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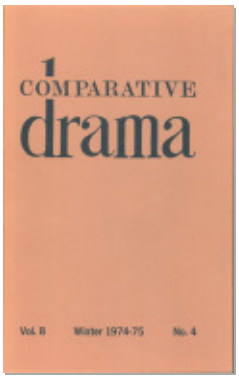

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The moral play *Mankind* has maintained an important position in the history of pre-Shakespearean drama because it is regarded as our earliest indisputable example of the popular professional theatre and because its performance in innyards has allowed theatre scholars to make rather direct connections between the shape of the innyard and Renaissance theatres.[1] Although there has been considerable modification of Hardin Craig's assertion that this is a crude play presented before a group of local yokels, the assumption still remains that the play is of popular, indeed of provincial, origin because it contains some rough humor and is stopped before Titivillus' entrance so the actors can collect the "gate" from the innyard audience.[2] In effect, these critics argue, the presence of obscenity and levity "places" the drama in the popular or less sophisticated tradition. It is true the lively dialogue is marked by the inclusion of utterances reminiscent of those used by the *Towneley* Cain and the demons of the *Castle of Perseverance,* but it also is made up of witty word play in Latin. This "learned" content, coupled with the dubious dramatic principle of stopping the play to collect the "gate," challenges our traditional attribution of the play to the popular canon as well as our assumptions about the criteria for defining audiences.

Before Titivillus enters, the play is stopped, we have come to believe, while the Three N's—New Gyse, Now-a-days and Nought—go through the audience collecting money. But one must question whether this method for obtaining the "gate" is necessary—the English apparently love plays and need not be flummoxed into paying admission—profitable, or dramatically defensible. If these three characters alone collected money from an innyard of people, then we must assume the play was halted for a considerable time. There are some indications in the text that the play, in fact, was performed indoors:

Nought. Go we hens, a deull wey!
Here ys þe dore, her ys þe wey. (158-59)
[*Mankynde.*] All heyll, semely father! ȝe be welcom to þis house. (209)
Mankynd. I wyll into þi ȝerde, souerens, and cum ageyn son. (561)[3]
[*Nought.*] I xall goo and mende yt, illys I wyll lost my hede.
Make space, sers, lett me go owte. (700-01)

The first illustration is the most specific; the other three more general and could simply refer to an offstage area. Nevertheless, the references suggest the possibility of indoor performance and the lack of any necessity to stop the play to collect a "gate" since it would be simpler and more profitable, assuming an admission was charged, to collect money at the door.

It is possible the interruption before Titivillus' entrance therefore is a begging joke, a tongue-in-cheek appeal to the "souerence" of the audience and the "goodeman" of the house to increase the players' pay:

NEW GYSE. ȝe, go þi wey! We xall gaþer mony onto,
Ellys þer xall no man hym se.

Now gostly to owr purpos, worschypfull souerence,
We intende to gather mony, yf yt plesse yowr neclygence,
For a man wyth a hede þat ys of grett omnipotens.

NOWADAYS. Kepe yowr tayll, in goodnes I prey yow, goode broþer!

He ys a worschyppull man, sers, sauying yowr reuerens.
He louyth no grotys, nor pens of to pens.
Gyf ws rede reyallys yf ȝe wyll se hys abhomynabull presens.

NEW GYSE. Not so! ȝe þat mow not pay þe ton, pay þe toþer.

At þe goodeman of þis house fyrst we wyll assay.
Gode blysse yow, master! ȝe say as yll, ȝet ye wyll not sey nay.
Lett ws go by and by and do þem pay.
ȝe pay all alyke; well mut ȝe fare! (457-70)

If we assume the play was directed to a popular audience, then

we must read "goodeman" literally to mean "innkeeper" and "souerence" as a compliment intended, without hope of success, to raise the tally from "grotys" to "rede reyallys." If, however, the speech is directed humorously to an audience of "worschypfull souerence," then it mockingly ("yf yt plesse yowr neclygence") equates the position of the devil with the audience's: "He ys a worschyppull man, sers, sauying yowr reuerens." The appeal for money is also made in a bantering tone; whereas "rede reyallys" would be appropriate from "worschypfull souerence," the players will settle for "pens" if that is all that will be stingily offered (467-70). This latter jibe at the audience's meanness may provide a more realistic explanation for the players' disclaimer of money at Titivillus' entrance. Finally, the reference to the "goodeman of the house" is perhaps not to be taken literally but as a humorous aside addressed to the insufficient patronage of their employer and as a recasting of him in the role of a common purveyor of refreshment.

The argument that the play may have been directed to a private audience cannot be postulated on this section of the play alone since it is capable of being read in at least two different ways. More significant—both because it would be comprehended by fewer people and because it exists in greater quantity than the scatology—is the ridiculing of Latin and Latinate speech. A few of the Latin phrases and sentences do not depend on a knowledge of Latin either because the root word is actually English or because the phrase is merely a tag which does not convey or interfere with meaning.[4] After Mankynd quotes Latin to the Three N's, Nought replies:

> No, mary, I beschrew yow, yt ys in spadibus.
> Therfor Crystys curse cum on yowr hedybus. (398-99)

The Latin may be an example of silly presumption as when Titivillus enters:

> Ego sum dominancium dominus and my name ys Titivillus.
> ȝe þat haue goode hors, to yow I sey caueatis. (475-76)

Or nonsense as when Nought records the court proceedings:

> Here ys blottybus in blottis,
> Blottorum blottibus istis. (680-81)

Similarly, the ridicule of Latinate speech requires no knowledge of Latin.[5]

However, most of the Latin citations are puns or involve witty mistranslations, and there is a large body of citations which convey the "moralitas." These passages require an understanding of Latin if one is to appreciate the humor and comprehend the message of the play.[6] The first Latin parody of an aphorism occurs after Mischief intrudes upon Mercy's statement that the "corn xall be sauyde, þe chaffe xall be brente" (43):

> Ande ȝe sayde þe corn xulde be sauyde and þe chaff xulde be feryde,
> Ande he 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 þe nexte bakynge.
> 'Chaff 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)

Despite the nonsense of the "Latin," the passage requires some knowledge of grammar as well as of the style of the popular preachers such as that of our Dominican Mercy.[7]

The most telling point against the assumption of innyard performance is the quantity of untranslated Latin at the conclusion of the play when the moral is drawn. Rather than cite the Latin and translate it, a technique to be expected in popular preaching and in works such as *Piers Plowman,* the playwright chooses to use the citations as authorities to endpoint the argument of redemption. It should be noted, therefore, that the Latin quotations do not restate an idea made in English but are a part of the argument:

> Mankend, ȝe were obliuyos of my doctrine monytorye.
> I seyde before, Titiuillus wold asay ȝow a bronte.
> Be ware fro hensforth of his fablys delusory.
> Þe prowerbe seyth, 'Jacula prestita minus ledunt.'
> (879-82)

While we must concede that the audience may not have been entirely aristocratic or literate—those standing "brothern" (line 29) may have been servants, for example—the texture and content of the play, if the Latin is not merely rhetorical but essential, argue the playwright anticipated a primarily educated audience.

This review of the evidence for staging the play may help us to understand its ambience. There is an uneasiness among

critics about Mercy's sententiousness and a belief that the folly figures, because they are amusing, overwhelm the moral. The play, they imply, is too much fun to be effectively didactic. This point of view is predicated, in part, on the "classical" assumption that comedy and serious matter do not mix, and its corollary, that pious material must be presented seriously and glumly. If, however, we separate "piousness" from "piety," then the mixing of the two dramatic modes is possible without the one overwhelming the other. More important than preconceived ideas of what constitutes a "moral play" is a misunderstanding of the initial effect of Mercy's speeches, and of his characterization in the central portion of the play. The solemnity of Mercy's opening speech would not be broken up by titters: it is in a high rhetorical style—that of God in the cycle plays as opposed to that of Herod, Pilate, and others—and the folly characters have not yet appeared to reorient the audience's perception of those speeches. Similarly, at the end of the play the speeches of both Mankynd and Mercy move from the less formal speech of the central portion of the play to the increasingly formal and aureate lines of the conclusion:

MERCY. Aryse, my precyose redempt son! ȝe be to me full dere.
He ys so tymerouse, me semyth hys vytall spryt doth exspyre.

MANKYNDE. Alasse, I haue be so bestyally dysposyde, I dare not apere.
To se yowr solaycyose face I am not worthy to dysyere. (811-14)

MERCY. Now for hys lowe þat for vs receywyd hys humanite,
Serge ȝour 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 prowe.
Therefore God grant ȝow all per suam misericordiam
Þat ye may be pleyferys wyth þe angellys abowe
And hawe to ȝour porcyon vitam eternam. Amen! (907-14)

The inclusion of Latin sentences, macaronic verse, and Latinate

words gradually elevates the style to the solemn conclusion. Had the poet immediately reverted to the aureate style of the opening speeches he might have invited laughter; however, he gradually reintroduces the style, and, in the absence of the farce characters, the play has the rising motion of edifying comedy.

No one, I think, would dispute the view that the ridiculing of Mercy and his style of speech is intended to force an alignment of the audience with the Three N's, Mischief, and a fallen Mankynd. The playwright uses laughter to trap the viewer into "sin." The farce, however, does not undermine the redemptive moral because the play works simultaneously as an affirmative comedy—Mankynd is saved, the antagonists banished—and as a social and theatrical satire. There is good reason to assume Mercy is dressed as a Dominican; the central portion of the play, therefore, can attack the pomposity and absurdities of the Dominican preaching style without touching the message of redemption.

Theatrical satire is apparent in the temptation scenes. One reason Mankynd will not get much grain out of his plot of ground, as the Three N's attempt to draw to his attention (351-75), is that it is a floor. The stealing of the grain and shovel is good farce but the action of the fall is made ludicrous by Titivillus' placing a board underneath Mankynd's shovel but on top of a wooden floor. In fact, Titivillus may not be the favorite character of a provincial audience; more than anything else he is a parody of the demons of popular drama. The playwright does not create a Lucifer or Satan; instead, he calls forth a ridiculous figure to be the "star" of his show. Not even among the minor demons of the cycle plays do we find a devil with a more anticlimactic or ridiculous entrance. After the noise of his incipient arrival, he cries, "I com with my legges vnder me," and, upon his arrival, his rhetorical flare collapses mid-sentence: "Ego sum dominancium dominus and my name ys Titivillus." And the character is further deflated by his immediate attempt to cadge some money from the Three N's.

Because of the comic portrayal of the antagonists, our perception of Mankynd's fall and its significance is radically different from that we have of Adam and Eve's in the cycle plays. In the latter is a direct agreement between God and man, a confrontation between man and Satan; the consequences of Adam's act are momentous, they alter the nature of time and the cosmos

and call into operation the divine scheme of salvation. Even the fall of Mankind in the *Castle of Perseverance* takes place within a cosmological framework. It is true that the *Castle*-Mankind succumbs to the abstract Covetise rather than the concrete Belyal, but the action of Mankind's life takes place amidst clearly visible cosmological forces. The tone of these two falls is serious; the effect, of apparent consequence. The fall of *Mankind* is farcical.

The playwright recalls the image of Adam by showing Mankynd in a post-Edenic world where he must "dyke and delve," "swete and swynke." But this is no Adam facing off the Archenemy of man; instead, we have a somewhat pompous farmer who is oblivious to the presence of his third-rate "tempter." In fact, Mankynd is not really tempted. The Three N's are ineffectual because they are so clearly fops whose silliness collapses into childish mewling when Mankynd resists their giddy blandishments. Mankynd is able to resist the obvious folly of the Three N's but unable to hold out against the slightest adversity. More than anything Mankynd falls out of impatience. Ultimately, the seriousness, the truthfulness of the action is not predicated on Mankynd's fall as a cosmic upheaval and expulsion from Eden. Every man's fall does not follow from a direct confrontation with the Archenemy but from an incidental moment of exasperation. While the ever alert Christian anticipates a grandstand play, while he waits around for Satan to show up to tempt him, the play implies, he has been aided in his fall by a thousand Titivilluses. The scene of Mankynd's fall best illustrates the play's ambience; it is a serious action treated comically without losing its significance. To fall, the play suggests to its educated audience, is to go to court, to become a fop; such a tragedy can only be averted by opening oneself up to Mercy.

The "learned" content, the performance indoors, and the use of the play as a vehicle for social and theatrical satire suggest *Mankind* may have been performed under private auspices. The presence of scatalogical humor, furthermore, need create no impediment against assigning the play to a literate or even aristocratic audience. Our tendency is to idealize the aristocracy and intelligentsia and its tastes; thus, we feel it "appropriate" for Chaucer to assign a romance to the knight and warn us against the churlish Miller's fabliau. Chaucer's warning, however, makes it impossible for the normally curious to pass over the tale and

we can be assured he read the *Miller's Tale* to his aristocratic audience and then followed up this bit of anal humor with the more outrageous *Summoner's Tale*. Neither did the "father of English comedy," John Heywood, fail to see the virtue of mixing scurrilous and "appropriate" humor in his plays. It is difficult to forget—partially because Heywood is a grand elaborator of such jokes—Merry Report's Disquisition on his wife's wind and water mills or the Potycary's success with the woman afflicted with the falling sickness or Johan Johan, Tyb his wife, and Sir Johan the priest.

If my argument for private auspices for *Mankind* is correct, or if it only questions our assumptions about innyard performance, then it may cause us to revaluate the play and re-examine the criteria on which we distinguish between popular and private drama. Often the distinction is less important in itself than in the effect the labelling of a play has on our expectations and understanding of it. *Mankind,* in my view, is not a play which inartistically allows comedy to overwhelm its boring didactic message; instead, it is a witty social satire integrated with a moving moral statement. Further, the inclusion of the Three N's and Mischief is much more significant for later drama than the possible performance of the play in an innyard. These are not vice figures, simple descendants of the *Castle*-abstractions; they are figures of folly and thus are more intimately related to the humanist tradition of Erasmus, Heywood, and Skelton—men who were connected with both the intelligentsia and the court. *Mankind,* finally, is not a *Castle*-type morality diminished to fit the means of professional travelling troupes; instead, it is a shift, a total reorientation not only from the cosmic to the individual but also from the portentous to the comedic. From the obvious and overt allegory of the World as a battleground where man seems lost between the opposing forces of Good and Evil, there is a shift to a bemused outlook on life which would blame, not the World or Covetise for man's fall, but his own folly.

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NOTES

1 A. W. Pollard, *The Marco Plays,* EETS, e.s. 91 (1904), p. xv, and J. Q. Adams, *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas* (London, 1924), p. 304, argue the play was performed in an innyard. See Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages,* I (London: Routledge, 1959), 5-7, for the association of innyard and Elizabethan theatres. David

Bevington discusses *Mankind* and the popular drama in his book, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 48 *et passim,* and in his recent article, "Popular and Courtly Traditions on the Early Tudor Stage," in *Medieval Drama,* Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 16 (London: Arnold, 1973), pp. 97-98.

2 Craig, *English Religious Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 350-51. The play is associated with Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. See *The Macro Plays,* ed. Mark Eccles, EETS, 262 (London, 1969), pp. xxxviii and xliv, and W. K. Smart, "Some Notes on *Mankind,*" *MP,* 14 (1916), 45-58. It may belong to a university town, Cambridge, therefore, rather than to the "provinces."

3 Both Bevington, in his article, pp. 97-98, and Eccles, p. xlii, note this line may indicate indoor performance but do not point out that, if so, the original reasons for assigning the play to an inn and the popular canon, the collecting of the "gate," are invalidated. See also the comment in T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (London, 1967), p. 128 n. 40. All citations of the text are from Eccles' edition.

4 Latin pretentiousness or nonsense can be found in lines 57-63, 126, 142, 324-26, 398-99, 446, 471-76, 478, 680-81, 687-93, 774-75 and 779-81. Of these, lines 398-99, 472-73, 680-81 and part of 57-63 require no knowledge of Latin since English words form the roots of the "latin." Tags are to be found at lines 440, 456, 516, 578, 616, and 666.

5 In lines 44-46, 124 and 129-38, the characters explicitly make fun of Latinate speech.

6 See, for example, Mercy's statements at lines 228, 292, 754-55, 826, 834, 866, 882, 894, and 900-01, and his macaronic lines at 767, 771, 862, 912, and 914. Mercy only translates one of his Latin lines (850 in line 851). Mankind, lines 321, 397, 554, New Guise, lines 324-26, and Nought, lines 471 and 487, also spout Latin which they do not translate.

7 Lines 152-53 suggest Mercy may have been dressed as a Dominican: "Gode brynge yow, master, and blyssyde Mary/ To þe number of þe demonycall frayry!"