"THERFORE THY BOKE OF COUNTE WITH THE THOU BRYNGE": A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE MORALITIES

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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April 24, 1989

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

April 1989

for graduation from the Honors College May 1989
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"When compared with the achievements of Renaissance drama in which the supposed evolutionary process was said to have culminated, every form of medieval drama has been found to be different from its offspring rather than like them, and not only markedly different from the progeny but far inferior to them" (Taylor 3). According to many modern critics the religious drama of the Middle Ages "had no dramatic technique or dramatic purpose, and no artistic self-consciousness" (Taylor 4). Medieval drama has been viewed as drama only because of its roots in ritual, the commonly accepted birthplace of theater. Conversely, it has been denied acceptance as a full dramatic form due to the religious ritual of which it is a part. "It has been said to excel in instances of comic but not of tragic art, and yet it has been taken as serious in intent and without any aim to amuse" (Taylor 5). And perhaps most ironically, "since its art was allegedly not intended to be thought of as art, it has been denied examination" as such (Taylor 5).

It is this narrow interpretation of drama that I refute in this paper. "The theater of the Middle Ages is as colorful and varied, as full of life and contrast as the centuries to which it belongs. It holds discourse with God and the devil, builds its paradise upon four plain posts,
and moves the whole universe with a windlass" (Berthold 228). It amazes me that critics can consistently dismiss the plays and their characters as "bloodless abstractions," as if they were nothing more than a series of dreary Sunday sermons. Perhaps in the plays the Virtues are often meek and moralizing, but how could one so readily dismiss the Vices who often stagger onto stage laughing, shouting, drinking, and farting, while all the time scheming to ambush Mankind? Surely they are portrayed as red-blooded and robust, hardly "bloodless abstractions."

Perhaps the term "Morality" in and of itself is partially at fault. Morality implies a set of conventions and convictions that may or may not be our own. We instinctively resent the behavioral instruction the word "morality" implies, and that resentment is amplified by the fact that this moral "classroom" is contained within the theater, a place where we feel we should be entertained. The outlook for these plays becomes even worse when the word "allegorical" is thrown into the matter. Some critics have suggested that to avoid such stigma the plays should be called "moral interludes," or perhaps, in order to draw audiences, just "interludes." But I question the change in terminology, for the delineation between the terms is hazy at best.

Despite the pejorative nature of the term, it does have its advantages. The term "Morality" forces us to accept the
plays for what they really are. It is not my intention to claim that the plays are light-hearted farces with no instructional motive or value. Indeed, these plays do moralize. They do sermonize. They do try to direct their audiences toward salvation. Despite this, these plays are not outdated, unbearably dry, humorless and dull orations. They are much more than "simple fossilized text[s]..., dreary little undifferentiated amoeba of modern drama, without plot, without character, almost without conflict, whose only value is historical" (Taylor 7). It is the life and the vigor of these plays that I hope to trace within this paper. To do this I intend to employ a brief history, then segments dealing with form, characterization, staging, and intent. From there I will end with a brief discussion of the impact of these plays upon later dramatic literature and the distinctive mark they left upon world theater.
It seems theater and ritual have always traveled hand in hand. Theater historians tie the origins of theater to early religious and ritualistic practices within primitive societies. From there Western theater rose until it reached its height in Rome in the fourth century A.D. Ironically, while ritual brought theater into the world, it also removed it. The theater's major source of opposition at that time was the rising Christian church. Both the Church and invading conquerors served to extinguish the theater. The last definite record of a performance in Rome is found in a letter written in 533. Although the theater may have continued on after that, it does not seem to have survived the Lombard invasion in 568. That invasion seems to have been the final blow which pushed the theater back into the "obscurity out of which it had slowly emerged some 900 years earlier" (Brockett 84). Oddly enough, after the Church's persecution helped break down organized theater, it also helped to rebuild it.

Theater had its rebirth in the Church's liturgy, as parts were distributed among "actors" in order to reinforce the point of the Scripture. It wasn't until the late Middle Ages (c. 1300-1500) that drama began to emerge outside the church, and even when it did, it was still highly religious
in nature. The majority of these extant medieval plays are dramatizations of Biblical events. The drama of this time found its roots in the re-enactment of the Resurrection, an event central to the development of Christianity. From there writers of the time reached back in history to the Creation and forward to Armageddon, and the mystery cycles tracing all of human history evolved. At nearly the same time, a smaller body of plays was evolving. These plays are known today as "morality plays."

The morality play, the secular form closest to the cycle plays, first appeared in the late fourteenth century. It grew and flourished along with the miracle and mystery plays during the fifteenth century and shared much with them in the way of staging, characterization and structure. However, unlike the other two forms, it was essentially a new genre, having no precedent in the earlier church drama. Perhaps because it was not as firmly rooted in the church it was more adaptable to "new ideologies and social conditions during the sixteenth century than...other kinds of medieval drama, and thus survived to become a formative influence on the Renaissance drama while the cycles and saints' plays found themselves increasingly under attack by the Reformation Church" (Bevington, Drama 791).

Like the cycle plays, the morality plays are "Christian, anonymous, and 'popular,' written in English to be performed for the general population" (Potter 6). Moral
personifications such as Death and the seven Deadly Sins abound not only in the allegorical morality plays but in the N Town pageants and the saint's play of Mary Magdalene. Truth, Justice, Mercy, and Peace are featured in the morality play The Castle of Perseverance, but also appear in the N Town pageant on the parliament of heaven (Bevington, Drama 791). Usually comical Vice figures appear in morality plays but are not limited to them. Vice figures appear in virtually every other form of medieval drama as well (Bevington, Drama 791). Just like the cycle plays the morality plays make use of mansion and platea staging. They also incorporate music, colorful costuming, processions, large crowd scenes, and other features of the cycles. Also, both forms of drama take place "on earth in the midst of an arena that encompasses heaven and hell" (Bevington, Drama 792).

The primary difference between the two forms concentrates more on the focus of the drama than on any other aspect. "Where the cycles take their form in fulfilling the totality of human history and defining its crucial rhythms, the morality play takes its shape from a different figure and pattern—the life of the individual human being" (Potter 6). The morality play tells the story of a representative individual Christian rather than the collective history of all men. The hero of the morality play is usually named Mankind, Everyman, or another name
evoking his relationship to all men. Both types of plays, moral and cyclical, seek to involve the audience members in the dramatic action, to provide opportunities for them to "identify with the characters of the play so that [they] may more fully grasp the nature of the doctrinal message purveyed" (Kahr 103). The cyclical plays do this by individualizing historical characters, whereas the moral interludes strive to universalize their characters as fully as possible in order to reach every member of their audience (Kahr 103).

It is this striving for universality that leads to the use of abstractions and generalized names in the plays. As mentioned before, some critics today downgrade this allegorical drama calling the plays, "drama of bloodless abstractions, of stilted characterizations, and thus indeed an inferior mode of drama" (Kahr 104). Yet before readily accepting such a sweeping generalization one must note that:

Recent revivals... have reminded us, if we were prone to forget, that whenever the play was acted, the characters, instead of being dreary types and abstractions, were at once individualized and humanized; and the same transformation once took place in the case of every one of the other Moralities which are now so hastily judged on the basis of the printed copy (Kahr 104).

It seems the view that the moralities are dully allegorical persists because the plays are discussed from a reading acquaintance only, instead of from familiarity with production. "When one reads such plays, the row of speakers' names down the left margin of the page inexorably
insists on the allegory through repetition of such names as 'Humanum Genus,' World, Pride, or Good Angel" (Kahrl 104). However, in production this repetition does not occur. On stage the actors are infrequently called by name after their first appearance except in ways which are natural in the context of the dialogue. With this in mind, it becomes easier to disassociate the rigidity of the written allegory from the animated action of the play.

Characterization is at the very heart of drama, and yet, in examining the characters of medieval drama one "should be careful to rid [oneself] of purely modern notions of the nature and function of dramatic characterization. [One] should equally avoid..."historical positivism" which, with eyes closed, methodically obliterates its subject" (Miyajima 96). This is especially relevant in any discussion of the "realism" of characters within the moralities. The notion that these characters are in some way "real" individuals must be shunned. These characters are not meant to be "real" in the sense that Ibsen's characters are "real." They lack psychological depth. However, "these characters have their own 'realism,' but it is inevitably of a different sort" (Miyajima 96).

Each character in the moralities is clearly identified, without any ambiguity as a stereotyped being or an abstract quality. Often the character announces himself explicitly and in concrete terms. It is by adding the dimension of ordinary life to the personifications and by another factor (that of the pre-conception of the character in the spectator's mind) that the author
of the morality enriches his characterization (Miyajima 96).

Thus, in order to provide an accurate account of these characters, one must try to see them as the medieval audience would have viewed them. In the moralities the medieval theater-goer was presented with five major character types: Humankind, Vice, Virtue, Death, and God.

Although God was at the center of the medieval universe, "the logical protagonist of the moral drama was man—never spiritually perfect or saintly man, but simply man—placed in that moral world of stresses and strains between good and evil where humanity by reason of its freedom of choice shapes character" (Farnham 177). The "man" character carries within it a remarkable duality, which is emphasized by most of the medieval morality playwrights. This "man" character is a man, simply a man, but also "simply" all of men. The example illustrating this best is the play Everyman. Throughout this play the author emphasizes the ambiguity of the character "Everyman." By switching often from the singular to the plural, the playwright insures that we are all implicated, individually and generally. These switches in number are emphasized below in God's first speech:

Every man lyueth so after his owne pleasure,
And yet of theyr lyfe they be nothynge sure.
I se the more that I them forbere
The worse they be fro yere to yere.
All that lyueth appayreth faste;
Therfore I wyll, in al the haste,
Haue a rekenyng of every mannes persone;
For, and I leue the people thus alone
In theyr lyfe and wycked tempestes,
Veryly they will become moche worse than beestes,
For now one wolde by enuy another up ete;
Charyte they do all clene forgete.
I hoped well that every man
In my glory shoold make his mansyon,
And therto I had them all electe... (11. 40-54)

When God summons Death and orders him to return with
Everyman he speaks of him in the singular. Yet when Death
replies, he does so in the plural. This ambiguity continues
to a lesser extent throughout the play, and is far from
accidental. It serves to emphasize our individual and
collective fates. The "Man" character embodies another
duality as well, that of body and soul. This bipartite
nature manifests itself in man's placement in the great
chain of being. Man inhabits the midpoint on this chain,
the summit of the lower order of being and the base of the
higher ethereal order. His placement on the chain is
necessitated by his body which is "destined to undergo the
corruption of death, but his soul came only at the moment of
his conception directly from God who created it and destined
it for eternal life" (Miyajima 98). Thus death of the body
frees man's soul to join the higher order, but only if the
soul has been able to win out over the base desires of the
flesh. It is this fight between body and soul that is often
presented in these plays. The play Wisdom attacks this motif
in perhaps the most obvious way, by offering separate
characters for body and soul. In this case the characters
are presented as Wisdom, who embodies the pure
soul, intellect, reason, and conscience; and Anima, who represents the soul which is torn between the sensual and the rational. The two parts of Anima are symbolized by her white dress covered by a black mantle.

However, despite the acknowledgment of man's dual nature, he is held highly accountable for his own actions. No fault can be blamed entirely upon the body, for the soul must be a part of all actions as well. The soul is the ultimate arbiter of action, and in the play is accorded complete free will. Although the Virtues and Vices may fight for possession of man's soul, it is by his own choice that he decides his fate. It is important to realize that what the audience saw was not merely psychomachia, a struggle for the soul of the protagonist conducted by rival armies of good and evil. Instead, these are plays which seek to "universalize the patterns of moral choice in man's life" (Kahrl 110). The forces designed to destroy man rely on their powers of persuasion and trickery and on man's weaknesses. They can push man toward a decision, but the choice itself belongs to the man alone. This is apparent in the epilogue by Mercy at the end of Mankind:

Ye may both save and spill your soule,
that is so precius;
'Libere welle, libere nolle' God may
not deny, iwis (11. 893-4).

This translates as, "you have free will to choose salvation or damnation; God may not deny you freely to choose or freely not to choose, truly" (Bevington, Drama 937). These
plays then, are studies in the choices made by men, "the recurrent opportunity to fall, in which man is no inert battlefield over which the forces of good and evil march but a being with free will created by God whose chances to choose the right road to salvation end with the coming of death" (Kahl 106). Man's free will is his asset in these plays. Although his poor choices lead him to the brink of damnation, he is acutely aware of the fact the the choice of salvation was always possible and could be made up until the time of death.

In some ways the focus on man's free will seems to detract from the importance of the Vice characters within the moralities, but without them, the central conflict of the play would disappear, leaving nothing behind but the shell of a saint's play. In The Castle of Perseverance the Vices have the crucial duty of setting the mood for the play. This play begins with three vice characters, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, on stage discussing Mankind's fate in much the same way Shakespeare's witches do in a later period. But a man's fate wasn't entirely up to the Vices. Since salvation was always possible, the main task of the Vices was not only to pull man down, but to keep him down until Death could arrive. Armed only with their persuasive powers and means for trickery, the vices attempt to lead man astray. "Most of the Deadly Sins and other tempters are not only masculine but aggressively so,
boisterous, arrogant, loud" (Bevington, Castle 161). Their camaraderie usually entices Man to join them. They are also usually presented in "opulent finery, jewels, and other tokens of extravagant luxury" (Bevington, Castle 160). They promise Man a multitude of wealth, wit, and women, and chide him for his naivete. In the the play Mankind, the most comical of the moralities, the Vices are "rowdies who flaunt their stylish clothes, jest about hanging, and jeer at Mankind for his piety and devotion to hard work. Like Falstaff and his companions of later date, they are highwaymen, horse stealers, and despoilers of churches" (Bevington, Macro xiii). These vice characters provided what was in many ways the central entertainment. Their raucous ways cajoled the audience into laughing at their own transgressions and foibles. In fact, the vice characters are known for their rapport with the audience. They serve to involve the audience in the play. A vice character in the form of Lucifer in Wisdom shares with the audience the fact that he is not the gallant he seems to be, and tells them of his plans (1. 324). In Mankind the major vice figure is Titivillus. In the play he remains visible to the audience while he is invisible to Mankind. In the same play Titivillus' cronies lead the audience in singing and also take up a collection before the play's climax.

Just as the vices could not force their ways upon Man, neither can the virtues. The seven virtues in these plays
directly oppose the seven Deadly Sins. Each sermon by a Virtue "serves as a remedium for the lessons of the appropriate vice, and together they bring Mankind to a state in which he can receive God's grace—if he perseveres" (Schell 288). Not only do their doctrines directly oppose the Vices, their manners and costuming do as well. Unlike the Vices, the Virtues who aid Mankind in The Castle of Perseverance are "lovely in lace" (l. 22548), simply dressed as opposed to the extravagant "robys rounde" and "grete gounse" (ll. 2072-73) of Pride and his cohorts. They are described as "sevene sisterys swete" (l. 2047) and are also referred to as "maidyns" and "ladys" (ll. 1764, 1806). The contrast between the Vices and Virtues is heightened by the Vices' description of the sisters as "wenchys," "moderys," and "bicchys" (ll. 1728-31, 1884). And yet, the Virtues should not be seen as dull didactic characters. "The sermons of the Virtues, like the instructions of the Deadly Sins, are not homiletic intrusions into the play" (Schell 289), but instead are intricately woven into the play's action.

Quite often, as is the case in psychomachia, the Virtues and Vices go against each other in one to one combat. In The Castle of Perseverance an all out battle is waged as the Vices attack the Castle in which Mankind has sought refuge. Wrath goes into battle intending to use his cross-bow and hoping to pelt Patience "with stiffe stony" (ll. 2111-12).
Envy intends to attack Charity while Gluttony hopes to inflame Abstinence. The Virtues go into battle armed only with Scriptures, flowers and water. This Christian paradox is heightened by comic incongruity as the overtly masculine Vices wince in pain and humiliation at the wounds they have received from such passive weapons. As is usual the Virtues, with their meek way, win the battle. Yet at the crucial moment Mankind's free will interferes with his salvation as he chooses to go away with Covetousness.

Along the same lines as the Virtues, but perhaps on a higher plane are the four daughters of God; Mercy, Truth, Peace, and Justice. These four characters appear in several of the moralities, but are most effectively used in the climactic scene of The Castle of Perseverance. The stage action during this scene "literalizes the well-known lines from Psalm 84.11, 'Misericordia et Veritas obviaverunt sibi; Justitia et Pax osculatae sunt' ('Mercy and Truth have met each other; Justice and Peace have kissed')" (Bevington, Castle 155). In the scene Truth and Justice argue against Mankind's salvation, while Mercy and Peace provide his defense. In the end Mercy's arguments win God over to Mankind's side, and God invites Mankind to join him at his right. According to the stage directions for the play, these daughters are dressed in colored cloaks to symbolize their grouping into two opposing pairs. Mercy and Peace wear white and black while Truth and Justice wear red and
green. Like the Virtues, these daughters of God are unable to make man change his ways. They can only gently prod as Mercy does (as a male) in Mankind. Even when all else has been taken into consideration, salvation is still a matter strictly between a man and his god. This theme runs in strict accordance with the theological beliefs of the medieval period.

However, chance plays a role in this relationship between Man and his god. Man knew that he had up until his very moment of death to repent. Eternal salvation was only a deathbed confession away. What Man put odds on was his moment of death. Yet Death himself paid little attention to the odds and took lives with little regard toward salvation. Death didn’t discriminate. No one was safe, prince or pauper, knight or knave. During the Middle Ages Death dominated as the plague roared across the countryside. Because of this, the personage of Death on stage would send a chill through each member of a fifteenth century audience. Theirs was an age preoccupied with death, and this comes through in their drama. However, the preoccupation manifests itself more in the fact that the plays exist at all than in the characterization of Death within the plays. In fact, in only two of the English moralities does Death appear on stage; Everyman and The Castle of Perseverance (Miyajima 109). As a whole the plays tend to emphasize living a good and moral life since Death lurks nearby and
the wages of sin is indeed eternal damnation.

In the two plays the characterizations of Death are quite similar (Miyajima 109). In both cases Death's appearance is "brief but skillfully managed" (Miyajima 109). In *The Castle of Perseverance* it seems death is slightly more revered. This leads to the realization that indeed the play is from a period much closer to that of the plague. Allusions to the black death point to this (Miyajima 109). "In the grete pestelens/Thanne was I wel knowe" (11. 2815-16). "If, from the point of dramatic impact, the appearance of Death in *The Castle of Perseverance* is less remarkable than in *Everyman*, it remains nevertheless quite impressive" (Miyajima 109). Death occurs at the moment when Mankind least expects it, just after he has left the Castle and succumbed to the wiles of Covetousness. In *Everyman* Death appears at the beginning of the play and "while his intervention is limited, it is crucial dramatically" (Miyajima 109). In this case Death's manner is straightforward and practical.

His approach to *Everyman* is peremptory. The speech by which he introduces himself is a masterpiece of forceful concision. He tells the audience he is omnipresent and that he cruelly pursues the great as well as the humble of the earth and especially the rich and the concupiscent. He exploits *Everyman*'s initial surprise by recalling God and giving *Everyman* precise instruction in almost military fashion. "Therefore thy boke of counte with the thou brynge,/For tourne agayne thou can not by no waye" (Miyajima 110).

Death continues by scornfully refusing to be bribed. He
deals severely with Everyman's tears, then insists he is the messenger of God. He then proceeds upon a discourse covering Original Sin and the Last Judgment. He then leaves as suddenly as he appeared. "If we analyze the speeches of Death, we see how, in a few dozen lines, the author had brought in the popular concept of Death the Grand Leveller on the one hand, and the doctrinal and homiletic aspect from the *ars moriendi* on the other" (Miyajima 110).

The last form of characterization to be found in the plays is that of God. He is the culminating point of the great chain of being, the center upon which the medieval world rotated. Yet at this point in history the concept of God was in a state of flux. On one hand God was looked upon as the Old Testament vengeful, omnipotent, overpowering force in the universe. On the other hand He was reduced to something anthropomorphic. "'They judge,' wrote Walter Hilton of his contemporaries of the fourteenth century 'of divine things from the analogy of corporeal things, imagining, for example, that God in his own nature has the body of a man like their own,...'" (Miyajima 106). This explains why the people of this period felt no qualms about putting their God on stage in the moralities despite Biblical sanctions against such impersonations. It also explains why no elaborate special effects were needed by the God character since the people realized God could be omnipotent even though he moved about in the body of a
mortal man.

This duality in the nature of God manifested itself on the stage as well. In the plays God often vacillated between the formidable and the merciful. This dual nature of God is exemplified in *The Castle of Perseverance*, in which God appears as both the intimidating final judge of Mankind's actions and as God the merciful Father. The contrast between God as judge and God as Father is stark, and Mankind's eternal life hangs in the balance. However, in the enc gentle prodding from Mercy causes God to embrace his fallen son, saying,

My mercy, Mankind, yeue I th.  
Cum syt at my ryth honde.  
Ful wel haue I louyd th.  
Unkync thow I the fonde (11. 3598-3601).

Yet this show of mercy is countered by his lines at the end of the play in which he offers a final warning:

& thei that wel do in thys werld, here welthe schal a wake  
In heuene thei schal heynyd in bounte and blys  
& thei that evyl do thei schul to helle lake  
In byttyr blys to be brenyt my judgement it is  
My vertus in heuene thanne schal thei quake  
ther is no wyth in this werld that may skape this  
all men example here at may take  
to mayntein the goode and mendyn here mys  
thus endyth oure gamys.  
To saue you fro synnynghe,  
Evyr at the begynnynge  
Thynke on youre last endynge! (11. 3638-48)

Despite the fact that sometimes the plays lapse into sermonizing, their theatricality always serves as their saving grace. "At their best the morality playwrights work with the eye of a skilled preacher or public speaker--
balancing rhetoric and earnestness against an awareness that the audience must be surprised and delighted and mousetrapped into understanding" (Potter 33). To do this the plays use the verbal effects of low humor and comic relief. However, much of their theatricality comes from the visual effects of their staging. Often times these plays used elaborate pageantry and costuming as is mentioned in the play *Wisdom*:

_Fyrst enteryde WYSDOME in a ryche purpulle clothe of gold wyth a mantyll of the same ermynyde wythin, hawyngge abouwt hys neke a ryall hood furred wyth ermyyn, wpon hys hede a cheweler wyth browyyys, a berde of golde as sypre curlyed, a ryche impereyall crown [th]wpon sett wyth precyus stonyes and perlys...* (Potter 34).

Other notable costuming effects are apparent in the *Virtues* with their virginal white robes and in the *Vices* with their sumptuous finery. Changes in costuming are also used to represent the various stages of Man. This is best represented in *The Castle of Perseverance*. At the beginning of this play Mankind is found naked and newly born, represented by an actor in flesh-colored tights. This lack of earthly clothing represents his initial purity. Once the *Vices* appear in their finery Mankind becomes concerned about his appearance, and soon he, too, is dressed as they are. At this point one can observe he is clothed in "welthys wonde" and in "robys rive" (11. 625, 699), as a sign of his reliance upon worldly pleasures. Later, before he dies, he is dressed in the full loose robes of an old man.
"Stage properties, like costume changes, mark the epochs in the career of Mankind as he oscillates from good to evil, and give concrete theatrical form to conventional homiletic metaphor" (Bevington, *Castle* 162). For example, the "prick of conscience and death's dart are enough alike to juxtapose visually two critical moments in the life of the protagonist" (Bevington, *Castle* 162). The prick of the darts is taken quite literally, as are all actions within the plays; thus, the major prop used by both Penitence and Death is a lance with which to prick Mankind.

Props are used also in the battle between the Vices and Virtues. Gluttony attacks Abstinence with a flaming torch (1. 1961). Lechery, too, battles with fire, but is repelled by Chastity who quenches "that fowle hete" (1. 2303). Sloth proposes to drain the moat surrounding the castle by use of his spade (11. 2326-29). Use of fire abounds as the smoke from "hell fire" rolls forth from the scaffold of the devil, who informs Mankind that there he will burn in pitch and tar (11. 32076-78). Many of the props are military in nature. The Virtues raise banners as do the Vices. As the battle rages the Vices can be identified by their weapons of war including lances, firebrands, and shields. The Virtues, conversely, fight armed with flowers and water to quench rage and hatred.

Music, too, is used to heighten the impact of the plays. In many of the plays trumpets are used, especially
in battle scenes. In The Castle of Perseverance trumpets are called for by Belial who commands, "Clariouns cryith up at a krake" (11. 2197). Also music signals the winning over of Mankind to the side of sin. This is countered later in the play when the Virtues sing to celebrate Mankind's entry into the castle. At the end a final musical piece is called for by God, the Te Deum laudamus.

Just as costumes, props, and music delineate good from evil, so do the gestures of the characters. As mentioned before, the Vices are rowdy, raucous characters, loud and boisterous, while the Virtues are meek and retiring. While the Vices shout and laugh, the Virtues sigh and cry in lament for Mankind's wicked ways. Yet this is reversed at the end of Castle when the Vices and the Bad Angel "sobbe" and "sye sore" (11. 1866, 3593) as Mankind stands before the throne of God and they "are beaten down to hell while the virtuous rejoice" (Bevington, Castle 168).

The last element of staging to be discussed is perhaps the most important one, scenic practices. Although most of the plays followed similar designs, the stage design for The Castle of Perseverance is the most elaborate. Also, it is the only English morality play to offer an extant diagram of the "stage" design (Appendix II). For this play a castle is erected in the center of the platea, or playing space. This playing space was outdoors since around it a ditch was dug. This ditch had the dual purpose of serving as the castle's
moat and also the means by which to keep out non-paying spectators. The audience gathered in the area between the castle and the ditch. On the outside of the ditch five scaffolds, or "mansions" were built. The northern scaffold belonged to Belial, the southern to Flesh, and the northeastern to Covetousness. As is appropriate to Biblical imagery the Eastern scaffold represented Heaven while the western scaffold represented Hell. These scaffolds were decorated as was appropriate to their occupants. The scaffolds belonging to the Vices were richly arrayed, the hell scaffold was designed as a "hell-mouth," and the Heaven scaffold was resplendent in its glory motif. During the performance the action moved from one scaffold to another and so did the audience. "In such a cosmic arena, stage movement cannot fail to suggest a sense of direction or its opposite, wandering, in man's spiritual pilgrimage through life" (Bevington, Castle 170). This results in two planes of action, one vertical, one horizontal. After his visit with the Vices Mankind descends (literally from the scaffold) into sin. When he goes into the castle to repent he ascends. When he reemerges into the grasp of Covetousness he descends again. This movement changes to ascent yet again as mankind mounts the Heaven scaffold after his final repentance and death. The action throughout the play also moves horizontally as Mankind journeys back and forth from east to west, from Heaven to Hell, and back.
What emerges overall is a theater representative of the divine universe, with little Man at its center and with vast contending forces facing their opposite numbers on every side. The audience is everywhere at once and thus omniscient; nothing that Man does escapes notice, his smallest acts are cosmically significant. The audience, sharing the perception that Man's trust in worldly prosperity is illusory, is prepared to concur in the justice of the final judgment scene, and to apply the lesson to its own need to think on the "endinge day" (Bevington, Castle 170).

In plays not as scenically elaborate as Castle the same basic principles hold true. These plays usually begin with a prologue by a speaker, either a character in the play or a formal presenter. In this way the players freely acknowledge the presence of the audience. The audience is not asked to imagine a fictional locale, but instead the speaker is likely to allude to the playing space itself, likening it to the greater world (Potter 32). "The prologue establishes the dual locality of performance. The playing area, normally a market square or guildhall or field, had become for the moment a model of the world. Members of the audience are not so much asked to suspend their disbelief, as invited by the actors to to participate in a theatrical analogy" (Potter 33).

I pray you all give your audience,  
And here this mater with reverence,  
By figure a morall playe:  
The Somoninge of Everyman called it is... (11. 1-4)  
Here shall you se how Falawship and Jolite,  
Bothe Strengthe, Pleasure, and Beaute,  
Will fade from the[el] as floure in Maye;  
For ye shall here how our heven Kinge  
Calleth Everyman to a generall rekeninge.  
Give audience, and here what he doth saye. (11. 16-21)
To force the audience to think on its own "endinge day" is indeed the point of each of these plays. However, these plays were designed to teach while entertaining their audience. They were communal calls to repentance, yet they didn't leave their audiences with the bitter aftertaste of public chastisement. It is important to note that a play which in the end is to call for repentance must first "produce the communal acknowledgment that we are all human beings. It must define human beings as creatures for whom the pleasures of the flesh will always seem more immediately attractive than the considerations of eternity" (Potter 36).

In other words, the plays view the fall of each man into sin as an inevitable part of life and thus usually spend little time dealing with the concept of innocence. Everyman, for example, begins when Everyman is summoned by Death, long after Everyman's initial fall into sin. Yet the protagonist is always saved from damnation in the end. To teach the means by which sinners can gain salvation is at the heart of the drama.

The moralizing of the moralities is not, then, a puritan denial of human nature; indeed, it is a dogmatic proclamation of the Adam in all men. And fortunately for all men, their sin may lead to remorse, that remorse may be converted to contrition, and thus they may be forgiven and saved. The dialectical thesis of the moralities, stated briefly, is that God has recognized human nature and carved out for it a path to salvation, through repentance (Potter 49).

In order to teach this lesson the play must encourage its audience to "acknowledge with laughter [its] recognition
of the common weaknesses of humanity, which being general can scarcely be blamed" (Potter 36). It is in this way that the morality play serves as liberation from individual guilt. "Its initial attack is on the hypocritical pretension that any human being can be strong enough to resist being human" (Potter 36). In this way the audience members are lured into accepting their own weaknesses and are "subtly prepared to accept the unfortunate and unpleasant consequences... as a case of collective guilt" (Potter 36). When the audience, frightened by the caricature of its own behavior, sees the consequences brought about by the actions of "Mankind" on the stage, the solution of repentance will become compelling, both as a "collective response to an individual guilt and as an individual escape from the collective guilt" (Potter 36). And if for any reason the audience missed the point of the play during the action, an epilogue was presented to spur their consciences.

Granted, the main purpose of the moralities was to save individual souls, but perhaps beneath the surface lies the intent to save society through imbedded social satire. Richard Southern points this out stating, "In fact, apart from the great biblical cycles which were the basic foundation stones of the drama, we find that there was a constant incentive to tell audiences not only something new, but if possible something startling" (Miyajima 117). Light
social satire is present in several of the plays. *Everyman* denounces clerical misconduct. *Wisdom* jabs at abuses of the law including bribery, perjury, false indictment and unjust juries. However, the most deeply rooted social satire is contained within *The Castle of Perseverance*. This play appears to be a straightforward account of the perils of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil—until we realize that the worst of all the deadly sins is not shown (as was usual) to be Pride, but Covetousness. Now this may not startle us; but in a period when the mercantile classes were rising at the expense of the old feudal order, and England was finding a great new prosperity through trade, it must have been in many quarters an unwelcome doctrine (Southern in Miyajima 117).

As one can easily see, the moralities were so much more than merely "bloodless abstractions." Granted, the morality was allegory dramatized, but that in and of itself does not yield or equal dullness or rigidity as some critics would have one believe. Instead the effect was quite the opposite. By dramatizing allegory the morality "opened up to the dramatic author in England the great possibilities of personification as an instrument for presenting abstract ideas. It is this technique, much freer and intellectually stronger and with more flexible possibilities that separates the morality from the miracles and mysteries" of that same time period (Miyajima 4-5). The moralities represent a great step forward for English drama and literature.

The author of a morality can arrange his subject freely, attempt construction and unity. He is led to analyse human qualities and defects, to
emphasize psychological characteristics. Misery, for instance, cannot be presented without study of the character of the miser. In this way the morality, even the religious morality, prepared drama for emancipation from religion. Its theme is the struggle of the forces of good and evil which contest for the human soul. This problem continued to confront the poet who was no longer inspired by the Christian faith. The permanent basis of every dramatic work had been discovered (Emile Legouis in Miyajima 5).
APPENDIX I

The Legacy of the Morality

During the sixteenth century the morality form underwent several changes. In some cases the subject matter became almost entirely secular, "as in John Skelton's Magnificence, which describes the lifestyle appropriate to a ruler, or in Nicholas de la Chesnaye's Condemnation of the Banquet, which treats both mental and physical health and warns especially against the dangers of overeating" (Brockett 141). The plays were also often used as weapons in the religious battles of the day. "Perhaps the best of these plays is John Bales's King John, in which the English ruler holds out against the evil forces of the pope" (Brockett 141). This play, marked by historical personages and events intermingled into the morality form, leads the way for the chronicle plays of Shakespeare and others.

More and more often though, the plays marked divisions between Protestants and Catholics. The two religions denounced each other in their plays. Protestant playwright Thomas Naogeorgus penned perhaps the most forceful of these,
Pammachius, "which treats the struggle against antichrist over a period of almost 1,000 years, ending with the glorification of Luther as a major target of antichristian forces, epitomized in Bishop Pammachius" (Brockett 142).

However, many of these later, theoretically more advanced dramas have fallen by the wayside. Paradoxically, Everyman, which in some ways seems simple in comparison to some of the later plays, stands now as the perfect mark of the age. It has had a long and successful history on the modern stage, and has exerted considerable influence upon modern drama (Hurt 1547). The play was restaged in London in 1901, and the revival was received favorably. German director Max Reinhardt was inspired by the London production. Reinhardt's Jedermann was first performed in 1911. It is apparent that Everyman, along with other pre-realistic dramas, "has had a strong influence upon the development of the post-realistic modern drama, especially as a model for dramatizing inner, psychological action" (Hurt 1548). Perhaps though, it is extreme to link the moralities too closely with the modern theater. It is however, due to its adaptability that the form has survived, "since its basic plot of soul-struggle, fall, and the eventual recovery could be suited to countless themes" (Bevington 795). As Bernard Spivack proved in *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil*, Shakespeare owed much to the moralities for providing insight into the nature of evil.

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"Richard III, Iago, Edmund (in King Lear), and to an extent Falstaff, all owe much to the Vice as a stage type. The morality plays thus became the chief dramatic link between the medieval stage and the Shakespearian," and at least in that way, if not in and of itself, the morality play has left its distinctive mark on world theater (Bevington, Drama 795).
APPENDIX II

This illustration comes from

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