of their lives. Mary's selfless response demonstrates her willing acceptance of these conditions, and of her parents' success in teaching her to love the Lord. Mary's acceptance of this charge replays Isaac's acceptance of his demanding task in a feminine context. Thus the *Mary Play* recasts service to the Lord as a feminine act of devotion:

Fadyr and modyr, if it plesyng to 3ow be,  
 3e han mad 3oure avow, so sothly wole I,  
 To be Goddys chast servunt whil lyff is in me.  
 But to be Goddys wyff I was nevyр wурthy!  
 I am ƚe sympelest ƚat evyr was born of body.  
 I have herd 3ow seyde God xulde haue a modyr swete.  
 ƚat I may leve to se hire, God graunt me for his mercy,  
 And abyл me to ley my handys vndyr hire fayr fete. (9.34-41)

Mary's innocence and humility in thinking herself unworthy of such an honor as marriage to God show the great extent of her worthiness to fill such a position. She simply conceives of her service more practically, as a maiden to the mother of Christ, and considers this role as one granted through the Lord's "mercy" (9.40). Mary's reference to mercy reinforces the Theme about which Contemplacio is preaching in these pageants, exploring her role as the Mother of Mercy in this play through her humility.

Mary's parents and the priests at the temple alike marvel at the great miracle that Mary's words of blessed knowledge demonstrate. Mary's divinely inspired speech makes her the exemplary child:

A, ho had evyr such a chylde?



Nevyr creautre ȝit þat evyr was bore!  
 Sche is so gracyous; she is so mylde –  
 So xulde childyr to fadyr and modyr evyrmore. (9.86-9)

Significantly, this play extends Mary's exemplarity from her motherhood to her childhood in order to justify her role as future female teacher of Christ. Like Christ who will one day educate scholars in the temple while still a child, Mary is herself already an educator: she pauses on each step of the temple as she climbs to recite fifteen Psalms (the fifteen Gradual Psalms) written in her praise, first in English and then in Latin. The first Psalm serves as a representative example:

The fyrst degré gostly applied,  
 It is holy desyre with God to be.  
 In troubyl to God I haue cryed,  
 And in sped þat Lord hath herde me.

*Ad Dominum cum tribularer clamaui, et exaudiuit me.*<sup>213</sup> (9.102-6)

Mary's recitation is reminiscent of Moses' exposition on the Decalogue. The obvious difference is that Moses' delivery was in the form of a sermon, while Mary's is only a series of statements. Additionally, Mary states the English before the Latin whereas Moses spoke in Latin first, a reversal that underscores how she parrots divine speech. Nevertheless, Mary's exposition is an interpretation because she lends "gostly" (9.102) meaning to her words: "the 'gostly' meaning of the physical steps of the temple and the Gradual Psalms is manifest both in the body of Mary, which will bear Christ, and in the inspired truth of her glosses."<sup>214</sup> Mary's body begins to negotiate the strictures of the Old Law and the New, her interpretations "[teaching] directly the application of the Old Testament to the spirit of the New."<sup>215</sup> Mary's seemingly simple

<sup>213</sup> "To the Lord I cried when I was afflicted, and he heard me."

<sup>214</sup> Colin Fewer, "The 'Fygure' of the Market: The N-Town Cycle and East Anglian Lay Piety," *Philological Quarterly* 77 (1998), 117-47, at 138. Mary continues her ghostly interpretations in the "Marriage" play, when she says that "the psalms 'feryth mannys herte gostly' (10.44)," (Fewer, 138).

<sup>215</sup> Stevens, 247.

statements actually participate in a larger on-going debate about the ability of women to preach.<sup>216</sup> It is significant that she teaches using women's words, as Margery Kempe once famously claimed, and does not step anywhere near a pulpit in this scene.<sup>217</sup>

The vast knowledge Mary displays before her entrance into the temple demonstrates her worthiness and her holiness, but, more significantly, it also demonstrates the threat that she poses to the men whose duty it is to teach and preach. The remainder of the "Presentation" goes to great lengths to contain Mary's lessons by refocusing educative endeavors on the masculine. Episcopus assumes authority over Mary and teaches her about the Ten Commandments (9.170), the supreme law to love the Lord (9.171-6), the Trinity (9.177-85), the "maydenys fyve" (9.194), and the "sefne prestys" (9.207), the first three subjects of which are all regularly discussed in sermons and stressed as necessary to preach multiple times a year in *pastoralia*.<sup>218</sup> Mary's education is not limited to the knowledge of Episcopus, however. An angel appears who promises to feed her with "aungelys mete" (9.248) and to "lerne [her] the lyberary of oure Lordys lawe lyght" (9.252) every day.

As if Episcopus and the angel were not enough to counter Mary's teaching exposé, Contemplacio returns to conclude this play:

Lo, sofreynes, here 3e haue seyn  
In þe temple of oure Ladyes presentacyon.  
She was nevyr occapyed in thyngys veyn,  
But evyr besy in holy ocupacyon.

And we beseche 3ow of 3oure pacyens  
Pat we pace þese materys so lythly away;  
If þei xulde be do with good prevydens,

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<sup>216</sup>Waters, 31-9.

<sup>217</sup> When accused of preaching, Margery Kempe replies, "I preche not, ser, I come in no pulpytt. I use but comonnycayon and good wordys, and that wil I do whil I leve," (*The Book of Margery Kempe*, Lynn Staley (ed.), (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 126).

<sup>218</sup> Dykema, 158.

Eche on wolde suffyce for an hool day. (9.294-301)

By summarizing the play's action and discussing it as a subject matter worthy to reflect upon for an entire day, Contemplacio transforms Mary into an *exemplum*, a rhetorical illustration of his Theme of the Mother of Mercy that provides meditative links to Christ as the embodiment of mercy. Contemplacio's addresses bracket this play so that his meta-sermon is the discourse through which the audience understands Mary's body, learning, and Latin. These aspects of Mary are worthy of praise in themselves, it is true, but they are communicated as worthy of praise because of the prominence that the preacher's overarching voice places on them.

Contemplacio's meta-sermon therefore highlights Mary's body by containing it as an *exemplum*, his presence in opening and closing this play verbally and visually reinforcing Episcopus' and the angel's masculine, educational containment of Mary.<sup>219</sup> It is significant, then, that, during this portion of his meta-sermon, Contemplacio mentions the "Parliament" play for the first time:

"The Parlement of Hefne sone xal 3e se, / And how Goddys sone com man xal he" (9.307-8). A revision to Contemplacio's speech,<sup>220</sup> this addition calls attention to the play in which Mary's body will be empowered through its pregnancy by the word of the Lord. By waiting until this

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<sup>219</sup> The use of preaching to contain Mary and her erudition is, I would argue, another example of "the tradition of Marian interpretation that employed figures of enclosure as consummate signs of Mary's wholeness, integrity, and physical purity" (Theresa Coletti, "Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles," Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Feminist Approaches to the Female Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 65-95, at 68).

<sup>220</sup> Since the *Mary Play* was in conflict with the Banns that announce the cycle, it could not be imported wholesale as it was into N-Town. Revisions to the *Mary Play* therefore ensued upon its addition to the manuscript, revisions which, as Meredith shows, draw attention to Contemplacio and to the Parliament play. Meredith describes Contemplacio's first three appearances: "At the very beginning (1), after introducing the whole play, he[Contemplacio] sketches out the five [playlets]...but without mentioning the Parliament of Heaven. On his next appearance (2), he bridges the gap between the Conception and Presentation, mentioning Mary's birth in passing. Then (3), he rounds off the Presentation and introduces the Marriage, and also, unusually, looks forward to the fourth episode, the Annunciation, mentioning the Parliament for the first time" ("Establishing an Expositor's Role," 291-2). As Meredith makes clear, Contemplacio only mentions the "Parliament" play the second time he provides an overview of the pageants in the *Mary Play*, a fact that, Meredith states, has caused "[m]any [to think] that the Parliament of Heaven is an addition to an earlier form of the *Mary Play*, simply because it is not part of his initial list of episodes" (Ibid., 295).

moment to mention the “Parliament” play – it is not listed in the initial Division of the Parts of his meta-sermon (cited above, p. 19) – Contemplacio displays how preaching rhetoric imitates God’s pronouncements by withholding information about the female body’s reproductivity until the time *when* it is appropriate for an audience to know about it. Contemplacio’s meta-sermon regulates the audience’s ability to understand the miracles that Mary’s body performs as God regulated the miracles of barren mothers’ wombs in the previous play. Contemplacio’s meta-sermon puts divine rhetoric to practice, managing Mary’s body as an *exemplum* of God’s will, a reality that surfaces immediately in the next play when Mary finds herself in need of a husband.

Conflict surrounds the fourteen-year-old marriage eligible Mary in the “Marriage of Mary and Joseph” because she must “chese...a spowse” to “fulffylle...[the] lawe” (10.34-5).

Mary refuses:

Aȝens þe lawe wyl I nevyr be,  
But mannys felachep xal nevyr folwe me.  
I wyl leyvn evyr in chastyté  
Be þe grace of Goddys wylle! (10.36-9)

Mary’s attempt to control her body by avoiding marriage contests the control that masculine authority claims to have over female bodies to this point in the *Mary Play*. This dilemma, however, is firmly planted within Mary’s obedience to the law, a type of masculine discourse, making it less subversive than it could be. Mary’s quibble over her marriage marks her participation in changing the Old Law into the New through the role her body will play in bearing Christ. Since Mary presents a unique situation, the priests decide to pray to God for insight (10.104), an action that again links the status of female reproductivity directly to the word and will of God. This prayer also offers an opportunity for the actors to involve the audience in

the play's articulation of Marian devotion, a form of piety that was extremely popular in fifteenth-century East Anglia:<sup>221</sup>

I charge 3ow, bretheryn and systerys, hedyr 3e com  
And togedyr to God now pray we  
That it may plese his fyntyte deyté  
Knowleche in þis to sendyn vs.  
Mekely ech man falle down on kne  
And we xal begynne 'Veni Creator Spiritus.' (10.110-15)

As a result of this prayer, all the descendents from the House of David gather in the temple with a branch. The man holding the branch that blossoms will become Mary's husband. Humor ensues when an old and impotent Joseph, himself a virgin with no interest in a wife, produces a blooming branch upon entering the temple: this "spectacle of...holding up rods to see whose will bloom would have been a graphic image of phallic sexuality, but this sexuality is invoked only to be denied."<sup>222</sup> In the end, Joseph marries Mary, enabling her to uphold the law and to remain a true virgin. Yet this resolution remains precarious because Joseph, as an impotent husband, is not able to claim Mary's body as other husbands claim their wives' bodies. In this respect, Mary's virginal body still defies masculine control.

The next play in the *Mary Play*, the "Parliament of Heaven; Salutation and Conception" revisits the need to control and contain the soon-to-be pregnant, and therefore divinely empowered, body of Mary by directly incorporating sermon language: this is the play, as I mentioned above, in which Contemplacio delivers the first four stanzas of sermon.<sup>223</sup> Not

<sup>221</sup> Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, 137-78.

<sup>222</sup> Emma Lipton, "Performing Reform: Lay Piety and the Marriage of Mary and Jospeh in the N-Town Cycle," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001), 407-35, at 413.

<sup>223</sup> These four stanzas were not originally Contemplacio's: "[t]he scribe-compiler of the N-Town manuscript, who is possibly himself responsible for imposing the ascription to Contemplacio, has failed to remove completely all traces of the earlier original inscription" (Alan J. Fletcher, "The 'Contemplacio' Prologue to the N-Town Play of the Parliament of Heaven" *Notes and Queries* n.s. 27 (1980), 111-2, at 111). W.W. Greg explains how the rubrications in the first four stanzas of the "Parliament" reveal that there was originally more than one speaker. I quote him at length: "The passage is certainly assigned to Contemplacio by the scribe, but at the top of the page, above the first

originally Contemplacio's lines, when the N-Town compiler/reviser attributes these stanzas to Contemplacio, he makes a clear case for humanity pleading for its own redemption, and what is more, connects this plea to the voice of the preacher specifically. Preaching is the mechanism that asks for, and eventually acquires, divine intervention, firmly grounding the accessibility of the Lord's mercy in the preacher. What is more, this play appropriates the sermon form, using rhetoric that mimics the moves a sermon makes. Contemplacio condemns humankind for its sins in the first stanza:

Fowre thowsand, sex undryd foure, I telle,  
 Man for his offens and fowle foly  
 Hath loyn ȝerys in þe peynes of helle,  
 And were wurthy to ly þerin endlessly;  
 But thanne xulde perysche ȝoure grete mercye.  
 Good Lord, haue on man pyté!  
 Haue mende of þe prayour seyde by Ysaie,  
 Lete mercy meke þin hyst magesté. (11.1-8)

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stanza (there is, of course, no heading), there stands in the manuscript 'I', i.e., Primus. Before the first line of the third stanza is the figure '2.' Stanzas 5 and 6 are spoken by Virtues, stanza 7 by Pater (i.e., God), after which the discussion is carried on by Veritas, Misericordia, Justicia, and Pax. Now, elsewhere Contemplacio is an expositor who takes no part in the action of the play. But in the four stanzas assigned to him here the deity is directly addressed, and the intercession on man's behalf begun, which is carried on in the speech of the Virtues. It is clear then that the speaker or speakers of these lines (for the manuscript clearly suggests that we / have to do with two speeches, not one) must be characters of the play on a par with the Virtues. Who they are appears from the lines in speech of the latter...Angels [and] archangels" (fn 1, 125-6). Scholars largely accept Greg's observation that Contemplacio is not the original speaker of the "Parliament"'s first four stanzas, either agreeing with his ascription of these lines to the angels and archangels or positing instead the patriarchs and prophets as the speakers. In agreement with Greg are Stephen Spector, "The Composition and Development of an Eclectic Manuscript: Cotton Vespasian D VIII," *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. IX (1977), 62-83, at 70, and Peter Meredith, "Establishing an Expositor's Role," 298. Alan J. Fletcher disagrees with Greg, arguing for the patriarchs and prophets as the speakers of the stanza in "The 'Contemplacio' Prologue to the N-Town Play of the Parliament of Heaven," 111-2. Greg ascribes these lines to the angels and archangels because they, along with the virtues, "form, in ascending order, the first or lowest hierarchy of heavenly beings" (*Bibliographical*, fn. 1, 126). In choosing these beings, Greg's ascription suggests that the pleas for humankind's mercy begin in heaven, whereas Alan J. Fletcher, and those who place the lines in the cries of the patriarchs and prophets, instead understand humanity recognizing its need for mercy. I do not intend to resolve who these speakers should be, but rather to ask what seems the more obvious question that this revision begs, and that scholarship has so far left unexplored, which is, if Contemplacio is not the original speaker of these lines – and it is clear that he is not – why does the N-Town scribe revising the compilation attribute these opening lines to him? I maintain that the answer lies in Contemplacio's unrealized role as preacher and in the "Parliament" play's equally unrealized loose appropriation of the form of a thematic sermon.

Contemplacio emphasizes God's great mercy in this stanza, highlighting how its goodness stands in sharp contrast to humankind's foul and sinful nature. Yet God's mercy exists precariously, surviving only because of humanity's sinful nature and, in fact, requiring that nature to achieve the full glory of its expression. Contemplacio's opening five lines emphasize the role of mercy in man's imperfect existence, making mercy the topic about which he preaches. The ensuing quotation from Isaiah citing the word "mercy" formalizes Contemplacio's topic as a proper sermon Theme. By incorporating the word of the Theme in the authority confirming it, a strategy that *artes praedicandi* recommend,<sup>224</sup> the reviser even demonstrates some skill in his presentation of Contemplacio as preacher.

In his next two stanzas, Contemplacio goes on to express the hope that the Lord will live among humanity to save it from its sins. He confirms this sentiment in his fourth stanza with a citation from Jeremiah:

‘A,’ quod Jeremye, ‘who xal gyff wellys to myn eynes  
 Pat I may wepe bothe day and nyght  
 To se oure bretheryn in so longe peynes?’  
 Here myschevys amende may þi mech myght.  
 As grett as þe se, Lord, was Adamys contryssyon ryght.  
 From oure hed is falle þe crowne!  
 Man is comeryd in synne, I crye to þi syght:  
 Gracyuos Lord, gracyous Lord, gracyous Lord, come down! (11.25-32)

The discussion of the Lord's Incarnation followed by the Jeremiah quotation confirming humankind's piteous state explores one way in which God can express his great mercy towards humanity. The quotation from Jeremiah, in formal sermon rhetoric, therefore becomes a sermon Protheme, describing an additional route through which God's mercy is made available, namely through Christ. Notably, the Incarnation occurs despite humankind's sinful misbehavior, and so

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<sup>224</sup> Robert of Basevorn, 133-42.

humanity's ability to procure mercy enhances the understanding of mercy as a magnanimous gift bestowed by God upon unworthy recipients.

The "Parliament" play then falls into three episodes, and so recalls the practice of dividing a sermon into three Divisions that support and verify its Theme. The first episode stages a debate among the Four Daughters of God (11.33-188), the second a discussion amongst the parts of the Trinity (11.189-212), and the third Gabriel's announcement to Mary (11.213-340). These episodes explore different expressions of the Lord's mercy, first through the triumph of Mercy over Justice, next through Christ's assumption of the Flesh, and finally through Mary's assent to bear the fruit of the Lord.

In the first episode, the Virtues speak about humanity's need to be saved, ending their first stanza by "[crying]...[m]ercy, mercy, mercy" (11.40) and their second stanza by imploring the Lord to "[l]ete [his] mercy make [man] with aungelys dwelle" (11.47). The repetition of these pleas, which pick up on *Contemplacio*'s Theme of mercy, recall the formal Restatement of the Theme in a sermon. The Latin that Pater (the Lord) states in the next stanza functions as a sermon's Introduction would by identifying the source from which the remaining explication unfolds: "Propter miseriam inopum / Et gemitum pauperum / Nunc exurgam" (11.48-50).<sup>225</sup> The episode with the Four Daughters of God now starts in earnest, with the usual disagreement between Justice and Mercy, followed by Peace's protests that the sisters maintain their accord. This debate represents the confrontation of the Old Law (represented by Truth and Justice) with the New (represented by Mercy and Peace) to which Mary's actions in "Presentation" and "Marriage" have already drawn attention.<sup>226</sup> A Latin authority from the Psalms bolsters the

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<sup>225</sup> "On account of the pitiful condition of those in need / and the groans of the poor / Now I will rise."

<sup>226</sup> Twycross, 112.



discussion, making the episode, through the use of a confirming citation, reminiscent of the First Division of a sermon: “Veritas mea et Misericordia mea cum ipso” (11.85).<sup>227</sup> The word *misericordia*, mercy, further underscores the practice of repeating the word of the Theme in the authorities that confirm sermon divisions.<sup>228</sup>

In the second episode, the three persons of the Trinity engage in a debate about who will restore humankind. Filius, or the Son, states that he is “redy to do þis dede” (11.180), that is, to experience the Incarnation, to which Mercy exclaims “Misericordia et Veritas obvauerunt sibi / Justicia et Pax osculate sunt” (11.187-8).<sup>229</sup> This citation of the Psalms confirms that the second episode serves as a Second Division in a sermon, and again reemphasizes mercy, the key word of the Theme. This Psalm citation also substantiates Contemplacio’s Protheme by presenting Christ’s assumption of the Flesh as an expression of God’s great mercy.

The third episode depicts Gabriel’s visitation to Mary, and the confirmation for this episode as a Third Division comes in the Latin Gabriel speaks: “Ave, gracia plena, Dominus tecum!” (11.217).<sup>230</sup> When he finishes his salutation, Mary cries – “A, mercy, God!” (11.229) – maintaining the consistent use of the word “mercy” to confirm the play’s Theme. Gabriel then informs Mary of the work that her body will perform in the Lord’s service: “Ȝe shal conceyve in ȝoure wombe indede / A childe, þe sone of þe Trynyté. / His name of ȝow, Jesu, clepyd xal be” (11.239-41). He gently prods her for a response when she marvels at this miracle, a miracle that she describes working within her:

A, now I fele in my body be  
Parfyte God and parfayte man,  
Havyng al schapp of chyldly carnalyté;

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<sup>227</sup> “My Truth and my Mercy (be) with him.”

<sup>228</sup> Robert of Basevorn, 133-42.

<sup>229</sup> “Mercy and Truth will have met each other / Justice and Peace have kissed.”

<sup>230</sup> “Hail, full of grace, the Lord (is) with you!”

Evyn al at onys, thus God began,  
 ...  
 Of 3oure handmayden now 3e haue mad 3oure modyr  
 Withowte peyne in the flesche and bon.  
 Thus conceyved nevyr woman non  
 Pat evyr was beyng in this lyff.  
 O myn hyst Fadyr in 3oure tron,  
 It is worthy 3oure son – now my son – have a prerogatyff.

I cannot telle what joy, what blysse,  
 Now I fele in my body!  
 Aungel Gabryel, I thank 3ow for thys.  
 Most mekely recomende me to my Faderys mercy. (11.293-6, 11.299-308)

Mary's conception is the crowning moment her body achieves in its service to the Lord, as now she becomes the vessel through which He acts, a vessel invested with the power of His Word. Mary experiences this rhetorical power corporeally, eloquently expressing the sensation of the shape of a child within her. Singling out the transformation that God's rhetoric works in and through her body, Mary draws attention simultaneously to being handmaiden and mother, a situation making her body unlike any other. Expressing her thanks in terms of God's "mercy" (11.308), Mary's language again confirms Contemplacio's Theme of mercy because it acts as the Conclusion to the sermon form underwriting this play. The Salutation demonstrates how the Lord's rhetoric controls Mary's body, becoming pregnant *when* His word specifies, and empowers it: her body is divinely sanctioned with His embodied Word in a way that no other human body was, is, or will be. By presenting the Annunciation, the moment when Mary's body gains divine empowerment, as an *exemplum* that illustrates God's mercy, Contemplacio's sermon language contains Mary's feminine empowerment within the previously empowered discourse of the preacher. And, what is more, through its form as a sermon, the "Annunciation" play actually reappropriates Mary's pregnancy as its own: just as Mary embodies divine rhetoric through her pregnancy, so too does this play embody sermon discourse by making its Protheme

flesh through Christ's Incarnation. Sermon rhetoric serves the same function as Mary's pregnant body, embodying the Word as Flesh, showing how the preacher's voice imitates and encapsulates the female body. Mary's female body is an object that the male preaching voice must control.

The "Parliament" play's portrayal of mercy through its tripartite episodic structure gains significance in light of the overall Theme of Mary as the Mother of Mercy that the *Mary Play* explores. "Parliament" is a hinge play, in that its addition to the manuscript highlights how preaching works throughout the compilation and specifically within this play grouping. Mary's virgin conception communicates God's power rhetorically and makes her His instrument. Within the narrative preaching framework N-Town constructs, Mary's body is controlled by the Lord's rhetoric, becoming pregnant specifically at His will, just as her body is contained as a preaching *exemplum* generally by Contemplacio's sermon language. Yet, in the world that the individual plays of N-Town present, Mary still is in control of her body, as the next two plays, "Joseph's Doubt" and "Visit to Elizabeth" make clear. Mary's retained ability to govern her body becomes problematic, because, as the child within her grows, Joseph, the priests, and every bystander N-Town introduces interpret the sign of Mary's pregnant body incorrectly, accusing her of behaving sinfully instead of virtuously. "Joseph's Doubt" is not considered one of the plays that was originally part of the *Mary Play* because it does not appear in Contemplacio's initial overview; thus, I consider it only cursorily to suggest the threat that Mary's body conveys to masculine authority. Joseph, who has been away from home to earn an income for his new wife, and who is already impotent, is stripped of whatever virility remains to him when he cannot enter his own house upon his return. Perhaps a metaphor for his inability to enter the body of his wife sexually, Joseph's occlusion from his own residence conveys the threats that female

reproductivity bears to the societal, and masculine, system of inheritance: Joseph looks like the old man cuckolded by his young wife, displaced from his own bed and house.<sup>231</sup>

The more serious threat Mary poses to masculine forms of control surfaces in the last play of the *Mary Play*, “Visit to Elizabeth,” when she speaks the *Magnificat* in Latin. Featuring a meeting between two women whose bodies are empowered by divine rhetoric, this play is also the first meeting of two preachers, for, when Elizabeth greets Mary, so too does John the Baptist greet Christ: Elizabeth reports “[p]at þe childe in my body enjoyd gretly / And turnyd down on his knes to oure God reverently. / Whom 3e bere in 3oure body, þis verily I ken” (13.54-6). The gendered embodiment of divine rhetoric emerges simultaneously through the female body’s current reproductive capacity and the male body’s future ability to preach. Indeed, it is John the Baptist’s movement *in utero* that causes Elizabeth and Mary to recite the lines of the *Magnificat*, with Mary speaking two lines of Latin at a time and Elizabeth translating them into English (13.82-126). Sharing the task of speaking and translating Latin highlights the exemplarity of these women at the same time that it removes authority from them by locating the source of their words in their sons who are themselves future preachers. Nevertheless, Christ and John the Baptist are not visible participants, and this scene is the second time in the *Mary Play* that Mary recites Latin, now newly invested with God’s rhetorical authority through her pregnancy. It is therefore of little surprise that Contemplacio returns not only to bracket the action of this play with opening and closing speeches about Elizabeth’s conception (13.23-42) and Mary’s conception (13.150-85), but also that his concluding speech is lengthened from two to six stanzas

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<sup>231</sup> Coletti, “Purity and Danger,” 65-95.

by the compiler.<sup>232</sup> Contemplacio's visible presence and speeches assert the preacher's presentational control over the dialogue of these women, transforming that dialogue into an *exemplum* of Marian devotion at the conclusion of the play. In this longer conclusion, Contemplacio explains the origin of the *Magnificat*, placing it in the salutation Gabriel made:

Lystenyth, sovereynys, here is a conclusyon:  
How þe *Ave* was mad here is lernyd vs.  
þe aungel seyde, 'Ave, gracia plena. Dominus tecum,  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus.'  
Elyzabeth seyde, 'Et benedictus  
Fructus uentris tui.' Thus þe Chirch addyd 'Maria' and 'Jesus' her.  
Who seyde oure Ladyes Sawtere dayly for a ȝer þus,  
He hath pardon ten thowsand and eyte hundryd ȝer. (13.150-7)

As Contemplacio's explanation clarifies, Gabriel is the original source of the Latin lines that Christ and John the Baptist subsequently cause Mary to recite and Elizabeth to translate. These women's words are in imitation of the masculine voices first announcing them. Thus, the *Magnificat* is inspired by a preacher (Christ *in utero*) and controlled within N-Town by a preacher (Contemplacio), making the language Elizabeth translates for Mary as well as the Latin Mary speaks less subversive. Contemplacio assures the audience that these women are not interpreting and explicating Scripture as preachers; rather, it is Contemplacio's current explanation, as he instructs the audience to say "oure Ladyes Sawtere dayly" (13.156) to attain "pardon" (13.157), that performs this function.

The final stanza of the play again emphasizes Contemplacio's interpretative importance. As he thanks and dismisses the audience, he states, "[w]ith 'Aue' we begunne and 'Ave' is oure conclusyon: / 'Ave Regina Celorum' to oure Lady we synge'" (11.184-5). Contemplacio reminds

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<sup>232</sup> Meredith identifies three versions that could end this play, two of which give Contemplacio only two stanzas (sixteen lines), and a later version of which gives him seven stanzas (thirty-six lines), (*The Mary Play*, 134-7).

the audience that the word *Ave* brackets the presentation of Mary's pregnancy in this sequence, a word that, while used by Gabriel and Elizabeth alike, nevertheless communicates first and foremost the Lord's linguistic power within these plays. Like the word *Ave* he singles out, Contemplacio too functions within the individual plays and throughout the *Mary Play* as a figure whose language brackets Mary's, reappropriating the power of her speech within the explicatory authority of the masculine preacher and the tradition of his sermon.

### III. The Body of the Preacher: Christ in N-Town

As a preacher, Contemplacio performs the important work of transforming Mary into a preaching *exemplum*, both through the appropriation of the sermon form in play 11 and more broadly throughout the *Mary Play* as a result of his role as meta-preacher delivering a meta-sermon. Contemplacio's presentation as a preacher who manipulates Mary's portrayal aligns the *Mary Play*'s Marian devotion with N-Town's larger preaching project. Thus, Contemplacio is an intermediate figure connecting the preacher of the Old Testament plays, Moses, to the preacher of the New Testament plays, Christ; and, at the same time, within the *Mary Play*, Contemplacio highlights Mary's significant role in God's plan for salvation as the Mother of Mercy without letting her compete with her son who will embody mercy in word and deed in the remainder of the cycle. Contemplacio's preaching rhetoric therefore enables the reader/viewer to consider the similarities between Mary and Christ, and specifically through the rhetorical device of the sermon Theme, here established as mercy. Contemplacio's name signals the meditative quality that his sermon language encourages, illustrating again how preaching in N-Town's various play groupings creates a timelessness throughout the cycle and the salvation history that the cycle captures. Yet in spite of the crucial contemplative role Contemplacio serves, he never tells the

audience his name.<sup>233</sup> The withholding of this detail is an essential aspect of how preaching in the *Mary Play* functions. The preacher, as God's ubiquitous voice, does not need a name to communicate his message, and, what is more, as the forerunner to Christ in the cycle, Contemplacio is a figure who only needs to be memorable enough; that is, memorable to the point that he captures the persona of a preacher but not so memorable that he overshadows the preaching Christ is about to undertake. Contemplacio needs to fade into the background, much as Mary does, if N-Town's theme of preaching and preachers is to continue successfully. Just as the compiler/reviser does not want Mary to outshine Christ in knowledge or the miracles her body performs, so too does he need Contemplacio's sermon to pale in comparison to the sermons Christ delivers as the cycle progresses: once Contemplacio vets and regulates Mary's reception in the *Mary Play*, he, like Mary's body as the cycle progresses, fades into the background.

The plays that follow the *Mary Play* increasingly focus on Christ, his miracles, and his preaching ministry. Plays 14 and 15, "The Trial of Mary and Joseph" and the "Nativity," depict Mary's body making way for her child's. When Mary is judged by ordeal – forced to drink a potion and walk around an altar seven times at her trial, for instance – she calls upon her son *in utero* to aid her, "A, dere son, I pray 3ow, help 3oure modyr mylde!" (14.345), a plea that emphasizes that the safety of her body is for Christ, not for its own sake:

O, gracyous God, as þu hast chose me  
 For to be þi modyr, of me to be born,  
 Save þi tabernacle, þat clene is kepte for þe,  
 Which now am put at repref and skorn. (14.338-41).<sup>234</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Meredith, "Establishing an Expositor's Role," 304.

<sup>234</sup> The trial by ordeal introduces "an alternative model of language...in which God is literally a participant" (Lipton, 130).

A tabernacle is a temporary storage unit, wherein the consecrated and unused host remains, and this image is particularly apt to describe Mary's body because it currently houses fruit that will become the food, in the form of the Eucharist, that sustains Christ's followers. In the "Trial" play, Mary's body becomes a site where competing masculine discourses expend themselves, pitting an established Jewish identity in the voices of the detractors against an imminent Christian understanding: "This is the first time Mary serves as the *mater mediatrice*, an active agent of the new law...the trial of Mary and Joseph publicly establishes the potency of the new Word through a conflict over Mary's body."<sup>235</sup> Significantly, Mary's pregnant body affirms the discourses of both traditions (as did her body in the "Marriage" play) because she drinks "þe botel of Goddys vengeans" (14.234) during her ordeal without consequence.<sup>236</sup> The Jewish detractor who takes the same drink, however, suffers from a headache, showing that the masculine discourse of the Old Law fails when confronting the masculine embodiment of the New in Christ. Mary's self-description as a tabernacle underscores her crucial, but transitional, participation in salvation by comparison to Christ's. The image of the tabernacle also forms thematic and meditative links to the "The Last Supper" in *Passion Play I*, wherein Christ will preach about the host and instate the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Kinservik, 195.

<sup>236</sup> Mary's innocence confronts stereotypes that "[associate]...a woman's speech with her body, and specifically with her sexuality. Generally this serves as a means of condemning her speech as lies and her body as overly carnal; the body is both the impetus for dissembling and, paradoxically, the source of literal truth that belies the claims of its owner" (Lipton, 123).

<sup>237</sup> The tabernacle imagery offers another meditative link between Mary and Christ: Mary's virginity and Christ's transubstantiation into the Eucharist are both "symbol[s] of bodily seamlessness always whole," even if "Mary's intactness [is] continually questioned in order to be continually reaffirmed" whereas Christ's is not (Price, 456). The emphasis on Mary's body and corporality throughout the *Mary Play* looks forward to and provides contemplative links to the body of Christ as it is embodied and remembered in the host. Viewed in this manner, the words of the many detractors and doubters of Mary's purity anticipate Christ's suffering on the cross, when the wholeness of his body is challenged by being beaten, scourged, crucified, and dying, but not overcome it defies death.



The “Nativity” continues to negotiate Mary’s body in relation to Christ’s when Mary feels Christ stirring between her sides (15.97). She removes herself from the sight of the audience and Joseph to give birth:

Therefore, husbond, of 3oure honesté,  
Avoyd 3ow hens out of þis place,  
And I alone with humylité  
Here xal abyde Goddys hy3 grace. (15.114-7)

Besides solving the practical problem of staging a birth, the absence of Mary’s body during Christ’s delivery draws attention to its modesty and purity; but, more importantly, it also draws attention to the way in which Christ’s body will replace his mother’s as the body that the audience should watch and imitate.

When Mary’s body returns to sight, Christ is born. Despite this fact, two midwives, Zelomy and Salomé, attend to Mary. These two women reenact the belief and doubt that has surrounded Mary’s body throughout its pregnancy: Zelomy, though incredulous, trusts the virgin birth and respectfully asks to examine Mary in case she is in need of “medycyn” (15.219); conversely, Salomé, scoffs at Mary and, in anticipation of Thomas with Christ, doubts what she sees: “I xal nevyr trowe it but I it preve! / With hand towchyng but I assay” (15.246-7).<sup>238</sup> This action results in the withering of her hand. Both of these women place Mary’s body on display by testing it, but, as the withering of Salomé’s hand suggests, Mary’s body is no longer the source of the miraculous. It is Christ, not Mary, who provides the cure Salomé seeks: Mary says

As Goddys aungel to 3ow dede telle,  
My chyld is medycyn for every sor.

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<sup>238</sup> Doubt is another meditative link that connects Mary and Christ. In discussing “The Temptation, ...[the] Woman Taken in Adultery, and the Raising of Lazarus,” Stevens observes that “all in varying degrees show Jesus performing tasks that his onlookers *doubt* he can accomplish” and he argues that “[w]hat we witness...is Jesus overcoming the doubt of foe and friend alike. And with his success, his Ministry [becomes] manifest” (201-2). I would extend Stevens’ observation to the remainder of N-Town, starting with “Christ and Doctors” and moving through both *Passion Plays* as well as the majority of the plays after his Resurrection, especially “Cleophas and Lucas; Appearance to Thomas.”

Towch his clothis, be my cowncelle,  
 3owre hand ful sone he wyl restor. (15.290-3)

And indeed, as soon as Salomé touches Christ, her hand is healed.<sup>239</sup>

Now that Mary's body has performed its reproductive function, its investment with God's rhetorical power lessens. Mary's body gives way to Christ's body, and so her appellation in the *Mary Play* as the Mother of Mercy becomes clearer, for her son is mercy itself. The "Purification" play demonstrates how Mary's body quietly disappears before Christ's: even though Mary and Joseph go to the temple for the double purpose of offering their son to God and cleansing Mary's body, the action of the play only depicts Christ's presentation, a continuation of N-Town's emphasis on the dedication of children as first fruit. It is Christ's body that now takes center stage, and his teaching and preaching activities that reappropriate the space that the knowledge and miraculous actions of Mary's body once occupied. Indeed, the miraculous recital of the Gradual Psalms by the three-year-old Mary both anticipates and creates meditative links to the twelve-year-old Christ who discourses with scholars in the temple; and, in hindsight, the teaching exposé Christ provides in "Christ and Doctors," wherein Christ explains the theories behind the Trinity (21.65-72, 21.81-4, 21.89-92), the Virgin birth (21.97-104), and the Incarnation (21.115-32), makes Mary's recital appear as little more than the recitation of information that it is.

Christ assumes his role as teacher in "Christ and Doctors" when he corrects the overconfident boasts of two narrow-minded scholars:

Omnis sciencia a Domino Deo est:  
 Al wytt and wysdam, of God it is lent.  
 Of all 3oure lernynge withinne 3oure brest

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<sup>239</sup> Physical punishment for disbelief involving the Virgin's body also arises in N-Town's "Assumption" play, where the hands of a disrespectful Jewish prince become stuck to Mary's funeral bier when he tries to attack her body after her death. For further discussion of corporeal punishment surrounding the Virgin, see Price, 442-3.

Thank hyghly þat Lord þat hath 3ow sent. (21.33-6)<sup>240</sup>

Christ teaches these scholars that they err by failing to remember and thank the Lord for the knowledge they have, employing this Latin citation as a preacher would, both to counter the scholars' previous use of Latin in this scene (21.1, 21.3), and to unfold his message about humility throughout this play. Christ's tremendous knowledge and fluidity with teaching quickly earn the respect of the scholars, a respect which they show by calling him their "mayster" (21.138) and elevating him before them:

Come forth, swete babe of grett excellens,  
 Þe whysest clerke þat evyr 3ett was born.  
 To 3ow we 3eve the hy3 resydens,  
 Vs more to teche as 3e haue done befor. (21.141-4)<sup>241</sup>

Christ's position in this high seat visually reinforces his authority as teacher, a position that his engagement with preaching in the next four plays will verify.

The progression of plays depicting Christ's ministry, plays 22-25, explore how Christ is what he preaches, that is, how there is no incongruity between word and action when and where preaching concerns him.<sup>242</sup> Christ is the only preacher for whom word and deed as well as inner intention and outer display are one and the same: "The Incarnation presented doctrine in an accessible form and provided the perfect example for Christians to follow: an embodied human person who fully expressed all the ideals of the faith."<sup>243</sup> There is no discontinuity between the flesh Christ assumes and the doctrine he expounds because he does not suffer from original sin;

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<sup>240</sup> "All knowledge is from the Lord God."

<sup>241</sup> Christ's elevation into this seat corrects the self-praise from which these scholars previously suffered. This correction is a reversal of Lucifer's pride that caused him to usurp God's chair in N-Town's first play. Sitting in the scholars' chair also shows the praise and honor owed to Christ, both for the wisdom he displays as a child and for the wisdom that he embodies as the second person of the Trinity.

<sup>242</sup> I acknowledge that this incongruity is of course present in and during performance, since it is an actor, and not Christ himself, who is portraying the role of Christ on stage.

<sup>243</sup> Waters, 40.

therefore, since the actions and words of Christ's body are never at odds, they never have the potential to defile, challenge, or hamper the presentation of his sermon. The absence of these discontinuities separates Christ from the human condition of every other preacher.

The first of the plays of Christ's ministry, the "Baptism," features the preaching of John the Baptist. Despite its significant engagement with preaching, this play does not appropriate the rhetorical moves of a sermon as play 11 of the *Mary Play* does; rather, the "Baptism" places the preacher as preacher on display, starting with a Latin citation that identifies the origin of John's preaching voice: "Ecce vox clamantes in deserto. / I am þe voys of wyldirnese / Þat her spekyth and preachy[t]h yow to!" (22.1-3).<sup>244</sup> This citation defines what preaching is: a solitary voice crying out against distractions to guide the masses to penance, a voice which, by the end of the play, Christ is determined to find for himself:

Into deserte I passe my way  
For mannys sake, as I 3ow say.  
Xl<sup>ti</sup> nyghts and xl<sup>ti</sup> day  
I xal nowther ete nor drynke. (22.128-31)

Christ goes into the desert to serve his penance for humanity's original sin, a penance that will verify in action the humility and meekness that John's words ascribe to Christ as a preaching *exemplum*. The "Baptism" then ends where it begins – with a voice crying from the wilderness – in order to examine the process whereby Christ becomes an internally and externally consistent preacher.

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<sup>244</sup> "Look, a voice crying out in the wilderness." John's sermon deals with penance, a subject closely tied to the act of preaching.

The Theme of the sermon that John delivers is penance: “Penitenciam nunc agite / Appropinquabit regnum celorum: / For your trespass penaunce do ȝe” (22.14-6).<sup>245</sup> John explains that the baptism he offers is a precursor to baptism in Christ:

I gyff baptym in watyr puere  
 Þat is callyd Flom Jordon.  
 My baptym is but sygnyfure  
 Of hys baptym þat his lyke hath non.  
 He is lord of gret valour;  
 I am not worthy to onbokyll his schon.  
 For he xall baptize, as seyth Scryptour,  
 Þat comyth of hem all euerychone,  
 In þe Holy Goost. (22.27-35)

The baptism Christ promises is more complete than the one John can provide. John’s actions foreshadow Christ’s at the same time that his words present Christ as an *exemplum*. However, as soon as John mentions Christ in his sermon, Christ appears, physically embodying the “Scryptour” (22.33) John just referenced. John next uses Scripture to affirm Christ’s arrival – “Ecce Agnus Dei qui tollit peccata mundi” (22.40)<sup>246</sup> – a citation that Christ makes material not simply through his appearance but more compellingly through his enactment of the humility and meekness about which John has been preaching:

Me to baptyze take þu no dowth;  
 Þe vertu of mekenes here tawth xal be,  
 Euery man to lere  
 And take ensawmple here by me  
 How mekely þat I come to þe.  
 Baptym confermyd now xal be;  
 Me to baptyze, take þu no dwere. (22.73-9)

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<sup>245</sup> “Do penance now, the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Technically *appropinquabit* is in the future tense.) For a discussion of this connection, see Beverly Mayne Kienzle, “Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record,” Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 89-126.

<sup>246</sup> “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

Christ participates in the baptism that he himself is. His action confirms the complete continuity between John's preaching words and Christ's deeds. Through his baptism, Christ takes the first step in conforming the outward persona he will assume as preacher to the interior and unseen intentions motivating his preaching.

Deus then appears, explaining that Christ is his "wel-belovyd chylde" (22.93), and that the audience should "[t]ake good hede what he doth preche, / And folwyth þe lawys þat he doth teche" (22.102-3). Deus' announcement empowers Christ rhetorically to preach, and thus recalls the manner in which the Lord invested linguistic power in the patriarchs of the Old Testament plays. The parent-child teaching relationship that Moses typified through the sermon form is now revisited, as the Lord invests His son with the power to preach; yet, since God and Christ are the same person, there is not a distinction between God and the preacher whom he empowers. Deus therefore subtly reconfirms the continuity between the actions and words Christ will perform as preacher, a continuity which John's sermon intimates. Like Moses and Contemplacio, John the Baptist reinforces a timelessness in the perception of preaching, and, like the preachers in N-Town preceding him, John serves as an intermediary who anticipates Christ. John's incredulous cry that he should baptize Christ even acknowledges his intermediate role:

My Lorde God, þis behovyth me nought,  
With myn hondys to baptize the.  
I xulde rather of the haue sought  
Holy baptym þan þu of me. (22.67-70)

As baptizer/preacher, John is secondary to Christ, yet Christ's humility requires that John perform a function of which he knows he is unworthy. Even though John brackets the presentation of his *exemplum* by opening and closing the "Baptism" with his sermon language (22.1-53, 22.133-83) like Contemplacio did the *Mary Play*, John does not contain or control

Christ's portrayal as *Contemplacio* did Mary's because, as a man, Christ can teach and preach without subversion.

"The Parliament of Hell; Temptation" depicts Christ's meekness in action – the meekness that John's sermon has previously described – through Christ's temptation by Satan in the desert. Even though Christ still illustrates John's *exemplum*, there is no preacher in this play who explicates Christ's actions; rather, Christ interprets his actions himself, a situation which allows his actions and words to merge into one and the same thing. For example, when Satan taunts Christ to turn stones into bread (23.79-91), Christ equates the deeds that his body currently performs with the Word of God:

Nott only be bred mannys lyff ȝitt stood  
But in þe wurde of God, as I þe say.  
To mannys sowle is neuyr mete so good  
As is þe wurd of God, þat prechid is alway.  
Bred materyal doth norch blood,  
But to mannys sowle, þis is no nay,  
Neuymore may be a betyr food  
Pan þe wurd of God, þat lestyth ay.  
To here Goddys wurde, therfore, man, loue.  
Thi body doth loue material brede;  
Withoute þe wurde of God þi soule is but dede.  
To loue prechyng, therfore, I rede,  
If þu wylt duellyn in blysse above. (23.92-104)

Christ interprets the meaning of bread in a twofold manner: bread that feeds the body and bread that feeds the soul. As Christ emphasizes, preaching is the bread that feeds the soul. Since Christ is the embodied word of God, when he refuses to eat, he aligns his actions with his words, his external with his internal. By denying himself physical food, Christ paves the way for his words and deeds to be the food that will nourish his faithful, exactly what his sermon will accomplish in "Woman Taken in Adultery" and what his actions will accomplish in "Raising of Lazarus." His self-denial also looks forward to "The Last Supper" in *Passion Play I* when his sermon will

transform the words that have nourished his followers into his body, a body which will continue to nourish them after his death through the sacrament of the Eucharist that he institutes.

The remainder of “Parliament of Hell; Temptation” confirms that Christ’s words and actions are in accord. Christ relies on Scriptural citations to repel Satan’s remaining two onslaughts, underscoring once again that there is no disconnect between the actions of his body and the words of his mouth, saying first “[i]t is wretyn in holy book, / Þi Lorde God þu xalt not tempte” (23.131-2), and later

Go abak, thu fowle Sathanas!  
In Holy Scrypture wretyn it is,  
Thi Lorde God to wurchipp in every plas  
As for his thrall and þu servaunt his. (23.183-6)

Christ then affirms his own exemplarity:

Now all mankende exaunple take  
By these grete werkys þat þu dost se  
...  
All þis I suffyr for mannys sake,  
To teche þe how þu xalt rewle the. (23.196-7, 23.202-3)

Christ teaches both through his words and deeds, explicating himself through his intentions and actions as a preacher would a sermon’s Theme.

Christ immediately emerges as a preacher in “Woman Taken in Adultery,” a play which he opens by preaching for forty lines on a Theme that he himself embodies, mercy:

Nolo mortem peccatoris.  
Man, for þi synne take repentaunce.  
...  
Thow þu haue don azens God grevauns,  
3ett mercy to haske loke þu be bolde. (24.1-2, 24.5-6)<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> “I do not want the death of the sinner.”



The central crux of this play is what to do with the sinful, female body caught between two authoritative masculine discourses: the Old Law represented by the Pharisees and Scribes demands punishment by death while the New Law embodied by Christ's sermon on mercy lavishes forgiveness. The Pharisees and Scribes fear that their law will be torn to shreds by Christ's new interpretation of mercy, and so they contrive to catch a woman in the act of adultery to test Christ: which law will he choose when they confront him with her, and, in choosing, how will he avoid becoming a hypocrite? Instead of falling for their trap and deciding between one of two options, Christ upholds both laws by offering to let the man free from sin cast the first stone:

Loke which of 3ow that nevyr synne wrought,  
But is of lyff clenner þan she,  
Cast at her stonys, and spare her nowght,  
Clene out of synne if þat 3e be." (24.229-32)

Christ has already written the sins of this woman's accusers in the ground before making this statement, and so he effectively preserves the Old Law and his new teaching by making these men into what they had hoped to make him, a hypocrite.

Left alone with the woman, Christ teaches her about mercy:

What man of synne be repentaunt,  
Of God if he wyl mercy craue,  
God of mercy is so habundawnt,  
Pat, what man haske it, he xal it haue. (24.285-9)

Christ's message of forgiveness and mercy clarifies how his teachings reinterpret the Old Law, which, despite the woman's pleas for mercy (24.153, 24.154, 24.156), her accusers refuse to consider: "Aske us no mercy; it xal not be!" (24.157). Christ's preaching therefore takes control of this woman's body in two ways, first by removing it from the discourse of the play's other masculine authority and then by reinvesting it with a virginal status: "Go hom ageyn and walk at large. / Loke þat þu leve in honesté, / And wyl no more to synne, I þe charge" (24.278-80). The

misuse of the woman's body, both by her for prostituting it and by the Pharisees and Scribes for accusing it, reveals the lack of continuity between the words and deeds of characters who are not Christ. The disconnect from which every body except Christ's suffers casts light on N-Town's depictions of the female reproductive body and of the masculine preaching body, the implications of which are explored for the feminine via the prostitute's body in "Woman Taken in Adultery" and for the masculine in "Raising of Lazarus" when Christ raises Lazarus from the dead in anticipation of his own Resurrection.

In many ways, Mary is in the background of "Woman Taken in Adultery." Besides Christ, she is the only character to negotiate the strictures of the Old Law while participating in a New Law, as she did in the "Marriage" and "Trial" plays when she married Joseph but remained virginal and passed her trial by ordeal unscathed. By preserving both options, Christ's actions are reminiscent of his mother's, and so N-Town's emphasis on parents teaching their children, first understood through the patriarchs of the Old Testament plays and then through Mary teaching Christ, now extends to Christ teaching the audience, and particularly the targeted audience of the woman in this play. By making her a prostitute, "Woman Taken in Adultery" draws the greatest contrast possible between this woman's body and Mary's, and, even though it presents the feminine body in the worst way, significantly, the play does not exclude it from Christ's mercy.<sup>248</sup> Instead, the female body remains the site over which masculine speech gains and validates its authority: just as God determined the time of fertility for women and

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<sup>248</sup> However, all the anxiety surrounding Mary's pregnant body earlier in the cycle made her out to be a prostitute, or at least an adulterous wife. In this respect, Mary and the woman in "Woman Taken in Adultery" are closer than they may first appear because of the difficulty in determining chaste sexual conduct regarding women: "medieval scientific and theological thinking...saw in the female body's openness 'breaches in boundaries' that were analogous to its moral character," making "the good female body...closed and intact" and "the bad woman's body...open, windy, and breachable. Because of their openness and temporal instability, the ambiguous boundaries of the female body can only be thoroughly confounded by the idea of a virginal maternity" (Coletti, "Purity and Danger," 69-70).

Contemplacio's sermon bracketed Gabriel's announcement to Mary, so too does Christ come to control this woman's body by transforming her sinful status into purity through his sermon rhetoric. Sermon discourse brings to the forefront the interdependence between the male preacher and the female body, because without the feminine, masculine sermon rhetoric cannot verify its legitimacy. The constant anxiety surrounding Mary's pregnant body transfers to the prostitute's in this play via the contradictory masculine discourses – Old and New Laws – surrounding it. Once Christ validates the prostitute's body as non-prostitute, however, it is no longer inconsistent, just as Mary's body is no longer in doubt as mother and virgin after Christ's birth because his presence affirms her cleanliness. For this reason, it becomes unnecessary and even superfluous to examine Mary further after Christ is born, as the "Purification" confirms by only staging Christ's presentation in the temple.<sup>249</sup>

Mary, like her son, exemplifies the Theme of mercy, and so through N-Town's emphasis on sermon *exempla*, Mary and Christ are simultaneously both children and parents who teach others and whose parent-child teaching relationship manifests rhetorically through the *exemplum*. Both are portrayed as *exempla* of mercy in sermons, Christ embodying the Theme that he discusses and Mary facilitating that Theme, not only through her pregnancy but also through Contemplacio's sermon rhetoric. When Christ preaches about mercy, N-Town revisits Contemplacio's role as preacher to critique it: "If Christ's humanity mediates between the

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<sup>249</sup> A similar circumstance also precedes the sermon Christ delivers in "Last Supper" when Christ purges the body of a prostitute, traditionally identified as Mary Magdalene, from seven devils. This prostitute's body acts as a template confirming masculine authority and validating Christ before he institutes the Eucharist. Significantly, after her purging, the woman refers to the status of her body: "I xall nevyr forffett nor do trespace / In wurd, nor ded, ne wyl, nor wytt. / Now I am brought from þe fendys brace, / In þi grett mercy, closyd and shytt" (27.182-5). Closed off, her body is now renewed, and no longer inconsistent or in doubt just as the prostitute in the "Adultery" play and as Mary's body in general. Indeed, in the "Assumption of Mary," "[w]hen Mary's spirit returns to her body in preparation for its departure from the world, Dominus declares that her sinless life will be rewarded with perpetual inviolability: 'For as ye were clene in erthe of alle synnys greyn, / So schul ye reyne in hefne clenest in mend; (41.513-4),' (Kinservik, 200).

heavenly and the earthly, then the preacher, who should be a true reflection of that example, is the mediator at one remove.”<sup>250</sup> Since Christ is the embodiment of mercy about which he preaches, when juxtaposed with Mary and Contemplacio, the intermediary role of each becomes clear: Mary facilitates the embodiment of mercy by giving birth to Christ and Contemplacio cannot enact his Theme as Christ can. Christ, as the body that is divine rhetoric, betrays the division between word and deed that every other masculine preacher’s body in N-Town experiences, even though these bodies are divinely sanctioned bodies in their own right.

#### IV. Christ Impassioned: Negotiating Presence and Absence in *Passion Play I*

*Passion Play I* is the thematic culmination of N-Town’s engagement with preaching; for, in this sequence of plays, Christ delivers a sermon on the Eucharist as he instantiates it as a sacrament, at once broadcasting the unity of his words and deeds as he establishes a commemorative ritual for those same words and deeds. The inception of the Holy Communion makes Christ’s embodiment of scripture available to his Apostles, and, in turn, makes them the living embodiment of him. When Christ invests his Apostles with this sacrament, he also invests them with the power to teach through their preaching:

Werfore, Petyr and 3e everychon,  
 3f 3e loue me, fede my schep,  
 Pat for fawth of techyng þei go not wrong;  
 But evyr to hem takyth good kep.

3evyth hem my body, as I have to 3ow,  
 Qweche xal be sacryd be my worde.  
 And evyr I xal þus abyde with 3ow  
 Into þe end of þe werde. (27.496-503)

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<sup>250</sup> Waters, 41.

By transforming his Apostles into vessels wherein he “abyde[s]” (27.502), Christ makes them participants in the father-son teaching/preaching relationship that he himself represents with God. The Apostles will act as the shepherds and fathers for the Christian faithful in Christ’s absence. Thus, the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist surfaces; for, by consuming the transformed bread and wine, the Apostles acknowledge that their embodiment of Christ is a removed embodiment: even though Christ is present in them, they are not Christ, and the preaching that the Apostles will undertake acknowledges Christ’s absence from them: “The preacher *re*-presents God or Christ precisely because neither is bodily present...Both the preacher’s need and his ability to ‘cite’ Christ derive from this relative absence.”<sup>251</sup> Indeed, N-Town negotiates the ideas of Christ’s presence and absence in its representation of preaching throughout the cycle, but these notions intensify as *Passion Play I* begins because the reality of Christ’s looming absence becomes tangible: Christ will die for humanity.<sup>252</sup>

The several sermons in *Passion Play I*’s first play, “Conspiracy; Entry into Jerusalem,” explore Christ’s simultaneous presence and absence. John the Baptist “prophesye[s] / Þat on xal come aftyr me and not tary longe” (26.125-6), for which reason, John advises “to do penawns ... / For now xal come þe kyngdham of hevyn” (26.131-2). John’s message is exactly the same as the Theme of his sermon in the “Baptism,” where he said “Penitenciam nunc agite, / Appropinquabit regnum celorum” (22.14-5).<sup>253</sup> John’s Theme of penance produces a consistency across these play groupings, both at thematic and rhetorical levels: the repetition of John’s

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>252</sup> The question of temporalities comes to the forefront as a result: Christ is present in the world of *Passion Play I*, but in the real time in which N-Town as a manuscript exists, Christ is absent, making his representation in the cycle an embodied remove, as a name on a page, or, perhaps, as an actor playing him on a stage.

<sup>253</sup> “Do penance now, / The kingdom of of heaven is near.”

Theme emphasizes the need for contrition, not only because it leads the faithful to God but also because of the brevity of Christ's time on earth.

John the Baptist is the first of three men to deliver brief sermons in *Passion Play I*'s first play. Peter and John the Apostle preach the next two. In their respective sermons, Peter and John similarly extend Themes from previous plays about Christ's ministry, Peter emphasizing the message "to love God" (26.406) and "to love þi neybore" (26.407) and John Christ's "exawmple of humylyté" (26.428). Christ himself affirms these messages and continues to embody the Theme of mercy when he arrives in Jerusalem, announcing

Frendys, beholde þe tyme of mercy,  
 Þe wiche is come now, withowtyn dowth.  
 ...  
 As I haue prechyd in placys abowth,  
 And shewyd experyence to man and wyf,  
 Into þis werld Goddys Sone hath sowth  
 For veray loue man to revyfe. (26.458-9, 26.462-5)

Christ's reference to the "tyme of mercy" (26.458) highlights the imminence of his presence for and absence from humanity, an imminence which his preaching in word and deed captured throughout the previous plays of his ministry.<sup>254</sup>

As the next play, "Last Supper; Conspiracy with Judas," confirms, preaching starts and ends in Christ, and particularly in his establishment of the Eucharist. Like his explanation of bread as food for the body and soul in the "Temptation," Christ ascribes a double meaning to the act of eating lamb in this sermon. Christ explains how the patriarchs, represented by "Moyse

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<sup>254</sup> Several scholars see the opening monologue that Satan speaks in play 26 as a sermon. While I agree that Satan's address contains language reminiscent of a preacher's, it does not incorporate the rhetorical moves I have been detailing in the sermons of Moses, Contemplacio, the Apostles, and Christ. Plummer places particular emphasis on the phrase "beholde the time of mercy" (26.458) that Christ speaks because Plummer feels it directly "[answers]" Satan's prologue: "Christs words, promising the very mercy for which the deleted portion of Satan's text cried, cancel exactly and pointedly Satan's opening textual gambit" (317).

and Aaron,” were “comawndyd by [his] Fadyr” (27.351) to eat lamb in the past, an action which, while preserved, is now different:

And as we ete it, so ded þei, hastyly.  
 Þis fygure xal sesse; anothyr xal folwe þerby,  
 Weche xal be of my body, þat am 3oure hed,  
 Weche xal be shewyd to 3ow be a mystery  
 Of my flesch and blood in forme of bred. (27.360-4)

Christ refers to the process of transubstantiation, the process that changes bread and wine into his flesh and blood, the repetition of which makes him simultaneously present with and absent from his followers. Christ’s reference to Moses as the man whom God first invested with this tradition underscores how N-Town employs preaching to lend thematic cohesion to the cycle: Christ’s sermon connects the first preacher that N-Town depicted to Christ, the first Chrisitan preacher, at the same time that it reinterprets the Passover of the Old Law as the Eucharist of the New,<sup>255</sup> showing how Christ embodies the New through his words and deeds.<sup>256</sup>

Bretheryn, be þe [vertu] of þese wordys þat [re]hercyd be,  
 Þis þat shewyth as bred to 3oure apparens  
 Is mad þe very flesche and blod of me,  
 To þe weche þei þat wole be savyd must 3eve credens.

And as in þe olde lawe it was comawndyd and precepte  
 To ete þis lomb to þe dystruccon of Pharao vnkende,  
 So to dystroy 3oure gostly enmye þis xal be kepte  
 For 3oure paschal lomb into þe werdys ende.

For þis is þe very lombe withowte spot of synne  
 Of weche Johan þe Baptyst dede prophesy  
 Whan þis prophesye he ded begynne,  
 Seying: ‘Ecce agnus Dey’. (27.381-92)

<sup>255</sup> Theresa Coletti, “Sacrament and Sacrifice in the N-Town Passion,” *Mediaevalia* 7 (1984), 239-64, at 243.

<sup>256</sup> In the preceding “Conspiracy and Entrance” play, Annas and Caiaphas also make references to Moses and the Old Law: “I, Annas, be my powere xal comawnde, dowteles: / Þe laws of Moyses no man xal denyel!” (26.167-8) and later Caiaphas rejoins “Of þe lawe of Moyses I haue a chef governawns; / To seuere ryth and wrong in me is termynable” (26.215-6). Despite Annas’ and Caiaphas’ claims to Moses and the Old Law, Moses and his laws already inform N-Town’s preaching discourse, and so represent the New Law throughout the cycle. The source of Annas’ and Caiaphas’ claims to power has already and is always already appropriated by Christ in N-Town.

*Ecce agnus Dei* is the Latin that John the Baptist cited in the “Baptism” when Christ appeared as an *exemplum* in John’s sermon. The repetition of this citation suggests that preaching discourse has negotiated the presentation of the Old and New Laws throughout N-Town, and that John the Baptist, Moses, and even Contemplacio via his representation of Mary are important transitional figures in that process. Those preachers, however, could not embody their messages as Christ does, and so Christ’s reiteration of John’s biblical authority once again reinforces his embodiment, not only of Scripture as an *exemplum*, but also of the sacrament he institutes. This citation marked the beginning of Christ’s preaching ministry, of his presence to the world, in the “Baptism,” and now its repetition marks the completion of his preaching, of his absence in death.

The reinterpretation and fulfillment of the Old Law as the New that the references to John’s sermon and Moses’ preaching typify appear throughout Christ’s sermon on the Eucharist. The activities of the Old Law are as follows:

And as we with *swete bredys* haue it ete,  
 And also with þe *byttir sokelyng*,  
 And as we take þe *hed with þe fete*  
 So ded þei in all maner thyng.

And as we stondyn so ded þei stond;  
 And here *reynes*, þei *grydon*, veryly,  
 With *schon on here fete* and *stavys in here hond*;  
 And as we ete it, so ded þei, *hastyly*. (27.353-60, my emphasis)

After his instatement of the Eucharist, Christ returns to the activities of the patriarchs and the Old Law in order to reinterpret them systematically through the New Law: “both the pascal lamb and the Host are present simultaneously on stage, the new dispensation visibly displacing the old. This scene / thus represents not only the historical institution of the Eucharist but also signals the



passage from the Old Law to the New even as it defines an ideal of Christian fraternity inherent in the sacrament of communion.”<sup>257</sup> I cite his sermon at length to reveal the overlaps:

With no byttyr bred þis bred ete xal be:  
 Pat is to say, with no byttyrnesse of hate and envye,  
 But with þe *suete bred* of love and charyté,  
 Weche fortetyet þe soule gretlye.

And it schuld ben etyn with þe *byttyr sokelyng*:  
 Pat is to mene, 3f a man be of sinful dyspocycyon,  
 Hath led his lyff here with myslevyng,  
 Þefore in his hert he xal haue byttyr contrycyon.

Also þe *hed with þe feet* ete xal 3e:  
 Be þe hed 3e xal vndyrstand my Godhead,  
 And be þe feet 3e xal take my humanity.  
 Þese tweyn 3e xal receyve togedyr, indede.

This immaculat lombe þat I xal 3ow 3eve  
 Is not only þe Godhed alone,  
 But bothe God and man, thus must 3e beleve;  
 Þus þe *hed with þe feet*, 3e xal receyve echon.

...

The *gyrdyl* that was comawndyd here *reynes* to sprede  
 Xal be þe gyrdyl of clennes and chastyté.  
 Pat is to sayn, to be contynent in word, thought, and dede,  
 And all leccherous levyng cast 3ow for to fle.

And þe *schon þat xal be 3oure feet vpon*  
 Is not ellys but exawnpyl of vertuis levyng  
 Of 3oure form-faderys 3ou befor;  
 With þese *schon* my steppys 3e xal be sewyng.

And þe *staf that in 3oure handys* 3e xal holde  
 Is not ellys but þe exawmpyls to other men teche;  
 Hold faste 3oure *stauys in your handys*, and beth bolde  
 To every creature myn precepttys for to preche.

Also, 3e must ete þis paschall lombe *hastyly*,  
 Of weche sentens þis is þe very entent:

<sup>257</sup> Victor I. Scherb, “Liturgy and Community in N-Town *Passion Play I*,” *Comparative Drama* 29 (1996), 478-92, at 484-5.

At every oure and tyme 3e xal be redy  
 For to fulfyll my cowmawndement. (27.397-412, 27.417-32, my emphasis)

Christ's reinterpretations display how he works within the parameters of the Old Law to create the New, an objective with which preaching itself is intimately concerned because of its origin with Moses in N-Town. The sermon, and specifically Christ's sermon in this play, is the medium through which new interpretations are promulgated and explained: the "suede bred" (27.399) and "byttyr sokelyng" (27.401) of the past become the respective "loue and charyté" (27.399) and "contrycycon" (27.404) of the New Law, as does the "gyrdyl" (27.417) of the Old come to represent the example of virtue in imitating Christ in the New.

The imagery of feet that Christ uses in this sermon particularly highlights how the Apostles will carry out Christ's preaching mission in the remainder of N-Town: through the "immaculat lombe" (27.409) they receive, the Apostles become human and divine. Like Christ, they will "[convey] the heavenly by earthly means,"<sup>258</sup> and preaching is the tool enabling the Apostles to straddle both worlds, as the image of "þe staf...in [their] handys" (27.421) affirms. As Christ explains, shoes represent the deeds, the "vertuis levyng" (27.422), and the staff the words, the "preceptys for to preche" (27.428) that the Apstotles must embody as examples of Christ. Christ encourages his Apostles to imitate him in word and deed, to be the embodiment of Scripture that he himself is. This imagery is particularly apt because "feet...recall the image of preachers as the feet of the church, and the staff in his hand reminds us of his role as shepherd."<sup>259</sup>

The discussion of feet and shoes in this sermon draws parallels to past preachers in several ways. In the first play of *Passion Play I*, when John the Baptist describes Christ's

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<sup>258</sup> Waters., 41.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 35.

imminent arrival, he states how Christ is “[i]n many folde more strengere þan I / Of whose *shon* I am not worthy to lose þe thonge” (26.127-8, my emphasis). John then substantiates this image by advising the audience through his preaching to use its feet “to walk” (26.134) on the “myddys” (26.138) path:

Of þis wey for to make moralysacyon,  
Be þe ryth syde 3e xal vndyrstonde ‘mercy’;  
And on þe lefte syde lykkenyd ‘dysperacyon’;  
And þe patthe betwyn bothyn þat may not wry  
Schal be ‘hope and drede’, to walke in perfectly,  
Declynyng not to fele for no maner nede. (26.141-6)

By living with hope and dread, humanity can walk a path that leads it to Christ, a path that penance and baptism help to maintain. This imagery creates ties between all the sermons that John, Peter, and Christ deliver in the first Passion sequence both thematically and “tropologically”: Peter says in his sermon that “the lame will be made to walk... ‘In the wey that John Baptist of prophecied,’” which harkens to the Baptist’s “‘way’ of the Lord, as in ‘path,’ so that Peter’s words here may be understood to mean that Christ will cause the lame to walk in the paths of the Lord of which John has spoken.”<sup>260</sup> The focus on the shoes and feet that walk Christ’s paths are not unique to *Passion Play I*, however. John previously associated them with Christ in the “Baptism,” remarking at the River Jordan that he is “not worthy to onbokyll his[Christ’s] schon” (22.32). Indeed, the imagery of shoes is so intimately connected with preaching that, just before God commands Moses to “preche” (6.41) in the “Moses” play, He orders him to “take þi schon anon ful rownde / Of þi fete in hast” (6.29-30), to which Moses replies: “Barfoot now I do me make / And pull of my schon fro my fete. / Now haue I my shon of take.” (6.33-5).

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<sup>260</sup> Plummer, 325.

In “Last Supper,” Christ’s action of washing the feet of his Apostles after his sermon completes the humble portrayal of the preacher:

PETRUS: Lord, what wylt þu with me do?  
 Þis sercyce of þe, I wyl forsake.  
 To wassche my feet, þu xal not so –  
 I am not worthy it of þe to take.

JESU: Petyr, and þu forsake my service all  
 þe weche to ʒow þat I xal do,  
 No part with me haue þu xal,  
 And nevyr com my blysse onto.

PETRUS: Þat part, Lord, we wyl not forgo;  
 We xal abbey his comawndement.  
 Wasche hed and hond, we pray þe so;  
 We wyl don after þin entent. (27.516-527)

Christ explains that the purpose of this action is to create a memory for the Apostles:

Frendys, þis wasshyng xal now prevayll.  
 ʒoure lord and mayster ʒe do me calle,  
 And so I am, withowtyn fayl;  
 ʒet I haue wasschyd ʒow alle.  
 A memory of þis haue ʒe xall  
 þat eche of ʒow xal do to othyr.  
 With vmbyl hert submyt egal,  
 As eche of ʒow were otherys brother. (27.528-35)

This action embodies the language of Christ’s sermon, confirming once again that his words and deeds are aligned. Washing the Apostle’s feet demonstrates how they must imitate Christ as preachers in word as well as in action.

The example that Christ sets for his Apostles by cleansing them surfaces earlier in the “Last Supper,” however, when Christ’s own feet are cleaned by Mary Magdalene’s tears:

With þis oynement þat is so sote,  
 Lete me anoynte þin holy fote,  
 And for my balys þus wyn some bote  
 And mercy, Lord, for my trespase (27.163-6)

The message of mercy and forgiveness about which Christ has been preaching throughout N-Town is now reflected back upon itself in Mary's actions, the feminine body confirming yet again the masculine preaching discourse that surrounds it. In this way, Mary Magdalene's body serves much as the Virgin's did in the *Mary Play*, revealing the success of Christ's preaching mission:

I xal nevyr forfeit nor do trespace  
 In wurd, nor deed, ne wyl, nor wytt.  
 Now I am brought from þe fendys brace,  
 In þi grett mercy, closyd and shytt. (27.182-5)

The Magdalene's renewal in Christ is complete, her person becoming hermeneutically sealed against sin in word and deed, assuming a status in its sinless state reminiscent of the prostitute in the "Adultery" play and of the Virgin herself.<sup>261</sup>

Perhaps it is not surprising then that the feminine is the register through which Christ's Passion is understood in the final play of the first Passion sequence, "Betrayal; Procession of Saints." At the end of the "Betrayal," Mary Magdalene recounts Christ's crucifixion to Mary, who, in this play, remains in the temple in prayer while her son is crucified. The Virgin reacts quickly and deeply to the news of her son's suffering, framing her own mental anguish in a manner that parallels her son's physical anguish:

A Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, Jesu!  
 Why xuld 3e sofere þis trybulacyon and advercyté?  
 How may thei fynd in here heryts 3ow to pursewe  
 Þat nevyr trespacyd in no maner degré?  
 For nevyr thyng but þat was good thowth 3e.  
 Wherefore þan xuld 3e sofer þis gret peyn?  
 I suppoce veryly it is for þe tresspace of me.  
 And I wyst þat, myn hert xuld cleve on tweyn.

<sup>261</sup> While N-Town does not pursue Mary Magdalene's *vita* as a preacher, the Magdalene does nevertheless go on to preach Christ's word, a fact with which the audience viewing/reading this play would be familiar. It is therefore interesting to consider that the divine investiture of preachers flanks Christ's sermon in the "Last Supper," first with Mary's cleansing in body and soul and then with the Apostles having their feet washed.

For þese langowrys may I [not] susteyn,  
 Þe swerd of sorwe hath so thyrlȳd my meende!  
 Alas, what may I do? Las, what may I seyn?  
 Þese prongys, myn herte asondyr þei do rende. (28.165-76)

Like her son, Mary has “nevyr trespacyd in no maner degré” (28.168), and so her question as to why Christ “xuld... sofer þis gret peyn” (28.170) is equally applicable to herself. Yet, instead of blaming his accusers, Mary chastises herself for her son’s suffering, falsely claiming that she has committed a “tresspace” (28.171) against him. As Christ suffers for humanity’s original sin so Mary suffers for Christ, experiencing his Passion with and for him by taking on the burden of a trespass that is not her own. Mary’s assimilation of her son’s suffering produces the image of a sword that pierces her mind: “[þ]e swerd of sorwe hath so thyrlȳd my meende” (28.174). Mary’s pain manifests as the weapons used against Christ throughout his buffeting, scourging, and crucifixion, tearing her “herte asondyr” (28.176) just as her son’s flesh is shredded. The description of Mary’s pain offers the female body once again as a template through which to comprehend the outcome of Christ’s ministry, as in this instance, Mary’s mind serves as a map through which Christ’s pain is navigated. The mind is an appropriate location for Mary’s suffering for several reasons: first, it underscores Mary’s erudition, which was noted previously throughout the *Mary Play*; second, it furthers the meditative links to Christ that this mother and son already share; third, it connects the preaching discourse of Contemplacio and Christ through the Themes of mercy, since Mary is the Mother of Mercy and Christ mercy itself; fourth, it enacts the affective piety for which East Anglia was so well known – Mary models an emotive response by placing herself in her son’s position, a position that any reader/viewer can imitate.

The full force of Mary’s affection surfaces in her attempt at understanding her pain by turning to prayer. Mary asks “O Fadȳr of Hefne, wher ben al þi behestys / þat þu promysys[d]

me whan a modyr þu me made?” (28.177-8) and “A, good Fadyr, why woldyst þat þin owyn dere sone xal sofre al þis? / And ded he nevyr azens þi precept, but evyr was obedyent” (28.181-2).

These questions again bring N-Town’s emphasis on parent-child relationships to the fore, recalling the three prayers earlier in this play that Christ speaks when he pleads with his Father to avoid the Passion (28.25-27, 28.37-44, 28.45-52). Despite his fears, Christ remains an obedient son, receiving his Father’s blessing from an angel: “Þis chalys ys þi blood, þis bred is þi body, / For mannys synne evyr offeryd xal be” (28.61-2). These words “[carry] forward the Eucharistic emphasis of the Last Supper, thus heightening the identification of sacrament and sacrifice because Christ here sheds blood for the first time in his Passion.”<sup>262</sup> The angel acknowledges that Christ has become an *exemplum* of mercy through his own sacrifice. And indeed, it is in the thought of Christ’s mercy alone that Mary is able to find any solace:

Now, dere sone, syn þu hast evyr be so ful of mercy  
 Þat wylt not spare þiself, for þe love þu hast to man,  
 On all mankend now have þu pety  
 And also thynk on þi modyr, þat hevy woman. (28.189-92)

Thus, the first Passion sequence ends with an affirmation of the preaching that Christ performs, first through Mary’s voice and then through the voices of two doctors who explicate a list of saints

To þe pepl not lernyd I stonde as a *techer*  
 Of þis processyon to 3eve informacyon;  
 And to them þat be lernyd as a gostly *precher*,  
 That in my rehersayl they may haue delectacyon. (28.201-4, my emphasis)

N-Town’s preaching mission is now realized in Christ’s absence, as these doctors themselves become the preachers who continue Christ’s mission to teach.<sup>263</sup> Interestingly, these doctors

<sup>262</sup> Coletti, “Sacrament and Sacrifice,” 248.

<sup>263</sup> Significantly, the scene with the doctors is an added scene: “At one point in the manuscript’s history, Mary’s *planctus* constituted the final scene of *Passion Play I*,” a fact to which Scherb calls attention in order to conjecture

ground their preaching in the saints, in other preachers like Peter (28.206) and John the Apostle (28.209), who have preached in their own right alongside Christ. The last saint they praise is John the Baptist:

Heyl, Johan Baptyst, most soveryn creature  
That evyr was born be naturall conseyyng,  
And hiest of prophetys, as wytnessyth Scripture;  
Heyl, [v]oys þat in desert was allwey crying. (28.229-32)

This reference to the voice crying in the desert recalls the Latin authority with which John began his sermon in the “Baptism,” the play in which Christ embodied John’s preaching *exemplum*. The first Passion sequence therefore ends with a direct invocation of preaching rhetoric, suggesting preaching’s ubiquity and timelessness in aiding humankind to remember Christ’s sacrifice.

#### V. The Preacher Paradoxically Silenced: Christ in *Passion Play II*

*Passion Play II* explores Christ’s embodiment of preaching rhetoric by offering a different version of Christ’s Passion that could be played in alternate years. Contemplacio returns to introduce the first play of *Passion Play II*, serving mostly as a figure summarizing the action of the Passion from the previous year (29.7, 29.9-16). “Now wold we procede,” Contemplacio informs the audience,

how he was browth þan  
Beforn Annas and Cayphas, and syth befor Pylate,  
And so forth in his Passyon, how *mekely* he toke it for man;  
Besekyng 3ou for mede of 3oure soulys to take good hede þeratte. (29.17-20)

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that “the ending seems to have been perceived as too bleak, Mary’s solitary assertion of faith too weak, and perhaps its liturgical allusions too faint to function as an emotionally satisfactory end to the play” (487). Scherb’s assumptions aside, the addition of these doctors to this scene again subtly suggests preaching’s purpose in containing and representing the feminine as an *exemplum* under the control of its discourse.



The subject of *Passion Play II*, as *Contemplacio* clarifies, is Christ's meekness. This topic of course continues to develop Christ as *exemplum*, a topic intimately connecting this sequence of plays with those of Christ's ministry and *Passion Play I*.<sup>264</sup> Yet *Passion Play II* explores Christ's meekness more subtly than the preceding play groupings, mostly as a result of Christ's refusal to preach, indeed, to even speak, when his accusers address him about his preaching. Christ's embodiment of preaching as actions, rather than as words, is therefore acutely emphasized. In light of Christ's silence, *Contemplacio*'s reappearance is significant visually: since Christ will not address the audience as a preacher in these plays, *Contemplacio*'s presence serves to remind the audience of the importance of the preacher's deeds.

Within the manuscript's broader presentation of preaching, *Contemplacio*'s reappearance also recalls the *Mary Play*, wherein *Contemplacio* used sermon rhetoric and delivered the opening stanzas of a sermon in order to control the attention that Mary's erudite mind and empowered body received. While *Contemplacio* defends Mary's legitimate portrayal, he simultaneously quiets her voice. His reappearance therefore reactivates the gendered associations of the female body as template for masculine authority. Because of its silence and subjection to torture – a physical manifestation of the masculine, legal discourses that Annas, Caiphas, Herod, and Pilate control – Christ's body is in effect feminized throughout *Passion Play II*. Yet *Contemplacio* does not appear again after the introduction to this sequence of plays, suggesting that, even if Christ's body is made to look effete, it is still a masculine body in control of its rhetoric. Christ's silence then becomes the most effective preaching tool he has throughout this

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<sup>264</sup> Even though both Passion sequences may not have been performed together in the same year, their sequential arrangement in the manuscript makes their thematic continuities relevant to anyone who could access and read the manuscript.

sequence of plays because it communicates the power of embodied meekness and humility, his body serving as an *exemplum* that illustrates with actions the words of his previous sermons.

In “Herod: Trial before Annas and Cayphas,” the first play of *Passion Play II*, Caiaphas interrogates Christ about his preaching:

CAYPHAS: What arn þi dysciplys þat folwyn þe aboute?  
 And what is þi dottryne þat þu dost preche?  
 Telle me now somwhath, and bryng us out of doute  
 Pat we may to othere men þi prechyng forth teche.

JES[US]: Al tymes þat I haue prechyd, opyn it was don  
 In þe synagog or in þe temple, where þat all Jewys com.  
 Aske hem what I haue seyde, and also what I haue don.  
 Þei con telle þe my wordys, aske hem everychon. (29.130-7)

Christ’s insistence that Caiaphas ask others for the message of his sermon underscores that his followers have already internalized his lessons. Significantly, these are four of only twelve lines, in a play of two hundred and twenty-four, that Christ speaks. Christ’s refusal to rehearse the subjects of his preaching on demand communicates the power of what he has said: his message already has been imparted to those who have heard and seen him, and those presently persecuting him are powerless to remove that message from him or those people. Because of Christ’s refusal to speak, his accusers are forced to recount the lessons of his preaching:

DOCTOR 1: Sere, þis I herd hym with his owyn mowth seyn:  
 ‘Brekyth down þis temple without delay,  
 And I xal settyn’t up ageyn  
 As hool as it was be þe thrydde day’.

DOCTOR 2: 3a, ser, and I herd hym seyn also  
 Pat he was þe Sone of God,  
 And 3et many a fole wenyth so!  
 I durst leyn þeron myn hod.

DOCTOR 3: 3a, 3a! And I herd hym preche meche þing  
 And a3ens oure lawe every del,  
 Of wheche it were longe to make rekenyng  
 To tellyn all at þis seel. (29.150-61).

The doctors' statements, somewhat ironically, serve to spread the word of God instead of containing it. These doctors therefore suggest that Christ's message, since it can be communicated by his persecutors, will be embodied by those who become his followers and preachers even more succinctly and successfully. And in fact, Christ's enemies inadvertently support his preaching message at the crucifixion, something that becomes evident when Caiaphas complains to Pilate about the plaque placed above Christ's head:

CAYPHAS: Sere Pylat, we merveilyth of þis,  
 þat 3e wryte hym to be Kyng of Jewys.

þefore we wolde þat 3e xuld wryte þus,  
 þat he namyd hymself Kyng of Jewus.

PYLAT: þat I haue wreytn, wretyn it is,  
 And so xal it be for me, iwys. (32.177-82)

As this complaint registers, *Passion Play II* subtly addresses the continuation of preaching without directly investing a preacher with the task, what *Passion Play I* overtly accomplished at the Last Supper through Christ's sermon to the Apostles. In this way, Christ's silence in preaching before Annas and Caiaphas underscores Christ's absent-presence from humanity.

While Christ does speak a handful of lines in the next two plays of *Passion Play II*, overwhelmingly, the questions of his accusers – “What seyst to these compleyntys, Jesu?” (30.57), “Jesus, why spekyst not to þi kyng?” (30.209), “What! Spek, Jesus, and telle me why / þis pepyl do þe so here acuse” (30.213-4), “What, þu onhangyd harlot, why wylt þu not speke?” (30.221), “Jesus, what seyst now, lete se” (31.118), “What seyst, Jesus? Whi spekyst not me to?” (31.127) – take over the dialogue of these plays. This silence eventually results in the Jews taunting and beating Christ. These actions suggest the power of the spoken (and the unspoken) word that preaching produces, and while Christ is being physically beaten throughout the

delivery of these lines, the Jews' constant insistence that Christ speak serves as a form of abuse and torture in itself:

REX HERODES: What? Spek, I say, þu foulyng! Evyl mote þu fare!  
 Loke up, þe devyl mote þe cheke.  
 Serys, bete his body with scorgys bare,  
 And asay to make hym for to speke!

JUDEUS 1: It xal be do withoutyn teryeng.  
 Come on, þu tretour, evyl mot þu þe!  
 Whylt þu not speke onto oure kyng?  
 A new lesson we xall lere þe!

*[Here þei pulle of Jesus clothis and betyn hym with whypps.]*

JUDEUS 2: Jesus, þi bonys we xal not breke,  
 But we xal make þe to skyppe!  
 Þu hast lost þi tonge, þu mayst not speke –  
 Þu xalt asay now of þis whippe!

JUDEUS 3: Serys, take þese whyppys in 3oure honed,  
 And spare not whyl þei last,  
 And bete þis tretoure þat here doth stoned;  
 I trowe þat he wyl speke in hast. (30.229-44)

The Jews seem to suggest that, if Christ were to speak, his torture would cease. A false promise, Christ's silence again reveals the irony of the language motivating his persecutors; for, their new purpose becomes to make Christ speak, which is the opposite of what originally motivated their desire to capture him; that is, to prevent his preaching.

Christ's silence in *Passion Play II* extends to the very moment of his death on the cross, affecting the enemies who taunt him as well as the followers who grieve for him:

JUDEUS 1: 3a! Vath! Vath! Now here is he  
 Þat bad us dystroye oure tempyl on a day,  
 And withinne days thre  
 He xulde reysyn't agen in good aray.

JUDEUS 2: Now and þu kan do swech a dede,  
 Help now þiself, yf þat þu kan;  
 And we xal belevyn on þe withoutyn drede,

And seyn þu art a mythy man.

JUDEUS 3: Ȝa, yf þu be Goddys sone, as þu dedyst teche,  
 From þe cros come now down.  
 Pan of mercy we xal þe beseche  
 And seyn þu art a lord of gret renown.

JESTES: Yf þu be Goddys sone, as þu dedyst seye,  
 Helpe here now, both þe and vs.  
 But I fynde it not al In my feye  
 Pat þu xuldyst be Cryst, Goddys sone Jesus.

DYMAS: Do wey, fool! Why seyst þu so?  
 He is þe Sone of God, I beleve it wel!  
 And synne ded he nevyr, lo,  
 Pat he xuld be put þis deth tyl.

But we ful mech wrong han wrowth.  
 He ded nevyr þing amys!  
 Now mercy, good Lord, mercy, and forgete me nowth  
 When þu comyst to þi kyngham and to þi blysse! (32.105-32)

Christ only responds to the cry for mercy among the many taunts that he preach and perform miracles. The words that he speaks to Dymas, the thief crucified next to him, highlight the power that his silenced preaching voice nevertheless communicates throughout *Passion Play II*, for the message of mercy that he previously spoke is strong enough to provoke conversion despite its silence. Yet Christ's silence unexpectedly extends to his followers as well, as Mary's emphasis on his speech clarifies:

O my sone, my sone, my derlyng dere!  
 What! Haue I defendyd þe?  
 Þu hast spoke to all þo þat ben here,  
 And not o word þu spekyst to me.

To the Jewys þu are full kende:  
 Þu hast forgove al here mysdede.  
 And þe thef þu hast in mende:  
 For onys haskyng mercy, hefne is his mede.

A, my sovereyn Lord, why whylt þu not speke  
 To me þat am þi modyr, in peyn for þi wrong?

A, hert, hert, why whylt þu not breke,  
 Pat I wore out of þis sorwe so stronge! (32.133-44)

Mary's question of "why whylt þu not speke / To me þat am þi modyr" (32.141-2) echoes the many questions that Christ's persecutors put to him throughout the second Passion sequence. Unlike those persecutors, however, Mary feels pain for Christ. Mary's ability to vocalize both Christ's silence and pain again offers an opportunity for viewers/readers to experience these emotions for themselves, the feminine, as in *Passion Play I*, again acting as a model of affective piety to further enhance Christ's suffering. Mary's question and suffering register and reinforce the success of the masculine preaching discourse to reach Christ's faithful, as Dymas' previous conversion confirms.

Christ's response to Mary is to focus on the parent-child relationship that she is losing, instilling John as her new son:

A, woman, woman, behold þer þi sone,  
 And þu, Jon, take her for þi modyr.  
 I charge þe to kepe her as besyly as þu kone;  
 Þu, a clene mayde, xal kepe another. (32.145-8)

Christ emphasizes the necessity of parent-child relationships in the world, contextualizing them in light of the ultimate parent-child relationship with God:

And woman, þu knowyst þat my fadyr of hefne me sent  
 To take þis manhod of þe, Adamys rawnsom to pay.  
 For þis is the wyl and my Faderys intent,  
 Pat I xal þus deye to delyuere man fro þe develys pray.

Now syn it is þe wyl of my fadyr, it xuld þus be.  
 Why xuld it dysplese þe, modyr, now my deth so sore?  
 And for to suffer al þis for man I was born of the,  
 To þe blys þat man had lost, man aȝen to restore. (32.149-56)

N-Town's depiction of preaching as a direct inheritance from the Lord, and of the obedience of children to their parents that began in the Old Testament play grouping, culminates in Christ's last moments on the cross.

#### VI. The End as the Beginning: Preaching after Christ's Resurrection

Christ's silence in *Passion Play II* effectively communicates the power he has over the earthly figures of authority persecuting him. Christ demonstrates this power in N-Town's remaining plays by dying and rising again, by defeating the devil and harrowing hell, and by appearing to his followers and assuring them of his everlasting might. Christ's brief return to earth before his Ascension reinforces the messages of humility, meekness, and mercy that were central to his preaching, instilling confidence in those who follow him and will serve as his preachers.

Christ revisits the need to preach, and for his preachers to embody his words and actions, in play 38, "Cleophas and Luke; Appearance to Thomas," when he appears to the Apostles Cleophas and Luke on their journey to the village of Emmaus (38.3). Failing to recognize him, these Apostles nevertheless demonstrate that they have internalized Christ's preaching, Luke explaining that Christ was a "holy prophete with God... / Myghtyly in wurde and eke in dede" (38.61-2). And in fact, it is to display the very might of his words and deeds that Christ appears to them, using this opportunity to act as "his own commentator, explicating the real meaning of the Old Testament and tying its meaning to the bewildering events they have witnessed but have not understood."<sup>265</sup> Christ first cites "Holy Scrypture" (38.90) saying that "Cryste xulde deye for

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<sup>265</sup> Stevens, 238.

3oure valure / And syth entre his joye and blys” (38.93-4), and that after that death, he should rise again:

In Holy Scrypture 3e may rede it –  
 Of Crystis deth, thei spak also,  
 And how he xuld ryse out of his pitt.  
 Owt of feyth than why do 3e flitte  
 Whan holy prophetys 3ow teache so pleyne?  
 Turne 3oure thought and chaunge 3oure witte  
 And truste wele þat Cryst doth leve ageyne. (38.98-104)

Cleophas and Luke of course doubt these words, dismissing with certainty Christ’s ability to return to life. As a result, Christ turns to sermon rhetoric, pulling three *exempla* from the Bible, to prove his Theme about his Resurrection. The preaching *exempla* that Christ incorporates into this play reenact the sermon that he delivered at the Last Supper. Preaching rhetoric essentially reintroduces the present-absence of Christ’s relationship to his faithful through the Eucharist, and each *exemplum* that Christ employs builds upon the previous in terms of defining what his present-absence means. In his first *exemplum*, Christ cites Jonah and the whale:

Trewth dyd nevyr his maystyr shame.  
 Why xulde I ses than trewth to say?  
 Be Jonas þe prophete I preve the same,  
 Þat was in a whallys body iij nyghtis and iij day.  
 So longe Cryst in his grave lay  
 As Jonas was withinne þe se.  
 His grave is brokyn, þat was of clay;  
 To lyff resyn a3en now is he. (38.113-20)

Christ uses a typological explanation of Jonah and the whale to teach Cleophas and Luke, redefining the Old as the New as he did in his sermon in “Last Supper.” Cleophas and Luke doubt the validity of this example, however, because Jonah never died, as Christ did. Their doubt betrays the remove they experience as followers of Christ because they cannot see that the embodiment of this *exemplum* sits before them. As a result, Christ offers a second example, this time of a dead object, to persuade them:



Take hede at Aaron and his dede styk,  
 Which was ded of his nature.  
 And ȝit he floryschyd with flowrys full thyk  
 And bare almaundys of grett valure.  
 The ded styk was signifure  
 How Cryst, þat shamfully was deed and slayn,  
 As þat dede styk bare frute ful pure,  
 So Cryst xuld ryse to lyve ageyn. (38.129-36)<sup>266</sup>

Also an example from the Old Testament, this comparison to Aaron's rod makes Christ's death and resurrection more explicit. Again, Christ attempts to recuperate the language that embodies his actions for his Apostles, and again, they fail to recognize him as an *exemplum*, as an embodiment of Scripture in both word and deed. Christ proceeds,

Why be ȝe so hard of truste?  
 Ded not Cryste reyse throwe his owyn myght  
 Lazare, þat deed lay vndyr þe duste  
 And stynkyd ryght foule, as I ȝow plyght?  
 To lyff Cryst reysid hym agen ful ryght,  
 Out of his graue, þis is serteyn.  
 Why may nat Cryste hymself þus qwyght,  
 And ryse from deth to lyve ageyn? (38.145-52)

By calling upon a miracle that he himself performed, a miracle that embodies the very action Christ continually tries to make his Apostles understand, Christ finally succeeds in persuading Cleophas and Luke that it is possible for a man to rise from the dead. Even though both men persist in their failure to recognize that Christ is before them, their words and actions reflect that they have internalized Christ's message. Cleophas tells "the stranger" before them that his "mastyr, Cryst Jesu / ... / ...was bothe meke and mylde of mood, / Of hym to speke is to me food" (38.193, 38.196-7) and Luke invites this stranger to "[t]akyth þis loff and etyn sum bred" (38.206). Cleophas and Luke reenact the actions of the Last Supper in word and deed, words and

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<sup>266</sup> Christ's reference to Aaron's stick recalls the miraculously blooming stick Joseph produced in the "marriage" play.

actions that Christ confirms when he says that “[w]ith myn hand þis bred I blys / And breke it here, as ȝe do se” (38.213-4). After doing so, Christ disappears from the table, reinforcing his present-absence, and demonstrating what will soon become the paradox of his absent-presence, that where two or three are gathered in his name, so too is he. It is only at this point that Cleophas and Luke understand Christ’s embodiment of Scripture, how his words align with his deeds, Cleophas exclaiming “[b]e Holy Scripture þe trewth he tolde” (38.248) and Luke “[b]at Cryst xuld leve he tolde tyll us, / And previd it be Scripture, verament” (38.278-9). The doubt and subsequent certainty in Christ that Cleophas and Luke experience is immediately replayed by Thomas in the second half of this play. And once he is made to believe, Thomas concludes the play with a five stanza sermon offering various proofs of the Latin citation “Quod mortuus et sepultus nunc resurrexit” (38.360, 38.368, 38.376, 38.384, 38.392).<sup>267</sup> The play’s conclusion in sermon discourse suggests the proliferation of Christ’s preaching rhetoric as a sign of his absent-presence to humanity.

#### VIII. Concluding Thoughts: The “Assumption of Mary” Play

The proliferation and dissemination of Christ’s preaching mission throughout the world is made evident in the “Assumption of Mary,” the second-to-last play in the cycle and a once independent play fitted into N-Town by the compiler/reviser.<sup>268</sup> The “Assumption” offers itself as a logical place to conclude the discussion of preaching in N-Town because of the way in which it weaves together the many themes and motifs that preaching highlights throughout the cycle’s various play groupings. For instance, parent-child relationships are present, as Christ

<sup>267</sup> “He who died and was buried now has risen.”

<sup>268</sup> Douglas Sugano, “‘This game wel pleyd in good a-ray’: The N-Town Playbooks and East Anglian Games,” *Comparative Drama* 28 (1994), 221-34, at 224.

looks out for his “suede moderis preyere” (41.107) and John and Mary address each other as “moder” (41.196, 41.212) and “sone” (41.205, 41.208), Mary recalling how Christ “on cros sayd vs this teme: / ‘Lo, here thy sone, woman,’ so bad he me you call, / And you me moder, eche othir to queme” (41.200-2). Prevalent also is the Theme of mercy, mentioned at least a dozen times, which Christ “extende[s]” (41.111) to Mary and which she acknowledges repeatedly: “Now thanke be to that Lord of his mercy euyrmore” (41.136) and “A, swete sone Jesu, now mercy I cry. / Ouyr alle synful thy mercy let sprede” (41.310-11). But most central to this play is the threat that the Apostles’ preaching poses to Jewish Law – “[f]or thorow here fayre speche oure lawys they steyn!” (41.71) – a threat that is realized through the presence of Peter, John, and Paul, but that manifests specifically on the body of Mary, who is the Mother of Christ:<sup>269</sup>

His dame is levyng, Mary that men call;  
Myche pepil halt hire wythall.  
Wherfore, in peyne of reprefe,  
Yif we suffer hyre thus to relefe,  
Oure lawys sche schal make to myschefe,  
And meche schame don vs she schall. (41.60-5)

In Christ’s absence, Mary’s feminine body again destabilizes the masculine discourse of the law, as it previously did in the “Marriage” (when Mary refused to take a husband) and in the “Trial” (when Mary was accused wrongfully of adultery). Introducing angst into masculine discourses of control, Mary’s body becomes the target of Jewish plans of defilement: “But be that seustere ded, Mary, that fise, / We shal brenne here body and the aschis hide, / And don here all the dispith we can here devise” (41.83-5). In contrast to the Jewish Episcopus and princes who seek to defame Mary’s body, the Christian preachers – here represented as the twelve Apostles –

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<sup>269</sup> Kinservik explains that “[t]he typological construction of the play recalls Christ’s Passion in order to finally resolve the conflicts that lead to Christ’s crucifixion” (192). In this way, the “Assumption” offers additional meditative connections to both *Passion Play I* and *Passion Play II*.

agree to preserve her body and its purity. Addressing the Apostles who have “prechid...[i]n dyveris countreys” (41.283), John instructs

That non of you for her deth schewe hevy speche.  
For anon to the Jewys it schuld than notyd be  
That we were ferd of deth, and that is agyen that we teche.  
For we seyn all tho belevyn in the hol Trynyté,  
They schul euyr leve and nouth deye; this truly we preche.  
And yif we make hevynesse for here, than wyl it seyde be,  
‘Lo, yone prechouris, to deye they fere hem ful meche’.

And therfore in God now beth glad euerychon. (41.263-71)

John understands that Mary’s death is not a death but an invitation to eternal life with her son and Lord, Jesus Christ. He advises the Apostles in this speech to see her passing as an opportunity to celebrate the power of life in Christ, reminding them in the process that this message of salvation is what they themselves as preachers declaim in their own sermons.

John’s words reinforce yet again the interdependent relationship of feminine bodies and masculine preaching in N-Town, wherein the authority of the Christian preacher is established by its representation of the feminine body as an *exemplum* under its control. John clarifies that there is a need for the Apostles to control the presentation of Mary’s body in death to the Jews: these preachers must portray her passing as a positive event that does not result in “hevy speche” (41.264) because their discourse as preachers is what confronts and corrects the misinformed perspective of the Jews’ discourse. In this battle, Mary’s body becomes a casualty, because even if the Apostles’ preaching protects it from the destructive intentions of the Jews, their words will come to define how we as an audience perceive the miracles it performs. The price of Mary’s transformation into a preaching *exemplum* is the lost ability of the female body to define its own actions. John’s advice to the Apostles to use their preacherly discourse to control the perception of Mary’s body reenacts Contemplacio’s function in the *Mary Play*, where he controlled the

Mary *exemplum* to praise and safeguard it from the voices of detractors. The “Assumption” is particularly reminiscent of the *Mary Play* not only because of the way in which preaching discourse envelops Mary’s body as *exemplum* but also because of the preaching framework offsetting this play: a Doctor who delivers an opening monologue offers assurance that this material is in fact within the presentational scope of a Christian preacher, addressing the audience as “[r]yght worchepful souereynes” (41.1) and citing the derivation of the play in Scripture from “a book clepid apocriphum” (41.4).

The proliferation of preaching figures in the “Assumption” contains the threat that Mary’s body poses to masculine discourses, both the discourse of the Jewish Law that seeks to destroy it and the discourse of the Christian preacher that seeks to uphold it. Even in its death, Mary’s body still wields an incredible amount of power, enough to affix and wither the hands of a Jewish attacker to her funeral bier (41.424-5). This attack on Mary’s body is a clash of the play’s competing masculine discourses to control her representation, and like the “Nativity” where the cure for Salomé’s offensive and withered hand was the masculine body of the Christ child, the source for this Jewish prince’s bodily recuperation is Peter, a preacher acting in Christ’s stead:

PETRUS: But neuyrtheles, beleue in Jesu Criste, oure Saveyour,  
And that this was his moder that we bere on bere.

PRINCEPS 1: I believe in Jhesu, mannys salvacyon!

PETRUS: In Goddis name, go doun then, and this body honure.

PRINCEPS 1: Now mercy, God, and gromercy of this savacyon!  
In Jesu and his moder to beleve, euyr I seure.

PETRUS: Than take yone holy palme and go to þi nacyon,  
And bid hem beleve in God yif they wyl be pure.  
And towche hem therwyth, both hed, hand, and facyon,  
And of her sekenesse they schal haue cure –

And ellis in here peyns indure.

PRINCEPS 1: Gromercy, holy fader Peter.  
 I schal do as ye me teche her,  
 Thankyng God euyr in my speche her,  
 Wyth hye repentaunce and herte most mure. (41.434-48)

Through his words, Peter both heals and converts this Jewish man, investing him with the power to preach and, in turn, to convert other Jewish non-believers. Christian preaching discourse simultaneously protects Mary's virginal body and dismantles the authority of its competing masculine discourse through conversion. Mary's body is of course the ultimate source of this conversion and the triumph of preaching discourse, but its potency pales in comparison to the vigor of Peter's words: Peter appears as the one who prompted this conversion, and Peter is the one who the Jewish prince thanks for his restoration (41.445). What is more, while the language of the converted prince and Peter recognizes Mary (41.435, 41.439), it continually emphasizes belief in God and God's power, quietly omitting Mary's presence, power, and role in this conversion (41.436, 41.438, 41.439, 41.441, 41.447). Indeed, by the end of the play, the power of Mary's body is recast and remembered only for the reproductive miracle it performed: "Tabernacle of joye, vessel of lyf, hefnely temple, to reyn" (41.511), these are the salutations with which Christ greets and defines his mother as he commands her to "[a]rys" (41.510) from the dead and take her place in his eternal glory.

The "Assumption" reinforces the success of the preacher's discourse in deriving its authority from the female body it controls and in overtaking other masculine discourses that confront it. In this way, the "Assumption" ties up lingering challenges to Christ's preaching that surfaced earlier in the plays of his ministry, such as when his words protected the prostitute whom Jewish Law accused in the "Adultery" play, and when his voice as preacher was paradoxically silenced during *Passion Play II*. The "Assumption" confirms that the legacy of

Christ's preaching is not only preserved but also growing, and that the Theme of his sermons – his mercy – is available through his preachers to any and all who meekly and honestly seek it. It is through this realization that Mary's greatest contribution to N-Town's preaching discourse is made, for as her son is mercy itself, so is she the Mother of Mercy. And thus Christ's final description of Mary as a "[t]abernacle" (41.511) is appropriate, because it is ultimately through the reproductive work of her body that Christ's mercy is made available to humankind. Because of Mary's own bestowal of mercy we as an audience gain access to the understanding of Christ's mercy and miracles. Mary's intercession as the "Qwen of Hefne and Moder of Mercy" (41.526) brings N-Town's audience closer to understanding Christ's preaching, her status as preaching *exemplum* shining through Christ's words as the "Assumption" concludes.

#### Chapter 4: The Body and the Saint: Preachers in Digby Manuscript 133

The tensions that surround gender and preaching in N-Town emerge explicitly in *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene*, two saints' plays preserved in Bodleian Library MS Digby 133.<sup>270</sup> East Anglian in origin, *St. Paul* dates to the early sixteenth century and *Mary Magdalene* to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>271</sup> While the saint's play bears many similarities to the morality and cycle plays already discussed in earlier chapters, *St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene* differentiate themselves by dramatizing the lives of saints who were famous preachers. As a result, these plays place the preacher as preacher on display, exploring how the technical execution and lived experience of the sermon enhances the dramatic form. What is more, *St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene* embody the process of preaching and conversion more prominently than their East Anglian dramatic counterparts. These plays show how their titular characters negotiate their bodies' susceptibility to vice and fortitude in virtue. The visibility of both of these saints begins and ends in the spectacle of their bodies, a visibility marked in turn by conversion and preaching: Saul, for instance, is temporarily made lame (198) and blind (199) when "a feruent, wyth gret tempest" (sd 182) literally knocks him off his horse, while the Magdalene writhes under the expulsion of seven devils from her body as "thondyr" (sd 691) sounds in the background. As if these conversions were not enough, both Saul and Mary go on to recapture their audiences' imaginations as preachers.

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<sup>270</sup> The portion of this chapter discussing *The Conversion of St. Paul* has been published elsewhere. The citation is as follows: "Preaching Rhetorical Invention: Poeta and Paul in the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul*," *Early Theatre* 18.1 (2015): 9-32. The copyright owner has expressed permission to reprint.

<sup>271</sup> *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS. Digby 133 and E Museo 160*. Ed. by Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall, Jr., EETS 283. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. xvi, xxx. Citations of both plays are from this edition.



Seen especially clearly during these moments of conversion and preaching, the physicality of the saint's body becomes problematic because it equally informs displays of sin and sanctimony. Indeed, it is the body of the saint that visibly marks his or her transformation through conversion, making the change that the saint's body undergoes tangible and accessible to the audience in a way that the bodies of protagonists in the Macro Manuscript and N-Town are not. Characters from these manuscripts do not change in their fundamental portrayals as do the saints in the Digby plays: because of their conversions, Saul's and Mary's bodies become what they were not previously. As a result, the process of conversion validates the legitimacy of Saul's and Mary's transformations at the same time that it highlights the potential for doubting the sincerity of their transformations. I argue in this chapter that the necessity to stage conversion causes both *St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene* to go to great lengths to stage the body preaching in order to mitigate any underlying anxiety that their conversions introduce. The success of these protagonists as preachers, and consequently of their plays as didactic mediums, depends upon the believability of Saul's and Mary's changed character because after their repentance, these characters must preach, and furthermore, convincingly so, about and from the experience of sin to an audience: "[a]fter conversion, the convert's own actions must bear witness, *dramatically*, to the effects of their conversion: an interior experience must be translated into exterior behavior," and thus Sarah Salih pinpoints how the saint's play "takes on the difficult, but imperative, task of finding and staging an exterior sign of the interior experience of contemplation."<sup>272</sup> As other scholars before her, Salih identifies this exterior marker as a change in clothing,<sup>273</sup> Saul

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<sup>272</sup> Sarah Salih, "Staging Conversion: the Digby saint plays and *The Book of Margery Kempe*." In *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*. Ed. by Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih. London: Routledge, 2002. p.121- 34, here cited from p. 128.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, 129. Many scholars discuss the significance of Saul changing his clothes. For an overview, see Salih, "Staging Conversion," 129; Chester N. Scoville, "The Hood and the Basket: Image and Word in the Digby

discarding his aristocratic knight's attire for "dyscyplys wede" (sd 501) and Mary Magdalene assuming an outfit of white: "Thys clothyng of whyte is tokenyng of mekenesse" (1607). Critics also point towards Paul's change of name from Saul as a second external marker.<sup>274</sup>

These conventions surely reflect Saul's and Mary's internal change, but, as I will argue in this chapter, an even more substantial representation of this externalizing process materializes in these characters' preaching. The sermon in the last part of *St. Paul* rhetorically counteracts the sin staged in the first part, replacing Saul's proud, bombastic boasts as persecutor with Paul's humble directives as preacher. Because the representation of Saul's sin and Paul's repentance alike are rhetorical in nature, the sermon itself is the crucial external indicator of Saul's alteration because it reconfigures his once self-absorbed rhetoric into a tool that announces the Lord. Similarly, the two sermons that Mary delivers in *Mary Magdalene* emphasize her body, reconstituting the source of her previous sin as prostitute as the instrument bringing others the faith that has saved her. Linguistically conveying their errors in desiring to serve themselves instead of God, Paul's and Mary's sermons broadcast the power and persuasion of their divinely redirected rhetoric, firmly situating their conversions in the medieval arts of preaching and substantiating their newly found roles as Christian preachers.

#### I. Preaching Rhetorical Invention: Poeta and Paul in *The Conversion of St. Paul*

In *The Conversion of St. Paul*, the figure essential for interrogating the playwright's connection between Paul and preaching rhetoric is Poeta. Poeta divides the action of the play into

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*Conversion of St. Paul*," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 41 (2002), 157-67; and Clifford Davidson, "Violence and the Saint Play," *Studies in Philology* 98 (2001), 292-314.

<sup>274</sup> The majority of scholars who address Saul's change of name to Paul do so only cursorily, claiming no more than that the change occurs. Chester Scoville, however, notes the opposite: 'although the play is called the "The conuersyon of Seynt Paule" (9), the character does not change his name from Saul to Paul upon his conversion, contrary to popular expectation' (*Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (Toronto, 2004), 91.)

three parts, promising the audience episodes of Saul in Jerusalem, his conversion en route to Damascus, and his apostolic work as Paul in Damascus. In each of these episodes, Poeta offers the audience interpretative guidance, subtly incorporating elements of preaching language into his addresses in order to anticipate and clarify the rhetorical nature of Paul's conversion. By demystifying Paul's conversion and sermon, Poeta demonstrates *St. Paul's* extensive engagement with the preaching tradition, not only in Paul's delivery of a thematic sermon, a popular form of preaching contemporaneous with the play,<sup>275</sup> but, more importantly, through his deployment of the rhetorical principle of *inventio* (invention).<sup>276</sup>

Rhetorical invention concerns "finding" the material on which one is to discourse, and in the case of the medieval preacher, invention means selecting the subject matter of and supporting evidence for his sermon; in *St. Paul*, this subject matter and evidence are the three episodes from Paul's life as persecutor, convert, and preacher. Taking advantage of the range that rhetorical invention affords, Poeta moves over the course of the play from an indirect approach, in which he leaves interpretation open to his audience, to a direct approach, in which he makes the signification of events explicit for the audience. This movement in rhetorical invention parallels the play's progressive re-representation of Saul/Paul in concert with his self-awareness: from a characterization that is consistent with his initial self-identification (persecutor of Christians) to one that negates or empties that formerly boastful self (Christian convert) to one that proclaims

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<sup>275</sup> For information on the thematic sermon, see Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, L. Genicot (ed.), *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge* 61 (Turnhout, 1992), 1-68.

<sup>276</sup> The five rhetorical principles incorporated from classical rhetoricians that inform medieval preaching are "*inventio* (finding material), *dispositio* (arranging of it), *elocutio* (putting words to invented material), *pronuntiatio* (physical delivery), and finally *memoria* (retention of ideas, words, and their order)," (James J. Murphy, Introduction, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, (Berkeley, 1971), vii-xxiii, here cited from ix). *St. Paul* engages with the other four principles only cursorily. The playwright's most substantial use of the remaining four principles is *dispositio*, which he incorporates by using Poeta to divide and organize the material found in *Acts of the Apostles* into three distinct episodes in his play.

the meaning of conversion and selfhood (Christian preacher). Poeta's engagement with *inventio* imposes a rhetorical framework on the play's three episodes, creating a meta-rhetorical preaching commentary that drives the play and encapsulates Paul as an *exemplum* throughout, the three stages of his developing character illustrating the literal, allegorical, and tropological levels of scriptural interpretation in a medieval sermon. Both Poeta (in his meta-rhetorical commentary) and Paul (in his sermon) develop these three meanings to mark Paul's internal conversion externally. Through his incorporation of *inventio* and interpretative levels, Poeta exposes the cognitive process of Paul's sermon, making the structure of Paul's preaching language – that is, the rhetoric representing his shift as Christian convert – transparent and accessible to the audience.

By considering Poeta's and Paul's complementary engagement with these three levels of scriptural interpretation, my discussion of *St. Paul* will illustrate how its preaching rhetoric places Poeta and Paul in dialogue with each other. This connection reevaluates Poeta's role as a framing structure for the drama's presentation, emphasizing instead his interactive relationship with Paul.<sup>277</sup> As I will show, *St. Paul*'s use of rhetorical invention effects a transformation in Poeta as the play progresses, switching his purpose from an unassuming expositor to a forceful practitioner of preaching rhetoric, that is, from a preacher who employs an indirect approach to one that employs a direct approach. This alteration in Poeta parallels the change that Paul as

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<sup>277</sup> Scholars have argued that Poeta's interventions constitute a frame in sundry ways, some of which include setting the play's devotional tone in an opening prayer (Victor I. Scherb, "Frame Structure in *The Conversion of St. Paul*," *Comparative Drama* 26 (1992), 124-39); reassuring the audience of the stability of a character made unstable through the process of conversion (Salih, "Staging Conversion," 126); validating the play's authority through citations of the Bible and the *Acts of the Apostles* especially (Scoville, "On Bombshells and Faulty Assumptions: What the Digby *Conversion of Saint Paul* Really Did with the Acts of the Apostles," David N. Klausner and Karen Sawyer Marsalek (eds), *'Bring Furth the Pagants': Essays in Early English Drama Presented to Alexandra F. Johnston* (Toronto, 2007), 197-211, cited here from 204); and finally, embodying an historical moment of unrest before and during the Reformation in which the accuracy of biblical interpretation was contested (David L. Jeffrey, "English Saints' Plays," Neville Denny (ed.), *Medieval Drama* (London, 1973), 69-89, here cited from 74).

convert undergoes, reinforcing Poeta's and Paul's scriptural interpretations at the additional level of the play's form. Enhancing its thematic content with its form, *St. Paul* employs Poeta's preaching rhetoric not only to grant Paul the ethical mobility he requires to become a Christian preacher but also to validate the salvific message of his sermon.

## II. Poeta as Preacher

Poeta introduces and concludes each of *St. Paul*'s three episodes,<sup>278</sup> and his engagement with sermon rhetoric is immediate. Opening the play with a two-stanza speech, Poeta employs such preaching strategies as an invocation and prayer for the audience's well-being in the first stanza. He then discusses rhetorical interpretation in the second stanza:

*Rex glorie*, kyng omnipotent,<sup>279</sup>  
 Redemer of þe world by thy pouer diuine,  
 And Maria, þat pure vyrgy[n] quene most excellent,  
 Wyche bare þat blyssyd babe Jhesu þat for vs sufferd payne,  
 Vnto whoys goodnes I do inclyne,  
 Besechyng þat Lord, of hys pytous influens,  
 To preserue and gouerne thys wyrshypfull audyens.

Honorable frendys, besechyng yow of lycens  
 To procede owur processe, we may [shew] vnder your correccyon,  
 The conuersyon of Seynt Paule, as þe Byble gyf experyens.  
 Whoo lyst to rede þe booke *Actum Appostolorum*,<sup>280</sup>  
 Ther shall he haue þe very notycyon;  
 But, as we can, we shall vs redres,  
 Brefly, wyth yowur fauour, begynyng owur proces. (1-14)

<sup>278</sup> The total number of Poeta's appearances can vary depending on directorial choices. A marginal note in the manuscript makes Poeta's appearance to conclude the first episode optional, meaning he could appear five or six times in a given performance, five if he does not return to close the first episode and six if he does. Scholars debate the staging of the play as follows: F.J. Furnivall argued that the play was staged on pageant wagons that moved to various locations in the Introduction to his edition of the play: *The Digby Plays with an Incomplete 'Morality' of Wisdom, Who is Christ*, EETS es 70 (London, 1896). In more recent years, scholars have contested Furnivall's interpretation, arguing instead for a place-and-scaffold model of performance. See Mary del Villar, "The Staging of *The Conversion of St. Paul*," *Theatre Notebook* 25 (1970-1), 64-8; Glynne Wickham, "The Staging of Saint Plays in England," Sandra Sticco (ed.), *The Medieval Drama* (Albany, 1972), 99-119; and Raymond J. Pentzell, "The Medieval Theatre in the Streets," *Theatre Survey* 14 (1973), 1-21.

<sup>279</sup> "King of glory." All Latin translations are my own.

<sup>280</sup> "Acts of the Apostles."

Poeta positions himself in a complex relationship to the audience by the end of the second stanza. His initial appellative tag, “Honorable frendys” (8), and use of the verb “beseech” (6, 8), following the articulation of prayer in the first stanza (1-7), echoes the opening address a preacher would employ in a sermon.<sup>281</sup> The word “processe” (9) further confirms that Poeta’s language is within the presentational scope of sermon-making: process is a word that writers of medieval sermon manuals and preachers alike often used to refer to the parts of a sermon, both in Latin and the vernacular.<sup>282</sup> Despite his incorporation of preaching rhetoric in these stanzas, Poeta is not yet ready to assume an authoritative preaching persona, as is immediately evident in his generous bequeathing of power: the audience’s “lycens” (8) and “correccyon” (9) drive the presentation of this play. Poeta’s deference certainly can be seen as gratuitous, but the reality of his need to actually cater to the audience’s whims surfaces before the first episode ends, when Poeta’s function as epilogue is made optional by the marginal note *Poeta–si placet* (sd 155); Poeta should return to the stage only if it is pleasing, or necessary, for the audience in a particular

<sup>281</sup> Robert of Basevorn, “The Form of Preaching,” Leopold S. Krul, O.S.B., (trans.), James J. Murphy (ed.), *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (Berkeley, 1971), 114-215, here cited from 148-50. Manuscript British Museum Royal 18 B. xxiii provides several parallel locutions. For instance, Sermon 9 addresses its auditors as “[w]orshippull bretheren and susteren,” and begins with this prayer: “The [helpe] and þe grace of almyghty God thorowght þoʒ besechyng of ys blessed modur and mayden, Oure Ladye Seynt Mary, be with vs now at oure begynnyng, helpe vs and spede vs in all oure lyvyng, and bryng vs to þat blis þat neuer shall haue endyng. Amen.” (Woodburn O. Ross (ed.), *Middle English Sermons: Edited from British Museum MS. Royal 18 B. xxiii, EETS os no 209* (London, 1940), 46). Sermon 41 addresses its auditors as “[s]irs” and “[f]rendes” throughout, and opens with the following prayer: “Allmyȝthy God, to whos powere and goodenes ynfinite all creatures bethe suget, at þe besechyng of þi glorious modur, gracious Lady, and of all þi seyntus, helpe oure febulnes with þi powre, oure ignoraunce with þi wisdom, oure freelte with þin sufficiaunt goodnes, þat we may resceyve here þin helpe and grace continuall, and finally euerlastyng blisse, to þe wiche bliss þou toke þis blisshed Lady þis day to hure eternall felicity. Amen” (Ibid, 241). Finally, Sermon 42 starts “Oure very gracious Lord, Ihesu, God and man, thorow þe besechyng of is modur, most soueraygne Ladie, and of all þe seyntes of heven, in þis tyme of perfite lyvyng and euere, endew vs so with is grace þat we at Ester worthely may come vn-to is fest, finally to dwell with hym in is eternall felicity. Amen” (Ibid, 261).

<sup>282</sup> H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), 111. Sermon 48 from British Museum Royal 18 B. xxiii provides an example of the word “process,” used in this sermon as the preacher offers his Division of the Parts, a rhetorical move that provides the points of proof for a Theme: “Frendes, for a processe 3e shull undirstond þat I fynde in holy writt iij commynges of oure Lord; the first was qwen þat he com to make man; the second was qwhen he com to bie man; and þe iij shall be qwen he shall com to deme man” (Ross (ed.), *Middle English Sermons*, 314).

performance. It is Poeta's responsibility, as the play's orchestrator, to gauge audience reaction and appease its desires, a responsibility that makes Poeta a mediator not only between play performance and audience but also between the interpretative moves of the audience and the playwright. To compose his play, the *St. Paul* playwright inevitably made decisions about which material from the Bible, and specifically from the *Acts of the Apostles*, to dramatize. By calling attention to the audience's "lycens" (8) and "correccyon" (9), Poeta empowers the audience to critique the playwright's selections, suggesting that the spectators' interpretative command of Scripture as a source of "experyens" (10) and "notycyon" (12) is more reliable than the players'. Scripture is a resource that enables the audience to correct the shortcomings of the play for which Poeta is already apologizing: "we shall vs redress" (13). Poeta's mediation between the play and audience betrays the tension that the selection of biblical material for dramatic presentation creates, a tension that Poeta seeks to mitigate by locating the interpretative power of *Acts* in the audience.

In his next appearance, which, as I have noted above, is made optional in the margins of the manuscript, Poeta closes the first episode by again catering to the authority of the audience:

Fynally, of þis stac[y]on thus we mak a conclusyon.  
 Besechyng thys audyens to folow and succede  
 Wyth all your delygens þis generall processyon;  
 To vnderstande þis matter, wo lyst to rede  
 The Holy Bybyll for þe better spede,  
 Ther shall he haue þe perfyth intellygens,  
 And þus we comyt yow to Crystys magnyfycens! (155-61)

Poeta defers, for a second time, any interpretative control of the first episode as it has unfolded, and relies instead on the audience to refer to the Bible to attain the "perfyth intellygens" (160) of the episode's meaning. Poeta does not need to offer the audience any analysis, however, because

at the end of the first episode, Saul's character is internally consistent, his power and position as persecutor remaining unchanged:

My pere on lyue I trow ys nott found!  
 Thorow þe world, fro þe oryent to þe occydent,  
 My fame ys best knowyn vndyr þe fyrmament!  
 I am most drad of pepull vnyuersall. (17-20)

The first episode therefore grants the audience interpretative control when there is nothing in the presentation of Saul over which to squabble.

Poeta's presence in the first episode underscores the condition of effective rhetoric; that is, to be so well constructed that the moves it makes go unnoticed by an audience. Poeta is employing a branch of rhetorical invention known as *insinuatio* (insinuation), or the indirect approach, whereby he lets the audience draw its own conclusions from the material he presents: "Insinuation is an address which by dissimulation and indirection unobtrusively steals into the mind of the auditor."<sup>283</sup> By employing *insinuatio*, the playwright positions Poeta as a meta-preacher – the ultimate interpretative source for the meta-rhetorical commentary that the play is constructing – without detracting from the illusion he has created that the audience possesses interpretative control over this episode. Poeta's indirect approach underscores that his Saul *exemplum* requires no explanation: at the literal level of scriptural interpretation, Saul is a proud persecutor, exactly what this episode conveys. Bracketing the first episode with Poeta allows the playwright to contextualize Saul's character rhetorically and visually against Poeta: Poeta's humility and deference as preacher strongly contrast with Saul's proud and abrasive language as persecutor. An example to his audience in both word and deed,<sup>284</sup> Poeta anticipates what Saul

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<sup>283</sup> Cicero, *De Inventione*, H.M. Hubbell (trans.), *Cicero: De Inventione; De Optimo Genere Oratorum; Topica* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 43.

<sup>284</sup> Clare A. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2004), 31-56.



himself will become as a preacher after his conversion, and so Poeta becomes the template through which Saul's conversion to preacher can be understood. That template materializes through the playwright's choice to create the greatest possible contrast between Poeta and Saul in this initial episode.

This contrast also has implications for the audience. The illusion of interpretative authority that Poeta's insinuation sets up and maintains has the potential to align the audience with Saul's self-deception: like Saul who fools himself into thinking that the rhetoric of Caiaphas' and Annas' letters expresses true power (49-53), the members of the audience could construct the false pretense that they have the power to uncover the meaning of Scripture without a preacher's intervention.

Poeta reinforces his role as meta-preacher by opening the second episode of *St. Paul's* tripartite structure with the repetition of the appellative tag "Honorable frendys" (162), the verb "beseech" (162), the attention to the play's "prosses" (163), and the plea for the audience to grant "lycens" (164):

Honorable frendys, we beseche yow of audyens  
To here our intencyon, and also our prosses.  
Vpon our matter, be your fauorable lycens,  
Another part of þe story we wyll redres:  
Here shalbe brefly shewyd, wyth all our besynes,  
At thys pagent Saynt Poullys conuercyon.  
Take ye good hede, and therto gyf affeccyon! (162-8)

Poeta takes a slightly more authoritative tone when he concludes this stanza, however, commanding the audience to pay attention to the action to come – "Take ye good hede" – and to view it with "affeccyon" (168). By telling the members of the audience to invest emotionally, Poeta is advising them to be moved by the story rather than to view it at a remove, rationally assessing its fidelity to the Bible and Acts. (Significantly, Poeta no longer mentions the play's

sources in this stanza.) Creating an emotional response to alter an audience's course of action is one of the offices of rhetoric; indeed, it is also one of the markers of a sermon's efficacy.<sup>285</sup>

Poeta's request for an affective response demonstrates that he has begun to shift the burden of interpretative control from the audience to himself; it also highlights how his use of rhetorical invention is changing from an indirect to a more direct approach of interpretation, wherein Poeta will assist the audience's understanding of the scene played before it. Poeta's interpretative assistance is increasingly necessary because, in the second episode, Saul's character becomes internally inconsistent when he converts and receives baptism. As Poeta aligned the audience with Saul in the first episode through insinuation and the indirect approach, so too does he achieve this parallel a second time by asking the audience to relinquish its claim to interpretative control, an idea that complements how Saul's self-control is suspended when the Lord both cripples (198) and blinds (199) him during his conversion. Through Poeta's guidance, the audience therefore experiences a sort of internal and contemplative transition even as the play stages Saul's own religious conversion. Saul's transformation informs the first of two stanzas that Poeta delivers to conclude the second episode of the play:

Thus Saule ys conuertyd, as ye se expres,  
The very trw seruant of our Lord Jhesu.  
Non may be lyke to hys perfyzt holynes,  
So nobyll a doctor, constant and trwe;  
Aftyr hys conuersyon neuer mutable, but styll insue  
The lawys of God to teche euer more and more,  
As Holy Scrypture tellyth whoso lyst to loke perfore. (346-52)

The proliferation of adjectives – “very trw” (347), “perfyzt” (348), “nobyll” (349), and “constant and trwe” (349) – that Poeta uses to insist that Saul was “neuer mutable...[a]ftyr hys conuersyon”

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<sup>285</sup> Beverly Mayne Kienzle, “Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record,” Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2002), 116.

(350) draws attention to Saul's very mutability,<sup>286</sup> as well as to the subsequent need for Poeta to assist the audience's interpretation of the Saul *exemplum* in this episode. Because of his conversion, Saul inhabits a new Christian identity with new-found humility, a humility which not only recalls Poeta's meta-rhetorical posturing but also allegorically replicates Christ's humility. Caught somewhere between the indirect and the direct approach of rhetorical invention, Poeta of course does not overtly announce this allegorical level of scriptural interpretation to the audience in his first concluding stanza. What he does say is that "[h]oly Scripture tellyth whoso lyst to loke" (352). But Poeta's directive to consult Scripture differs from the first episode: Poeta does not suggest that the play should continue to "procede...vnder [the] correccyon" (8) of the audience members or that they should interpret the action they have just seen; rather, he assigns this task to those "pat letteryd be" (355), as the second stanza (cited below) concluding this episode betrays.<sup>287</sup> While the referent of the relative clause "pat letteryd be" does not necessarily exclude the members of the audience, Poeta's rhetoric certainly does not immediately include them:

Thus we comyte yow all to þe Trynyte,  
 Concludyng thys stacyon as we can or may,  
 Vnder þe correccyon of them *pat letteryd be*;  
 Howbeyt vnable, as I dare speke or say,  
 The compyler hereof shuld translat veray  
 So holy a story, but wyth fauorable correccyon  
 Of my honorable masters, of þer benynge supplexion. (353-9, my emphasis)

By asking for those who are "letteryd" (355), Poeta invokes the need for a qualified interpreter, and, as a result, calls attention to the process of selection requiring a "compyler" who "shuld translat" (357). Thus, Poeta again addresses *inventio* in the construction of this "[s]o holy a

<sup>286</sup> Salih, "Staging Conversion," 204.

<sup>287</sup> Hill-Vasquez addresses the uncertainty of a Catholic or Protestant interpretation to which this clause draws attention in her article "The Possibilities of Performance," 10-11.

story” (358): collection and selection are typical processes of invention for medieval “compilers” and “translators.” Indeed, the playwright demonstrates great skill in the selection of his material for this episode, integrating three disparate accounts of Saul’s conversion found in the Acts of the Apostles into one cogent story line for his drama.<sup>288</sup> Even in spite of the playwright’s skill, Poeta insists that the “correccyon / Of...honorable masters” (358-9) is necessary, and the master that the playwright includes in his play and intends the audience to look towards is Poeta.

The playwright’s presentation of Poeta, and the role that Poeta fulfills, alters yet again as the third episode of *St. Paul* begins. Here, Poeta sheds his unassuming role of orchestrator for that of a decisive preacher just as Saul discards his knight’s regalia for disciple’s weeds:

The myght of the Fadirys potenciall Deite  
 Preserue thys honorable and wurshypfull congregacyon,  
 That here be present of hye and low degre,  
 To vnderstond thys pagent at thys lytyll stacyon,  
 Whych we shall procede wyth all our delectac[y]on,  
 Yf yt wyll plese yow to gyf audyens fauorable.  
 Hark wysely therto—yt ys good and profetable! (360-6)

Poeta now transforms the “Honorable frendys” (7, 162) to whom he spoke in the previous two prologues into an “honorable and wurshypfull congregacyon” (361), and the audience that was once educated enough to make its own interpretations suddenly fractures into persons of “hye and low degre” (362), confirming the differentiation that Poeta’s earlier reference to those who are “letteryd” (355) signaled. Poeta commands the audience’s attention in this episode, employing the direct approach of rhetorical invention to present himself as the one who must command the audience if it is to understand the material before it. Demanding his audience’s attention with an invocation of God’s might and a prayer, Poeta transforms his role as mediator

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<sup>288</sup> Scoville, “On Bombshells and Faulty Assumptions,” 201-7.

between audience and playwright, becoming instead mediator between the audience and God. It is Poeta who conveys the “myght of the Fadirys potencial Deite” (360) to the audience; it is Poeta who facilitates the audience’s ability to understand theologically the content of the play before it; it is Poeta who anticipates the position in which Paul as converted preacher will imminently present himself. At the outset of this episode, Poeta’s mediation expands to include a moral responsibility, and so he addresses the tropological level of scriptural interpretation that is the preacher’s primary concern in a sermon. Poeta therefore portrays Paul as an *exemplum* of moral righteousness in the third episode, as one of a series of preachers including Poeta who act in the image of Christ, preaching to the faithful, whom the members of the audience should strive to imitate.

The role of meta-preacher that Poeta inhabits becomes obvious when he closes the third episode of the play after Paul delivers his sermon. In the first of two stanzas at the end of the play, Poeta cites Latin as a preacher would in order to confirm his point:

Thus leve we Saule wythin þe cyte,  
 The gatys kep by commandment of Caypha and Anna;  
 But the dyscyplys in þe nyȝt ouer þe wall truly,  
 As the Bybull sayeth: ‘*dim[i]serunt eum summitten[te]s in sporta*’.<sup>289</sup>  
 And Saule, after that, in Jerusalem *vera*,<sup>290</sup>  
 Joyned hymself and ther accompenyed  
 Wyth þe dyscyplys wher þei were vnfayned. (649-55)

Poeta no longer tells the members of the audience to refer to the Bible; rather, he does so himself by citing Acts 9:25. Thus, for a third time, Poeta aligns the audience with Paul, placing it in a situation where it must humbly accept the Lord just like Paul, who graciously accedes to be the

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<sup>289</sup> “Lifting him in a basket they sent him out.”

<sup>290</sup> “Truly.”

Lord's servant. Furthermore, Poeta oversees the audience's interpretation of the play through his concluding directive to sing a hymn:

Thys lytyll pagent thus conclud we  
 As we can, lackyng lytturall scyens,  
 Besechyng yow all, of hye and low degre,  
 Owur sympylnes to hold excusyd and lycens,  
 That of retoryk haue non intellygens,  
 Commytyng yow all to owur Lord Jhesus,  
 To whoys lawd ye syng: '*Exultet celum laudibus!*'<sup>291</sup> (656-62)

The hymn in which Poeta leads the audience invokes the setting of a mass and is an "appropriate hymn since in the Sarum rite it was used in the Office of the Conversion and Commemoration of St. Paul."<sup>292</sup> This hymn, in conjunction with the exposition Poeta offers in the previous stanza, places the spiritual conclusion and understanding of the play firmly in his interpretation. Poeta no longer appeals to the audience, nor does he make his opinion subsidiary to the audience's interpretation.

Poeta must assume the role of an outright preacher in the final episode because Paul's character is now internally different, a difference that Paul's change of clothing signals externally. Paul is not a persecutor of Christians any longer, but a Christian himself, and Poeta's concluding biblical citation and hymn convey this authoritative interpretation of Paul's transformation to the audience. Poeta also mentions in his concluding stanzas that Paul goes on to join the disciples in Jerusalem "wher þei were vnfayned" (655), or undisguised. The company Paul will keep is an additional external indicator confirming his internal change. Poeta's direct approach encourages and eases the understanding of Paul's new identity, and importantly, does so without competing with Paul as preacher. Poeta therefore concludes the play by reinforcing

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<sup>291</sup> "Let heaven rejoice with praises!"

<sup>292</sup> Scherb, "Frame Structure," 135.

the meekness that Paul's preaching conveys, highlighting the players' "lackyng lytturall scyens" (657), or knowledge of Latin, their "sympylness" (659), and their little "intellygens...of retoryk" (660). Despite his insistence to the contrary, Poeta certainly has demonstrated that he and the other actors know some Latin (at least enough to quote it) and that the play's engagement with rhetoric is more than cursory, as the repeated deployment of *inventio* confirms. Poeta's humility in this concluding stanza therefore reinforces the consistency of his character throughout the play, significantly displaying for a second time the template of humility through which the audience can comprehend Paul's transformation into preacher. By emphasizing humility, Poeta draws attention to the mechanism through which the audience can judge the play's didactic success, showing that God's grace becomes available to an audience through the preacher's rhetorical strategies, including those strategies informing Poeta's stanzas and Paul's sermon on the seven deadly sins in the play's third episode. Poeta's humility in the concluding stanza also underscores what Paul as preacher has learned, a topic I will discuss in the second section below. By engaging the audience in the rhetorical process of sermon construction throughout *St. Paul*, Poeta marks the rhetorical shift that Paul undergoes during his conversion externally, and this transparency lends Paul's conversion and ensuing sermon credibility.

### III. Paul the Preacher

The persuasive success of Paul's sermon derives from Poeta's role as meta-preacher and practitioner of *inventio* in the prologues and epilogues to each episode. Indeed, the sermon that Paul delivers gains rhetorical power and momentum not only from Poeta but also from its development in the style of a thematic sermon, an outline of which is available in Appendix E.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> A thematic sermon proposes to teach its audience by isolating a sentence, phrase, or word, typically from the Bible, as a Theme, and then expands upon its meaning through a series of rhetorical moves. In practice, these

The beginning of Paul's sermon addresses the Lord (502) and invokes a prayer first for the audience's well-being – "Saue þis asembly" (504) – and then for himself:

That Lord þat ys shaper of see and of sonde,  
And hath wrowȝt wyth hys worde al thyng at hys wyl,  
Saue þis asembly þat here syttyth or stond,  
For hys meke mercy, þat we do not spyll.  
Graunte me, good Lorde, þi pleasure to fulfyll,  
And send me soch spech þat I the truth say,  
My ententyons profytable to meve yf I may. (502-8)

Paul prays for "speech" (507) that will effectively convey the word of the Lord to his audience, demonstrating rhetorically that he has emptied himself of his former pride and is now merely a vehicle for expressing truth. Hoping to fulfill the Lord's pleasure by acting as his servant and mediator, Paul's prayer emphasizes the change that his character undergoes from the beginning of the play: Paul desires to "say...the truth" (507) instead of persecuting those who speak the truth, and he wants to say it with "ententyons profytable to meve" (508) the audience. Paul's rhetoric therefore echoes that of Poeta's prologues, both in form – addressing the audience and praying for it – and in intention: like Poeta, Paul situates himself as a mediator between the audience and God who produces an affective response in its auditors. Paul's desire "to meve" (508) his audience announces the moral intention of his sermon, making the alteration of the audience's behavior through the consideration of his rhetoric the explicit goal of his preaching.

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rhetorical moves can contain much variation, but a thematic sermon's principle components tend to develop according to the following general scheme. First, the sermon's Theme is stated. A Protheme supplements the Theme, introduces a prayer, and offers the audience grace. Next the Theme is restated and three rhetorical strategies follow: the Introduction, the Division of the Parts, and the supporting Subdivisions. The Introduction explains the meaning of the Theme, the Division of the Parts provides proof for the meaning ascribed to the Theme, and the Subdivisions confirm these proofs with additional proof. The proof preachers present in the Division and the Subdivisions often are verses from the Bible, called authorities, although there is no requirement that all forms of proof originate in this source. A sermon closes with a Conclusion, through which the preacher reviews his subject matter, says another prayer, and dismisses his audience. For more detailed information about the construction of thematic sermons, see Briscoe, *Ars Praedicandi*, 1-68.



After he has established himself as a willing vessel conveying God's message, Paul proceeds to his sermon proper, addressing the audience as "[w]elbelovyd fryndys" (509), and identifying "[p]ryde" (511) as the Theme of his sermon on the seven deadly sins:

Welbelovyd fryndys, þer be seuen mortal synnys,  
 Whych be provyd pryncypall and pryncys of poysons.  
 Pryde, þat of bytternes all bale begynnys,  
 Wythholdyng all fayth, yt fedyth and foysonnys,  
 As Holy Scripture baryth playn wytnes:  
 '*Initium omnium peccatorum su[per]bia est*'—<sup>294</sup>  
 That often dystroyth both man and best.

Off all vyces and folý, pryde ys the roote;  
 Humylyte may not rayn ner yet indure.  
 Pyte, alak, that ys flower and boot,  
 Ys exylyd wher pryde hath socour.  
 '*Omnis qui se exaltat humiliabitur*'.<sup>295</sup>  
 Good Lord, gyf vs grace to vnderstond and perseuer,  
 Thys wurd, as þou bydyst, to fulfyll euer. (509-22)

In the first of these stanzas, Paul confirms the Theme of his sermon through a Latin citation from Eccles. 10:13. This authority incorporates the word of his Theme, "su[per]bia" (514), or pride, a standard practice in late-medieval sermon-making.<sup>296</sup> After identifying his Theme, Paul moves directly into a Protheme that establishes pride's place as the foremost vice on the Tree of Vices. The Protheme further develops the concept of pride by describing its antidote, humility. Paul confirms the assertion of his Protheme by citing another biblical authority, this time from Luke 14:11 and 18:14. This strategy of describing a vice through its opposing virtue highlights the damning effects of pride through humility's restorative quality, a concept that Paul's personal experience of being crippled (198) and blinded (199) before his conversion underscores. Paul then concludes this section of his sermon with a brief prayer to the Lord and an invocation of

<sup>294</sup> "The beginning of all sins is pride."

<sup>295</sup> "Anyone who praises himself will be humiliated."

<sup>296</sup> Robert of Basevorn, "The Form of Preaching," 133-42.

grace for the audience (521-2), both standard components of sermon Prothemes.<sup>297</sup> Throughout the opening stanzas of his sermon, Paul discusses and shows his humility, and, in not claiming any authority apart from God's, he demonstrates the meekness that proves his conversion from his former pride. Paul has become a Christian preacher, unified in word and deed, a conversion which Poeta's meta-rhetorical posturing anticipated in the first episode.

Paul next restates "pryde" (523) as his Theme and moves immediately to the First Division of his sermon. This and each of the ensuing two Divisions return to the subject of the sermon's Theme and Protheme in order to explicate pride and humility through presentations of personal experience with sin. Paul continues to incorporate language evoking the metaphor of the Tree of Vices throughout his Divisions, a move that strengthens the overall delivery of his sermon by lending it continuity. Paul's own personal experience of humbling meekness is the topic of the First Division, which a biblical citation from Rom. 11:20 confirms:

Whoso in pryde beryth hym to hye,  
Wyth mysheff shalbe mekyd as I mak mensyon.  
And I therfor assent and fully certyfy  
In text, as I tell the trw entencyon  
Of perfyzt goodnes and very locucyon:  
'*Noli tibi dico in altum sapere sed time*'.<sup>298</sup>  
Thys ys my consell: bere the not to hye! (523-9)

Paul locates his personal experience with pride in the Bible, explicating via Scripture both himself and the actions that the audience has seen throughout the play. Contextualizing himself in this fashion, Paul becomes an *exemplum* in his own sermon, explaining how, at the literal level, he was a proud man whom God humbled and transformed to be a benefactor of Christians.

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid, 148-50.

<sup>298</sup> "To you I say do not be proud but fear."

The Second Division of Paul's sermon continues to juxtapose meekness with pride, but in this section of the sermon, the personal experience through which this juxtaposition is understood is the Lord's:

‘Lern at myself, for I am meke in hart’—  
 Owur Lorde to hys seruantys thus he sayth,  
 ‘For meknes I sufferyd a spere at my hart;  
 Meknes all vycys anullyth and delayeth;  
 Rest to soulys ye shall fynd in fayth:  
 “*Discite a me quia mitis sum et corde humilis,*  
*Et inuenietis requiem animabus vestris.*”<sup>299</sup>

So owur Sauyour shewyth vs exampls of meknes,  
 Thorow grace of hys goodnes mekly vs groundys.  
 Trwly yt wyll vs saue fro þe synnes sekenes,  
 For Pryde and hys progeny mekenes confoundys. (537-47)

Since the First Division highlights Paul's experience, when the Second Division leads off with “[l]ern at myself, for I am meke in hart” (537), the expected referent is Paul. Yet the following lines reveal that it is the Lord's meekness that destroys vice, and so the Lord's example of sacrifice for humankind complements and strengthens Paul's experience, granting validity to Paul's internal change by drawing a parallel to the initial source of Christian meekness in Christ. By acting in imitation of Christ, Paul presents himself as an *exemplum of imitatio Christi*: just as he imitates Christ by humbling himself, so will his auditors imitate Christ if they do the same. This *imitatio Christi* trope captures the imitative essence of hagiography and reveals Paul's allegorical interpretation of his actions, showing how he molds Christ's humility to himself. Imitating Christ in this manner strengthens Paul's commitment to emptying himself of his former pride, as he now constitutes his selfhood through Christ instead of through himself.

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<sup>299</sup> “Learn from me because I am gentle and humble in heart, / And you will find rest for your souls.”

Whereas the first two Divisions take the personal experience of individuals into account, the Third Division presents a broader examination of how sin affects the body in general. This move allows Paul to extrapolate the ideas of meekness about which he has been speaking and apply them to the members of the audience. The experiences of his body and the Lord's body are extraordinary, but these experiences have quotidian expressions as well, expressions that the audience must recognize if it is to avoid falling into sin through the temptation of the flesh. Earlier in his sermon, Paul employed imagery of the Tree of Vices to tell the audience to

...drede alway synne and folye  
 Wrath, enuy, coutytys, and slugyshnes;  
*Exeunt* owt of thy syȝt glotony and lechery<sup>300</sup>  
 Vanyte and vayneglory, and fals idylnes –  
 Thes be the branchys of all wyckydnes.  
 Who þat in hym thes vyces do roote,  
 He lackyth all grace, and bake ys þe boote. (530-6)

Advising the members of the audience to rid themselves of vice, Paul essentially asks them to empty their bodies of “synne and folye” (530) as he has. Paul connects the actions of his body to those of the audience members through his rhetoric, explaining to them how to experience the transformation he has undergone. What is more, Paul's rhetoric achieves this connection metatheatrically: by using the verb “[e]xeunt” (532) – a common stage direction meaning “they exit” – to tell the audience to banish these vices “owt of [its] syȝt” (532), Paul's language figures the body as a sort of stage on which vice acts. Indeed, drawing on the performance of his own body, as Paul moves into his Third Division, he stresses how pride leads the body to other vices, focusing particularly on the sin of lechery and its connection to speech:

Fro sensuylte of fleshe, thyself loke þou lede;  
 Vnlefully therin vse not thy lyfe!  
 Whoso therin delyteth, to deth he must nede.

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<sup>300</sup> “Exit.”

It consumyth nature, the sleyth wythowt knyf;  
 Also yt styntyth nott but manslawter and stryf.  
 ‘*Omnis fornicator aut immundus non habet hereditatem Christi*’.<sup>301</sup>  
 Non shall in heuyn posses that ne so vnthryfty!

Fle fornycac[y]on, nor be no letchour,  
 But spare your speche, and spek nott theron:  
 ‘*Ex habundancia cordis os loquitur*’.<sup>302</sup>  
 Who movyth yt oft, chastyte louyth non;  
 Of þe hartys habundans, þe tunge makyth locucyon.  
 What manys mynde ys laboryd, therof yt spekyth—  
 That ys of suernes, as Holy Scryptur tretyth. (551-64)

The first of these two stanzas establishes that fornication in particular prevents the receipt of Christ’s inheritance, or “hereditadem Christi” (556), as the biblical citation from Eph. 5:5 confirms. Paul’s next stanza more fully explicates how he interprets “fornycac[y]on” and lecherous behavior, “be no letchour” (558): these certainly are sins of the body, but Paul locates their expression not in bodily lust but in bodily speech: “spare your *speche*, and *spek* nott theron” (559, my emphasis). Paul stresses the role of words in lascivious behavior, confirming through his quotation of Matt. 12:34 that the mouth, “os” (560), is the source of chaste and unchaste behavior: he “[w]ho movyth yt oft, chastyte louyth non” (561). Fornication and lechery are sins of the mouth that result from the “locucyon” of “þe tunge” (562) and speech.

Paul continues to emphasize the mouth as the source of lechery and chastity as he offers the Conclusion of his sermon:

Wherfor I reherse thys wyth myn owyn mowthe:  
 ‘*Caste viuentes templum Dei sunt*’.<sup>303</sup>  
 Kepe clene your body from synne vncuth;  
 Stabyll your syghtys, and look ye not stunt,  
 For of a sertaynte I know at a brunt,  
 ‘*Oculus est nuncius peccati*’.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>301</sup> “Every fornicator or sinner does not hold the inheritance of Christ.”

<sup>302</sup> “The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart.”

<sup>303</sup> “They who live chastely are the temple of God.”

<sup>304</sup> “The eye is the messenger of sin.”

That the Iey ys euer þe messenger of foly. (565-71)

Paul demonstrates how his mouth has become a source of chaste living when he cites the commonplace expression “[c]aste viuentes templum Dei sunt” [they who live chastely are the temple of God] (566). By rehearsing these words with his mouth, Paul connects his body to the experience of repentance that he has undergone; he also recalls the “speech” (507) for which he prayed at his sermon’s outset. This gesture reminds the audience that the specific source of Paul’s sin was the bombastic boasts of his mouth, and that through learning humility and preaching God’s word by emptying himself and letting God provide the speech, Paul has reformed that sin of pride from which his mouth previously suffered. In his Third Division, Paul advises the audience to avoid sin by highlighting the snares of the flesh from which he himself has suffered. Thus Paul offers a tropological interpretation of himself, presenting his casting off of sin as a model to those who listen to him. Paul’s conclusion emphasizes the moral behavior of the body, reminding the audience from a citation of John 9:41 to have steadfast vision, for “[o]culus est nuncius peccati” [the eye is the messenger of sin] (570). Like pride, the root of the Tree of Vices, the eye is the initial source tempting the body to sin. Paul therefore skillfully presents the same idea of falling into sin at the beginning and end of his sermon, developing it twice through the different bodily images of the mouth/speech and the eye.

#### IV. Poeta and Paul

*The Conversion of St. Paul* externalizes the internal and cognitive process of sermon construction in order to make maximum rhetorical effect of Paul’s conversion. Paul executes this process by delivering a sermon that makes the internal procedure Poeta describes external to Paul and visible to the audience so that it experiences and understands his transformation into a Christian preacher. Paul’s conversion is the hinge on which the moral success of *St. Paul*

depends, and the relationship that the playwright construes between Poeta and Paul brings the play's didacticism to fruition. Even though Poeta and Paul start the play with different relationships to rhetorical control, by its conclusion, the mutual source of their rhetorical empowerment is the Lord. Poeta's meta-rhetorical commentary suggests that the play, like a sermon, depends on the bestowal of God's grace for its moral to reach the audience. The play therefore moves towards a greater acknowledgement of God's agency in its rhetorical success as it progresses: yielding agency to God creates a more genuine selfhood and conveys a more genuine agency upon the self, and especially in this play, upon the preacher. Poeta, for instance, appears powerless before the audience when the play starts because of his indirect approach to rhetorical invention, while Paul actually is rhetorically powerless when he introduces himself. As the play develops, each character changes his relationship to rhetoric, Poeta increasingly asserting his rhetorical dominance through the direct approach and Paul penitently emptying himself by withdrawing his bombastic words to become God's servant. When the play ends, both Poeta and Paul preach as mediators empowered by the Lord.

In spite of their mutual roles as mediators, the balance of power between Poeta and Paul remains uneven when the play concludes: Poeta asserts interpretative control over Paul despite the rhetorical deference that his last stanza grants because Poeta controls the interpretation of Paul's name. Although Saul becomes Paul after his conversion, quite strikingly this change does not register in the play's nomenclature. Neither the speech prefixes in the manuscript nor the characters' dialogue in the play acknowledge that Saul has become Paul. Despite his changed character, Paul is called "Saul" after his conversion. Indeed, after the delivery of his sermon in the third episode, Paul says to an inquisitive priest: "Yes, sertainly, Saule ys my proper name" (579); and, after his sermon, Paul is addressed as Saul seven times, five times by characters in

the play (572, 579, 591, 601, 635), and twice by Poeta (649, 653). Even Poeta denies Paul the new identity that his conversion produces during the play, saying, in the stanza after his baptism: “Thus Saule is conuertyd” (346). Yet, Poeta calls Saul “Paul” twice *before* his conversion, once apiece in the stanzas opening the first and second episodes: “The conuersyon of Seynt Paule” (10) and “Saynt Poullys couercyon” (167) is the repeated subject of the play.

The retention of Saul’s name may reflect the playwright’s desire to maintain biblical accuracy, as Saul converts in Chapter 9 of the Acts of the Apostles but is not called Paul until Chapter 13:9;<sup>305</sup> or, as Matthew Hansen suggests, the name Saul may relieve the tension of the dramatic portrayal of the play’s baptism: taking the name “Paul” would risk making the baptism that Saul receives (309-38) appear like the legitimate execution of the sacrament.<sup>306</sup> The playwright’s decision to suppress the name “Paul” – the most obvious external rhetorical marker of Saul’s conversion – suggests the importance of Poeta’s shift from an indirect use of rhetorical invention in the first episode to a direct approach in the second and third episodes. *St. Paul* must posit more interpretative power in Poeta as it progresses, because, by telling the audience how to understand what it sees – that it in fact sees Saul and not Paul – Poeta provides the reassurance that what the play offers spectators is a representation of the baptismal sacrament and not the sacrament itself. Poeta’s employment of rhetorical invention intentionally waxes to force the audience’s interpretative ability to wane so that no confusion results from Saul’s conversion and baptism. Thus, while Saul’s character is stable in the first episode, Poeta allows the audience the appearance of interpretative control, but as soon as Saul’s conversion starts in the second episode and his baptism brings his character under examination, Poeta restricts the audience’s

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<sup>305</sup> Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Medieval Biblical Drama* (Toronto, 2004), 91.

<sup>306</sup> “Dancing in the Shadows: Ritual, Drama, and the Performance of Baptisms in the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* and Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado*,” *Quidditas* 30 (2009), 56-77, here cited from 69.



interpretation, completely overtaking the role of interpreter in the third episode after Paul's baptism. The movement of Poeta's rhetorical invention from the indirect to the direct approach mitigates the potential effect of Paul's instability as a character, providing the underlying rhetorical frame for Paul's preaching so that the content of his sermon can convey a credible thematic and didactic message. The playwright therefore aligns preaching's rhetorical principles with its execution, exposing how Poeta's meta-rhetorical perspective and contributions produce the successful staging of Paul's conversion and sermon.

#### V. The Female Preacher: Mary Magdalene

The sermon Saul delivers in *The Conversion of St. Paul* replaces the sin of pride from which he suffers and reconstitutes his identity as Christian preacher through his discussion of the virtue meekness. In contrast, the two sermons that Mary Magdalene delivers in the second saint's play of the Digby Manuscript, *Mary Magdalene*, do not directly confront the sin of lechery that causes her fall; rather, these sermons focus on the source of her sin as prostitute, her body.

Unlike *St. Paul* whose protagonist lives in sin and eventually repents, *Mary Magdalene* incorporates the cycle of innocence, fall, and redemption seen in the Macro plays to explore its protagonist's conversion and apostolic work. Hand-in-hand with the corporeal nature of Mary Magdalene's sin is the corporeal presentation of her preaching: Mary's two scriptural explications emphasize the body and its relation to Christ, her first sermon examining the body's location within the cosmos and her second its relation to the Beatitudes. Yet Mary Magdalene is never called "preacher" within this play: Christ first tells the angel Raphael that Mary "xall *converte* þe lond of Marcyll" (1371, my emphasis), a directive that is reiterated to the audience when Raphael later informs Mary that the "[k]yng and quene *converte* xall 3e" (1380, my emphasis). Sending Mary on a "conversion" rather than a "preaching" mission, Christ never

pointedly says that Mary should preach, and, significantly, Mary's scriptural explications are never directly called sermons by the characters who hear them. Indeed, on a rhetorical level, while the Magdalene's language is sermonic, it is not sermonic in the way that every other preacher's words examined in this dissertation are: there is none of the rhetoric of the thematic sermon in this play anywhere, and especially not in the expositions that Mary shares with those whom she converts. The preaching that occurs in *Mary Magdalene* does not involve the flair and structure of the thematic sermon; instead, it is reminiscent of an earlier style of preaching where the meaning of biblical citations was simply stated in a straightforward manner.<sup>307</sup> Different because of her rhetoric and her gender, Mary Magdalene is the preacher who is not called "preacher," delivering sermons devoid of rhetorical embellishments, whose Themes consistently return to the subject of the body, requiring her to speak from her own experience and not from studied authorities as male preachers do.<sup>308</sup> It is true that Saul speaks of the changes that his body undergoes in the sermon he delivers as Paul, but his discussion of his body is intellectualized through the form of the thematic sermon that he utilizes. Mary's sermons do not rhetorically transform her body in this manner, and so *Mary Magdalene*'s emphasis on the body, both hers and others, as well as on the corporate body politic, becomes essential to understanding how preaching functions in this play. I turn now to a consideration of how the *Magdalene* playwright empowers bodies politically and spiritually in order to delve into this play's presentation of its female preacher.

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<sup>307</sup> Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, p. 29-30. In the Index to his *Forma Praedicandi*, Robert of Basevorn acknowledges the change between earlier and modern types of preaching, noting in the heading to chapter seven "[t]hat the modern method varies from all the methods mentioned above" (118).

<sup>308</sup> Chaucer's Wife of Bath famously acknowledges the different sources from which women and men speak in the opening lines of the prologue to her tale: "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in mariage" (1-3), (Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, Third Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987)).

Tiberius Caesar's opening tirade immediately connects bodies, power, and governance in *Mary Magdalene*:

I woll it be knowyn to al þe word vnyversal  
 That of heven and hell chyff rewlar am I,  
 To wos magnyfycens non stondyt egall!  
 For I am soveren of al soverens subjugal  
 Onto myn empere, beyng incomparable  
 Tyberyus Sesar, wos power is potencyall!

I am þe blod ryall most of soverene –  
 Of all emperowers and kyngs my byrth is best,  
 And all regeouns obey my myty volunte! (4-12)

Tiberius' claim to power is so extensive that he boasts the ability to govern every person in his kingdom:

But all abydyn jvgment and rewle of my lyst.  
 All grace vpon erth from my goodnes commyt fro,  
 And þat bryngis all pepell in blysse so!  
 For þe most worthyest, woll I rest in my sete! (16-9)

Tiberius may be a source of judgment, grace, and bliss, but even if he is, the end of his bounty is limited to himself, a point that he demonstrates by sitting in a throne and calling himself the most worthy. Tiberius' claims stress the magnitude of his control; yet, this image of control is immediately undercut by Tiberius' own acknowledgment of preachers in his lands: "Dyssevyr tho harlottys, and make to me declaracyon. / And I xall make all swych to dye, / Those precharsse of Crystys incarnacyon!" (27-9). Tiberius' all-encompassing rhetoric betrays the earthly limitations of his power, as does the grandeur he seeks to instate as a self-fashioned deity pale in comparison to the Lord God, the true ruler of heaven and hell.<sup>309</sup> The rhetoric and

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<sup>309</sup> John W. Velz discusses sovereignty as a unifying theme in *Mary Magdalene*, and notes in particular that each claim to power made by an earthly ruler "will be measured against the valid kingship of Christ, who makes no claims, yet has limitless power," showing that "true sovereignty [opposes] false" throughout the play ("Sovereignty in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*," *Comparative Drama* 2 (1968): 32-43, at 33.

position that Tiberius announces reveals not only the tenuous claim to authority that he so desperately wants to establish but also a rival expression to that authority. Preaching language is problematic to the worldly execution of Tiberius' power because its delivery hails a king whose rhetoric of salvation, unlike Tiberius' promise of grace and bliss, is neither empty nor temporary. What is more, the source of the preacher's rhetoric derives from Christ's incarnated body, a body whose power rests in the selfless actions it performs, not in the selfish contrivance of a throne.

The irony of Tiberius' claim to power is replayed when King Herod appears, for whom Tiberius' unsettling preaching problem turns into an explicit threat. Posing the question, "Am nat I þe grettest governowur?" (165) to two of his scholars, Herod receives a more honest answer than he anticipates:

PHELYSOFYR: Ye be þe rewlar of þis regyon,  
 And most worthy sovereyn of nobylnes  
 That euyr in Jude barre domynacyon.  
 Bott, sir, skreptour gevytt informacyon,  
 And doth rehersse it werely,  
 That chyld xal remayn of grete renovn,  
 And all the word of hem shold magnify:

*'Et ambulat gentes in lumine [tuo], et reges  
 In splendore ortus tui.'*<sup>310</sup>

HERWODES: And whatt seyest thou?

2 PHI[LOSOFYR]: The same weryfyyt my bok as how,

As þe skryptour doth me tell,  
 Of a myty duke xal rese and reyn,  
 Whych xall reyn and rewle all Israell.  
 No kyng aʒens hys worthynes xall opteyn,  
 The which in profesy hath grett eloquence:

*'Non auferetur s[c]eptrum [de] Juda, et dux de  
 Femore eius, donec veniat [qui] mitendus est.'*<sup>311</sup> (168-85)

<sup>310</sup> "And the races walk in your light, and the kings / In the splendor of your birth."

<sup>311</sup> "The scepter will not be carried from Judea, nor a king / from her loins, until he comes who must be sent."

The quotations from Scripture that these scholars cite herald the arrival of a king far more powerful than Herod, of a king who frightens him: “Forsake 3e þat word! / Þat caytyff xall be cawth, and suer I xall hem flaw; / For hym, many mo xal be marry[d] wyth morder” (190-2). The quotations that intimidate Herod so completely are the authorities preachers use to construct their sermons, respectively, Isaiah 60:3 and Genesis 49:10. Whereas preachers presented a dispersed threat to Tiberius, to Herod, that threat manifests in terms of a specific type of preaching rhetoric – that is, the authority – as it represents a specific body, the Christ child’s. Herod’s promise of murder, materializing in the slaughter of the innocents, reinforces the destructive and self-serving presentation of kingship at the same time that it confirms a text’s ability to empower a body.

These scriptural authorities reveal that the tension among portrayals of power, bodies, and governance in *Mary Magdalene* results from interpretation. Tiberius and Herod both understand power literally: power for them is the ability to terminate the earthly existence of any challenger to their law. The power of which these authorities speak, however, is more abstract, and deals with Christ’s claim to the kingdom of heaven, to his capability to destroy sin and redeem the soul of the sinner. Nevertheless, earthly power, as it is represented by the law, returns time and again throughout the play, and its proper execution is the primary concern of the next worldly figure who governs, Pilate: “Ye do no pregedyse a3en þe law! / For, and 3e do, I will yow natt spare / Til ye haue jugment to be hangyd and draw!” (234-6).

In contrast to this triumvirate of self-absorbed rulers is Cyrus, Mary’s father. Cyrus’ rhetoric certainly establishes him as a formidable ruler, a trait that echoes the maniacal bragging that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate exhibit. But Cyrus distinguishes himself from these men, and Herod especially, through the care that his power bestows on children:

Thys castell of Mavdleyne is at my wylddyng,

Wyth all þe contré, bothe lesse and more,  
 And Lord of Jherusalem! Who agens me don dare?  
 Alle Beteny at my beddyng be.  
 I am sett in solas from al syng sore;  
 And so xall all my posteryte,  
 Thus for to leuen in rest and ryalte. (59-65)

Cyrus does not use the power or the lands that he owns to persecute others; rather, it secures familial inheritance and the wellbeing of his offspring:<sup>312</sup>

Now, Lazarus, my sonne, whsch art þer brothyr,  
 The lordshep of Jherusalem I giff þe aftyr my dysses;  
 And Mary, this castell alonly, an non othyr;  
 And Martha xall haue Beteny, I sey exprese. (79-83)

Cyrus offers a selfless example of kingship in the world.<sup>313</sup> The focus of his rule does not settle solely on himself, and as a ruler, he also acknowledges a certain amount of vulnerability in that he makes provisions to bequeath his lands in the event of his death. And indeed, Cyrus does die during the play, a circumstance that differentiates him from the other worldly rulers.

The proper use of Cyrus' material possessions leads to displays of familial piety, as all his children praise and thank him for his generosity. In her expression of thanksgiving however, Mary Magdalene stands out from her siblings by addressing the Lord first:<sup>314</sup>

Thou God of pes and pryncypall covnsell,  
 More swetter is þi name than hony by kind!  
 We thank yow, fathyr, for your gyftys ryall,  
 Owt of peynes of poverte vs to onbind.

<sup>312</sup> Theresa Coletti discusses this interaction as a dramatization of "the economic ties and responsibilities that bind parent and child in the landed family" as part of her larger argument about the relationship of economic and spiritual transactions in the play: "The dramatist revises the legend made popular by Jacobus to capitalize on aspects of the traditional narrative in which economic issues figure and also invents episodes and subplots that develop the relationship between temporal and spiritual economies" ("Paupertas est donum Dei: Hagiography, Lay Religion, and the Economics of Salvation in the Digby Mary Magdalene," *Speculum* 76 (2001): 337-78, at 347, 345).

<sup>313</sup> The general critical consensus of Cyrus in fact argues for the opposite reading, saying that he is as self-indulgent as Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate, and that his propensities to boast about the size of his domain and to feast on expensive wines and spices accurately aligns him with these rulers. See Coletti, "Paupertas est," 347, 349, and Coletti, "The Design," 316-8.

<sup>314</sup> Chester N. Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 34. Scoville notes that each child thanks Cyrus and the Lord, Lazarus and Martha in that order, but that Mary thanks the Lord before Cyrus.

Thys is a preseruatyff from streytnes, we fynd,  
 From wordly labors to my covmforting,  
 For this lyfflod is abyll for þe dowtter of a kyng,

Thys place of plesavns, þe soth to seye! (93-100)

While the “fathyr” (95) whom Mary addresses is likely Cyrus, in the absence of his name, the word “fathyr” could plausibly still refer to God, as he remains the ultimate source of her preservation. Mary’s praise of her heavenly and biological fathers reinforces not only her religious and paternal devotion but also the role that God plays in the corporate health of society. Mary’s order of gratitude – God before father before self – reminds the audience that God is the highest lord in the hierarchy of kingship, and that the worldly hierarchy among Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate means little. The castles that Cyrus bequeaths to each of his children show how he fosters a corporate, Christian body politic through generosity and benevolence.

After her father dies, Mary makes the Lord’s role in ruling more pronounced. While Lazarus’ and Martha’s laments focus on their pain, Mary’s understanding of pain is mediated through God:<sup>315</sup>

The inwyttysymus God þat euyr xal reyne,  
 Be hys help an sowlys sokor!  
 To whom it is most nedfull to cumplayn,  
 He to bry[n]g vs owt of owr dolor;  
 He is most mytyest governowre,  
 From soroyng vs to restryne. (285-90)

As governor, God is caretaker both of bodies while they are in the world and of souls when they enter heaven. The domain of God’s kingship demonstrates the social obligation that Mary

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid. 35. Scoville argues that Mary’s order of address in this and the earlier scene when she receives the Castle of Magdalene “[helps] to establish [her] natural moral character, contrary to a number of expectations deriving from the tradition. Wealthy and upper class, yet the least worldly of her family; tempted to worldliness, sin and despair, yet not entirely culpable, this Mary Magdalene does not escape the sinful life of her legend but is not identified entirely with sin either (Ibid, 35).

envisions him performing: He will help her father by providing relief for his soul and her by mitigating the pain she expresses in her loss. Like God, whose influence effects a corporate whole, Mary, now a ruler due to the death of her father, also assumes responsibility for those she governs in the Castle of Magdalene. In this role, Mary herself becomes a sort of secular mediator, because it is through the example of her piety as a ruler that she gains the ability to lead and educate her people in Christ.

The devotion that Mary exhibits distinguishes her and her family's approach to ruling from Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate. The concerns of these worldly kings do not extend beyond themselves, and the corporate health they represent is entirely literal – the body is seen only as a body, as an encasement of matter able to be deprived of life. Yet, as Cyrus and Mary show, the body's existence is more complex: the body houses a soul whose status in health is equally legitimate, and more importantly, governable. To understand how the health of the soul affects the body, the playwright introduces a second triumvirate of kings into the play, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil/Satan. Known also as the three enemies of humanity, this triumvirate transforms the literal interpretation of power that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate represent into an allegorical jockeying for power through *psychomachia*. The playwright revisits and sharply refocuses the role of governance, and the necessity of God's governance in particular, as well as the ramifications of Mary's corporeal and corporate responsibilities by shifting the stakes of ruling to the spiritual. Indeed, World, Flesh, and Satan even rework the aspects of power that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate represent, World first replaying the ironic boasts of Tiberius' self-praise and extensive domination:

I am þe Word, worthyest þat euyr God wrowth,  
And also I am þe prymatt portature  
Next heueyn, yf þe trewth be sowth,  
And that I jugge me to skriptur;



And I am he þat lengest xal induere,  
And also most of domynacyon! (305-10)

The World's self-interpretation intentionally blurs literal and figurative meanings: it is true that the Lord created the world, as Mary's first sermon will confirm, but the World that currently addresses the audience is the allegorization of sin, a point confirmed by the presence of Pride and Covetous as World's retainers (326-9).<sup>316</sup> World's ability to validate his creation and behavior in Scripture typifies the tension surrounding preaching language and its proper interpretation. But instead of drawing upon Scripture or an authority to secure his power, World relies on material possessions, specifically on the many precious metals that he possesses, metals he calls the "seuyn prinsys of hell" (324). The practice of alchemy communicates the deception surrounding the power that World offers, a deception that will inhibit Mary's proper recognition of the gallant Curiosity during her temptation.

The second enemy of humankind, Flesh, makes the connection to kingship that World suggests more explicit:

I, Kyng of Flesch, florychyd in my flowers,  
Of deyntys delycyows I have grett domynacyon!  
So ryal a kyng was neuyr borne in bowrys,  
Nor hath more delyth ne more delectacyon!  
For I haue comfortatywys to my comfortacyon: (334-8)

The "comfortatywys" (338), or restoratives, Flesh enumerates form a catalogue of the many remedies he has at his disposal to ease the suffering of the body. These restoratives, like World's metals, are the source of his power, and are also objects that recall Herod, who, above the other

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<sup>316</sup> D.K. Smith, "'To passe the see in short space': Mapping the World in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 193-214, at 200.

earthly kings, enjoys feasting.<sup>317</sup> Flesh's restoratives are the remedies that Herod's or any other overindulged body needs. Yet Flesh offers no refreshment for the soul and so despite his curatives, is unable to offer any true salve for bodily (and spiritual) health.

Satan completes the second triumvirate of kings and is appropriately matched with Pilate because during Christ's trial, Satan tempts Pilate's wife in a dream, causing her to urge her husband not to kill Christ. Satan's introductory speech typifies the stakes of the *psychomachia* surrounding Mary:

Now I, prynse pyrked, prykkyd in pryde,  
 Satan, [3]owr sovereyn, set wyth euery cyrcumstanse,  
 For I am atyred in my towyr to tempt yow þis tyde!  
 As a kyng ryall I sette at my plesavns,  
 Wyth Wroth [and] Invy at my ryall retynawns!  
 The boldest in bowyr I bryng to abaye,  
 Mannis sowle to besegyn and bryng to obeysavns.  
 ...  
 So I thynk to besegyn hem by every waye wyde –  
 I xal getyn hem from grace, whersoeyr he abyde –  
 That body and sowle xal come to my hold,  
 Hym for to take! (358-64, 369-72)

The three enemies refocus the health of the corporate body that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate bring to light on the single body of the Magdalene. Like the preachers who threaten to destabilize the claims to power that the earthly triumvirate of kings holds, Mary threatens to overturn the cosmological order in which these figurative kings have sway because her bodily status in sin or grace is the key component to their abilities to govern successfully:

Sertenly, serys, I yow telle,  
 Yf she in vertu style may dwelle,  
 She xal byn abyll to dystroye helle,  
 But yf your cov[n]seyll may othyrwyse devyse! (418-22)

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<sup>317</sup> For an extensive discussion of the theme of feasting in this play, see Theresa Coletti, "The Design of the Digby Play of *Mary Magdalene*," *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979): 313-33.

Mary poses a tangible threat to the kingly domains of the three enemies because of her ability “to dystroye helle” (420), an action that Christ himself will perform during the Harrowing of Hell.<sup>318</sup>

This reference makes explicit the comparison between Mary and Christ that the play will go on to develop, as Mary will carry on Christ’s preaching mission on earth in his absence. In fact, this reference reveals the first of two instances of a repeated plot structure hinging on the physicality of the body. In this first instance, the focus of the repeated plot is on the body in sin. The states of sin that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate proudly announce are multiplied by the appearance of their men on stage, as the following chart summarizes:

<u>Tiberius</u>	<u>Herod</u>	<u>Pilate</u>
Serybyl	Philosopher 1	Servant 1
Provost	Philosopher 2	Servant 2
Messenger	Soldier 1	
	Soldier 2	

Similar to but not as tidy as the multiplication of vice seen in *Wisdom*, three bad rulers nevertheless result in nine henchmen, preserving an overall ratio of three to nine where vice multiplies by factors of three. While not living in sin as the other earthly leaders, Cyrus is still an earthly ruler with three “servants,” his children, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. The play’s numeric scheme for worldly rulers encompasses this holy family too. Once this earthly paradigm is set, the play repeats it through a spiritual paradigm with the three enemies, wherein a similar multiplication of vice occurs:

<u>World</u>	<u>Flesh</u>	<u>Devil/Satan</u>
Pride	Sloth	Wrath
Covetousness	Gluttony	Envy
Messenger called Sensuality	Lechery	(Bad Angel)

<sup>318</sup> Some critics even “[describe] Mary as a female type of Christ: ‘Mary Magdalene’s temptation and her ascension into heaven are patently modeled on those of Christ’” (Susannah Milner, “Flesh and Food: The Function of Female Asceticism in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*,” *Philological Quarterly* 73 (1994): 385-401, at 385). Milner explains that “Mary’s post-conversion experiences in the play, whether they are motivated directly by Christ or typologically linked with experiences in Christ’s life, are important points of identification for the audience” (Ibid., 386).

I place Bad Angel in parenthesis because he appears at Satan's command – "Cum owt, I sey! Heryst nat what I seye?" (435) – after Satan and Flesh migrate to the World's stage.<sup>319</sup> The three enemies, with their respective cohorts of vice, increase the stakes of how sin is multiplied in *Mary Magdalene*; for, unlike the first triumvirate who only send Tiberius' messenger among themselves, this triumvirate actually moves all of its constituents from their respective stages to the World's stage: Satan decides to consult with World, bringing along his cronies (sd 380), and then World summons Flesh and his knights by sending his messenger Sensuality (388-98). The movement of all these bodies steeped in sin to one location on stage visibly portrays how vice becomes more dangerous and adept in its temptations when it is multiplied and magnified: the three enemies hatch a plan to send Lechery to Mary, telling Lechery to "byn at hure atendvns, / For 3e xal sonest entyr, 3e beral of bewte!" (424-5). The beginning of Mary's temptation therefore conveys the physicality of her body by negotiating the identities of her individual and corporate bodies: while the three enemies send Lechery specifically to tempt Mary, the Castle of Magdalene in which she resides is beset by the remaining six deadly sins (sd 439). Mary is as much under attack as those she oversees, because if she chooses to leave her Castle, she will deprive herself and her subjects of God's spiritual governance that she and they require. The Deadly Sins' double attack demonstrates humanity's physical frailty to sin, as both encasements – Mary's flesh and the Castle's walls – yield to Lechery, bringing compliments in store.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> *Mary Magdalene* was staged using a place-and-scaffold set, where scaffolds which served as their own stages were erected in a semi-circular fashion to create a central area called the *platea* through which actors could move. Discussing the play's staging, D.K. Smith notes that "the place-and-scaffold method of presentation [emphasizes] the breadth of the world being traversed," causing "the world of the play [to appear] to the audiences as a world of distances and physical relationships, of voyages and a kind of implicit navigation between stages. Thus, all that takes place in the play, all the acts of sin and redemption, occur within an implicitly geographical world" (201).

<sup>320</sup> Coletti notes that "[a]lthough the castle that Mary Magdalene inherits is typically interpreted in allegorical rather than economic terms, the text makes it eminently clear that the Magdalene's patrimony is most significantly a piece of property" ("Paupertas est," 347). Indeed, the Castle of Magdalene should be understood in both allegorical and

Heyl, lady most laudabyll of alyauvns!  
 Heyl, oryent as þe sonne in hys reflexite!  
 Myche pepul be comfortyd by your benyng afyavuns.  
 Bryter þan þe bornyd is your bemys of bewte,  
 Most debonarius, wyth your aungelly delycyte! (440-4)

Lechery's repetition of "[h]eyl" (440, 441) and emphasis on images of light recall the Annunciation when Gabriel brought tidings of God's favor to the Virgin Mary. Lechery's entrance serves as a false annunciation for Mary Magdalene, however, and Mary's response reveals its perversity by describing her willing fall into sin as a physical deflowering: she says that Lechery's "debonarius obedyauuns ravyssyt [her] to trankquelyte" (447). This statement highlights the role that Mary's body will play in her fall and life in sin when she leaves the Castle of Magdalene and places its governance in her brother's and sister's hands (462-5).

Mary's temptation and fall occur in a tavern through the rhetoric of courtly love,<sup>321</sup> a language that complements the civic discourse in which Mary's body already is immersed: "[a]rticulated in a language commensurate with her social station," Mary's "seduction" by Curiosity through courtly rhetoric turns her body into a performative object: "Mary Magdalene does not embark upon the path of her downfall as an already erotized feminine subject; rather, she becomes one through the appealing coercions" of Curiosity.<sup>322</sup> None other than Pride in disguise, Curiosity redirects Mary's spiritual devotion from God to himself, a worldly lover. Bad Angel explains that

Pryde, callyd Corioste, to hure is ful laudabyll,  
 And to hure he is most preysseabyll,  
 For she hath gravnttyd him all hys bonys!

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literal terms, as its attack represents the stakes of corporate and self-governance in the worldly and spiritual realms that Mary inhabits.

<sup>321</sup> Joanne Findon, "Napping in the Arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play" *Early Theatre* 9 (2006): 35-55, at 38-9. For further discussion of the rhetoric borrowed from the genre of romance in this scene, see Tony Davenport, "Lusty fresch galaunts," *Aspects of Early English Drama*, Paula Neuss (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1983), 111-26, at 21; Coletti, "Curtesy doth," 12, and Scoville, 32-3.

<sup>322</sup> Coletti, "Curtesy doth," 13.

She thynkyt hys person so amyabyll,  
To here syte, he is semelyare þan ony kyng in tronys! (550-4)

Mary sees her beau, who is a commoner, as a king, a misunderstanding that shows how her sin confuses the secular mediation that her body performed when ruling. Instead of loving God, Mary prays that God will condone her actions as prostitute: “A, God be wyth my valentynys, / My byrd swetyng, my lovys so dere!” (564-5), and even falls asleep in an arbor hoping that “som lovyr wol apere / That me is wont to hailes and kysse” (570-1). Instead of a man, Good Angel comes to Mary, calling her to task and demanding that she remember Christ’s “mercy” (600). Just as Mary Magdalene falls into sin through the rhetoric of courtly love, so too does she begin her rise back to virtue through that rhetoric, realizing through Good Angel’s promptings that she must “porsue þe Prophett” (610) and effectively take Christ as a bridegroom to her soul.

Interweaving scenes of Mary in the arbor with scenes of the banquet at Simon’s house until Mary arrives to repent, the *Magdalene* playwright effectively revisits the relation among bodies, power, and governance in terms of corporeal and spiritual sustenance, the feast at Simon’s house serving as a backdrop for Christ’s transformation into food – in the form of the communion host – that saves an individual’s body and soul. In this respect, “Simon’s feast celebrates heavenly power”.<sup>323</sup>

I haue ordeynnyd a dynere of substawns,  
My chyff freynyes þerwyth to chyre.  
...  
So wold to God I myte have aqueyntowns  
Of þe Profyth of trew perfytnesse,  
To com to my place and porvyowns;  
It wold rejoyse my hert in gret gladnesse,  
For þe report of hys hye nobillnesse  
Rennyt in contreys fer and nere –  
Hys precheyng is of gret perfytnes,

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<sup>323</sup> Milner, 392.

Of rythwysnesse, and mercy cleyre. (574-5, 580-7)

Simon's description of Christ and his far-reaching reputation provides a positive example of a lord's domain. Preaching is highlighted as a rhetoric beneficial to ruler and corporate identity alike: the righteousness and mercy about which Simon speaks are legitimate and offered for the salvation of all. Transforming the negative association of feasting with tyrants into an act of generous behavior, Simon honors Christ at his house, and as a result, merits Christ's preaching. Telling a story about two debtors, Christ asks Simon which of the two, the one who owes his master one hundred pence or the one who owes him fifty, would be more beholden if the debt were dissolved (649-58). Simon answers that it would be the one who owes more (559-60), at which point Christ applies this sermon *exemplum* to himself, Simon, and Mary, saying:

*Recte iudicasti.*<sup>324</sup> Pou art a wyse man,  
And þis quessyon hast dempte trewly.  
Yff þou[Simon] in þi concyens remembyr can,  
Ȝe to be þe dectours þat I specefy.

But, Symond, behold þis woman in all wyse,  
How she wyth terys of hyr bettyr wepyng  
She wassheth my fete and dothe me servyse,  
And anoytyt hem wyth onymentys, lowly knelyng,  
And wyth hur her, fayur and bryght shynnyng,  
She wypeth hem agayn wyth good entent.

But, Symont, syth that I entyrd þy hows,  
To wasshe my fete þou dedyst nat aplye,  
Nor to wype my fete þou were nat so faworus;  
Wherefor, in þi conscyens, þou owttyst nat to reple!  
But, woman, I sey to þe, werely,  
I forgeyffe þe þi wrecchednesse,  
And hol in sowle be þou made þerby! (661-77)

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<sup>324</sup> "You have judged correctly."

The application of Christ's *exemplum* reveals that even though Simon is an upright and generous man, he, like Mary Magdalene, has made mistakes; in this instance, he has not shown Christ the deference he deserves. As Christ points out, Simon's answer proves that he is "a wise man" (661), but Christ additionally calls him to "remembyr...in [his] concyens" (663), something at which Simon fails where Mary does not, as Christ illustrates by the end of his *exemplum* when he tells Simon "in þy conscyens, þou owttyst nat to replye" (674). Simon is as much a sinner as Mary, and Christ's *exemplum* reminds the audience that, before God, everyone has faults for which to ask forgiveness.

Christ's *exemplum* also draws attention to the physicality of Mary's repentance, as she uses her body parts – her "teres" (666) and "hur her[hair]" (696)<sup>325</sup> – to wash Christ's feet, Christ's own "bodily-ness" being placed on display in this scene as well. In contrast to the misuse of her body as prostitute, the proper use of Mary's body in devotion towards Christ cleanses it from sin. This action provides a second opportunity to display the physicality of Mary's body as it reacts to the expulsion of seven devils (sd 691), making her "body...a locus of religious experience"<sup>326</sup> that will continue to define her actions throughout the remainder of the play. (Re)Fortified in Christ, Mary acknowledges the safety of her soul – "þis rehersyd for my sped, / Sowle helth attys tyme for to recure" (692-3) – and contextualizes Christ through a reference to Isaiah: "Now may I trost þe techeyng of Isaye in scryptur, / Wos report of þi nobyllnesse rennyt fere abowt" (697-8). Intriguingly, and perhaps because Christ has not yet

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<sup>325</sup> Long hair was often seen as a gift from God, and Mary's "long hair...[is]...the most striking detail" in her "unique deed of anointing Jesus both with her tears and with perfume...a loving gesture in anticipation of his burial. This example singled her out as the first helper in preparation for death, which / the Christian Church regarded as especially significant since she ministered to Christ himself" (Isle E. Friesen, "Saints as Helpers in Dying: The Hairy Holy Women Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt, and Wilgefortis in the Iconography of the Late Middle Ages," *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gisick (eds.), (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 240-1).

<sup>326</sup> Milner, 393.



empowered her as his preacher, Mary does not cite this Scriptural reference in Latin; she simply states her understanding of it, recognizing Christ as the fulfillment of the teachings in the Old Testament. Mary's words connect the new-found purity of her body to Christ, as well as to the words of the authorities that Christ embodies and which he and his preachers use to spread his teachings. Mary's choice of Isaiah is also particularly poignant because one of Herod's philosophers cited Isaiah earlier in the play to herald Christ's coming (175-6). Renewed spiritually, Mary returns to Lazarus and Martha at the Castle of Magdalene and is reinstated as a ruler: "Systyr, 3e be welcum onto yower towyre!" (764). Mary again takes her place in a hierarchy of rulers wherein she acts as a secular mediator: "Thys king, Cryste, consedyryd hys creacyown; / I was drynychyn in synne deversarye / Tyll þat Lord relevyd me by hys domynacyon" (753-5). Governed by Christ's "domynacyon" (755), Mary again offers spiritual guidance to those she comes in contact with and governs, a point that Lazarus' promise to "serve [Christ] with honour" reinforces.<sup>327</sup>

Mary's reunion with her family at the Castle of Magdalene marks the beginning of *Mary Magdalene's* second repeated plot structure, this time focusing on the body in virtue rather than in sin. As I have noted, earlier in the play, Mary inherited her castle but neglected her corporate responsibility and fell into sin, eventually finding spiritual recovery at Simon's house and the reward of ruling again. As before with the two triumvirates of kings, this plotline about Mary as

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<sup>327</sup> Angered by his inability to influence and govern Mary any longer, Satan proceeds to take out his displeasure on the seven deadly sins, beating each in turn: "thys hard balys on þi bottokkys xall byte!" (735). The perverse depiction of a buffeting and scourging, this scene offers some comic relief to the audience after the serious moment of Mary's repentance. Satan's only recourse to action is to attack the bodies of the sins because he can no longer attack Mary's body; it has become untouchable to him, to lechery, and to sin in general. The first of several beatings in the play – the pagan priest's boy Hawkins is struck by his master as is the shipman's assistant in another scene beaten by his overseer – this constant emphasis on violence throughout the play underscores the playwright's interest in presenting the body as a physical object.

ruler repeats, but with raised stakes, because in her new-found virtue, Mary receives the task of converting the land of Marseilles, to do to other bodies what Christ has done to hers by turning it to faith in him:

Ower Lordys preceptt þou must fulfyll,  
To passe þe see in shortt space,  
Onto þe lond of Marcyll.

Kyng and quene converte xall 3e,  
And byn amyttyd as an holy apostylesse.  
Alle þe lond xall be techyd alonly by the,  
Goddys lawys onto hem 3e shall expresse. (1377-83)

Mary's conversion mission represents her opportunity to prove the sincerity of her repentance, what her life at the Castle of Magdalene during her brother's death (776-924) and her encounter with Christ after his Resurrection (993-1132) have already suggested.<sup>328</sup> Her mission is not only one of converting the King and Queen, however; Mary must also "[teach]...[a]lle þe lond" (1382), revealing that the spiritual health of the body politic is as important as those who govern it. Mary's mission presents her with a challenge though, because the last time she left the Castle of Magdalene, she fell into sin via prostitution, a temptation that comes back to haunt Mary as she attempts to charter a ship to Marseilles:

MASTER: Now, boy, what woll þe þis seyll?

BOY: Nothyng butt a fayer damsel!  
She shold help me, I know it well,  
Ar ellys I may rue þe tyme þat I was born!

MASTER: By my trowth, syr boye, 3e xal be sped!  
I wyll hyr bryng onto yowr bed!

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<sup>328</sup> Both of these sequences continue to highlight the physicality of the body, especially as it corroborates preaching. As Lazarus is dying, Mary explains that Christ's "prechyng to vs is a gracyows lyth" (771), a light that eventually defeats death by restoring Lazarus' body from the grave in anticipation of Christ's own Resurrection. Similarly, the state of Christ's "body" (1013, 1019, 1032) is constantly emphasized when the three Mary's approach the sepulcher after his death. The physicality of Christ's body is also made blatantly manifest when Christ appears to Mary in the garden, saying "[t]owche me natt, Mary" (1074) and telling her that the disciples will see him in Galilee "Bodily, with here carnall yye" (1124).

Now xall þou lern a damsell to wed –  
 She wyll nat kysse þe on skorn! (1411-18)

Stepping forward after this conversation (sd 1422), Mary must confront her previous sin without falling into it, a reminder that “a story of a prostitute saint centers in the flesh, which is frail but takes power from grace.”<sup>329</sup> And Mary certainly demonstrates her new-found state of grace, as her earlier fall is only recalled, and not replayed, in this repetition of the plot structure.<sup>330</sup> As before, Mary will become responsible for a corporate body, by ruling *in absentia* in Marseille for the King and Queen; she will also receive a spiritual reward, when, during the last phase of her life as a desert hermit, she will be raised to heaven by angels to eat manna three times daily. This repetition of the plot structure reinforces the legitimacy of Mary’s virtuous body throughout the second half of the play.

Once in Marseille, Mary confronts a pagan King who immediately demands to know who Christ is, what power he has, and what he made “at þe fyrst begynnyng” (1478). In response to these inquires, Mary launches into her first sermon explicating the authority “[i]n principio erat verbum” (1484).<sup>331</sup>

He seyð, ‘In principio erat verbum’,  
 And wyth þat he provyd hys grett Godhed!  
 He mad heuen for ower spede,  
 Wheras he syth in tronys hye;

<sup>329</sup> Susan Carter, “The Digby *Mary Magdalene*: Constructing the *Apostola Apostolorum*,” *Studies in Philology* 106 (2009): 402-19, at 414.

<sup>330</sup> Findon explains that women in the medieval period generally “did not travel alone – both for their safety and to avoid censure and suspicion of sexual ‘wandering’” Joanne Findon, “Mary Magdalene as the New Custance? ‘The Woman Cast Adrift’ in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play,” *English Studies in Canada* 32 (2006): 25-50, at 34). “In medieval literature in general” however, Findon notes that “a woman travelling alone in a ship is often in the midst of a deep personal crisis. In saints’ lives, she may be a prostitute driven by insatiable lust, like St. Mary of Egypt, who sets sail for Jerusalem, paying her passage with her body, or she may be a young virgin fleeing an unwanted marriage, like St. Frideswide of Oxford. The *Life of St. Kentigern* includes an episode where the king’s daughter is set adrift when she becomes pregnant with the future saint after being raped” (Ibid., 31). All of these examples concern sexual misconduct, and while it is not reenacted in this scene, Mary’s prostitution remains in the backdrop.

<sup>331</sup> “In the beginning was the Word.” Scoville notes that Mary “repeats the Genesis 1 account of creation (1481-1525), with one major difference: her quotation of the ‘in principio’ of the Gospel according to John rather than that of Genesis” (43).

Hys mynystyrs next, as he save nede,  
 Hiy angelus and archangyllys, all the compeny.

Vpon þe fryst day God mad all þis,  
 As it was pleasyng to hys intent. (1484-91)

Mary's sermon locates the power of God in the language – "verbum" (1484) – that He uses to create cosmic order and corporate identity. Indeed, Mary's sermon goes on to detail the creations that God fashions each day, arranging them in specific places, and even making "man, / ... / Aftyr his own semelytude" (1513-5). By privileging the generative power of the word of God specifically, Mary recalls the moment of Pentecost wherein "alle maner tonggys he[God] 3af vs knowyng, / For to vndyrstond every langwage" (1343-4), enabling "þe dysypylls [to] take þer passage" (1345) to "prech and teche" (1347). The Apostles can carry out their preaching missions precisely because they have gained understanding of the divine mystery, which is represented by their receiving of the gift of language at Pentecost. The King of Marseille does not prove to be the best student of the divine mystery that Mary communicates in her first sermon, however. Frustrated with her teaching exposition, the King threatens to remove Mary's "tong" (1530), the source of her locution as preacher:

Herke, woman, thow hast many resonnyys grett!  
 I thyngk, onto my goodys aperteynyng þey beth!  
 But þou make me answer son, I xall þe fret,  
 And cut þe tong owt of þi hed! (1526-9)

Because of his violent reaction to Mary, the King reignites the tension from the beginning of the play involving Tiberius, Herod, Pilate, and preachers. Mary's conversion mission and preaching suddenly appear to be part of a larger dispersed activity threatening the governance and law of countries.

The emphasis of Mary's sermon on God's "[v]erbum" (1484) proves crucial to her ultimate success in converting Marseille, however. Mary's encounter with this pagan idol

Mahomet is entirely verbal: “the system of paganism depicted in the play renders words opaque, able to signify merely as distorted, parodic icons of the true church rather than as symbols of anything transcendent...this contrast between opacity, of calling attention to language for its own sake, and clarity, of declaring language to be a rhetorical vehicle for divine authority, frames the conflict between paganism and Christianity.”<sup>332</sup> Therefore, when the King beseeches the idol’s statue to “[s]peke” (1542, 1543) before Mary, it cannot, the temple priest explaining that “he woll natt speke whyle Chrieten here is” (1547). Speech is the source of God’s power – as Mary already explained in her sermon; it is also the source of her body’s power as God’s spiritual mediator. Praying to God, Mary demolishes Mahomet’s temple simply by reciting a Latin authority: “Dominus, illuminacio mea, quem timebo? / Dominus, protecctor vite mee; a quo trepedabo?” (1553-4).<sup>333</sup> These statements are extremely significant in that they locate the language of God in His servant Mary instead of in the misguided servants of Mahomet, one of whom previously spoke in mock Latin (1186-97).<sup>334</sup> Powerless before Mary, the pagan idol of “mament tremyll[s] and quake[s]” (sd 1554) at her Latin citations, and soon thereafter, the temple is consumed by a “clowd from heven and sett...on afyer” (sd 1562).

The work of Mary’s miraculous speech in Marseille is not yet complete, however. Winning over the King through her display of verbal might, Mary learns that the King and Queen are childless, a situation that Mary seeks to correct through her speech: “To my Lord I

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<sup>332</sup> Scoville, 41.

<sup>333</sup> “The Lord [is] my illumination, whom will I fear? The Lord [is] the protector of my life, of whom will I be afraid?”

<sup>334</sup> The mock Latin sermon that the servant boy Hawkins delivers is one of several instances of how the depiction of paganism in *Marseilles* uses the “grotesque...[to parody] and [invert] Christian practice in a carnivalesque, implicitly blasphemous manner” (Victor I. Scherb, “Blasphemy and the Grotesque in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*,” *Studies in Philology* 96 (1999): 225-40, at 229). Other instances of the grotesque include parodic relics producing miracles (Ibid., 233), the debasement of ritual, ecclesiastical practices (Ibid., 234), and the use of violence between the pagan priest and his boy (Ibid., 235). The “dog-Latin” of the mock sermon is particularly subversive because it “threatens to reduce language, especially ecclesiastical language, to mere sound” (Ibid., 236).

prye wyth reythfull bone. / Beleve in hym and in no mo, / And I hope she xall be conceyvyd sone” (1571-3). The Queen eventually does conceive, an action that is important in establishing the difference between the roles that the female body serves in this play: before her conversion mission to Marseille, Mary’s body was similar to the Queen’s in that it was a ruling body that also had spiritual obligations to fulfill for those that it governed; in this sense, Mary’s prostitution was so damaging because the misuse of her body in this sin in particular had the potential to result in an heir outside the sanctity of marriage. Now that Mary’s body is reserved for God and participant in His apostolic work, it cannot take on the responsibility of providing a human heir for the lands that she rules. Instead, the Queen’s body stands in for Mary’s so that this woman can continue the lineage of worldly rulers who praise Christ and tend to his flock. Motherhood for Mary is no longer literal as it is for the Queen; as a mother, Mary now has the populace of Marseille to educate in the message of Christ.<sup>335</sup>

Nevertheless, Mary as caretaker of souls is seen first through her interactions with the King and Queen. Mary complies with the King’s request to “reherse... / The joyys of [the] Lord in heven” (1657-8) and is now so successful in her lessons that the King bequeaths his rule to Mary: “Mary, in all my goodys I sese yow þis day, / For to byn at yower gydyng, / And þem to rewlyn at yower pleasyng” (1688-90). Mary’s ability to convert the King and Queen results in their trust in her to govern their kingdom in their absence. The royal couple decides to make a

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<sup>335</sup> Mary’s second sermon firmly establishes her role as spiritual mediator and mother. Jacob Bennett argues that *Mary Magdalene* is built upon “two essential underlying theological components, the Second Eve formulation and the Bernardine “mother” of God thesis,” that is, “the view that a true believer who pursues the struggle against Satan can through grace become a ‘mother’ of God” (“The Meaning of the Digby *Mary Magdalene*,” *Studies in Philology* 101 (2004): 38-47, at 47 and 39). Due to the Bernardine formulation, “many / of the key attributes of the Virgin Mary...[are] transferred to Mary Magdalen, some virtually verbatim” (Ibid, 42-3). Instances of this verbal blurring occur throughout the play, as, for instance, when the Queen praises Mary after her preservation on the rock at sea when she says “[v]irgo salutata” (1900) and “pulcra et casta” (1901) and when the King greets Mary with “Heyll be þou Mary! Ower Lord is wyth the!” (1939). This verbal parallel between Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary stresses the importance of motherhood as a spiritual responsibility.

pilgrimage to the Holy Land so that they can continue their education in Christ through Peter (1680), a pilgrimage that brings back into focus the gendered limitations inhibiting Mary's otherwise successful preaching and conversion mission. Yet Mary's power as "apostylesse" (1381) is not minimized before Peter; for, while in-transit to Jerusalem, the Queen dies in childbirth and is left on a rock at sea: "For defawte of wommen here in my nede, / Deth my body makyth to sprede. / Now, Mary Mavdleyne, my sowle lede!" (1762-4). Demonstrating her understanding of eternal life through Christ, the Queen entrusts her soul to Mary as Christ's spiritual mediator. And Mary does more than protect it, preserving both the Queen's body and soul as well as the Queen's newly born infant son for two years until her husband happens upon the same rock at sea when he returns from pilgrimage.<sup>336</sup> Alive and well, the Queen explains the all-encompassing miracle that Mary has performed, a miracle that, despite being "extra-corporeal" in nature,<sup>337</sup> emphasizes the physicality of the Queens' body:

*O virgo salutata*, for ovr savacyon!  
*O pulcra et casta*, cum of nobyll alyavns!  
 O almyty Maydyn, ower sowlis confortacyon!  
 O demvr Mavdlyn, my bodyys sustynavns!  
 Pou hast wr[a]ppyd vs in wele from all waryawns,  
 And led me wyth my lord i[n]to þe Holy Lond!  
 I am baptysyd, as ye are, by Maryvs gyddavns,  
 Of Sent Peterys holy hand.

I sye þe blyssyd crosse þat Cryst shed on hys precyvs blod;  
 Hys blyssyd sepulcur also se I.  
 Whe[r]for, good hosbond, be mery in mode,  
 For I have gon þe stacyounys by and by! (1900-11)

<sup>336</sup> By "displacing both the birth crisis and the motif of the 'woman cast adrift' from the protagonist (Mary) onto a second woman, the recently converted Queen of Marseilles," Findon explains that "Mary Magdalene [is] free of the burden of real motherhood to be the nurturing savior-figure, with heightened associations with the Virgin Mary with whom she shares the epithet *Stella Maris*, 'star of the sea.' Similarly, although Mary Magdalene is not herself destined to marry in Marseilles, the marriage-conversion trope is reconfigured in the play, as the saint operates through the body of the king's wife who is presented almost as Mary's / alter ego, strikingly similar to Mary in her beauty and her pre-conversion courtly language" ("Mary Magdalene as the New Custance," 40-1).

<sup>337</sup> Carter, 416.

Like her husband, the Queen experiences baptism and the sights of the Holy Land through Mary's intervention, and, as a result, is herself a fit Christian ruler. The Queen's use of Latin suggests that she "has adopted Mary Magdalene's language of prayer and praise as a sign of her new faith," indicating the changing spiritual state of Marseilles and the "the mediating position of Mary Magdalene...as both powerful saint and secular woman."<sup>338</sup> Interestingly, all the miracles surrounding the Queen that Mary performs involve displays of the body, from helping her to conceive to preserving her and her son, to enabling her to experience the Holy Land through her husband's body: "These miracles are clearly linked to the role of Mary as woman who cares for the bodies of others."<sup>339</sup> But as the Queen's Latin praises highlight, Mary attends to bodies through the power of God's word. Mary thus unites feminine displays of power through bodily acts like reproduction with masculine, verbal claims to power.

During the royal couple's absence, Mary's ability to use her body to collapse distinctions between feminine and masculine sources of power manifests through her preaching. Fostering the spiritual health of Marseille – what her preservation of the Queen and infant son on the rock at sea accomplished on a smaller scale – Mary is seen preaching to the people upon the King's and Queen's arrival home, demonstrating how she is a caretaker of souls for the populace at large. This is the second sermon that Mary delivers in the play and its Theme is poverty, a concept that Mary explicates through the Latin citation "pauvertas est donum Dei" (1931). The sermon begins:

O, dere fryndys, be in hart stabyll!  
 And [thynk] how dere Cryst hathe yow bowth!  
 Aȝens God, be nothyng vereabyll –  
 Thynk how he mad all thyng of nowth!

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<sup>338</sup> Findon, "Mary Madgalene as the New Custance," 43.

<sup>339</sup> Milner, 394.



Thow yow in povertē sumtyme be browth,  
 [3]itte be in charyte both nyth and day,  
 For þey byn blyssyd þat so byn sowth,  
 For, *pavpertas est donum Dei*. (1925-30)

Mary's reminder that God made "all thyngs of nowth" (1926) recalls her earlier sermon but changes the context to focus on the empowerment that poverty brings to individual followers of the faith. Like God who can create things of substance from nothing, people can create acts of charity even in their poverty to help others. Mary's assertions are in "accord with traditional medieval thinking about poverty, which enjoined the poor to accept their lot 'with patience and resignation' in the hope of attaining salvation. In this familiar construction of poverty...is the blessing of the meek and the weak; it is a temporary misfortune into which people may, as the Madalene puts it, 'sumtyme be browth' (1927)."<sup>340</sup> Poverty therefore breeds opportunities for Christian generosity, ideas Mary goes on to explain:

God blyssyt alle þo þat byn meke and good,  
 And he blyssyt all þo þat wepe for synne.  
 Þey be blyssyd þat þe hungor and þe thorsty gyff fode;  
 Þey be blyssyd þat byn mercyfull aȝen wrecched men;  
 Þey byn blyssyd þat byn dysstroccyon of synne –  
 Thes byn callyd þe chyldyren of lyfe,  
 Onto þe wyche blysse bryng both yow and me,  
 That for vs dyd on the rode tre! Amen. (1931-8)

Mary elaborates on the ideas of Christian poverty and charity through her "loose paraphrase of the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew."<sup>341</sup> These ideas emphasize how the individual body earns glorious rewards through poverty and works of corporeal mercy. Her sermon tackles the complex relation between body and soul, describing how the care of the body bears directly on its spiritual wellbeing. As a redeemed sinner, Mary's body is participant in this cycle of care

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<sup>340</sup> Coletti, "“Paupertas est,”” 362.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 358.

about which she speaks, and, to a certain extent, her own life experience informs the Theme of her sermon and offers a living *exemplum* confirming the righteousness of her words. Mary never explicitly states that her body serves as a sermon *exemplum*, however; in this respect, she does not display her body as a teaching tool through her preaching as Paul does. The playwright rather leaves the understanding of her body as preaching *exemplum* for the audience to realize on its own.<sup>342</sup>

When Mary sees the King and Queen, she happily reinvests them with their lands, acknowledging their qualifications as spiritual rulers:

Welcum hom to your own eritage wythowt othe,  
 And to alle yower pepyll present in syth!  
 Now ar 3e becum Goddys own knyght,  
 For sowle helth salve ded 3e seche,  
 In hom þe Holy Gost hath take resedens,  
 And drevyn asyde all þe deseptyon of wrech.  
 And now have 3e a knowle[ge] of þe sentens,  
 How 3e shall com onto grace!  
 But now in yower godys a3en I do yow sese.  
 I trost I have governyd þem to yower hertys ese.  
 Now woll I labor forth, God to plese,  
 More gostly strenkth me to purchase! (1950-61)

The King and Queen could not govern Marseille properly without themselves first understanding how to achieve grace. Now that they have acquired this knowledge, Mary hands over their “hom” where “þe Holy Gost hath taken resedens” (1954) through her preaching efforts so that she can remove herself to live the life of a hermit. The King demonstrates the spiritual and corporate responsibility expected from him by promising “[c]hyrchys in cetyys I woll edyfye”

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<sup>342</sup> In medieval Catholic theology, Mary Magdalene is of course the “chief *exemplum* of a sinner transposed through conversion and penance into a saint – an example of a *vita dealbata*” (Joseph Harris, “‘Maiden un the Mor Lay’ and the Medieval Magdalene Tradition,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1971): 59-87 at 83). Mary becomes such a prominent *exemplum* because of “Pope Gregory the Great’s deliberate conflation of several different Marys in the Gospels...[into] a powerfully coherent figure, the ‘single Magdalene,’” who “provided the Church with a compelling model of repentance, devotion, and contemplation, the three ideal aspects of the spiritual life according to medieval Christianity” (Findon, “Mary Magdalene as the New Custance?” 30).

(1984) and to “ponysch [s]wych personnys wyth perpelyxyon! / ...whoso a3ens ower feyth woll repleye” (1986, 1985). This is the first and only time in the play that a ruler threatens to punish non-Christians. The King of Marseille effectively reverses the persecution that Tiberius, Herod, and Pilate prompted at the outset of the play, establishing kingship in the world as a formidable safeguard for Christ’s preachers.

As a result of the King’s conversion, the landscape in Marseille comes to reflect Mary’s body. Just as Mary’s penitence began through her body – anointing Christ with her tears and hair – and matured through her word as God’s preacher, so too does the development of Marseille’s spiritual landscape start with the physical and progress to the verbal: where there were once pagan temples, now there are Christian churches; where there were once thoughts in sin, now there are prayers in sanctimony; where sermons were once spoken in mock Latin, now they are delivered in legitimate Latin.

Similar to Marseille’s landscape, Mary’s relation to the physicality of her body also changes throughout the play. As her rule of the Castle of Magdalene and fall into sin suggest, at first, Mary’s understanding of her body is worldly: while it is true that she praises God, her body is mostly an instrument that first facilitates security in its capacity as ruler and later pleasure in its capacity as prostitute. During Mary’s repentance at Simon’s house, however, her knowledge of her body begins to shift. She certainly still understands it as a worldly object – she uses it to anoint Christ, after all – but this action changes Mary’s understanding of how the body provides security and pleasure: it is not for worldly pursuits but for heavenly ones. Mary’s realization is connected to Christ’s transformation of his own body, and by understanding how his body provides nourishment for the soul, Mary can reconceptualize how to use her body, what she

eventually does when she goes on her conversion mission to Marseille.<sup>343</sup> Mary's reference to Isaiah acknowledges her shifting perception of her body's physicality. Mary's spiritual growth in Christ continues before she reaches Marseille however. Participant in the events of Christ's Resurrection and Pentecost, Mary realizes that the body, while physically present, is an instrument that provides insight into the spiritual through its verbal capacity. When Christ appears to Mary in the garden after his Resurrection, Mary immediately enacts her former understanding of bodily physicality, petitioning "[l]ett me anoynt yow wyth þis bamys sote" (1071), to which Christ replies "[t]owche me natt, Mary" (1074). This moment provides Mary with "the gaze of insight," allowing her to "[renounce] an overly narrow physical concept: the human body of Christ."<sup>344</sup> Pentecost completes Mary's education in the body as spiritual conduit of Christ, for she receives the touch of Christ through the tongues that he bestows, a figurative "touch" that manifests verbally but not physically and causes the bodies of the Apostles to be living embodiments of Christ. By the time that Mary reaches Marseilles, she understands that her body's physical existence is only important in its capacity to facilitate Christ's teaching, what she successfully does by converting the land.

Another lens through which to view Mary's changing perception of her body is as mediator. As the ruler of the Castle of Magdalene, Mary was a secular mediator, her praise of God serving as an example to those she governed from the distance of her Castle: "We thank yow, fathyr, for your gyftys ryall, / Owt of peynes of poverte vs to onbind" (95-6). Mary recognizes her father's bequest as a safeguard against "poverte" (96), showing that her devotion, while sincere, is still tied to and understood by material possessions. But when Mary witnesses

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<sup>343</sup> Coletti discusses this scene and Mary's change through the motif of food ("The Design," 320-4).

<sup>344</sup> Barbara Baert, "*Noli me tangere*. Six Exercises in Image Theory and Iconophilia," *Image and Narrative* 15 (2006): 1-12, at 5, 7.

Christ's redemption and speaks with him in the garden, she becomes a spiritual mediator – first between God and the Apostles when she announces Christ's Resurrection and later as his preacher in Marseille. Mary's relationship to poverty now changes, as her sermon explaining that poverty is a gift from God – “pavpertas est donum Dei” (1930) – confirms. By this time, Mary openly espouses and embraces the poverty – the lack of physical comfort of Castle and body alike – that once defined her devotion to God. The secular exploration of what becomes Mary's spiritual mediation signals the reconception of her body's purpose as a conduit for salvation.

Mary's spiritual growth and changing understanding of her body's physicality does not end in Marseille. Leaving to become a desert hermit, Mary turns her penitence inward,<sup>345</sup> seeking to gain greater spiritual awareness by denying her physical existence and willingly embracing the poverty about which she preached. Without pointedly drawing attention to it through her preaching, Mary nevertheless illustrates her sermon's Theme a second time through the actions of her body, her “eremitic retreat...[affording] an opportunity to” enact “the medieval practice of poverty as a spiritual vocation leading to perfection.”<sup>346</sup> Mary's poverty takes the specific form of depriving her body of food, or at least of any food that she could procure in the world: “Of wordly fodys I wyll leve all refeccyon; / Be þe fode þat comyt from heven on hye, / Thatt God will me send, by contemplatyff” (2000-2). Mary's decision to fast, however, inadvertently draws attention to her body: “Because Christ's body was considered to have been wholly constituted of female flesh – the flesh of his mother – a woman's body provided her access to the divine. As a form of suffering that focused on and *even elevated women's physicality*, then, fasting became an

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<sup>345</sup> “Starting from the writings of the Desert Fathers, the eremitic life was considered to be supremely penitential” (Mary Agnes Edsall, ““True Anchoresses are Called Birds’: Asceticism as Ascent and the Purgative Mysticism of the *Ancrene Wisse*” *Viator* 34 (2003):157-86, at 164).

<sup>346</sup> Coletti, ““Papuertas est,”” 361.

almost uniquely female type of asceticism.”<sup>347</sup> Mary’s attempt to deny, or erase, her body in fact heightens awareness of its presence, as the daily assistance of the angels required to elevate Mary’s body to heaven to receive her spiritual manna betrays: “God woll send þe fode be revelacyon. / Þou xall be receyvyd into þe clowddys, / Gostly fode to reseyye to þi savacyon” (2024-6), one of the angels tells her. Even though “[g]ostly fode” (2026) and “contemplatyff” (2002) are Mary’s primary sources of sustenance, and her access to heaven a validation of her true spiritual grace, her body nevertheless complicates the spiritual union of knowledge that she seeks with Christ. Though not in sin, the physicality of Mary’s body remains an obstacle that she must overcome for the next thirty years if she wants to achieve wisdom in Christ.

Mary’s body remains an inconvenient nuance in her death as well. Told by an angel that her “sowle xall departe from [her] body” (2096), Mary receives her last communion from a male priest that God sends to her, saying: “Þis celestially bred for to determyn, / Thys tyme to reseyye it in me, / My sowle þerwyth to illumyn” (2106-8). Despite its holiness, Mary’s body still requires the intervention of a male priest to find its final peace. Receiving her final communion from a man and not from the angels who have previously helped her, the physicality of Mary’s body again comes to the fore, the final communion wafer that she receives serving as a subtle, physical reminder of Christ’s body that died for humanity. The appearance of the communion wafer in this final scene is itself somewhat striking, given Mary’s goal of overcoming her own physicality: “the Christian message increasingly comes to be embodied in material form” of the Eucharist.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Milner, 387, my emphasis.

<sup>348</sup> Victor I. Scherb, “Worldly and Sacred Messengers in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*,” *English Studies* 73 (1992): 1-9, at 8.

Speaking the concluding words of the play after the angels receive Mary's "sowle"

(2120) in heaven, the male priest focuses on Mary's body:

A Mary, Mary! Mych is þi solas,  
 In heven blysse wyth gle and game!  
 Þi body wyl I cure from alle maner blame,  
 And I wyll passe to þe bosshop of þe sete,  
 Thys body of Mary to berye be name,  
 Wyth alle reverens and solemnyte. (2125-30)

Praising the bliss of heaven that Mary has attained, this priest nevertheless acknowledges the uncertainty surrounding Mary's body on earth. Hers remains a "body" requiring "cure from alle maner blame" (2127) even after all its affirmations of virtue and holiness throughout the play. Still a locale of interpretative tension, this priest promises to take Mary's body to "þe bosshop of þe sete" (2128) in order to make a case for the "reverens and solemnyte" (2130) that he himself has witnessed. Mary's body is not affirmed by its own actions, but rather by the male Church hierarchy that governs it on earth. Mary's success in transforming the understanding of her physicality through willing poverty ironically places it back into a system of earthly governance that sees the body as a physical entity whose holiness must be measured and determined.

## VI. Embodying Bodies

*Mary Magdalene* concludes by emphasizing discomfort in the display of its titular character's body. In fact, it refuses to determine what the saint's body is, and how exactly it should be remembered. These discrepancies point towards the larger anxiety that the dramatic portrayal of saints' bodies produces. To assuage these anxieties, the *Magdalene* playwright shifts the play's point of focalization outward in its final moments, employing the male priest to direct the audience members to consider their own bodies:

Sufferens of þis processe, thus enddyt þe sentens  
 That we have playyed in yower syth.

Allemythty God, most of magnyfycens,  
 Mote bryng yow to hys blysse so brygth,  
 In presens of þat Kyng!  
 Now, frendys, thus endyt thys matere –  
 To blysse bryng þo þat byn here!  
 Now, clerkys, wyth woycys cler,  
 ‘*Te Deum laudamus*’ lett vs syng! (2131-9)

Addressing the audience as “[s]ufferens (2130) and “frendys” (2136) and praying that God “[t]o blysse bryng þo þat byn here” (2137), this priest assumes the familiar position of preacher concluding the “processe” and “sentens” (2131) of his sermon. Ending the play in this manner, the playwright can contain any potentially subversive dramatic portrayals – such as a woman preaching and an indeterminably sinful/sanctified body – by asserting a masculine preaching voice over them. Quite quickly and forcefully, this voice brings the audience back to the present moment, a moment in which the understanding of Mary’s body is approved by the Church and praised for its actions, as the singing of the “Te Deum Laudamus” (2139) hymn reinforces: “In calling for a canticle to end the play, the Digby playwright attempts to move the audience to act as one in faith; by making the character of the priest do so, to the accompaniment of the procession of the saint’s body, he emphasizes the sacramental function of his central figure and of her story.”<sup>349</sup> This strategy connects the body of the saint with the bodies of the members of the audience, as well as “[connecting] them bodily with the entirety of the Church of history,”<sup>350</sup> a strategy which the *Conversion of St. Paul* also employs, as it concludes with the singing of a hymn, the “*Exultet celum laudibus*,” which, as I have already discussed, is a hymn used to commemorate the Feast of St. Paul.

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<sup>349</sup> Scoville, 53.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid, 53.



A strategy for concluding both *Mary Magdalene* and *St. Paul*, the use of the hymn most effectively betrays the anxiety surrounding the dramatic depiction of the saint's body. Uncertain of how an audience will interpret what it sees, the hymn offers an opportunity to understand these saints' plays as sanctioned and virtuous devotional productions. Furthermore, the singing of the hymn enables the members of the audience to join in the sanctioned behavior of the Church, to acknowledge for themselves that what they witness is devotional in intent. The fact that critic Chester N. Scoville envisions the hymn in *Mary Magdalene* being accompanied by an audience procession underscores this point,<sup>351</sup> as do arguments for the staging of *St. Paul* that insist that the audience walks among three locations to experience Saul/Paul's spiritual journey physically. In this respect, perhaps the hymn also equates the body of the audience member with the body of the saint, the audience member a body on earth that has the ability, through penitence and spiritual decisions, to emulate the holy behavior of these saintly protagonists. As a result, outside of the sermons in their respective plays, Paul and Mary become *exempla*, who, through practices like *imitatio Christi* and affective piety, can embody and be embodied, who can effectively collapse generic distinction between preaching and drama.

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid, 53.

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## **Appendix A: *Wisdom's* Numerology**

### Two

2 part soul  
Act 2 written in two word rhyme

### Three

3 minstrels  
3 Might  
3 part Trinity  
3 enemies  
3 part fall into sin (suggestion, delight, consent)  
3 major sins (Pride, Covetous, Lust)  
3 dances  
3 part restoration (contrition, confession, satisfaction)  
3 Act structure  
Acts 1 and 3 written in a three word rhyme

### Five

5 wits

### Six

6 speaking roles  
6 aspects of the sensual half of the soul (5 wits + Anima)  
6 dancers for each Might  
6 coins to pay for dinner

### Seven

7 dancers dance on stage

### Nine

9 aspects of the soul (Anima + 5 wits + 3 Might)  
9 catechismal requests made by Anima  
9 reasons with which Lucifer tempts Mind  
9 part sermon delivered by Wisdom  
9 part confession from Anima

### Ten

10 actors in procession to end Act 1 (Wisdom, Anima, Three Might, 5 Wits)  
(Ten is the perfect number)

### Eighteen

18 dancers poised to dance with the Might

### Twenty-One

21 dancers when the Might join



Appendix C: A Wheel of Sevens from the Psalter of Robert De Lisle, British Library,  
Arundel MS 83 II



**Appendix D: W. De Brailles, Wheel of Ages and Fortune, Single leaf. Cambridge,  
Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 330**



## **Appendix E: The Organization of Paul's Thematic Sermon**

**Theme:** 'pryde' (511)

Confirmed by the authority from Eccles. 10:13, 'Initium omnium peccatorum su[per]bia est' (514)

**Protheme:** 'humylyte' (517)

Confirmed by the authority from Luke 14:11 and 18:14, 'Omnis qui se exaltat Humiliabitur' (520)

**Restatement of the Theme:** 'pryde' (523)

**First Division:** Paul speaks from his own personal experience

Confirmed by the authority from Rom. 11:20, 'Noli tibi dico in altum sapere sed time' (528)

**Second Division:** Paul speaks about the experience of the Lord

Confirmed by the authority from Matt. 11:29, 'Discite a me quia mitis sum et corde humilis, / Et inuenietis requiem animabus vestris' (542-3)

**Third Division:** Paul speaks about the experience of the body in sin

Confirmed by the authority from Eph. 5:5, 'Omnis fornicator aut immundus non habet hereditatem Christi' (555), and by an authority from Matt. 12:34, 'Ex habundancia cordis os loquitur' (560)

**Conclusion:** Paul locates the sin of pride in the mouth

Confirmed by the commonplace expression, 'Caste viuentes templum Dei sunt' (566), and by an authority from John 9:41, 'Oculus est nuncius peccati' (570)