THEATRICALITY IN *MANKIND*: THE DEVIL'S "REAL PRESENCE"
BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

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Studiul de față se concentrează în jurul teatralismului piesei *Mankind*, scopul demersului critic fiind scoaterea în evidență a relației complexe dintre tensiunea sacru-profan a piesei și spectacolul profan al acesteia. Premisa cercetării o constituie faptul că, în ciuda considerării sale ca moralitate, având un puternic caracter religios și didactic, piesa relevă și o remarcabilă interacțiune a întruchipării diavolului cu doctrina Lateran IV a Prezenței Reale.

Addressing theatricality in the English morality play *Mankind* may seem redundant when a host of studies and essays have done precisely this (Kelley; Garner; Twycross). Nonetheless, the play's theatricality is worth investigating anew so as to unravel the striking parallel – albeit presumably unintended – between its embodiment of the devil and the Lateran IV doctrine of the Real Presence, and to study the role the play's original audience may have been cast in. A brief review of the medieval development of the doctrines concerning embodiment in two of the most extreme theological cases, i.e. the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the devil's ontological status, is necessary for clarifying how the twentieth-century views of theatricality as embodiment bear upon the theatrical and doctrinarian strategies of fifteenth-century *Mankind*.

Christianity inherited from the Greco-Roman antiquity and Judaism, and developed along its own lines in accordance with the historical context too, an ambivalent attitude to the senses and the body, most apparently shown in the commendation of sight as both cognitively uppermost within the hierarchy of the senses and yet just as prone to being deceived, the most noble sense and at the same time still unable to contemplate Truth (Pelikan *passim*; Jay 28-33). Ironically, despite its various interpretations during the Middle Ages, the Johannine triad "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (NKJV, 1 Jn. 2:16) never lost its grip on the medieval mind as the media for one's succumbing to the devilish snare (more homely dubbed *temporalia*).[1]

Largely unacknowledged – or at least not as emphatically as the former – the positive dimension of *libido videndi*, viz. a keen search for this-life *visio Dei*, gained momentum after the promulgation of the doctrine of transubstantiation[2] by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), especially in the context of the Church's "strategy of the visible" (Certeau 87). Thus, the thirteenth century initiated the Elevation of the Host after consecration, which encouraged a form of Eucharistic devotion soon to abandon frequent communion, in certain cases, in favour of merely seeing the Host (i.e. ocular communion). This inchoate ocularcentrism was only bolstered by the early fourteenth-century institution of the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, which paraded the Eucharist for adoration *extra muros* (Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion" 97-8). Both institutions

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[1] Augustine of Hippo interpreted *concupiscentia oculorum* ("desire of the eyes") as *vitium curiositatis*, i.e. idle thinking that distracted the Christian from thinking of God, or alternatively that sought to pry into God's *secreta* (Newhauser 109-10). It should be pointed out, however, that Augustine emphatically equated *oculus* with all the senses – and distrusted all just as much. On the other hand, his notion of *curiositas* overlapped to a certain extent with each of the other two vices, *superbia* and *voluptas carnis*, at least due to what they shared in common: the allegedly impure eyes gazing at and delighting in the body of oneself, of the other, or of the Invisible.

[2] The Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation has an intricate history of controversy. Since Augustine and until mid-12th century a temporal caesura had obtained in the Latin Church between Jesus' historical body (viz. the *proprium et verum corpus*) and its effects manifest in the Church–Eucharist binary (viz. Christ's *corpus mysticum*), i.e. in the liturgical combination of a visible community (*laós*, "people") and a secret action (*érgon*) or *mysterium* (Certeau 86). *Corpus mysticum* as strictly the consecrated Host remained thereafter, with few exceptions, the official meaning of the term until mid-12th century, whereas the Church as Christian society continued to be known as the *Corpus Christi* in agreement with St Paul's terminology. With climactic moments in the ninth century (the controversy between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus), the eleventh century (Berengar of Tours' unorthodox views) and the teaching of heretical sectarians (who tended to spiritualise and mystify the Eucharist), the dispute about Eucharistic transubstantiation compelled the Church to stress most emphatically, not a spiritual or mystical, but the *real* presence of both the human and the divine Christ in the consecrated Host, a doctrine finally culminating in the dogma of transubstantiation (promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215). The Eucharist was now officially designated as the *corpus verum* or *corpus naturale* (or simply *Corpus Christi*), while the notion of *corpus mysticum* was gradually transferred after 1150 to the Church as the *organised* body of Christian society united in the Sacrament of the Altar.

support Michel de Certeau's (85) opinion that Lateran IV authorised the hiatus between the signifier and the signified: formerly the *corpus mysticum*, the Eucharistic signified now became, as the *corpus verum*, the signifier of *ecclesia* (grasped as mysterious and constituted only through communion).[3]

Although medieval theologians insisted on the consecrated Host's consubstantiality with Christ, it was held as his *invisible* image: Christ's Real Presence lay concealed behind the species of bread and wine[4] and would only resurface either to reward faith, especially in the case of the female mystics' Eucharistic trances (Bynum, *Holy Feast*), or to counter *trivial* doubt, as in the case of the legendary Mass of St Gregory (Rubin 118).[5] In other words, a vision of the Real Presence could ostensibly confirm and bolster faith while in fact playing down the tension within Christendom between belief and, patterned on the Doubting Thomas archetype, disbelief or mistrust: the sacramental (bleeding) body of Christ would re-emerge within the liturgical format and church building only when a breach of faith was apparent.

At the other end of the spectrum, seeing the devil/demons was not necessarily linked to a liturgical or (largo sensu) religious context, though it could be at times. To begin with, the medieval Church defined its position relative to the notion of the devil well after the turn of the first millennium: theologians may have pronounced on the issue all along,[6] but the dogma itself lagged behind. This, according to Muchembled (19, 29), indicates the absence of a *great demonic obsession* within Christian society at large, though one that obtained only in the absence of a *concrete threat* posed to its faith by religious heterodoxies. It was only with the Fourth Lateran Council that the Church deemed it timely to pronounce on the devil's *existence*.[7] The very textual structure of the first canon is quite telling, for the devil issue occurs, embedded within a comprehensive view of the universe, immediately before the authoritative presentation of the Second Person of the Trinity, itself preceding the promulgation of the transubstantiation dogma: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created by God good by nature but they became bad through themselves; man, however, sinned at the suggestion of the devil" (Schroeder). This so-called *Firmiter* constitution thus resorted to the patristic notion of free will in order to grapple with the tenuous question of the presence of sin and evil in a world created by the supreme Good: moral evil was construed as spiritual, not corporeal, originating as it did in a *spiritual* entity's temptation of the humans into transgression (Quay 30). Nonetheless, the devil and demons were given full ontological status on a footing with the angels';[8] this, in turn, paved the way for a gradually more coherent reappraisal of the global ontological system, where imaging the devil became an important explanatory instrument.

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[3] The Church allowed devotion to the *humanity of Christ* to gain momentum at the same time as it elicited reverence for the *temporarily deified celebrant* because of the *divinity* he was handling so conspicuously, due to the shift in emphasis from "being filled with the Spirit" to "*making the body and blood present*" (qtd. in Pelikan 200; my italics) in the liturgy of the Mass (which isolated the words of institution from the rest of the Eucharistic prayer). The thirteenth-century corporatist Church thus appropriated the sacramental body of Christ through an act of "symbolic cannibalism" (Biddick 54) to identify itself as the only earthly institution vested to grant legitimate vision of the invisible *spiritualia* – albeit generally in metaphorical terms – to all Christians.

[4] Throughout the Middle Ages, the theologians attempted to explain whether the Real Presence was to be grasped literally or metaphorically. Of interest here is the explanation of the remanent *species of bread and wine* in the consecrated wafer: drawing on Ambrose, figures as different as James of Vitry, John of Peckham and Roger Bacon extolled the benevolence of the divinity in *veiling the awesome view of flesh and blood* so as to obviate both the Christians' aversion to and the infidels' ridiculing this form of cannibalism (Rubin 360; Bynum, "Blood of Christ" n. 8).

[5] In Miri Rubin's (118) classification of exempla featuring Eucharistic miracles, apart from a "vision" of the real substances (or other unusual sensations, e.g. smell, taste, sound), the other major categories of Eucharistic miracles involved some unusual behaviour of natural elements, animals or humans, arising from the awesome proximity of the Eucharist or the appearance of Eucharistic properties (e.g. flesh, blood or the Man of Sorrows) to a knowing abuser (subsequently to be meted out his/her due punishment).

[6] In the records of the eremitic tradition of the desert the evil distractions levelled at the saintly were successfully circumvented and sometimes deflected to such an extent as to claim that the holy figures had finally played a trick on the devil (Jennings 4). The subsequent reports, commentaries and definitions by Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great or Isidore of Seville, authoritatively insisted on the range of the activities of malign spirits, extending from the mental and spiritual worlds into that of material creation; since the eleventh century, a vast demonological output would comprise forms as diverse as legends, hagiography, ascetical and mystical treatises, ecclesiastical and juridical records, primers for preachers and various compendia, and demons would be discussed in works by Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Lombard, Albert the Great or Thomas Aquinas (Jennings 5-6). According to Tom Licence, of all later medieval monastic orders, the Cistercians should be credited for opening to scrutiny the subject of the mechanics of demon-vision, the origin and means of obtaining this ability, and the power it bestowed upon the seer. Hagiographers generally blurred the distinction between the ability to see invisible demons and that to spot visible ones in disguise, by advancing the notion of *phantasmata*, i.e. the devil's capacity of adopting various chimerical disguises, including invisibility.

[7] As early as 561 the Second Council of Braga defined the devil as a creation of God.

[8] Lateran IV's acknowledgement of the existence of demons, however, should be understood in the historical context of the Church's fight against the Cathar heresy (premised on a dualist depreciation of the material world with devastating impact on the Creationist and Incarnational doctrines).

Dogma apart, iconography and homiletic literature had already featured the devil; the very specificity of the visual medium and of the audience, respectively, called for a *material* embodiment of demons. Originally still the product of theological imagination and clerical fears, particularly in the monastic milieu, the devil became highly visible in iconography after the Year One Thousand. Muchembled (26-7, 41-3) contends that in the contemporary scholastic conceptual framework the notion of the devil acquired the attributes of inverted sacredness (viz. the infernal king) and materiality. Demons came to be considered able both to manifest themselves bodily in the world, particularly in the realm of sexuality, and to acquire any beastly or hybrid body, even to enter the human body itself.

This material turn was bolstered by the preachers' inclination to particularise demons by attributing them special functions and even names (whether creations of monastic fantasy or derivations from other religions). Of them all, Titivillus (or Tutivillus) is the only one whose name and activities seem to have been generally familiar in the later Middle Ages, and who is often recognisable in imagery.[9] In the later medieval literary tradition,[10] Titivillus conflated two characters: the anonymous *diabolus scribens* (recording demon) of the exemplum tradition and the sack-carrier Titivillus. The former's task was to register the *vaniloquia* of the laity attending Mass; the latter's, to deposit in his bag the clerics' fallacies during prayers and the divine service, from omitted to skimmed-over (Latin) syllables. In both cases, the collection was be used as evidence against the speakers on Judgement Day.[11] Positive or negative verbal excess notwithstanding, the offenders were deemed guilty of *taedium* or *acedia*, the vice of sloth which here amounted to stealing what was due to God: the very words of prayer, and moreover thorough and whole-hearted religious observance as a form of spiritual communion (as also happens in *Mankind*). According to Margaret Jennings (32), a parallel process can be traced between the waning force of moralisation of the scribbler motif in the exempla and the waxing of the demon's popularity in folklore and the visual arts (focusing on the entertainment value of the incident).

Mutatis mutandis, *Mankind* provides a "demonic" counterpart to the liturgical Real Presence, this time sponsored not by the *ecclesia* via the celebrant priest before a congregation standing in the church nave, but by "the theatre" via the actors' impersonations of the dramatic characters before a seated and standing audience presumably in a great hall.[12] What the spectators could *all* see – as the script insists – was the bodying forth of Titivillus, traditionally a demonic *underling* now turned the devil incarnate. The crux of the matter in *Mankind* from the point of view of theatricality is the way Titivillus makes his apparition onstage and works his way up to change Mankind's mind by working his way down the man's "material bodily lower stratum" (in Bakhtin's terms). To understand the theatrical claim of representing the devil and how this could impinge on the audience's fall into temptation, however, requires a brief overview of our modern understanding of theatricality.

Recent theorization of the twentieth-century search for theatricality has brought to the fore the "literalness principle" (Sarrazac 62-3), which asserts the material dimension and the presentness of theatre. By highlighting the physical presence of the specific elements of theatre (e.g. the actors' bodies, sets and props, costumes, etc.), this principle renders the sensible *the* signifier and always links meaning to its locale.

The "literalness principle" implicitly underpins Josette Féral's discussion of *the theatricality of the quotidian*. The conditions under which this is realized – (1) through the performers' reallocation of the quotidian space they occupy and (2) through the spectators' active gaze framing a quotidian space that they don't occupy – create a cleft that "divides the space into the 'outside' and the 'inside' of theatricality" (Féral 97).

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[9] Anderson (173-5) mentions various English illustrations of this story in wall-paintings and especially misericords. Titivillus' earliest extant iconographic rendition is a fresco in St Gregory's church, Reichenau, dated *c*. mid-fourteenth century. Concurring with Anderson, Jennings (33) documents a more frequent occurrence of the scribbler motif (on the Continent too), whether it be on roof bosses, capitals, niches, bench ends, manuscript marginalia or even tapestries, as well as in folklore.

[10] In English literature, Titivillus features in the Towneley *Last Judgement* (the work of the Wakefield Master) and in the sermon collection *Jacob's Well* (*c*. 1410-20). The demon of *Mankind*, W. A. Davenport (107-8, 112) maintains, may well have his ancestry in the Titivillus equipped with scroll and sack, but he is also connected, if indirectly, with Treselincellis in Peter Idley's *Instructions to His Son* (mid-fifteenth century), whose source was the demon Terlyncel ("Draw-sheet") in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (1303).

[11] Both the scribbler and the sack carrier, whether or not identified onomastically, as well as Titivillus, feature in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts (Jennings 85-91). This demon's office may be rooted in part in Jesus' words: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof on the Day of Judgement" (Matt. 12:36).

[12] Line 29 ("O 3e soverens þat sytt and 3e brothern þat stonde right uppe") suggests a distinction between seated and standing spectators that would account, according to Walker (260, n.2), for their (social) hierarchical positioning for an indoor performance within a great hall. In effect, some medievalists (Twycross 66-70; Pettitt, qtd. in Diller) concur with Richard Southern in conjecturing that *Mankind* was most likely designed for such a performance, although there is by no means unanimity over the issue: William Tydeman believes an outdoor performance was rather the case (qtd. in King 247).

Accordingly, *stage*-related theatricality is only *one* expression or manifestation of (transcendent) theatricality (Féral 98-9): the actor's body becomes a system of signs which semiotizes everything around it, while acting itself "is the result of a performer's *decision… to consciously occupy the here-and-now of a space* different from the quotidian, *to become involved in activity outside of daily life*" (101; my italics). The rules codifying acting derive as much from general rules of performance as from more specific ones derived from historically defined theatrical aesthetics, and supply a *framework* for the action. It is precisely this framework that which guarantees order against forces coming from the outside while, from within, it authorizes the violation of the same order, in the sense of "freedoms… of reproduction, imitation, duplication, transformation, deformation, the violation of established norms, of nature, and of social order," yet within certain interdictions (Féral 101, 104). Féral's theorization of the conditions of the theatricalization of the quotidian (subsumable under the "literalness principle") is particularly useful in understanding the production of the medieval theatre, and can provide the theoretical background for investigating the import of theatricality in a morality play like *Mankind*.

A brief description of *Mankind*[13] will provide the context for understanding the play's theatricality and, within it, for addressing Titivillus' *differentia specifica* from the literary and iconographic tradition of the recording demon. As various commentators have remarked, *Mankind*'s didactic burden concerns labour as a remedy for the deadly sin of sloth. Not only does the confessor-preacher Mercy enjoin that Mankynde (Mankind) should till his plot industriously, but the man himself, having readily internalized the sermon, counterpoises his earnest agricultural labour to the enticements put forward by the so-called "distraction vices," Nowadays, New Gyse (New Guise) and Nought.[14] The morality play dramatizes the multifarious means whereby, on Mercy's temporary departure, the World orchestrates the manipulation of Mankind/the audience's profession of faith in an attempt to subvert his/their religious allegiance through excessive merry-making. Unattended by their leader Myscheff (Mischief), the three Vices deride Mankind's toil but strive unsuccessfully to lure him away from it (ll. 345-76). Threatened with the spade (ll. 377-81) and finally beaten up in a highly comic slapstick routine, they complain about having been torn asunder (ll. 382-4, 389-92) and curse his "myght" (ll. 399-401). Mischief's return will provide for another round of amusement, this time in evoking the mummers' routine of the quack doctor: he promises to cure the Vices' injured parts by chopping them off and then restoring them, which they flatly refuse lest they "myght well be callyde a foppe [*fool*]" (l. 445). There's no telling whether the audience would have perceived this as a self-conscious demystification of the quack doctor routine or as the funny routine itself (presumably never entirely able, nor meant, to take in the spectators). However, Nought's mockery[15] of the fears of Nowadays of losing his head and of New Guise his "jewellys" (*testicles*) testifies to an acknowledgement of the "schreude charme" (*wicked trick*, l. 438) involved, whether it be magic or mere conjuring tricks.

In brief, the Vices' initial role is ostensibly to entertain the spectators solely – for the protagonist turns a deaf ear on them at this point – at the expense of Mankind (or even apart from him), so as ultimately to win *them* over insidiously into perdition. The means whereby this can purportedly be accomplished is offering a spectacle of actual or invoked infliction of bodily pain verging on dismemberment. Not abstract exhortation but spectacularly ostended physicality is what woos the audience into sympathy with, though for the time still keeping a distance from, the Vice figures and the material evil they are made to stand for in the homiletic/theological discourse.

Keeping this distance from the allurements of the *theatrical space*[16] is hard to always do, and in fact it is hardly desirable at times, especially where the characters professing the Church's teachings step in. Furthermore,

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[13] One of the three East-Anglian Macro plays, *Mankind* dates in manuscript (Folger Shakespeare Library MS Va. 354) from 1465-70. All my subsequent quotations from the play come from *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. Greg Walker (2000).

[14] Mankind learns the Vices' names (l. 295) from Mercy, who takes pains to warn him that though "nyse in ther aray, in language they be large" (l. 296), viz. ready to imbue him with "many a lye" (l. 300), while Titivillus, who can "goth invysybull" (l. 303), is wont to cast his evil snare by even more deceptive stratagems: "He wyll ronde [*whisper*] in yowr ere and cast a nett before yowr ey" (ll. 304-5).

[15] Nought looks forward to watching the cure, which he ironically blesses like at a public execution: "Ye pley *in nomine patris*, choppe!" (l. 441).

[16] Donnalee Dox classifies the space of the medieval theatre into (1) theatrical space, (2) mutable space and (3) the space of imagination. *The theatrical space* denotes the "stagings of the play based on twentieth century conjectures and the relationship of bodies and objects in space that produce meanings duplicated elsewhere in fifteenth century English culture" (167); *the mutable space* "deals with how the play's themes of Christian order and hierarchy are represented in space" (168); *the space of imagination* "suggests that theatrical performance not only occurs in space but also represents concepts of space," thus offering "a conception of space that links performance space directly with belief in God," more specifically "an aspect of space not defined by bodies and material objects but by the Christian theological imagination" (168), viz. the void (or imaginary) space inaccessible to the human senses (187).

the performance venue (let alone the actors' everyday status and relation to the audience) makes this distance a moot point: I have already alluded to this as presumably the great hall of a noble household or of a college (Twycross). Meg Twycross' (66-7) tentative reconstruction of the great hall as a theatrical space for *Mankind* suggests a visual and semiotic offstage confrontation between the authority figure, on the one hand, and the visitors, servants and (amateur) actors, on the other. Framed under a *celure* ("cloth of estate") and seated at the high table on the dais, the lord commanded a global view of the hall as well as being immediately recognizable as the wielder of power to the actors, who emerged into the hall through the two entrance gaps in the wooden screens (masking the kitchen wall and the side wall entrance). If the indoor performance hypothesis is correct, and moreover if the audience was not a motley crowd but rather one familiar with Latin (so that the Latinate English puns and theological arguments wouldn't be lost on the listeners), then the "actors" entered a quotidian space with a view to temporarily reallocating it as their acting area, yet they had to seize it back continually, for this purpose, from the (standing) spectators. In other words, their performance literally *took* (the) place (cf. Weber 122) and fought for commanding its allocation, the meaning inscribed on it and the spectators' attention, even participation. Furthermore, in the case of *Mankind*, the occasion itself may have been Shrovetide,[17] the pre-Lenten moment of merriment and climax of Christmas revels. Thus, the dining space of the great hall could temporarily accommodate an alternative world, itself "part of a continuum of festivity" that engendered a "sense… of being *en fête*" (Twycross 67). No wonder, then, that the Vices habitually cry for room and silence when they reappear onstage, a practical necessity that was finally written into the part: theirs is an intrusive yet cheerful and ludic entrance, commensurate with both venue and occasion, an *enterlude* ("interlude") in fact. The *enterlude* refers here both to the morality's avowed *ludic* bent, permeating as it does the very banqueting format which occasioned its production and wherein it is another piece to be festively consumed, and to various instances of an actor *entering* the visual field of the audience.

Quite appropriately, Mercy' and Mankind's drab homiletics in the initial part of the play are interspersed with the distraction vices' *enterlude* routine, as Mischief proclaims from the outset, "I am cumme hedyr to make yow game" (l. 69) and Nowadays reinforces, "Lett ws be mery wyll we be here!" (l. 77). At New Guise's bidding, Nought dances to the minstrels' "comyn trace" (*common tune*, l. 72), while later, at Nowadays' initiative to sing a (bawdy) "Chrystemes songe" (l. 333), he invites the spectators to join in: "Now I prey all þe yemandry þat ys here / To singe with ws with a mery chere" (ll. 334-344). When the Vices summon Titivillus, they will have a "mynstrell" call him (l. 452), but Nought volunteers to "pype in a Walsyngham wystyll" (*blow a whistle/flute*, l. 453). It appears that Nought was no idle braggart when, on meeting Mankind, he professed his role as a professional entertainer, viz. the "foll" (*fool*, l. 275): "I love well to make mery" (l. 273).

From a strictly theatrical point of view, the Vices' summoning of Titivillus to come and work his magic on the adamant Christian ushers in the most spectacular part of the play where the performance thrives on theatrical skills and special effects that operate structurally, i.e. contribute to the overall theatricality of the play. The Vices' conjuring of the devil to their aid arguably looks more like conjuring him up, while Titivillus' deeds onstage render him the embodiment of deceit *par excellence*.[18]

To begin with, the enthusiastic Vices extol Titivillus' qualities in terms of praise-abuse (Bakhtin) reminiscent of the traditional attributes of Satan himself and pointing to the use of a suitable mask, a "hede… of grett omnipotens" (l. 462) commensurate with "hys abhomynabull presens" (l. 466). The spectators are thereby persuaded to *pay to see* the devil incarnate: "*Estis vos pecuniatus*?" (l. 472), Nought enquires soon after New Guise has announced,

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[17] Shrovetide, a pre-Lent Carnival extravaganza of lesser importance in Britain than on the Continent, evinced in its very name the preparation for abstinence, while the feast overarching the three days before Ash Wednesday actually capitalized on public display and aggression (Axton 146-7).

[18] In Isidore of Seville's seventh-century *Etymologies* magic was described as an artifice bestowed on the humans by the devil; Hugh of St Victor's twelfth-century taxonomy of magical practice classified it, along Isidore's lines, as (1) *mantica* (e.g. necromancy), (2) *mathematica* (e.g. augurs and the horoscope), (3) *sortilegium* (the odds), (4) *maleficium* (sorcery), and (5) *praestigium* (illusionism). *Praestigium* features here as a branch of magic insofar as illusions, to the medieval mind, could only interfere with the senses by demonic intervention. Yet, according to Kieckhefer ("Magic and Sorcery in Medieval Europe" 16, 21-2), this interpretation also suggests the ludic dimension of magic, whether couched in terms of sense *delusion* or of sinister *entertainment*. Moreover, the later Middle Ages still upheld the Augustinian view of magic as theurgy that concerned wonders wrought by demons: Augustine contended that "the only way for demons to exercise power over people after the devil's defeat by the resurrection of Christ was by deception," so that magic merely amounted to "an imposture of malignant spirits" whose powers were "essentially cheats, deceptions and lies" (qtd. in Ward 9-10).

We xall (*shall*) gaþer mony onto
Ellys þer xall no man hym se
Now gostly to owr purpose, worschypfull soverence,
We intende to gather mony, yf yt plesse yowr neclygence. (ll. 458-61)

The entrance fee routine *evoked*, rather than collected,[19] here plays up the theatricality of the event no less than inverting religious practices and the divine commandments that condemn both idol veneration ("He ys a worschyppull man, sers, saving yowr reverens," l. 464) and any commerce with the devil. Once cajoled into succumbing to *curiosity* and the "*lust of the eyes*" for the *physical presence* of the demon onstage, i.e. the very premise of theatricality, the spectators are urged to "make space and be ware" (l. 475) for Titivillus, who has agreed to appear in visible, human form ("com wyth my leggys under me," l. 455).

"*Ego sum dominancium dominus* and my name ys Titivillus" (l. 476), Titivillus issues forth upon entering the stage. His asseveration of absolute power (*I am the lord of lords*) mimics God's – in Deuteronomy 10:17, but also in the English mystery plays of the Creation – and is commensurate with the cosmic and political claims of most tyrant figures in the medieval English theatre. Feudal allusions notwithstanding, this assertion of dominion over the world is primarily targeted at the audience, who should succumb to his spell (the devil's, but also the actor's) no less readily than the Vices appear to have done – once they call him "*Domine*" (l. 488). Titivillus' opening line thus drives it home to the spectators that they are witnessing the encroachment of evil upon the world, and likewise the actor's on the great hall turned theatrical space, whereby he steals the show.[20] Later, Titivillus necessarily inverts the formulaic bidding good-bye (God be with ye) to the Vices by commending them to the "Deull" (*devil*, l. 522), and suitably blesses them with his "lyfte honed" (*left hand*) to have a "foull… befall" (l. 523).

Invisible to Mankind after casting a net over the protagonist's eyes (symbolic of the latter's lapse into moral *caecitas*), Titivillus puts on a show for the spectators at the expense of the man: the board which he slips in to have the labourer think the soil is hard (ll. 534-7) counteracts physically Mankind's spade; the devil's *sleight of hand* in stealing the corn (l. 548), i.e. the fruit of one's spiritual endeavour, counterpoises symbolically *dextera Domini*, viz. God's right hand emerging from the clouds to bless and to dispense justice on Earth, according to medieval iconography. By the same token, any instance of a conjuror's trick maintains the demonic association this morality play highlights, and, by extension, so can theatre itself, as suggested earlier in the quack doctor's (failed) routine.

The devil's deceit is all-embracing indeed: no sooner has Mankind resolved to stop work to pray[21] than Titivillus induces him a need for defecation. The episode capitalizes on a bodily function (to be "performed" offstage) regarded, in Bakhtinian terms of praise-abuse, as relief. Arguably, this hoax on the man renders purgation the most expedient countermeasure to prayer; in fact, Mankind's predicament amounts to a parodic *real*ization, or rather debased *incarnation*, of the biblical notion of the "Word made flesh." The World, the "Flesch" and the "Dewell" (l. 885) – embodying as they do the medieval motif of the Three Enemies of Man – have eventually succeeded in subjecting even the pious and alert Christian.

Eli Rozik's (113) triadic semiotic model underpinning the principle of acting as quintessential theatricality may provide both a useful theoretical tool for addressing the *Mankind* performance of the devil and a caveat. On stage the actor produces two kinds of signs: *self-referential* (ostending the actor's artistic skills) and respectively a *deflection of reference* (by means of subject-signs that identify the dramatic character and predicate-signs that describe the character). There is therefore an ontological gap between the actor's body in the real world and the text inscribed on his/her body which describes the character independent of the real world, and likewise between the latter and the character as the fictional referent of the description on stage. Moreover, another ontological gap, this time undergirded by theatrical conventions too, obtains between the enacted action on stage and its corresponding action in the fictional world (Rozik 116). Arguably, only highly

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[19] Tom Pettitt (qtd. in Diller) argues that a real *quete* would have unduly interrupted the performance for too long, and would have proven an uncertain basis for the existence of a touring professional troupe – as it has long been held *Mankind*'s actors were.

[20] Ironically, Titivillus will steal the distraction vices' show (who have already made an exhibition of themselves, especially Nought, avowed as he is to make a fool of himself) by attracting the audience's attention to his acts with very material outcome: from sleight of hand (when he steals Mankind's corn and spade), magic (when he induces Mankind's defecation, then sleep and dreams) and conjuring skills in general (when he reveals the secret of counterfeit coins to the audience), to urging the Vices to try their own dexterity at robbery and warning the audience against it!

[21] "Thys place I assyng as for my kyrke" (*I assign this place for my church*, l. 553) not only evokes the protagonist's incipient lapse into spiritual torpor but also shows the actor's manipulation of space by assignment or description.

sophisticated spectators nowadays are aware of such intricate interpretative protocols, and it would therefore be counterproductive to require this much of the medieval audience (whether aristocratic or scholarly) or even to deploy contemporary theories in interpreting the past. Here we may, however, have reached rather slippery ground, for the "fictional world" evoked by a medieval morality play was deemed the ontologically most real one, i.e. it was regarded as the individual's microcosm and corresponded to the mystery cycles' macrocosm of the *historia sacra*. If, for Rozik (117) stage "reality" amounts to a description (only apparently real due to the material nature of the theatrical sign), for the medieval audience the inverted commas around the term *reality* concerning the dramatization of spiritual fall and redemption would have been anathema. The religious discursive formation in the later Middle Ages construed both the hereafter and one's inner life as matters whose spiritual reality (Dox's "space of imagination") did not defy human senses *altogether* (if we subsume the contemplation of the supreme Truth under the rubric of the soul's senses), nor substantial rendition in verbal, pictorial or theatrical media. Generic conventions – consonant as they were with the Church's long-term rhetorical strategy of having the Christians interiorize their religion – encouraged perceiving the Mankind character of any morality play as both personification allegory (ultimately representative of each and every spectator) and an individual in his (*sic*) own right (viz. a dramatic character). Furthermore, as Twycross and Carpenter (29-36) argue, the use of masks particularly for the supernatural characters ensured that the actor was perceived as *representing* (viz. standing in for) the character, hence close to Rozik's notion of description, rather than encouraging any actor–character identification. Hence, *Mankind*'s structural "ensnaring" of its contemporary audience in evil may have played upon the dangerous intertwining between what Jean Alter (qtd. in Carlson 245) calls the referential (or semiotic) function of theatre, which engenders emotional identification and sympathy, and its performance function (or theatricality), where the virtuosic display of the arts of the theatre is meant to affect the audience and thereby to engender a distancing from the everyday through amazement at flamboyant artifice.

On the other hand, the late twentieth-century celebration of the theatricality of plays like *Mankind* has lately turned to the anthropological dilemma of whether "the ritual of public game enhanced the community's mythic sense of reality" or rather "demysticized" the "invisible and ritually sacrosanct" (Paxon n.32). "Histrionic artifice" (involving the unusual co-operation of several craft guilds in the case of mysteries) would raise doubts about the credibility of demons and afterlife punishment, hence, according to Paxon, the "artificial demonic" on stage contributed to a gradual internalization of the literate *dis*belief in the *reality* of the demonic. It could be countered that other supernatural figures too benefited from the plays' theatricality and the craft guilds' ingenious contrivances, so by the same token the holy figures would have been rendered just as noncredible, and moreover that the generic format of the plays, be they mysteries or moralities, ensured a certain degree of conformity of interpretation rather than permitting a double standard.

In *Mankind*, the devil as the archetypal trickster-figure shows the audience his skills at deception: "Titivillus kan lerne yow many praty things" (l. 573), he boasts, such as the secret of counterfeiting silver coins (ll. 570-2); his evil teachings attempt a *trompe-l'oeil* effect whereby to ensnare the people in the eternal fire. In fact, religious ideology and theatrical ruse reinforce one another in Titivillus' acting in *Mankind*: he *stages* the protagonist's sleep – wherein the latter has a "vysyon" (l. 656) of Mercy's demise "on the galouse" (ll. 590-601) – in terms of "a praty *game*" that "xall be *scheude* yow" (*shall be showed*, l. 592; my italics) provided that "for me kepe now yowr sylence" (l. 590). As elsewhere in medieval theatre, deceit underpins everything related to the world, the flesh and the devil to the effect that salvation itself might be imperilled ("Forwell, everychon! for I have don my game, / For I have brought Mankynde to myscheff and to shame," ll. 606-7), were it not for the reassuring generic format supported by the Christian doctrine of divine grace.

That within the morality frame Titivillus plays no episodic but a fundamental part can be grasped from the change of his traditional role and the conditions of seeing him. The familiar recorder of the sin of sloth has become the very occasion for it (Jennings 67), on the one hand, and moreover the demonic underling has been promoted to the role of *the* fiend of Hell who *prides* in his expertise in the *deception of humanity*, i.e. his fundamental demonic condition, on the other. Appropriately relocated from the recording demon's highperched position to the sack-carrier's ground floor, Titivillus nonetheless stays concealed out of the spectators' view unless and until they consent to enter the game of perverted "simony." Ironically, though, the audience's succumbing to the *vitium curiositatis* and scripted readiness to *pay* for *seeing* the devil *incarnate* – a demonic parody of both the divine kenosis (the Incarnation) and transubstantiation (the Eucharistic Real Presence) to be *festively consumed* – turns on its head the very Christian dogma of the divine salvific plan, i.e.

Jesus' crucifixion as *paying off* the humans' debt incurred upon Adam and Eve's encounter with the tempter. Titivillus' most important role in *Mankind* is to orchestrate, albeit implicitly, the show of merriment-cum-perdition; accordingly, the play could arguably be construed as a theatrically-effective endorsement of the medieval view of the close links between theatre and (ludic) deceit, as the original meaning of *illusion* implies too.[22]

Mankind enjoys a status of in-between-ness: a morality play true to its religious-didactic agenda, it nevertheless makes the most of the venue and convivial disposition of the spectators so as to edify *and* entertain them. The profane commensality inscribed in the great hall, which renders the diners a small, temporary, participating community (all the more so as the "enterlude" of *Mankind* is presented as both *entertainment for consumption* and *food for thought*), echoes and displaces the sacred commensality underpinning the Christian community/congregation that participates, through Eucharistic communion, in the very Christic drama of passion and salvation. Ironically, then, the play's theatricality defines festive (convivial) participation as communality not in terms of the sacred community but, to employ John Cox's definition (19), by default, as what disrupts and opposes it, as the sheer number of evil characters suggests.

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[22] Some scholars have noted the latent ideological flaw of a morality play like *Mankind* due to its foregrounding of theatricality as its outstanding accomplishment: "the entertaining immediacy of performance as a form of diversion… 'distracts' attention from the invisible realities of the eternal to the sensory realities of the moment" (Garner 275). Likewise, the "flamboyant ornamentation" of morality plays often eclipses their instructive bent, so that in the last resort they "delight more than they preach or teach" (Kelly 27). Accordingly, Mankind's fall seems to depend more on the devil's cleverness as a magician (Kelly 87) than on the traditional abstract concept of evil snare – which is theatricality at its best.

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