The Sacrament and the Stage: Eucharistic Representations in English Theater

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The earliest Christians believed that the appropriate response to Christ's sacrifice was gratitude; for this reason, they called their primary ritual *eucharist*, which means "thanksgiving." Thus, although it is customary for academics to acknowledge those whose indispensable and undeserved aid saved their projects, it seems particularly appropriate that I preface a dissertation on staged representations of the Eucharist by recognizing those for whom I give thanks.

Without John Parker's counsel, my project would have foundered on a thousand unseen dangers. John cannot countenance nonsense, and the virtue of that disposition is that we all spend our time arguing about the essential things. Some protégés pray for a double portion of their tutor's spirit; I would be astonished to receive half of John's. Katharine Maus and Dan Kinney pointed me to rich veins of research when I was stumped, and their questions have sharpened points that languished in mediocrity. David Austin and Whit Jones showed me that literature and theology drive at the same questions and that loving one's students requires hours of thankless grading. The indefatigable Mark Rankin deserves my thanks for modeling academic rigor and for encouraging me that good scholars still get jobs. It made all the difference that Ryan McDermott and Hans Boersma reframed my questions when I had lost the thread. Kevin Bywater taught me that it was better to be good than to be correct, a lesson I am still learning.

My friends Lloyd Sy, Simon Sarkodie, and Perrin Godbold deserve my deepest thanks for commiserating over stalled chapters and moribund baseball teams; I would not have survived the dissertation without their unflagging cheer. I ceaselessly wonder how this project would have languished had I not pondered the eucharistic mystery in the communion of saints—Josh and Sarah, Drew and Mary Elizabeth, Isaac and Emily, Todd and Rachel, Jeremy and Amelie, Kevin

ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes up secularization theses, genealogies of modernity, and periodization schemes that bracket, enable, or disallow disciplinary narratives concerning the transition from late medieval to early modern drama. I argue that segregating drama into sacred and secular camps has been critically disabling; this move prevents us from effectively analyzing religious content in these plays. Frequently, these dramatists comment upon contemporary issues—matters of justice, economics, law, social hierarchies, epistemologies, and metaphysical enigmas—by repurposing earlier dramas and ancient scripture. To be fair, no critic may avoid the obligation to periodize, and it is inevitable that the heuristics we create will include disadvantages. Still, I am concerned that many early modernists understand the movement from the church pulpit to the secular stage in terms of evacuation and replacement, where disenchanted drama fills the role that sacramental liturgy used to play. I argue instead that the late medieval and early modern dramatists I address are keenly aware of the social implications for sacramental theology, for which reason they contend for certain theological positions through plots, characterization, dialogue, and imagery that is laden with religious significance.

My first chapter explores the mythology of the "Wakefield Master," purported (perhaps invented) author of the supposedly modern, racy, secular pageants in the Towneley play. I demonstrate that whoever composed the play wrote and read Latin. There are various indications that he had extensive clerical training: his deep understanding of Pauline theology, for one thing, and his apparent familiarity with the Latin liturgical festivities surrounding Christmas; he may well have read Terence and medieval Latin comedy. Furthermore, I show his indebtedness to Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, wherein the apostle explicates eucharistic doctrine as the centerpiece of his ideology of the body and the social formations proper to Christian community.

I argue that Corinthian themes supply the elusive unity to both Towneley *Shepherds'* plays; their author applies ancient eucharistic doctrine to condemn fifteenth-century economic injustices through medieval Latin comedic forms.

My second chapter examines the Protestant satire *Jack Juggler*, commonly attributed to tutor, translator, and rector Nicholas Udall. I offer a more robust case for Udall's authorship based upon the theology, metaphysical presuppositions, and diction his satire shares with Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Treatise on the Eucharist*, which Udall translated into English. Vermigli defined proper eucharistic doctrine with reference to the concepts of *plainness*, *parsimony*, *possibility*, and *passibility*, all of which he takes from nominalist theologians of the fourteenth century. Udall embeds these terms in his retelling of Plautus's comedy *Amphitryon*, which Thomas Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner cited as they argued whether one body could simultaneously inhabit distinct locations—the exact issue at the heart of Protestant objections to transubstantiation. I show that Vermigli and Udall felt deeply ambivalent about plain theology, given that Catholic theologians had already staked a claim to a literalist hermeneutic, and the plot of *Amphitryon* foregrounds the fact that sensory data is vulnerable to deceptive manipulation.

My concluding chapter extends the argument that Shakespeare's history tetralogies are modeled upon a medieval cycle drama; I document that extensive eucharistic references and imagery—most notably, blood-drinking—stitch the individual dramas together into a coherent whole. These internal connections suggest that the histories form a Corpus Christi cycle, and they suggest that the fortunes of English community are inextricably linked to the viability of true participation in the Eucharist. In other words, the English civil war is a crisis of Communion. I also build upon Margreta de Grazia's recent critique of how recent Shakespeareans depend upon a suspect compositional order to make global claims about the

playwright, his corpus, and his artistic maturation. I suggest that medieval cycle dramas were properly *history* dramas performed in context with the celebration of the Eucharist; Shakespeare emulates this form and offers a comprehensive, teleological creation-to-judgment history of England. Taken together, I hope these chapters chart a path for more fruitful engagements that may arise if critics examine how late medieval and early modern dramas interweave the sacred and the secular.

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NOMENCLATURE

Unless otherwise indicated, quotations preserve old-style spelling, including instances of

"u"/"v," "i"/"j," and "vv/w." When pagination is lacking or irregular, I supply the abbreviation

"sig." Furthermore, I expand contractions in square brackets and preserve superscripted spellings

(e.g., "y^e" for "the") to retain the original character of the works whenever possible.

INTRODUCTION

"The appeal of modernity haunts all literature," writes Paul de Man, even though modernity as such may be "incompatible" with history.[1] The "radical impulse" that drives all authentic expressions of modernity entails a "desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure," and literature, which possesses "a constitutive affinity with action, with the unmediated, free act that knows no past," cannot help but be enamored by this mirage.[2] The paradox lies in the reality that to loosen oneself entirely from the chains of history is impossible, as Nietzsche observed, and that "[t]he more radical the rejection of anything that came before, the greater the dependence on the past."[3] Literature has, then, in some sense, "always been essentially modern," and histories of literature, which pivot upon attributions of modernity, produce intractable riddles that vex the literary critic, especially the historicist.[4]

Fredric Jameson summarizes the paradox historiographers face in a much quoted maxim about modernity: "We cannot not periodize," he writes, and when critics do segment eons into epochs, the notion of modernity they advance is not, properly speaking, a "concept, philosophical or otherwise, but a narrative category."[5] No matter how frequently the critic insists that the periodization scheme is provisional, no matter how stridently she objects on principle that the act of periodizing is "intolerable and unacceptable in its very nature," the "inevitability" of the obligation to periodize frustrates critics, for they seem condemned to spawn genealogies of

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[1] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., rev., Theory and History of Literature 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 152, 142.

[2] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," 147–48, 151–52.

[3] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," 161.

[4] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," 151.

[5] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 29, 40.

modernity that obscure as much as they reveal.[6] Nevertheless, appeals to modernity possess a

unique cachet. Jameson notices that critics deploy the trope of modernity for "rhetorical effect"

not only to justify the particular narrative of history or culture that they wish to propagate but

also because they recognize the power inherent in this move.[7] This trope "bears a libidinal

charge," and the critic who utilizes it can predictably invest the specific literary artifact or

historical phenomenon under consideration with a "unique kind of intellectual excitement not

normally associated with other forms of conceptuality."[8] It is a tried-and-true way to raise the

stakes of the critic's argument. Moreover, any new appeal to modernity entails a justification for

revising existing genealogies that, in the critic's opinion, disparage or improperly value his or her

subject.[9]

There are special incentives for early modernists (as we now dub ourselves) to

characterize our period and subject matter as modern. Margreta de Grazia points out that aside

from the B.C./A.D. divide, no period division has wielded more influence than the divide between

the medieval and the modern. This is because influential histories, by identifying the

Renaissance as "the invention (or beginning) of every modern this-or-that," created an incentive

for subsequent critics to designate their subject matter as modern, and thus a relevant academic

pursuit.[10] The stakes of this designation could not be higher:

> Whether you exist on one side or the other of the B.C./A.D. divide determines
> nothing less than salvation. Whether you work on one side or the other of the
> medieval/modern divide determines nothing less than relevance. Everything after
> that divide has relevance to the present; everything before it is irrelevant. There is
> no denying the exceptional force of that secular divide; indeed, it works less as a

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[6] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 28–29.
[7] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 34.
[8] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 34.
[9] See Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 35–36.
[10] Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide: From Either Side," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 458.

historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not.[11]

Chronology used to be seen as a dispassionate, unprejudiced valuation whose promise lay in its potential to harmonize disjunctive temporal systems into a single progressive timeline onto which historical events could be mapped, but after Walter Benjamin eviscerated this notion of time's homogeneity and emptiness, critics cannot fail to see the value judgments embedded in periodization schemes.[12]

In addition to furnishing the scaffold for organizing and relating historical events, chronology supplies the chassis upon which academic disciplines are bolted; it gives universities and their employees their "epistemological and institutional bearings."[13] Brian Cummings and James Simpson warn that we must not discount the effect of the academic machinery on the conclusions critics draw. Laboring within disciplines where academic subjects are subdivided and organized according to chronological periods tends to camouflage ideological claims embedded in seemingly neutral period divisions. Cummings and Simpson admit that arguments for "a profound historical and cultural break" around 1500 contain substantial merit but argue that

> …the very habit of working within those periodic bounds (either medieval or early modern) tends…simultaneously to affirm and to ignore the rupture. It affirms the rupture by staying within standard periodic bounds, but it ignores it by never examining the rupture itself. The moment of profound change is either, for medievalists, just over an unexplored horizon; or, for early modernists, a zero point behind which more penetrating examination is unnecessary.[14]

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[11] Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide," 453.

[12] See Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 4; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 261.

[13] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 5

[14] Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds., *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

Even when one does peer over the horizon, the view becomes murkier because, as they put it,

"while modernity, as an experience, could be said to be as old as time itself, it is not such a very

old *idea*. Indeed, it is a medieval idea."[15] As will become clear, I think nominalism's emergence

does entail a distinctive turn to modernity—it was not accidental that proponents and adversaries

referred to nominalism as the *via moderna*—but at minimum we should note that reading outside

of these chronological frames will be an uphill slog, given our dependence upon distortive

genealogies of modernity.[16]

Notice how Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin make the concept of modernity a load-

bearing wall in their reading of Shakespeare's histories. They designate Henry V as "thoroughly

modern"—the first of well over one hundred instances where they invoke the concept of

"modernity" or its derivatives to plot Shakespeare's histories along a medieval/modern axis.[17]

They chalk up almost every distinction between the individual plays, their characters, or the

features of the two tetralogies to "greater 'modernity'" of the second tetralogy.[18] The

performative notion of kingship, the domestication of women, the tawdry banter of the tavern,

Henry V's threatening courtship of Kate, the public/private binary between self and role: these

not only demonstrate modernity's advent—they create it. They insist, "The transition to

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[15] Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds., *Cultural Reformations*, 8. Emphasis theirs.

[16] See Pekka Kärkkäinen, "Nominalism and the *Via Moderna*," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*, ed. Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 697. Though Kärkkäinen points out that critics have overestimated the "doctrinal uniformity" between fourteenth-century nominalists and later writers who have been identified with the *via moderna*, he admits that "it would be a mistake to completely deny the connection between the *via moderna* of the 15th and 16th centuries and its 14th-century authorities. From the perspective of the *via moderna* as it had developed by Luther's time, certain 14th-century writers had gained a special authoritative status" (697).

[17] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, Feminist Readings of Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

[18] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 29.

modernity, *which we feel these dramas helped to effect*, cannot fail to be of concern to feminists, for in this transition the world we have inherited was emerging."[19] Furthermore, they assert that popular twentieth-century productions of *Henry V* (starring Lawrence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh, respectively) were produced to shore up England's national identity in moments of historical crisis, and the films were met with such acclaim because they reproduced the gender ideology that Shakespeare initially created. "The interconnections between Englishness, aggressive masculinity, and closeted womanhood that emerge so clearly in Branagh's film are present in Shakespeare's text, marking it with a modernity that bears investigation," they write.[20] They stipulate that nations are not organic entities but "artificial creations," and the actual unity of "imagined communities"—to use Benedict Anderson's seminal phrase—never can match the wholeness represented in a "carefully constructed fiction" of that unity.[21] No cultural practice, such as participation in shared rituals of remembrance, actuates or effectuates the unity.

Howard and Rackin's argument is particularly illustrative of just how invested literary critics are in genealogies of modernity and how those genealogies correspond to other historiographical narratives, such as disenchantment narratives. Another example may nail down the point. Regina Mara Schwartz connects secularization—to be specific, the desacralization of the universe produced by transformations in eucharistic theology in the latter sixteenth century—to the birth of modernity. The reformers "chipped away at sacramentality until the body of sacramental experience was reduced beyond recognition," which in turn produced a fear that God might be leaving the world again.[22] She argues that this sense of the gods' departure has

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[19] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 38. Emphasis mine.
[20] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 10.
[21] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 12.
[22] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 11.

occurred throughout history, and that the evacuation constitutes the sense of radical newness

attendant to modernity. She writes, "[T]he gods departed with the rise of modernity: here, a

medieval universe full of sacramental meanings gave way to the notion of the infinite

mechanistic universe."[23] Elsewhere, she claims,

> Debates about the Eucharist became the occasion for the worldview we regard as
> "modern" to begin to be articulated. When the dust settled after the Reformers had
> redefined the Eucharist, understandings of the material and immaterial, the visible
> and invisible, immanence and transcendence were revised. Theology,
> metaphysics, aesthetics, and politics were re-imagined. This fledgling modernism
> swept into its purview a vast array of concerns and disciplines… In the course of
> questioning the Eucharist, justice and sacrifice, cosmos and creation, community
> and love, language and image were all implicated.[24]

None—or exceedingly few—of the reformers intended to expunge completely a sacramental

vision of the world; they only wished to bring their "fledgling modern sensibility" to the

medieval metaphysics they had inherited.[25] This marriage was doomed to fail, in her opinion;

sacramental thinking is "completely alien to the way modern secularism has conceived matter,

space, time, and language," and thus this mode of thought, this metaphysical precommitment

"had to be almost dismantled for modernism to be born."[26]

There is a tension in Schwartz's argument: she insists that early modern poets both

lamented the loss of God in their poetry and "displace[d] their longing for that sacred world onto

other cultural forms, to accommodate sacramentalism to modernity."[27] She argues, in other

words, that "the very sacramental character of religion lent itself copiously to developing the so-

called secular forms of culture and that these are often thinly disguised sacramental cultural

[23] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 11–12.
[24] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 8–9.
[25] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 16.
[26] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 11.
[27] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 13.

expressions."[28] Schwartz wants to eat her cake and have it too: she means to suggest that secularization caused modernity to emerge and also that these "so-called secular forms of culture" were thoroughly imbued with a sacramental dimension. Other critics reject her pessimism, arguing instead that poets did not entirely experience this transformation as a loss, but even these critics recognize that the early modern poets framed their art out of the rubble of the sacramental controversies and its implications for other spheres of life.[29]

It bears mentioning that although Judith Anderson locates the "epistemological watershed" during the Reformation, many historians locate that rupture much earlier at the nominalist revolution in the fourteenth century.[30] For example, Hans Blumenberg contends that modernity appeared through a process of "secularization by eschatology"—that is to say, the process of secularization entailed a "reoccupation" of cultural territory that Christianity had relinquished and a new attitude of self-assertion and innovation that culminated in Enlightenment rationalism.[31] That entire process was predicated on the "*mathematizing* and the *materializing* of nature," a process that started in the Middle Ages.[32] The nominalists finally solved the theodical problem that had stumped early Christian thinkers (the question of why evil should exist in the world in the first place) by hypothesizing a radically voluntaristic deity, one unconstrained even by His own prior commitments—a precursor of the unconcerned deistic God of the

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[28] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 14.

[29] See Ryan Netzley, *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England*, Ideas in Context 104 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[30] Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 48.

[31] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 45, 65.

[32] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 164. Emphasis his.

Enlightenment.[33] Nominalist theology and philosophy spread through Europe like wildfire; English, Parisian, and Spanish camps of nominalists flourished and influenced the highest echelons of society, and "by the time of Luther there was only one university in Germany that was not dominated by the nominalists."[34] Though Heiko Oberman and William Courtenay have argued that there were at least four distinct strains of nominalism, all of them largely agreed on the main points—that there were no universals, only names; that God was radically unbound and could do as he pleased; and that it was a fair question to consider what humans could perform *ex puris naturalibus*.[35] This division between the purely natural and the divinely ordained, and between the signifying name and the signified entity were cracks of a larger schism. Nominalism broke the "ontotheological synthesis"—the "sacramental worldview"—that had governed Western thought since the Platonic-Christian synthesis.[36] When the medieval scholastics spoke decisively in favor of Aristotelian metaphysics and tried to articulate sacramental theory with its ontological categories, they created intractable logical conundrums about substances and accidents, and about divine volition and human agency. The nominalists tried to sort out these quandaries, but their solution compromised the ontic structure on which Western Christendom was built. The Platonic-Christian synthesis assumed that human connection with the divine was a

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[33] See Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 22.

[34] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, 26–27.

[35] See Heiko A. Oberman, "Some Notes on the Theology of Nominalism: With Attention to Its Relation to the Renaissance," *The Harvard Theological Review* 53, no. 1 (1960): 47–76; William J. Courtenay, "Nominalism and Late Medieval Thought: A Bibliographical Essay," *Theological Studies* 33, no. 4 (1972): 716–34; Pekka Kärkkäinen, "Nominalism and the *Via Moderna*," 696–708.

[36] Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3; Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 32, 53. See also Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

"participatory, or real, connection—not just an external, or nominal connection"; the official sacraments, especially the Eucharist, were the apex of a totally participatory ontology, an "intensification of [God's] sacramental presence in the world."[37] "Modernity…originates out of a series of attempts to construct a coherent *metaphysica specialis* on a nominalist foundation," Michael Gillespie argues.[38] Modernity dawned when the sun set on a sacramental ontology.

Brad Gregory, this thesis's most eloquent spokesman, faced vicious rebuttals when he put forth a version of this argument in *The Unintended Reformation*, claiming that the reformers inadvertently conceived hyperpluralistic secular modernity when they attempted to perfect the church. Following Amos Funkenstein, Gregory explicitly connects medieval developments in concepts of metaphysical univocity, nominalism, and ontological and epistemological parsimony to later reformers and finally to "the peculiar confluence of theology and physics" in the seventeenth century.[39] James Simpson blasted him for "lambasting almost all of Western history and modernity as landscapes of utter failure."[40] But even Simpson admits that the underlying historiographical narrative was produced by a "very well-read, serious, if not infallible historian of ideas" and that "[o]ne can take issue with many of the key arguments…but each chapter purveys serious historical positions boldly posed; each opens out into rich areas of reflection and argument."[41] Thomas Pfau's more measured appraisal dings Gregory for a deterministic view of modernity and for exaggerating the uniformity of the supposedly settled sacramental worldview

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[37] Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 24–26.

[38] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, 273.

[39] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation, 39.*

[40] James Simpson, "Brad Gregory's Unintended Reformations," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 46, no. 3 (2016): 545.

[41] James Simpson, "Brad Gregory's Unintended Reformations," 545, 547.

by undervaluing pre-Reformation heterodox movements.[42] Nevertheless, I suggest that we may walk and chew gum at the same time. We may recognize that matters of faith are always in flux, that the individuals who assent to particular doctrines cast their votes provisionally and inconsistently, yet we may also affirm that within hybrid historical moments there may be dominant views and positions, a core set of beliefs and practices that may be identified and justifiably associated with a particular historical moment and place.

Few literary sub-disciplines, I would argue, are as invested in charting the "swerve" toward modernity as early modern drama. In "The Mousetrap," which analyzes the eucharistic anxieties that drive Hamlet to madness, Stephen Greenblatt advanced a trio of propositions:

> [F]irst, most of the significant and sustained thinking in the early modern period about the nature of linguistic signs centered on or was deeply influenced by eucharistic controversies; second, most of the literature that we care about from this period was written in the shadow of these controversies; and third, their significance for English literature in particular lies less in the problem of the sign than in what we will call "the problem of the leftover," that is, the status of the material remainder.[43]

He and other New Historicists postulated what has been described as an evacuation-and-replacement narrative wherein the "mystery, magic, spectacle, [and] theatricality" of Catholic worship were replaced by commercial, secular theater—"another form of compensation" for the loss of the old-time religion.[44] Later, in *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*, Greenblatt dubs Poggio Bracciolini "a midwife to modernity" for saving Epicurean materialism from the

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[42] See Thomas Pfau, "'Botched Execution' or Historical Inevitability: Conceptual Dilemmas in Brad S. Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 46, no. 3 (2016): 614.

[43] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 141.

[44] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 95; Louis Montrose, "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," *Helios* 7 (1980): 60.

dustbin of history and making the "key principles of a modern understanding of the world"

accessible to the brightest minds of the Renaissance.[45]

> Something happened in the Renaissance, something that surged up against the constraints that centuries had constructed around curiosity, desire, individuality, sustained attention to the material world, the claims of the body. The cultural shift is notoriously difficult to define, and its significance has been fiercely contested. But it can be intuited easily enough…[46]

The logic behind this argument is clear: an author or a literary artifact's modernity may be

measured by the degree to which it evinces secularity. Greenblatt certainly would not be the first

to imply this correlation. Brian Cummings argues that the division between religion and

literature is as old as the discipline itself, and, furthermore, is constitutive of the discipline.

> A theory of secularization…lies at the origin of the study of English as a discipline. The absence of religion from the plays of Shakespeare is therefore not incidental, but axiomatic to the emergence of modernity. From [A. C.] Bradley in 1904 to [Harold] Bloom in 1998, Shakespeare's exceptionalism lies in this capacity to explain a secular view of culture as postreligious.[47]

Even though Bradley held no antireligious bias, Cummings points out that Bradley insists that

> Elizabethan drama was almost wholly secular; and while Shakespeare was writing he practically confined his view to the world of non-theological observation and thought, so that he represents it substantially in one and the same way whether the period of the story is pre-Christian or Christian.[48]

Successive generations of Shakespeareans have largely reaffirmed the division, albeit

with more sophisticated justifications. Bernard Spivack argued that Tudor drama "gradually

freed itself from its homiletic purpose, whereby it was essentially the dramatized exemplum of a

sermon, and acquired autonomous life and justification as dramatic spectacle," and he imagines a

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[45] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), 26, 21.

[46] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 9–10.

[47] Brian Cummings, "Afterword," in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 301.

[48] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on* Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), 25.

medieval audience groaning under didacticism and yearning for the fresh air of real drama—

drama for its own sake.[49] Similarly, David Bevington argued the bishop of Winchester in *2*

Henry VI was ostensibly a "non-theological" portrayal (insofar as Winchester's character is

defined by hypocrisy, political "meddling," and moral failures, not doctrinal allegiances).[50]

Roland Frye noted the irony that some scholars could argue that Christian theology was wholly

irrelevant to Shakespeare's dramatic projects, while others found his plays "essentially and

pervasively—even blatantly—Christian."[51] Frye conceptualized the crosspollination between

religious doctrine and Shakespearean drama as a unidirectional affair: the theology contributed to

the drama, and not the inverse. Shakespeare's concerns were "essentially secular, temporal, non-

theological."[52] The most radical version of this argument belongs to George Santayana, who

claimed that he could find in Shakespeare's corpus only "half a dozen passages that have so

much as a religious sound."[53]

This long tradition of bracketing the religious from the literary incentivizes new scholars

to preserve the division or to reject it flagrantly, which yields an unfortunate and distorting

polarization. This is how Shakespeare becomes a "decisively secular dramatist" who worked

within a "decidedly secular domain," even as other critics write doorstoppers listing the religious

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[49] Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to Major Villains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 59.

[50] David M. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 201–02.

[51] Roland Mushat Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine*, 1st ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 4. See also William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

[52] Roland Mushat Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine*, 7.

[53] George Santayana, "The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare," in *Essays in Literary Criticism of George Santayana*, ed. Irving Singer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 141.

allusions and quotations within his work.[54] The chasm is so great, one wonders if the critics are assessing the same data set. Nor is it confined to Elizabethan drama. It has bled backwards into medieval drama, where the inducement to characterize playwrights as forerunners of this shift looms large. Martin Stevens, even as he critiques the argument for the so-called "Wakefield Master's" distinctive meter, observes that critics tend to favor medieval dramatists (the "Wakefield Master" or "York Realist," for instance) whose alleged secular leanings can rival those of Shakespeare.[55]

If literature's quality is due to its modern sensibilities and secular outlook, what becomes of religious content in the purportedly secular drama when it is not dismissed outright as non-theological? According to Arthur Marotti and Ken Jackson, New Historicists and cultural materialists usually have "translated [religious themes, images, or content] into social, economic, and political language," which is ground they feel more comfortable occupying.[56] Marotti and Jackson primarily credit Debora Shuger with forcing the field to reckon with two points that should seem obvious: that religion—not politics, economics, culture, law, philosophy, or any other domain of life—was the least common denominator by which most early modern people conceptualized their existence and experience, and that to treat religion as "false consciousness" for one of these other material causes results in "scholarly and cultural myopia that distorts our

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[54] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2016), 36; Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance: Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama Across the Reformation Divide*, Reformations: Medieval and Early Modern (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 14.

[55] Martin Stevens, "Did the Wakefield Master Write a Nine-Line Stanza?" *Comparative Drama* 15, no. 2 (1981): 99.

[56] Arthur F. Marotti and Ken Jackson, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies," *Criticism* 46, no. 1 (2004): 167.

understanding."[57] Again, the critical incentives to treat religion as false consciousness are high because the critic gets to play the role of demystifying savant who is able "to deliver the medieval or early modern text from its own illusions, to complete the partial insights which it had not the language to say in its own time."[58] Instead of treating religion as the prime matrix through which early modern people understood their world and conceptualized their experience, these critics treat it as a "cabinet of curiosities" to "[raid] for selective booty" to justify their anthropological pronouncements.[59] To my way of thinking, the critic is entirely justified in pointing out the social, economic, or political entanglements of religious formations; indeed, to do so would only echo that which New Testament authors freely admit—that religious formations cannot help but contain pragmatic social, economic, and political ramifications. But the critic never can be justified, in my opinion, in suggesting that secular formations may be fully divorced from their religious inheritance or in implying that an author could somehow deploy religious content non-theologically—without commenting on religious doctrine and its social outworking. Theory and theology cannot be untangled, both because thinkers from earlier eras conceptualized the world in theological terms and because current scholarship must resort to religious discourse to articulate fully their "secular" concerns.[60] In other words, I'm suggesting that critics will get better analytic purchase on the religious content in plays if they adopt a view of religion congruent with Kevin Sharpe's definition. He notes, "Religion was not just about

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[57] Arthur F. Marotti and Ken Jackson, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies," 168.

[58] David Aers and Sarah Beckwith, "Introduction: Hermeneutics and Ideology," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 2 (2003): 211.

[59] Arthur F. Marotti and Ken Jackson, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies," 175–76.

[60] For a particularly salient example of secular theory's debts to theological frameworks, see John Parker, "What a Piece of Work Is Man: Shakespearean Drama as Marxian Fetish, the Fetish as Sacramental Sublime," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 3 (2004): 643–72.

doctrine, liturgy or ecclesiastical government; it was a language, an aesthetic, a structuring of meaning, an identity, a politics."[61] I insist that this description applies across time and space, and even in predominantly secular cultures. But it was especially true for early modern England, where religion served as the "master-code" for a "thick biblical culture."[62]

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several critics attempted to provide more comprehensive accounts of why reportedly secular early modern drama was so affected by eucharistic controversy, and what the new theatrical forms made of that conflict. Huston Diehl and Michael O'Connell explore how reformed drama "rehearses the religious crisis that disrupted, divided, energized, and in many ways, revolutionized English society.[63] O'Connell specifically attributes the origins of this iconophobia to twelfth-century reformations in Catholicism's incarnational aesthetic, suggesting that that century fundamentally rearranged the relationship of word and image, between verbal and visual representation. The tensions between these representational modes are as old as Christianity itself: the same God who said, "man shall not see me and live" and who forbade graven representations of His likeness became incarnate in Jesus—the image of the invisible God.[64] Did not Jesus tell his disciples that whoever had seen him had seen the Father?[65] The incarnational mystery is the unseeable God made accessible, knowable, touchable, shockingly present—Immanuel, God dwelling with men. The dramatic mode, writes O'Connell, cannot help but be vexed by the same incarnational questions because

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[61] Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth Century Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.

[62] Fredric Jameson, "Religion and Ideology: A Political Reading of *Paradise Lost*," in *Literature, Politics, and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference, 1976–84*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, London: Methuen, 1986), 40; Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 42.

[63] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, 1.

[64] Exod. 33:20; Col. 1:15 ESV.

[65] John 14:9 ESV.

in it acts of representation are always acts of embodiment.[66] The implications for drama from this "profound shift in consciousness" metastasized into the explosive iconoclasm of the English Reformation.[67] That same drive that eventually suppressed biblical drama manifested in the intense reconsideration Shakespeare gives to the problematics of visual representation and interpretation. In the plays, Shakespeare affirms the value of visual representation over and against the verbal supremacists.[68]

Other critics, most notably Sarah Beckwith and Jeffrey Knapp, have suggested that in some sense drama itself can be sacramental. They insist that the plays can "do theological work."[69] They argue that dramatists could imagine affirmative religious dimensions for their work—namely, the formation of community and the expression of charity that is at the heart of the eucharistic mystery.[70] The sacrament and the stage are such pregnant sites for epistemological exploration because the question of how we "present ourselves to each other (the classical domain of theater) and how we are present to each other (the domain of sacrament)" cannot be fully divorced.[71] Beckwith shows that the term "sacramental theater" sounds "oxymoronic" after Reformation attacks on transubstantiation as mere theater, but that divorcing theater and sacrament to separate realms and epistemologies is critically disabling; to frame English theater thus makes pre-Reformation plays "unacknowledgeable" because the terms by which we think we apprehend its meaning estrange us from its actual effect. Beckwith argues

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[66] See Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.

[67] Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*, 67.

[68] See Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*, 155.

[69] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), xvii.

[70] See Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 138.

[71] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God*, xv.

this in the context of the York Corpus Christi plays, but her claim holds wider application

because, for her, neither theater nor the sacrament is "an object to be known, but rather a process

that demands our participation and our willingness to be known in the contingencies of our own

biographies."[72] Taking another approach, Jeffrey Knapp rejects the notion that the stage grew

secular and instead suggests that early modern playwrights recognized the extent to which their

dramas could instruct audiences to prioritize charity and community. The gap between preacher

and player, in his view, is quite narrow:

> Shakespeare may have accepted this argument…that the spiritual receipt of
> Christ's body in the field, tavern, or theater was 'not enough,' but he also seems
> to have believed that the fellowship achievable in the theater was at least a better
> start for Christians than the communion practiced in either a popish or a
> preacherly church.[73]

Shakespeare threads the needle between Catholic artificiality and puritanical didacticism,

commenting on matters pertaining to theology and politics without collapsing into mere

polemical propaganda.

The unstated but omnipresent debate lurking behind all these approaches is the question

of dramatic historiography—of how the Church resurrected the dramatic mode that it had, for

centuries, censored, and how that drama mutated into the forms that appeared after the

Reformation. E. K. Chambers had insisted that Christian worship's bent toward the dramatic

appeared quite early in Christian history and that the Mass was "an essentially dramatic

commemoration" of the Last Supper.[74] Thus, the church was inclined towards the dramatic mode

even if major thinkers castigated idolatrous representations and framed actors as reprobates

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[72] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God*, xvii–xviii.
[73] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 138–39.
[74] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 2:3.

whose vocation was fundamentally incompatible with Christian piety.[75] Despite the vehement

disagreements over the evolution of dramatic liturgical worship into commercial theater,

Chambers, Karl Young, O. B. Hardison, Jr., Sarah Beckwith, James Simpson, and John Parker

all envisage that sacramental performance and drama lie along a continuum.[76] In other words,

though it may seem that drama and sacrament operate by "different econom[ies] of

representation," in actuality both pressure the same questions: "Do we believe what we see? Are

we seeing what we believe?"[77] Speaking particularly of the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*,

Sarah Beckwith argues that the mere fact of "having the host on stage implies that the host can

be staged. It opens up the possibility that the theatrical resources of the priesthood are not

completely separable from the resources of theatre."[78] In my estimation, although the rate and

direction of change in dramatic forms is a matter of historical interest, it is all too easy to slip

into teleological insinuations that sacramentality and theater will eventually permanently

separate into distinct species.

Before I address my approach and arguments, I wish to establish other reasons that the

nexus of stage and sacrament should be such a productive test case to examine genealogies of

modernity, secularization theses, and periodization schemes. The first reason is that, insofar as

humans cannot not signify, and since their significations have so often gestured toward a

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[75] See Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[76] On this point, see E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*; O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965); Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Sarah Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body," in *Culture and History, 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing*, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992); John Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[77] Sarah Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre," 76, 66.

[78] Sarah Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre," 75.

transcendent reality beyond the material world, the cultural works that humans create will be "unavoidably sacramental."[79] Drama, as an art that can theoretically evoke the sublime, suggests a sacramental world even as its mode insists upon material distinctions between actor and role, between person and persona, between setting and historical place.[80] Furthermore, humans use signs not just to represent reality, but to effectuate it—to call it into being, to "manifest a world."[81] "Rites make something happen," Regina Mara Schwartz comments, and as long as humans make oaths and effectuate them through rituals, a sacramental order will haunt human affairs. (This is why, she insists, the Roman sense of sacrament meant "oath-taking").[82]

Yet there are further reasons the sacrament and the stage should share such a convoluted history, and why critics have found such rich veins of research where they meet. Both sacraments and drama are performed—to put the matter crassly, there are actors, vestments/costumes, established dialogue, participating audiences, liturgical objects/props—but sacraments and drama propose an inverse logic. On the one hand, the logic of a sacramental ontology suggests that human actions correlate with and even affect Reality as such, so each moment, each historical action participates in something beyond what may be seen. Every moment possesses a surplus of meaning. Drama, on the other hand, is predicated on the distinction between sign and meaning. Actors are not the characters they play; the positions they espouse on stage do not match their true sentiments. Thus, when a sacrament is staged, the

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79 David Jones, *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings*, ed. Harman Grisewood (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), 164.
80 See John Parker, "What a Piece of Work Is Man," 643–47.
81 Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 7.
82 Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 7, 10; see also James Simpson, *Permanent Revolution: The Reformation and the Illiberal Roots of Liberalism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2019). Simpson writes, "[T]heater, like the Mass, stages the performative—words making something happen in the world. Theater works as a look-alike to the Mass (or vice versa), using words, staging, movement, and costume to underwrite and guarantee the performative happening" (205).

conflicting epistemological assumptions fluster audiences. What world are they living in? By what mechanisms could they know what they know, and how could they trust the accuracy of their senses?

In the chapters that follow, I proceed according to the following assumptions. I take seriously Brian Cummings and James Simpson's exhortation that even if we cannot not periodize, we should nonetheless strain against our periodic yokes, set the periods in dialogue with one another, and see what emerges when we take up new heuristics.[83] I brook no illusions that periodization schemes are useless, nor do I maintain that the dominant schemes I criticize possess no merit, but I do think they are incomplete and, in the case of moments where eucharistic representations appear on stage, seriously inadequate. To accomplish this end, I press to document transtemporal correlation, and in some cases, causality. I show dramatists and theologians reaching backward from their historical moment to harvest medieval plays, ancient scriptures, and ancient theological disputes to speak to their own moment, to the corruptions of their own societies, to the epistemological and metaphysical conundrums of their own day.

Secondly, I want to address moments where late medieval, Reformation, and early modern playwrights take up eucharistic theology, sacramental mechanics, or the sociopolitical implications of the Eucharist and explore their meaning in dramatic mode. I contend that these dramatists sensed that the Eucharist carried serious implications for their vocation, as well as for physics, epistemology, social structures, and national identity. I take pains to demonstrate the means by which "secular" drama pressures religious questions and "religious" drama is intimately concerned with social and political affairs; to demonstrate, in other words, that it makes no sense to segment religion and literature into separate fields of inquiry. I maintain that if

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[83] See Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds., *Cultural Reformations*, 5.

we insist upon translating religious content in these dramas into other idioms such as politics or economics, we will miss both the religious and the secular point. Finally, by starting with these two commitments, I aim to bisect the reductive genealogies of modernity and secularization that have, in my view, impoverished medieval and Renaissance literary criticism as a whole, and specifically religious content in drama. I want to show that these old antipathies and false binaries need not govern our inquiries and that we can see far more if we eschew them.

In my first chapter, I examine the "masterpiece of the English religious drama"—the *Second Shepherds' Play* written by the so-called "Wakefield Master."[84] Critics have too often considered him to be a modern artist, a man born ahead of his time and not beholden to the strictures of the bland religious dramas of his day, someone attuned to secular complaint and modern comedic repartee. Furthermore, because critics could not account for the weird amalgamation of themes present in that play (or, for that matter, the *First Shepherds' Play* too), they first denigrated it for its disjunction, then accepted its unity only to disagree upon that unity's source. I show, however, that most of the themes in the play come from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and that the Towneley author or authors apply Pauline logic to contemporary fifteenth-century England. Paul does not treat the Eucharist as a solitary ritual detached from the shape of Christian community but as the chief cause and highest expression of that community— the source and summit of Corinthian Christian life. I contend that the Towneley author(s) draw down upon this logic to confront the abuses, corruption, social division, and marital dysfunctions of contemporary English life. The Towneley *Shepherds*' plays interpret history diachronically and tropologically, and if we wish to understand what the plays are up to, we should not cut against the grain of their presumptions. These plays depict the malfeasances of fifteenth-century

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[84] Albert C. Baugh, *A Literary History of England* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 281.

Yorkshire as echoes of first-century Corinthian crookedness, and they apply Pauline theology to suggest that the medicine of the Eucharist will remedy contemporary evils. A diachronic reading leverages biblical narrative and eucharistic doctrine to denounce systemic oppression in contemporary "secular" affairs. To praise these plays because they are modern (bawdy, boisterous, slapstick, crass, attuned to social injustices) is to miss his whole theological point. It is also to ignore the bawdy and boisterous elements of the Latin festive culture with which clerical authors would have been intimately familiar.

The second chapter takes up the Protestant satire on transubstantiation, *Jack Juggler*, which most critics attribute to Nicholas Udall. I bolster the case for Udall's authorship by documenting that he harvests the language and philosophical commitments in Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Discourse* on the Eucharist—which Udall translated from the Latin—and deploys them to great effect in *Jack Juggler*, which was composed immediately after (or during) Udall's translation. From Vermigli, Udall seizes the concepts of *plainness*, *ontological parsimony*, *perception*, and *passibility*—all of which Vermigli takes from nominalists and Wycliffites in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Furthermore, Udall, like contemporary clergymen Thomas Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner, advocates for his reformed sacramental theological positions through the use of a Plautine drama—*Amphitryon*.

Nevertheless, I argue that Udall's satire on transubstantiation unwittingly forecasts the consequences of the disenchanted memorialism toward which Anglican divines gravitated shortly after Henry VIII's death. At the conclusion of the play, every character consumes his or her supper alone—no one eats together, there is no communion at a table. In an effort to expose the theological juggling of Catholic priests and to emphasize the Protestant sneer that one body could not simultaneously inhabit two distinct locations, Udall's drama depicts the fractured

community, epistemological confusion, and isolation that results from the strident materialist epistemology that undergirds the theological point. Thus conceived, the eucharistic supper fails to produce social communion, remedy injustice, or convey the peace that comes from ontological certitude. Suppers scarfed down in solitude for mere nourishment cannot effectuate holy communion.

In the third and final chapter, I address Hardison's and Knapp's observation that Shakespeare's history tetralogies form a sort of secular Corpus Christi cycle.[85] Though the histories contain a huge proportion of Shakespeare's references to the Mass and the word "sacrament," critics largely ignore the structural load these references bear. Frequently, critics read against E. M. W. Tillyard, who argues that the plays confirm the static view of social hierarchy and providential sanction for the crown that Tudor propagandists spread; most critics see the second tetralogy as artistically superior to the first and argue that its modern disenchantment unspools *Richard III*'s providential conclusion. I suggest instead that the history plays depict England's long civil war as a crisis of Christian Communion, charting the health of the English community vis-à-vis eucharistic imagery—chiefly, oaths taken upon the sacrament, images of profane blood drinking, and eucharistic iconography. *Richard II* opens with eucharistic desecration; the blood drinking that regularly appears throughout the tetralogies typifies English ruin. Henry Tudor intends to effectuate and nourish England's communal regeneration by restoring genuine eucharistic participation. Furthermore, I strive to demonstrate that the history plays undermine the notion that symbolic participation alone—what Bolingbroke terms "bare imagination"—can secure real communion, upon which the health of Christian nations

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[85] See O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, 290; Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," in *Shakespeare and Religious Change*, ed. Kenneth J. E. Graham and Philip D. Collington, Early Modern Literature in History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 217.

depends.[86] Not only that, they subvert the mythology that Henry V represented the glorious apex of English masculinity by voicing his anxiety that he will be punished for his father's sacrilegious usurpation and by exposing his failed efforts to constitute communion—a band of brothers—whether around the tavern table with Falstaff or around the victory table after Agincourt.

I hope that these chapters will demonstrate the fruitfulness of reading diachronically and of casting a wary eye on inadequate genealogies of modernity that urge us toward narratives of secular disenchantment and historical supersessionism. I further hope that they provide yet another rejoinder to the sentiment that literature became beautiful when it became secular. Implicitly, I hope my work provides a new justification for medieval and early modern drama's relevance. Sarah Beckwith insists, "All theater is relentlessly and inevitably contemporary," not because by examining it we may prove that new dispensations have dawned or that new epistemologies have triumphed.[87] Instead, I maintain that both theater and the Eucharist dance between the wholly transcendent and the completely immanent, and that there is more than meets the eye in our rituals and our dramatic representations. In other words, I hope readers will find in these pages an enchanting invitation to reconsider the substance of the secular stage.

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[86] *Richard II*, 1.3.297. All Shakespeare references come from William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, Rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

[87] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God*, xvii.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CORINTHIAN ORIGINS OF THE TOWNELEY *SHEPHERDS'* PLAYS

I – "If anyone will read these plays together…"

Although literary critics have almost unanimously extolled the *Second Shepherds' Play*'s

quality (and perhaps invented a genius to justify the presence of that excellence), they have

struggled to integrate the disparate themes in the play: harmonious singing, marital strife,

economic exploitation, status-based divisions, drunkenness, eucharistic imagery, the shepherds'

awareness of biblical prophecy. I maintain that all these themes hail from a single source—

Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians—which the second shepherd, Gyb, quotes in his diatribe

against marriage. Because critics have not recognized the import of this connection to the

Towneley author's argument, they have typically played the themes off against one another or

accepted as fact that the play is disorderly. Early critics criticized the jangling hodge-podge of

themes in the pageant; later critics spurned this view and praised its unity, only to argue for the

preeminence of one theme over another. For reasons that will become apparent, I think this

misses the Towneley author's (and Paul's) entire point. We can make much better sense of the

Towneley author's project in fifteenth-century Yorkshire if we recognize the Corinthian origins

of his material and observe the way that he leverages Paul's argument to comment upon the

modern secular concerns of his own historical moment.

I make no pretension to solve the thorny questions about the Towneley collection's origin

or the identity of the genius who composed the shepherds' plays, even though I consider recent

fulminations that categorize the "Wakefield Master" as a critic's invention to be overblown.

Nevertheless, it is useful to fix the questions and their stakes firmly in mind, all of which go to

the heart of dramatic historiography, conceptions of authorship, editorial procedure, and the effects these metacritical matters have on individual literary objects. These are the questions: 1) Is the Towneley play a cycle drama in the vein of the York and Chester cycles, and if so, was it performed around Wakefield? 2) Is the distinctive "Wakefield stanza" that appears so frequently in the pageants unique to the Towneley manuscript, and if so, what does it tell us about the skill of one of its authors? 3) Is the Wakefield Master a single person, and if so, what precisely were his notable contributions, and what qualitative evaluations may the critic justifiably make about his work? 4) Finally, given the answers to the preceding questions, what are the merits of previous interpretations of the Towneley *Shepherds'* plays?

We have Alfred W. Pollard to thank for codifying aesthetic and bibliographical judgments about the scope and quality of the Towneley author's work. It is not inconsequential that Pollard divides the cycle into a three-stage evolution and that the "work of the one real genius of the Towneley cycle" who composed the *Shepherds'* plays and the other work "written in the same metre" should "naturally lead us to assign to them as late a date as possible."[1] From the earliest editions, editors recognized the manuscript's "composite character," so the question for Pollard was not whether the pageants formed a cycle but how many pageants could, by "sure evidence," be identified as having been composed by the single person in the distinctive nine-line stanza.[2] He lavishes the highest praise upon this singular literary genius:

> If anyone will read these plays together, I think he cannot fail to feel that they are all the work of the same writer, and that this writer deserves to be ranked—if only we knew his name!—at least as high as Langland, and as an exponent of a rather boisterous kind of humour had no equal in his own day.[3]

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[1] Alfred W. Pollard, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, Early English Text Society Extra Series 71 (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1897), xxvi.

[2] Alfred W. Pollard, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, xxi.

[3] Alfred W. Pollard, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, xxii.

Without this author's effort, the Towneley cycle would have been no more remarkable than its

analogues, but with his additions, the whole collection deserves "to be ranked among the great

works of our earlier literature."[4]

By 1986, doubts had emerged about the quality and integrity of the Towneley cycle, and

furthermore, critics began to chaff against V. A. Kolvé's influential proposal of a "proto-cycle"

of pageants common to all Corpus Christi plays.[5] David Mills accuses Kolvé of merging the

"historical" and the "generic" aspects of the play-cycle form into a "generic definition" of a

Corpus Christi cycle.[6] Thus, though the compiler—who was likely not the Master—of the

Towneley manuscript clearly "intended, for whatever reason" to pass the plays off as a cycle like

York or Chester, the cycle-form is always, in Mills's view, an act of "mental reconstitution" on

the part of the audience because viewers rarely watched the whole series of plays from Creation

to Judgment.[7] Furthermore, Barbara Palmer asserts that "an overly zealous local historian"—

John W. Walker—seriously falsified, mischaracterized, conflated, or misinterpreted the

documentary evidence to inflate the Towneley plays into a proper cycle.[8] Now, according to

Garrett Epp, because the plays' "status as a coherent cycle of plays for sequential production"

has "largely been discredited," the only way that critics may continue to apply the "cycle" label

is via vague, odd, or dissembling definitions, such as Peter Meredith's definition: "In form and

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[4] Alfred W. Pollard, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, xxx.

[5] V. A. Kolvé, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 51.

[6] David Mills, "'The Towneley Plays' or 'The Towneley Cycle'?" *Leeds Studies in English* 17 (1986): 96.

[7] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction," in *The Towneley Plays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/epp-the-towneley-plays; David Mills, "'The Towneley Plays' or 'The Towneley Cycle'?" 96. See also Barbara D. Palmer, "'Towneley Plays' or 'Wakefield Cycle' Revisited," *Comparative Drama* 21, no. 4 (1987): 318.

[8] Barbara D. Palmer, "'Towneley Plays' or 'Wakefield Cycle' Revisited," 335.

content Towneley is no less a cycle than York or Chester. It is a cycle of human beings, humble and natural, gross and inflated, but all human, not types and figures."[9]

As Barbara Palmer shows, early ascriptions that the Towneley manuscript descended from the abbeys of Widkirk or Whalley cannot withstand scrutiny, and the connection between the Towneley manuscript and Wakefield is almost entirely a product of John Walker's imagination.[10] Other internal allusions to places near Wakefield have also "proven dubious."[11] Martin Stevens expresses a lonely bewilderment that scholars find the Wakefield attribution so shaky, given that the manuscript twice includes the term "Wakefield" in pageant titles and has "recognizable local allusions" to the place.[12] Few scholars now express confidence that the pageants were ever produced at Wakefield. Peter Meredith writes, "So far no evidence for such an organisation has been produced in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Nor is there any evidence for a site or sites for the performance in or outside Wakefield."[13] Palmer, too, rejects any attempt to "force the Towneley plays into civic production" because the documentary records indicate that Wakefield "did not acquire a civic structure, organized craft guilds, or cultural environment which would suggest that [it] was the progenitive or even ultimate site for a Corpus Christi cycle performance."[14]

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[9] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction"; Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Pageants," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher, 2nd ed., Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 179.

[10] See Barbara D. Palmer, "'Towneley Plays' or 'Wakefield Cycle' Revisited," 324, 331.

[11] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction."

[12] Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles: Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 109.

[13] Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Pageants," 164.

[14] Barbara D. Palmer, "'Towneley Plays' or 'Wakefield Cycle' Revisited," 341; Barbara D. Palmer, "Corpus Christi 'Cycles' in Yorkshire: The Surviving Records," *Comparative Drama* 27, no. 2 (1993): 228.

There are multiple flaws in this reasoning. First, absence of evidence does not constitute evidence of absence. Second, why should ecclesiastical authorities ban dramas that included representations of God, as we know that they did in 1576, if such performances were not, in fact, occurring in or around Wakefield? While the historical case could be stronger, Meredith's and Palmer's arguments seem exaggerated. Some even go so far as to wonder whether the plays were performable at all. Stevens admits that his opinion that the plays were performed is "not universally accepted," and Epp now contends that "they were never intended to be performed as a coherent professional cycle."[15] Nevertheless, Epp makes an obvious and needed concession that there is no way to prove definitively that cycle pageants were never performed at Wakefield, and he contradicts Palmer's claim that Wakefield had no craftsmen to perform them:

> It is worth noting that York's craft guilds not only produced their own pageants for the Corpus Christi cycle but were also involved, under the auspices of the Corpus Christi guild to which many individual craftsmen would have belonged, in the production of the much shorter multi-pageant Creed Play, the text of which unfortunately does not survive. Wakefield's assorted craftsmen could well have been involved in something similar; they could even have produced or co-produced a series of biblical pageants, some of which did indeed get copied at some point into the Towneley manuscript.[16]

Even if the compiler and the Master were different entities, as is likely the case, both seem invested in the cyclic form, invested enough to compile this anthology to mimic established cycles, such as York and Chester, and invested enough to compose new variants of spectacular quality that fit within that scaffold. We know, for instance, that the Towneley *Judgment* takes whole passages nearly verbatim from York's *Doomsday* pageant and adds wildly colorful additions composed in the unique bob and wheel stanza; the author clearly was aware of and

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[15] Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 95; Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction."

[16] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction."

keen to emulate a "true" cycle, even if his pageants were never performed or were performed as standalone dramas.

For decades, critics interpreted the distinctive nine-line stanza diplomatically reproduced from the manuscript as evidence of the "Wakefield Master's" distinctive signature, and all editors prior to the second EETS edition followed this form. The exceptional plays—*Noah*, *First Shepherds' Play*, *Second Shepherds' Play*, *Herod the Great*, and *The Buffeting*—are written entirely in this form, and nine other pageants also use it to varying degrees, such as the *Judgment*, otherwise borrowed from York, which means that its composer may have had a hand in half of the plays copied into the manuscript.[17] Still, recent treatments denounce the Wakefield stanza as an "editorial interpretation," a mark of "arbitrary scribal or editorial choice and not… an organic structure chosen for its formal design by the poet."[18] Martin Stevens argues that the scribe compressed the *frons* in the Wakefield stanza for reasons of space (see figure 1) and that, when left uncompressed, the meter is "conceptually, if not scribally, a thirteener."[19] Epp too justifies his use of the thirteener from the same rationale, stating flatly, "it is not unique."[20] These accounts are unconstructive. All the decisions that affect the way the stanza appears in the manuscript are scribal, and no single choice can be categorized as more or less arbitrary than another. It may well be the case that "scribal choice" *is* "authorial choice," if the scribe copied the manuscript as he found it in a holograph version.

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[17] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds., *The Towneley Plays*, 2 vols., Early English Text Society SS 13–14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1:xxxi.

[18] Martin Stevens, "Did the Wakefield Master Write a Nine-Line Stanza?" *Comparative Drama* 15, no. 2 (1981): 99–100; Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 143.

[19] Martin Stevens, "Did the Wakefield Master Write a Nine-Line Stanza?" 105. See also Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds., *The Towneley Plays*, 1:xxix–xxxi.
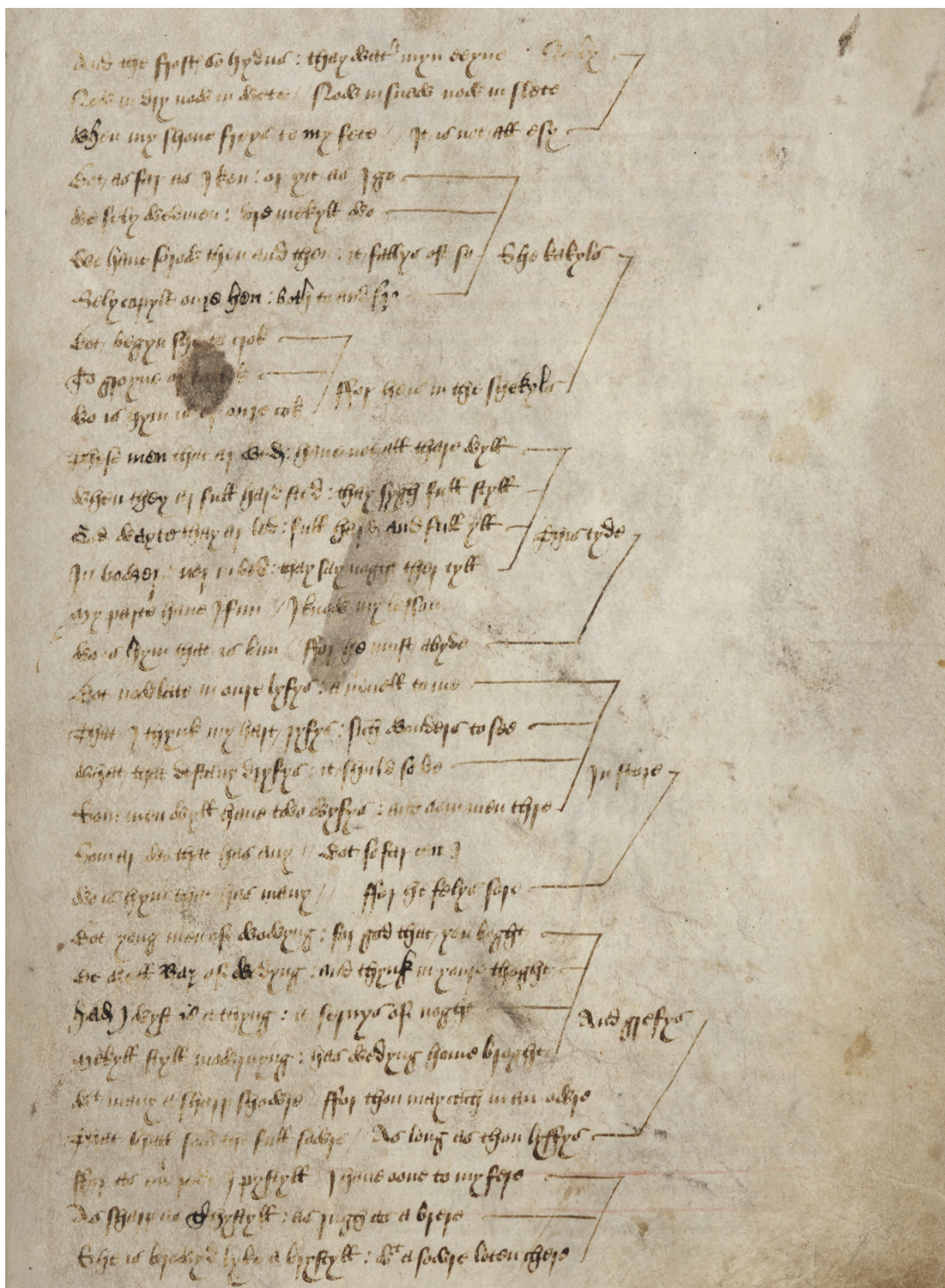
[20] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., "Introduction."

Fig. 1. Huntington HM 1, fol. 39ᵛ, c. 1490–1510, showing the "Wakefield Stanza." Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Published with permission.

Furthermore, even though scribal interventions may emend the author's work, they still precede

the choices of modern editors, often by centuries, and there is usually no original with which to

compare, as is the case with the Towneley plays, whose sole version resides in Huntington MS

HM 1. When modern editors such as Epp or Stevens and Cawley refuse to render the lines as

they appear in the manuscript, *they* are the ones editorializing. They change what they find in the

manuscript so that it is no longer unique, then assert that their editorial inventions invalidate the

existence of a unique nine-line stanza. Nothing could be more circular. Stevens even seems to

concede that the actual stanza form, as it appears in the manuscript, is never found in any other

medieval English manuscript.

The uncomfortable speculations Stevens voiced should have "sounded the death-knell for

the Wakefield Master," Joseph Dane argues.[21] But they did not. The name stuck even though it

was one of the most egregious instances of "authorial fiction"—a figure fabricated to embody the

aesthetic values critics preferred.[22] Dane comments that they cannot free themselves of the

persona because that would require them to relinquish teleological dramatic historiography that

culminates in Shakespeare and those who share his sensibilities.[23] If modern editors' choices are

fabricating thirteeners, even as they accuse the original scribes of fabricating bob and wheel

stanzas, perhaps that is the reason that even they cannot shake the "Wakefield Master"

attribution. Years after his article, Stevens wrote, "a strong case can be made for the Wakefield

Master to have been the principal compiler and the guiding intelligence of the Wakefield

cycle."[24] Dane claims that Stevens' early thesis had no effect because his edition of the plays

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[21] Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," in *Abstractions of Evidence in the Study of Manuscripts and Early Printed Books* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 64.
[22] Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," 57.
[23] See Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," 62.
[24] Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 88–89.

"was based on assumptions that exposed his earlier polemic [in favor of the Wakefield Master] as purely typographical."[25] Thus, skeptical blows against the Master's identity only glance, and no amount of qualification via scare quotes or preemptive modifiers such as "so-called" can dislodge the Master as a "convenient reference name" for the author of a "strikingly original group of pageants."[26] Critics attach this judgment to more nebulous criteria, such as his use of dialect, grasp of humanity, self-conscious use of language in characterization, or the natural or organic integration of his theological and literary points.[27] Martin Stevens notes that "[t]he tendency has always been there to assign to him everything in the Towneley cycle that is realistically comic, racy, vital, and dramatically exciting."[28] It seems that critics cannot dispense with the "Master" because of modern biases that favor works attributed to an author who supplies the unity, meaning, and genius of a work because, after the construction of "Shakespeare" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they need an equivalent genius for any play to rival his.

I maintain that the value of identifying the stanza with an author is not to construct a modern Shakespearean secular genius but to recognize that the stanza's inventor likely had a clerical education; his mastery lies in his knowledge of the Vulgate and the Latin Christmas liturgy, if not also Terence and medieval Latin comedy.[29] Without this recognition, critics have

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[25] Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," 70.

[26] Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," 64; Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Pageants," 152.

[27] On this shift, see Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 152; Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Pageants," 173, 177; Joseph A. Dane, "Myths of the Wakefield Master," 63; John Gardner, *The Construction of the Wakefield Cycle* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), 139.

[28] Martin Stevens, "Did the Wakefield Master Write a Nine-Line Stanza?" 99.

[29] On the medieval investment in and appreciation for ancient drama, see Carol Symes, "Ancient Drama in the Medieval World," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*, ed.

read the Towneley *Shepherds'* less productively than they might. Early critics considered the *Second Shepherds' Play* to be an "artistic absurdity" because the Mak episode was "hopelessly out of proportion to the proper matter of the play," even though that subplot was "the masterpiece of English religious drama."[30] After Homer Watt's influential essay in 1940, the sense that the two halves of the *Second Shepherds' Play* are disjointed is now longer sustainable; "it is impossible," writes Míceál Vaughn, "to treat the *Secunda Pastorum* as anything but a unified work."[31] But why does it work? On this matter, there is no consensus, save that the religious content does not reduce the "delightful sense of secular vitality" in the demotic subplot.[32] But this segregates what I sense as the most likely conclusion: the Wakefield stanza suggests an author or authors who were schooled in both biblical exegesis and the vibrant culture of secular Latin literature. Other critics contextualize the social complaint, ponder the shepherds'

Betine van Zyl Smit, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Classical Reception (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 97–130.

[30] Albert C. Baugh, *A Literary History of England* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 281. See also Lawrence J. Ross, "Symbol and Structure in the *Secunda Pastorum*," *Comparative Drama* 1, no. 2 (1967): 122.

[31] Míċeál F. Vaughan, "The Three Advents in the *Secunda Pastorum*," *Speculum* 55, no. 3 (1980): 484.

[32] William M. Manly, "Shepherds and Prophets: Religious Unity in the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum*," *PMLA* 78, no. 3 (1963): 155. See also Leah Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays," *Speculum* 48, no. 3 (1973): 509. Sinanoglou marvels, "It is proof of the artistry…that the sacrificial motif woven through [the plays] is never allowed to smother their lively human appeal" (509). For a smattering of the themes that have been proposed, see Homer A. Watt, "The Dramatic Unity of the *Secunda Pastorum*," in *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 1940), 158–66; William M. Manly, "Shepherds and Prophets," 151–55; Lawrence J. Ross, "Symbol and Structure in the *Secunda Pastorum*," 122–49; Francis J. Thompson, "Unity in the *Second Shepherds' Tale*," *Modern Language Notes* 64, no. 5 (1949): 302–06; Linda E. Marshall, "'Sacral Parody' in the *Secunda Pastorum*," *Speculum* 47, no. 4 (1972): 720–36; and Lois Roney, "The Wakefield *First* and *Second Shepherds Plays* as Complements in Psychology and Parody," *Speculum* 58, no. 3 (1983): 696–723.

moral character, or sift folklore to find a source for the Mak tale.[33] I suggest that a clerical

education solves the riddle of the play's mélange of sacred and secular content (given that an

author schooled in the Vulgate would have at the forefront of his mind the eucharistic

implications of the nativity and would also have been familiar with the liturgical festivities

surrounding Christmas).

Recently, two scholars have questioned the plays' Corpus Christi performance context

entirely. Alexandra Johnston now categorizes the *Second Shepherds' Play* as an example of a

subgenre of specifically Christmas plays, on the grounds that its social complaint would be better

suited for a festive Christmas banquet than an open-air summer festival, but her evidence is

rather speculative. For some reason, critics have been more willing to stomach social criticism

when it is embedded "within the context of the salvation of an individual soul than in the context

of salvation history itself," but this has led them to presume that biblical drama can only be

"pious, didactic, and performed…as an act of devotion."[34] She argues that only a "sophisticated

and politically aware audience" could have tolerated the social criticism and farce combined with

sacred story.[35] Only in the interior Christmas season performance context could the satire on

maintenance really bite.[36] Ernst Gerhardt makes a similar argument with the *First Shepherds'*

Play. He objects to critics who have presumed the Corpus Christi performance context, where

the "grotesque" feast's imaginariness supplies the precondition of absence on which the ironic

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[33] See Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs': Sheep and Humans in the Pastoral Ecology of the Towneley *First* and *Second Shepherds' Plays*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 3 (2009): 336–59; Claude Chidamian, "Mak and the Tossing in the Blanket," *Speculum* 22, no. 2 (1947): 186–90; Robert C. Cosbey, "The Mak Story and Its Folklore Analogues," *Speculum* 20, no. 3 (1945): 310–17; and Thomas J. Jambeck, "The Canvas-Tossing Allusion in the *Secunda Pastorum*," *Modern Philology* 76, no. 1 (1978): 49–54.

[34] Alexandra F. Johnston, "*The Second Shepherds' Play*: A Play for the Christmas Season," *Medieval English Theatre* 37 (2015): 145.

[35] Alexandra F. Johnston, "*The Second Shepherds' Play*," 145.

[36] See Alexandra F. Johnston, "*The Second Shepherds' Play*," 145.

miming and theological point about Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist rely.[37] He wonders

why critics inconsistently read the feast "non-indexically"—where the characters' words and

gestures refer to items that are not physically present in the theater—while interpreting the

remainder of the drama indexically.[38] Like Johnston, Gerhardt argues that if critics granted the

Christmas performance context, they could break out of the circular logic that traps them in

interpretations that the manuscript's provenance cannot support. But Gerhardt supplies little

documentary evidence for the Christmas setting, and the evidence he does produce is

circumstantial (for example, the feast items in the Chester shepherds' pageant corresponded to

real purchases for guild meals, so the Towneley food might also correspond). I propose an

alternative explanation: the plays in the manuscript were compiled (and many of them

composed) on the model of cycle drama (regardless of whether they were ever performed as

such) but are at the same time indebted to Pauline theology, the festive, parodic atmosphere of

the Christmas liturgy, and perhaps also to Latin secular literature more generally.

Johnston and Gerhardt are only the latest example of critics playing the various themes in

the Towneley *Shepherds'* off against one another. Even if the plays were performed at

Christmas, that would not reduce the eucharistic subtext of the pageants because, as Leah

Sinanoglou documents, medieval theologians and philosophers repeatedly linked Christmas and

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[37] See Ernst Gerhardt, "The Towneley 'First Shepherds' Play': Its 'Grotesque' Feast Revisited," *Early Theatre* 22, no. 1 (2019): 12. A. C. Cawley argues the author creates the sense of grotesqueness by "mixing together aristocratic and plebian dishes," whereas V. A. Kolvé claimed the joke lay in the meal's size, not its odd combination of dishes. See A. C. Cawley, "The 'Grotesque' Feast in the *Prima Pastorum*," *Speculum* 30, no. 2 (1955): 213; V. A. Kolvé, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, 160. On the connection between the Eucharist and the imaginary food, see Robert Adams, "The Egregious Feasts of the Chester and Towneley Shepherds," *The Chaucer Review* 21, no. 2 (1986): 96–107; Alicia Nitecki, "The Sacred Elements of the Secular Feast," *Mediaevalia* 3 (1977): 229–38; Lois Roney, "The Wakefield *First* and *Second Shepherds Plays* as Complements in Psychology and Parody," 696–723.

[38] Ernst Gerhardt, "The Towneley 'First Shepherds' Play,'" 19.

the Eucharist, and there is substantial evidence that the average layman did as well.[39] The critical literature is replete with unwarranted juxtapositions—social complaint versus devotional content, Aristotelian versus Augustinian conceptions of notions of sin, sacred versus secular plots, and unenlightened Old Testament shepherds versus enlightened English shepherds, to name a few. I am convinced that we can account for the seemingly discordant themes of marital dysfunction, status-based oppression, discordant and harmonious worship, the Eucharist, and discerning and showing deference to the unity of *corpus Christi*, all of which Paul conjoins in 1 Corinthians.

II – "For as ever rede I pystyll…"

The play begins with parallel six-stanza complaints against two sources of misery for medieval husbands (both farmers and married men): exposure to the elements and a trio of social injustices.[40] Coll, the first shepherd, laments his threadbare clothing and the vicious weather, then rails against the practices of enclosure, maintenance, and purveyance by which landlords and their hired henchmen impoverish "husbandys [farmers]" and drive them to ruin (*SSP* 14, 33).[41] These unjust policies compel the farmers to become shepherds, which decimates their economic and physical wellbeing. When the second shepherd Gyb arrives, he does not see Coll

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[39] See Leah Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice," 491–509.

[40] See Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Pageants," 173.

[41] Garrett P. J. Epp, ed., *The Towneley Plays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/epp-the-towneley-plays. All references to Towneley pageants refer to Epp's lineation and are parenthetically cited, and all glosses refer to his marginal glosses where present. If they are not present, I supplement with Martin Stevens' and A. C. Cawley's glosses. Epp comments that the manuscript reads "shephardes" but he, like most modern editors, emends the passage to read "husbandys" to preserve the rhyme. He also insists that the word means "farmers" in this instance and at line 33, whereas the term "wed-men" at line 94 implies "husbands" in the "usual modern sense." See Epp's footnote at line 14.

(the significance of which will become apparent), and he too airs his grievances.[42] He curses the

"spytus [spiteful]" weather, which creates the expectation that he too will criticize his corrupt

employers next; however, after a lone stanza on the weather, he denounces domestic forms of

enclosure, maintenance, and purveyance that afflict "wed-men [husbands]" (*SSP* 83, 94). The

adjective 'sely,' which the *Middle English Dictionary* defines as "wretched, unfortunate,

miserable," applies to both types of husband, cementing their connection (*SSP* 14, 94).[43]

Whereas Coll resents that landlords have enclosed arable land for pasture and have hired

enforcers to police those boundaries ("the tylthe of oure landys / Lyys falow as the floore"), Gyb

hates that marriage "shakyls [shackles]" husbands and prevents them from plowing their fields

with their farming implements (*SSP* 20–21, 104). (If we take seriously Mak's word about Gyll's

prodigious reproduction, this may not be an empirically fair accusation.)

Coll describes the tactics of "gentlery-men"—the hired muscle who "enforce the dubious

policy" of enclosure and abuse the peasants—thus:

> These men that ar lord-fest [bound to a lord],
> Thay cause the ploghe tary [plow to tarry];
> That men say is for the best—
> We fynde it contrary.
> Thus ar husbandys opprest,
> In ponte to myscary [point]
> On lyfe. (*SSP* 26, 29–35)[44]

The peasants protest this treatment at their peril, suggesting that the maintained men will rough

up anyone who resists their authority (see *SSP* 42–45). Maintained men abuse the policy of

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[42] A. C. Cawley, ed., "*Secunda Pastorum*," in *The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 54sd. Citations to pageants in this edition refer to its lineation.

[43] "sēlī *adj.*," in *Middle English Dictionary*, accessed May 17, 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED36558/ track?counter=5&search_id=13569780. In other contexts, *sely* implies spiritual favor, blessing, and virtuousness, so the author may intend irony with this selection.

[44] Alexandra F. Johnston, "*The Second Shepherds' Play*," 140.

purveyance, whereby kings traveling through the realm provided for their train by seizing food,

animals, farm equipment, and vehicles at a price they unilaterally set—a kind of eminent

domain, if you will.[45] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley indicate that despite "many enactments"

against maintenance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the practice carried on without

interruption.[46] Coll describes his first-hand experience with the racket:

> Ther shall com a swane [swain]
> As prowde as a po [peacock],
> He must borow my wane [wagon],
> My ploghe also;
> Then I am full fane [obliged]
> To graunt or he go.
> …
> I were better be hangyd
> Then oones say hym nay. (*SSP* 53–58, 64–65)

The hired enforcers can "make purveance / With boste and bragance [bragging]" (*SSP* 49–50).

As Robert C. Allen documents, when the Black Death cut the legs out from under the

labor market in 1348–49, it became more efficient to raise sheep than crops.[47] Lords seized vast

swaths of peasant land, evicted the tenants, destroyed small farming communities and their

economies, and created a class of homeless migrants who had few marketable skills to survive in

the new economic order.[48] Furthermore, the few remaining jobs transitioned to wage-based

compensation, which lacked the upside of agricultural work. In an agrarian economy, peasants

benefited from bumper crops, but as all wage laborers know, the only way to make more is to

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[45] See Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds., *The Towneley Plays*, 2:496. They comment, "It is not surprising that noblemen and their retainers found it convenient to follow the king's example, so that purveyance ceased to be exclusively a royal privilege" (496). Citations to Stevens' and Cawley's notes refer to the volume and page number on which the note appears.

[46] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds., *The Towneley Plays*, 2:496.

[47] See Robert C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman: The Agricultural Development of the South Midlands, 1450–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 14–28.

[48] See Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs,'" 337.

work more, and less desirable, hours. Lisa Kiser argues that this transition savaged their core identity, not just their employment:

> The result of this economic shift is that the peasants are being cut off from the land in a very real sense, no longer having a meaningful relationship to it. Formerly, their investment in the land would have been deep and abiding, as they communally worked to bring in the harvest and as they all shared in the material benefits of its bounty. But under the system of enclosure, they have become displaced from their former roles in the rural village community (with the "village" itself perhaps becoming an outdated concept) and are now rewarded with money for their newly-adopted pastoral roles, destroying whatever sense of "communal work" and "identity with the land" they may formerly have had.[49]

Though enclosure began in the fourteenth century, it did not cease when population growth caught up to demand because manor lords intuited the value proposition inherent in economies of scale and realized that they could collect higher profits by selling wool and mutton than growing crops.[50] The practice continued throughout the 1400s and the first half of the 1500s, and the destitution was most pronounced between 1440–1520.[51] Martin Stevens goes so far as to suggest that Abel's description in *The Killing of Abel* serves as "a precursor of the other Shepherds of the Wakefield plays" and that the play "focuses on another socioeconomic situation of moment in late-fifteenth-century Yorkshire: the festering rivalry between the tenant farmer and the sheep raiser."[52] Some have protested that the connection between *The Killing of Abel* and the *Shepherds'* plays is tenuous; nevertheless, the facts remain: *The Killing of Abel* contains a clear

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[49] Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs,'" 337–38.

[50] See Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs,'" 337n1; see also Leonard Cantor, *The Changing English Countryside, 1400–1700* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 29.

[51] See Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs,'" 338.

[52] Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 128–29. See also Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:441.

reference to Wakefield and it includes the stanza form (albeit the "format C" variant), so it is not

farfetched to correlate the labor struggles of Wakefield to their depictions in these pageants.[53]

Gyb describes the travails of marriage in terms that are strikingly similar to the

shepherds' complaints about labor relations more generally. He argues that married men "[d]re

mekyll wo [endure much woe]" when their silly wives, imagined as clucking, cackling, croaking

hens, run their mouths, imprison their husbands (cocks), and domesticate them (*SSP* 95). To add

insult to injury, wives oblige their spouses to shut up and take it, just as the maintained men do.

Gyb grumbles that husbands "[i]n bower [bedroom] nor in bed / Thay say noght thertyll [in

reply]" (*SSP* 111–12). The language of a sexual violence that silences victims is difficult to miss.

Earlier, Coll claims that shepherds are

> so hamyd [restrained]
> Fortaxed and ramyd [overtaxed and beaten down],
> We ar mayde hand-tamyd [submissive]
> With thyse gentlery men (*SSP* 23–26).

Wives transform their husbands into impotent, passive victims who receive the ramming instead

of inflicting it. The *Middle English Dictionary* cites this scene in its definition of *reimen*, which

it characterizes as "to plunder; rob, plunder, fleece."[54] In other contexts, however, the word

means "to ravage [a country or territory]."[55] These shepherds have been emasculated, silenced,

and robbed of their stake in the production cycle.

After his initial rant, Gyb likely turns and advises the young men in the audience to

remain single. He cautions them to "be well war[y] of wedyng" and warns them that marriage

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[53] See Epp's headnote to *The Killing of Abel;* Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:441. Epp argues that Cain's desire to be buried "in Gudeboure at the quarrel hede" supplies "the sole clear reference" to a location near Wakefield in any of the pageants.

[54] "reimen *v.*, 2a," in *Middle English Dictionary*, accessed May 17, 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED36558/track?counter=5&search_id=13569780.)

[55] "reimen *v.*, 2c," in *Middle English Dictionary*.

brings men "mekyll styll mowrnyng [much steady mourning]" (*SSP* 133, 137). He presents his

own wife as a horrifying case in point:

> For as ever rede I pystyll [in the epistle]
> I have oone to my fere: [one for my companion]
> As sharp as thystyll,
> As rugh as a brere,
> She is browyd lyke a brystyll
> With a sowre-loten chere [sour-looking demeanor].
> Had she oones wett hyr whystyl,
> She couth syng full clere
> Hyr *Paternoster* ["Our Father"]. (*SSP* 144–52)

In this anti-marriage speech, two phrases betray the Corinthian source that provides the themes

considered in both Towneley *Shepherds'* plays. The first comes in Gyb's oath: "as ever rede I

pystll" (*SSP* 144). Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley speculate that this oath is "an asseveration

more appropriate to a priest—perhaps the playwright himself—than to a shepherd."[56] They

follow Karl Young's claim that clergy presided over the celebratory Masses during the

Christmas season—the feasts of the Circumcision, Epiphany, and the octave of Epiphany—and

that wild misrule was incorporated within official liturgy on these occasions.[57] While Young

(among others) insists that these performances were not dramatic but were "allied to sheer

revelry and hilarity rather than to the stage," clearly the sacred performance of liturgy and the

secular performance of misrule have interpenetrated.[58]

I suspect that the Wakefield author was intimately acquainted with the incorporation of

the Latin culture of misrule into the Christmas holiday liturgy—hence, the racy "secular" content

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[56] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:497.

[57] See Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1:104–11.

[58] On the supposedly impermeable boundary between revelry and liturgy/drama, see Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). For a trenchant critique of this view, see Alexandra F. Johnston, "'Pleyes of Myracles,'" *English* 64, no. 244 (2015): 5–26.

in his *Shepherds'* plays. The ubiquity of this misrule greatly complicates Johnston and Gerhardt's view that the plays belong to independent festivities; instead, they are modeled upon "the astonishing clerical revels admitted into the liturgy of many medieval cathedrals, collegiate churches and monasteries…during the period."[59] The most plausible scenario that explains the oath's content is that the author was literate and familiar with reading the scripture in Latin. He had to have had some form of clerical education, which likely also exposed him to satirical Latin drama *within the confines of the church.* Alone, his choice of "epistle" as a fourth rhyme to complement the descriptions of Gyb's wife's sharp personality, rough demeanor, ungainly eyebrows, and obnoxious singing voice may seem puzzling, but with the presence of a quotation from Paul's letter in the same monologue, the Corinthian connection is unmistakable.

The second tell-tale line drawn from 1 Corinthians comes when Gyb instructs the young men that they should avoid marriage because God has purchased them; he tells them, "Bot yong men of wowyng, / For God that you boght, / Be well war of wedyng" (*SSP* 131–33). This comment echoes Paul's rationale in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 for why Christians must stop sleeping with prostitutes and avoid bonding themselves out as servants: "you were bought with a price."[60] There, he offers his most sustained commentary on marital relations and argues for the preferability of singleness (though for entirely different reasons than Gyb supplies). Marital accord is but one of several Corinthian themes in the Towneley *Shepherds'*—the others being a robust critique of status-based divisions and socio-economic exploitation, a concern for orderly worship and prophecy, the recognition and unity of Christ's Body, and the Eucharist's place in forming and strengthening the Christian social order. I would like to use this Pauline source-text

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[59] Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1:104.

[60] 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23 ESV. All references to 1 Corinthians are taken from the English Standard Version and are hereafter cited parenthetically.

to reframe the questions about the *Shepherds' Plays*' authorship, performance context, and the relationship between "secular" social complaint and biblical content.

III – Discerning the Body

As we turn to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, it will help to summarize the letter's overarching concerns. In plain English, I would paraphrase his message as follows. Cut out this factionalism! All Christians are united in one Body under only one head—Christ. True Christians embrace both Christianity's absurd metaphysical claims and its offensive social vision. Defend Christ's Body by excommunicating those who threaten its integrity through grievous sin; and show radical deference to all people—especially those of lower social station—protecting Christian unity at all costs; partake of the Eucharist in a manner consistent with its meaning: the ritual elements are not talismans, but the manner in which one receives the Eucharist determines whether it strengthens and nourishes Christ's Body or tears it asunder. If practiced properly, the Eucharist nourishes the Body of Christ and produces real communion, but if received improperly, it effectuates communion with demons. The parts of Christ's Body fill different roles, but the health of the whole organism depends upon healthy relations between the parts. Thus, deference should be the rule of life in all matters: social arrangements, marital relationships, sexual practices, legal engagements, diet, and worship. If Jesus was really resurrected, then the order of reality—both metaphysically and socially—has changed, and Christian life must conform to this new reality.

Paul attacks all manner of social, ideological, and ethical dysfunction in the Corinthian church, but his predominant concern of abolishing status-based divisions that produce sin and strife lies behind the individual chastisements. Dale Martin argues that the Corinthians' disunity

and moral dysfunction were secondary manifestations of ideologies of the body that, when transposed from physical to social bodies, created the divisions Paul excoriates.[61] Then and now, class divisions correlated to philosophical commitments, political tribes, and socio-economic disparities. Martin contends that New Testament commentators frequently misread Paul because they apply Cartesian categories to societies that did not have access to them. Aristotle's concept of physics does not separate the spiritual and physical into completely distinct realms, as modern Cartesians do. To original readers, the word *hyle* ("matter") did not imply the modern material/immaterial distinction because *pneuma*, the substance that made up the soul or spirit, did not connote incorporeality: it was matter of a different order.[62] Importantly, this meant that *pneuma* was not "safely cloistered in a separate ontology" but could be affected or impaired by matter from other orders.[63] "Paul's theology," Martin writes, "is constrained by his physiology."[64]

Paul's elite interlocutors, "the Strong," conceptualized physiology through the language of humoral balance; they charted health, disease, and bodily dysfunction according to indices of proportion.[65] The body was, for them, strictly hierarchical and inequitable—the inferior members' sole reason for existence was to serve the needs of the more essential. The image "usually functioned conservatively to support hierarchy and to argue that inequality is both

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[61] See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 56.

[62] See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 7–10. Martin notes Aristotle juxtaposed *hyle* (content) to *eidos* (form) or *logos*, and he predominantly lays blame upon W. S. Hett's Loeb translation. Also, Martin argues that equating *hyle* with "matter" is "even more inappropriate for Epicureanism" and that it also fails to account for Stoic conception of "nature" that include both that which exists and that which exists mentally but "lacks substance."

[63] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 24.

[64] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 135.

[65] See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 31.

necessary and salutary."[66] This ideology of "benevolent patriarchalism" incentivizes the elite to

rule just humanely enough to retain political power, and it emotionally blackmails commoners by

making the health of the State dependent upon their submission to mistreatment.[67] It was in no

sense a "moderate ideology"; it maximized and prolonged exploitation by limiting it to

sustainable levels in order to stave off revolt.[68] Martin reiterates, "The conservative ideological

benefits to be derived from the use of the body analogy are obvious. Conceiving the social group

as a body is a strong strategy for establishing the givenness of the current order and hierarchy."[69]

It leverages fear of anarchy to head off revolution.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul rejects this ideology but does not seek to supplant all social

hierarchies. He reimagines the relationship between the individual and collective by

conceptualizing *pneuma* and *sarx* as apocalyptic entities, not categories of matter. The terms

constitute "radical dualism in Paul's ethical cosmos."[70] Martin summarizes Paul's position:

> *Pneuma* is everywhere, giving life to all but always under threat from the death-
> dealing of *sarx*. All boundaries dissolve in the cosmological soup of competing
> and combatting forces of *sarx*, *pneuma*, death, life, impurities, and cleansings. For
> Paul, firm boundaries must be drawn between the church and the world precisely
> because firm boundaries do not exist between flesh and spirit, body and spirit,
> divine spirit and human spirit.[71]

Specifically, Martin argues that Paul's ideology of the body causes him to diverge from the

consensus of elite physicians of his day on the matter of disease etiology. "[A]ll Greek

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[66] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 92. Martin lists Dio Chrysostom, Livy, Cicero, Seneca, Philo among many examples of this rhetoric. See 268n15.

[67] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 42. Gerd Theissen imagines patriarchalism as actually benevolent, but Martin disagrees: "I use the term benevolent with some irony here, since patriarchalism may be characterized as benevolent only in the minds of the deluded" (259n12). See Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, ed. and trans. John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

[68] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 43.

[69] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 93.

[70] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 172.

[71] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 174.

professional medicine," Martin writes, "reflects the imbalance etiology," but Paul's etiology of sickness matched lower-class views on the subject.[72] "The Weak" envision the cosmos as a "precarious" place where hostile agents threaten invasion at every turn; their justifiable paranoia about disease "evinces a social position of helplessness in the face of outside powers."[73] The Weak instinctively intuit that bodies have permeable boundaries and are thus in need of "protection against invasion, manipulation, and disintegration" because their social station continuously exposes them to existential risks.[74]

Paul, along with most early Christian thinkers, theorizes disease according to the invasion model, which I think explains his stern, inflexible chastisement of sins that threaten to infect the whole Body.[75] The Strong think their sexual sins are mere "peccadilloes" irrelevant to the Body's health, and they feel no compunction consuming meat sacrificed to idols.[76] Though Paul agrees with the Strong that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with eating consecrated meat (and even encourages them to continue eating so long as it does not scandalize others), he condemns their lack of deference, which divides the Body's unity and exposes it to the contagion of schism. Given these conditions, "[T]here can be no truce, no meeting the enemy half-way"; those who expose the Body to contagion and introduce a "foreign, utterly hostile, polluting agent that threatens the body…must be cast out of the body entirely."[77] Excommunication—excision from the Body—is the only sufficient remedy to protect Corinthian believers from this threat. The

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[72] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 147. Martin lists Herophilus, Hippocrates, Erasistratus, and Galen as proponents of the imbalance etiology. See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body,* 147–49.

[73] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 160.

[74] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 161.

[75] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 163.

[76] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 208; see also Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 75.

[77] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 217.

concern for avoiding contamination countermands and supersedes the preference of the Strong for stability, hierarchy, and moderation.[78] Christian unity is no pious, parochial concern, but a utilitarian matter of closing ranks against polluting forces that threaten the whole body's integrity.

Greco-Roman *homonoia* rhetoric was stridently hierarchical, and although Paul retains this hierarchy, he flips the script. For classical authorities, the whole point of *homonoia* was to "solidify the social hierarchy by averting lower-class challenges to the so-called natural status structures."[79] Paul argues instead that the Gospel demands real "self-lowering and status reversal" that results in permanent, irrevocable "disruption of the stable hierarchy of the political and cosmic body" because this reversal is the only way to protect the Christian Body from corruption, pollution, and ultimately death.[80] Having preserved status-based distinctions common to secular social networks, the Corinthians sabotaged the Gospel's regenerative potential and left themselves susceptible to external threats and internal decay. Paul places the onus on the stronger, more respectable members of the body to defer to the weak—to refuse to exercise their rights even if the Weak are superstitious, irrational, or paranoid (1 Cor. 12:21–26 ESV). In 1 Corinthians 9, he tells them to emulate himself: he refuses to exercise his rights as an apostle to take a wife, to receive compensation for his preaching, and to eat and drink what he pleases, choosing instead to act as a slave to the gospel, constantly deferring to the needs of others to prevent any impediment to their conversion.

> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as

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[78] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 163.
[79] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 47.
[80] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 68.

one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19–23 ESV)

It is important to notice the extent to which Paul frames all his specific doctrinal positions relative to a broader discourse of the proper Christian ideology of the body, and his particular social pronouncements descend from judgments about the pragmatic ramifications an ideology of the body entails. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul expresses his wish that all people remain unmarried like himself, but he encourages people to marry if they lack sexual self-control, noting that they have not sinned in so doing but have simply received a different "gift" from the Lord. Married people suffer from anxiety caused by "worldly troubles"—how to please their spouse and how to provide for themselves and their families—but single people only must worry about how to please God (1 Cor. 7:28, 32–35 ESV). Also, Paul imagines marriage as a state of captivity: he says that wives and husbands do not have "authority" over their own bodies but must defer to the needs and wishes of the other (1 Cor. 7:4 ESV). Furthermore, he twice notes that married people are "bound" to their spouses, which, not incidentally, is the same language Gyb adopts in the *Second Shepherds' Play*. As bondservants are bound to their masters, married people are constrained and may not pursue their own desires (1 Cor. 7:27, 39 ESV; *SSP* 116).

Orderly and harmonious worship is as much a matter of deference to the social body as marital relationships are; just as Corinthian sexual unions were dysfunctional and damaging to the Body, so too was their worship, particularly the ways they spoke in tongues. The Corinthians apparently were "eager for manifestations of the Spirit," which Paul did not want to dissuade (1 Cor. 14:12 ESV). He thanks God that he speaks in tongues more than any of the Corinthian congregants, and he tells them that he wishes they too would speak in tongues, but he desires

more for them to prophesy in the congregation, which is the greater gift (1 Cor. 14:5, 18 ESV). When a person speaks in tongues in worship without interpretation, the prayer is privately effectual but is of no benefit to the others gathered who cannot understand, so Paul instructs the Corinthians that in a congregational setting he would "rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14:19 ESV). Here as elsewhere, the issue is deference to the needs of Christ's Body, the Church. Christian worship should reflect the peaceableness, orderliness, and humble self-sacrifice of the One who is worshipped, and individual preference in the mode of worship should give way to the primacy of the unity of the Body and its wellbeing. In the matter of worship, Paul instructs the Corinthians that "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40 ESV). Orderly worship is an explicitly social matter, not a doctrinal one; all the reasons Paul supplies are pragmatic, rooted in deference to the needs of the Body of believers. He claims that God is not a God of confusion but of peace, and that speaking in tongues, which sounds like a cacophony to others, does not bother the One who understands perfectly. Nevertheless, the assembled body of believers cannot understand (without interpretation) and thus would not be edified. The community would not be strengthened, nourished, reaffirmed, and renewed if everyone privatized their worship.

Finally, we must notice how Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist functions within his fullest explication of Christian community. It is no coincidence that the Christians who severely botched eucharistic ritual practice also displayed the most difficulty in embracing Paul's social vision. Moreover, it is no surprise (given this dysfunction) that Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist sits immediately adjacent to his exposition of a Christian ideology of the body. When he arrived in Corinth, he found a church divided in allegiance to different Christian leaders, behaving in ways fundamentally incompatible with the Gospel, and utterly fractured along class lines. In 1

Corinthians 11, Paul yokes the discernment of a resurrected body's metaphysical properties to one's allegiance to his social vision. Paul thinks that Jesus's resurrection not only defeated the forces of sin, death, and the devil, but also enabled the possibility of entirely new social norms. Corinthian factionalism crescendoed at the Lord's Supper, the very ritual given to express, nourish, and reaffirm the unity of the Christian Body. Some, refusing to wait for others, rush ahead, consume all the food and get drunk, leaving those who arrive late hungry and humiliated (1 Cor. 11:21–22 ESV). Paul argues that proper reception of the *corpus mysticum* both effectuates and safeguards the health of the *corpus Christi*, and improper consumption exposes both the individual communicant and the corporate Body to sickness, up to and including death (1 Cor. 6:18, 11:30 ESV).[81] Only social distancing, the uncompromising exclusion of diseased agents to protect society's weakest members, can protect the whole Christian Body from an infection against which there was no other defense.

While the Eucharist does not immediately dissolve socio-economic, gendered, or racial barriers, it nevertheless instantiates a new social order where deference replaces selfishness and unity transcends identity. Dale Martin argues that status-based discrimination was so widespread in Greco-Roman culture that it was to be assumed; the wealthy expected their primacy due to their patronage of the congregation, by hosting house churches, supplying meals, and providing the majority of tithes.[82] These cultural norms structured the Corinthian community, and Paul demands that the Strong "avoid shaming the 'have-nots'" or exploiting their desperation.

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[81] I use the terms *corpus mysticum* and *corpus Christi* according to what Cardinal Henri de Lubac defines as their original meaning: the *corpus mysticum* referred to the body of Christ as present in the sacramental elements, and the *corpus Christi* referred to the social body of Christian believers. Cardinal de Lubac argues that these two meanings inverted in the Middle Ages. See Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. Gemma Simmonds, CJ, Richard Price, and Christopher Stephens (London: SCM Press, 2006).

[82] See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 74.

Eucharistic malpractice does not raise his hackles because the Corinthians fail to display "a proper attitude of piety" or misconstrue the "nature of the elements."[83] When the Corinthian social elites eat and drink from the Lord's Table unworthily, they fracture Christ's Body instead of healing it.[84]

> The Strong at Corinth, by reinforcing social distinctions in the church, divide the church. They are quite literally, in Paul's view, "killing" Christ by tearing apart his body. They pervert the meal of unity, the "common meal," by making it an occasion for schism and difference. And in Paul's logic, one puts one's own body in a state of vulnerability to disease by dissecting the body of Christ. By opening Christ's body to schism, they open their own bodies to disease and death.[85]

Paul accuses those who pervert the Eucharist of consuming the feast without "discerning the body," which is a hotly contested phrase (1 Cor. 11:29 ESV). Scholars have debated whether this means a) handling the eucharistic elements appropriately, recognizing their divine properties; b) recognizing the sacrament as a commemoration of Christ's death; c) recognizing that the Church is Christ's Body and treating that social entity and its members properly; or d) recognizing that the body of the individual Christian (whether self or neighbor) must be treated appropriately, without causing offense or mistreating it.[86] Martin takes it to mean all these things simultaneously, and I think he is dead right on that account, but I also suspect that this language of "discerning the body" would have directed medieval readers to consider Christ's post-resurrection appearances, especially at Emmaus and on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Those vignettes connect the discernment of the ontological properties of resurrected bodies to the discernment of the needs and vulnerabilities of the Body of Christ.

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[83] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 74, 194.
[84] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 194.
[85] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 194–95.
[86] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 194–95.

Following Christ's resurrection, a pattern emerges in His appearances to the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and to Cleopas and his companion at Emmaus. The disciples 1) see the risen Jesus and fail to recognize Him until 2) he replays an episode from their previous interactions with him, and this performance 3) crystallizes their understanding of the resurrected order and actuates their loyalty to His kingdom and its citizens. After a long, futile night of fishing, Peter, James, John, Thomas, Nathanael, and two unnamed disciples see an unrecognizable man at dawn cooking fish on the shore. Jesus reenacts the scene when He first called Peter, James, and John: He asks if they have caught anything and instructs them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, where they will find some fish (Lk. 5:1–11 ESV). They still fail to recognize him, but when their nets swell to the breaking point, as they had three years earlier, John experiences what Richard Hays calls a "conversion of the imagination"—the process whereby a reenactment of history localizes a metaphysical truth and effectuates its claims for the participant.[87] The reenactment jogs John's memory of the moment when Jesus called them to become "fishers of men," and he discerns the body of the resurrected Christ: "It is the Lord!" he cries (Jn. 21:7 ESV).

The Emmaus tale, which was frequently depicted in the cycles, hones this motif of discerning the body to a razor's edge. Cleopas and his unnamed companion "were kept from recognizing [Jesus]" even as he walked miles beside them, interpreting prophecies about the Messiah (Lk. 24:16 ESV). Jesus engages the men in "a pattern of semiotic rupture and repair" to dislodge the metaphysical preconceptions that thwart their "sacramental encounter" and

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[87] Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 4, 105.

inclusion into "sacramental community."[88] After Christ reveals his identity in the Towneley

Pilgrims pageant, Luke (whom medieval commentators assumed was Cleophas's companion)

wonders,

> Dere God, why couth we hym not knawe? [could; know]?
> So openly all on a raw [in turn]
> The tayles that he can till us shaw [show]
> By oone and oon [one after another]. (*Pilgrims* 328–30)

Cleophas responds,

> I had no knawlege it was he
> Bot for he brake this brede in thre
> And delt it here to thee and me
> With his awne hande. (*Pilgrims* 334–37)

The typology of the Old Testament, even perfectly interpreted by Jesus, God's Word incarnate,

does not convert their imagination without ritualized reenactment; together, word and sacrament

produce discernment of resurrected bodies' new properties and the obligation to care for the

Body of Christ.

IV – Corinthian Echoes in the Towneley *Shepherds'* Plays

Both versions of the Towneley *Shepherds'* pageants depict a dog-eat-dog world, where

no one—spouses, coworkers, employers, or employees—defers to another's needs. Two episodes

reveal this most clearly. In the *First Shepherds' Play*, shepherds Gyb, John Horne, and Slowpace

curse the weather, fickle fortune, the liver rot that slew their flocks, and maintained men who

requisition their farm implements, and they argue about imaginary flocks of sheep. To

demonstrate the stupidity of the argument, Slowpace empties his meal sack on the ground, which

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[88] Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance: Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama Across the Reformation Divide* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 205.

leaves them without any food and only ale to drink. They then "set a table" with an elaborate smorgasbord of food, and drink themselves to a stupor. Although most critics think the *First Shepherds' Play*'s "grotesque" feast is imaginary, none doubt the reality of the booze. John Horne produces copious amounts of "good ayll of Hely," but he and Gyb drink so voraciously and indiscriminately that Slowpace fears there will be none left for him (*FSP* 352, 359–60). They run out of the first bottle before Slowpace gets enough, but John Horne miraculously discovers another, and the first two shepherds go at it again (*FSP* 377). Slowpace again complains about his exclusion while the other two have drunk a "quart" of the alcohol (*FSP* 393). They refuse to be hospitable to each other with their drinking, and as a result, the Strong get drunk while the Weak go without, even though exploitation was what drove them to seek salvation in spirits— "boyte of oure bayll," a phrase associated with Christ's remedy of man's sorrows through his passion (*FSP* 357).

The pattern of the destitute victimizing their social inferiors appears in the *Second Shepherds' Play* too. When Daw staggers on stage with hunger and requests food, Coll and Gyb begrudge his fare (which apparently is only bread "full dry") and call him a "ledyr hyne [lazy servant]," an accusation that prompts him to threaten to reduce his effort in order to match the level of his compensation (*SSP* 224, 214, 236–37). Though Daw gripes that other shepherds restrict his rations and sleep, he recognizes that they, too, are victims and are simply passing costs down the line:

> We ar oft weytt and wery [wet; weary]
> When master men wynkys [sleeps],
> Yit commys full lately [very slowly]
> Both dyners and drynkys;
> Bot nately [quickly]
> Both oure dame and oure syre,
> When we have ryn in the myre [run],

> Thay can nyp at oure hyre [reduce our wages]
> And pay us full lately. (*SSP* 227–34)

Likewise, Mak's theft is as abominable as it is goofy, which the shepherds' willingness to swear off sleep and food till they find him (as famished and fatigued as they are) demonstrates (*SSP* 679–85). But starvation drives Mak to steal, and he blames his crimes on his own economic exploitation: "My belly farys not weyll; / It is out of astate" (*SSP* 330–31). All these peasants look out for themselves first, but oppression from their social superiors makes them vulnerable to this sin. James Simpson writes,

> This play is pressingly aware of the ways in which members of an oppressed society oppress each other in turn. If the lords oppress the peasants, the first two shepherds oppress the third; the second shepherd feels oppressed by his wife; Mak exploits the trust of the shepherds. What drives this oppression amongst the oppressed is, unsurprisingly, hunger: the third shepherd is hungry, and Mak is tormented by the insatiable hunger of his many children, so much so that he wishes himself in heaven, where no children weep.[89]

Furthermore, Simpson correctly identifies that the *Second Shepherds' Play* turns upon an act of unmerited grace (the shepherds' gifts to the Christ-child) that cuts like a knife through the "relentless imperatives of that material world" to overcome the selfishness, the destitution, the cascading levels of victimization.[90] The *First Shepherds' Play* also hinges upon unearned generosity; when the shepherds conclude their magnificent feast, they gather the leftovers to give to "hungré begers frerys [hungry mendicant friars]" (*FSP* 411–12). One stanza later, the angel arrives, announcing that God has come to commune with men. Simpson shrewdly comments, "Eating the Eucharist is intimately related to, and finally inseparable from, feeding a family," a position with which Paul would undoubtedly concur.[91]

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[89] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 13 vols., The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2. 1350–1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 527.

[90] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 527.

[91] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 528.

Paul preferred singleness to marriage as a "concession," not a "command," but he emphasizes that marriage places constraints upon people that take their time, their freedom, and their energy (1 Cor. 7:6 ESV). Gyb's frustration with marriage is that it binds a man from doing as he pleases. He says, "These men that ar wed / Have not all thare wyll" (*SSP* 105–06). He concludes two successive stanzas on this point. Moments after he suggests that married men are in "shakyls," he laments, "Wo is hym that is bun [bound] / For he must abyde" (*SSP* 116–17). The fact that some foolish widowers, having escaped the marriage trap, immediately seek remarriage, even multiple remarriages, baffles him. He imagines marriage as a disease that one could "cach in an owre [hour]" and that will cause suffering all one's life (*SSP* 141). His marriage is not the only dysfunctional union in the pageant. Mak and Gyll's matrimony is marked by competition, accusations, strife, mistrust, and grudges, and even their collaboration to trick the shepherds seems rooted in destitution, not in any magnanimity or charity. Mak, it seems, has no productive employment to support his family, and though he compulsively lies, it is not implausible that he tells the truth when he claims to suffer from malnourishment and starvation (*SSP* 330–31, 467–68). Gyll keeps the household economy afloat by spinning late into the night after a full day's work of chores and childcare. When Mak arrives and startles her, she comments,

> I am sett for to spyn.
> I hope not I might
> Ryse a penny to wyn [to earn].
> I shrew them on hight [curse them; high];
> So farys [fares]
> A huswyff that has bene [housewife]
> To be rasyd thus betwene [constantly interrupted].
> Here may no note be sene [profit]
> For sich small charys [chores]. (*SSP* 430–38)

Later, when Mak berates her for wasting her time fooling around with her toenails, she retorts,

> Why, who wanders, who wakys [wakes]?
> Who commys, who gose?
> Who brewys, who bakys?
> What makys me thus hose [hoarse]?
> And than
> It is rewthe to beholde [sad],
> Now in hote, now in colde,
> Full wofull is the householde
> That wantys a woman. (*SSP* 599–607)

Neither marriage is characterized as a relationship of mutual help and submission, deference, and concord.

A third commonality that the *Shepherds'* plays have with 1 Corinthians is a section on orderly worship. Martin Stevens and Suzanne Westfall have shown just how central a role music plays in the Towneley plays, and especially in the *Shepherds' Plays*.[92] Stevens argues that the stillness, simplicity, unadorned speech, harmony, and metric regularity reflect virtuousness and the peace brought by God, whereas villains bluster, speak in foreign dialects, and eventually expire in exhausted silence.[93] He claims this as the central piece of evidence for his revision theory, arguing that the contrast between vulgar and holy music and their eventual merger "becomes the most significant feature in the Wakefield Author's revision from the *First* to the *Second Shepherds* plays [*sic*]."[94] He further insists that "[t]he shift from discord to harmony…can be seen as the fundamental concern of the Wakefield Author's masterpiece, the

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[92] See Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," *Speculum* 52, no. 1 (1977): 100–117; Suzanne R. Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 49–52, 173.

[93] See Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 102–06, 110–11.

[94] Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 111. E. K. Chambers also endorses the revision theory but on "on theological rather than literary grounds." A. C. Cawley and Martin Stevens suggest the opposite: that "it is more likely that the author of the First Shepherds' Play realized he could improve on his own handiwork, and did so in the Second." See E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 2:146; Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:482.

Second Shepherds' play."[95] Of course, singing, musical terms, and the angel's song factor

heavily in both *Shepherds' Plays*, but in the second play, "the contrast between noise and music

or cacophony and harmony is of central thematic importance to the outcome of the play"; the

second composition "does much from the outset to associate unrest and noise with the profane,

and peace and harmony with the sacred."[96] Stevens shows that generic terms for song and noise

become much more varied, specific, and grating in the second play: noises become more

animalistic and primal, and the "Wakefield Author clearly revised the first version of his play to

stress disharmony, as is attested alone by the much more diversified onomatopoetic vocabulary

for noise."[97] From the beginning of Mak's entrance, the author associates him with bad singing:

he "pypys [pipes] so poore" and "makys sich dyn" (*SSP* 283, 428). When Daw hears Gyll and

him singing a contrived lullaby, he asks Coll and Gyb, "Will ye here how thay hak [warble]? /

Our syre lyst croyne [likes to croon]," to which Coll replies, "Hard [Heard] I never none crak /

So clere out of toyne [tune]" (*SSP* 686–89). To this list, we might add Gyb's sarcastic praise for

his wife's singing in the Mass: "Had she oones wett hyr whystyll [once; whistle] / She couth

syng full clere / Hyr *Paternoster* ["Our Father"]" (*SSP* 150–52). He argues that by play's end,

> The most dissonant voices of the secular world have been stilled, and the singers
> of popular song have been inspired by angelic example to raise their voices in
> sacred harmony to celebrate the birth of Christ. For the Wakefield Author the
> ultimate interest in the *Second Shepherds* play is to find the right language with
> which to hail God.[98]

This may well be true, but it misses the fact that hailing God properly is a matter of deference, a

manifestation of charity. James warned his readers of the incongruity of blessings and cursing

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[95] Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 111–12.
[96] Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 114.
[97] Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 115.
[98] Martin Stevens, "Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays," 116.

flowing from the same mouth, and Paul would concur that one's worship may not be disconnected from pragmatic love (Jam. 3:10 ESV).

Paul argues for the supremacy of prophecy as a spiritual gift, and the Towneley *Shepherds'* incorporates that at two moments. As Thomas Jambeck has so eloquently shown, the etymological sense of "canvasing"—tossing a person in a canvas—connotes the process of winnowing grain.[99] By having Mak canvased, the shepherds decisively judge him; he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and will, like all chaff, be thrown into the fire to be burned. Nevertheless, because the shepherds decline to pursue capital punishment, to which Mak's crimes expose him, canvasing leaves open the possibility that he may amend his crooked ways. Furthermore, the ridicule inherent in this form of chastisement denies Mak the very thing he wishes most: exaltation above his station and the respect due that elevated status. This treatment accords nicely with a long-running strain of Christian theology that suggests that the devil must not be taken too seriously.[100] It would be both an artistic and theological blunder to execute Mak; the devil must be given his due, and no more. In some sense, Mak is both an Antichrist and a destitute peasant driven to theft by his hunger pangs; to slay him would collapse the eschatological horizon upon which the prophets insist and bring the final judgment screaming into the present.[101] Here, critics should probably refrain from reducing prophecy to mere

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[99] See Thomas J. Jambeck, "The Canvas-Tossing Allusion in the *Secunda Pastorum*," 50.

[100] G. K. Chesterton argues, "Seriousness is not a virtue…. Satan fell by the force of gravity." Thomas More observed, "the devil…the proud spirit cannot endure to be mocked." Martin Luther instructs, "The best way to drive out the devil…is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn." See G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909), 222; Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, ed. Frank Manley, The Yale Edition of the Works of St. Thomas More: Selected Works (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 158; William Hazlitt, ed., *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1902), lxxxvi.

[101] On Mak's association with the Antichrist, see Linda E. Marshall, "'Sacral Parody' in the *Secunda Pastorum*," 720–36; William M. Manly, "Shepherds and Prophets," 151–55; and

prediction when they analyze the shepherds' understanding of biblical prophecy.[102] Thomas

Campbell argues that "the shepherds' recognition of Old Testament prophecies of the Savior is

one of the few elements which the *Secunda Pastorum* shares in common with all medieval

English shepherds' plays" and that it "may be traced back to the very roots of the Christmas

drama itself."[103] Additionally, he insists that the play's "awareness of the spiritual community

established by the birth of the Savior" dominates the play's sensibilities.[104] Biblical prophets

never separated their predictions of Messianic salvation from indictments of contemporary

injustices. Like the Hebrew prophets who indict their own people for mistreating widows,

orphans, and foreigners—like the apostle, who chastises the Corinthian elite for abusing the

Weak and violating the Body of Christ—the Towneley shepherds rebuke those who oppress

fifteenth-century Yorkshire peasants, and they foretell that, at the Messiah's second advent, the

wrong shall fail, and the right prevail, with peace on earth to men of good will.

Finally, I want to make three more comments regarding the presence of eucharistic

subtexts in the play. First, a rebuttal: though Alicia Nitecki and Leah Sinanoglou both discuss the

eucharistic imagery in the plays, both scholars hamstring their arguments by demarcating a

bright line between the secular and sacred content of the play. Nitecki sees the secular feast as

mere metaphor for Christ's feasts; she perceives no "psychological narrative continuity" between

the shepherds' suffering and Christ's birth.[105] This approach produces several problems. She

reads Gyb's reckless doubling-down on buying more sheep (that will also inevitably rot) as an

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John Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe*
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 167–68.

[102] See Thomas P. Campbell, "Why Do the Shepherds Prophesy?" *Comparative Drama*
12.2 (1978): 137–50; William M. Manly, "Shepherds and Prophets," 151–55.

[103] Thomas P. Campbell, "Why Do the Shepherds Prophesy?" 138.

[104] Thomas P. Campbell, "Why Do the Shepherds Prophesy?" 144.

[105] Alicia Nitecki, "The Sacred Elements of the Secular Feast," 235.

insolent "assertion of self" instead of the last gasp of the destitute, akin to buying a scratch-off to stave off foreclosure.[106] She thinks the play satirizes "man himself," not the brokenness of the world or contemporary society's corruption, and as such the first half of the play satirizes "the folly of human aspirations for human betterment."[107] Likewise, Sinanoglou argues that, like the *First Shepherds' Play*, the *Second* presents a double-plot—the action "played twice, first in a rough and jocose secular mode, then in tender holiness."[108] But if, as I maintain, the author of the play had 1 Corinthians in mind as he wrote or revised these plays, this division would be a contradiction of terms. Paul cannot imagine a spiritualized Eucharist divorced from the material reality of status divisions, exploitation, hunger, marital conflict, worship, and social disunity. Though the narrative frame excludes the consummation of the remedy the Nativity portends, the shepherds' proper interpretation of Old Testament prophecy implies they have learned to place their hope in the salvific justice the Prince of Peace brings.

Furthermore, the shepherds commit the same sin that Corinthian Christians commit at the Lord's table: they eat and drink without waiting on social inferiors to join. When in the *First Shepherds' Play* Gyb suggests that they drink the night away, Slowpace questions the value of drink without food and sarcastically tells Gyb to "sett us a borde" (*FSP* 282). John Horne replies, "Abyde unto syne [wait until later]," but Slowpace cannot afford to wait:

> Be God, syr, I nyll [will not],
> I am worthy the wyne.
> Me thynk it good skyll [reasoning]
> My servyse I tyne [waste];
> I fare full yll
> At youre mangere [feast]. (*FSP* 285–91)

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[106] Alicia Nitecki, "The Sacred Elements of the Secular Feast," 233.
[107] Alicia Nitecki, "The Sacred Elements of the Secular Feast," 233.
[108] Leah Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice," 507.

Mere moments later, John Horne guzzles the alcohol indiscriminately, ignoring Slowpace's pleas

to save enough wine for him and cursing him for the meager sips he snatches. Likewise, when

Daw begs for food and drink in the *Second Shepherds' Play*, Coll curses him and Gyb tells him

to wait to eat:

> Abyde unto syne [Wait until after]
> We have mayde it [eaten],
> Yll thryft on thy pate.
> Though the shrew cam late,
> Yit is he in state
> To dyne, if he had it. (*SSP* 216–21)

In both plays, the weakest and lowest members of society go hungry while higher status

individuals are gluttons and drunks.

I want to stress the amplification of the theme of visual recognition or misrecognition in

the *Second Shepherds' Play* and its relevance to the Eucharist. In the *First Shepherds' Play*,

recognition amounts to spiritual perception. The spectacle of the angel's song produces figural

insight. Slowpace comments that he would have assumed the commotion "had bene thoner-flone

[a thunder bolt]" but knew it was not because he "sagh with myn ee" (*FSP* 468–69). Gyb and

John Horne recollect that Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, but John Horne comments that this

epiphany would have been unimaginable before the angel's message: "Sich was never none /

Seyn with oure ee" (*FSP* 489–90). When Slowpace brings up Moses's burning bush as a

foreshadowing of the Messiah's miraculous birth, Gyb notes,

> That was for to se
> Hir holy vyrgynyté
> That she unfylyd shuld be [undefiled],
> Thus can I ponder,
> And shuld have a chyld,
> Sich was never sene. (*FSP* 526–31)

John Horne commands him to shut up and illuminates him: "Pese, man, thou art begyld! / Thou shall se hym with eene— / Of a madyn so myld" (*FSP* 532–34). Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley rightly comment that the repeated phrase "sagh with myn ee" and the word "see" might imply "that seeing is believing and…that the shepherds have gained a new spiritual insight since the Angel visited them."[109] The phrase also hearkens to Thomas's incredulity, as recorded in John's Gospel and in the subsequent pageant *Thomas of India* in the Towneley collection.

The *Second Shepherds' Play* focuses less on figural sight but amplifies the problems of visual recognition and weaves them into the plot. The shepherds' misrecognition of each other and their sheep (initially) stands in sharp relief to the fact that they immediately uncover Mak's disguise. Gyb does not see Coll as he enters the stage; similarly, when Daw shows up, he does not notice the other two for seventeen lines because he is too distracted by storms and floods. When he finally sees them, he does not recognize them and hesitates to approach till he can ascertain who they are:

> We that walk on the nyghtys [at night]
> Oure catell to kepe,
> We se sodan syghtys
> When othere men slepe.
> Yit me thynk my hart lyghtys [is cheered];
> I se shrewys pepe [rascals peep].
> Ye ar two allwyghtys [monsters];
> I wyll gyf my shepe
> A turne. (*SSP* 196–204)

Daw cannot even discern whether they are human, much less their identities. Cawley and Stevens attribute his avoidance to impudence, but the scene makes more sense as another instance of failed recognition. Daw cannot assign the entities he sees to a stable ontological category, so he cannot determine friend from foe, which estranges him from communing with

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[109] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:490.

them. His later misrecognition of Mak and Gyll's "child," even though his nose tells him it is an animal ("Whik catell [livestock] bot this, / Tame nor wylde, / None, as have I blys, / As lowde [strong] as he smylde [smelled]"), redoubles this characterization (*SSP* 790–93).

What is weird about these moments of misrecognition is that the shepherds recognize Mak's ruse immediately. When Mak saunters up with a cloak thrown over his peasant's smock, Gyb immediately names him, and more importantly, Daw recognizes the threat to their belongings and warns everyone, "Is he commen? then ylkon [everyone] / Take hede to his thyng" (*SSP* 289–90). Both figuratively and literally, Daw rips the cloak off Mak, exposing who is underneath. Mak blusters that he is an emissary sent "from a great lording" and promises the shepherds that they will "thwang" if they resist him, but Coll tells him to drop the urban dialect and eat shit ("take outt that sothren tothe [southern tooth] / And sett in a torde") (*SSP* 294, 307, 311–12). Mak only drops the scam when Gyb and Daw threaten violence, at which point Coll sarcastically retorts, "Can ye now mene you [be earnest]?" (*SSP* 320).[110] The shepherds just as quickly recognize their sheep when they return to Mak's house to present gifts. Gyb exclaims, "He is lyke to oure shepe" when Daw lifts the blanket (*SSP* 851). When Mak and Gyll protest that this sheep is their child, Daw retorts, "I know hym by the eere marke; / That is a good tokyn" (*SSP* 881–82). Just as the shepherds in the *First Shepherds' Play* learn to interpret Old Testament prophecy rightly after the angel's song, their counterparts in the *Second Shepherds' Play* distinguish bodies and thus discern truth from lies: and Coll replies, "This is a fals wark" (*SSP* 887). Also, as Alexandra Johnston notes, Coll's use of the verb "manteyn" to describe Mak's unwillingness to admit the fraud ("Syn thay manteyn [affirm] thare theft / Let do thaym to dede [Let them be put to death]") connects Mak and Gyll's crime to the maintenance the lord's

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[110] Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley better capture the point in their gloss: "Can you now remember [who you are]?" See Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 2:501.

hired men inflict upon the peasants (*SSP* 896–97).[111] The characters' own words link visual

recognition of bodies to injustice against members of the social Body.

V – Conclusion

The literary criticism on the Towneley *Shepherds'* plays has sounded, to my ears, like an

orchestra warming its instruments: the audience can distinguish clear notes and recognize

individual instruments, but it has no sense of the harmonies that could peal forth when the sheet

music and conductor's wand organize the energies to work in concert. I also sense a cautionary

tale of the danger of unwarranted juxtaposition. When a reader centers the various meanings of

"discerning the body" in all its Pauline senses in the Towneley *Shepherds' Plays*, false

dichotomies melt away. By telling the Corinthians to "discern the body," Paul forbids them from

divorcing the Eucharist's metaphysical claims from its social implications. Yet this is the

division that compromises so much criticism on the plays. In 1967, Lawrence Ross wrote that

"there are clear critical dangers" in positing "uncombinable antinomies of the medieval mind"

and that "our unreflective use of such disjunctive terms as 'secular' and 'religious' may depend

on premises which are critically disabling."[112] Few critics have heeded his warning, and Lisa

Kiser is, in my view, entirely justified in her frustration that critics have not arrived at a

consensus on the nature of the plays' unity using such false contrasts:

> Indeed, scholars have always had problems with the secular emphases of the
> Towneley shepherds' plays, wondering how to reconcile them with the arrival of
> the Christ child…. Moreover, the history of scholarship and criticism on both of
> these plays is studded with attempts to nail down the elusive unity that readers so

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[111] See Alexandra F. Johnston, "*The Second Shepherds' Play*," 144.

[112] Lawrence J. Ross, "Symbol and Structure in the *Secunda Pastorum*," 124. Ross critiques A. P. Rossiter, who suggests, in Ross's phrasing, the "uncombinable antinomies of the medieval mind" (142).

desperately feel is needed to diminish their unease with the "tacked on" Christian endings.[113]

The ending is not "tacked on," nor are the secular and sacred plots unrelated, nor should critics strain for principles of unification when Pauline theology might suffice.

Finally, I think we may venture one larger conclusion that pertains to Miri Rubin's disagreement with "single strand" explanations of the Eucharist's sociological or anthropological function.[114] She accuses them of treating religious culture as a stable discourse instead of a shifting language, of exaggerating facets as more representative or influential than they were, to the exclusion of other "coexisting idioms" operative within the discourse.[115] Synthesizing interpretations like these inevitably shrink the breadth of what *corpus Christi* celebrations entailed. Following Mary Douglas, Rubin objects to any rhetorical move to present an organic, natural, unmediated image of the human body because "[t]he social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived."[116] Neither the Corpus Christi feast, nor procession, nor the plays it may have contained could express some "essential and generic bond without which there would be no society."[117] Instead, she argues that celebrating the body of Christ could only accomplish the inverse: "By laying hierarchy bare it could incite the conflict of difference ever more

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[113] Lisa J. Kiser, "'Mak's Heirs,'" 358–59.

[114] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4. Rubin names Mervyn James, Charles Zika, and John Bossy as the most influential proponents of single strand interpretations. See Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in a Late Medieval English Town," in *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16–47; Charles Zika, "Hosts, Processions, and Pilgrimages: Controlling the Sacred in Fifteenth-Century Germany," *Past & Present* 118 (1988): 25–64; and John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution 1200–1700," *Past & Present* 100 (1983): 29–61.

[115] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 7.

[116] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 72.

[117] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 266; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure*, Symbol, Myth, and Ritual Series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 97; Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 26.

powerfully sensed in a concentrated symbolic moment."[118] She flatly claims, "Bodies cannot be taken as possessing an essential meaning; like all meaningful signs they are culturally constructed."[119] I quibble with none of these points. I hasten to add that Paul certainly did not believe that the Eucharist was a natural symbol, nor did the Towneley author or authors. I think that this debate between medievalists about definitions of "the body" and how this pertains to Corpus Christi celebrations recapitulates first-century debates about the role of the body in relation to Christ's Body, as well as the relation of the *corpus mysticum* to the social totality. The Towneley author or authors, by virtue of their clerical education, would have been eminently aware of the social ramifications of these debates about "the body."

Paul condemns unjust social relations and a flawed ideology of the body that Corinthian Christians had encoded into ritual practice. The Towneley author coopts this rhetoric to name the abuses and corruptions of his own day as eucharistic sacrilege, and to identify eucharistic participation—eating the grotesque, insubstantial feast and consuming the lamb in the manger—as the remedy for those evils. Ernst Gerhardt wanders near this conclusion when he observes that food items in the *First Shepherds' Play* appear as "untimely objects" that "conflat[e] or confus[e]" English time and geography Palestinian contexts.[120] However, he argues that this conflation transposes the tone of "the seemingly shared convivial and commensal present to the devotional time of the nativity," a move that sanitizes and sentimentalizes the ancient moment till it loses its revolutionary dimension that is so relevant to fifteenth-century England.[121] V. A. Kolvé got closer to the truth when he explained the effect of dramatizing figural moments in Christian history:

[118] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 266.
[119] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 270.
[120] Ernst Gerhardt, "The Towneley 'First Shepherds' Play,'" 29.
[121] Ernst Gerhardt, "The Towneley 'First Shepherds' Play,'" 29.

> Every moment is charged with memories of the past and expectations of the future; thereby we discover order and unity in a drama that tells several stories, each separate and apparently discontinuous, which span all human time. Like recurring chords in music, the figures and their fulfillment discover singleness in diversity. Form and meaning become one.[122]

The Towneley author, whoever he may be, recognizes that modern Yorkshire was not that different from first-century Corinth, and he repurposes Paul's epistle to bear prophetic witness against contemporaneous failures to discern the Body of Christ.

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[122] V. A. Kolvé, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, 84.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE KNUCKLE-SANDWICH:

PLAIN PAIN AND SOLITARY SUPPERS IN *JACK JUGGLER*

I – Introduction

Jack Juggler is a Protestant satire of transubstantiation that is likely an Edwardian

composition, though not printed until 1562. Earlier critics wondered whether it was composed

late in Mary's reign, given that the epilogue voices complaints about religious violence and

coercion, but now Tamara Atkin suggests that it likely was written when Thomas Cranmer,

archbishop of Canterbury, and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, disputed the Eucharist in

the early 1550s.[1] After a lengthy prologue, *Jack Juggler* reworks the Mercury-Sosia subplot of

Plautus's tragicomedy *Amphitryon*, wherein Mercury impersonates Amphitryon's slave Sosia,

taking on his appearance, garb, and mannerisms, locking the slave out of his own house and

convincing the slave that he (Mercury) is him (Sosia)—all to buy time for Jupiter, who is

impersonating Amphityron in order to sleep with Alcmena, Amphitryon's wife. As part of the

trickery, Mercury beats Sosia, who is befuddled by the prospect that he has beaten himself up.

When he tells this to his master, Amphitryon, to excuse his delay, Amphitryon becomes enraged

at the preposterous tale and bellows, "You dare tell me a thing no one ever saw before, an

impossible thing—the same man in two places at one time?"[2] Eventually, Jupiter reveals the ruse

and informs Amphitryon that Alcmena will give birth to twins conceived by superfetation: the

natural son conceived by her and Amphitryon, the miraculous son, Hercules, the offspring of

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[1] Tamara Atkin, *The Drama of Reform: Theology and Theatricality, 1461–1553*, Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 23 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 129.

[2] Titus Maccius Plautus, "Amphitryon," in *Plautus*, trans. Paul Nixon, 5 vols. (London: W. Heinemann, 1916), 1:59. All references to *Amphitryon* refer to the pagination in this edition.

Alcmena and Jupiter. This announcement converts the play from tragedy into comedy, and thus the tragicomic genre was born.[3]

Jack Juggler truncates most of Amphitryon's action and reorients the play around supper rather than sex.[4] The narrator contends that "mirthe and recreacion" should be "[i]nterchaungeablie admixed" with honest labor, and he renounces polemical content, claiming that the play will include "nothing but trifles" and no "mattiers substancyall."[5] The plot opens with Jack, the eponymous Vice, informing the audience that he will mimic a dopey, profligate page named Jenkin Careaway to convince him that "he is not him selfe, but an other man" as retribution for a prior "great debate" (JJ 179, 118–20). Jack observes and memorizes the page's actions that day: Careaway blew off a command to escort his mistress Dame Coye to dinner and instead wasted his time gambling and stealing apples. Jack copies his attire, stuffs apples up his sleeve, locks Careaway out of the house, argues with him that he (Jack) is Careaway, and beats the page when he disagrees. The ruse baffles Careaway, who concocts an alibi to appease his hungry mistress, who is irate that her husband has not sent for her. When she sees Careaway, she too beats him, which causes him to forget his story. She also rejects the true account and sends him to Bongrace, who roughs up the page for the third time. Eventually, the abuse flusters Careaway until he confesses his loitering and gambling to Bongrace. The play concludes with

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[3] See Titus Maccius Plautus, "Amphitryon," 9.

[4] Beatrice Groves, "'One Man at One Time May Be in Two Placys': Jack Juggler, Proverbial Wisdom, and Eucharistic Satire," Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England 27 (2014): 49–50.

[5] Nicholas Udall [?], "A New Enterlued for Chyldren to Playe Named Jacke Jugeler: Both Wytte, Very Playsent, and Merye," in Three Tudor Classical Interludes: Thersites, Jacke Jugeler, Horestes, ed. Marie Axton, Tudor Interludes (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 16–17, 68, 73. All quotes from the play refer to the lineation in this edition, hereafter cited parenthetically and abbreviated JJ, unless otherwise specified.

Jack removing his costume and slinking off, Dame Coye and Bongrace reconciling, and

Careaway nursing his wounds, still baffled at what has occurred, and too upset to eat any supper.

Thomas Cranmer, in his answer to Stephen Gardiner's "crafty and sophisticall

cavillation," cites *Amphitryon* as evidence that the senses may be deceived, that perception may

be mere illusion, and that this must be what occurs during the eucharistic ritual, since a single

body cannot simultaneously inhabit two distinct locations.[6] *Jack Juggler*'s author, whom most

critics believe to be Nicholas Udall, clearly was attuned both to *Amphitryon* and the eucharistic

subtext that Reformation theologians gave the play because the climactic lines, where Bongrace

rejects Careaway's excuse, hearken back to the Plautine original:

> …darest thou affirme to me
> That which was never syne nor hereafter shalbe?
> That on man may have too bodies and two faces?
> And that one man at on time may be in two placys? (*JJ* 784–87)[7]

Ostensibly, Udall composed the satire to mock the mechanics of transubstantiation and to

reaffirm (what he considered to be) the correct ontological and epistemological foundation for

proper eucharistic theology. Indeed, the case for his authorship is quite strong, given that the play

borrows the terminology of *passibility*, *possibility*, *plainness,* and *perception* from Peter Martyr

Vermigli's *Treatise on the Sacrament of the Eucharist*, which Udall translated and published in

1549–1550. Vermigli composed his treatise as a tract for Lord Somerset to use in the

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[6] Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes:* Thersites, Jacke Jugeler, Horestes, Tudor Interludes (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 20.

[7] See also Beatrice Groves, "'One Man at One Time May Be in Two Placys,'" 40–56. Among recent critics, only Ros King contests Udall's authorship on stylistic reasons. See Ros King, *The Works of Richard Edwards: Politics, Poetry, and Performances in Sixteenth-Century England*, The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 1–33; William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, Twayne's English Authors Series 30 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965), 60–71; Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 127–29; Tamara Atkin, *The Drama of Reform*, 129n8.

parliamentary debates over eucharistic theology in December 1548, and he fleshed it out to its final form the following year. Joseph McLelland calls the full version the "formal explication" of Vermigli's public disputation of the matter at Oxford from May 28 to June 1, 1549.[8] These terms and their eucharistic connotations crescendo in one couplet in *Jack Juggler* that contains a textual variance that deserves greater scrutiny. Reinterpreting the play in accordance with these two lines provides a more robust justification for *Jack Juggler*'s early 1550s composition date and places the play at the heart of early English Protestant debates about the Eucharist.

Jack Juggler's opening Latin proverb must have been delivered with a wink and a nod if Udall was in the room to heighten the situational irony, given his vocational distinction as England's *premier* translator, lecturer, and headmaster at elite educational institutions (Winchester College, 1517–20; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 1520–29; Eton, 1534–41; Westminster School, 1555–56). The narrator questions the audience,

> *Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis*
> *Ut possis animo quem vis sufferre laborem.*
> Doo any of you knowe what Latyne is this?
> Or ells wold you have an *expositorem*
> To declare it in Englyshe *per sensum planiorem*?
> It is best I speake Englyshe, or ells with in a whylle
> I may percace myne ownselfe with my Latin begile. (*JJ* 1–7)

Translating classical proverbs into the vernacular and directing Plautine or Terentian dramas would have been standard academic tasks at the institutions at which Udall taught.[9] By all accounts, he was a savant linguist, whom Edwardian power brokers employed to translate Latin

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[8] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, ed. and trans. Joseph C. McLelland, The Peter Martyr Library 7 (Moscow, ID: The Davenant Press, 2000), xxii, xxv–xxviii.

[9] See Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 100–06. See also Carol Symes, "Ancient Drama in the Medieval World," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*, ed. Betine van Zyl Smit, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Classical Reception (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 97–130.

texts into the vernacular to launder their theology and encode it in drama. His brilliance at

Corpus Christi College, Oxford (the "beehive of humanism"), landed him the position of lecturer

in logic and Greek after he graduated, and while serving in that capacity, he was named among

those accused of distributing banned works of Lutheran theology.[10] There, he also befriended

John Leland, with whom he penned and directed "especially enthusiastic" verses for the

coronation pageant of Anne Boleyn, the first Protestant queen.[11] The next year (1534), he

published *Floures for Latine Spekynge*, a textbook so adept at translating Latin idioms that it

remained a preeminent Latin textbook in Tudor schools for the next fifty years.[12] He swiftly

advanced to become first headmaster at Eton, then Master of Arts at Oxford, then Vicar of

Braintree, and by 1537, records indicate that Thomas Cromwell paid him, probably for dramas

performed at court.[13] An investigation in 1541 concluded that he "did confesse that he did

commit buggery…sundry times heretofore" with one of his pupils, Thomas Cheney, which

nearly derailed his career, but powerful patrons secured his release from Marshalsea prison less

than a year later.[14] He immediately published *Apopthegmes* (a translation of excerpts from

Erasmus's anthology with Udall's commentary), catching the eye of Katherine Parr, who tapped

him to oversee a team of scholars translating Erasmus's *Paraphrases*.[15] Specifically, he excelled

at "opening up and simplifying Latinisms" and rendering them in a Saxon word order.[16] Since

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[10] William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall,* 20.

[11] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, 20–24, 27; Matthew Steggle, "Udall [Yevedale], Nicholas (1504–1556), Schoolmaster and Playwright," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, September 23, 2004.

[12] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, 31.

[13] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall,* 34.

[14] William L. Edgerton, Nicholas Udall, 37–38.

[15] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, 51; Matthew Steggle, "Udall [Yevedale], Nicholas (1504–1556), Schoolmaster and Playwright."

[16] David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 255.

the *Paraphrases* were, apart from the scripture and liturgical forms, more responsible for the common understanding of the Bible than any other work, we must extrapolate from Emrys Jones's claim, "without Erasmus, no Shakespeare" and say, "without Udall, no Erasmus."[17] His were the words that rendered humanism's most influential work of biblical exegesis in the vernacular.

Edward's accession brought a wave of work to Udall: he served as recorder for Stephen Gardiner's 1548 sermon to Edward; he probably composed *An answer to the articles of the comoners of Devonsheir and Cornwall* (1549) when that area resisted the first *Book of Common Prayer*'s adoption; he translated and acquired sole publishing privileges for Vermigli's *A Discource or Traictise of Petur Martyr*; he contributed to a book of elegies to Martin Bucer; he composed *Ralph Roister Doister* and revised Erasmus's *Paraphrases* for a second edition; he became canon of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle; he wrote an anatomical textbook; and he eventually was appointed rector at Calborne.[18] Though Queen Mary deprived him of these last clerical appointments, he remained on her payroll for dramatic entertainments, was included in Stephen Gardiner's will, and became headmaster at Westminster School, a post he held until his death on December 23, 1556.[19]

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[17] Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 13.

[18] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, 61–64; Matthew Steggle, "Udall [Yevedale], Nicholas (1504–1556), Schoolmaster and Playwright."

[19] On Mary's payments to Udall for dramatic entertainments, see Albert Feuillerat, ed., *Documents Relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary (The Loseley Manuscripts)* (Louvain: A. Uystpruyst, 1914), 159–60. Mary's order read thus: "Trusty and welbelouid wee grete you well. and wher as our welbelouid Nicholas vdall haith at sondry seasons convenient hertofore shewid and myndeth herafter to shewe his diligence in setting forthe of dialogwes and Entreludes before vs for our Regall disport and recreacion to thentent that he may be in the better redynes at all tymes when it shalbe our pleasure to call. wee will and comaunde you and euery of you that at all & euery soche tyme and tymes so ofte and when so euer he shall neade & requier it for shewing of any thinge before vs ye delyuer or cause to be delyuered to the said vdall or to the bringer herof in his name out of our office of Revelles soche

This is the relevant context for the prologue's narrator goading the audience. He "Englyshe[s]" Cato's precept—"'Emongs thy carfull busines use sume time mirth and joye / That no bodilye worke thy wytts breke or noye'"—and denigrates Latin's deceitfulness; that language can "begile" even those who speak it fluently, to say nothing of those who merely hear it (*JJ* 7, 12–14).[20] Though deriding the papists' tongue was common sport for English reformers, imitating classical Latin for its 'purity of style' and ideas was part and parcel of the humanist project.[21] Publishers emulated the "appearance and apparatus of contemporary editions of Greek and Latin classics" to make their own editions seem as "appealing and acceptable as a trustworthy ancient authority."[22]

Udall's intimate knowledge of and preference for staunchly Reformed theologies of the Eucharist made him painfully aware just how diverse those theologies were and how little they had progressed beyond transubstantiation, if measured by the standard of "plainness." The same could be said about his immersion in the humanist project. His entire profession was predicated on the assumption that complex Latin theology, drama, and philosophy contained much of value for sixteenth-century Englishmen, yet he, like the Edwardian theologians, rhetoricians, and

apperell for his Auctors as he shall thinke necessarye and requisite for the furnishing & condigne setting forth of his Devises before vs and soche as may be semely to be shewid in our Regall presens / And the same apperell after the exhibitinge of any soche thing before vs to be restored and redelyuered by the said vdall into your handes and custody againe. And that ye faile not thus to doe from tyme to tyme as ye tender our pleasure till ye shall receve expresse comaundement from vs to the contrary herof. And this shalbe your sufficient warraunt in this behalf yeven vnder our Signet the xiijth day of December in the Seconde yere of our Reigne" (159–60).

[20] Marie Axton indicates that Cato's precept comes from *Cato Major*, Cicero's collection of Cato's moral maxims. See Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 181–82.

[21] See John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 42; Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 2.

[22] John N. King, *English Reformation Literature*, 328. On Crowley's editions of *Piers Plowman*, see John N. King, "Robert Crowley's Editions of *Piers Plowman*: A Tudor Apocalypse," *Modern Philology* 73, no. 4 (1976): 342–52 and John N. King, "Robert Crowley: A Tudor Gospelling Poet," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 8 (1978): 220–37.

schoolmasters of his day, extolled the vernacular for its plain simplicity. *Jack Juggler's* epilogue recycles the prologue's concerns, but the formerly jovial tone becomes stern, and the speaker erases the stark boundary between innocent fun and "serius matters" that the prologue draws (*JJ* 15). All play and no work, the prologue implies, will make Jack a very dull, confused, broken boy. The narrator comments,

> no tale can be tolde
> But that sum Englyshe maye be piked therof out,
> Yf to serche the Laten and ground of it men wil go aboute.
> As this trifling enterlud that before you hath bine rehersed
> May sygnifye sum further meaning if it be well serched. (*JJ* 995–99)[23]

Unfortunately, two cultural conditions inhibit the project of clear theology for the simple kind of men. All too often, the "symple innosaintes" are prone to delusion "an hundred thousand divers ways," able to be coerced into confessing nonsensical ideas—that "the moune is made of a grene chese," or that "the croue is whight," or that "he him selfe is into a nother body chaunged" (*JJ* 1001–02, 1005, 1019–20). The second impediment to plain communication is that rulers reinforce this epistemological violence with real violence, the total effect of which is "playne terani" (*JJ* 1048). The powerful control the "rude" man by compelling him to "confesse and graunt him selfe an ase" (*JJ* 1034). Udall ridicules Latin theology's hypercomplexity, which defies common sense and discombobulates the unlearned. Paradoxically, he must embed his critique of this doctrine in complex misdirection, irony, and humor to prevent its censure.

I begin at this point because *Jack Juggler* is a play about torture and the Eucharist, about suffering and surety, sight and satire, and supper and solitude. In the drama, a villain inflicts physical and psychological abuse to unmoor a simpleton from his most basic ontological assumptions, to excommunicate him from his social relationships, and to supplant his notion of

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[23] Q3 omits "Laten and." See Axton's footnote.

reality with an entirely different vision. The project accords strikingly well with two of Elaine

Scarry's observations on pain and its relationship to epistemological certitude:

> …for the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that "having pain" may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to "have certainty," while for the other person it is so elusive that "hearing about pain" may exist as the primary model of what it is "to have doubt." Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed.[24]

Furthermore, whole cultures—not merely individuals—use pain as the lodestar to chart a course

through epistemological bewilderment. Scarry comments that when a culture loses faith in the

first principles that undergird its worldview, it falls back on pain's incontrovertible realness to

stabilize itself:

> It will gradually become apparent that at particular moments when there is within a society a crisis of belief—that is, when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief either because it is manifestly fictitious or because it has for some reason been divested of ordinary forms of substantiation—the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of "realness" and "certainty."[25]

Both Udall's and Plautus's dramas resolve when their protagonists return to pain's

incontrovertible reality to reground their scrambled epistemologies.

II – Vermigli's Theology: Plainness, Parsimony, Passibility, Possibility

Udall explicates the crisis of the Reformation in terms of physical torment. He does so by

repurposing a secular play from late antiquity and imbuing it with theological concepts that Peter

Martyr Vermigli took from late medieval nominalism to communicate what he believes to be

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[24] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

[25] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 14. In her dependence of the human body's "sheer material factualness," Scarry diverges from Miri Rubin, Mary Douglas, and Mervyn James, all of whom argue that the body and social ideologies are mutually constitutive.

transcendent ontological and epistemological realities that buttress proper eucharistic theology. It is hard to overstate the degree to which Vermigli's eucharistic theology depends upon the principle of plainness, even as he realizes that Protestant theologies of the Eucharist must not accept the plain or literal words of Christ but must rather interpret them as figures of speech. Given that Udall translated his *Treatise* in 1549 or 1550, their common dependence upon the term lends more credence to the case for Udall's authorship of *Jack Juggler* than the circumstantial or stylistic evidence typically cited. Both Udall and Vermigli are torn by the vagueness of plain theology and epistemology; it is this double-mindedness that undercuts *Jack Juggler*'s satiric commentary.

As both Vermigli and Udall note in their respective prefaces, their audience's limited education dictates their need for a plain style. Vermigli reassures a presumptive "Christian Reader" that he has explained things "all in simple terms, and without style as it were, but faithfully," but in his dedication to Cranmer, he complains that this task was difficult because he was "not trained sufficiently in the fine arts," so that "now it is difficult for me to speak and write plainly, simply, and easily."[26] And yet in his dedication to Sir William Parre, Udall singles out Vermigli's knack for simplifying intricate theology:

> …this wryter throughe his singuler gifte of grace, his right profounde learnynge, and his highe iudgmente as well in the scriptures, as also in the doctours, and in the generall councell wadeth so depein searchyng and boultyng out the trueth of this matier that he maketh it so clere so plaine and so euident to all mennes yies whiche either can or wyl see that neither there can now be any ferther doubtyng of the veritee, and trueth of thys sacramente.[27]

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[26] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, 4, 20.

[27] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *A Discourse or Traictise of Petur Martyr Vermilla Flore[n]Tine, the Publyque Reader of Divinitee in the Universitee of Oxford Wherein He Openly Declared His Whole and Determinate Judgemente Concernynge the Sacrament of the Lordes Supper in the Sayde Universitee*. (London, 1550), sig.* 2ʳ–2ᵛ. All Vermigli citations are taken

Udall's translation philosophy prioritizes clarity, even though the outcome "maie seme in some places to haue somewhat swerued from the precise woordes of the latin booke" (Vermigli sig.* 4ᵛ). He defends himself,

> Now this boke I haue labored to make as plainas I could do, & therfor in some places I haue either altered or leaft yᵉ scoole terms whych otherwise would haue made the thing more derke, & brought it as nere I could to the familiar phrase of English speakyng, or els haue added suche circumstaunce of other woordes, as might declare it & make it plain. (Vermigli sig.* 4ʳ–4ᵛ)

Still, he questions this approach's fruitfulness: what is the use of broadening a work's influence through a plainer style for unlearned readers? Immediately after he brags about his translation's accessibility, he qualifies that it is a "weorke right expedient and necessary to be hadde in the Englishe toungue aswell for the instruction of suche as can read," but even among that group, the probability that the readers will understand is slim (Vermigli sig.* 3ᵛ). "[G]ood persones & curates" can read and have "a good zele & forwardnes to set forth yᵉ ki[n]ges maiesties most Christian procedynges," but they are "defaulte of sufficiente learnyng" and

> are not of themselues hable neither throughly to enstructe their flocke of all the trueth, nor to satisfy the ignoraunt in suche doubt full cases or questions, as maye haplye aryse aboute this matier, nor finally to stoppe the mouthes of sedicious Papistes, or of suche as are malicious and indurate enemies againste the pure doctrine of Christes ghospell. (Vermigli sig.* 3ᵛ)

If that is the case with the learned, the "grosse and rusticall multitude" don't have a prayer at comprehending that which is "ferre above the reache of theyr grosse understandynge" (Vermigli sig.* 4ʳ). All things considered, the payoff of plain vernacular theology is that "euerye bodye maye be edifyed as ferre foorth as hys capacyte wyll serue" (Vermigli sig.* 4ʳ)

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from this source unless otherwise specified, and hereafter it is abbreviated "Vermigli" and cited parenthetically.

Whereas Udall's ambivalence about plain theology and speech derives from his readers'

deficiencies in intelligence and education, Vermigli expresses consternation that Catholics had

already staked a claim for the literalist hermeneutic, which was ground the reformers could not

cede without defanging their critique of Catholic artifice. Reformation-era Catholic theologians

repeatedly insist that the words *Hoc est corpus meum* are "cleare" and "haue no nede of any

ferther exposicion or declaracion," Vermigli notes, but he contests this strenuously (Vermigli fol.

3^v). He documents a wide range of historical heresies whose proponents went afoul precisely

because they read a particular Scriptural passage too plainly: the Arians took Christ's claim that

"My Father is greater then I" literally; the Chiliasts similarly interpreted prophecies of Christ's

thousand-year reign at face value; the Sabellians denied the division of persons in the Trinity

because Christ claimed "I and the Father bee one"; and the Ebionites reckoned that God could

not forsake himself, so Christ's lament from the cross that God had forsaken him must mean that

Christ was a creature (Vermigli fols. 42^v–43^v). Vermigli also rejects pure literalism by listing

examples where Jesus spoke in parables, euphemisms, and metaphors (e.g., Christ is a Rock, a

Lamb, a Vine). The following year (1551), Bishop Stephen Gardiner, in his debates with

Cranmer and others on this matter, would accuse Protestants of distorting and twisting the plain

meaning of Scripture to fit their agenda, but Vermigli preemptively refutes this:

> [T]he aduersaries ferther alleged…that if place be geuen to tropes, that is to saye,
> to figurate maniers of speakynge in Scripture: that than the Heretiques wyll
> peruerte altogether [a]nd I on the other syde saye agayn, that excepte we use
> tropes and figuratiue maniers of speakyng in scripture: the Heretiques bee sure of
> the ouer hande…. For the heritiques also on theyr parte, wyll stycke to the propre
> sence and signification of the wordes, and to that sence, whych at the fyrst choppe
> offreth it selfe to the reader. (Vermigli fols. 46^v–47^r)[28]

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[28] See also Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, xxxiii–xxxv.

Proponents of transubstantiation should not "allege the plainenes of the sentence and stande altogether upon the woordes," then, because "the sence of yᵉ words is not plaine" even though the words are "plaine as concerning yᵉ significatio[n] of yᵉ wordes" (Vermigli fols. 42ᵛ, 44ʳ). If, however, one allows figures of speech, "all pointes are light, and easye, and playn to understande: all poinctes of unconueniences are auoyded, and one place of the Scriptures is not repugnaunt to another" (Vermigli fol. 46ᵛ).

Vermigli and Udall's public support for plain speech and theology (even if they were privately ambivalent about the pragmatics of plainness and selective in applying the literalist hermeneutic) was congruent with other Edwardian Protestant theologians, educators, and printers, who believed Latin must be shown no quarter if the vernacular was to gain supremacy. William Tyndale praises English's affinity with Greek and Hebrew, which enabled simple "worde for worde" translation, whereas translation into the Latin required "a compasse."[29] John Jewel pushed for simplicity, clarity, and unadorned language in his *Oratio contra Rhetoriciam* (c. 1548), and educators John Cheke, Roger Ascham, and Thomas Wilson taught that English style should follow Aristotle's approach of rendering sophisticated thought in common speech.[30] No one supported plainness more earnestly than Cranmer. He wanted commoners to hear the gospel "so sincerely & plainly, without doubts, ambiguities, or vain questions, that the very simple and vnlearned people, may easily vnderstand the same, and be edified thereby."[31] John

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[29] William Tyndale, *The Obedie[n]Ce of a Christen Man and How Christe[n] Rulers Ought to Governe, Where in Also (If Thou Marke Diligently) Thou Shalt Fynde Eyes to Perceave the Crafty Conveyance of All Jugglers* (Marburg [i.e. Antwerp]: From the "Hans Luft" Press, 1528), fol. 15ᵛ.

[30] See John N. King, *English Reformation Literature*, 139.

[31] Thomas Cranmer, *An Aunsvvere by the Reuerend Father in God Thomas Archbyshop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitane, Vnto a Craftie and Sophisticall Cauillation, Deuised by Stephen Gardiner Doctour of Law, Late Byshop of Winchester Agaynst the True and Godly Doctrine of the Most Holy Sacrament, of the Body and Bloud of Our Sauiour*

King argues that the "universality of Cranmer's audience dictated his search for a plain style"; to accommodate so many dialects and levels of educational attainment required a regression to the mean.[32] It also served two pragmatic functions. A common tongue narrowed the gap between the clergy and laity; a standardized theological language supported Henry VIII's goal of national uniformity and centralization.[33]

The *Book of Common Prayer* was the primary agent that implemented this cultural transformation and that controlled the revolutionary energies that vernacular biblical translation had unleashed. Timothy Rosendale writes that Cranmer strove to enable the "homogenization of worship on an explicitly national scale" by curtailing the "great diversitie in saying and syngyng in churches within this realme" through the use of the *Book of Common Prayer,* which Rosendale dubs a "blunt object of coercive collectivity."[34] Rosendale does not examine the reformers' penchant for plain theology or discuss Vermigli beyond a few passing references, but Vermigli clearly endorsed the value of plainness. His litmus test for clear interpretations is whether they necessitate unnecessary or impossible duplication; conversely, parsimony attests to plausibility. He cites Cyril of Alexandria in support of the material integrity of Christ's physical person, who claimed that Christ "would for a litell space remaine wyth hys disciples namyng

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Iesu Christ Wherein Is Also, as Occasion Serueth, Aunswered Such Places of the Booke of Doct. Richard Smith, as May Seeme Any Thyng Worthy the Aunsweryng. Here Is Also the True Copy of the Booke Written, and in Open Court Deliuered, by D. Stephen Gardiner (London, 1580), 35.

[32] John N. King, *English Reformation Literature*, 140.

[33] John N. King, *English Reformation Literature,* 140; James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 13 vols., The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2. 1350–1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

[34] Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37, 34, 221. Ramie Targoff concurs that the *BCP* was an instrument of uniformity and standardization, designed to annex spaces of private devotion with authorized public forms. See Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 14–35.

hymself in plain woordes, because no ma[n] should presume to deuide Christe into twoo sonnes" (Vermigli fol. 102^r). Simplifying to the extreme, heresy always breeds duplicitous duplication. Satan is, after all, the father of lies. Simple truth, however, is sparse—singular.

Metaphysical plainness complements rhetorical plainness in Vermigli's scheme; he champions ontological and epistemological parsimony (colloquially known as Ockham's razor) and the notion of disparates (the predicate of the law of noncontradiction), both of which resonate strongly with nominalist logic.[35] He alleges that Catholic interpretations require "bothe tropes and allegories euen by whole heapes" even as they require strict literalism in interpreting certain passages (Vermigli fol. 10^r). Against this question-begging approach, he reminds readers of the dictum, "miracles are not to be heaped up together without a necessitie," a point to which he returns in his conclusion (Vermigli fol. 10^v). There, though he claims that Luther and Zwingli "neuer can bee praised ynough," he objects to the basic Lutheran sympathy toward a participatory metaphysics as exemplified in Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation:

> I dooe in no case approue ne allow ye grosse copulation[n] of ye bodye of Christe w^t the breade so y^t it should be naturally, corporally, & really co[n]teyned in ye same breade. For ye holy Scripture doeth not co[n]straigne us to stablishe any suche doctrine: & to multiplie & heape up so many miracles without testimonie of goddes woorde, standeth not wel w^t the rule of diuinitee. (Vermigli fol. 106^r)

Some have suggested that it is reductive to attribute the principle of parsimony to William of Ockham since he nowhere states it explicitly and since earlier thinkers espoused it too; nevertheless, Ockham and the later nominalists, whose thought informed subsequent scientists, theologians, and philosophers, formalized the principle and made it inviolable.[36] Aristotle

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[35] See Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, 24n14, 252n407.

[36] Heiko Oberman and William Courtenay parse the various camps of nominalist thought. See Heiko A. Oberman, "Some Notes on the Theology of Nominalism: With Attention to Its Relation to the Renaissance," *The Harvard Theological Review* 53, no. 1 (1960): 47–76; William

advances it in his *Posterior Analytics*: "We may assume the superiority *ceteris paribus* of the

demonstration which derives from fewer postulates or hypotheses."[37] Aquinas likewise admits,

"If a thing can be done adequately by means of one, it is superfluous to do it by means of

several; for we observe that nature does not employ two instruments where one suffices."[38]

Galileo, Newton, Lavoisier, and Einstein all champion the bias toward simplicity, and most of

them claim it as integral to the project of scientific and philosophical inquiry.[39] The reformers

often criticize transubstantiation for violating this key principle of Aristotelian logic.

There has been wide disagreement as to when, why, and how Ockham deployed his

razor. Elliot Sober helpfully specifies that Ockham actually uses two razors—the razor of silence

and the razor of denial; the former entails a default chariness toward unnecessary complexity,

while the latter rules out contradictions of terms.[40] That second, hardline, exclusive razor appears

in Ockham's discussion of whether heavenly matter is of the same kind as earthly:

> [I]t appears to me…that the matter in the heavens is of the same kind as the matter here below. And this is because plurality should never be posited without necessity, as has often been said. Now, however, there appears no necessity to posit matter of a different kind here and there, since everything that can be saved

J. Courtenay, *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of His Thought*, Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[37] Aristotle, "Posterior Analytics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 150.

[38] Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. A. C. Pegis, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1945), 2:129.

[39] See Alan Baker, "Simplicity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/simplicity/. Amos Funkenstein points out that "nearly all original philosophical minds" of the seventeenth century were nominalists. See Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 27.

[40] See Elliott Sober, *Ockham's Razors: A User's Manual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 12; Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols., Publications in Medieval Studies 26–27 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 1:160–61.

> by [positing] diversity in matter can just as well or better be saved by [positing matter] identical in kind.[41]

Vermigli borrows this rhetorical commonplace to invalidate the Catholic sacramentology (which presupposes that each instantiation of a sacramental ritual is a miraculous event) without actually answering the question of whether miraculous events occur regularly. In so doing, he subtly draws on a second plank of nominalist logic—a voluntarist conception of divine will. When medieval philosophers teased apart God's *potentia ordinata* and his *potentia absoluta* (for the purpose of unbridling God's creative power and sovereignty), they exponentially expanded the number of events that were, in the abstract, *possible*. Ontological and epistemological parsimony counterbalanced this expansion by restricting the possible with the *probable*; it was the limiting principle. Vermigli argues that maximalist accounts of God's power, which traffic in hypotheticals, run afoul of this principle, and cites John of Damascus as offender-in-chief. The Damascene argues, for instance, that had Adam not sinned, matrimony would not have been required for procreation; on the same grounds he suggests,

> …seeynge that god was of power to create bothe heauen and yearth by hys woorde, and by the same woorde to brynge foorthe plantes and trees, beastes, foules and fyshes: why shoulde he not bee of power to make hys owne bodye of breade? (Vermigli fol. 78ʳ)

Vermigli scoffs that such a claim is "of the weakeste and febleste sorte that can bee," but admits that he does not object to the division of *potentia ordinata* and *potentia absoluta* in principle: "[W]e dooe not denye that god is hable to turne breade into fleashe: But all our varyaunce is, whether he wyll so dooe or not" (Vermigli fol. 78ʳ). Here we see in action the sustained influence of the fourteenth-century fraying of 'pure nature' and the supernatural into "two formally distinct aspects of one reality" upon Tudor theology—the division upon which empiricism and Cartesian

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[41] Elliot Sober, *Ockham's Razors*, 11.

skepticism were built.[42] Louis Dupré writes that although "[t]heologians did not begin to treat the concept of pure nature as a concrete independent reality until the sixteenth century," the concept's origins lay with Aquinas's intellectual descendants in "late nominalist theology":

> Once the idea of an independent, quasi-autonomous order of nature gained a foothold in Catholic theology, it spread to all schools except the Augustinian, including some of Aquinas's commentators such as Sylvester and Cajetan. Thus the medieval synthesis came to an end, and a dualism between nature and a supernatural realm solidly entrenched itself in Catholic theology for four centuries.[43]

Two hundred years downstream of that revolution, the implications of that division manifested daily in volatile eucharistic debates.

Udall's whole project in *Jack Juggler* culminates when Master Bongrace disputes Careaway's alibi and bellows, "Plainelye it was thy shadow that thou didest see / For, in fayth, the other thyng is not *possible* to be"; at least, that is how most editors prefer to render the lines because they follow the second and third quartos. The first quarto, however, reads, "the other thyng is not *passible* to be" (*JJ* 880–81).[44] The simplest explanation, to be sure, is printer transposition, but as Marie Axton observes, "In context *passible* (capable of being suffered or felt) might link this comic talk of two bodies and shadows to arguments on transubstantiation:

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[42] Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 177.

[43] Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 178. From one perspective, the medieval synthesis that collapsed was Paul's understanding of "the body" since he had no concept of an immaterial supernatural realm. See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 7–10.

[44] Emphases mine. Notable modern editions include John S. Farmer, *Anonymous Plays. 3rd Series, Comprising Jack Juggler—King Darius—Gammer Gurton's Needle—New Custom—Trial of Treasure—Note-Book and Word List* (London: Early English Drama Society, 1906); Nicholas Udall [?], *Jack Juggler*, ed. J. S. Farmer, The Tudor Facsimile Texts 100 (London, 1912); W. H. Williams, *Jacke Jugeler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914); Nicholas Udall [?], *Jack Juggler*, ed. Eunice Lilian Smart and W. W. Greg, The Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933); William Tydeman, ed., *Four Tudor Comedies* (London: Penguin Books, 1984).

Christ's *passible* and *impassible* bodies."[45] Through a weird coincidence of etymology, the

concepts of *passibility* and *possibility* are inextricably linked, and both pertain to late medieval

commentary on the mechanics of the eucharistic ritual. The adjective *passible* appears frequently

in medieval texts that address Christ's incarnation, and the concept factored heavily in ancient

Christian thought on the resurrection—especially Irenaeus's and Tertullian's writings.[46] For

example, an early English prose version of the New Testament translates Paul's testimony to

Festus and Agrippa in Acts 26 thus:

> And ȝitte vnto þis daye I stande, hulpun wiþ þo grace of God, witnessande boþe to
> þo lesse ande to þo more, no þinge sayande more þanne Moyses ande þo
> prophetes saide forto kome; þat Criste was p[a]ssibul, & þat he was firste of þo
> resurreccione of þo deed, forto schewe lyghte vnto þo puple ande to þo
> naciones.[47]

To medieval authors, the notion of passible bodies encapsulated the Incarnation's chief material

implication; Jesus, like all humans, could suffer, and by contrast, his resurrected body was

impassible, liberated from the bondage of suffering. The word enters the English lexicon at the

same historical moment as the word *possible*; in fact, the *OED* traces their origin to the same

text—the Wycliffite New Testament. *Possible* appears prominently in Luke's account of the rich

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[45] Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 200–01.

[46] Caroline Walker Bynum has detailed how central the notion of passibility and impassibility was to early Christian controversy on the bodily resurrection of the dead. The paradox was how human identity persevered even if the body was in flux. Tertullian and Irenaeus emphasized that the chief consequence of resurrection was that bodies were freed from being digested, eaten by decay, and that, paradoxically, the cannibalistic eucharistic meal guaranteed that Christians would not themselves be consumed. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, Lectures on the History of Religions 15 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 21, 39, 41–45, 56, 59–60, 163, 166, 185, 251–52, 314.

[47] Anna C. Paues, ed., *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 193. See also John Gower, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 2 vols., Early English Text Society Extra Series 81, 82 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1900), 423; Anonymous, *Vitas Patrum*, trans. William Caxton (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1495), 341.

young ruler, who could not relinquish his vast wealth to follow Jesus. Jesus laments, "How hard

thei that han richessis schulen entre in to the rewme of God; forsoth it is esyer a camel to passe

thurʒ a nedlis yʒe, than a riche man for to entre in to the kingdom of God."[48] Those watching

wonder aloud how any could be "maad saf" under such exacting conditions, but Jesus reassures

them, "Tho thingis that ben vnpossible anemptis [with respect to] men, ben possible anemptis

God" (Lk. 18:27 WNT). One implication of this episode is that first-century Christians had as

clear a sense of dimension and spatiality as any enlightened modern: they knew that, in the

natural course of affairs, a massive mammal cannot squeeze through a millimeter-wide gap.

Their question assumes a natural physical order against which they judge an event's plausibility.

Notably, Jesus does not spiritualize his observation or categorize it as hyperbole; instead, he

validates their intuition but invites them to recalibrate their plausibility structures to comport

with a different ontology, one where divine action can bend the laws of physics.

Compare this episode to Wycliffe's translation of James 5, where *passible* is used to

advance the inverse proposition. James instructs Christians that they should pray like Elijah but

prohibits the inference that Elijah was superhuman; he was a man "lijk to us passible, '*or able*

for to suffre'" (Jam. 5:15–18 WNT).[49] The 1560 Geneva Bible translates this idiom, "Helias was

a man subiect to like passio[n]s as we are"; modern translations render it, "Elijah was a man with

a nature like ours," or more bluntly, "Elijah was a human being like us."[50] Given Elijah's special

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[48] Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, eds., *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850). Luke 18:24–25. All subsequent citations to Wycliff's New Testament refer to this edition and are hereafter cited parenthetically by chapter and verse and abbreviated WNT.
 [49] Emphasis his.
 [50] See William Whittingham, A. Gilby, and T. Sampson, eds., *The Bible and Holy Scriptvres Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated According to the Ebrue and Greke, and Conferred with the Best Translations in Diuers Langages. With Moste Profitable*

significance in the Old Testament, James's move to emphasize his ordinariness is particularly

relevant. Malachi's concluding prophecy ("Beholde, I [Yahweh] wil send you Eliáh the Prophet

before the coming of the great and feareful day of the Lord") weighed heavily on first-century

Jewish consciousness, as the synoptic gospels record (Mal. 4:5 GNV). Jesus designates John the

Baptist as the foretold Elijah—a fact that everyone, even John's own followers, missed (Mt.

11:7–19 GNV). Later, after Peter, James, and John witness Christ's transfiguration where Moses

and Elijah attend him, they are more bewildered by prophetic chronology than by the miraculous

sight, and ask, "Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come?" (Mt. 17:10 GNV). Jesus

responds,

> Certeinely Elias must first come, & restore all things. But I say vnto you, that Elias is come already, and they knewe him not, but haue done unto him whatsoeuer they wolde: likewise shal also the Sonne of man suffer of them. Then the disciples perceiued that he spake vnto them of Iohn Baptist. (Mt. 17:11–13 GNV).

Matthew and Mark's crucifixion narratives record that the crowds suppose that Jesus was calling

on Elijah to rescue him from the cross when he called out "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*" ["My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"] (Mt. 27:46–49 GNV). Elijah's miracles parallel

Jesus's, and he enacts them—like Jesus—simply by praying. He multiplies food, controls the

weather, raises dead children to life, and violently confronts corrupt religious figures.[51] More

than any other prophet, he engages a sacramental world in which the divine and the ordinary

interact. James tells the early Christians that their intercessions, like Elijah's, pierce the veil

between heaven and earth and move the passible God to action.

Annotations Vpon All the Hard Places, and Other Things of Great Importance As May Appeare in the Epistle to the Reader (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560); *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Anglicised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). All subsequent quotations of the Geneva Bible refer to this edition and are parenthetically cited with the abbreviation GNV.

[51] See 1 Kings 17–19; 2 Kings 2 GNV.

In Vermigli's *Treatise*, the term *passible* occurs in constellation with other incarnational terminology (for instance, *corruptible/incorruptible*, *mortal/immortal*, and *resurrection*). It also frequently appears adjacent to the word *plain* or its synonyms (*clear*, *simple*, or *evident*). Vermigli's sense of that which constitutes *plainness* is rooted in his understanding of *disparata*—things that have "no common ground or genus (unlike contraries and disjuncts)"—an idea that can be traced back to Cicero and which was "prominent in Occamist logic."[52] Vermigli imagines disparates as fundamentally incompatible entities, such as square circles or arid water, and corruptible and incorruptible (or passible and glorified) bodies serve as his example *par excellence* (see Vermigli fol. 53^r). The "transubstanciatours" interpret the words of institution according to the "bare and propre sence… w^{t}out any chaunge or alteracion" (Vermigli fol. 52^v). This construction is "manifestlye false" because it "chau[n]ge[s] the tymes [that is, it introduces unparallel grammatical tenses]" and suggests the mingling of disparates (Vermigli fol. 52^v). Vermigli protests,

> Neyther can there be in one and the same substaunce or subiecte at one and the same tyme the properties and qualities of a bodye corruptible together with the gyftes and properties of a bodye glorifyed: so that one and the same body at one instaunt tyme should bee bothe passible and not passible…. suche thynges as of themselues are in suche sorte dyverse, & unlyke, and disseuered or contrary of nature and kinde the one to the other… (fols. 52^v–53^r, emphasis his)

In this taxonomy, corruptible and glorified bodies share no common DNA; in fact, it is precisely their incompatibility that produces the gap that figure, synecdoche, metaphor, or analogy must bridge. The laws of dimension prohibit bodies from inhabiting multiple locations. Ubiquitarian Catholics "scattre the bodie of Christ about to be in many places at once yea and euery where at once" (Vermigli fol. 98^v). This view is inappropriate because it grants the properties of spirits

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[52] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, 25n14. Vermigli returns to the subject in his later defense against Stephen Gardiner (1559).

(which could theoretically be diffused endlessly) to bodies (which are temporally and spatially bound).[53] To summarize, Vermigli argues that the impossibility of ontological comingling of two bodies requires a figural interpretation of the Eucharist.

Consider how Vermigli negotiates the question of what "manier" a body Christ gave his disciples at the Last Supper. Some Catholic theologians suggest that he could only give the body that he had at the time, which was "both passible (that is to saye, subiecte to hungre, thurst, colde, and other tormentes,) and also mortall, (that is to saye, subiect to death)," but Vermigli retorts,

> Christe had not these thynges glorifyed and unpassible till after his resurreccion…. The state and properties of a passible bodye, and of a glorifyed bodye, be contrary the one to the other, so that they can not in one respecte bee in one bodye together and at one tyme: wherefore it foloweth, yf ye wyll haue bothe the sayed contraries of passible and glorifyed to bee in Christes bodye bothe at one selfe tyme: that ye make Christes body a double bodye. (Vermigli fols. 27ᵛ–28ʳ)

The language here harmonizes with Paul's apology for the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15—a passage Vermigli undoubtedly covered in his lectures that first semester at Oxford.[54] Paul relentlessly deploys the law of noncontradiction to raise the stakes:

> Now if it be preached, that Christ is risen from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? For if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vaine, and your faith is also vaine…. For if yᵉ dead be not raised, the[n] is Christ not raised. (1 Cor. 15:12–14, 16 GNV)

Paul insists that Christianity's validity hangs on the proposition that Jesus rose from the dead, which is the minor premise to the major one that dead people can, in fact, rise. The central issue

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[53] See Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, 14–15.

[54] See Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, xvii–xviii. Vermigli was one of "several 'foreign divines'" that Cranmer imported to implement "his grand plan for the reform of the Ecclesia Anglicana" (xvii). Cranmer installed Vermigli as Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford to replace the conservative Richard Smith.

that confronts both Paul and Vermigli is the question of the properties of resurrected bodies. Paul imagines his interlocutors pressing the question, "But some man wil say, How are the dead raised vp? and with what bodie come they forthe?" (1 Cor. 15:35 GNV). To Paul, this is a nonsensical question because different types of flesh possess different properties. Vermigli likewise accuses his Catholic interlocutors of "foile" (that is, 'folly'), but he conceptualizes this according to a starker nominalist division between pure nature (with its dimensive constraints) and the supernatural (Vermigli fol. 27^v).

Vermigli argues that Christ could only give his disciples the body that he had at the Last Supper, a human body bound by the laws of entropy, dimension, time, and location (see Vermigli fols. 27^v–28^r). Nevertheless, if neither chronology nor dimension satisfies skeptics, the law of noncontradiction should prevent them from imagining the horror of horrors—that one could duplicate Christ's flesh. Joseph C. McLelland translates the final phrase (originally "*ut geminum faciatis Corpus Christi*" in the 1549 Latin edition) the "twin bodies of Christ," which isolates the variable that horrifies Vermigli.[55] The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fascination with and aversion to twins manifested in the "monstrous birth" literary genre, of which twins conceived by superfetation was the archetypal case. Hercules and his twin brother Iphicles's birth was the most notable of "many examples" of abnormal, superfetatious births during the period.[56] The duplication of Christ's body unnerves Vermigli. He believes that eliding the

[55] Peter Martyr Vermigli*, The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, 46; Petrum Martyrem Florentinum Vermilium, *Tractatio De Sacramento Eucharistiae Habita in Celeberrima Universitate Oxoniensi in Anglia* (London: R. Wolfe, 1549), 17. On twin aversion, see Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 17, 24 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), 234–37 and René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 56–59, 61–63, 79, 252.

[56] Daisy Murray, *Twins in Early Modern English Drama and Shakespeare*, Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 34 (New York: Routledge, 2017), 12.

boundary between Christ's physical and spiritual bodies permits an unholy conjunction of passible and impassible flesh.[57]

That Nicholas Udall paid particular attention to Vermigli's argument on this point is unmistakable because he supplies a marginal gloss and interjects his own commentary to refer readers to 1 Corinthians 15. When Vermigli concurs with Augustine "that Christes bodye glorified is not after suche sorte a spiritual bodye, that it passeth into the nature of a spirite," Udall glosses "*corpus animale*" in the margins and expands the point:

> For a certain kynde of bodye there is, whyche of S. Paule in the fifteenth chapitur of hys former epistle to the Corinthians is called *corpus animale*, as if ye should saye in englyshe, a bodye endewed wyth a solle whyche the translatours of the bible dooe for the more planer understandying of the unlearned calle a naturall bodye, and yet in the self same place of Paule, it is sayed of Adam that he was made a lyvyng solle, and suche a man is in the secound chapitur of the same epistle called *Animalis homo*, and it is translated in englishe, **a natural man**. But the sayd place of S. Paule where suche a bodye endewed with a solle is called *corpus animale*, is not so to bee understanded, as though the bodye dooeth passe and chaunge into the nature of the solle. (Vermigli fol. 88ᵛ, italics and emphasis his).

This commentary does double duty because by referencing other translators who used plain diction to simplify their texts for vulgar audiences, it implicitly justifies Udall's own translation strategy. Having established these historical connotations of *plainness*, *passibility, possibility,* and ontological *parsimony*, we are better positioned to see how and why Udall juggles themes of suffering, epistemological certitude, visual confirmation, and supper in his satire on transubstantiation, and why that project sometimes falls flat.

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[57] See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 163–97.

III – *Jack Juggler*'s Vermiglian Assumptions

Let us return now to Bongrace's central exclamation: "Plainelye it was thy shadow that thou didest se / For in faith the other thyng is not possible to be" (*JJ* 880–81). First, if the audience had begun to lose track of the eucharistic subtext of the play, the term *shadow* likely reawakened them to the pertinent context. As Jay Zysk points out, both Catholics and Protestants juxtaposed the terms *shadow* and *substance* to "negotiate the meaning of Christ's body and its sacramental signs" in their eucharistic treatises.[58] Second, when Bongrace uses *plainelye* to reinforce the conclusion he thinks is obvious, it is the culmination of repeated instances where characters use *plain* (or synonyms) to espouse supposedly irrefutable truths. After the prologue's narrator offers to explain Cato's proverb "in Englyshe *per sensum planiorem*," he claims that evidence of the proverb's truthfulness is "[m]anifest, open and verie evident" (*JJ* 5, 29–30). When Jack warns Careaway not to approach the house "lest I handle thee like a strainger," the page retorts, "Marye, I defye the, and planly unto the tell / That I am a servaunt of this house, and her I dwel" (*JJ* 410–13). Less than fifty lines later, Jack's blows make Careaway change his tune. Jack blusters,

> I woll make the chaung that song ere wee pas this place,
> For he is my maister, and a gaine too thee I saye
> That I am his Jenkin Careawaye.
> Who art thou now; tell me plaine? (*JJ* 465–68)

Cowed into submission, Careaway meekly replies, "Noo bodye but whom please you, sertayne" (*JJ* 469). At this point, Careaway does not believe what he is saying; he only complies temporarily to stop the thrashing. Later on, however, he actually questions whether Jack has usurped his identity:

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[58] Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance: Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama Across the Reformation Divide*, Reformations: Medieval and Early Modern (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 7.

> I se it is soo, without any doubte,
> But how the dyvell came it aboute?
> Who soo in England lokethe on him stedelye
> Sall perceive plainelye that he is I. (*JJ* 568–71)

Careaway's suffering initiates an "epistemological nightmare" that compromises his rationality.[59]

Successive beatings dislodge his initial surety till he admits, "My witte is breched in suche a

brake / That I cannot devise what way is best to take!" (*JJ* 674–75). In modern parlance, Jack

gaslights Careaway until the page is excommunicated from rational society—subjecting him to

what Miranda Fricker calls "epistemic injustice."[60]

In the play, this pattern reoccurs three times: someone asks Careaway to remember what

has happened to him, and when he tells his story, the interlocutor buffets him, which causes him

to forget his tale and recant. He maintains his identity after Jack's first blows, and when Jack

asserts his insanity ("This bedelem knave without dought is mad!), Careaway protests,

> No by God, for all that, I am a wyse lad
> And can cale to rememberaunce every thing
> That I dyd this daye sithe my uperysinge:
> …
> I remember I was sent to feache my maisteris
> And what I devised [the story I fabricated] to save me harmeles.
> (*JJ* 498–501, 512–13)

It turns out, however, that the Juggler can "reherse" the story point-by-point; he can remember

(with all the eucharistic subtext that word implies) better than Careaway (*JJ* 526). Jack has stolen

not only the humble page's name and story, but also a primary aspect of his vocation. In order to

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[59] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 68.

[60] See Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Several theorists have described gaslighting as a counterphobic attack rooted in perpetrators' anxiety at the inadequacy of their own explanatory framework. See Kate Abramson, "Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting," *Philosophical Perspectives* 28 (2014): 1–30; Victor Calef and Edward M. Weinshel, "Some Clinical Consequences of Introjection: Gaslighting," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1981): 44–66.

obey Bongrace, Careaway must remember instructions and refuse to distract himself with cheap thrills till he forgets his mission (see *JJ* 162).

If memory and certitude can be compromised so easily, how can they be reconstructed? Careaway grasps for various oaths ("by cockes precius passion," by "cockes bodie," "*In nomine patris*," by the "blessed ladye," and swearing "on a booke") to buttress his claims, but the "other I" can swear as well as he, and by the same objects (*JJ* 629, 684, 430, 554, 432, 845, 852; see also *JJ* 846, 892).[61] Without access to this corroborative mechanism, he and the other characters fixate on the question of the reliability of sensory perception—especially sight. On the one hand, everyone refuses Careaway's story as inherently implausible because it contradicts visual evidence. When Jack locks Careaway out of the house, he presents himself to the page for visual inspection:

> Looke well upon me and thou shalt see as now
> That I am Jenkyne Careawaye, and not thou.
> Looke well a pon me and by everye thyng
> Thou shalt well know that I make no leasing. (*JJ* 564–67)

The preponderance of evidence convinces Careaway:

> I have sene my selfe a thousand times in a glasse
> But soo lyke myself as he is, never was.
> He hath in everye poynt my clothing, and my geare,
> My hed, my cape, my shirt, and notted heare;
> And of the same coloure my yes, nose, and lypps,
> My chekes, chyne, neake, fyte, leges, and hyppes;
> Of the same stature, and hyght, and age,
> And is in every poynt Maister Boungrace page —
> That if he have a hole in his tayle —
> He is even I myne owne selfe without any faile. (*JJ* 572–81)

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[61] James Calderwood argues that the "search for things to swear by" pervades *Richard II*'s desacralized world; the crucial objective is to find some unambiguously valid collateral to ensure that the oath will bind its participants. The same logic applies here. See James L. Calderwood, "*Richard II*: The Fall of Speech," in *Shakespearean Metadrama: The Argument of the Play in* Titus Andronicus, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, *and* Richard II (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 160.

Udall virtually plagiarizes this description from Plautus but swaps out the final body part for a

scatological effect. In *Amphitryon*, the whip scars on Sosia's back provide the final definitive

piece of evidence that he is, in fact, the slave.[62]

In the same vein, Bongrace evaluates possibility and plausibility by visual confirmation,

saying, "darest thou affirme to me / That which was never syne nor hereafter shalbe?" (*JJ* 784–

85). Visual certitude regularly comes up in their conversation. Careaway laments the misery of

the servant whose master "with force woll compel him that thing to denye / That he knoweth true

and hath syne with his ye" (*JJ* 820–21). The epilogue likewise bemoans the fact that the

powerful always force the powerless one to "stifelie denye" the events that he "sawe done before

his own face" (*JJ* 1025–26). Careaway admits that he too would have found his story implausible

if he hadn't seen the proof with "myne own yes," and Bongrace scoffs and mutters words

strikingly akin to Thomas's statement to the other apostles: "I woll not bee deludyd with such a

glosing lye / Nor give credens tyll I see it with my owne iye" (*JJ* 827, 862–63).[63]

Bongrace and Careaway walk by sight, not by faith, even though eyewitness testimony

produced the evidence that jeopardized Careaway's epistemological certitude in the first place—

he was bewildered *because* of what he saw. His confusion is not imbecility; any rational observer

would presumably come to the same conclusion. The forgery is so perfect

> That if he were here you should well see
> That you could not discerne nor know him from me.
> For thinke you that I do not my self knowe?
> I am not so folishe a knave, I trowe.

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[62] See Titus Maccius Plautus, "Amphitryon," 446. See Marie Axton's footnote on the passage: *Jack Juggler*, 580.

[63] See John 20:25. Jay Zysk links this passage to the moment where Careaway displays his hands, feet, and other bodily parts to Jack as proof. See Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance,* 210; *Jack Juggler,* 514–15.

> Let who woll looke him by and by
> And he woll depose upon a boke that he is I. (*JJ* 887–92)

Even inanimate (and theoretically objective) mirrors could not distinguish the two bodies (see *JJ* 572–73). This is the conundrum: *Jack Juggler* asserts that seeing is believing, yet its dramatic action trades upon the inverse principle—the problematics of ocular proof.

Though late medieval and early modern dramatists were preoccupied with the possibilities and pitfalls afforded by visual confirmation, they did not discover this tension. It was just as pressing a concern for first-century Jews as for sixteenth-century English speakers. Christianity's chief historical events are what N. T. Wright calls "public fact[s]" that any spectator could verify, but several apostles reiterate Isaiah's remark that God curses his enemies by scrambling their senses to produce inaccurate data.[64] Luke stresses that his Gospel provides a "point to point" account of what he heard from those who "sawe [the events] their selves," and his Acts of the Apostles begins with the observation that Jesus "prese[n]ted him self aliue after that he had suffred, by manie infallible tokens, being sene of them by the *space* of fourtie dayes…" (Luke 1:2–3; Acts 1:3 GNV; italics his). Likewise, John opens his first epistle presenting his *bona fides*—first-hand sensory experience of Jesus's body:

> That which was from the beginning, which we haue heard, which we have sene with our eyes, which we haue loked vpon, and our hands haue ha[n]dled of yᵉ Worde of life, (For the life appeared, and we haue sene it, and beare witness, and shewe vnto you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and appeared vnto vs) That, *I say*, which we haue sene & heard, decleare we vnto you…
>
> (1 John 1:1–3a GNV; italics his)

Nevertheless, it is also the case that Yahweh frustrates his enemies by distorting their senses.[65] When He commissions Isaiah as a prophet, He tells him to inform the Israelites,

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[64] N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 38.

[65] See Ps. 69:23; Rom. 11:10.

> Ye shal heare in dede, but ye shal not vnderstand: ye shal plainly se, & not perceiue. Make the heart of this people fat, make their eares heauie, and shut their eyes, lest they se with their eyes, & heare with their eares, and vnderstand with their hearts, and conuert, and he heale them. (Isa. 6:9–10 GNV)

Jesus quotes these lines when his disciples inquire why he teaches in parables: "Therefore speake I to them in parables, because they seing, do not se: and hearing, they heare not, nether vnderstand…But blessed are your eyes, for they se: & your eares, for they heare" (Mt. 13:13–16 GNV). Both the validity and vulnerability of sensory confirmation crescendo in Jesus's appearance to Thomas. On the one hand, the crass materiality of seeing Jesus and penetrating His abdominal cavity with his finger alleviates Thomas's doubts and produces faith, but on the other hand, Jesus blesses those "who haue not sene, and have beleued" (John 20:29 GNV). In the latter part of Romans, Paul remarks upon the irony that the Jews, who had the benefit of "the adoption, and the glorie, and the Couenantes, and the giuing of the Law, and the seruice of God, and the promises," did not perceive the mystery of God's salvific plan, because "God hathe giuen the[m] the spirit of slomber: eyes that they shulde not se, & eares that they shulde not heare vnto this day" (Rom. 9:4; 10:8 GNV). The Gospel hides in plain sight, so to speak, yet is not perceived. Eyewitness testimony confirms God's deeds in history, but only those whose eyes have been opened may accurately perceive what they witness.

When *Jack Juggler*'s characters demand a plain account of what happened, or when the prologue's narrator simplifies or clarifies a point, it is always a catch-22. In a world of liars, compelled confessions, and corruptible senses, can any perception be plain? And in that case, what's the problem with transubstantiation? For that matter, Udall also undercuts the trustworthiness of scent—the sense most tied to memory. Bongrace inquires where the "other Careawaye" has gone, and his page replies that he could not have gotten far way but must be

hiding amidst the crowd. Between blows, Bongrace tells him to "sike and smell him out," to which Careaway protests,

> Trulye, good syr, by your maistershipps favoure
> I cannot well fynd a knave by the savoure.
> Many here smell strong but none so ranke as he.
> A stronger sented knave then he was cannot bee. (*JJ* 860, 864–67)

Taken as a whole, *Jack Juggler* ambivalently toggles between espousing the veracity of the senses and disabusing the audience of trusting in observations they produce. Thus, the audience is permitted no confidence in Bongrace's remark "Plainelye it was thy shadow that thou didest see" because they have seen the juggler's deceits with their own eyes and overheard his plots with their own ears.

All this discussion about plainness and the reliability of sensory perception engages Christianity's fraught history with drama even as it participates with the contemporaneous Edwardian theological controversies bound up in the terms. Historically, many entertainers were lumped under the term *ioculator*, and juggling was connected to a whole host of ludic entertainments (pantomimes, ropewalkers, stilt-walkers, tumblers, clowns, beast-tamers, strong men) that elicited Roman and Christian hostility.[66] Despite the antipathy, authorities unevenly

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[66] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 1:7; A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Background, Origins and Developments*, English Literature (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 42–45. On classical and early Christian antitheatrical prejudice, see Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 38–66. On the stage's development through the Middle Ages, Chambers' thesis of evolutionary continuity between forms has been hotly contested by O. B. Hardison, Jr. and Lawrence Clopper. See O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965) and Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). John Parker rejects the notion that Chambers implied any teleological dimension to drama's evolutionary development. See John Parker, "Who's Afraid of Darwin? Revisiting Chambers and Hardison…and Nietzsche," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40, no. 1 (2010): 7–35.

enforced and frequently ignored the prohibitions, and the paradoxical reality is that "[t]he stage provokes the most active and sustained hostility when it becomes a vital force in the life of the community."[67] Thus, as a ludic art, juggling "inherited all the ill-repute of the *histrio* or *mimus*" even as it was incorporated in the larger minstrel tradition and patronized by royal and clerical leaders.[68] *Piers Plowman* lists "Iakke the iogelour" beside other "wasters and cheats for whom Piers specifically refuses to provide food," and given the popularity of Robert Crowley's Tudor editions of Langland's poem, this is probably where Udall encountered the character.[69] Chambers argues that the "palmy days of minstrelsy" in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries eventually evaporated in the "complete break-up of minstrelsy in its medieval form" by the sixteenth century, to the extent that the "*jougleur* as the thirteenth century knew him was by the sixteenth century no more."[70] Nevertheless, he admits that the Tudors—especially Henry VII— were particularly fond of "their jugglers, their bearwards, their domestic buffoons, jesters or fools," so even if the *jougleur* tradition as such was dead, its reputation lingered.[71] In light of this, Marie Axton's footnote on Jack Juggler's name seems most apt:

> In the 16th century *jack* is used as a common noun for 'knave' or 'lowbred fellow.' *Juggler* (Lat. *ioculator*, O.Fr. *jester*, *jogleor*) denotes: (1) buffoon,

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[67] Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 66. A wide body of scholarship identifies the degree to which medieval clergymen imitated minstrels, and Udall would have had a living memory of this phenomenon. See David L. Jeffrey, *Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 169–230; Christopher Page, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Musical Life and Ideas in France, 1100–1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 8–41; J. D. A. Ogilvy, "Mimi, Scurrae, Histriones: Entertainers of the Early Middle Ages," *Speculum* 38, no. 4 (1963): 603–19; and Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars of the Middle Ages* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000).

[68] A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans*, 43.

[69] Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 19; see also John N. King, "Robert Crowley's Editions of *Piers Plowman*," 342–52.

[70] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 1:68–69.

[71] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 1:68.

entertainer; (2) a magician or conjuror; (3) generally a deceiver. All senses are current in late medieval and Tudor usage. The emphasis is on visual deception.[72]

Tudor theologians—both Catholic and Protestant—seized upon juggling's association with deception and magic as they accused each other of hermeneutic gymnastics with respect to eucharistic theology. Nicholas Ridley said of priests,

> In the steade of the Lordes holy table, they geue the people with muche solemne disgisinge a thinge they call it their masse, but in dead and in truthe it is a very maskinge and a mockery of the true Supper of the Lord or rather I may call it a craftye Juglinge, whereby these false theues & Juglers hath bewitched ye mindes of the simple people…[73]

Thomas Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner mutually accused one another of 'juggling' in their eucharistic theology and scriptural hermeneutics. Gardiner observes that "the rude man" might condemn the priests for "playe jugling," but it was actually the case that the Protestants were stretching the Bible's plain words; Cranmer, citing the deception of Alcmena by Jupiter, seizes this ammunition and fires back, "Why then is not in the ministration of the holy communion an illusion of our senses, if our senses take for bread and wine that whiche is not so indeed?"[74] Vermigli uses the same language, arguing, "Christ is no iugler, neither doth he mocke or daly w^t our senses. But whan he was arise[n] again from death to life, he proved & declared his resurreccion by our se[n]ses" (Vermigli fol. 13^v).[75] Udall parrots this exact charge to patron William Parr, claiming that the "iugleyng sleyghtes of the Romysh Babylon be so throughly

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[72] Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 184. See also Beatrice Groves, "'One Man at One Time May Be in Two Placys,'" 48.

[73] Nicholas Ridley, *A Frendly Farewel Which Master Doctor Ridley, Late Bishop of London Did Write Beinge Prisoner in Oxeforde, Unto All His True Lovers and Frendes in God, a Litle before That He Suffred for the Testimony of the Truthe of Christ His Gospell. Newly Setforth and Allowed According to the Order Apoynted in the Quenes Majesties Injunctions* (London: John Day, 1559), B2.

[74] Qtd. on Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 20.

[75] On the topic of Christ as magician, see Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978).

espyed that they can no longer deceiue" (Vermigli sig.* 2ᵛ). Thus, when Jack Juggler tells the

audience that he will "playe a jugling cast a non. / I woll cungere the moull, and God before, / Or

ells leat me lese my name for evermore," he activates these theatrical and theological

connotations and aligns himself with the forces antithetical to plainness: drama, trickery,

conjuration, hermeneutic gymnastics, and (from a Reformed perspective) manipulative

sacramental theology that amounts to devilish bewitchment (*JJ* 107–09).[76]

What is at stake in this 'game' of conjuration is not merely Jack's "reputation," as Glynne

Wickham maintains, but his ontological identity—and Careaway's too.[77] They are locked in a

zero-sum game to control the foundational markers of identity (name, location, clothing, and

social relationships), and the loser shall suffer the horrifying fate of essence-less existence,

presence without identity.[78] When Careaway first comes on stage, he immediately announces the

congruence of his name and his psychological state: "My name is Careawaie—let all sorrow

passe" (*JJ* 196). The Juggler's blows rob him of his fundamentally cheery disposition, a fact he

laments as soon as his realizes its implications: "[G]ive me a new maister, and an other name /

For it wold greve my hart, soo helpe me God, / To runne about the stretes like a maisterlis doge"

(*JJ* 477–79). Udall doubly embeds this tension in the drama because the page's name puns on

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[76] Note well that Bongrace conjures too: he threatens Careaway, "Your tonge is lyberall and all out of frame. / I must niddes counger it and make it tame." See *Jack Juggler,* 800–01.

[77] Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300–1660*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 3:77.

[78] On the conundrum of essence-less presence and its relation to late medieval eucharistic controversies and linguistic shifts, see Judith H. Anderson, "Language and History in the Reformation: Cranmer, Gardiner, and the Words of Institution," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2001): 22–24; Brian F. Byron, "From Essence to Presence: A Shift in Eucharistic Expression Illustrated from the Apologetic of St. Thomas More," in *Miscellanea Moreana: Essays for Germain Marc'hadour*, ed. Clare M. Murphy, Henri Gibaud, and Mario A. Di Cesare, Moreana 100 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1989), 430.

"caraway," a variety of apple: Careaway is an early modern Johnny Appleseed, as it were.[79] This begs the question: who would Johnny Appleseed be without any apples? Careaway's mind wanders to this exact conclusion when Jack produces apples from his sleeve; the bewildered page immediately assumes that he must acquire a new name.

> How the divell should thei cume there?
> For I dyd them all in my owne sleve bere!
> He lyeth not a worde in all this
> Nor dothe in any one poynt myse.
> For ought I se yet, betwene erneste and game,
> I must go sike me a nother name. (*JJ* 536–41)

Here, Udall ponders the tension that Shakespeare repeatedly explores in *Richard II* with the question of whether Bolingbroke's authority is collateralized by the logic of primogeniture or in his ability to amass military forces. Is the king's name equivalent to "twenty thousand names," as Richard naïvely assumes, or is it just another empty title (*Richard II*, 3.2.85)? In the famous deposition scene, Richard II mourns that he has been stripped not only of his title but also of his Christian name, which was given to him in a sacramental ritual:

> I have no name, no title
> No, not that name that was given me at the font,
> But 'tis usurp'd.
> …
> [I] know not now what name to call myself. (*Richard II*, 4.1.255–57, 259)

Udall reflects upon the nominalist debasement a half-century before Shakespeare: Jack has successfully juggled, and Careaway has lost his apples and his carelessness, and must obsolesce into anonymity.

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[79] See Marie Axton's notes for *Jack Juggler*, 114, 285. See also *2 Henry IV*, 5.3.3 for Falstaff's joke about caraways and costerds. All subsequent Shakespearean references are cited parenthetically from William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, Rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

Mercury boasts that because he is a god, he can adapt *Amphitryon* from a tragedy to a comedy without changing a line, and Udall seems to have been possessed of a similar hubris. He attempts to render the plot as satire, of course, but the pragmatic constraints of the genre derail his plan. Anne Barton notes, "To lose one's name is an incipiently tragic situation. To climb out of the abyss of anonymity by acquiring one, although the rarer experience of the two, is quintessentially comic."[80] I suggest this is doubly true in a play that is so invested in the dramatic possibilities enabled by names that literalize a character's personality traits.[81] If Barton's speculation that comedy possesses a bias toward a cratylic view of language and names passes muster, Udall faces an intractable conundrum. A realist account of language holds that speech exists in some integral relationship with the thing it describes; that in the naming of things, some speech can represent their ontological essence; and that ritualized speech-acts can effectuate, and not merely describe, reality. Change the name, change the thing. (I hasten to add that a sacramentalist metaphysics presupposes this same possibility.) Comedy frequently traffics in ironizing meaningful names, or, more classically, in resolving a plot's conflict by restoring characters to their rightful names, identities, clothing, etc. When Udall creates two characters with cratylic names and places them in an existential struggle to abolish one another, the plot cannot resolve without simultaneously establishing and undermining the cratylic principle. Either Jack will juggle, or Careaway will steal apples and loiter uncaringly, but either resolution will sabotage the play's didactic intentions. Udall wants to uphold the parsimonious principle rooted

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[80] Anne Barton, *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 164.

[81] The adjective "cratylic" is derived from Plato's *Cratylus*, wherein the titular character argues for linguistic naturalism (that names correspond naturally to their subjects), and his interlocutor Hermogenes argues for linguistic conventionalism (that only arbitrary local convention determines the words that designate objects). See David Sedley, "Plato's *Cratylus*," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/plato-cratylus/.

in a materialist explanation, but it remains unclear whether the cratylic view of language and a realist metaphysics have been vanquished.

Jack Juggler constantly reminds the reader that physical violence drives victims into epistemological crisis, and by representing that violence with the diction of cannibalism, Udall supplies a eucharistic subtext to the scenes. When Jenkin Careaway first realizes he has been locked out of his own house, he threatens Jack,

> What knave is that? He speaketh not too me, I trowe.
> And we mete, the one of us is lyke too have a blowe,
> For now that I am wel chafed and sumwhat hote,
> Twentye suche could I hewe as small as fleshe too pote.
> And surelie, if I had a knyfe,
> This knave should escape hardelye with his lyfe. (*JJ* 332–37).

Shortly thereafter, Jack returns the threat with an offer of a knuckle-sandwich, which Udall takes directly from Plautus; Jack instructs his fists to "bestur you about his lyppes and face / And streake out all his teth without any grace," then turns to Careaway and inquires, "Gentelman, are you disposed to eate any fist met?" (*JJ* 376–78).[82] Careaway meekly protests that he's already had supper that evening, and that Jack should give his meal to others who are hungry, but Jack ominously retorts, "[Yt] shall do a man of your dyet no harme to suppe twise. / This shalbe youre chise, to make your met digest" (*JJ* 379–82). While Jack compels his victim to duplicative dinners, Bongrace (whose name Anglicizes the Greek *eucharistia*) ironically starves his household. Jack thinks that Bongrace treats Careaway well, noting that his master "mentainyth him and lovethe not mee" (*JJ* 121). But after Bongrace scolds and beats Careaway, the page contradicts this reputation of generosity:

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[82] Titus Maccius Plautus, "Amphitryon," 33. Mercury (in Sosia's guise), tells the slave, "I tell ye, any man that comes this way shall eat fists [*Quisquis homo huc profecto venerit, pugnos edet*]."

> But as for you, yf you gave me drinke and meate
> As oftentymes as you do me bete
> I were the best fed page in all this cytie.
> But as touching that, you have on me no pitye,
> And not onlye I but all that do you sarve
> For meat and drynke maye rather starve. (*JJ* 792–97)

Townspeople may think Bongrace is lavishly generous, but Careaway knows that he gorges himself in solitude without waiting for his family to join the feast, and as a consequence, they go hungry. This is the same sin against eucharistic charity for which Paul chastises the Corinthian Christians.[83]

Jack sins by commission, not omission: he forces his victims to consume a horrifyingly material meal. Careaway mourns that "withe him [Jack] I supped and dranke truelye"—an echo of Jesus's claim that "my flesh is meat in dede, & my blood is drinke in dede" (*JJ* 791; John 6:55 GNV). In medieval eucharistic miracle stories, skeptics were often cursed with horrifyingly realistic consumption, while the believing were blessed with divine deception.[84] Tracey Sedinger writes, "In other words, skeptics were punished by knowing and feeling exactly what they were eating."[85] After Dame Coye and Bongrace finally accept their page's story on account of incontrovertible ocular proof of his wounds, Dame Coye curses Jack Juggler with eternal exclusion from life-giving (i.e. eucharistic) food: "…I besiche him that hanged on the rode / That he [Jack] never eate ne drynke that may do hym good / And that he dye a shamefull dethe, saving

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[83] See 1 Corinthians 11:20–22, 33 GNV; Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 190–91, 194–97.

[84] See Steven Justice, "Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2012): 307–32; John Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 133–34.

[85] Tracey Sedinger, "'And Yet Woll I Stiell Saye That I AM I': *Jake Juggler*, the Lord's Supper, and Disguise," *English Literary History* 74, no. 1 (2007): 250. See also Sarah Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 2 (2003): 265–66.

my cheryte" (*JJ* 937–39). After this malediction Careaway says he has relinquished his hatred of his mistress, but to compliment her "wonderful charytable facion" feels like a stretch (*JJ* 943).

IV – Table for One

Where does this leave us? I think we may hazard a few guesses. First, the case for Udall's authorship is much stronger than previous critics have suggested, given the shared linguistic and metaphysical similarities between Udall's translation of Vermigli's *Treatise* and *Jack Juggler*. The question that remains, however, is who put the play on, when and where they did so, and how they managed to retain their head. Paul Whitfield White, for instance, accepts Udall as having the "best claim" to authorship, and he documents that *Jack Juggler* was the sole play to survive the Marian purge of "subversive works" against the sacraments.[86] Nevertheless, he speculates that "the play may well have been performed by the boys of Westminster in 1555"— the chief evidence for which is Udall's royal warrant for Christmas dramas dated December 13, 1554, as well as the fact that other notable Protestants (William Baldwin, Thomas Cawarden, Thomas Benger, and William Hunnis) participated in court revels before 1556.[87] Even if *Jack Juggler* merely satirizes the debates about the Eucharist instead of advocating a radically reformed theology of the Eucharist, it denounces the principle of Christ's ubiquity in the elements with such a vehemence that I struggle to believe the suggestion that Marian authorities would have permitted this play to be performed in January 1555, nine months before they were burning Protestant reformers who advocated a spiritualized Eucharist.[88] Given Udall's work on

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[86] Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 127, 124.
[87] Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 129.
[88] See Torrance Kirby, "From Florence to Zurich via Strasbourg and Oxford: The International Career of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562)," in *Bewegung Und Beharrung: Aspekte Des Reformierten Protestantismus, 1520–1650*, ed. Christian Moser and Peter Opitz,

so many high-profile Protestant documents, his appointment to several distinguished positions in

the Anglican hierarchy, it is stunning that Mary continued to employ him for entertainments and

that Stephen Gardiner included him in his will. It testifies to the utility of his skill set and the

authorities' recognition of that utility. Udall was not appointed headmaster at Westminster

School until December 16, 1555, and he taught at Eton from 1534–41, so White may be

extrapolating that he had no pupils to serve as actors until the 1555 date.[89] Instead, I suspect that

William Edgerton and Marie Axton's chronology is likeliest: if *Ralph Roister Doister* was

performed at Windsor in September 1552, Udall may have had access to "choir boys" as actors

between 1551 and 1553, and *Jack Juggler*'s initial performance may have been during the

Christmas season of 1552/3.[90] If Vermigli fled England at Cranmer's insistence late in 1553, it is

difficult to imagine *Jack Juggler* being performed after that date.

In addition to a stronger case for Udall's authorship, I think Vermigli's dependence on

the notion of *plainness* in his eucharistic treatise and *Jack Juggler*'s appropriation of that term

explains the genre switch from tragicomedy to satire. A notion of what constitutes plain reality is

the essential prerequisite of satire. Satires are intensely topical and highly contextual, so they

tend to go out of date swiftly. This makes them crude vehicles to advance timeless universal

dogma.[91] In addition, for a satire's insults to land, its author and audience must share

assumptions about what constitutes metaphysical, epistemological, or moral absurdity. "Readers,

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Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 144 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 138. Kirby identifies
"instrumental realism" as the technical name for the position of those who tried to
"reconcile…Zwingli's anti-realist sacramentarian memorialism and Luther's hyper-realist
consubstantiation," but I sense no efforts in *Jack Juggler* to budge on a symbolic understanding
of the Eucharist (138).
    [89] See William L. Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall*, 65–66.
    [90] Marie Axton, *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 20–21. See also William L. Edgerton,
Nicholas Udall, 89.
    [91] See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 2000), 224; Tracey Sedinger, "'And Yet Woll I Stiell Saye That I AM I,'" 263.

no matter how critically able," Duncan McFarlane notes, "are more apt to make mistakes with satire than with any other form of literature" because there are too many contextual variables to permit the level of ideological homogeneity necessary for them to endure.[92] For this reason, Northrop Frye originally imagined satire as an acid that indiscriminately corroded everything it contacted, even though he eventually came to see more constructive possibilities for the genre.[93] His claim that satires require "wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd" is unquestionably correct, but it stops one step short because *plausibility* (physical or moral) implies a sense of *possibility* (also physical or moral).[94] Paul Dominiak argues, "Every political vision assumes an epistemology, a way of looking at and understanding the world, in turn buttressed by some kind of ontology, a claim about what, how, and why the world is."[95] Every effort to satirize vile or preposterous things contains an implicit invitation for the audience to share the satirist's perspective on what constitutes such conditions. Cannibals might find Jonathan Swift's modest proposal to be eminently reasonable. Thus, Frye claims that when readers encounter content that they "recogniz[e] as grotesque," they are also encountering the author's "implicit moral standard" buried within.[96]

What metaphysical and epistemological assumptions does Udall presume his readers will share? I argue that he assumes a naturalistic account of physical laws of dimension, which

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[92] Duncan McFarlane, "The Universal Literary Solvent: Northrop Frye and the Problem of Satire, 1942 to 1957," *English Studies in Canada* 37, no. 2 (2011): 157.

[93] See Duncan McFarlane, "The Universal Literary Solvent," 155, 159, 162, 164–65 and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 223. Acidic metaphors dominate Frye's early writing on the subject, but as he integrated satire within his broader theories on myth, he began to imagine a more constructive utility for it. His terminology shifts toward that of *comminution*—the reduction or pulverization of an object into its elemental components so that they may be reconstituted in a different form. This is what distinguishes satire from "sheer invective" (223).

[94] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 224.

[95] Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*, T & T Clark Studies in English Theology (T & T Clark, 2020), 1.

[96] Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 224.

supplies the conditions that create the satiric ironies in *Jack Juggler*. William N. West astutely

points out that the primary overlap between drama and the eucharistic debates of reformation

England—the thing that made both so culturally incendiary—was their challenge to the laws of

physics: "Early modern theatrical and scientific accounts of change and identity assumed a

physics as well as an ideology."[97] That physics was "roughly Aristotelian" in its treatment of the

relationship between form and matter.[98] Shakespeare did not embrace only one model of physics

across his corpus, or even within a single play, West comments, but Aristotelian physics affords

"particular advantages to the work of the actor" because it allows actors to pressure the basic

assumptions through which humans understand their world.[99] They can probe the possibilities of

what happens to "the player's substance"—its "material sameness"—even as his accidents

morph between forms (dress, mannerisms, deformities, inflected speech, etc.)[100] When characters

engage the "physics of performance," they teach the audience how the world operates, and thus

how the audience should operate in the world.[101]

Herein lies the irony: the Fourth Lateran Council's eucharistic doctrine

(transubstantiation) conjoined Catholic thinkers to a metaphysical system predicated on

ontological individualism and linguistic nominalism, to commitments that would undermine

belief in the Real Presence, even if they continued to deny the ramifications these Aristotelian

commitments held for their sacramentology. West points out that the reformers largely

"support[ed] the basic premises of Aristotelian physics" and criticized other theological

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[97] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?: Physics, Identity, Playing," *South Central Review* 26, no. 1/2 (2009): 108.
[98] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?" 108.
[99] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?" 116.
[100] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?" 113.
[101] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?" 103.

interpretations that suggested alternative models.[102] Torrance Kirby notes that Aristotle's works

formed the basis of Vermigli's education at the University of Padua for eight years, where the

reformer "must have acquired his thorough grasp of Aristotelian method and logic which was to

become the acknowledged hallmark of his mature writing."[103] Furthermore, when the theologian

returned to Strasbourg, he worked on a commentary for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which shows

that his investment in Aristotle's philosophy was not merely a schoolboy's exercise but a deep

scholarly preoccupation. Most reformers, including Vermigli, rejected strident Zwinglian

memorialism, but their philosophical precommitments caused them to gravitate toward a

materialist view of physics that precluded any real participation between the divine and human

realms. *Jack Juggler's* physics is explicitly materialist. Although the apparent material

duplication confounds the page, theoretically it confirms the irreducible singularity of embodied

presence to the audience, which was the central question in eucharistic debates and dramatic

theory. Careaway's solitary suffering reiterates the point that, although there may be two bodies

that look similar, only one body is stricken, smitten, and afflicted, acquainted with sorrows,

despised and rejected of men. *Hoc est corpus meum*—mine alone, and the reason Careaway

knows this is because the pain is his to bear alone.

But this presupposition causes the satire to flounder, at least partially. The Edwardian or

Marian audience was as confessionally hybrid as the Elizabethan audience: its members held a

tremendous range of beliefs on sacramental metaphysics, which implies strong disagreement

over what constituted plain truth, absurdity, possibility, or grotesqueness.[104] Furthermore, the

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[102] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare?" 123n15.
[103] Torrance Kirby, "From Florence to Zurich via Strasbourg and Oxford," 135, 140.
[104] On the hybridity of the Elizabethan stage, see Musa Gurnis, *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling: Theater in Post-Reformation London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

dominant Sacramentarian voices on the Eucharist—Cranmer, Vermigli, Bucer, Bullinger, or even Calvin—verbally opposed a memorialism that conceived of the elements as "empty symbol[s]" or "vain or bare tokens" of Christ's body.[105] By 1571, Article 25 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion asserted,

> Sacramentes ordayned of Christe, be not onely badges or tokens of christian mens profession: but rather they be certayne sure witnesses and effectuall signes of grace and Gods good wyll towardes us, by the whiche he doth worke inuisibly in us, and doth not onely quicken, but also strengthen and confirme our fayth in hym.[106]

Jack Juggler's disenchanted materialism gestures toward a plain, factual cosmos where realities can be independently verified; its plot, however, shows that appearances can be manipulated. This tension is what sabotages the satire. To write a satire, Udall and his audience must share epistemological assumptions, but the fact that Udall felt the need to compose the satire demonstrates that this consensus did not exist.[107]

2018); Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion and the Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[105] See Egil Grislis, "Reflections on Richard Hooker's Understanding of the Eucharist," in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 208–09.

[106] Church of England, *Articles Whereupon It Was Agreed by the Archbishoppes and Bishoppes of Both Prouinces and the Whole Cleargie, in the Conuocation Holden at London in the Yere of Our Lorde God. 1562. According to the Computation of the Churche of Englande for the Auoiding of the Diuersities of Opinions, and for the Stablishyng of Consent Touching True Religion. Put Foorth by the Queenes Aucthoritie.* (London: Richarde Jugge and John Cawood, 1571), 15–16. For an overview of opposition to "bare" memorialism, see Egil Grislis, "Reflections on Richard Hooker's Understanding of the Eucharist," 208–12.

[107] Scholars have generally praised *Jack Juggler*'s nimble humor and its deft assault on transubstantiation, but only Tamara Atkin has criticized its execution. She argues that the polemic against 'juggling' priests and their magical confection of the eucharistic elements unwittingly invites uncomfortable scrutiny of the iconic drama of the Communion ceremony, which the reformers were eager to disavow; Jack's language also uncomfortably echoes the official Anglican words of institution. See Tamara Atkin, *The Drama of Reform*, 127–51; F. S. Boas, "Early English Comedy," in *The Cambridge History of English Literature: The Drama to 1642*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 107; Beatrice Groves, "'One Man at One Time May Be in Two Placys,'" 40–41; David M. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics:*

Finally, I wish to point out a final irony in *Jack Juggler*. In Paul's exposition of eucharistic theology, the ritual effectuates that which it signifies or symbolizes; rightly observed, the Communion meal causes Christian community to emerge, while eating in isolation fragments the *corpus Christi* by segregating the communicants between the haves and have-nots.[108] If *Jack Juggler* presents the thoroughly disenchanted vision of the Sacrament, as I have argued, it is no mere coincidence that in a play about supper, all the characters dine alone; some feast while others go hungry. The purportedly generous but actually stingy Bongrace desires to dine with his wife, but he does not refrain from eating until she arrives, and if one can trust her maledictions, her suppers are frequently delayed by his philandering. As she comes on stage, she fumes,

> I shall not suppe this night, full well I see,
> For as yet noo bodie cumithe for to fet mee.
> …
> Of al unkind and churlishe husbands this is the cast—
> To let ther wives set at home and fast
> While they bee forthe and make good cheare,
> Pastime and sporte as now he doth there. (*JJ* 638–39, 644–47)

Bongrace, the one whose name transliterates 'eucharist,' partakes alone, and only for sustenance. Jack, however, force-feeds unwilling diners with human flesh. In fact, eating "fist-met" is such a horrifying experience that Careaway is too upset to eat. He muses, "I nede no supper for this night / Nor wolde eate no meat though I myght," and he encourages his master likewise to rush to bed too because the oblivion of sleep offers the only safety (*JJ* 983–84). *Jack Juggler* presents two visions of eating: solitary fasting or solitary engorgement: there is no communal meal that incorporates rich and poor, slave and master, male and female into a corporate social body.

A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 124, 126; William Tydeman, ed., *Four Tudor Comedies*, 19; Tracey Sedinger, "'And Yet Woll I Stiell Saye That I AM I,'" 239–69.

[108] See especially 1 Cor. 11:20–22, 33–34 GNV.

I want to reiterate the medieval origins of the language and philosophy that influence this Reformation drama, along with its modern consequences. Vermigli's theology is unashamedly nominalist in its understanding of the properties of disparate bodies, of epistemological parsimony, of representational signification, and of the division between natural and spiritual realms. I would also speculate that the reformers' obsession with the geographical, chronological, and material properties of human bodies was an unexpected outcome of medieval incarnational theology. Dramatists in the mid-sixteenth century were as attuned to ancient controversies about the reliability of sight, about how suffering can corrode belief in first principles, and about the physical laws of dimension as their descendants were. Disenchanted, rationalistic moderns compliment themselves on their innovative philosophies, yet they find themselves preoccupied by the conundrums that centuries of ancestors have pondered. The most fruitful readings of *Jack Juggler* emphasize its debt to ancient drama and nominalist logic and theology.

CHAPTER THREE

CRISIS OF COMMUNION:

EUCHARISTIC REPRESENTATIONS IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY CYCLE

I – Sacraments, Secularization, and the Stage

When Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond, summarizes the carnage of Bosworth Field,

he depicts the War of the Roses as a crisis of communion; fittingly, the actions he proposes to

remedy the communal rupture are described in the language of participation in the Eucharist,

which will both effectuate and embody a new age of "smiling plenty" and "smooth-fac'd peace"

(*Richard III*, 5.5.33–34).[1] Each part of his agenda—proper burial of the slain, pardon to enemies

who have surrendered, a marriage to unite the Yorkist and Lancastrian claimants to the throne—

derives from a greater restoration that will ensue after he and his subjects "have ta'en the

sacrament" (*Richard III*, 5.5.18). In fact, allusions to the Eucharist and eucharistic imagery loom

large in Shakespeare's histories; the plays contain "two-thirds of Shakespeare's direct references

to the Mass, as well as eight of his nine references to the word 'sacrament.'"[2] Do we not have

here a clear example of a transfer of sacramental energies from religious ritual to the secular

stage? Most critics who address the matter agree that the cultural energies bound up in the late

medieval fights over the Eucharist had to go somewhere, and that somewhere was into early

modern literature. Regina Mara Schwartz, Sophie Read, and Ryan Netzley, for example, argue

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[1] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, Rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011). All Shakespeare quotations refer to the lineation in this edition unless otherwise noted and are cited parenthetically.
[2] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," in *Shakespeare and Religious Change*, ed. Kenneth J. E. Graham and Philip D. Collington, Early Modern Literature in History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 227.

that the metaphysical poets strive to approximate the sacramental efficacy of Catholic ritual, some animated by nostalgia trying to recover the vitality of the old sacramental system, others excited by the prospect of an "immanent divinity," still others parsing how changes in eucharistic theology enable different ways of signification.[3] But drama is the more logical place to analyze this transfer because drama, like a sacramental ritual, is *performed*, so it inevitably encounters the same ontological questions about the relationship between performance and meaning.

New Historicists usually advance a theory of evacuation-and-replacement, wherein the new commercial drama was "another form of compensation" for the "mystery, magic, spectacle, [and] theatricality" of banned forms of Catholic worship; the English public, nostalgic for some of that old-time religion, ate it up.[4] In this framework, "acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural" and erodes confidence in the efficacy of rituals, even though those rituals continue to be "loyally affirmed."[5] The secular stage rises inexorably as the

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[3] Ryan Netzley, *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 6. See also Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 3–17; Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England*, Ideas in Context 104 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3; Robert Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Frances Cruickshank, *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010); Gary Kuchar, *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England*, Medieval & Renaissance Literary Studies (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005); Kimberly Johnson, *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[4] Louis Montrose, "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," *Helios* 7 (1980): 60; Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 95. See also C. L. Barber, "The Family in Shakespeare's Development: Tragedy and Sacredness," in *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Powers of Development*, ed. C. L. Barber and Richard Wheeler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 29.

[5] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 109, 126. See also Anthony Dawson,

conditions of performance whittle away at a religious worldview's plausibility and reveal

sacraments to be mere theater (the constant refrain of Protestant polemicists and pamphleteers).

Shakespeare, writing after "the swerve" toward atomistic materialism, and deeply conscious of

the gap between signifier and signified, becomes the first "decisively secular dramatist" creating

art in the "decidedly secular domain" of the commercial theater—the first fruit of modern art.[6]

Critics would not endlessly proffer varieties of this argument if it possessed no merit, but

it does suffer from what C. S. Lewis referred to as "chronological snobbery": the proclivity to

apply pejorative periodic categories by which moderns disaffiliate themselves from their naïve,

dark-age ancestors.[7] Recent scholarship has demonstrated how arbitrary and distortive these

periodic epochs are, to little avail.[8] For one thing, as James Simpson and Brian Cummings have

shown, "the very habit of working within" periodic boundaries "tends…simultaneously to affirm

and to ignore the rupture [between the medieval and the early modern]."[9] This allows critics to

"embed ideological claims within apparently neutral periodic divisions" without actually ever

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"Performance and Participation," in *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate*, ed. Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 29; Anthony Dawson, "Shakespeare and Secular Performance," in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 83–100.

[6] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), 7; Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2016), 36; Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance: Eucharistic Controversy and English Drama Across the Reformation Divide*, Reformations: Medieval and Early Modern (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 14.

[7] C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), 206.

[8] See the 2007 *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* special issue entitled "Against Periodization."

[9] Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds., *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

having to "[examine] the rupture itself."[10] For another, by doubling down on a stark medieval/early modern divide, the evacuation-and-replacement explanation presumes "a supersessionist model of historical change," which obscures early modern dramatists' debts to their immediate forebears.[11]

The significant alternative to the evacuation thesis—the sacramental theater model, of which Jeffrey Knapp and Sarah Beckwith may be said to be representative—maintains that early modern dramatists saw no antithesis between their vocation and their faith and sought to use theater for explicitly religious purposes, primarily to develop a tolerant, Erasmian community.[12] The commercial stage does not, they argue, "represent the supercession and succession of religion, purgatory, and ritual action by a disenchanted theater."[13] They shun both a "functionalist understanding of [religious] ritual" and the tendency to interpret Shakespeare's avoidance of doctrinal positions as evidence of his secularism.[14] This thesis is preferable to the evacuation model, but at times it exaggerates the stability of early modern religious convictions, which shifted in response to censorial pressures and to natural reconsideration of complicated doctrines. This phenomenon has led Jean-Christophe Mayer and Musa Gurnis to describe the dramatists, their audiences, their dramas, and even single plays as confessionally hybrid; all of

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[10] Brian Cummings and James Simpson, *Cultural Reformations*, 3. See also Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide: From Either Side," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 453.

[11] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 9.

[12] See Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 15–57; Sarah Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 2 (2003): 275.

[13] Sarah Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," 275.

[14] Sarah Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," 273. See also Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 50–51.

them send "conflicting signals" about religious allegiances.[15] Furthermore, although Knapp

recognizes the profusion of references to the Eucharist in the histories, and although Timothy

Rosendale analyzes the "sacramental kingship in the Lancastrian tetralogy," neither offer a

satisfactory account of what those references might mean.[16]

I think there is more ground to cover. Although Jean-Christophe Mayer discusses

"ritual[s] of remembrance" and rejects the New Historicist notion that dramatizing a ritual

disenchants it, there is still no mention of the Eucharist's place as the central ritual of

remembrance in late medieval and early modern England.[17] By the 1560s, some Protestants

began to warn that sacramental reforms would lead to a fully disenchanted vision of the

Eucharist, and they cautioned that spiritual apprehension of Christ without the sacrament was

insufficient. Even Jeffrey Knapp, who is as bullish on the sacramental stage as anyone, frames

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[15] Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion, and the Stage*, Early Modern Literature in History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 12. Mayer argues that theater is neither a secularizing institution nor a proxy pulpit, but a space to conduct a "spiritual quest" (12). Musa Gurnis concurs; for her, the playhouse is too ideologically heterogenous for it to be a secularizing or proselytizing institution. See Musa Gurnis, *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling: Theater in Post-Reformation London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 4.

[16] See Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 227; Timothy Rosendale, "Sacral and Sacramental Kingship in the Lancastrian Tetralogy," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 121–40. Jay Zysk repeatedly stresses the inadequacy of both the New Historicist and the "sacramental theater" argument. He objects that "the dramaturgy is too delicate and its semiotics too multivalent for such neat arguments to hold," but he insists that early modern drama "reinvigorate[s] the spirit of Eucharistic controversy" and refracts "its key semiotic questions" when it includes key *topoi* such as Christ's wounds, the king's sacred body, liturgical books and language, relics, devotional objects, and sacramental presence. See Jay Zysk, *Shadow and Substance*, 9, 17. See also Jay Zysk, "The Last Temptation of Faustus: Contested Rites and Eucharistic Representation in *Doctor Faustus*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2013): 335–67; Jay Zysk, "In the Name of the Father: Revenge and Unsacramental Death in *Hamlet*," *Christianity & Literature* 66, no. 3 (2017): 422–43.

[17] Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith*, 43. See also Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith*, 10, 52–55.

the stage as a superior replacement for the inadequate sacramental community of the church. He speculates that Shakespeare may have believed that the sort of community the theater could foster was superior to sectarian religious communities, even as the playwright admits the inadequacy of a purely spiritual reception of the Eucharist to establish and nourish Christian fellowship.[18] To frame the function of the dramas thus excludes their commentary upon the effects of contemporary sacramental controversies.

II – Shakespeare and the Sacrament

When Shakespearean characters refer to the Eucharist, they do so while they attempt to effectuate an oath or buttress a truth claim to a skeptical listener. When a credulous soldier questions Parolles, "Shall I set down your answer so?" Parolles immediately fires back, "Do. I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will" (*All's Well That Ends Well*, 4.3.134–36). In *King John*, Lewis orders Melun to copy a document so that both contracted parties may have identical records of why "we took the sacrament / And keep our faiths firm and inviolable" (*King John*, 5.2.6–7). Both scenarios occur frequently in Shakespeare's histories. The captain of Bordeaux warns Talbot, "Ten thousand French have ta'en the sacrament / To rive their dangerous artillery / Upon no Christian soul but English Talbot" (*1 Henry VI*, 4.2.28–30). When Edmund, Duke of York, discovers Aumerle's complicity in a plot to assassinate Bolingbroke, he screams at his frantic wife:

> Thou fond mad woman,
> Wilt thou conceal this dark conspiracy?
> A dozen of them here have ta'en the sacrament,
> And interchangeably set down their hands
> To kill the king at Oxford. (*Richard II*, 5.2.95–99)

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[18] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 138–39.

Because oaths require ontological grounding, and because no better ground exists in Christian

nations than the Eucharist, characters repeatedly use it to authenticate or validate their promises.

Nowhere is this clearer than when Aumerle laments to the Abbot of Westminster and the Bishop

of Carlisle that there is no plot to exterminate Bolingbroke; the Abbot consoles him,

> My lord,
> Before I freely speak my mind herein,
> You shall not only take the sacrament
> To bury mine intents, but also to effect
> Whatever I shall happen to devise. (*Richard II*, 4.1.326–30)

When Clarence tries to save his life by convincing his assassins that the "great King of Kings"

wreaks vengeance on murderers, they throw his pretentious piety back in his face:

> And that same vengeance doth He hurl on thee,
> For false forswearing, and for murder too:
> Thou didst receive the sacrament to fight
> In quarrel of the House of Lancaster. (*Richard III*, 1.4.197–200)

None could mistake them for righteous servants of the law—one assassin's conscience condemns

him as a 'Pilate' while they stab Clarence and drown him in a "malmsey-butt"—but all the men

seem to accept the logic that violating a pact that has been ratified by eucharistic participation is

grave sacrilege (*Richard III*, 1.4.267–69).[19]

James Calderwood has convincingly shown that the "search for things to swear by"

permeates the opening scenes of *Richard II*, and John Kerrigan has expanded that thesis,

showing that that search has far broader resonance in the histories as characters struggle to

ground oaths in a world where ritual guarantees are unavailable to collateralize their oaths.[20]

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[19] Malmsey was the traditional wine used in Mass. See Arnold Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England," *Past & Present* 161 (1998): 39–83.

[20] James L. Calderwood, "*Richard II*: The Fall of Speech," in *Shakespearean Metadrama: The Argument of the Play in* Titus Andronicus*,* Love's Labour's Lost*,* Romeo and Juliet*,* A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and* Richard II (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 160. See also John Kerrigan, "Oaths, Threats and *Henry V*," *The Review of English Studies* 63,

Narratively speaking, the context is quite clear. These characters have inverted and weaponized the Eucharist to secure anti-eucharistic ends—they use the elements of Communion to put communion asunder. In one sense, the appeal to sacred ritual to corroborate an oath is anthropologically unremarkable; oaths often require holy objects upon which to swear—a sword, a scripture, a relic. But in another sense, it is odd that villains swear with a ritual whose putative functions (the re-presenting, re-enacting, reaffirming, or remembering of Christ's atoning sacrifice; the establishment and maintenance of social communion; and the momentary attainment of uncorrupted signification) run against the grain of their ambitions.[21] Despite the wide variety of late medieval eucharistic theology and practice, even the reformers who questioned the mechanics of transubstantiation and insisted upon the receptionist principle— wherein the power of the sacrament is located in the faith of the participant, not the elements themselves—admitted its "unitive theme" and "communitarian and corporate imagery."[22] The communitarian impulse implies an exclusionary function too; excommunication has been the chief mechanism whereby Christians formally sanction those whose beliefs or actions lie beyond the pale of orthodoxy since Paul's epistles in the first century.

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no. 261 (2012): 551–71. Bolingbroke, John of Lancaster, and Richard III are notorious oath-breakers: see *1 Henry IV*, 4.3.50–51; 5.1.41–64; 5.2.4–25, 36–40; *2 Henry IV*, 4.2; *Richard III*, 4.4.372–73. Walter Burkert argues that religious mechanisms undergird all oaths—the basis for any sort of social cooperation or contractual obligation. See Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 204.

[21] See Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, 8; Louis Bouyer, *Rite and Man: Natural Sacredness and Christian Liturgy*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S. J., Liturgical Studies 7 (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 64–65. Bouyer and Walter Burkert argue that oaths and rituals almost always possess an intrinsic logic; that is, the artifacts or actions through which a rite is performed possess a verisimilitude with the meaning of the rite. See Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 208–09.

[22] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 92; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 288.

III – Biblical Allusions

If there is one thing the Levitical laws make clear, it is that no one, Israelite or foreigner, should consume the blood of any creature, the penalty for which was excommunication and the wrath of Yahweh.

> Likewise whosoeuer he be of the house of Israél, or of the stra[n]gers that soiourne among them, that eateth anie blood, I wil euen set my face against that persone that eateth blood, & wil cut him of from among his people: For the life of the flesh is in the blood, & I haue giuen it vnto you to offer vpon the altar, to make an atonement for your soules: for this blood shal make an atonement for the soule.[23]

This prohibition set Israel apart from other ancient Near Eastern tribes that had no similar prohibition; Jacob Milgrom concludes, "Israel's blood prohibition cannot be passed off as an outlandish vestige of some primitive taboo but must be adjudged as the product of a rational, deliberate opposition to the prevailing practice of its environment."[24] Even though this prohibition was eventually relaxed to allow consumption of flesh so long as the blood had first been drained, the enjoinder against blood consumption remained a bedrock principle of Jewish law, applicable to the whole world.

> In the Priestly scale of values, this prohibition actually stands higher than the Ten Commandments. The Decalogue was given solely to Israel, but the blood prohibition was enjoined upon all mankind; it alone is the basis for a viable human society.[25]

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[23] Lev. 17:10–11 GNV. All biblical citations are hereafter cited parenthetically and refer to William Whittingham, A. Gilby, and T. Sampson, eds., *The Bible and Holy Scriptvres Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated According to the Ebrue and Greke, and Conferred with the Best Translations in Diuers Langages. With Moste Profitable Annotations Vpon All the Hard Places, and Other Things of Great Importance As May Appeare in the Epistle to the Reader* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560).

[24] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, 3 vols., The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 706.

[25] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 705.

The dietary laws demarcated Israel's distinct ethical and theopolitical identity; unlike other nations, it was forbidden to consume animals who sustained themselves by violence.[26] By draining the blood and giving it back to God on the altar, Israel forsook "profane slaughter."[27] To consume blood, then, was to fall under God's curse.[28]

The prophets likewise rank blood consumption adjacent to other heinous sins and designate it as a primary reason for Jewish exile. Ezekiel suggests that excommunication from the land is the only appropriate consequence for this infraction: "Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift vp your eyes towarde your idoles, and sheade blood: shulde ye then possesse the land?" (Ezek. 33:25 GNV)[29] In Isaiah, however, God comforts exiled Israelites with the promise that He will turn the tables on their taskmasters:

> I wil contend with him that contendeth with thee, & I wil saue thy children, And wil fede them that spoile thee, with their owne flesh, and they shalbe drunken with their owne blood, as with swete wine: & all flesh shal knowe that I y^e Lord am thy Sauior & thy redeemer, the mightie one of Iaakób. (Isa. 49:25b–26 GNV)

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[26] See Daniel Weiss, "Bloodshed and the Ethics and Theopolitics of the Jewish Dietary Laws," in *Feasting and Fasting: The History and Ethics of Jewish Food*, ed. Aaron S. Gross, Jody Myers, and Jordan D. Rosenblum (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 290. Weiss memorably sums up the situation: "In a variation of 'you are what you eat,' the biblical text presents the permitted birds and quadrupeds in the terms of 'eat only what you ought to be'" (290). See also Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 706.

[27] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 710.

[28] See 2 Samuel 23:13–17. There, David sees water to drink in a Philistine stronghold, and three of his men break in at night and get it for him, but he refuses to drink it because it was a reckless act that needlessly endangered life. David equates drinking that water with drinking the blood of the men who risked their lives to obtain it.

[29] Jacob Milgrom cites *Jubilees* 6:7–8, which emphasizes that excommunication and exile await profane blood eaters: "But flesh which is (filled) with life, (that is) with blood, you shall not eat—because the life of all flesh is in the blood—lest your blood be sought for your lives…. And the man who eats the blood of the beasts or cattle or birds throughout all the days of the earth shall be uprooted, he and his seed from the earth." See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, 3 vols., The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1503.

Yahweh frequently judges evildoers by turning their potable water into blood and forcing them to drink it, as in the plagues of Egypt.[30] The accursed blood-consumer image culminates in the dragon-riding whore of Babylon (a figure that appears incessantly in Reformation anti-Catholic polemical drama, pamphlets, and invective) who is "drunken with the blood of Saintes, & with the blood of the Martyrs of Iesus" (Rev. 17:5–6 GNV).[31] During the Marian persecution, English reformers tapped into this along with other blood-consumption images to accuse Bishop Stephen Gardiner, whom they dubbed the "Winchester Wolfe," of cannibalizing his opponents (which they linked to his Catholic eucharistic theology).[32] A contemporary satirical print, *The Roman Wolves* (see figure 1), shows Gardiner biting into the Lamb of God's neck; blood from that wound flows into chalices held by wolves (i.e., Bishops Edmund Bonner and Cuthbert Tunstall) who have covered their vestments with sheepskin, while lamb carcasses (Protestant martyrs Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Hooper, John Bradford, and John Rogers) lie at his feet. In response to Christ's question, "Why do you crucifie me agen?" the Winchester Wolfe confesses,

> Hole men that eate muche and drinke muche, haue muche bludde and muche feede. But we are hole men eatinge muche and drinkinge muche, ergo we haue muche bludde and muche feede. But suche as haue muche bludde and muche feede if they lacke wyves of there owne, and are destitute of the gyfte of chastitie,

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[30] See Exod. 7:14–24 and Rev. 16:5–6 GNV.

[31] For some examples of the literary crossover of this religious image, see Patrick Ryan, "Shakespeare's Joan and the Great Whore of Babylon," *Renaissance and Reformation* 28, no. 4 (2004): 55–82; Gretchen E. Minton, "Apocalyptic Tragicomedy for a Jacobean Audience: Dekker's *Whore of Babylon* and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 36, no. 1 (2013): 129–52; and Gretchen Minton, "'Suffer Me Not to Be Separated / And Let My Cry Come unto Thee': John Bale's Apocalypse and the Exilic Imagination," *Reformation* 15, no. 1 (2010): 83–97. The image deeply intrigued Cyprian, who fixates on the fact that she sits upon the water, to which he connects the mingled blood and water in the eucharistic chalice. See William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation*, vol. 12, 29 vols., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 281.

[32] John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 38.

> do and must often grevouslie synne in aduouterie [adultery] fornication, and pollutions in the nyght: But we are destitute of the gifte of chastite, and haue no wyves of our owne, ergo we synne muche and often. And whereas without sheadinge of bludde is no remission of synne, therfore syth we synne so grevously, none ought to marvaile that we dayly shedde so heynously.[33]

The New Testament exhibits continuity and divergence with this Old Testament precedent. Christ frequently identifies himself as the typological fulfillment of the divine food that sustained the Israelites (for example, bread from heaven, living water, the Pascal lamb); nevertheless, his insistence that his followers must feed upon his flesh and blood—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son[n]e of man, and drinke his blood, ye haue no life in you. Whosoeuer eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hathe eternal life, and I wil raise him vp at the last day. For my flesh is meat in dede, & my blood is drinke in dede" (John 6:53–55 GNV)—was particularly difficult for his followers to stomach. John's narrative records that many disciples abandoned him at this point (though the synoptic gospels do not include this detail), and those who remained only did so begrudgingly, conceding that there was nowhere else to go since Jesus alone possessed the "wordes of eternal life" (John 6:68 GNV). Here, in the gestational moments of eucharistic doctrine, the Eucharist already produces allegiance and abandonment—incorporation and excommunication.

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[33] *The Roman Wolves*. C. 1555. Engraving. By courtesy of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London, P.S. 206871. See also John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition,* 37–39.

Fig. 1. *The Roman Wolves*, c. 1555, published by permission of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London, P.S. 206871.

Paul similarly belabors that eucharistic participation both incorporates and excommunicates; the one who partakes unworthily "eateth and drinketh his owne damnation, because he discerneth not yᵉ Lords bodie." (1 Cor. 11:29 GNV). Uncharitable eucharistic participation fractures the body it ordinarily would constitute. Both the devout and the unworthy consume the same meal, but the former are "partakers of the Lords table" and are incorporated into His body, while the latter feast at "the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10:20–21 GNV). Paul does not divide humans into blood-consumers and abstainers; instead, he argues that all people incorporate themselves into a community by consuming blood. The only question is whether they shall dine at a divine or a demonic table, communing with the consecrated or the damned, ingesting life or imbibing death.

IV – Profane Blood Consumption in Shakespeare's Histories

Instances of sacrilegious blood ingestion that fractures social communion proliferate in Shakespeare's histories, and these images function as the connective tissue that unites the individual dramas into a corpus.[34] Paired with the explicit references to the Eucharist, they inextricably link England's civil strife to sacramental violations.

The earth itself is the thirstiest blood-drinker. When Lady Anne berates Richard III for killing her husband and her father-in-law (Henry VI), she begs,

> O God! which this blood mad'st, revenge his death;
> O earth! which this blood drink'st, revenge his death;
> Either heav'n with lightning strike the murderer dead,
> Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,
> As thou dost swallow up this good King's blood. (*Richard III*, 1.2.62–66)

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[34] See Charles R. Forker, "Spilling Royal Blood: Denial, Guilt and Expiation in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy," in *Shakespeare's Second Historical Tetralogy: Some Christian Features*, ed. E. Beatrice Batson, Locust Hill Literary Studies 35 (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 2004), 107–28.

Repeat customers might recall that in the previous installment Richard taunts her father

Warwick, "Thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk." Belligerently, Warwick counters,

"Then let the earth be drunken with our blood. / I'll kill my horse because I will not fly" (*3*

Henry VI, 2.3.15, 23). Richard's own mother laments that England was "[u]nlawfully made

drunk with innocent blood" during her son's ascendancy (*Richard III*, 4.4.30). Queen Elizabeth's

kinsman Rivers, speaking for Vaughan, Grey, and himself, melodramatically offers Pomfret

Castle "our guiltless bloods to drink," just as it had consumed Richard II's blood (*Richard III*,

3.3.14). *1 Henry IV* commences with the newly crowned Bolingbroke's wistful hope, "No more

the thirsty entrance of this soil / Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood" (*1 Henry IV*,

1.1.5–6).

These references echo the Cain and Abel story that is so central to the second tetralogy,

and multiple characters link Richard II's deposition to the Fall of Eden.[35] The image of earth

gulping human blood strikes a solemn and sober note, but that tone never lingers long before it is

cut with debasing farce. When the earth is not swallowing blood, that blood is being spilled out

and mingled with dirt, which stains the soil. Richard II halts the chivalric combat in order that

"our kingdom's earth should not be soil'd / With that dear blood which it hath fostered," but the

previous scene makes his duplicity clear because he "crack'd" open one of the "seven vials of

[his grandfather Edward III's] sacred blood" (*Richard II*, 1.3.125–26; 1.2.19, 13). His disregard

for "all the precious liquor" of that "vial" cripples his efforts to "purge this choler without letting

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[35] See Gen. 4:11 GNV; Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 1.1.103–06, 5.6.43; and Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.1.157–58. On the second Fall of England, see Shakespeare, *1 Henry VI*, 1.3.38–40; and Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 2.1.40–42 and 3.4.73–76. See also Thomas F. Berninghausen, "Banishing Cain: The Gardening Myth in *Richard II* and the Genesis Myth of the Origin of History," *Essays in Literature* 14, no. 1 (1987): 3–14.

blood" (*Richard II*, 1.2.19; 1.1.153).[36] The "uncivil kerns of Ireland" defile English blood by

mixing it with clay; the loose cannon Hotspur is equally cavalier with his blood, happy to waste

it "drop by drop in the dust" (*2 Henry VI*, 3.1.309–10; *1 Henry IV*, 1.3.131–32). No one puts the

point quite as bluntly as the Bishop of Carlisle, however, who warns the usurpers that if they

proceed with the deposition, "The blood of English shall manure the ground, / And future ages

groan for this foul act" (*Richard II*, 4.1.137–38). In a war-torn England, the blood of its children

becomes dung.

In the histories, a blood-drunk earth is a desecration, and a blood-stained earth is a farce,

but the human consumption of blood is a grotesque horror that character after character relishes.

Richard, Duke of York, pledges that his kinsmen will eternally wear the "pale and angry rose, /

As cognizance of my blood-drinking hate" and invites his friends to dine with him while

ominously muttering, "I dare say / This quarrel will drink blood another day" (*1 Henry VI*,

2.4.107–08, 132–33).[37] His son Richard III, who inherits both his malice and his vocabulary,

fantasizes about reviving his enemy Clifford—who slew Rutland and died before Richard III

could enact revenge—only to suffocate him with blood:

> If this right hand would buy but two hours' life,
> That I in all despite might rail at him,
> This hand should chop it off, and with the issuing blood
> Stifle the villain whose unstaunched thirst
> York and young Rutland could not satisfy. (*3 Henry VI*, 2.6.80–84)

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[36] See Heb. 9:22 GNV.

[37] See also Rupert Goold, Richard Eyre, Thea Sharrock, Dominic Cooke. *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses* (Universal Studios, 2016). The BBC's recent adaptation amplifies this moment. In the text, Queen Margaret places a paper crown on his head and wipes tears from his eyes with a handkerchief she had dipped in Rutland's blood, but the cinematic version exchanges a crown of thorns for the paper crown, and Margaret shoves the bloody handkerchief into Richard's mouth to gag him, which compels him to consume his child's blood.

Shakespeare's plebians are blood-drinkers too, but they are imagined as parasites on aristocratic wealth. Pistol labels Bardolph, Nym, and himself as "horse-leeches," whose function is "[t]o suck, to suck, the very blood to suck!" (*Henry V*, 2.3.53–54). What they really want to siphon off, however, is gold, not blood; when a French prisoner attempts to ransom himself with two hundred crowns, Pistol magnanimously remarks, "As I suck blood, I will some mercy show" (*Henry V*, 4.4.62). Warwick insults Suffolk as a "[p]ernicious blood-sucker of sleeping men" before sending him to his execution; Suffolk comforts himself, "Drones suck not eagles' blood, but rob beehives" (*2 Henry VI*, 3.2.226; 4.1.109). Grey likewise characterizes his executioners as a "knot…of damned bloodsuckers," even though he has been parasitically benefitting from Queen Elizabeth's proximity to her husband, Edward IV (*Richard III*, 3.3.6).

The commoners' parasitism isn't necessarily debasing; on the contrary, the early modern expectation was that subjects were supposed to suck nourishment from their king in the same manner that they fed upon Christ in the Eucharist—a sort of holy parasitism if you will. Monarchs were supposed to offer this sustenance willingly, but Richard II denies his subjects this nourishment to satisfy his own appetites.[38] John of Gaunt first compares him to an "insatiate cormorant," which, "[c]onsuming means, soon preys upon itself" (*Richard II*, 2.1.38–39).[39] Minutes later, he switches the animal metaphor and calls Richard a pelican:

> O, spare me not, my brother Edward's son,
> For that I was his father Edward's son;
> That blood already, like the pelican
> Hast thou tapp'd out and drunkenly carous'd. (*Richard II*, 2.1.124–28)

Since at least the third century, the pelican has been associated with Christ's sacrificial death, and medieval commentators and artisans across Europe increasingly associated the bird with the

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[38] See Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 2.2.83–90 for an instance of this expectation in a Roman play.

[39] The cormorant was renowned for its voracious appetite.

Eucharist in texts and carvings on eucharistic pyxes and other church equipment.[40] *Physiologus*,

which was "one of the most popular and widely read books of the Middle Ages," records and

interprets the myth thus:

> David says in Psalm 101, "I am like the pelican in loneliness" [Psalm 102:7].
> Physiologus says of the pelican that it is an exceeding lover of its young. If the
> pelican brings forth young and the little ones grow, they take to striking their
> parents in the face. The parents, however, hitting back kill their young ones and
> then, moved by compassion, they weep over them for three days, lamenting over
> those whom they killed. On the third day, their mother strikes her side and spills
> her own blood over their dead bodies (that is, of the chicks) and the blood itself
> awakens them from death.[41]

Shakespeare certainly knew this legend because he uses it twice elsewhere; Laertes signals he

will "repast" Polonius's friends with his blood "like the kind life-rend'ring pelican," and King

Lear castigates his oldest two children as "pelican daughters" (*Hamlet*, 4.5.146–47; *King Lear*,

3.4.74). Where Shakespeare learned the legend is unclear, but there was no shortage of pelican

iconography in sixteenth-century England. Thomas Cranmer, shortly after he became

archbishop, replaced the cranes in his family crest with pelicans—a more appropriate symbol for

his new vocation (see figure 2).[42] The new arms appear in the left seal on the title page of the

Great Bible. The Corpus Christi Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge both feature a pelican in her

piety on their arms. In fact, when Archbishop Matthew Parker noticed that the old arms of the

College of Corpus Christi [Cambridge] "gave offence to some persons in his time" because of its

association with the rebel Lancastrian John of Gaunt, he procured revised arms that included

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[40] Michael J. Curley, ed., *Physiologus*, trans. Michael J. Curley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), ix.

[41] Michael J. Curley, ed., *Physiologus*, ix, 9–10.

[42] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 9.

pelican iconography at his own expense.[43] The clearest connection between the pelican and the

Eucharist appears in George Wither's book of emblems, which shows the pelican reviving and

feeding her chicks with her breast-blood, while in the background a throng of individuals raise

chalices to gather blood streaming from the crucified Christ's breast; at the top of that cross sits

another pelican feeding her young (see figure 3).[44] I suggest that we see in this iconography

another example of the transfer of the logic and language of eucharistic doctrine from theology

into legal discourse.[45] An anonymous parliamentarian, on behalf of a group of his colleagues,

wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth I imploring her "to be (after a sorte) a Christ unto us" and to

sacrifice her body for the good of the commonwealth—primarily by accepting the pain and

danger of childbirth.[46]

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[43] H. P. Stokes, *Corpus Christi*, University of Cambridge College Histories (London: F. E. Robinson, 1898), 228–29.

[44] George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne Quickened VVith Metricall Illvstrations, Both Morall and Divine: And Disposed into Lotteries, That Instruction, and Good Counsell, May Bee Furthered by an Honest and Pleasant Recreation* (London: Henry Taunton, 1635), 154.

[45] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 15–16.

[46] Meryl Bailey, "'*Salvatrix Mundi*': Representing Queen Elizabeth I as a Christ Type," *Studies in Iconography* 29 (2008): 176.

Fig. 2. Stained glass panel showing Thomas Cranmer's arms, c. 1540, published by permission of The Victoria and Albert Museum.

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Our Pelican, by bleeding, thus,
Fulfill'd the Law, and cured Vs.

PROLEGE · ET · PRO · GREGE ·

ILLVSTR. XX.   Book. 3

Looke here, and marke (her sickly birds to feed)
How freely this kinde *Pelican* doth bleed.
   See, how (when other *Salves* could not be found)
To cure their sorrowes, she, her selfe doth wound;
And, when this holy *Emblem*, thou shalt see,
Lift up thy soule to him, who dy'd for thee.
   For, this our *Hieroglyphick* would expresse
That *Pelican*, which in the *Wildernesse*
Of this vast *World*, was left (as all alone)
Our miserable *Nature* to bemone;
And, in whose eyes, the teares of pitty stood,
When he beheld his owne unthankfull *Brood*
His *Favours*, and his *Mercies*, then, contemne,
When with his wings he would have brooded them:
And, sought their endlesse peace to have confirm'd,
Though, to procure his ruine, they were arm'd.
   To be their *Food*, himselfe he freely gave;
His *Heart* was pierc'd, that he their *Soules* might save.
Because, they disobey'd the *Sacred-will*,
He, did the *Law of Righteousnesse* fulfill;
And, to that end (though guiltlesse he had bin)
Was offred, for our *Vniversall-sinne*.
   Let mee Oh *God*! for ever, fixe mine eyes
Vpon the Merit of that *Sacrifize*:
Let me retaine a due commemoration
Of those deare *Mercies*, and that bloudy *Passion*,
Which here is meant; and, by true *Faith*, still, feed
Vpon the drops, this *Pelican* did bleed;
   Yea, let me firme unto thy *Law* abide,
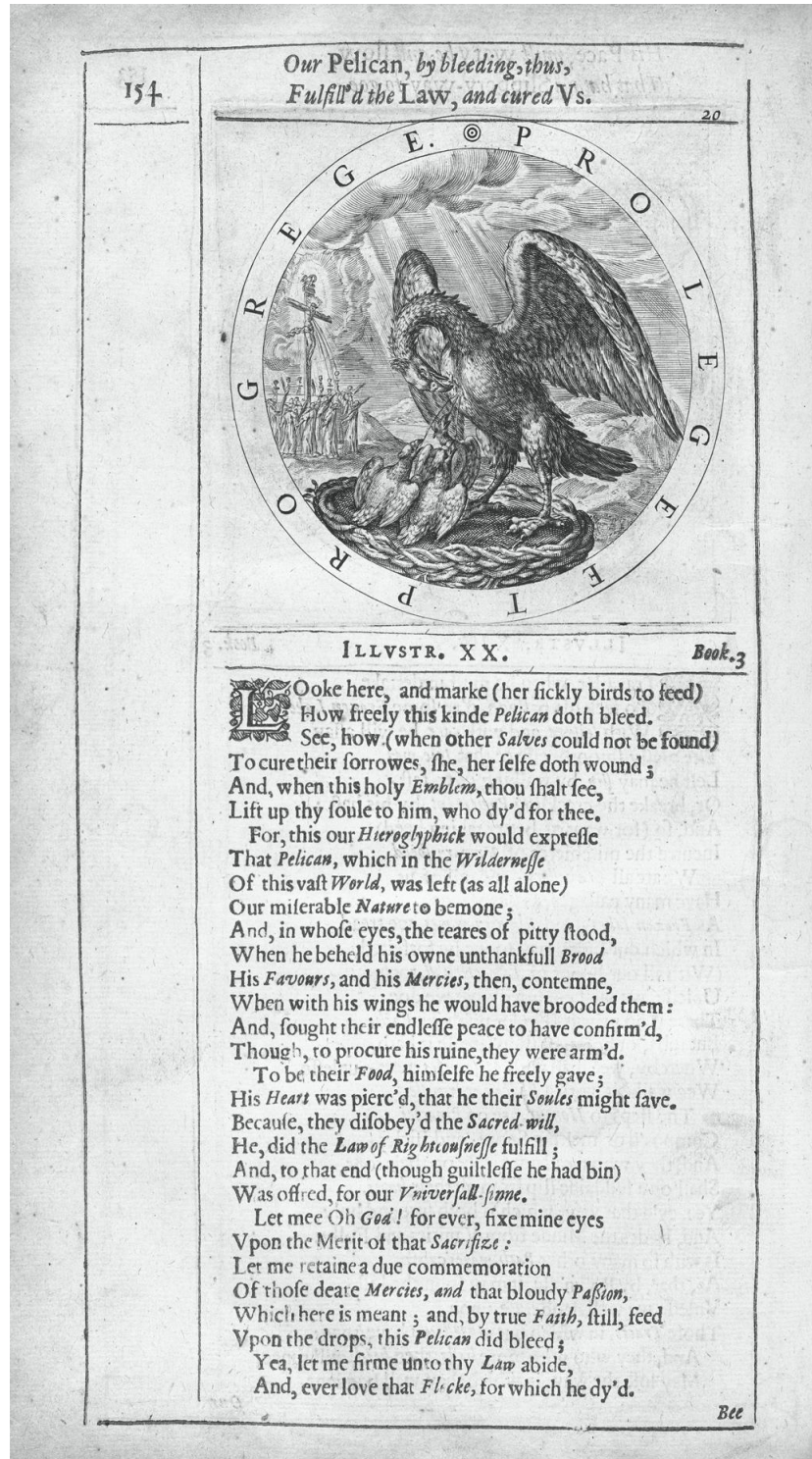And, ever love that *Flocke*, for which he dy'd.

Bee

Fig. 3. Pelican emblem from George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes*, 1635, published by permission of The Huntington Library.

Artists such as Nicholas Hilliard depicted Elizabeth with a pelican brooch on her breastbone in his famous "Pelican Portrait" (see figure 4). If the monarch-as-pelican association was obvious to early modern viewers of *Richard II*, it adds another reason for her self-identification with Richard II.[47] The association implies that in her barrenness, she, like her equally childless ancestor Richard II, was a pelican hoarding her lifeblood from the people. Gaunt's accusation that Richard II is a gluttonous parent pelican cannibalizing itself designates him as a desecrator of the Eucharist who eats and drinks damnation on himself.

If Shakespeare casts Richard II as a drunken, gluttonous, narcissistic pelican, he depicts Richard III as a ravenous boar, a pig on the altar—an abomination that causes desolation.[48] The slop on which the swinish Richard feeds is blood. Before the Battle at Bosworth field, Richmond riles his men,

> The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
> That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
> Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
> In your embowell'd bosoms. (*Richard III*, 5.2.7–10)

Hitherto, the play spares no energy to highlight Richard's devilishness, but that characterization reaches a crescendo when Richmond designates him as a sacrilegious, blood-drinking pig—a scapegoat onto which all English sins and grievances may be cast.[49] He is such a bloodthirsty tyrant that none of his own troops wish to fight for him:

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[47] On Elizabeth's consternation at this association, see William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Charles R. Forker, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 9–16.

[48] Mk. 13:14 GNV; Dan. 9:24–27 GNV. When the swinish Richard III ascends to the balcony, couches himself between bishops, and feigns piety with a prayerbook, Shakespeare depicts him as an antichrist figure defiling a holy place. See *Richard III*, 3.7.95–102.

[49] On the extent to which Henry VII and Thomas More frame Richard III as a scapegoat, see Daniel Kinney, "The Tyrant Being Slain: Afterlives of More's *History* in *King Richard III*," in *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language, and Politics*, ed. Neil Rhodes, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 164 (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies,

Fig. 4. Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1573–75, published by

permission of the Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool.

1997), 35–56. René Girard's classic formulation suggests that scapegoats provide "exactly what [a society] needs to represent and exorcise the effects of the sacrificial crisis," which begins when one party commits a "fundamental" crime that attacks "the very foundation of cultural order, the family and the hierarchical differences without which there would be no social order." Girard himself identifies profanation of the Eucharist as an example of a fundamental crime, on par with incest and the murder of innocent children. Richard III famously murdered his nephews and was rumored to have desired an incestuous marriage with his niece Elizabeth; he is associated with all three categories of "fundamental" crimes that Girard identifies. Girard emphasizes the scapegoat's innocence, but Levitical law instructs the high priest to confess the nation's sins with his hands upon the scapegoat's head. The logic of the ritual is that all the nation's trespasses are subsumed into the scapegoat's body; the scapegoat's excommunication procures atonement. Richard III, as a profaner of the Eucharist and an incestuous murderer, represents the fullest expression of all English crimes in the histories, and with his excommunication, England has made atonement for itself. See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 15.

> Richard except, those whom we fight against
> Had rather have us win than him they follow.
> For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,
> A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
> One raised in blood, and one in blood established. (*Richard III*, 5.3.257–261)

In Richmond's telling, Richard III's entire life has been bathed in blood, not a drop of which has been sacred. Blood establishes his kingship, but it estranges him from communion with his people. He emerged misshapen into the world through a bloody Caesarean birth; he slaughtered rivals on the path to the throne, and bloodshed alone will sustain his power.

V – The Tudor Restoration of a Sacramental Ontology

The only eucharistic reference in the history cycle that does not imply sacrilege occurs in Richmond's final speech, wherein he announces a legislative agenda targeted to remedy three symptoms of the sacramental collapse: crises of atonement, fragmented social communion, and corrupted signification. Moreover, he signals his intention to heal the ontological disorder that produced the symptoms in the first place:

> Inter their bodies as become their births.
> Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled
> That in submission will return to us;
> And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
> We will unite the white rose and the red.
> Smile, heaven, upon this fair conjunction,
> That long have frown'd upon their enmity.
> What traitor hears me and says not Amen?
> England hath long been mad, and scarr'd herself:
> The brother blindly shed the brother's blood;
> The father rashly slaughter'd his own son;
> The son, compell'd, been butcher to the sire.
> All this divided York and Lancaster
> Divided, in their dire division.
> O now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
> The true succeeders of each royal House,
> By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
> And let their heirs, God, if Thy will be so,

> Enrich the time to come with smooth-fac'd peace,
> With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days.
> Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
> That would reduce these bloody days again,
> And make poor England weep in streams of blood.
> Let them not live to taste this land's increase,
> That would with treason wound this fair land's peace.
> Now civil wounds are stopp'd; peace lives again.
> That she may long live here, God say Amen. (*Richard III*, 5.5.15–41)

In the histories, dominant lords repeatedly offer pardon to rebellious subordinates, but they grant them only to those who are not politically dangerous (e.g., Aumerle after he confesses his assassination plot or the Bishop of Carlisle, whose commitment to divine-right kingship that precludes him from avenging the old king upon the usurper), or they first offer pardon but swiftly retract it (*Richard II*, 5.3; 5.5.19–29). Whatever the historical data says about Henry VII and the rest of the Tudors, we have little intratextual evidence to suspect that his proclamation of pardon "to the soldiers fled / That in submission will return to us" is disingenuous (*Richard II*, 5.5.16–17). Richard II could not "atone" Bolingbroke and Mowbray—in fact, he forbids them to contact one another or "reconcile" out of fear they will join forces against him (*Richard II*, 1.1.202; 1.3.186). Richmond, however, extends permanent amnesty, solemnized through eucharistic participation, to penitent rebels. They need not fear, like Mowbray, its propitiatory adequacy or its ability to reincorporate them into good communion (*Richard II*, 1.1.202; 1.3.181). In addition to pardoning rebels, Richmond rebuilds communion two other ways. He also commands that all the slain be interred in class-appropriate graves, which finally puts to rest the unbecoming burials, exhumations, and corpse desecrations the Lancastrians perpetrated.[50] Proper Christian burial signaled definitive inclusion within Christian community; denial of that

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[50] Paul Strohm, "The Trouble with Richard: The Reburial of Richard II and Lancastrian Symbolic Strategy," *Speculum* 71, no. 1 (1996): 87–89. See also *Henry V*, 4.1.285–301.

burial decisively excommunicated the damned, as Ophelia's burial scene poignantly depicts (see *Hamlet*, 5.1).

Richmond's sacramental marriage to Elizabeth enacts the "fair conjunction" of the houses of York and Lancaster, whose communion had been thwarted by the structural impasse of competing claims to the crown (*Richard III*, 5.5.20). The tautology that York and Lancaster had been "[d]ivided, in their dire division" is no grammatical blunder on Richmond's part (*Richard III*, 5.5.28). In a sacramental economy, fractured communion, epitomized in the atrocious crimes of fratricide, parricide, self-mutilation, and incest, is an intrinsic evil—the antithesis of the eucharistic ideal of real participation. The Bishop of Carlisle had prophesied that Richard II's deposition would prove to be the "woefullest division… / That ever fell on this cursed earth" and that the "[d]isorder, horror, fear, and mutiny" that would result would turn England into a second "Golgotha" (*Richard II*, 4.1.142, 146–47, 144). The "heinous, black, obscene" act of regicide is a crime that will "kin with kin, and kind with kind, confound" (*Richard II*, 4.1.131, 141). The crimes Richmond mentions echo examples of parricide from an earlier play that crystalize just how horrendous England's communal crisis had become.[51] Put differently, Richmond's speech suggests that there can be no cross-class, cross-family community without Communion. It is no surprise that the crimes Richmond lists as representative of England's communal fracture are obviously abhorrent, as unconscionable as self-mutilation:

> England hath long been mad, and scarr'd herself:
> The brother blindly shed the brother's blood;
> The father rashly slaughter'd his own son;
> The son, compell'd, been butcher to the sire. (*Richard III*, 5.5.23–26)

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[51] See Shakespeare, *Richard III*, 5.5.23–28. See Shakespeare, *3 Henry VI*, 2.5.56–83 where anonymous fathers and sons accidentally slay one another.

Richmond defines violence against the body politic as utterly irrational, and no holy or heroic martyrdom awaits the Englishman who participates in it.

Prince Hal's futile efforts to incorporate community through alcohol must be judged against the backdrop of Richmond's victory speech; compared to it, Hal's verbal dexterity feels like only so much hot air; his famous victories, hollow and impermanent; the national and cross-class fellowship he manufactures, artificial. In his Crispin's Day address, he implores his nobles to imagine an annual feast where they will sup together at a table, roll up their sleeves, display their battle scars, and have their names "in their flowing cups freshly remembered." (*Henry V*, 4.3.55). All those too cowardly or young will mourn their exclusion from this fraternity. Harry bemoans the erosion of forgetfulness, which frays a community by slowly unraveling its constitutive narrative; three times he insists that, through the ritual, communal consumption of wine and the retelling of the story (word and sacrament), the participants will be "remembered"—reconstituted back into a "band of brothers" (*Henry V*, 4.3.50, 55, 59–60). Each "vile" communicant will "gentle his condition" and become a brother to the king (*Henry V*, 4.3.62–63).[52] The language of remembrance is loaded here because all the theological fights over the Eucharist boil down to whether Christ's command "Do this in remembrance of me" entails only mental recall of his historical sacrifice or the actual incorporation (re-membering) of Christians into a body. As Jaroslav Pelikan indicates,

> The theme of remembrance was especially prominent in Zwingli's and in Bullinger's interpretations of the Lord's Supper: it was "a remembrance of the sacrifice" of Christ—not of his body, but of his death. Christ had instituted the

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[52] The anxiety of "vile participation," as Joel Altman has shown, pervades the Henriad. See Joel B. Altman, "'Vile Participation': The Amplification of Violence in the Theater of *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1991): 4–7.

Supper so that the mystery of his incarnation and crucifixion might not be forgotten in the church.[53]

There is ample reason to suspect Hal's ability to engender full communion and to incorporate all the British into full communion, especially if they are lowborn. Before Bolingbroke revolted against Richard, he greased elbows with common folk: he seemed "to dive into their hearts / With humble and familiar courtesy," and they swooned when he called them "my countrymen, my loving friends" (*Richard II*, 1.4.25–26, 34). After he consolidates power, however, he scolds Hal for "vile participation" with those who "daily swallow'd" him with their eyes (*1 Henry IV*, 3.2.87, 70). Despite Henry IV's fears, Hal's proximity to the "base contagious clouds" never threatens to produce real fellowship with them (*1 Henry IV*, 1.2.193). His loyalty is nominal, and his sunbeams can (and will) burn them away instantaneously. Hal's momentary communion with the tavern crowd parodies eucharistic participation: they assemble around tables and partake in a shared tankard offered by Falstaff, the "high priest of sack," but chalices contain malmsey, or even muscadine, and the tavern swill can never secure the renewal provided by that holy draught.[54]

His magnificent words come after his desperate attempts to exonerate himself through penitential prayer and by currying favor with Bates and Williams. His fraternal language papers over real ethnic and class hostilities, but after the miraculous victory, that congeniality

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[53] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vol., *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4:204–5.

[54] Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 261. Churchwardens' accounts bear some evidence that "the better sort of parishioners" were sometimes served muscadine rather than the traditional malmsey. See Arnold Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England," 39–83.

evaporates and old antagonisms persist even as they are baptized in humor.[55] The truth is that while nobles claim the spoils in France, the commoners will hobble back to their feudal plots on stumps instead of feet. Henry V, speaking in disguise to Bates and Williams, emphasizes the king's commonality with his men "in his nakedness [he] appears but a man" and would not wish to be anywhere else but with his men (*Henry V*, 4.1.104–5). Bates and Williams scoff; they wish to be anywhere else besides the battlefield, and Williams grumbles that a "reckoning" awaits the king who leads his men into battle needlessly:

> But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make when all those legs and arms and heads chopped off in a battle shall join together at the latter day and cry all 'We died at such a place', some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afeard there are few die well that die in a battle, for how can they charitably dispose of anything when blood is their argument? (*Henry V*, 4.1.132–141)

From the foot soldiers' perspective, war cannot constitute a body, create a royal fraternity of communicants, or justify bloodshed; instead, it dismembers and fragments bodies—it exacerbates the division between the rich and those too poor to buy their way out of service.[56]

Hal's earlier forays with commoners equally fail to produce any lasting communion with them. Even though he keeps company with reprobates, drunkards, thieves, and whores, Hal seems to accept his father's logic that to do so dilutes and sullies a king's presence.[57] From his first soliloquy, the audience knows that his participation with the Eastcheap rabble is only a foil to set off his "reformation"; he is sinning so that grace may abound! Falstaff jokingly pleads that if Hal excommunicates him from his "company," he will "banish all the world," but this only

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[55] See William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.1.86–281, 286–302; 5.1.1–87. Timothy Rosendale's cheery assessment of Henry's power to create an inclusive nation does not account for the stinging rebuke Bates and Williams give the king. See Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England*, 171–75.

[56] See William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.2.220–51.

[57] See William Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.2.87.

serves to foreshadow the moment when King Henry V decisively exiles him from his presence, condemning him to a broken heart and an isolated death (*1 Henry IV*, 2.4.472–74).[58]

Prince Harry's actions after victory at Agincourt eerily parody Richmond's after the Battle of Bosworth Field: he 1) inquires about those who have survived the battle, 2) commands the slain to be buried "with charity," 3) pardons the penitent soldiers, 4) woos a princess to unify a nation, 5) commands that the proper "holy rites" be observed, and 6) invokes divine blessing (*Henry V*, 4.8.121, 123).[59] Because the audience possesses an intimate knowledge of his thoughts, however, and because he has repeatedly shown himself to be opportunistic and self-absorbed, this piety seems shallow, and the Henry plays expose how evanescent his regenerative influence is. After his victory at Bosworth Field, Richmond's first concern is Young Stanley's health; Henry only asks about "prisoners of good sort" (*Henry V*, 4.8.74). Richmond commands burials for the slain "as become their births" (*Richard III*, 5.5.15), but Agincourt's dead are simply "enclosed in clay" (*Henry V*, 4.8.123), which amounted, as Holinshed records, to a mass grave.[60] Where Richmond pardons, the historical Henry famously ordered the execution of captives, an order his men refused to obey, whether because they deemed it unchivalrous or merely impractical.[61] Richmond declares that the Eucharist specifically, the quintessential sacrament, must solemnize these reconciliatory acts; Henry commands that his men should perform "holy rites" but settles for a quick muttering of the *Non nobis* and the *Te Deum* before his army marches off to claim the spoils (*Henry V*, 4.8.121–22).

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[58] For Falstaff's final banishment, see William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 5.5.46–69.

[59] See William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.8.81–127.

[60] See T. W. Craik's footnote on Holinshed's account of this moment in William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[61] See John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (New York: Penguin, 1978), 110–12; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.6.33–37; 4.7.5–10.

These stark juxtapositions suggest that the quasi-eucharistic remembrance Henry proposes fails to secure the lasting atonement, social wholeness, and pure signification that Richmond's true eucharistic participation produces. Even if Richmond's show of piety seems manipulative, even if the annals of English history reveal the Tudors to be as corrupt and brutal as their predecessors, the speech directs the audience's attention back to the most pervasive theme in the histories: that England's flourishing is inextricably connected to the proper practice of the Eucharist, or inversely, that eucharistic sacrilege represents, typifies, and perpetuates communal fracture. Furthermore, it means that Shakespeare's history cycle broadly tracks with the trends in eucharistic doctrine during the English Reformation, wherein literalist Catholic faith in the Real Presence gave way to reformed theology inflected with Zwinglian memorialism (especially by Bullinger and early Cranmer) before the nation reverted toward an Elizabethan reassertion of real, mysterious participation with God through the body and blood of Christ—a view Richard Hooker would solidify into the dominant Anglican perspective in the mid-1590s.[62]

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[62] See Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, 101; Brian E. Douglas, *A Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology: The Reformation to the 19th Century*, 2 vols. (Boston: Brill, 2012), 1:67–69, 91–96, 246–52. Though Cranmer's eucharistic theology morphed, it skewed memorialist, especially between the years of 1549–1552, when the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* encoded the Reformed doctrine that relocated Christ's sacrifice as history, as something to be remembered. Rosendale writes of the 1559 prayer book: "By reintroducing the direct reference to body and blood as agents of sacramental grace, this certainly seems to undo the insistent memorialism of 1552; it can be read as a step back from Zwinglianism and a step toward the more conservative and sacramentally higher Calvinism that would come to dominate the Elizabethan Church." (101). Brian Douglas argues that though Anglican theologies in the period display a "multiformity of philosophical assumptions underlying eucharistic theology," during Edward's reign nominalist assumptions prevailed, while under Elizabeth, realist assumptions began to dominate (85). He insists that the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* and the Thirty-Nine Articles as finally presented in 1571 both present a "moderate realist view of Christ's presence in the Eucharist" that retreated from the nominalist articulations that held sway in the late 1540s and early 1550s (246). On Hooker's strident repudiation of Zwinglian eucharistic theology, see W. David Neelands, "Christology and the Sacraments," in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Torrance Kirby, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 8 (Boston: Brill, 2008), 369–401.

Brian Douglas argues that Cranmer's deepest philosophical assumptions were "really nominalist" and that both the 1549 and 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* encodes these suppositions in the eucharistic rite; the 1552 "Black Rubric" of the Eucharist is specifically predicated on the "nominalist separation of sign and signified."[63] Queen Elizabeth, however, seems to have been "firmly convinced of Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist in the sense of moderate realism" despite her hesitancy about adoration of the Eucharist, and the modifications from the 1552 *BCP* to the 1559 *BCP* seem "deliberately intended to include a more Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist which some argue was Elizabeth's wish."[64] In Shakesepare's histories, Richard's II's absolutism collapsed under the weight of his sacrilege and his naïve belief that his body could be in more than one place at once; the Lancastrians disdained real participation with their subjects, and instead preferred a pragmatic and perfunctory symbolism, the center of which could not hold.[65] So things fell apart: social fragmentation, bloody factionalism, bodily mutilations, and dynastic fluctuation ensued until Richmond's victory united the English nation under a less ambiguous claimant—one who immediately set about to reinstate real participation in the body and blood.

Contrary to some opinions, Shakespeare's histories do not celebrate the possibilities a "Reformed flesh-made-word" semantic framework affords; instead, like the Hookerian theology of its day, they increasingly demonstrate the limitations of that "radically reconstructed symbolic

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[63] Brian E. Douglas, *A Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology*, 1:92, 94.

[64] Brian E. Douglas, *A Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology*, 1:248.

[65] On Richard's synecdochism and the Lancastrians' pragmatic symbolism, see Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England*, 157–60. On the reformers' insistence that Christ's physical body could not be present in the Eucharist because it was in heaven, see Beatrice Groves, "'One Man at One Time May Be in Two Placys': *Jack Juggler*, Proverbial Wisdom, and Eucharistic Satire," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 27 (2014): 40–56.

order."[66] Zwingli denied any instrumentality in the sacrament and treated it only as a

commemoration of a past salvific pardon, but Calvin rejects this memorialism for treating the

Lord's Supper as "an empty symbol," even though he clarified that the believer apprehends

Christ's presence in the elements spiritually (a doctrine that some have called "virtualism").[67]

Likewise, John Jewel, though he despised the notion of a "carnal presence" of Christ in the

Eucharist, objects to those who seek to shrink the Eucharist into "bare signs and figures."[68]

Cranmer ostensibly rejects memorialist theology as well, but the stark division between spiritual

and physical eating he introduces into the liturgy allows him to imagine that Christ's spiritual

presence flows as freely in other rites (or even in prayer) as it does in the Eucharist.[69] No

Elizabethan theologian disavows memorialism as stridently as Richard Hooker, however, who

scorns the idea that the elements are mere symbols. For Hooker, participation in the divine life of

Christ is the consummate goal of human existence, and the sacraments of baptism and the

Eucharist are the "causes instrumental" of that participation.[70] Baptism initiates the believer into

participatory life, which eucharistic eating sustains. Recent critics have concluded that

participation is the "key to Hooker's sacramental theology."[71] Paul Dominiak writes,

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[66] Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, 18–19.

[67] Egil Grislis, "Reflections on Richard Hooker's Understanding of the Eucharist," in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 207n2, 208. See also John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics 21 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 2:1370–71.

[68] Quoted in Egil Grislis, "Reflections on Richard Hooker's Understanding of the Eucharist," 211–12. See John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury*, ed. John Ayre, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Printed at the University Press, 1845), 1:448.

[69] See W. David Neelands, "Christology and the Sacraments," 383.

[70] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 2 vols., Everyman Library 201–02 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1907), 2:322; hereafter, cited by book, chapter, and section number.

[71] Ronald Vince, "Richard Hooker on the Eucharist: A Commentary on the *Laws* V.67," *Anglican Theological Review* 89, no. 3 (2007): 428.

"[P]articipation acts as an architectural principle that generates, informs, coheres and illuminates the entirety of the Laws: it is the principle behind and implied in every argument; and all of Hooker's claims must be read in light of his commitment to participation."[72] Hooker declines to ponder the metaphysical properties that allow Christ to be present in the Eucharist, but he adamantly excludes the view that it exists there only "by surmised imagination."[73] The receptionist principle factors largely for Hooker: "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament."[74] Read in the manner I describe, it looks very much as if Shakespeare's histories and late-Elizabethan theologians simultaneously arrive at the same conclusion—that eucharistic participation, neither talismanic nor purely commemorative, was required to incorporate English Christians into an undivided body. Bolingbroke's language as he bemoans his excommunication from England hints at this conclusion. When his father, John of Gaunt, encourages him to reckon his banishment positively, as an adventure or an escape from pestilence or a chance to frolic on continental Europe, he laments the inadequacy of remembrance alone to satiate real hunger.

> O, who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
> Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
> By bare imagination of a feast? (*Richard II*, 1.3.294–97)

In Shakespeare's history cycle, bare imagination only provides a fleeting, unsatisfactory approximation of true and lasting communion; for that fellowship to materialize, real eucharistic participation is required.

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[72] Paul Anthony Dominiak, *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation*, T & T Clark Studies in English Theology (T & T Clark, 2020), 21. See also Ronald Vince, "Richard Hooker on the Eucharist," 428.

[73] Richard Hooker, *Laws* V.67.1; see Ronald Vince, "Richard Hooker on the Eucharist," 426, 428.

[74] Richard Hooker, *Laws* V.67.6; see Ronald Vince, "Richard Hooker on the Eucharist," 431.

This evidence suggests that Jeffrey Knapp's argument that Shakespeare sought to constitute a tribe around a stage is due for a reconsideration. For all the merits of Knapp's argument, he excludes Shakespeare's commentary on the limitations of that project. As I have tried to show, characters are haunted by the fact that eucharistic sacrilege initiated and perpetuated their communal division and that only sincere eucharistic participation could effectuate their communal regeneration.

VI – Shakespeare's Histories, Sacramental Theater, and Genealogies of Modernity

Two further matters also deserve scrutiny. First, critics' dependence upon compositional order by which they interpret the histories relation to one another, and by which they chart the advent of modernity in themes or characters, must be fundamentally reimagined. Since the middle of the twentieth century, it is difficult to overstate the degree to which the supposed compositional order has been leveraged to demonstrate the trajectory of Shakespeare's artistic development or the maturation of his craft, but the dirty secret of the discipline is that compositional order is based upon suspect historicizing principles and crude dating mechanisms. Margreta de Grazia has recently shown that no one even attempted to arrange Shakespeare's corpus in compositional order until the late eighteenth century, and consensus about that order did not emerge until the mid-twentieth century. Since that time, however, it has served as the "basis for how we interrelate the plays and contextualize them" even though it must be admitted that the dates of composition "remain conjectural."[75] Historians began to value chronology for its seeming "neutrality" and the promise that one could synthesize competing calendrical systems

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[75] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 20.

"into a single advancing time line onto which anything might be situated."[76] Furthermore, such a

continuum is of immense pragmatic value for the literary critic:

> Our critical practices depend on it. It defines the object of our study: it gives us a discrete whole, from first work to last, differentiated on a temporal continuum. Complete unto itself, it appears autonomous, possessing an integrity and momentum of its own. While isolating the works from the world, it can also put them in contact with the world of both Shakespeare's life and his times. Chronology thus performs a double critical function: it shuts the canon off from the world as a timeless self-contained literary object, but it also opens it up to biography and history. As such, it has proven fundamental to formalist as well as to biographical and historicist criticism.[77]

If chronology is neutral and objective, periods of history can be conceptualized as discrete

epochs that possess certain features, thus supplying "a context, a coherent network of beliefs and

ideas characteristic of an age."[78] Using chronology, the scholar may demonstrate that any given

literary artifact comports with dominant forms or ideologies of its age or diverges from them,

which may be indicative of revolutionary politics, skepticism, or heresy. Either way, the critic

can compare artifacts and chart progress.

The compositional order of Shakespeare's plays has been the most pronounced

expression of this urge to chronologize. Before the nineteenth century, genre governed the

ordering of Shakespeare's collected works, beginning with the First Folio.[79] Period coherence

and historical realism became prized with the rise of the Romantics, which was furthered by the

long project of German idealist philosophy that strove to disambiguate periods from one another

and to define the "*Weltanschauung*, a way of looking at the world, cognitive, affective, and

evaluative" that was unique to each historical context.[80] These aesthetic preferences materialized

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[76] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 4.
[77] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 60–62.
[78] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 11.
[79] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 20.
[80] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 110.

in historically accurate productions in terms of props, settings, and costumes, and Margreta de

Grazia documents the transformation from "blithe indifference to history to a strict adherence to

it" in depictions of Coriolanus.[81] The New Shakspere Society and its founder, F. J. Furnivall,

made historical accuracy its primary mission; it set out "to make out the succession of his plays,"

because, as Furnivall reasoned, "Unless a man's works are studied in the order in which he wrote

them, you cannot get a right understanding of his mind, you cannot follow the growth of it."[82]

The society's vice-president, Edward Dowden, reproduces this rationale in his seminal work

Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art; establishing compositional dates allows the

critic "to trace with confidence the succession of Shakespeare's epochs of spiritual alteration and

development."[83] Following this turn toward relentless periodization, studying Shakespeare

without contextualizing him within periods is unimaginable, irrespective of whether he is

characteristic of his age or he transcends its perspective. Not only that, the period nomenclature

at our disposal to categorize his age—Renaissance or early modern—links him to disenchanted

antiquity or disenchanted modernity; above all, the impetus is to divorce him from "the dogma

and mystification of the Middle Ages."[84]

To return to the point I made in the introduction, most modern critics are deeply invested

in reading Shakespeare's histories according to speculative compositional order (instead of by

genre and historical succession, as the Folio organizes them) and in dichotomizing the tone,

style, and ideological orientations of the tetralogies. At every turn, they trace Shakespeare's

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[81] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 110.

[82] Robert Sawyer, "The New Shakspere Society, 1873–1894," *Borrowers and Lenders* 2, no. 2 (2006), http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/781463/pdf; F. J. Furnivall, "The Founder's Prospectus," *Publications of the New Shakspere Society* 1 (1874): 6–7. See also Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 10.

[83] Edward Dowden, *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875), 379.

[84] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 11.

artistic trajectory away from medieval form, content, characterization, and dramatic structure and towards disenchanted modernity and its artistic modes. They leverage that genealogy of modernity to demonstrate a cultural transformation: in political theory, the centralization of authority, the constriction of personal agency, sociopolitical and geographic fragmentation, the emergence of the nation-state, or in notions of theatricality, self-representation, and semiotic disintegration. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin claim that Hal's chameleon-esque ability to adopt *persona* shows that he, like his father, is a master of "politically motivated theatrical self-presentation" and has grasped that the security of his office depends upon his ability to *perform* authority, which political leaders after Machiavelli comprehend.[85] They describe the constriction of female agency in the second tetralogy as "a movement into modernity, the division of labor and the cultural restrictions that accompanied the production of the household as a private place, separated from the public arenas of economic and political endeavor."[86] They see in miniature what James Simpson sees as the global characteristic of the sixteenth century: "institutional simplifications and centralizations…a narrative of diminishing liberties."[87] Richard II's lavish opulence and moral degeneracy align him with the "polluting forces of effeminate modernity"; the sense of rapidly degenerating social conditions drives the nostalgia for a pure, enchanted, masculine, prelapsarian medieval England.[88]

Other critics bicker over the precise moment when modernity dawns and trace its encroachment along different axes, but they don't dispute the trajectory. For example, Leonard

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[85] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, Feminist Readings of Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 1997), 142, 37.

[86] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 139.

[87] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 13 vols., The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2. 1350–1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

[88] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, 147.

Barkan claims that the resolution of "suppressed passion" in the first half of *Richard II* in the

form of "explosive releases" moves beyond the local effect of creating an "emotional

consistency" in the play and helps to "establish Shakespeare's vision of kingship in the modern

world."[89] Consequently, he avers,

> Henry IV has, by accident or design, created the style of the modern world,
> though he is personally unsympathetic to that style. The plays named after
> Bolingbroke will celebrate that combination of comedy and bloodshed. What we
> need to recognize is that the modern world actually begins earlier than the *Henry
> IV plays*, with the birth of Henry's kingship in *Richard II*.[90]

J. H. Hexter hypothesizes that the modern division between self and role—a matter in which

theater, by definition, must be invested—manifests in anxiety over how to transfer real estate

safely from fathers to heirs. "Let there be no mistake," he writes, "the inheritance of real

property is the heart of [the play]"; in fact, "everybody of consequence" shares the "modern

sensibility" that to deprive any man of his property without due cause endangers the whole legal

structure of fair succession.[91] Phyllis Rackin argues that the modern separation of theology and

history into distinct disciplines carries profound epistemological and ontological ramifications,

especially the reliability of verification mechanisms and the shape of time. Once it became

possible to imagine "[a]lternative accounts of historical events," historiographic writing had to

reckon with the fact that no one had a "direct, unequivocal relation with historical truth."[92] The

need to defend particular versions of history supplied the impetus toward 'neutral' empirical

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[89] Leonard Barkan, "The Theatrical Consistency of *Richard II*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1978): 18.

[90] Leonard Barkan, "The Theatrical Consistency of *Richard II*," 19.

[91] J. H. Hexter, "Property, Monopoly, and Shakespeare's *Richard II*," in *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. Perez Zagorin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 21.

[92] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 13.

knowledge.[93] Shakespeare pressures the question of what happened before *Richard II*—that is, who killed Woodstock—and by submerging the audience in the ambiguities of competing truth claims without any independent verification mechanism, he subjects them to the historian's dilemma, to "make sense of conflicting reports and evidence."[94] Two different theories of historical causation underlie the two tetralogies, and although Rackin initially concedes that, "[t]aken as a whole, Shakespeare's history plays cannot be said to argue the superiority of either theory of historical causation," she—like many others—reads the second tetralogy as a maturation of his vision, a better reflection of Renaissance concerns and beliefs, a truer synopsis of its author's burgeoning "skepticism" and "self-consciousness" toward "the very process of historical production."[95] Most critics since the 1950s treat the second tetralogy as a recursive overwrite of the first—a recantation of its tidy providential conclusion. They have emphasized moments of rupture, discontinuity, and subversion to the exclusion of moments of synthesis and inter-episodic connection. "The series of plays that begins with *Henry VI* and ends with *Henry V*, writes Phyllis Rackin, "replaces the teleological, providential narrative of Tudor propaganda with a self-referential cycle that ends by interrogating the entire project of historical mythmaking."[96] Other critics, such as Graham Holderness, push beyond the recursive approach and maintain that the individual plays function in an "essentially disaggregated way…each enacting not only discrete and singular dramatic structures, but radically different visions of

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[93] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 40–41.
[94] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, 28.
[95] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, 28, 60–61.
[96] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, 60–61. See also 34; 39–40; 42–43n7; 62n33; 63–66.

history"—a position he holds even though he himself recognizes the "unmistakable internal connections that link the plays together."[97]

At their more honest moments, these critics admit why they frame the histories through appeals to modernity. Phyllis Rackin comments that *King John*'s popularity amongst critics toward the end of the 1980s could be chalked up to the "subversive implications of its chaotic plot"; the same feature made *Henry VIII* intriguing because those plays seem to offer "anticipations of [critics'] own project of historical demystification."[98] This is a roundabout way to press Shakespeare into service as a proponent of the "rational demystification of the historical past."[99] And yet if these plays' modernity was unquestionable, and if Shakespeare was the disenchanted modern that critics would like him to be, it would not need to be reiterated continually—unless a boogeyman haunts their imaginations. In the case of Shakespeare's histories, that boogeyman is quite clear: E. M. W. Tillyard, whose teleological, providentialist, and patriotic interpretation critics invoke to dismiss. Jeremy Lopez notes that even though rejecting his thesis has become "something of a convention of historiographical criticism," it has proven obdurate, in no small part because every time critics use him as a foil for their own readings, they reestablish his relevance.[100] Ironically, the more the critic desires to expose the morality and integrity of the teleological Tudor myth by revealing history's contingency, the more they depend upon a dogmatic notion of modernity, which is itself highly teleological, and a suspect sense of compositional order. "The hard fact," writes Margreta de Grazia, "is that we do not know when Shakespeare wrote his plays," and even if we did, to appeal to a thoroughly

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[97] Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 8.

[98] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, 62n33, 34; 42–43n7.

[99] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History,* 43.

[100] Jeremy Lopez, ed., *Richard II: New Critical Essays*, Shakespeare Criticism 25 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 27.

compromised genealogy of modernity in order to eradicate notions of empty time filled by

ideologically neutral events will only permit us to trade one set of problems for another.[101]

I can understand critics' reticence to allow Shakespeare to become a mouthpiece for a

brutal Tudor regime, and I can sympathize with them that the medieval/modern divide wields

such influence that having one's subject matter classified as "modern" determines nothing less

than academic "relevance," perhaps even salvation.[102] But there are two excellent reasons not to

solve these conundrums by playing the second tetralogy off against the first or by ignoring the

moments where the plays clearly are in conversation with one another. First, throughout the

plays, background characters frequently express deep cynicism at kings' efforts to legitimate

their reigns and to constitute a unified body politic. Against the widely popular contemporaneous

chronicles that laud Henry V as a national hero, Shakespeare calls attention to his inadequacies

to galvanize real communion amongst his subjects, whether noble lords and commoners.

Furthermore, even though Richmond purports to inaugurate an eschaton full of health,

prosperity, and peace, that plan must have sounded too good to be true to *Richard III*'s first

audiences. Commoners in that play (the Scrivener and the citizens) immediately perceive

Richard III's true character, and they remain to be convinced that the new king will reign any

more justly than his predecessors. Soldiers seek to excuse themselves from military service;

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[101] Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period Pieces*, 62. See also Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 258, 261. Benjamin exposed the discriminatory and hegemonic selection principles that determine which events get chronicled and which get consigned to history's dustbin as "debris," and after his work, it seems hopelessly naïve to trust in chronology's neutrality (258). Moreover, he identified that the goal of revolutionary politics is to "blast open" this historical continuum, to interrupt notions of sequential, empty time and the notions of historical progress that that view of time upholds. He writes, "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time" (261).

[102] Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide," 453.

ethnic boundaries fail to dissolve; king after king struggles to eliminate revolt. The histories never minimize history's contingency, nor do they imply that historical accounts are neutral, objective versions of what occurred, nor do they excuse the violence against the members of the body politic that procures and maintains the larger body's unity.

The urge to interpret the history plays as disaggregated, singular episodes similarly leaves much to be desired. Even if audience members never saw all the plays, they would still have a general understanding of their national history, especially such a formative section of it like a protracted civil war. We know that people contested the reputations of key figures in that war and sought to divorce themselves from disreputable affiliations; just as modern universities rename buildings that were named after slaveholders, Archbishop Matthew Parker revised the arms of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to distance the college from its sordid association with John of Gaunt.[103] Additionally, if even those who treat the histories as singular plays admit internal connections between them, how shall we account for those connections if there is no unifying theme on which to scaffold them?[104]

I propose that we must revivify the rarely mentioned idea that Shakespeare's histories are modeled upon the cyclic form, and that clarifying its cyclic qualities will extricate critics from the corners into which they have painted themselves. So far as I am aware, O. B. Hardison, Jr. was first to propose that "the plays remain something more than a haphazard collection, and their unity is that of the cycles."[105] The terms in which he frames the cyclic connotations are quite

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[103] See H. P. Stokes, *Corpus Christi*, University of Cambridge College Histories (London: F. E. Robinson, 1898), 228–29.

[104] Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories*, 8.

[105] O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 290.

restrictive, however, because he imagines only a very limited utility for Shakespeare's application of this ancient model:

> In the cycle of plays from *Richard II* to *Richard III* it is evident that we have a secular equivalent to the sacred cycle of the Middle Ages. The protagonist of the cycle is *respublica* rather than Holy Church, and its rationale is the religio-political synthesis of the Tudor apologists rather than Catholic theology.[106]

Furthermore, he argues that the presence of parallels between medieval cycle dramas and Shakespeare's histories is "of minor significance in itself" even though they supply evidence of the endurance of medieval forms in the Renaissance.[107] He envisions that "[t]he appearance of ritual pattern in individual plays is more important and more useful to criticism."[108] To the contrary, I argue that this commonality could not be of greater significance, not because it supplies a ritual template that allows the critics to measure secular equivalents to religious precursors, but because the *respublica* cannot be divorced from the Body of Christ, the *corpus Christi*, in ostensibly Christian nations. The payoff Hardison imagines—that critics may garner all the benefits of allegorical reading while avoiding its "liabilities"—is paltry relative to the actual purpose of the emulation, which is to link inextricably the fortunes of English community to the health of the Communion rite.[109]

Jeffrey Knapp conceives of a broader utility for Shakespeare's "unprecedented" use of the cycle form, given that no other contemporary dramatist attempted anything remotely close.[110] To his credit, he avoids the standard New Historicist view that equates the collapse of Catholic forms to secularization, and he shuns the notion that a literary form could "appropriate[e] the

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[106] O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, 290.
[107] O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, 290.
[108] O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, 290.
[109] O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, 290.
[110] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 217.

spiritual energies of Catholic worship" more than Protestant religious expressions could.[111] Not

only that, his rationale for calling the histories a cycle is rooted in the fact that internal evidence

in the plays requires this connection. The epilogues in both *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* display a

self-consciousness about the plays' place in the larger collection.[112] Knapp further argues that the

histories present no neutral objective history but show the ways that characters deploy religion

for selfish political reasons. He even seizes upon the fact that Falstaff relentlessly uses the word

"company"—a watered-down derivation of Communion.[113] All of this is to the good.

Unfortunately, Knapp suggests that the reason Shakespeare wrote a cycle was to justify

himself as an author and to assert the worth of his craft in the plays: "Shakespeare imagined the

later plays of the cycle as vindicating his own claims to piety and religious purpose."[114] There

are a couple difficulties with this approach. The cycle dramas supplied the mechanism by which

medieval communities negotiated the boundaries of social wholeness and social difference.[115]

Shakespeare's histories likewise ponder the boundaries of community: who is incorporated, who

is excommunicated, what the contours of the social body are, whether a member of the body

could become a different body part, as it were. To borrow Benedict Anderson's famous phrase,

who is included in the "imagined community," and what criteria secure their incorporation?[116]

Or, to riff off Ernest Renan, who argues that "suffering in common unites more than joy does,"

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[111] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 218.

[112] See Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 222.

[113] See Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 228.

[114] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 218.

[115] See Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in a Late Medieval English Town," in *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16–47.

[116] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

who possesses the sense of shared tragedy that constitutes the national community?[117] Knapp

subordinates the political to Shakespeare's private religious purposes, which obscures how his

characters negotiate the boundaries of social cohesion and difference via references to the *corpus*

Christi. Also, in Knapp's account, Shakespeare favors Protestant sacramentology:

"Shakespeare's distinction between actual and theatrical bleeding better accords with this

sacramental theory than with the Catholic view."[118] Thus, he concludes,

> Shakespeare's Lancastrian cycle, as he seems to have understood it, helped
> liberate Communion from the Catholic monopoly on it so that the impact of
> Christ's sacrifice could be seen to pervade everywhere—not only in the sincere
> religion of other Christian sects but in hypocritical pieties too.[119]

I don't dispute that Shakespeare scrutinizes the problems inherent in a realist metaphysics; in

fact, those with the greatest claim on the throne frequently possess less military power than those

who mutiny, which presses the materialist point that "might makes right." Nevertheless, as I

have tried to demonstrate, characters in the histories regularly run up against the poverties of

"bare imagination" or substitute, quasi-eucharistic rituals to instantiate and protect English

community. The histories repeatedly remind the audience that social bodies fray if their members

do not have access to shared sacramental rites that, in their effectual dramatic commemoration,

provide a common ritual structure to guarantee social unity.

  With this context in view, along with the eucharistic allusions I have documented

throughout the histories, I wish to elaborate my claim that these plays emulate a medieval cycle.

To begin, such a view reinstalls genre, not compositional order, as the unifying theme of the

histories, and framed thus, the essential questions the plays take up rise to the top. It would be

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[117] Ernest Renan, *What Is a Nation? And Other Political Writings*, ed. and trans. M. F. N. Giglioli, Columbia Studies in Political Thought / Political History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 261.

[118] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 233.

[119] Jeffrey Knapp, "Author, King, and Christ in Shakespeare's Histories," 233.

hard to imagine an audience prior to the eighteenth century who had a firm grasp on the plays'

compositional order, and even now our best guesses are exactly that—inferences based upon

imprecise dating mechanisms. On the contrary, even the dullest audience members would know

broad contours of English national history, I suspect, and by 1623, editors labeled the plays as

histories and ordered them by historical sequence. Modern critics typically label the medieval

Corpus Christi cycles as biblical or religious drama, but I hasten to add that, for original

audiences, they were *history* plays. Their scope was all-encompassing, a comprehensive account

from creation to judgment told in sequential episodes of the most pivotal moments in that

history. In Corpus Christi plays, Eden falls, brothers slay one another, patriarchs violate

covenants, innocents are slaughtered, Christ-figures suffer a passion, Antichrists are overthrown,

and divine judgment inaugurates an eschaton of peace and delight. Shakespeare's histories are no

different. Thus, I wonder what mileage critics could cover if they recognized that he models his

histories after a medieval form. If Shakespeare emulates the dramatic forms of his youth, we

have a powerful rejoinder to those who imagine him as a Renaissance man hearkening back to

antiquity or as a disenchanted modern throwing off superstitious medieval strictures.

The richest contemporary treatments of the medieval cycles emphasize the political,

economic, and cultural entanglements of those biblical stories. If Shakespeare's history plays

imitate cycle drama, perhaps they, too, emphasize the interpenetration of religious doctrine and

practice and the other dimensions of human experience: money, sex, greed, ambition, political

machinations, social hierarchies, national allegiance, ethnic affiliation. The reason it is such an

impoverishing critical posture to treat religious content, doctrine, imagery, or allusions as false

consciousness for some other material cause is that the plays we study and the characters within

them refuse that distinction.

What might these critics mean when they call Shakespeare, or his plays, or his artistic mode, or his historical context 'secular'? Do they mean that, after the banns in the 1570s, religious plots, characters, sacraments, biblical allusions, and sacred imagery disappeared entirely from the stage? Was Shakespeare really concerned with semiotics, language, epistemology, social institutions, economics, sex, politics, and dramatic aesthetics, and were religious content and matters of doctrine only of secondary importance—a means to an end? I have little faith that critics will judiciously apply characterizations of the Elizabethan stage's secularity. Instead, I assert that early modern dramatists sensed that the Eucharist carried serious implications for their vocation, as well as for almost every other discipline or realm of life, and that "secular" drama frequently takes up religious concerns, while "religious" drama consistently examines social and political matters. To segregate religion and literature into separate fields of inquiry is misleading. It permits us to understand neither the secular nor the religious point. What Shakespeare has joined together, let not scholars put asunder; we stand to comprehend his work better if we freely admit the mysterious, perhaps even sacramental, preoccupations of the secular stage.

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