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OPEN ADDRESS FROM THE GUILD PLAYS TO SHAKESPEARE

by

Janet Hill

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
October, 1997

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The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "Open Address from the Guild Plays to Shakespeare"

by Janet Hill

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

This work is about the guild drama of late medieval England and the strategies of address that developed in that drama. For two hundred years, audiences gathered in the streets and markets of towns all over England to watch plays that were financed, produced, and acted in by their local guilds. As England's provincial trade guilds suffered economic reversals, and as the nation's religious affiliations shifted, so theatrical playing conditions changed. In the Tudor period, many guildsmen took to the roads, becoming professional actors. During the early to mid-sixteenth century, small groups of professional players roamed England, setting up temporary stages, not in their home towns, but in the dining halls of the gentry or in inn-yards. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, commercial playhouses were established in London. Now playgoers paid to enter permanent theatres, to see plays acted by wholly professional companies, on fixed stages. Despite these changes in the playing conditions and auspices, Tudor, Elizabethan, and Jacobean popular dramatic performances were linked to the guild drama by a continuous tradition of strategies of address.

Each guild play relentlessly acknowledged the presence of its audience, speaking openly to the people crowding the streets. I call this stage strategy "open address." Open address was not an archaic dramaturgical device. Rather, it was a powerful technique for connecting each play to its audience. In guild drama, open address reminded the playgoers to bring their modern daily reality to bear on their understanding of the play. Under new playing conditions, the convention of open address changed but it survived. In Tudor drama's more unstable relationship with its playgoers, acknowledging audience presence through open address constructed the play as play and the audience as audience. In Shakespeare's commercial playhouse, open address--often called the "aside," "soliloquy," "monologue," "chorus," "prologue"--continued to forge an alliance with the audience. At the beginning of his career, Shakespeare restrained the plays within the bounds of his big bare stage, and did not openly acknowledge the presence of the playgoers. Gradually, however, he returned to the more interesting, more difficult, and more sophisticated address that he learned from the guild plays. He reshaped the old techniques of open address for the new stage space, the commercial scaffold, bringing the world of his audience into his plays.

My aim in this work is to recover the contract guild drama made with the townspeople who produced it and who watched it, and to show how the sophisticated strategies for addressing that audience became the continuous tradition in English popular drama. Shakespeare, son of a guildsman, was heir to this tradition. The particular vitality of English popular drama's exchange with its audiences dates not from Shakespeare but from the way the guild plays deeply engaged the late medieval crowds.

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CHAPTER ONE

OURE PLAY

1.1 PLAYING CONDITIONS IN THE GUILD PLAYS

And hardely, when I am dede,
Bery me in Gudeboure at the quarell hede
For, may I pas this place in quarte,
By all men set I not a fart.¹
(The Killing of Abel, Part 2, 366-9)

Cain speaks these words in Towneley's guild play. The Yorkshire town's dramatization of the first murder, *The Killing of Abel*, is based on the story in the Bible. All the expected narrative elements are there: the brothers Abel and Cain make their sacrifice to God; Abel's generous offering proves acceptable to the divinity, Cain's mean one does not; Cain slays his brother and is condemned by God to wander forever throughout the world, unable to die or to be killed by others.

The Killing of Abel, like its counterparts produced in the cities of Chester, York, and N-Town, is one of a cluster of dramatizations of biblical narratives, which together make up the four extant plays.² Two critical issues occur here that I need to make clear. I have chosen to use the term "guild plays" to describe the historical dramas. The plays are variously named "Corpus Christi dramas," "mystery cycles," and, more seldomly, "miracle plays." There are

problems with each name. The last--"miracle plays"--is inaccurate. These dramas deal only occasionally with miracles; miraculous or marvellous happenings are more typically the province of the late medieval Saints' plays, like the East Anglian Mary Magdelene, or of Croxton's Play of the Sacrament. "Mystery play" is a term semantically equivalent to "guild play"; guilds are mysteries. The designation "Corpus Christi play" produces controversy in some critical circles, as does "guild play." Some scholars suggest that performances of the plays either were, or became, unconnected to the Corpus Christi festival. But the term "Corpus Christi play" was the term most often used by contemporaries of these dramas, whether or not the performances fell on that liturgical occasion.

In spite of some difficulties about the degree to which trade guilds were involved in dramatic productions, I shall use the term "guild plays". The oldest of these plays clearly arose in a guild milieu, under guild auspices; it was under guilds that this dramatic genre found its characteristic shape. The most compelling reason is that all the plays (including N-Town) adamantly represent onstage the ongoing workaday world of the crowds who watched them.³ They do not allegorize or romanticize their audiences. Instead, they dramatize the ordinary daily, job-ridden lives

of the watchers. Hans-Jürgen Diller comments on the power of the guilds in building these plays:

On our present knowledge we must assume that the guilds and their desire for representation influenced not only the later developments of the Corpus Christi plays but were a decisive factor already at the outset. (Middle English Mystery Play 74)

The plays cover a wide temporal and geographical landscape, dramatizing Palestine, Egypt, Heaven and Hell, as well as places, happenings, and people who all belong to a world that is patently outside the here and now of the contemporary audience. Yet Towneley's Cain speaks as if he is in England, surrounded by a crowd of modern Yorkshire farmers, lords, shepherds, hucksters, merchants, and peasants. All through Towneley's episode, historical Cain behaves as if he is also a local farmer in north-east England, scraping a living in spite of England's rotten weather and its heavy tithes. When, after being cursed by God, Cain orders his burial, he sounds very much as though he wants his West Riding neighbours to be his undertakers.

Implicitly Cain says to these West Riding inhabitants, "I see you, you see and hear me," simultaneously acknowledging the playworld and the world of the audience. Many characters in the guild plays move fluidly between talking to one another and talking to the audience, either implicitly or openly. In every extant text, Towneley, York, Chester, and N-Town, as well as in the two fragments from

Norwich and Coventry, figures of distant history notice audience presence at the play.⁴ Whatever the rank or condition, divine or worldly rulers, patriarchs like Abraham and Noah, ordinary people like Joseph, all talk directly to the people standing in the streets. The relentless implicit or explicit acknowledgement of its audience by this genre play is what I call open address.

That guild plays persistently refer to and talk directly to their audiences is noted by many critics. There seem to be two major positions on why this genre does so. One point of view is that the plays remind the audience of their presence to keep them aware that what they watch is a play and nothing but a play, a dramatization, not reality. The other angle on open address is that it asks audiences to lose themselves wholly in the play.

V. A. Kolve holds the former view. He suggests that guild drama incorporates details of the crowds' modern lives into the plays and makes frequent open addresses to its audiences in order to separate play and playgoer. Both dramatic techniques, he says, are intended to remind audiences that they are not part of the play, to stop the crowds losing themselves in the performances and thus mistaking illusion or "game" for reality. He argues:

the aim of the Corpus Christi drama was to celebrate and elucidate, never, not even temporarily to deceive. It played action in "game"--not in "ernest"--within a world set apart,

established by convention and obeying rules of its own. A lie designed to tell the truth about reality, the drama was understood as significant play. (32)

Anne Righter offers an opposite view of the way the plays relate to their audiences. She argues that this drama involves its audiences wholly, drawing them in so that they are "mankind[who] depended for their justification and very existence upon the fact of their involvement in the play" (20). According to Righter, these plays remind the crowds that their on-going lives are insubstantial and shadowy compared with a more profound reality represented by the plays. I agree with Kolve when he says that guild drama urges audiences to be mindful of their everyday reality. However, I think that this reminder has a purpose quite distinct from that asserted by Kolve. I also agree with Righter's notion that the plays draw in their audiences. But I conceive a very different kind of contract between the play and the audience from the one she describes. I imagine that at the guild play performances there were surely individuals who stood back, and others (both audience and actors) who became so completely absorbed that they forgot themselves for a time.

Hans-Jürgen Diller offers a view closer to the one I argue in this work. He sees what he refers to as "audience address" as a vital and significant part of the way guild plays build meaning. In Middle English Mystery Play he

proposes several categories by which to identify various kinds of audience address, creating a taxonomy of these speeches in which the Chester plays and the N-Town cycle are distinguished from the York and Towneley Cycles. Diller argues for primary importance of close examination of the nature of the lines assigned to guild play characters:

Only in a very few cases may we hope for some sort of information from the stage directions. More rewarding is the examination of the texts themselves; vocatives and second-person pronouns which cannot refer to characters in the play or information which is familiar to these can be regarded as sure signs that the audience is being addressed. (113-4)

Diller regards what he refers to as audience address and what I call open address as a means by which a playworld ("W^d" in Diller's terminology, opposed to "W^o," the world of the audience) is built, and as a bridge by which audiences cross from W^o to W^d. Although I admire his detailed examinations of types of address, I am made uneasy by a reading of early drama that implies its dramatists had to cope with "difficulties," those of constructing a valid playworld, problems that were not, in fact, envisaged until the development of an indoor theatre, separated from daily life in the streets and markets of a town. In my view, we should reverse our thinking about dramatic address. We must start from a different assumption. Unless a play indicates that its audience is ignored, then we must assume that the actors play openly to, and involve, their crowds. And we

must not assume from our modern experience of the theatre that these crowds were necessarily, as Diller suggests in his book, "silent partner[s]" (113).

My notion is that the guild plays built a stage that mounts two play worlds simultaneously: the biblical and the modern. In every possible way, by persistent references to the local concrete reality of the audience and by face to face address, the plays constrained audiences to see their own lives onstage. By doing so, the drama showed audiences where they fitted into the history of the world. Audiences were never asked, even for a moment, to disregard the facts of their own here and now while watching the plays or to drop their sense of actuality in order to enter a deeper existence. They were not asked briefly to pretend to be the biblical crowds who shout for Barabbas or the Israelites fleeing from Pharaoh. Audiences entered the plays, but they entered as themselves. The way these plays about the Bible were staged searched out the modern now and here, never letting their audience forget that everything about their everyday world was real and mattered, from its beer cans, chitterlings, and peas, to its silken couches, gold crowns, and costly wines. Every aspect of their modern identity was put on stage. In this extraordinary drama, several strategies were at work, not to cast audiences by asking

them to assume roles, but rather to stage the audiences as themselves.

1.2 OUR STAGE

The first strategy is that audiences were reminded that the plays went on in their home-towns; that they, the people who came to watch, owned the stage. Some performances of the guild plays took place on wagons which moved from station to station, stopping to play at various locations in the city. This style is called processional. The York play seems to have followed this method. It seems likely that Towneley's play was stationary and performed on wagons drawn up around a flat space. Internal evidence suggest that N-Town's play used wooden structures set up around a playing space (Stevens 189-90).⁵ Nonetheless, whether the guilds performed their plays on moveable wagons or in a fixed playing space, they divided their stage into two distinct components. One was the big open area known as the platea; this was the playing space, either the flat bed of a pageant wagon or the ground on which the crowds stood (their city's streets, market places, cathedrals, courtyards).⁶ The other was the playing spaces called variously "loca," "seats," "scaffolds," "towers"; these playing spaces were raised or framed wooden structures marking specific historical

locations, such as Heaven's throne, the hill where Mrs Noah sits spinning, the ark, Bethlehem's stable, the cross at Calvary, or hell.

The most usual way to reimagine the platea--the playing space that lay close to and often on the level where the crowds assembled--is as a neutral stage space, a space with no specific spatial or temporal signals. Pamela M. King, for instance, considers the platea "represents non-localized space," and therefore "tends to be thematically neutral" except when journeys between loca (the framed structures like Herod's throne) temporarily give it spatial and temporal definition (46). Stanley Vincent Longman expresses a typical view of the medieval platea as a blank space, a kind of *tabula rasa*, given its meaning by the presence of the framed structures, the loca:

The platea is a generalized acting area. The principle behind the platea is the collaboration of the audience in ascribing an imaginary place to the acting area. In its medieval version, the entrance of the actors through one mansion, or scenic piece, and their making their way to the platea invited the audience to transpose the mansion's depicted location to the platea. (157)

In tracking early drama's exploitation of space from liturgical to guild plays, Diller also assumes that street playing depended on the erasure of the town's spatial features. He argues:

[I]n the liturgical drama place and time--the building of the church and the hour of divine worship--were not a semiotic *tabula rasa*, their signification always shone

through and affected that of the representing action. Each represented scene was embedded in the action of the service and received its significance from it. The vernacular plays, performed as they were on the pageant-waggon, the town market or the village green, were not so embedded and had to create their own spatio-temporal foundation. (Middle English Mystery Play 75)

I think, however, that the playwrights are at pains to urge their audiences to create the "spatio-temporal foundation" of the guild plays from what they saw around them. In this I follow Martin Stevens who stresses the importance of the constant visibility of York's architecture to the York play.⁷ It is unlikely that the audience saw the platea as a clean slate on which the plays wrote an "imaginary place." The platea was after all an acting area with no physical boundary between the play's space and where the crowd stood, on the cobbles, the flagstones, by the walls of the smithy, the cathedral gate, or the local merchant's house. There was no physical distinction between their local world, a space already inscribed as their here and now, and the playing space. Their local town was always visible to them, and nothing that happened in the play ever elided it.⁸ The platea, the large flat area, was bounded not by physical framing but by the audience. Here characters moved about in close physical proximity to the crowds. Usually, this space accommodated the ordinary people of history, those without rank or power, one of whom was Christ during the period of his ministry.

Although the big open platea is sometimes likened to the huge bare stage in Elizabethan popular theatres, I think it is vital to understand them as different. Both Elizabethan platform and medieval platea have in common temporal and spatial flexibility (rather than temporal and spatial definition, like the framed fixity of a stage shut behind a proscenium arch); nevertheless, each has a distinct kind of fluidity. They are physically very different. First, to see their stage Elizabethan audiences had to enter a theatre building. Enclosed by walls, the platform of the Renaissance public theatre is anywhere or nowhere until defined by the playwright's words. Inside the theatre, Elizabethan dramatists can exploit a more "neutral stage," one which "lent the playwright freedom" and "cleared the mind of the spectator for conjuring up visions" (Styan, Stagecraft, 29-30), telling their audiences that the stage was "nothing until imagination make it so," and calling on them to "eke out our performance with your mind" (Henry V, 2.Chorus.35). The Globe's stage, for instance, was a separate world from the on-going London world outside. Probably we hold on to the notion of neutral space because we tend to read English drama backwards from popular Elizabethan stages, about which we have ample information, to the stages of early drama--about which we have limited evidence.

Whereas much of the power of the Elizabethan stage lay in a version of neutrality, in its potential to be anywhere and any time that the playwright chose, early drama's staging was owned by its audiences. These audiences gathered in their own city streets, neighbourhood courtyards, or local quarry. They watched the history of the world played out in spaces which were very much part of their own familiar territory, in places which, outside performance time, were the sites of a variety of other everyday activities. The full power of guild plays' staging lay in the tight relationship of both locus and platea to the concrete actuality surrounding them. For the platea did, in fact, supply its audiences with significant locational signals: the familiar landmarks of their home towns. Never neutral, never a blank space, a chalk board on which to write and erase, the platea was not wholly localized by the play; it was always also York, Chester, the West Riding, N-Town, Coventry, Norwich. Historical characters could come into this ground, but it was always the audience's local city.

Even the fixed staging elements, the loca, signalled that onstage were historical sites--as well as the modern here and now. Loca always housed the high-ranking people of history (for instance, God, Lucifer, the Angels, Herod, Pharaoh Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas) and marked out specific

locations like God's throne, the stable in Bethlehem, Noah's ark, the lawyers' council house, and Hell's mouth.³ In guild drama, both the stage spaces, the locus and the platea, are surrounded by the audience's own town or countryside.

Because the framed loca were erected in a playing area that was primarily the audience's artisanal town, they, like the platea, were dramatically defined by the local concrete world. Concrete historical sites like Procula's (Pilate's wife's) bed or Bethlehem's stable, or the mound on which Mrs Noah sits stubbornly spinning were erected on a stage that was always also York, Chester, the West Riding, N-Town. Likeness and difference between these various loca often offered audiences figural readings of separate historical events; for example, loca made visibly apparent the typological connection between the hill on which Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac to the hill on which Christ is crucified; Mak's cottage locus is like and yet different from the stable locus of the nativity. England's farmwomen, hucksters, citizens, watched these loca come and go as history moved forward. Nevertheless, the really vital figural link that loca showed audiences was between distant events, places, people, and their modern world inside which the loca were set, a world the audiences could clearly see around them.

The guild plays' both/and staging, then, allowed the plays to exploit the likenesses and differences between there/then and here/now. God creates the world in York; Abraham goes to sacrifice his son on a hillside in N-Town; Mary gives birth in the biblical stable that is at the same time one of Yorkshire's farm buildings; Hell comes to Chester's streets. In each guild play, the sweep of the whole world's history plays out within (and in purposive tension with) a continually visible contemporary local world: urban York, rural Yorkshire, Chester, and N-Town. To return to *The Killing of Abel*: this episode uses a familiar landmark, the quarry on the outskirts of the town, to make the biblical story of murder simultaneously a local modern story, a tale about difficult lives in the Yorkshire countryside, about local disputes between farmers and herders, about the West Riding's current potential for meanness, disobedience, violence. The York play stresses that Christ enters "oure citée" where the citizens have seen many royal entries (Stevens 59). York's people stand in their streets, beneath their towers, and hear Christ refer to "yone castel" and to "this cite" (*The Entry into Jerusalem*, 15). Christ's references to the physical world do not correct York's buildings in order to reconstruct them as Jerusalem's; rather, they fuse the northern English city with the historical one, insisting that both exist,

simultaneous and complete. In another example, this time from Chester, a biblical shepherd tells an audience made up of local peasants, shepherds, tapsters, tradespeople and aristocracy, how he has followed his flock for an immense distance. He talks of a weary journey from Wales to Scotland, "from comlye Conwaye unto Clyde," the furthest limits of the known world for many in the local audience.¹⁰ The early stage, thus, is never neutral: the base-line is always the audience's local here and now.

1.3 OUR WORK AND PLAY ONSTAGE

The second strategy by which the guild plays kept audiences mindful of their full modern identity was by showing that the players were also members of the town's local work force. Although the church sanctioned the performances, practical production obligations were shouldered by each town's guild members.¹¹ Wakefield, Chester, and York civic records show that trade guilds paid for the performances, organized rehearsals, built and housed wagons when these were used, collected, bought and made costumes and props, directed and acted in the plays.¹² Guilds probably took on plays for which they were able to furnish appropriate properties, sufficient actors, and enough money.¹³ York's bakers, for example, put on the

Supper of Christ with the Disciples, presumably because they could provide loaves for the meal, as could Beverley's and Chester's bakers.¹⁴ York's goldsmiths mounted the Herod and the Magi episodes, whose biblical kings needed crowns, caskets for the Magi's gifts, and a glittering star to follow.¹⁵ This city's vintners supplied the wine for the marriage at Cana.¹⁶ Its tappeters and couchers supplied a luxurious bed for the ostentatious Procula, and its thatchers and tilers put together the stable for their nativity episode. Clearly most of the actors were local: amateurs, people from the neighbourhood, members of the town's guilds.¹⁷ For instance, the soldiers who crucify Christ in York were certainly the city's pinners.¹⁸

For the towns themselves the plays were good business. They brought together not only their own citizens but those of villages from miles around, and in a few instances they attracted royalty. (Arnold Williams 95)

There was money to be made from the crowds who attended the plays. In York, for example, sites along the route were rented out by "station holders," individuals who erected and owned scaffolds, or by householders whose windows overlooked the stopping places (REED: York, 829).¹⁹ According to John D. Coldewey, although the plays turned a profit for some citizens and for individual guilds, the work involved in putting them on was heavy and not always welcomed by the guilds.²⁰ Even if they did so reluctantly, many guilds

spent lavish amounts on their productions. They also frequently foregrounded their members' participation as players. In some plays, such as York's Crucifixion, its Noah episode,²¹ or Chester's bakers, biblical characters make unmistakable links between local workers. Higgins proposes that drawing attention to the fact that the players are also local tradespeople is one of the ways by which the plays' redactors strove to connect their audiences' local world of work with the world of the play, reminding the crowds of their likeness to and difference from people of the past. Higgins argues that the connection the dramatists sought was primarily figural, a way of looking at history that at once denied and asserted the importance of historical distance and difference from audiences' modern lives. So as well as giving the cities and the tradespeople of York, Norwich, and Chester useful advertising for local merchandise, putting onstage recognisable neighbours doing their ordinary everyday jobs encouraged audiences to see how the events of history connected to what was a crucial part of their here and now.

Since guild drama was performed largely in daylight, it allowed its audiences to get a good look at the players.²² Probably spectators knew that the biblical characters onstage were represented by the same guild each year, by their town's baker, blacksmith, or their local tanner,

goldsmith, carpenter, or cordwainer. According to Kolve, the fact that the players were recognizable as local tradespeople prevented audiences from the dangerous error of confusing "game" and reality. Kolve notes the importance of "the presence of neighbours in contemporary costume" onstage but argues that recognizing the actors as local tradespeople would act as "a major deterrent to illusionism" (55).

Nevertheless, everyone in the audience was familiar with the Bible stories: they knew the history of Noah well--who was saved, who was not; they knew that Eden was a fruitful garden; they were aware that soldiers crucified Christ and that at the last supper Christ broke bread and drank wine. So the fact that the players were recognizable as "neighbours in contemporary costume" (as Kolve says) made apparent what audiences might otherwise miss--the connection between these historical events and their everyday lives.

Ann Righter asserts that the world of work is something to be abandoned at the play as it is at church:

From the West Portal of Chartres, the images of the Twelve Months and their labours look out across the cornlands of the Beauce, reminding the worshipper that as he enters the cathedral he turns away from the world of spring-time and harvest, where birth implies destruction and the future flows irrevocably into the past. (15)

My reading of the carving is that the Chartres portal in fact welcomed into the cathedral French artisans, asked them to bring their everyday toil to their worship. Rather than

leaving part of their daily identities outside the entrance, they were told to carry their whole selves into church. The guild plays demand a similar completeness from their audiences. They were asked to bring their full identities to the performances and to see themselves onstage. York's Noah is not just a historical patriarch; he follows the audience's contemporary practices of shipbuilding; Norwich's Eden has a tree bearing local merchandise, the fruits and spices that the town's grocers imported.²³ When audiences recognized neighbours, local tradespeople, the town's artisans, onstage, they were instructed to consider their everyday lives that went on outside the play, to think about yesterday and tomorrow, when they and the tradespeople-actors were caught up in daily work, in selling and buying, and making bread, wine, or rope. The guild play stage signalled to its audiences to place their work and themselves among the great events and people of history. It did so by foregrounding the players not just as actors, but in their full lives as guildspeople, fellow workers, and neighbours.

Guild drama, then, made sure that its audiences noticed the alliance between their local town and the play's space, and that the actors were also their neighbours. A third strategy the plays used to incorporate the audience's world was to link everyone's leisure time with the world of the

play. Frivolous aspects of everyday contemporary life, its feasting and recreation as well as its work, appeared onstage. Historical characters engaged in activities that mimicked those of some of the audience. For instance, the biblical people portrayed by the players also represented modern people, sometimes given to eating lavish feasts that come out of the audience's world of the rich. Onstage wealthy people eat well, and they do so in style, eating to celebrate only themselves. Upper-class eating and drinking was always set in a locus, inside an enclosing frame. In this way, it was made into an exclusive event, shutting out the ordinary people in the play, and everyone in the audience. Enclosed in a locus, York's Pilate and his wife, "dame precious Percula," sip wine before retiring to sleep on their sumptuous couch made by the local tappeters and couchers (Christ before Pilate 1: The Dream of Pilate's Wife, 37). When N-Town's Herod thinks the infant Jesus has been killed, he fusses about the quality of the food, wanting an opulent celebration dinner to be served in elegant, and contemporary, style. He directs his servants to

sett a tabyll anon here ful sownde,
Coverid with a corious cloth and with rich wurthy fare-
Servise for the loveliest lorde that levinge is on
grownde.

Beste metys and wuthiest wines loke that ye non spare,
Thow that a lityl pint shulde coste a thowsand pownde.

(N-Town, Death of Herod, 144-148)

As a very correct modern host, he is also touchy about getting the seating arrangements right.²⁴ The guild plays spoofed rich diners. We have no records of how audiences responded, and it would be fruitless to speculate who in the audience was delighted and who was offended by these parodic meals; like any audience at any time, there was probably a range of shifting reactions to these scenes as to many others. The really important point is that the plays explicitly staged the rich diners, in both their identities, historical and contemporary, as funny and dangerous, but ultimately foolish because they set themselves up as exclusive, self-enclosed people, overwhelmed by a sense of entitlement to luxurious life-styles that they believe will go on forever and unchallenged.

The players also staged the meals of biblical and modern poor people. By contrast to the rich, these people ate on the platea, in the playing space close to the audience. Chester and West Riding shepherds, for example, eat what hungry people dream of: food in huge amounts, good Lancashire and Yorkshire dishes of onions, garlic, leeks, cows' and pigs' feet, chitterlings, oat cakes, a sheep's head soused in ale, and washed down with "ale of Halton and sowre milk." The peasant fare of the poor, the "liverastes, livers and longes," "sose," "sowse," and "saverraye" (livers, lights, lungs, sausages, sauce, savories) (Chester,

Shepherds, 44-5) was the food of local poor people and is funny, especially in its excess. But these feasts were not mocked as was the rich people's dining. In the West Riding, for example, although the shepherds' meal falls apart when they drink too much, quarrel, argue about who has had more than others, their meal is made an inclusive one for several reasons. These poor people's meals were eaten close to the audience, on the platea, where spectators may also have reflected their own festive eating and drinking. Second, they reflected fallible human communal eating of the world in plays and in actual life, perhaps the food audiences ate while they watched the performances, bought from the hucksters and regrators.²⁵ The plays compared these feasts to the perfect meal celebrated each year by the Corpus Christi feast itself, and each day in the liturgy. Towneley's First Shepherds' play, in particular, asserts the liturgical connection explicitly, reminding the crowds to think about the observances of the Mass. As they raise their bottle, the first shepherd comments:

This is boyte of oure bayll,
 good holsom ayll.
 (Shepherd's Play I, 247-8)

The Shepherds' Play further reinforces the link to the current religious observance when, after drinking, the shepherds exchange a kiss of peace: "By my thryft we must kys" (262). The inclusiveness is stressed further when the

shepherds propose to collect what is left for the poor (First Shepherds, 285-6).

The signals of modern work and play were everywhere intertwined with the biblical narrative. Nothing from city or rural everyday life seems to have been too inconsequential or trivial to appear in the plays. Familiar secular figures, characters from folk plays, mummings, and traditional ritual entertainments mingled with the Bible's people.²⁶ In the Towneley episode, Mak, Pykharnes and Titivillus take the scurrilous liberties assumed by the folk play fools; in Chester, Trowle is the folk play's recalcitrant servant. In N-Town Den, the court summoner, reading from a long list of those obliged to sit at an ecclesiastical court hearing: "Malkyn mylkedore," "Stevyn sturdy," "Thom tynkere," "Powle pewtere," and so on (10-30), acts as a "caller on" drawing in audience and characters alike. These figures from old secular plays also carried into the biblical narratives a nonsensical, subversive, back-to-front version of life. The folk plays' opening rituals announced the entry of biblical villains: kings, officials, or even men like Cain. Nearly every ruler quieted his audience with the familiar calls for silence that had their origin in the processional element of folk-drama, when local players wandered from house to house, clearing a space in which to play. In the guild plays the

milder cries for "room" became threats issued by belligerent rulers, claiming stage space as if audiences have no right to be present and should shrink back in terror.²⁷ For example, York's Pharaoh opens his episode with: "Peas! of pain that no man pas!" (1.1); its Herod with "Pes, ye brothellis and browlys in this braydenasse inbrased" (Christ before Herod, 1); N-Town's ruler with "Now sees of your talking. And gevyth lordly Audience / Not o word I charge you that ben here present" (N-Town, Passion Play II, 1-2). Wrestling, a popular sport, also made its way into the plays.²⁸ In Chester's nativity episode, the sport characterized the biblical shepherds' unstable relationship with one another. Offered a chance to wrestle his superiors, the underdog Trowle vaunts like a folk play hero: "Nowe comes Trowle the Trewe / a torne to take have i fight / with my master" (Shepherds, 234-6).²⁹ The "pretend" violence of the contemporary pastime of Hot Cockles, "pops" or "bobbid," in which a victim is blindfolded and beaten in game, is transformed to real torture when Christ is tortured by soldiers acting on instructions from Caiaphas and Annas in Towneley's *The Buffeting* or York's *Christ before Herod*.³⁰ The upsidedown game of making a boy a bishop or king for a day was itself inverted when Christ is called "boy," seated on a stool, and, with the crown of thorns, turned into a Mock-King (Towneley, *The Scourging*; York, *Christ before*

Herod).³¹ In a Chester episode, medieval knights massacre Judaeen babies in a grotesque tournament game, making the children "hop" upon their spears (The Innocents).³² The familiar snow baby story is used to slur Mary's character in N-Town's trial of Joseph and Mary. Audiences witnessed Christ humiliated by means of games they may play or at least know; they heard Mary judged a deceitful slut in the terms of a stock tale.³³

Perhaps the most ordinary everyday things from the world of the audience were the gifts the shepherds give to the infant Christ. Towneley's and Chester's anxious shepherds offer the Christ-child objects fit for both biblical and modern poor men. In the West Riding they give Christ a ball, a bottle, "a bob of cherys," a bird, a bell, "a lytyll spruse cofer." In Chester they offer a bell, a flagon and spoon "for to eat thy pottage with at noone / as I myselfe full oftetymes have donne," a cap, "a payre of my wyves ould hose." York's shepherds present the baby with a child's tin brooch, two cob nuts on a band, a bob of cherries, a bird, and that touching hungry man's vision of plenty, a horn spoon which will hold forty peas. The educated among the audience may pick up symbolic associations in these offerings, but everyone must attend to the literal; each gift is homely and utterly familiar to everyone in the crowd.³⁴ Each person, rich or poor, learned

or unlettered, saw Mary accept simple things from poor men. Then and now, all offerings proved acceptable, whether they were the Magi's caskets of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, or the shepherds' downscale, downmarket presents, not a golden orb but a tennis ball, not a phial of precious scent but an empty earthenware bottle.

In the work, the recreation, the objects of everyday life, and in many other ways, the guild plays searched out and integrated what really happened in their audiences' lives. By presenting onstage the mundane stuff of everyday living, the plays told audiences that what they did each day had deep significance, no matter whether they were rich or poor, worked as vintner, baker, goldsmith, shepherd, tapster, or king. Each moment of daily life mattered, however ordinary or trivial. No one was told to leave behind his or her home or to forget their work or play. Instead the plays' redactors derived a rich and urgent meaning from the tension between the history represented in--and by--each audience's local world.

1.4 OPEN ADDRESS FROM LOCA AND PLATEA

Throughout every play the full concrete reality of their modern lives was held resolutely in front of the

crowds. By the yoking of historical then and the audience's now, the crowds were made partners in a play that involved them as themselves, that reminded them that they owned the stage, that the characters were also their neighbours and that their own life was onstage. The most powerful dramaturgical strategy for integrating the audiences with the play as themselves was that figures in these plays, whether they were historical or from the modern world, looked out at the crowds and addressed them openly. Each character who spoke directly to the audience served as a guide, showing the people how to understand the play's action and how their modern everyday world was linked to it. How each particular address functioned depended on a combination of factors: where the character stood to speak, how he or she was costumed, what properties they carried or that surrounded them, what particular associations were set up between the character and the crowd's modern world. There was no such thing as one kind of open address in the guild plays. Some characters spoke from loca where their address was framed by historical specificity, located closer to the Bible story than to the modern world. Some talked from the platea, from the space surrounded by the audience and their home town, thus located in their local world. Each of the open addresses, those framed by staging elements and those framed only by the audience's local world,

operated differently, functioned as a different way of guiding audiences to an understanding of the play.

Characters could also cross from one function to the other, from the loca function to the platea function, and vice versa. Abraham, for instance, speaks from the platea, and from the hill where he prepares to sacrifice his son; the shepherds lament the condition of the world on the platea, and they worship the infant Christ within the frame of the Bethlehem stable. In either function, loca or platea, characters use open address, although this address is more the characteristic of the platea. However, the important and dramatically potent thing about open address is its capacity to construct and shift relationships between audience and action during the course of the play.

The words that first guide audiences into every play in every town are the "Ego sum alpha et o" of God. Each guild play opens with players perched high on a wooden structure decorated to represent Heaven.³⁵ And God the "primus et novissimus" of being, as well as being the first speaker, is also the last voice they hear in the plays, when in each Doomsday episode he ends the world. In most towns the actor playing God is set up high enough for everyone to see clearly, overlooking both playworld and audience. Although N-Town's three-fold God at first walks close to the audience on the platea, he then climbs up to "Hevyn hille" where he

surveys his creation, the playworld and N-Town's people (The Fall of Man, 240). In Chester, God calls down to Noah from "some high place--or in the clowdes, if it may bee" (Noah, Stage Direction 42). In 1433, York's Mercers used a mechanism to lower God from Heaven for their doomsday play. Their accounts included the order for a sturdy iron swing on which God ascended to heaven:

iiij Irens to bere vppe heuen iiij finale
coterelles & a Iren pynne A brandreth of Iren that
god sall sitte vpon when he sall sty vppe to heuen
With iiij rapes at iiij corners.³⁶

The God up on his big raised seat was always a spectacular sight; he always wore rich costuming. Tydeman comments that the materials used for God's locus "were usually as expensive as could be procured or afforded; they were intended to give this area of the stage qualities of radiance and unearthly splendour" (169). The wardrobes for the God figures included furs and skins and expensive imported silks.³⁷ For instance, Coventry's drapers supplied "iiij yards Redde Sendalle for god."³⁸ In some towns the actor playing God was made mysterious and unknowable by masking him, as in Norwich, whose grocers bought "face & heare for ye Father."³⁹ In other places, the guilds painted his face: in Chester in 1550 the cordwainers' and shoemakers' guild made a payment "ffor geylding of godes ffase" (REED: Chester, 50). In several places God was played in skins or leather. New Romney, Coventry and York

all record payments for skins of various kinds used to costume the actor playing God (Tydeman 208). In every town, then, God was made to look magnificent. The appearance of the actor playing the divinity never imitated a human magnifico. Instead all the visual signals that composed the God figure (the fact that he was raised high, his face made inhuman, his clothes made to be different from any worn by anyone in the audience's modern world) suggested a desire by the plays' producers to portray the divinity as being utterly distinct from any human being, whether biblical or modern. Because of this God did not look like anyone in the audience, neither ordinary people standing around the platea, nor wealthy members of society watching from their rented benches above the heads of the common people. Consequently, too, no one was invited to see any resemblance to local modern human power in the play's God. Instead God was visually defined as a being somehow outside all human time and place, either historical or present. The York citizen playing God at the creation, who obviously sat high up as he spoke the act of creation, was a non-contingent figure:

Here undernethe me nowe a nexile I neuen,
 Whilke ile sall be erthe. Now all be at ones
 Erthe haly, and helle, this hegheste be heuen
 And that wealth shall wield shall won in these
 wones.

(York, *The Fall of the Angels*, 25-28)

As York's God directed the townspeople to look at "this" heaven, he was a very self-contained dramatic figure; one that neither demanded, nor seemed to care whether or not they answered his words. His dignified diction appears not to acknowledge any listeners. The theological point here is that there is no extension, either temporal or spatial; there is no space or time, now, as he speaks the creation words. There exists nothing but the deity at the moment. Nonetheless, even though he looked as if he was ignoring York, he was not; in fact, words and staging told the citizens how to hear these words, and how to imagine themselves connected to them. Because they heard the announcement as they stood in their own city, by Micklegate, or outside the houses of Robert Harpham and John Gysburn, or in Coney Street, or on the Pavement, with York's buildings, their river, markets, neighbours and tradespeople, visible to them, God's address situated their local time and place, their York, in his timelessness.⁴⁰ He treated them as if they were part of a universal here and now. Thus, in every play God's open address framed not only the play but the actual world too, incorporating every town and every person as part of a community made up of all people at all times.

Historical rulers, Herod and Pharaoh, and political officials, like Pilate, were also allocated raised, elaborate loca. From these structures, they often said

roughly the same things as God: they introduced themselves and told what they planned to do. Human potentates were also spectacular, their faces painted or gilded (for example, REED: Coventry, 59, 1040), their costumes and props elaborate, like Chester's Herod who is "crowned in goulde" (Chester, Three Kings, 45-6).⁴¹ However, biblical rulers' clothes, properties, and words located them firmly in a human world, specifically that of the modern society. Kings and lawyers are often costumed in ways workers and lords in the audience would recognize as mimicking the clothes of modern rich and powerful people.⁴² N-Town's stage directions, for example, ordered the historical priest Annas to be dressed in a kind of double representation: as an upholder of the Old Testament law and as a contemporary cleric:⁴³

here shal Annas shewyn himself in his stage, besyn after a busshop of the hoold lawe in a skarlet gowne, and over that a blew tabbard furryd with white, and a mitere on his hed, after the hoold lawe; two doctorys standing by him in furryd hodys, and on[e] befor hem with his staff of astat; and eche of hem on here hedys a furryd cappe with a gret knop in the crowne; and on[e] standing befor as a Sarazyn, the w[h]ich shal be his masangere. (Passion Play I, 230)

Guilds went to considerable trouble and expense to give actors playing the roles of history's tyrants exactly the right props to connect them to the local world. In Coventry, Herod carried a symbol of modern political power: in 1490 the town's Smiths' Guild paid for "a septur for

heroud."⁴⁴ Also in 1490, Coventry's smiths ordered "a creste" and a "fawchon" (curved broad sword) for its Herod.⁴⁵ Coventry's cappers apparently played its Pilates so enthusiastically that the king's clubs and leather balls had to be repaired frequently.⁴⁶

The biblical rulers did not ignore audience presence as God did. Instead, they showed off about English properties and cities; they were lords over "castelle, towre and towne" (Chester, *Three Kings 2*, 171-2), offering to those who served them rewards such as "florens and fryhthis fre / parkys and powndys pleyne" (N-Town, *Adoration of the Magi*, 181-2). Chester's playwright radically remodelled the familiar biblical narrative, the massacre of the innocents, into a medieval horror story, supplying Herod with henchmen called Sir Waradrake and Sir Grymball Launcherdeepe. These knights grumble that they have not been summoned to a weighty quest, like killing a giant such as "Samsoun" or massacring an army of real warriors, such as the "kinge of Scottes and his hoste" (*The Slaughter of the Innocents*, 221-2). To their chagrin, they are ordered to murder simply a crowd of babies.⁴⁷

The words of biblical power mimicked the modern world's languages of authority. At opportune moments, rulers swung into French, which—whether or not audiences understood it word for word—they would recognize as a courtly language,

one spoken under aristocratic or authoritarian auspices. Chester's Herod uses French to toady to his three very socially correct visitors, the Magi. He welcomes them to his court with

Bien soies venues, royes gent.
Me detes tout veterere entent. (155-6)

However biblical kings' attempts to use courtly French were always made into a joke. The Wakefield Master (author of Towneley's many comic characters) makes one of his Herods (the king of Herod the Great) so wildly furious at being unable to get his own way, that he finds it hard to adhere to a posh style for more than a few words at a time. At first, in very down-to-earth English, he curses, brags and blusters, and offers bribes to the audience:

Draw therfor nerehende, both of burgh and of
towne:
Markys, ilkon, a thowsande, when I am bowne,
Shall ye have.
I shal be full fain
To gif that I sayn.
Wate when I com again,
And then may ye crave. (463-469)

Then this power-hungry leader's already paltry supply of courtly language runs out altogether. Overwhelmed by doubts that his soldiers will succeed in killing the rival king, he directly warns the audience that he brooks no dissent from any subjects, including them. He rushes off, telling them that they had better keep quiet even after he leaves the stage:

For if I here it spokyn when I com again,
 Youre bransys bese brokyn. Therfor, be ye bain.
 Nothing bese unlokyn; it shal be so plain.
 Begin I to rokyn, I think all disdain
 For-daunche.
 Sirs, this is my counsell-
 Bese not to[o] cruell,
 Bot adew!--to the devill!
 I can nomore Fraunch! (505-513)

The kings' French is a great joke: funny when they can manage to speak some because they use it pretentiously, funny when they cannot because they sound foolish. French in the plays comically deflates abusive authority.

Latin, the language of ecclesiastical law, was used in a more complicated way.⁴⁸ It required a different kind of contract with the audiences. It was the language of divine and religious authority; as such it was spoken to the audience in God's great formulaic pronouncements. God's Latin did not shut his listeners out because they would have heard it often in church. Melissa M. Furrow discusses who would have been familiar with Latin:

In very practical terms, the Pater and Ave and Creed in Latin were required knowledge for all medieval Christians, even tapsters and fishermen, herdsmen and washerwomen. Next for those who were formally taught came the hymns used in services of the Church and the Psalms, first to be memorized and recited, then to be construed and understood.
 (36)

Latin spoken by lawyer-priests such as Annas and Caiaphas is an abusive tongue, intended to shut out the audience and others. They use their legal Latin to signify their own rank and secrecy; already set apart from the

audience by the frames of loca, they are further separated from ordinary people, including the audience, by their words. For example, Towneley's legal clerics, a calculating Annas and irascible Caiaphas, obscure their proceedings against Christ with excursions into a Latin not meant to be understood by others: "Et hoc nos volumus, / Quod de iure quod possumus. / Ye wote what I mene:" (Buffeting, 214-6). Like Chaucer's Summoner, who could fall back on a Latin phrase to impress when he wanted to, ecclesiastical lawyers' Latin in the guild plays is always elliptical, intended to be overheard but also to remain obscure.

Mary speaks to the audience in familiar Latin, not from an elaborate frame but from the platea. In Chester's *Nativity*, the stage direction reads: "Maria gaudiens incipit canticum "Magnificat" (100). But in several ways Mary's Latin functions differently from the foreign words of rulers or lawyers: hers is unequivocal; it does not exclude the audience by elevating Mary. Instead, it reminded audiences that until her marriage, Mary devoted herself to a life of study.

Kingly French and clerical Latin, on the other hand, signal what is esoteric and closed in contemporary authority. Audiences could all recognize what social or political world their languages came from; their effect in the plays probably depended on predictable and mixed

responses, with many ways of understanding the language jokes among the diverse audiences. The educated or rich who paid to sit up on their scaffolds perhaps laughed knowingly with one another at such things as the comic misuses of French;⁴⁹ perhaps the unschooled heard the words as pretentious rubbish, funny even though individual words were incomprehensible. As with God's and Mary's Latin, word for word literal understanding did not much matter. With the kings' French and with the clerics' Latin, every member of the audience would get that tyrants (whether bureaucrats, lawyers, kings or priests) turn everything to their own selfish and abusive ends.

Although the historical rulers are intent on showing how separate they are from everyone else, they also constantly claim audiences as their subjects. Before the entry of Towneley's Herod, a messenger tells audiences to "downe ding of youre knees / All that him seys" (60-1). N-Town's Herod charges "you that ben here present," to cease talking (Passion Play II, 22). The kings go further than hurling words at audiences. In their lust for power, they burst from their framing loca into the watching space. Ruthlessly controlling a world that obstructs their wishes, they dash out among the hucksters and townspeople, to shout at them or bash them about. Consider the famous stage direction from the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' pageant:

"Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also."⁵⁰
 Audiences must have resisted their assertions of power, for the tyrants typically have to quell our noise before they can get their stories under way. Pharaoh, Pilate, and Herod (like Towneley's Pilate who shouts: "Peas, carles, I commaunde / unconnande I call you" [Towneley, *The Conspiracy*, 1) presumably had to subdue a crowd ready to shout back. Robert Weimann observes that tyrants like Herod probably provoked mixed responses because they were "both somber and ridiculous, terrifying and grotesque" (68). One of Towneley's Herods threatens physical violence to his servants and to the audience: "With this brand that I beare ye shal biterly aby" (Towneley, *Scourging*, 4). Every king sees in the crowd people whose tongues wag too much. York's Herod orders silence with threats of physical punishment:

Pes, ye brothellis and browlys in this broydenesse
 inbrased,
 And freykis that are frendely to your freytenesse
 to frayne,
 Your tounge fro tretimng of truffillis be trased,
 Or this brande that is bright schall breste in
 youre brayne.

(Christ before Herod, 1-4)

In the West Riding the king's herald tells Herod the audience is a gossiping crowd who "carp of a king" (78).

Herod warns them to shut up:

Stint brodels, youre din- yei, everychon!
 I red that ye harkyn to I be gone,
 ffor if I begyn I breke ilka bone
 And pull fro the skyn the carcas anone.
 yei, perde!

Sesse all this wonder,
 ffor I ryfe you in sonder,
 Be ye so hardy
 (Herod the Great 82-90)

In fact each biblical king is wholly obsessed by audience presence, by "you that ben here present" (N-Town, Passion Play II, 1-2). Delighting in their own magnificence, "most royall in richest array" (York, Remorse of Judas, 9-10), they boast to them, since, unlike God, human rulers need admirers. As Lucifer did, they preen themselves, pleased at how they look (and they make sure the audience notices too). Seated on his scaffold, York's "Pilate of Pounce," for instance, tells how beautiful he is, and, at the same time, signals the artificiality of his looks:

For I ame þe luffeliest lappid and laide
 With feetour full faire in my face,
 My forhed both brente is and brade
 And myne eyne thei glittir like þe gleme in þe
 glasse.

And þe hore þat hillis my heed
 Is even like to þe golde wyre,
 My chekis are bothe ruddy and reede
 And my coloure as cristall is cleere.
 (Remorse of Judas, 18-25)

Because all the tyrants insisted that the citizens of York or Chester, or the people who live in and around Towneley or N-Town, stare at and admire their appearance, they diminished themselves; they provoked audiences to judge them as part of the ordinary, modern world, and thus undermined their own authority. The magnificent God was self-contained; he neither needed nor asked for the audience's

wondering gaze. But Herod, Pilate, and Pharaoh are self-centred, demanding that their beauty and their trappings of power be worshipped--thereby stressing the transience of both these attributes.

When the Herods, Pilates, and Pharaohs claimed a modern audience as their own people, they talked as if these people consented to their self-definitions. But, in the end, the guild plays' tyrants were comics or fools, albeit horrific ones. The more the enforcers claimed "You are my subjects," the more they invited shouts of "oh no, we're not." Two versions of tyranny were presented. One said that in real historical time, as in the audience's now, tyrants did appalling things, committing real atrocities on people like the audiences. The other version of tyranny asserted that while what human power does to ordinary people cannot be ignored or dismissed, if it could also be seen in the whole sweep of history, it is limited; human tyrants were silly trivial human beings. This latter view was the one set up by the nature of their exchange with the audience. The central action and the dialogue showed that, for the historical people living in the same time as the tyrants, the horrors the rulers perpetrated are dreadful and real. But because the audiences retained their modern selves, never surrendering their ordinary identities, they had an ironic perspective on the words and actions (very much

intensified by the provocation to participate and resist) which told them that powerful men from any age were, in the end, no more than empty buffoons, locked in overblown ideas about themselves and their authority. The modern world was staged as people who knew that these reigns of terror would ultimately fall apart, able to resist because for them the tyrants were fools. By the end of the play, when the doomsday episodes dramatized the end of all time, the tyrants' authority and power dissipated; all that is left of the bullies are their personal sins.

1.5 TALKING ON THE PLATEA

The God of guild drama always spoke from Heaven's locus, signalling a here and now that is part of a timeless world. Christ, on the other hand, often spoke directly to audiences from the platea, stressing that he was part of the here and now of ordinary humanity. During the episodes about his ministry, Christ always spoke from the platea, where nothing stood between the ordinary modern world and that of the play. Here he moved close to those who stood around in the streets, was eye-to-eye with ordinary people, those members of the audience who could not afford fees for

raised benches or to overlook the performance from rented rooms.⁵¹

Platea characters are physically close to the audience, without any mediating physical structures between the audience and the play. Here, backed by things of everyday life--city walls, stinking gutters, merchant houses, tradespeople's stalls--ordinary people of history speak. Cain kills his brother in Yorkshire, and then turns on the West Riding's other farmers, its workers, its merchants.

Movement onto the platea is the strategy of guild plays to make located figures of history, the big epic figures like Abraham and Noah, into ordinary people who have problems, sorrows and joys like those of the audience. On the platea characters are always understood as experiencing life as their audiences do. They lead them into the play, show them how to link the play and their lives.

In every play, the patriarchs Abraham and Noah stood on the platea to tell about their struggles to comply with divine orders. Surrounded by the crowd, a bewildered Joseph tries to understand the confusions of his life (N-Town and Towneley). The unmediated space is also where N-Town's "bare-legged" citizens hail Christ:

Here the four ceteseynys makyn hem redy for to mete with oure Lord, going barfot and barelegged and in here shirtys, saving they shal have here gownys cast abouth them; and qwan they seen oure Lorde, they shal sprede ther clothis beforh him,

and he shal and go therupon, and they shal falle
downe upon ther knes all atonys.

(N-Town, Passion Play Stage Direction, 285)

On the same level as the audience, mothers scream and fight
back at Herod's knights, when the men make the children

"hopp uppon [the] speare":

Owt, owt, and woe is me!
Theeffe, thou shall hanged be.
My chyld is dead; now I see
my sorrow may not cease.
Thow shall be hanged on a tree
and all the men in this contree
Shall not make thy peace.

Have thou this, thou fowle harlott
and thou knight, to make a knott!
And on buffett with this bote
thou shalt have to boote.
And thow this, and thou this,
though thou both shyte and pisse!
And if thou thinke we doe amysse,
goe baskes you to moote.
(Innocents, 345-60)

Hideous as this carnage is, the women's coarse invectives
seem to be shrieked out from among the audience, or even to
urge them to join in. Countless other unnamed victims stood
in this area, railing against vicious attacks by a
succession of cruel leaders or worrying about ordinary,
everyday things, like the local weather, their bossy wives,
too many children, how it felt to grow old, or how to get
enough to drink and eat. On the platea, Mrs Noah says she
would prefer to drink with friends at a local Chester pub
than go aboard the peculiar-looking boat. On York's platea,
tired-out old Joseph, with bones as heavy as lead, grumbles

about how he made a "bad barganne" the day he married a "yonge wenche" (Joseph's Trouble about Mary, 35). Close to West Riding audiences shepherds are consumed with modern rural anxieties. They complain about the ills of shepherds' lives in Yorkshire: being out on the moors at night in rotten Northern weather; having to put up with oppressive working conditions of modern agriculture, where the land owners make life hard for tenant farmers. According to the shepherds in West Riding's second play, no tenant dares cross an official wearing livery; such a man "as prowde as po" can demand whatever he wants from the small farmer, his wagon or his plough, and pay very little in exchange. From the platea audiences are assured that modern marriage is no better than modern work. Married men, shackled by their wives, must keep their sighs to themselves; Yorkshire's people cannot risk going anywhere in their local countryside where wayfarers are set upon by "robers and thefeys," "bosters and bragers" with "long daggers" (Towneley First Shepherds, 55-6). And on both sides of the Pennines, close to the people in Yorkshire and Chester, shepherds worry about "the rott." In Yorkshire's West Riding, Gyb must beg and borrow to buy more sheep because foot rot has killed his flock (First Shepherds, 40). On Chester's platea the shepherds stir up herbs and tar to cure the flock's "taytful tuppes" (lively rams). The New Testament's shepherds guide

the audience to a very specific, modern world and connect this mundane world to the birth of Christ. Before the angels' announcement, all the shepherds complain about their lives. Chester and West Riding shepherds (like Noah) have marital troubles; Chester's third shepherd has been ruining his wife's kitchen pots to boil up "salve for our sheepe" (73). Although these were the Bible's shepherds, they all live in a modern English world. The Chester's first shepherd lists the English herbs, like henbane, ribwort, radish, and egremont, that make a good remedy for foot rot.

Chester and West Riding shepherds were staged both as emphatically local rustics with typical worries and as the historical figures for whom there is a terrifying and universal sense of desolation. Yorkshire's shepherds, as well as grumbling about difficult wives, hard jobs, and sick sheep, talk of a loss of hope in life itself. For example, Gyb tells fellow Yorkshire people of despair so great that it makes him envy the dead: "Lord, what thay are weyll / that hens are past! / ffor they nocht feyll / theym to downe cast" (Towneley, *First Shepherds*, 1-2). He speaks a familiar lament, that happiness and prosperity can only be unstable and transitory in this world:

Thus this World, as I say
farys on ilk syde,
ffor after oure play
com sorows vnryde;
ffor he that most may
When he syttys in pryde,

When it comys on assay
 is kestenn downe wyde,
 This is seyn;
 When ryches is he,
 Then comys pouerte,
 hors-man Iak cope
 Walkys then, I weyn.
 (Towneley, First Shepherds , 10-18)

From the audience's point of view, the shepherds despair at the brink of the world's greatest moment, speaking to everyone in the crowd, whether city artisans, tradespeople, burghers, lords, rural aristocracy, farmers, or peasants, explicitly including the modern world in "oure play" and "this Warld."

History's ordinary people, then, the Bible's bereaved women, shepherds, Joseph, its unnamed men and women, its patriarchs, as well as John the Baptist and Christ, stand close to audiences, talking openly to them about a world very much like the modern life.

As well as offering a doctrinal reading, the dramatizations of the Abraham and Noah stories insist that they understand how the patriarchs connect to us. In the Noah plays, words connected the old world order to the new (Kolve 146). The time of the flood, for example, is identified as the day on which God would "fordo all this medillerd" as he will at judgement day (Towneley, Noah, 100); cosmic as well as earthly order is restored when "the son shines in the eest" (Towneley, Noah, 454). But at crucial moments each figure turned to the people standing

close and confided in them about his pain and trouble. In N-Town's Sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham, after being told by God to kill his child, anticipates with horror "this nicht" when he will slay his "awn son" (N-Town, Abraham and Isaac, 112-4). There is nobody onstage but him and his son and it is understood the son does not hear him. He speaks to the audience. Only they hear Abraham's words, as he draws them into his agony:

Alone right here in this playn,
Might I speke to myn hart brast,
I wold that all were well full fayn. (109-11)

Every play emphasizes Abraham's suffering. N-Town is again typical of the sacrifice episodes when its Abraham tells of his wrenching sorrow:

Now goddys commaundment must nedys be done
Att his wyl is wourthy to be wrought
but yitt þe fadyr to sle þe sone
grett care it causyth in my thought
In byttyr bale now am I brought
My swete childe with knyf to kyllle. (89-94)

Whereas doctrine laid stress on the story as an exemplum of obedience to God's will, these plays insist that audiences notice the human, emotional cost of complying with God's orders and the temptation to resist.⁵² The Bible does not deal at length with Abraham's pain, the horror he goes through. In fact, there is a tension between the well-known story and what Abraham tells the audience from the crux of all the sacrifice episodes. Many in the audience must have known what it was to lose a "swete" child. Whereas the

doctrinal reading showed how people relate to God, Abraham's address on the platea connects Abraham to the audience, particularly to their emotions. It puts up front the love of this man for his son, bringing the human story forward because it connects Abraham to the audience's daily reality, connecting to them, as Auerbach shows, not on the symbolic or the ideal level of meaning, but on the literal, on the "everyday and real" (Mimesis 138).⁵³ They who live in an uncertain world are asked to feel Abraham's terrible human doubts.⁵⁴ But audiences had an ironic perspective on the event. They already knew that the story had a happy ending; they must have anticipated the moment in the play when they would see the angel move forward and stay Abraham's sword. Yet the very human Abraham obeys in spite of not knowing this.

The patriarch, Noah, directed audiences to another aspect of daily life. The flood which wiped out the whole world was serious stuff, and a very difficult event to make sense of. Yet this disturbing, seemingly intransigently sombre, Bible story is padded out to step firmly into the world of medieval comedy. Noah was always portrayed as an old man:

And now I wax old,
 Seke, sory and cold
 As muk upon mold
 I widder away. (Noah and the Ark 60-3)

In the West Riding, throwing off his gown to work in his coat he mutters to the audience about his "wery bak," and the stress of having to build a boat at his age when his "bonys ar so stark." Noah's family life (N-Town is the exception⁵⁵) is from the contemporary rough comedy which, as well as a foolish old man, has a harridan and plenty of knockabout.

In Chester, the West Riding and York, the Noahs lead messy family lives, and all insist that their modern audience must live the same way. Both the main characters, the weary old husband and the rebellious spouse, openly ask for audience sympathy. Towneley's Noah complains to Yorkshiremen about what he will face at home, when his irascible wife finds out that God has told him to build an ark:

For she is full tethee
 For littill oft angre;
 If any thyng wrange be
 Soyne is she wrothe. (Noah and the Ark, 186-9)

Only in N-Town is Mrs Noah a supportive wife. The other three wives, always stubborn, often pig-headed, defy their husbands: Towneley's wife sits on her hill spinning until the very last moment; Chester's Uxor scoffs at the "Ffrenyshe fare" (Noah 100) her husband has built, refusing to go into it unless she can take her ale-drinking "gossepes" with her; York's wife will not get on board without her friends and cousins, and would rather send her

family onto the ship while she goes to town or gathers up her kitchen utensils (The Flood). Every Mrs Noah is as quick as her husband to demand audience participation. In the West Riding, as elsewhere, Uxor speaks directly to the women who stand around her in the audience. Towneley's wife invites them to curse all "ill husbandes" who have mastery in that uneven partnership--marriage. Anticipating that they will agree, she grumbles to them:

Lord, I were at ese, and hertely full hoylle,
 Might I onys have a measse of wedows coyll.
 For thy saull, without lese, shuld I dele penny
 doyll.
 So wold mo, no frese, that I se on this sole
 Of wifys that ar here,
 For the life that thay leyd,
 Wold thare husdandys were dede.
 For, as ever ete I brede,
 So wold I oure sire were! (388-396)

In every city except N-Town, Mr and Mrs Noah have a fist fight on the platea, and, before their arguments are resolved, the three husbands and wives beat each other up. In Chester, Mrs Noah bashes at her husband with her distaff. In Towneley's play three skirmishes end only when Noah's "bak is nere in two," and his wife complains that she is "bet so blo / That I may not thryfe" (Noah and the Ark, 503-4). Worn out, Towneley's old man directly warns any young men in the audience around him to avoid his mistakes:

Yee men that has wifes whyls they are yong
 If ye lif youre lifis chastice thare tong:
 To se sich stryfis wedmen among:
 To fight fiercely until. (397-400)

The open attempts by the Noahs to elicit partisan responses from their audiences were very indecorous stuff. As with the Abraham and Isaac episodes, audiences must already have known the official story well: that Mrs Noah would eventually enter the ark, and that the whole Noah family would be saved. So, while the episodes stage the well-known story, they also make audiences take note that this hero and his wife lived ordinary human lives, where aging bones hurt, it is painful to grow old (particularly when you have to do strenuous carpentry), husbands and wives do not always get on, people often prefer friends, their belongings, going shopping or to the pub, to complying with divine orders, and some people have to be coerced in order to be saved. Open address in the Noah episodes, then, puts forward the concrete human reality that in spite of frailties like the modern world's, the Noahs were saved.

The guild drama's versions of the story of Mr and Mrs Noah, particularly Towneley's account of the Flood with its three bouts of wife / husband bashing, veer too much to slapstick for some critics. Rosemary Woolf, for instance, looks askance at the Towneley episode where she considers a "fabliau style is most marked," even to the extent of judging that its author, the Wakefield Master, has "developed the character pattern of Noah's wife at the cost of obscuring the allegorical significance of Noah" (143).⁵⁶

Richard Axton, who examines several flood episodes, also finds that the Towneley play's "knockabout" tends to "get out of hand" ("Modes" 36). The episodes are certainly rowdy. They seem to demand active participation from audience as well as emotional engagement. But the tone of the episodes in no way distracts from the meaning.⁵⁷

The dramatists do not let the plays slip out of their control by this human slant. They purposely make the play into a participatory folk play, a ritualistic, "oh yes, you are! oh no, you're not!" game, in order to engage and position the audiences.⁵⁸ As in the Abraham and Isaac episodes, their address stages the audience. Onstage is the familiar world of modern problems, staged too by the voices of the audience when they shout out for Mr or Mrs Noah. She and her husband guide the play into modern lives. As they act out recognizable everyday tussles, they are the kind of familiar play figures the audience shout back at. Both features invite the audience to connect the play to their lives. Audiences all know the story; they have to be told where they fit in.

Some characters who speak to the audience on the platea are not part of the play's historical action. Some engage with their audience in a straightforward way; others have a more equivocal pact with them. Among those who are unambiguous are figures who guide the audience through the

stories, appearing on the platea between episodes, to announce the next historical event or to interpret for the audience those they have just seen. In N-Town, for instance, Contemplacio announces several episodes connected to the Nativity: the Conception, the presentation in the Temple, the Betrothal, the annunciation and Meeting with Elizabeth. He closes the series of episodes first with direct address to the audience as "you," the playgoers, then, with a lyrical cry to God to take pity on the world, involving them as members, with Jeremiah and Adam, in a historical community:

A quod Jeremye . who xal gyff wellys to myn eynes
 þat I may wepe bothe day and nyght
 to se oure bretheryn in so longe peynes
 here myschevys Amende . may þi mech myght
 As gret as þe se lord . was Adamys contryssyon
 ryght
 Ffrom oure hed is falle þe crowne
 Man is comeryd in synne . I crye to þe syght
 Gracyous lord . Gracyous lord . Gracyous lord come
 downe.

(Epilogue, Betrothal of Mary, 25-32)

In Chester a more prosaic expositor, the Doctor, adds narratives that are not staged and offers Lancashire audiences short sermons on what they should take away from the play. This cleric always stresses the importance to the audience of what they have seen onstage to their lives in Chester. First he sums up the Abraham play:

Lordinges, this significatyon
 of this deede of devotyon--
 and yee will, yee wytt mon--
 may torne you to myche good.

This deede yee seene done here in this place,
 in example of Jesus done yt was,
 that for to wynne mankinde grace
 was sacrificed one the roode.

By Abraham I may understand
 the father of heaven that cann fonde
 with his Sonnes blood that bonde
 that the dyvell had brought us to. (460-471)

Then he implicates the audience as "we" and "us," kneeling
 on the platea and saying

Such obeydence grante us, O lord,
 ever to thy moste holye word;
 that in the same wee may accorde
 as this Abraham was beyne.
 And then altogether shall wee
 that worthye kinge in heaven see,
 and dwell with him in great glorye
 for ever and ever. Amen. (SD and 476-483)

Each of these guides makes sure that everyone sees how the
 familiar stories affect their lives.

Often the guild plays stage figures from old ritual
 drama, from folk drama, sword or plough plays, or
 mumblings.⁵⁹ These characters tend to act a peripheral part
 in the guild plays, occupying a disengaged, unembroiled
 stage position, and moving casually in and out of the
 narrative. The Wakefield Master adds the servants Pykharnes
 and Froward to his dramatization of the killing of Abel and
 the buffeting of Christ; and the word-mongering Titivillus
 to the last judgement. N-Town has Den, a vicious court
 summoner; Chester has canny yet foolish Trowle. None of
 these characters ever fails to notice audience presence.

All the extrabiblical figures whose origins lie in folk drama have a word-mongering reductiveness and a slipperiness that veer to the diabolic. Devils probe at the audiences, verbally and physically. In Towneley's Judgement episode, frantic minor demons rush about trying to conserve Hell. One needs to call a council meeting like "a pere in a parlemente" (120). Another reminds him that to get to the devil's court they must travel "up Watlyn Strete."⁶⁰ Titivillus on a platea that is also hell mocks the women in the audience:

Thay fele.
 When she is thus paynt,
 She makys it so quaynte
 She lookys like a saynt--
 And wars then the deyle.
 (The Last Judgement, 264-268)

Reading a list of sins from his bag full of documents, he teases the West Riding about its transgressions, in this case, well-dressed fools who spend so much money on clothes their children starve:

Here be, I gesse, of many nice hoket,
 Of care and of curstnes, hething and hoket,
 Gay gere and witles, his hode set on koket,
 As prowde as pennyles. His slefe has no poket--
 Ful redles.
 With thare hemmyd shoyn,
 All this must be done,
 Bot sire is out at hye noyn
 And his barnes bredeles.
 (The Last Judgement, 233-241)

However, the master-trickster, the devil himself, uses guile rather than force to invade a modern world, setting the audience up as willing confidants. In The Temptation, York's

devil assumes their collusion in his plans. Before each temptation, and after Christ answers him, he confers with them. For example, when Christ rejects food, before turning back to Christ, he says to them as if they agree: "Ah slike carping nevere I kende / Him hungres nogt, as I wende" (The Temptation, 85-6).

The devil in N-Town's First Passion Play is the most strikingly polished insinuator. Unlike other devils who leap "in to the place in the most orryble wyse" (N-Town, Passion Play II,), this devil (decked out as a comic version of late medieval fashion), is an engaging smoothie. In this episode, there is onstage a locus representing hell. The devil comes from here at first, though ignoring its existence, and the locus remains visible to the crowd. But as he speaks, the devil moves steadily away from any association with his locus, positioning himself squarely on the platea, in the audience's world. The devil shows off his garments to N-Town crowds as if lording it over envious friends, preening himself on the balanced harmony of his costume:

Eche thyng sett . of dewe naterall dysposycion
and eche parte Acordynge . to his resemblauns
Ffro the sool of the ffoot, to the hyst Asencion.
(First Passion , 66-8)

History's other well-dressed people, its tyrants, draw audience attention to their appearance, unknowingly making themselves fools in their spectators' eyes. The devil, on

the other hand, consciously plays the fool as he boasts about his gaudy wear. With the "thy" and "thee" of intimate address, as if speaking to one individual only, he urges each member of the audience to covet and to imitate latest modern fashions, locating his words in a parody of N-Town's excesses:

Cadace, wolle, or flokkys, where it may be sowth,
 To stuffe withal thy dobbelet, and make thee of
 proporcion
 Two smale legges and a gret body (thow it ryne
 nowth)
 Yet loke that thou desire to an the newe facion.
 (77-80)

He invites them to admire his flea-ridden hair-do, a coiffure that may also refer to medieval Jewish style:

With side lokkys, I schewe, thine here to thy
 colere hanging down
 To herborwe queweke bestys that tekele men onyth.
 (85-6)

His friends are urged to look at every detail of his contemporary outfit, right down to the decorations on his shoelaces:

Of ffyne cordewan, A goodly peyre of long pekyd
 schon
 hosyn enclosyd . of þe most costyous cloth . of
 Crenseyne
 þus a bey to a jentylman . to make comparycion
 With two doseyn poyntys of cheverelle . þe
 Aglottys of syluer feyn. (69-72)

This devil is the very epitome of modern, and illegal, artificiality, as he encourages N-Town to profligacy, pride, violence, and envy, and to disregard for their sumptuary laws: "thou sette hem at nowth" (76).⁶¹

The devil draws laughter at himself as he peacocks among them (he must surely have leaned close to individuals in the audience to let them finger his garments) and at the same time he makes them laugh at anyone who looks like his parodies.⁶² This is the nub of his contract with them: it is purposely divisive. "By-holde þe dyvercyte of my dysgysyd varyauns," he says, referring to his costume (65). The words could equally well apply to what he wants from his audience. His intent is to split N-Town up into contending individuals. Even his "thou" (a spurious caress for his individual friends) is meant to fracture the audience community and to promote comparison and competition. Again he invites them to slide their eyes at each other: "A gowne of thre yerdys loke thou make comparison / Vn-to all degrees dayly . that passe thin astat" (First Passion, 81-2). By making fun of some people (such as those who can afford and are legally entitled to be fashionable) and at the same time assuming an air of camaraderie with each individual however clothed, he directly appeals to disunity in the audience. While he makes fun of members of one group, he reminds others of what they lack. As the devil draws those he asks to "giff me your love. grawnt me my Affecion / And I wyll uncloze . þe tresour of lovys Alyawns" (61-62), at the same time he stages them as divided, not diverse.

As we can see, in the guild plays talking directly to the audience, what I call open address, varied greatly. The kind of contract each address made with the audience depended on many factors of staging, where the figure stood, inside a stage frame or on the platea, how he or she is dressed, what verbal or visual allusions were made to the audience's contemporary world. Among the located figures, God, because he overlooked the playworld and the audience world, always addressed the audience as members of his timeless, universal community. Rulers, visually and verbally drawn into modern society, and connected to the audience by the abuse they hurled outwards, had a tense and comic relationship addressing the audience as their subjects. Lawyers ostensibly ignored, implicitly abused, the audience. Platea figures, including Christ, engaged with them as fellow humans and contemporaries. The extrabiblical folk-diabolic characters made their address equivocal or divisive. Each address linked the audience and play in a different manner. Each address could shift the type of connection to the audience depending on where the characters moved within the playworld. For example, the shepherds, framed by entering the stable, became more infused with their historical identity than when unframed they addressed the audience from the platea. What never changed was the identity of the audience. At every guild

play audiences were always and only modern people. As such they were openly addressed by the play as people standing in their local towns, the unchanging element of the guild play stage.

1.6 FOUR EPISODES

I look now at the way these various open addresses connect the audiences to the plays. It does not matter whether the plays are mounted as processional performances or as stationary place and scaffold productions. The basic elements of staging are always *loca* and *platea*. *Loca* announce a historical specificity; the *platea* always allies itself with our space. Both are set up in a specific world; the stage, whether located or on the *platea*, is first and always the audience's city, its alleys and walls, its sycamore trees, its towers. Every character can speak directly to the audience, even those who sit on lofty thrones. In every play characters turn to the audience to guide them towards their part in the action, not shifting their modern identity, but showing how their modern selves and the play connect. Different plays have different guides. Each shows the audience a distinct way to connect to each particular episode. In this section, first I look at how audiences are claimed as intimates, by more than one

speaker in the case of Towneley's Killing of Abel. In this episode I examine how the ways of speaking directly to Yorkshire people jostle with each other. From the brawling world of Towneley's play, I move to York's Pinners' episode and then to Chester's Tapsters' episode, both of which invoke their audience as members of a local contemporary world of work. In the last episode I move to the silence of Christ in N-Town's Woman Taken in Adultery. I examine Christ's unspoken words as an open address that is the centre of the episode's meaning.

TOWNELEY: THE KILLING OF ABEL

The Wakefield Master invents a servant for historical Cain. In this version of Abel's murder, three stage characters speak openly to the West Riding: Cain, his servant Pykharnes, and God. Each of them asks the audience to be a different kind of listener, and each address urges them to reject the other two.

First Cain: both he and Abel play on the platea surrounded by Yorkshire people. Cain makes his entry to the platea trying to control a team hauling a plough. Here he counts sheaves he has set aside for sacrifice, pretending his meanness is thrift. Abel is saddened and worried by his brother's trivialisation of the pious transaction. In this

episode, the God who awaits the sacrifice is evidently visible, present throughout, set up on a high seat or scaffold. Abel repeatedly urges Cain to bear in mind that this sacrifice is meant for God. He reminds his brother: "Cam, I rede thou tend right, / For drede of him that sittys on hight" (245-6). Nevertheless, Cain holds on to being a resentful Yorkshire farmer who treats God as if they are doing human bargaining. Throughout the episode, Cain is locked in an angry reductive particularity: he sees nothing beyond local Yorkshire farming troubles: bad weather, failed crops, no money, high taxes. He complains the priest has had his last farthing. Cain has a very narrow moral vision. He sees getting money as the only end in life; he demands his listeners share his view. His idea of sacrifice is tit for tat: God gave him poor crops; God gets a paltry sacrifice. On the platea, he says of God:

For he has ever yit beyn my fo.
 For, had he my freynd beyn,
 Othergatys it had beyn seyn.
 When all mens corn was faire in feld,
 Then was mine not worth a neld.
 When I shuld saw, and wantyd seyde,
 And of corn had full grete neyde,
 Than gaf he me none of his;
 No more will I gif him of this.
 Hardely hold me to blame
 Bot if I serve him of the same. (119-129)

Pykharnes, on the other hand, tells Yorkshire people, again from the platea, that it's possible to have no moral vision whatsoever. The servant opens this dramatization of

brother killing brother by greeting the crowd with a cheerful: "All hail, all hail bothe blithe and glad, / For here come I, a mery lad" (Towneley, *The Killing of Abel*, 1-2). One role Pykharnes plays is to parallel, emphasize, and, at times, surpass Cain's coarseness (saying, for example, that Cain offers God a sheaf no bigger than one "as he might wpe his arse withal" [Towneley, *The Killing of Abel*, 237]). However, from the very beginning, his more important function is to prod the audience towards a kind of depravity different from Cain's. Pykharnes abuses Yorkshire people. With obscene warnings, he invites them to watch the play:

Bot who that janglis any more,
He must blaw my blak hoill bore
Both behind and before
Till his tethe blede. (6-9)

Pykharnes summons the audience to the play in an ambiguous way, suggesting that the West Riding already knows Cain well: "A good yoman my master hat-- / Full well ye all him kan" (15-6). Pykharnes has a subversive affiliation both with his master and with the audience that parallels Cain's relationship to God. Striking his master back when he is hit, he flattens out a hierarchical association into a disturbing kind of equality:

Yai with the same mesure and weght
That boro will I quwite. (51-2)

Cain behaves similarly. He wants to force God into his own mould, to pull God into the human and to guide the modern crowd to do the same. After the murder, God calls out from his high seat: "Cam, why art thou so rebell / Agans thy brother Abell?" (291). Cain wilfully misunderstands; his reply intends to shrink the raised-up magnificent God to a rural hobgoblin: "Why, who is that hob over the wall? / We! who was that piped so small?" (297-8). This must surely have been a tremendously funny and, at the same time, disturbing joke. One imagines a huge voice resonating from an elaborate, mysterious figure located above the platea and audience. God speaks to Cain again, asking him this time: "Caym, where is thy brother Abel?" (344). Cain answers the question with an evasive question of his own: "What askys thou me?" (345). Again he tries to draw God and bulldoze the implied into the literal human interaction. The Yorkshire bakers, farmers, tilers surely know that God, speaking as he does from the high-up omniscient seat of Heaven, does not need information. His words announce (to the audience as well as Cain) what is Cain's spiritual and moral condition. Cain tries to browbeat God, and God resists. At this point the located God speaks out familiar biblical words that address everyone, historical people and modern Yorkshire men and women, sounding out high over audience and playworld:

I will that no man other slo
 ffor he that sloys yong or old
 I shall be punyshid sevenfold. (371-3)

The words link the biblical and the modern; the ban forbids everyone in The West Riding, its millers, farmers, butchers, shearers, bailiffs, and priests to touch the murderer standing close by.

Even though God commands that no one may kill him, Cain is nervous of the nearby English people. He orders Pykharnes to cry the king's peace to them. Not wanting to risk getting too close to potential killers, Cain places Pykharnes between himself and the Yorkshire audience. However, Pykharnes's version of Cain's proclamation sends out messages which mean the opposite of what Cain says. The servant's words sift new meanings from Cain's announcements, disintegrating all that Cain wants Yorkshire to hear. For instance, Cain wants the audience to believe that the highest human authority will protect him: "The kyng will that thay be safe" (428). Pykharnes turns this order into an elemental wish, irrelevant to Cain: "Yey, a draght of drynke fayne wold I hayfe" (429). By counterpointing each of his master's announcements with one of his own he reduces to a further nonsense Cain's already futile attempts to control the West Riding community.

Cain's and Pykharnes's proclamation on the platea turns what the audience has heard so far into three conflicting orders. God has spoken to them in their identity as members of a universal eternal world, as members of a community in which each person bears responsibility for the other. Everyone understands that this is a command which can never be repealed, ignored, or modified by any human person. God's single clear announcement carries a meaning that is unequivocal, stable and universal; and therefore irresistible. But now Cain asks Yorkshire to do the impossible. He wants to lead the crowd into the play either as those who will slay him or as those who will clear his name. Both are impossible roles for them to play. He attempts to invoke only part of their whole actuality, to make them join in his efforts to challenge God. And Pykharnes, when giving the audience his fool's upside-down edition of Cain's words, invites them to join in his aberrant, uncaring attitude to God, murder, and life.

The three voices present the audience with three incompatible moral visions: Cain's narrowly local, immoral one, which insists on the paramount importance of a selfish individual; Pykharnes's amoral one, which casually values everything and everyone, including north-east England, at nothing; and God's moral vision, which values all actions and all people, including the people watching the play. At

the end of the episode, Cain takes his eyes off his individual situation and sees beyond it. With a final gesture at the people standing around him he slinks off through the Yorkshire platea to the locus of Hell, where in a stall in the infernal marketplace, he will forever sell his grain. Hell, like the West Riding, is a town with streets and markets. Unreformed, Cain will go on counting crookedly.⁶³

Now faire well, felows all, for I must nedys
weynd,
And to the dwill be thrall, warld withoutten end.
Ordand ther is my stall, with Sathanas the feynd.
Ever ill might him befall that theder me commend
This tide.
Farewell les, and farewell more!
For now and evermore
I will go me to hide. (443-450)

Cain is still a farmer in a market, and the market is in England's rural North.

YORK: THE CRUCIFIXION

York's Pinner's Guild took on their city's episode of the crucifixion.⁶⁴ The daily work of the local community's artisans bears a clear resemblance to the activities they perform onstage as they attach Christ to the cross. The episode makes no attempt to mute this disturbing connection; on the contrary, the pinner's guide York's other citizens to look hard at the link between themselves and the people

involved in the crucifixion, to consider the connection between York's daily work and the soldiers attempting to place Christ's cross in a mortice they made. All the action for this play takes place on the platea where, close to the audience, four soldiers stretch Christ to fit the cross. York's pinners simultaneously represent history's ordinary underlings, ordered by "lordis and leders of owre lawe" to carry out an execution, and workers in York's here and now. History's tortores, like any workmen, are a familiar mix of efficiency and fumbling, ready to get on with the job. The soldiers show themselves anxious to do "this unthrifty thyng" well, as they prepare to "cross him." Haste seems to be of the essence as they set everything ready for "this werke." They have their tools to hand, "both hammeres and nayles large and longe." The cross, with holes bored into it, is laid out on the platea. The tortores order "þe ladde" to lie down on "þis tree." They remain standing, watching as he does so, staring down at him. So presumably do the citizens of York. Stretched out on the ground at their feet, Christ speaks:

Almyghty God, my fadir free,
 Late þis materes be made in mynde:
 þou badde þat I schulde buxsome be
 For Adam plyght for to be pyned.
 Here to dede I obblisse me
 From þat synne for to saue mankynde,
 And soueraynely beseke I þe
 That þai for me may faouere fynde.
 And fro þe fende þame fende,
 So þat þer saules be saffe

In welthe withouten ende--
 I kepe nought ellis to craue. (49-60)

The play continues, showing with horrific detail the way the tortores/pinners botch their work. They argue about who is responsible for each task. In order to "fetter" Christ to the cross, it takes four of them to wrench his limbs. Every violent move they make is intensified by their detailed account of their actions; they bring his hand to the "bore," using a short thick nail, a "stubbe," which will go through bone and sinew. Unfortunately they have miscalculated the strength of Christ's body when they bored the holes, and Christ's sinews are so shrunken that his hands reach far short of the holes. They resort to hauling his arms along the cross with rope. That done, all four attend to his feet, lugging again on a rope to force the body to fit the cross. But when they heave Christ up, the cross will not stand. They have made a mess of the mortice. Even though the audience hears nothing from Christ, they hear a great deal of grousing from the soldiers about how their shoulders hurt, that body and cross are a "wikked" weight. The soldiers also talk about how Christ is shaken asunder, that the "cordis have evill encressed his paynes" (145) and that the pain "pis ladde" feels as the cross drops into the hole is "more felle / þan all the harmes he hadde" (247-8). The cross teeters. They have to insert wedges to make it stand firm. Every grumble is spoken near the audience on the

platea. The cross, with Christ stretched on it, shakes about close to them, too. York's community are led into this horror.⁶⁵ Standing back to admire his work, one soldier asks "Saie sir howe do we thore?" (105) implying that he wants York's approval. Several times the tortores seem to notice that standing around them are people who might also lend a hand in their hideous task. Uncertain they can manage with just four of them, one says: "now sertis I hope it schall noght nede / To call us more companaye" (169-70). When one soldier complains that he cannot find his hammer, his query "where are oure hameres layde / The we schulde wirke withal!" (239-40) seems to invite the people in the streets to yell out the answer, for surely they can see where the tools lie. Throughout, York is always guided into being on the edge of complicity in the killing of Christ. There is an increasing and extraordinary tension between comedy and horror as York's citizens watch their neighbours perform, certainly recoiling at the work imitated, teetering on answering calls for involvement, possibly leaning close to hear the joking exchanges, pulling back from the terror of the episode. The tension builds as the tortores shout out at the figure on the raised cross: "Say sir, howe likis you nowe / þes werke þat we haue wrought?" Christ replies:

Al men that walkis, by waye or strete
Takes tente ye schalle no travaile tine!

Biholdes min[e] heede, min[e] handis, and my
 feete,
 And fully feele nowe, or ye fine,
 If any mourning may be meete
 Or mischieve mesured unto mine. (253-264)

His words ignore the individual men and the specificity of their request. Facing them and York he speaks to everyone, collapsing time and space, tortores and pinners, history's people and the crowd. The tension resolves. Everyone in York's streets, their burghers, maids, butchers, chandlers, as well as their pinners, are involved as those who must be and are forgiven.

What is particularly gripping about this episode is that the playwright does not leave it there. The audience is not allowed to rest, anguished by the sight of the cross, but ultimately comforted by forgiveness. Instead, while the tortured body hangs in front of them, the audience hears the soldiers mock Christ's words as jangling and prattling. They praise themselves for a job well done, draw lots for the coat, and agree not to squabble about the gamble. York's people are led by the soldiers right back into a very ordinary world. But now, even though they still stand on the platea, the soldiers no longer notice York's presence, nor do they refer specifically to York's work world. Christ addressed and forgave all people, biblical soldiers and modern citizens. Until now, the tortores have acknowledged the presence of York's people; the stage has closely linked

the historical characters and the people standing in the streets. In the last part of the episode the soldiers completely ignore York's citizens. The two identities onstage, historical and modern, diverge. The full meaning resides in York's working world, with the city's people, those who understand the significance of Christ's words.

CHESTER: THE HARROWING OF HELL

Chester's Harrowing of Hell begins with the release from Hell of Adam, Esau, Simeon, John the Baptist, and the repentant thief who was crucified with Christ. A dejected Satan sits alone in his framed space, "in cathedra." A local tapster steps out from among the Chester crowd. This woman walks towards Satan bearing the "cuppes and kannes" of her brewing trade. She will be a damned soul:

Woe be the tyme that I came here,
I saye to thee nowe, Lucifere,
with all thy felowshipp in fere
that present be in place. (277-80)

She must exchange being a "taverner / a gentle gossippe and a tapster / of wyne and ale a trustie bruer" (285-7) for whatever companionship the inferno offers. The tapster has earned damnation because she cheated her Chester customers. The audience finds out that the tapster served them short measure and adulterated her products with "esshes and hearbes" (295). She turns to face Chester and speaks to its

citizens directly, warning any tradespeople among them that if they do not clean up their business they will come to an end like hers:

Tavernes, tapsters of this cittye
shalbe promoted here with mee
for breakinge statutes of this contrye. (301-303)

Her first words have been addressed to Satan. Now she turns unmistakably to all her fellow citizens. Her "this cittye" and "here," her "this contrye," locate Hell firmly in Chester as well as its ale-houses, taverns, and inns. Her next words to the audience snap the two spaces, Hell and Chester, together, making sure they know unequivocally the two places co-exist. In her first address she uses "this" to indicate Chester, her and the audience's hometown; now she implies "this" to point to the nearby hell: "therefore this place nowe ordayned ys / for such ylldoers so mych amysse."

Having made it patently clear where hell fits into their lives, she lists what goes on among her city's crooked tapsters, telling of sharp practices such as "castinge malt besydes the combes, / myche water takinge for to compound / and little of the secke" (314-5). She describes wine-makers, who make drinkers sick by selling them adulterated or improperly fermented drink:

With all mashers, mengers of wyne, in the night
bruyng so, blendinge agaynst daylight,
sych newe-made claret ys cause full right
of sycknes and disease. (317-320)

Standing on the platea where no boundaries divide the play and the audience she invites the inhabitants of "this cittye" to go with her to "this place":

Thus I betake you, more and lesse,
to my sweete mayster, syr Sathanas,
to dwell with him in his place
when hyt shall you please. (321-324)

With her cups and kannes, her inside information on the tricks of the brewing trade, she is a very familiar figure. She is also a comic example of Chester's sinners. But the comedy and the realism of her character and words are not an end in themselves; they are part of a larger, dramaturgical strategy. These features cluster with the "this," "here," "now" she so insistently uses, and with an open address that explicitly fingers everyone in Chester. The tapster is unmistakably one of Chester's citizens. Her roll of local corruptions does not include grand, historical crimes. She is no Cain or Herod: her sins are the trivial crookednesses that happen now in Chester among any of this city's workpeople: its brewers, fletchers, cordwainers, drapers or ironmongers. Hell is a promise for anyone who hurts "this" local "commonwealth."

Chester watches the devils welcome their neighbour. Satan is glad to see his "dere daughter." Secundus daemon promises her sex and a perpetual hangover:

Welcome, sweete ladye! I will thee wedd,
for manye a heavye and dronken head

cause of thy ale were brought to bedd
 farre worse then anye beaste. (329-332)

The third demon invites this "deare darlinge," who in Chester has used "cardes, dyces, and cuppes smale," to hell's "endless feaste." Chester's tapster guides the audience to see hell's connection to ordinary everyday Chester. Her collection of strategies for locating the play in the audience's world is utterly in the native tradition: she addresses them openly, using "this," "now," and "here" to locate their world as an intimate part of the play, and using simple English words.

At the beginning of the episode, the patriarchs addressed Chester, and directly told the people of their joy at release from torment. However, the register of their words differs from that of the tapster's. Although these great men connect to the audience by their position on the platea, they retain historical dignity in their speaking. Their diction is not high-flown; they speak with simplicity, but the tone of their addresses is lyrical. Using familiar images of the Bible, they remind modern Chester of their historical lives. For instance, Isaiah guides the city to remember his visions:

Yea, secerlye, this ilke light
 comys from Goddes Sonne almight,
 for so I prophecye a right
 whyle that I was livinge.
 Then I to all men beheight,
 as I goostlye sawe in sight,
 these wordes that I shall to myght

rehearse without tarienge. (25-32)⁵⁶

Chester's account of the harrowing does not stop with the historical account. By extending to incorporate a local city tapster, Chester's episode does what Auerbach observes about medieval Christian drama in general, "it opens its arms invitingly to receive the simple and the untutored" (Mimesis 135). The tapster insists on the place of the concrete, the literal, the here and now in the play. This is what Chester might otherwise fail to see if they only heard prophets speak; these are the things that sum up Chester's part in the play. When their neighbour eyes them, Chester cannot miss where they fit in.⁵⁷

Even those among Chester's citizens who have not committed her specific crimes can't get away from the notion that every action, however petty, matters here and now--in Chester today and in the eternity represented in front of them by hell.

N-TOWN: THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

One of the most compelling dramatizations of the Christ figure appears in N-Town's *Woman Taken in Adultery*. Unlike other episodes in the N-Town play, which make frequent use of elaborate staging and are often multi-focused, this episode is simply staged.⁶⁸ In this episode, there is only

one locus, possibly a simple wooden frame, representing the door of the prostitute's house. The episode's dramatic power throughout depends very much on audience presence close to the action.

At the opening of the episode, Christ enters alone onto the platea. He addresses N-Town's people as the communal "Man," in an urgent present tense, linking the citizens to Adam, and to all people, for all time:

Man for þi synne take repentaunce
 If þou amende þat is amys
 Than hevyn xal be þin herytaunce
 Thow þou haue don Agens god greauns
 Yett mercy to haske loke þou be bolde
 his mercy doth passe in trewe balauns
 All cruel jugement be many folde.

thow þat Your synnys be nevyr so grett
 Ffor hem be sad and aske mercy
 sone of my ffadyr grace Ye may gett
 with þe leste teer wepynge owte of Your ey
 My ffadyr me sent the man to bye
 All þi Raunsoun my-sylfe wyl dye
 Iff þou aske mercy I sey nevyr nay. (1-16)

He closely implicates modern N-Town in his call to repentance and to seek mercy. He warns them too against failure to show mercy to others, against vengeance on their neighbours:

Vppon þi neybore be not vengabyl
 Agaeyn þe lawe if he offende
 lyke as he is þou art vnstabyl
 thyn owyn frelte evyr þou attende. (25-28)

When Christ ends his speech, a Scribe, an Accusator, and a Pharisee who are huddled together on the platea confer about the trouble Christ causes them. Like all lawyers on

guild stages, rather than explicitly acknowledging the audience as listeners, as Christ does, they turn them into eavesdroppers. N-Town's people, whom Christ has just given the new laws about justice and mercy, watch these men planning to trick him. They hear him defamed as "pat ippocrite" and "pat stinking beggere," words spoken by figures who seem to glare at Christ over their shoulders. The Pharisee hopes to embroil Christ in a fake dispute: "A fals quarrel if we cowde feyne" (57). Throughout their plotting, the silent figure of the Messiah stays on the platea, clearly visible to everyone in the audience.

Amongst other issues, the episode explores ideas about communal responsibility and public shame, and it persistently draws on audience nearness to the action to do so. For instance, Christ himself has talked to them openly about community. The conspirators, on the other hand, very much aware that N-Town's citizens surround them, anxiously refer to the danger of the "pepyl."

Near to them is the house of a social outsider, the harlot:

A fayre Yonge qwene here-by doth dwelle
 both ffresch and gay upon to loke
 And a tall man with here doth melle
 the wey in to hyre chawmere ryght evyn he toke.
 (69-72)

The accusators aim to use the harlot to catch Christ in a "ryghte good sporte" (66). Advancing to the house, the

conspirators roar for the "quene" to come out (in a tone very different from their deliberate, careful plotting). If necessary they are ready to shoulder the door down. A young man, his shoes untied, his pants off, rushes out. The stage direction reads "hic juuenis quidam extra currit indeploydo calligis non ligatis et braccas in manu tenens" (page 204). The Scribe and Pharisee hurl vile alliterative epithets at the woman, chanting with the rhythmic brutality and bravado that come from being a group:

Come forth pou stotte com forth pou scowte
 com forth pou bysmare and brothel bolde
 com forth pou hore and stynkyng bych clowte
 how longe hast pou such harlotry holde.

Come forth pou quene come forth pou scolde
 com forth pou sloveyn come forth pou slutte
 we xal the tecche with carys colde
 A lytyl bettyr to kepe pi kutte. (145-152)

The woman begs for mercy in simple terms: "ffor goddys loue," "for charyte." The audience hears someone shout: "Stow that harlot, sum erthely wight" (125). It seems as if N-Town's crowd, rather than the accusers, who lurk on the platea, perhaps nervously staring at the young man's dagger, is called on to arrest the young man racing out with his britches in his hand. The prostitute's customer, trying to get away from these bullying but cowardly clerics, also sees the citizens, and twice shouts out directly at them. First he treats the audience as fellow sinners, who surely sympathize with his narrow escape from the accusers:

In feyth, I was so sore affraid
 Of yone thre shrewys, the sothe to say
 My breche be nott yett well up-teyd
 I had such hast to renne away. (137-40)

Then, he shifts who they are, turning the people of N-Town into allies of the three Jewish officials: "Adewe, adewe, a twenty devil way! / And Goddys curse have ye everychon" (143). This parting echoes and parodies Christ's final warning, that each man should "evyr ask mercy whil he hath space" (40). The young man is comic, vulgar, trivial.

Then the action starts to turn nasty. On the platea there is shouting and hustle. The woman's door is broken down, the young man curses, the lawyers spit obscenities at the woman. The prostitute begs first for mercy, then she asks "privily" to be put to death "in þis place," rather than to be shamed publicly. She petitions: "lete not the pepyl upon me crye / If I be sclaundryd opynly / To all my frendys it shul be shame" (172-5). But the Pharisee screams at her to be put on show for everyone to shout at and to vilify:

Fie on thee, scowte, the devil thee qwelle!
 Ageyn the lowe shul we kill?
 First hange thee the devil of helle
 Or we such folyes shulde fulfill! (177-80)

It's a jolt that these upholders of the law can so heartily relish their part in this. They abuse the woman verbally; she is "þou stynkyng scowte"; they also look forward to beating her up. The accusator: "I xal geve þe such a clowte

/ þat þou xalt fall down evyn in þe way" (187-8). The scribe: "Such a buffett I xal þe take þat all þe teth I dare wel say / with-inne þin heed ffor who xul share" (189-191).

Although Christ too stands on the platea, nothing in the text indicates that he attends to the brawl in any way. He has no lines; there are no stage directions for him. The accusers call out to "sere prophet" that they have a woman to be judged. During the brutal insults and desperate screams, Christ stands, watching and silent: "hic ihesus dum isti accusant mulierem continue debet digito suo scribere in terra" (206). The stage directions suggest that Christ, crouched down, lower than the people on the platea, lower than the crowd standing around, ignores all that goes on around him. He has been writing, and continues to write in the earth on the platea. The accusers try to attract his attention, to badger him about how he would apply justice to this matter, but he remains silent, continuing to scratch the ground: "Jhesus nichil respondit sed semper scrybyt in terra" (207). He remains silent so long that the scribe is disconcerted. He calls out to Christ: "in a cold stodye me thinkyth ye sitt" (225). The stage directions here are explicit. For a third time they insist that the silent Christ goes on writing: and "hic ihesus iterum se inclinans scribet in terre." Then the directions read: "et omnes accusatores quasi confusi separatim in tribus locis se

disiugent." Utterly unnerved, the accusers separate and then go off.

Christ's silent writing must be a potent dramatic focus. He is a stooping figure who writes continually in the earth ("semper scribit in terra") on the audience's own ground, and very close to them, ignoring the frantic activity around him. The biblical account has Christ write only twice. In this episode, Christ's act of writing is prolonged. He concentrates on N-Town's ground.⁶⁹ Some of the crowd's view may be blocked. People may shift about to find new sight lines--Christ is crouched so low, they can't see without straining, making the audience rather like the accusers trying to see what he's up to. Christ's act of writing turns out to seem significant to those on stage, to the Scribe, the Accusator, and the Pharisee. They are panicked. Each interprets Christ's writing as broadcasting their personal sins. They shift about to see; they try to read. Separated from each other, they murmur their fears. The Pharisee, certain that his sins are written on N-Town's earth, is terrified of his fellows: "Iff that my felawys that dude aspye / They will telle it bothe fer and wide" (237-8). The Accusator is also scared of what his peers would do if they knew all about him: "If that my felawys to them toke hed / I kan not me from deth aquite" (243-4). So the conspirators skulk off the platea to find somewhere to

hide, not only from each other, but also from N-Town's citizens, who they assume have also read out the hidden sins.

The audience sees them slink away, but Christ does not acknowledge their leaving. He asks the woman: "Where be thy fomen that dude thee accuse / Why have they lefte us two alone?" (265-6). Safe now, the woman answers that they fled in shame. The woman repents her "lewde lyff." Christ forgives her, and turns his address outwards to N-Town:

Whan man is contrite and hath wonne grace
 God wele not kepe olde wreth in mynde
 but bettyr loue to hem he has
 Very contryte whan he them fynde
 Now god þat dyed ffor all mankende
 saue all þese pepyl both nyght and day
 and of oure synnys he us vnbynde
 hyge lorde of hevyn þat best may. (289-296)

N-Town's citizens are "þese pepyl"; these are "oure synnys"; it is the artisans, clerics, lawyers, and harlots of N-Town who are forgiven. They are also vital witnesses of Christ's writing. Ranged around him, they must surely crane like the lawyers to see what he scratches in the dust, as if their sins too might be inscribed in the dust of their own city.

On the platea there have been two kinds of address. First, the clerics holding tight to their law books, much as they clutch on to their repressive version of the old law, talk secrets, first furtively in a group, then as isolated individuals. They use words to connive and entangle, to abuse, to shut out or aggress on. Their world is literate

but enclosed, upheld by secrecy, trickery and bullying. N-Town is not allowed into their world. Its people are overhearers, not members.

Then there is Christ, the woman, and her customer, who include the audience in their open addresses. The woman is allied to N-Town by her unmediated place on the platea; in other words, no staging signals separation from the audience. The young man is made an N-Town inhabitant when he directly confronts its townspeople. The marker of their words is inclusive language ("we," "our") and silence. For Christ's silent act of writing also implicitly invokes the modern English crowd. Whether everyone can read or not, the whole audience can strain to make out what is on the ground. Perhaps Christ's finger did no more than make scratches in the earth. For the unlettered, the marks mean as much or as little to them as writing does; for the literate, they may also be puzzling. The point is that Christ's silence, accompanied by the scribbling, is not closed and personal, like the lawyers' words. It is open, fluid, and inclusive. The crux of the episode is the audience's involvement with, and its contribution to, the episode's action. N-Town is staged: the modern city is the community who can shame or be shamed, who wish for mercy and who must also show mercy.

Turning its full gaze on its audience, each of these plays ends by focusing on its audience. At the close of *The Killing of Abel*, West Riding people are left looking at their home ground, where Cain plies his trade at an infernal stall. After *The Crucifixion*, York's citizens are made aware of themselves as the people who fully understand Christ's words of forgiveness. As the *Harrowing of Hell* ends, Chester's townsfolk are shown that it is they who make up "this" "commonwealth" that now faces hell. Everyone in N-Town, at the close of *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, is left to choose what kind of community their city will be.

Every year audiences were staged in "oure play." When each guild play ended, its audiences were still onstage. For the rest of their lives they continued to live on that stage. They went about their ordinary business in their own streets and markets where once a year characters from history mingled with them and spoke to them openly, in the dust of their own towns.

CHAPTER ONE

NOTES

¹ Throughout, all references to the Wakefield play are from England The Towneley Plays; to the York play are from Richard Beadle The York Plays; to the N-Town play are from K. S. Block Ludus Coventriae or the Plaie Called Corpus Christi; and to the Chester play are from R. M. Luminiansky and David Mills The Chester Mystery Cycle.

² Lincoln, Norwich, and King's Lynn have all been proposed as possible sites for N-Town's play. Lincoln seems to be the favoured place. For discussion of the possible homes of the N-Town play, see Tydeman 136 and Cameron and Kahrl 134-8.

³ See Davidson 3.

⁴ In his examination of the characteristics of the four extant complete plays, Martin Stevens "insists on recognizing the cycle form as a generic entity" (ix). For a close examination of the four play texts, see Stevens 326-7.

⁵ For a description of medieval open-air staging, both processional and place and scaffold, see Twycross "Theatricality" 38-64. For a more detailed discussion, see

Tydeman. Also see Wickham Theatre, Wickham Stage Vol. 1, Southern Round, and Southern Staging.

⁶ For a long examination of York's processional staging procedures, see Nelson, Stage; Nelson "Some Configurations"; and Meredith and Tailby 69-90.

⁷ Stevens 189.

⁸ Robert Weimann makes a vital argument about the connections and "interplay" between *loca* and *platea*. However, he also regards the *platea* as neutral ground (79).

⁹ Twycross offers a clear definition of *loca* in English and European medieval drama:

There are a variety of technical terms for the scaffolds: scaffold, stage, house, and tent, which implies a temporary construction of "stretched" (tentum) cloth, either a booth stage or a pavilion as set up for the contenders in tournaments. Presumably they could be as simple or elaborate as funds and taste allowed. Their inhabitants call them houses, castles, towers, halls or bowers, which gives a sense of their function. They represent identifiable locations, such as Jerusalem, Marseilles, the castle of Magdela or the Mount of Olives, or the unnamed "seats" of earthly potentates such as Herod, Pilate or Caesar Augustus, or of psychological and moral forces such as the World, the Flesh and the Devil, enemies of God who dwells in the Heaven scaffold. ("Theatricality" 60)

¹⁰ Cain, Christ, and the shepherd remind their listeners that the stage from which they speak is primarily each audience's home ground (Shepherds 5).

¹¹ For a detailed discussion see Higgins. Coldewey points out that for the trade and manufacturing guilds the burden

of putting on the plays was often a heavy one. In cities such as York or Chester fines were levied in the case of a guild's failure to come up with the money for Corpus Christi performances:

In Chester, as in York, the guilds cooperated with the city. Cooperation, however, does not necessarily mean enthusiasm. In fact the fines may not have been necessary in the first place because guild members were not always prepared to spend time and money in support of these enterprises.

Coldewey also notes, however, that the plays brought in good business for the towns in which they were performed (86-87).

¹² For a detailed account of which guilds took on specific episodes, see Higgins 78-84. Also see Davidson. Tydeman describes how English guild plays were financed:

In Britain a variety of methods was employed to support drama: the means most often referred to is the tax variously known as "pageant-pence" or "Pageant-silver" levied on all the members of a guild participating in the performances or processions of Corpus Christi or some other feast day. The records of the York Glovers of about 1476 state that native-born guildsmen paid 2d. annually towards the guild's pageant, while "straungers" were assessed at 4d. In 1525 the Coventry Weavers received "of the masters for the pagynt money xvj s iiij d," while the Smiths in "6 Edw [1552-3] reseved of the craft for pageant pencys iij s iiij d," and the Cappers in 1562 accepted "of the fellowship for pageant xxxij s iiij d." On 18 June 1519 the Lincoln Common Council recorded that "it is Agreid that every man And woman within this Citie beyng Able Scahll be Broder & Syster in Scaynt Anne gyld & to pay yerely iiij^d Man & wyf at the lest." At Chester the Smiths' Company in 1554 was levying 2s. 4d. annually from each of its guildsmen and about 1d. from each of its journeymen, and in 1575 one Arthur Tailer, a dyer, went to prison rather than

contribute to the pageant-money. Such levies doubtless went some of the way towards meeting the necessary expenses of performance, bearing in mind that pageant-carts, stage properties and costumes could often be preserved and used again in subsequent years, although sometimes it was a matter of pride that fresh apparel and furnishings should appear each year. (226-7)

¹³ Davidson describes the production of costumes for the play by medieval textile and clothing industries (57-81). Meredith and Tailby list English and European records of which guilds supplied the plays, special effects, properties and costumes (101-147).

¹⁴ Chester's Early Banns, 1539-40, ascribe the episode of "cristes monday where he sat with his Appostles" [The Last Supper] to the "bakers & mylners" (REED: Chester, 32).

¹⁵ For instance, the York city memorandum book of 10 April 1541 records that the goldsmiths provided crowns and gowns for the magi episode (REED: York, 334).

¹⁶ Recorded in the House Books for 27 June 1482 is the following:

thys same day it was agreid that Iohn harper shall sell a vessill of white wyn that he has with owt ony thyng paying thar for to the Vintners pagent so that the said Iohn herper sell the said wyn for x d A galon. (REED: York 130)

¹⁷ Higgins 82-5 and Palliser 103-106.

¹⁸ In 1422 York's painters and stainers combined with the pinner and latteners to produce the city's crucifixion episode. In the Memorandum Book for 1482

it is graunted unto the said Craft of pynners that the same craft of pynners and Wyredrawers from this present day forward be on Craft that is to say þat all that makes pynnes or draweth wyre or makes ffisshe hukes or Shobokilles [shoe buckles] yerelie tobe contriborie of And to the upholding of þer pageaunt. (REED: York 128)

According to Stevens, the pinners made "pins, fishhooks, mousetraps, and other small metallic objects" (30). Tydeman discusses the ways towns and guilds organized, recompensed and disciplined their actors (184-222).

Early banns 1539-40 state that its city's play is to be mounted not only for the

Augmentacion & incresse of the holy and catholyk ffaith of our sauour cryst Iesu and to exhort the myndes of the comen peple to gud deuocion and holsom doctryne ther of but Also for the comen welth and prosperitie of this Citie. (REED Chester, 33)

¹⁹ Crouch examines the history of York's stationholders and their customers from 1399 to 1499, concluding that over the hundred year stretch the "paying audience was . . . largely composed of the city elite, the master artisans, and their households" (101). For Twycross's description of York's patterns of station leasing from the end of the fourteenth century to 1572, see "Places" 10-33.

²⁰ Coldewey observes that

the plays also were an advertisement for a town's wealth, power, status, and stability. These readily translated, as the Chester record tell us, into 'profitte,' 'common welth and prosperitie' (REED: Chester, 33, 115). Along the same lines should be mentioned what has often been noticed before, that the plays could act as shop windows

for a guild's wares and services; hence the peculiar, sometimes humorous, sometimes grotesque, pairing of guild and pageant: the Bakers with 'The Last Supper' (York), the Mercers and Spicers with 'The Coming of the Magi' (Chester), the Ironmongers and Ropers with 'The Crucifixion' (Chester). But whatever benefits accrued to a guild from such advertising and publicity, it should be clear by now that the willingness of its members to undertake the chores of supporting the plays, of self-imposed regulation, and any other duties required by the town, depended very much upon that guild's power to preserve its monopoly and to serve the welfare of its individual members. To be Pageant Master at York was a duty for a junior officer in the Merchant's Guild; it carried with it no status and the officer had to advance his own money whenever necessary, clear evidence that guilds were willing but not overly keen to involve themselves in the civic theatrical enterprise. (87)

²¹ Richard Beadle notes the play's "copious and demonstrative use of technical terms" from medieval shipbuilding. He argues that "these are some of the means whereby the dramatist creates a link between the daily labour of the York shipwrights and the parts played by God and their remote ancestor Noah on the drama of salvation" ("Shipwrights' Craft" 58).

²² Twycross points out that plays were performed each year during the period 21 May to 24 June, the time of the longest daylight, although York's long processional plays may have ended by torchlight (38-39). See also Tydeman's summary of views on how York's long processional play was organized (115-120).

²³ The Grocers' Guild lists among its expenses for its

staging of Paradise payments for oranges, figs, almonds, dates, raisins, prunes and apples (REED: Norwich, 343).

²⁴ Like Lady Macbeth, he treasures hierarchical seating at his celebration, and like her feast, his order disintegrates when Death comes to dinner and makes havoc of Herod's finicky arrangements.

²⁵ Weimann suggests that the "delicacies . . . did not remain on the stage but were passed out amongst the audience" (95). Rosemary Woolf, on the other hand, finds the tone in these scenes of peasant feasting "harsh and satirical" and compares them to Breughel's Land of Cockayne and its "atmosphere of coarse repulsiveness [imposed] on the never-never land of abundant food" (186-7).

²⁶ For texts of folk plays, see Tiddy's The Mummers' Play. The Revesby play, in particular, is of interest, with its repeated calls for silence, nonsense dialogue, its verbal inversions, and subversive characters such as Pickle Herring and Fool. Weimann traces in detail the continuations and transformations of many aspects of native English folk drama (mummings, Robin Hood plays, sword plays) in the guild plays.

²⁷ Richard Southam describes the characteristics of mummings and amateur plays in England (Seven Ages 40-103). Also see Wickham Theatre.

²⁸ See Dobson 159-191.

²⁹ Southern writes that "a typical opening line of the Hero in the Mummer's Play is 'Here am I, St. George, an Englishman so stout'" This seems to be what Trowle has in mind. It is interesting, too, that as well as being a participatory and spectator sport, wrestling or fighting (followed by restitution) is also an integral part of folk drama (Seven Ages 51).

³⁰ Owst quotes from a fifteenth century sermon:

A common game in use nowadays is that which the soldiers played with Christ at his Passion: it is called the bobbid game. In this game, one of the company will be blindfold and set in a prone position; then those standing by will hit him on the head and say--

"A bobbid, a bobbid, a biliried:
Smyte not her, bot thu smyte a gode!"
And as often as the former may fail to guess correctly and rede amys, he has to play a fresh game. And so, until he rede him that smote, he will be blindfold and hold in for the post of player. (510)

³¹ See Weimann 21-22.

³² Tydeman notes that similar mimed massacres and sword games were popular as early as the tenth century in Twelfth Night celebrations.

³³ The familiar story of the snow baby is used by the first detractor to slur Mary:

in Ffeyth I suppose þat þis woman slepte
With-owtyn all coverte whyll þat it dede snowe
And a flake þer of in hyre mowthe crepte
and þer of þe chylde in hyre wombe doth growe.
(N-Town, The Trial of Joseph and Mary, 273-276)

Woolf comments:

This sceptical scoffing is based upon the story of the snow-child, . . . It is the story of a merchant who, returning to his wife after a long absence, finds her with a small baby. His wife, frightened by his anger, then makes the excuse that one day when she was thirsty she drank some snow and thus conceived. Five years later the merchant took the child on a voyage with him and gave him as surety to another merchant. Returning alone, he explained to his wife that the snow child (nivis-natus) simply melted away when sitting in the hot sun. The author of Ludus Coventriae has moulded this fabliau plot to provided the detractors with insolent, taunting fantasies. (176)

Woolf notes that this story was "current in Latin poetry between the tenth and twelfth centuries . . . and later in French fabliaux" (176).

See also Towneley's Shepherd I for the familiar story of the Wise Men of Gotham.

³⁴ For discussion on the associations of these gifts, see Ross 180-198 and Helterman 73-115.

³⁵ For further information about Heaven's staging, see Davidson 91-97, and Meredith and Tailby 92-95. Davidson offers detailed descriptions about how actors were raised and lowered to and from Heaven's raised structure (81-101).

³⁶ REED: York I 55. This entry also notes the delivery of elaborate stage properties to the pageant master, including such things as yellow wigs as diadems for the apostles, gilded masks and a Heaven hung with red and blue clouds, gold stars, and sunbeams and rainbows.

³⁷ Davidson 61; Tydeman 211-2.

³⁸ REED: Coventry, 250.

³⁹ REED Norwich, 53.

⁴⁰ This is based on the twelve stopping places in York's play listed in Crouch.

⁴¹ Davidson notes that "kings would have required gilded crowns as well as garments of rich brocade or other expensive-appearing fabric" (66).

⁴² In Lincoln the city's aldermen lent silk gowns to costume the kings (Kahrl 53).

⁴³ Squires argues that the N-Town play highlights contemporary abuses of law, including those of the ecclesiastical courts where bishops participated wearing hoods and hats like those clothing the play's Annas, Caiaphas, and the two doctors (207-11).

⁴⁴ (REED, Coventry, 73).

⁴⁵ (REED, Coventry 73).

⁴⁶ References to his balls being repaired appear on 202, 220, 223, 229, 236, 241, 245, 161; to his club being repaired: 79, 181, 202, 288, 291 (REED: Coventry).

⁴⁷ Later Lady Macduff will see a similar slaughter of "all [her] little ones" (Macbeth 4.2).

⁴⁸ Chaucer speaks of his summoner's use of ecclesiastical court Latin:

And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
 Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.
 But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
 Than hadde he spent al his philosophie;
 Ay "Questio quid iuris" wold he crie.
 (General Prologue, 642-646)

⁴⁹ Tydeman points out that although

many medieval performances were presented without charge being made to spectators some people paid for a good view of the play from windows in houses that overlooked the performances or by hiring seats on scaffolds. In York, the city authorities accepted bids for scaffolds along the play's route which could then be rented out to audience members. (232)

⁵⁰ Craig 87.

⁵¹ God's located open address brought the modern medieval world into his; Christ's platea address allied itself with the audience's ordinary life. Mary too stood on the platea when she marvelled to the audience at the annunciation, or lamented her son's death at the crucifixion. Mary's traditional words of praise in Towneley's *The Salutation of Elizabeth*, with its mix of Latin and simple, native English was spoken from the platea. It begins:

Magnificat anima mea dominum;
 My saull lufys my lord abuf,
 And my gost gladys with luf,
 In god, that is my hele;
 ffor he has bene sene agane,
 The buxumes of his bane,
 And kept me/ madyn lele. (49-54)

Or see the Chester Mary's agonized and graphic cries on the platea space below the cross:

Alas, whye nyll my lief forlorne
 to fynd my sonne here be before,
 tugged, lugget, and all totorne
 with traytors nowe this tyde,
 with nayles thurst and crowne
 of thorne. (249-253)

⁵² Elliott explores the comic structure of the play. He

argues that "pathos is abundantly present but never for its own sake; rather it serves to heighten the peripeteia from sorrow to joy. . . . Moral conflict is fully developed but never into tragic tension" (171). Thomas Rendell examines stage spectacle in the Abraham episodes, proposing that these episodes forge links with others in the plays; for example, the binding of Isaac signals the connection to the binding of Christ at the Crucifixion (221-32). These are important figural associations. However, I think the most immediate (and possibly most urgent) relationship the plays urge is the one between Abraham and ourselves as suffering human beings.

⁵³ Isaac, too, is no cypher. He displays a child's anguish and terror. In the Brome Sacrifice he tries to interest his father in a sheep grazing nearby. In Chester and Brome he fears the blade, asking to be blindfolded.

⁵⁴ Rosemary Woolf takes a different view. She considers that some of the "amplification" made by the redactors of the Abraham plays are done at the cost of dramatic and typographical consistency" (152). She glosses over the doubts expressed by Abraham. In particular she does not note that these are said directly to the audience and therefore, I would argue, carry great weight. Her view is that

the dramatists . . . show in Abraham reasoned obedience tempered by natural human feeling.

Since he is a type of God the Father he can feel no conflict nor judge the situation as a tragic dilemma. The dramatists are concerned only to show what the cost of obedience can be. Just as Noah had done, though in far less testing circumstances, Abraham instantly expresses obedience to God's will. (147)

⁵⁵ In the N-Town play, Mrs Noah puts up no objections and joins her husband in a long prayer of obedience to God's will. This episode omits the building of the ark, substituting the story of blind Lamech, an archer who mistakenly kills Cain.

⁵⁶ Helterman, on the other hand, suggests that by the end of the episode "the operation of parody [Mr and Mrs Noah's behaviour] allows the audience to identify with this family, in which domestic hierarchy and a sense of community welfare have been established" (94).

⁵⁷ Woolf thinks Mrs Noah stretches audience credulity too far, and that she is overdrawn in an attempt to cope with the "implausible action" of someone choosing to stay behind in a flood (143).

⁵⁸ Punch and Judy shows and traditional pantomime in England still exploit this relationship between actors and audience. A recent history of pantomime by Gerald Frow is called "Oh, Yes It Is!" The phrase is obviously so well known it can serve as the name for a book, yet the phrase is not used in the book and no explanation for the title is given.

⁵⁹ See Tydeman 1-22.

⁶⁰ The old Roman road running from Chester to London.

⁶¹ Various sumptuary laws regulated the quality of clothing permitted to different ranks of society, from royalty to labourers, restricting certain fabrics, colours and styles to specific groups. For instance, in 1363 laws designated that the lowest strata of society, farm labourers and those whose worldly belongings amounted to no more than 40 shillings, should dress in undyed cheap cloth. Later, in 1463 a Sumptuary statute allowed only those who served in a royal household or who were sergeants, gentlemen, and esquires worth 40 shillings per annum to wear damask. Later still, under Henry VIII this fabric, which could be either linen or silk, was confined to those whose estates were valued over £100 (Davidson 114, 116). See also Youngs, who writes: "the sumptuary laws of late-medieval and Tudor England were concerned with the prevention not of social mobility but of social emulation" (110).

⁶² He also encourages the audience to admire his fine Holland cloth shirt, not yet paid for, and to want a linen waistcoat like his, even though owning one would impoverish them.

⁶³ This vision of Hell is repeated in Macbeth when the porter tells the time-serving farmer that he will perpetually wait at Hell's tables (2.1).

⁶⁴ Pinners are defined as "manufacturers of pins and other

small wire articles" in REED: York II, 922.

⁶⁵ Stevens argues that "the city of York itself in all its complexity, is really the subject of the cycle." Of the social criticism inherent in the play, he writes:

York . . . is a major city--a provincial capital, a regional if not international trade center, as well as the seat of an archdiocese--and to the extent that the cycle implicitly reflected life in the city and brought into conjunction its diverse and unrelated institutions, it is a more highly charged instrument of social criticism than any of the other cycles. (77)

For a discussion of the history of York's craft guilds, their make-up and the often contentious relationship of guilds with one another, and with the civic authorities, see Palliser. See Swanson for the changes in the power structure and regulation of the city's guilds, in particular in the control exerted over York's manufacturing artisans in the fifteenth century.

⁶⁶ Counterpointed with the addresses to the audience of all patriarchs and prophets are familiar Latin tags, words people in the audience would perhaps most associate with each figure. For Isaiah:

Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris vidit lucem
magnam.
(The people who walked in darkness have seen a
great light.)

⁶⁷ According to Rodney Hilton the tapster was a very significant figure in everyday medieval life:

It may be worth speculating that women may have played a role beyond the purely economic in the

development of the ale-house whether as brewstesses or as tapsters. Such places were common in early fourteenth century London and by the end of the fourteenth century were to be found in other towns, large and small. Ale-houses were places for drinkers, but they were also places for sociability, for talk, perhaps subversive talk. If we knew more about these places we might discover that the presiding genius was "mine hostess" rather than "mine host." The medieval ale-house, in the particular setting of the household economy, where women in the workshop, women stall-holders, women selling n the street were not as separated from the male worker as in modern times, might well have been a place where women had influence, quite different from the predominantly male working class pub of modern times. Who kept the ale-house where Glutton was tempted to stay on his way to church in Langland's Piers Plowman? It was Betty the brew-wife. Who was sitting there? Watt the warrener and his wife; Tim the tinker and his two lads; Hick the hackneyman; Hewe the medlar; Claryce of Cockes Lane; the church clerk; Peres the priest with a woman, Purnele of Flanders; Rose the dishmaker; all sitting with craftsmen, retailers (including a garlic monger) and various rogues. (214-15)

⁶⁸ The stage direction in N-Town's First Passion Play, for instance, calls for several loca: "skaffoldes" for Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, heaven, and hell, a "cownsel hous" where the Jews plot Christ's death, and Simon the Leper's house where Christ celebrates the Last Supper.

⁶⁹ I am grateful to John Baxter for pointing out the play's revision of the biblical narrative and sharing his insight into how the play emphasizes the concrete nature of Christ's action.

CHAPTER TWO

NONCE PLAYS

2.1 THE STRAINS

At the end of the sixteenth century, real London players impersonated a company of Athenian players. The Athenians--Quince, Bottom, Flute, Snout, Snug, and Starveling--are at other times carpenter, joiner, weaver, bellows-maker, tinker and tailor, artisans working at trades other than acting, like England's civic tradespeople who year after year turned actor and took part in their town's guild productions. Shakespeare's stage mechanicals, however, are given problems to cope with that the English civic guildsmen never faced. One is that Bottom and his friends, rather than putting on a play about their own and their audience's history and lives, must mount a fiction, the classical tale of Pyramus and Thisbe.¹ Another difficulty for the Athenian players is that they, again unlike most of their English early drama counterparts, are not wholly amateur but part-time professional actors: they hope that their production will merit direct financial

reward, a fee for performance.² Last, they have worries about their playing space unknown to English guild players.

The Athenian troupe's theatre is not that of English guild drama, their home town. They are booked to perform in the hall of their ruler, Theseus. So the mechanicals have to fit their production to their employer's home. At their secret rehearsal in the forest, one of their biggest staging puzzles is how to play in the house of the most powerful man in Athens, a space where they do not usually belong, on a stage which will be a temporary structure in someone else's dining hall.

All actors, including all those involved in the seventeenth-century London Dream production, must worry about pleasing their audiences. But terrors about audience response hold Bottom and company in a feverish grip; they fret about how to entertain and convince yet, at the same time, not anger an audience who controls their lives, nor frighten the ladies among the audience by being too realistic. Bewildered by the paradox of seeing themselves getting no money for an unconvincing performance, or earning death if they perform too convincingly, they allocate much of their rehearsal time, and a huge chunk of their actual performance, to sorting out ways of accommodating an audience from a world that is not theirs. The artisans' fears are at once ridiculous and based on fact. They have a

tough assignment. They have to perform for people in immediate authority over them, people who control all their outside-the-play life (for an employer who has been seen to be willing to condemn a young woman to celibacy or execution for loving the wrong man).³ They must entertain with important people who are not their neighbours, who do not share their occupational class and social identities--and they have to do it in that audience's hall, on the aristocrat's trestles and boards.

Shakespeare's mechanicals must juggle play, staging, and audience concerns that are utterly different from any encountered by the actors and organizers of the guild plays. The Athenian guildsmen have to balance how to get paid against the appalling thought that if a lion's roar is made too real it will "fright the Duchess and the ladies" and that "would hang [them], every mother's son" (Dream 1.2.76-8); they have to delight a social group different from their own, with a story unconnected to any of their lives, making the best theatrical use of an unfamiliar space that usually serves as a dining hall. The things which exercise these Athenians--the money, the story, the stage, and the sixteenth century audience, are the strains of what for this work I shall call "nonce drama", drama that although it had often played concurrently with, was preceded and influenced by, guild drama.

The big guild dramas continued to be played in the streets and open spaces of many cities until the mid-sixteenth century. But shifts in economic distribution taking place throughout England and Europe meant that provincial guilds faced increasing financial difficulties.⁴ By mid-century the power of guilds outside London had significantly eroded; many provincial craft organizations found the massive production costs of the cycle plays beyond their now diminished resources. Phythian-Adams observes:

It would seem true, therefore, that by the mid-sixteenth century, late medieval urban society and culture in the well-established towns had become too elaborate, too costly to be sustained by contracting economies and populations. (Urban Decay 178)⁵

The great amateur productions also fell victim to religious pressure. After the Reformation, the plays were subjected to performance restrictions, and producers were ordered to cut what was now perceived as offensive or unorthodox material.⁶ Above all, in the turbulent first seventy years of the century, with an uncertain settlement and strong fears of political insurgency, large gatherings of people were perceived as constituting a threat to the Protestant authorities. Those in power became very edgy about allowing huge crowds to watch guild performances:

The celebration of Corpus Christi could raise difficult problems for public order for those towns in which they took place. And plays could undoubtedly be unsettling, even when they contained no potentially subversive content,

simply because of their tendency to loosen social constraints and inner controls. A case in point is that of the York Fergus play: a straightforward cycle play on the theme of the funeral of the Virgin Mary, but which included some particularly hilarious slapstick comedy effects. According to its sponsors, the Mason's gild, however, it not only caused irreverent noise and laughter, but also quarrels and fights and lawsuits among the onlookers. There is no doubt that assemblies for play and game, whether these were of the dramatic sort, or had the character of folk festival, could lead to sedition. A Lent carnival at Norwich in 1443 precipitated a revolt. Sometime in the 1550s the staging of one of the cycle plays at York--the play of Thomas the Apostle--provided the occasion for a papist disturbance. The Kett revolt was sparked off by a play at Wymondham. All this is a large part of the explanation why folk festivals, like the Hox play at Coventry or the Yule Riding at York, aroused the same sort of disapproval in Puritan circles as did the cycle plays, and were done away with more or less at the same time. The sixteenth century privatization of the drama by the development of the play, the theatre and the professional actor parallels the privatization of religious and civic ritual, and arose from much the same causes. In the setting, then, the public ritual and public drama of the Corpus Christi feast no longer had any place. (James 28-9)

Government became increasingly uncomfortable at the idea of people attending plays that talked to them about a now rejecting communal identity, dramatizing a public self that had held religious and political allegiances to powers regarded as inimical to the present state. In 1563, for example, the feast of Corpus Christi was excised from the church calendar in the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer (James 21 note 66). Anglicanism and English history replaced Catholicism and universal history. In The West Riding, one of the last hold-outs, guild performances

continued until 1576, when an injunction was issued against its play by the Diocesan Court of High Commission, the same year that saw the opening of the first London playhouse (Gardiner 78).⁷ Gradually, however, during the century, each Corpus Christi production stopped.

In various parts of England, some amateur or semi-professional playing, outside the auspices of civic guilds and unconnected to the big moralities, seems to have remained as part of the sixteenth-century drama. John Wasson has found evidence of amateur playing in Kent, where parish church accounts show that plays, heavily advertised in surrounding districts, raised money for local projects, such as mending church roofs. He describes a very active Kent drama scene. For example, in the 1520s at Lidd: "during the decade players from 11 different neighbouring villages came to town to perform. The Kent records reveal that in the 1520s 24 different parishes sent their plays or bann criers to neighbouring villages" (73). However, records of small local amateur productions such as these die out completely by the 1590s; perhaps coinciding, as Wasson speculates, with religious changes and with the opening of the professional theatres in London. Occasionally provincial producers seem to have supplemented their amateur production teams with professional personnel. John Coldewey identifies the "professional property player" in the records

of counties around London. He describes how local communities paid professional theatre men to come in, usually from London, to organize and direct their often very elaborate plays.

The mid-sixteenth century was predominately the era of professional players. Thanks to the fine work on this century's players and playing by Richard Southern, Glynne Wyckham, Robert Weimann, William Tydeman, and in particular David Bevington, we know that there were many kinds of player among the wage-earning actors.⁸ At the top end of the social scale were those players who acted in the productions at the royal court. Henry VII and his son, for instance, favoured performances by their own resident acting companies (Bevington, From "Mankind" 13). Adult companies like these were permanently attached to the court and worked nowhere else, performing only for their royal employers and royalty's guests. These resident actors were, in effect, servants of the royal household, a job which offered a certain security, putting the players' feet firmly under someone else's table. The court also housed boys' companies, such as those who acted before Mary (a monarch who was particularly fond of children's performances) in Heywood's Play of the Weather (1525-33).⁹ Like their adult counterparts the boys' troupes stayed put, never touring outside the royal court.

Other groups entertained in the houses of the aristocratic or well-to-do. Sir John Paston, for instance, employed his own actors.¹⁰ Occasionally, some of these players, like a few of the court players, were not permanent resident companies, and were employed to perform only on special occasions, the rest of the time earning a living by playing around the country.¹¹ W. R. Streitberger, examining the Revels accounts for the court at the beginning of the century, finds that companies like these were much in demand, especially at Christmas. The Revels accounts show evidence of "well over 50 performances by acting troupes at court between 1491 and 1509, most concentrated during the Christmas season" (33), and that many different troupes of various types appeared at sixteenth-century courts: "the King's Men, the Prince's Men, and Essex's Men, the Players of St Albans, Lord Burgavenny's Men and as well anonymous troupes including players from France" (Bevington, From "Mankind" 35).

Among the itinerant players, the more fortunate travellers wore the livery of royalty or landed gentry and could thus be quickly identified by local authorities as having regular employment. As Peter Thompson points out, following the "Acte for the punishment of Vagabonds and for the Relief of the Poor and Impotent" of 1572, an act which brought the profession under the terms of the Poor Law

legislation, "the nomadic life of the Tudor actor made it unwise for players to set up unless they were licensed by and wore the livery of a nobleman" (171).¹² Other itinerant players, the unlicensed, unliveried groups (like the anonymous companies who d Mankind or the Croxton Play) were in a much less secure legal position as they travelled from town to town. Both unnamed troupes and those under patronage (like the King's Men) might include tradesmen fallen on hard times and dislodged from their home towns. For example, Bevington notes that the king's men numbered in its company "a merchant tailor, a tailor, and a glazier" (Bevington, From "Mankind", 12). The anonymous itinerants, however, were always in danger of falling foul of laws enacted to police the countryside and to keep the vagabond problem down (Gurr 36). Early in the sixteenth century, all travelling groups of players were very small, made up of four or five men only, meeting the demands of their plays by innovative doubling and great versatility in playing styles.¹³ Like American summer stock companies or the small repertory groups who travelled the provincial towns of England in the early and mid-twentieth century, the travelling troupes probably carved out an uncertain living, playing all over the country, in inn yards or wherever there was a suitable venue and a potential audience. By the end of the period when numbers in the companies had increased to about eight

(often now including a boy),¹⁴ most itinerant troupes had gravitated to the new lucrative theatre market in London (Bentley 3-11).

In contrast with the scope and unity of the narrative in the guild plays about the history of our world, the topics of the troupes' plays are both narrow and diverse, and, compared with the guild plays' two hundred year run, their plays come and go very quickly.¹⁵ Another type of medieval play, the morality play, had followed a structure and subject matter that proved less intransigent politically and religiously for later playwrights than the guild plays.¹⁶ Many dramatists remoulded the medieval morality play to fit the needs of professional playing companies. The morality plays' innocence-fall-repentance-redemption plot was more easily adapted to mid-sixteenth century concerns than the guild plays' plot of the whole of world history. This, and the moralities' mix of generalized human and allegorical rather than sturdily historical or modern local characterisation could better meet the new theatrical conditions, especially the reduced numbers of players, smaller amounts of money for props and costumes, and the necessity for moving from place to place.¹⁷ Plays from the mid-Tudor period usually confine themselves to a single theme, though altogether they cover a diversity of subjects, written from many points of view, reflecting and responding

to the tremendous religious, political and social upheavals which characterize the five reigns from Henry VII to Elizabeth I. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, many current political anxieties appear on stage such as the terms of the succession in Horestes (1567),¹⁶ and the nature of political authority in Magnificence (1515-23)¹⁹ and King Darius (ca 1556-65). Nonce rama also talks about the period's intellectual changes, like the growth of humanism. For instance, it dramatises humanist notions about the importance of education in transforming English society, as in early plays like Rastell's Four Elements (1517-18),²⁰ and later, Calvinist approaches to education, such as the representation of ignorance as a source of moral degeneration and damnation in Ulpian Fulwell's Like Will to Like (1558-68).²¹ Throughout the period, too, plays bristle with strident dramatizations of antithetical religious beliefs. Within a 25 year span, there appear on stage a virulent denunciation of Roman Catholic policies and practices (Bale's King John of the 1530s, for instance),²² a portrayal of Protestants as treacherous fools (such as Respublica of 1553)²³ and then the re-identification of Roman Catholic practices and oaths with fools and moral degenerates in plays like Enough is as Good as a Feast (1558-69).²⁴ Secular topics, such as economic bad management and financial extortion appear in All for Money

(1558-78) and Trial of Treasure (1567),²⁵ plays which adapt the old morality structure of innocence-fall-redemption, while inventing new topical allegorical figures to warn about contemporary political and social abuses and their consequences.²⁶ This allegorical-morality form lingers on in late hybrid history-romance plays like Cambises (ca 1561)²⁷ and King Darius (ca 1558-1565). Later dramatists (those who wrote for the intellectual elite) also draw on classical learning to deliver political advice as in Gorboduc (1562)²⁸ or to entertain, as in Gammer Gurton's Needle (ca 1550).²⁹

Early drama guild players staged their productions in their local area on their home ground. Professional players have to perform on someone else's ground. The Gentlemen of the Chapel and the Chapel boys, resident players at court or manor, performed always for their employers in their employers' own homes. The stages for resident companies or the troupes under contract for occasional performances were built out of whatever the royal courts or aristocratic houses could offer. In the case of the royal court, this invariably meant troupes played in a pretty sumptuous theatrical setting.³⁰ Plays written for performance at court show internal evidence of expensive production techniques and resources (Bevington, From "Mankind", 54). Court records and the texts of plays written for performance at court show that these players had to hand expensive

settings, lavish costumes, many actors, trained singers and musicians.³¹ But in the homes of the gentry, the players mounted their plays in the dining hall, a place which was extraordinarily a stage and auditorium acting space, and ordinarily an eating place. Richard Southern speculates about a typical hall performance in which the players would act before an audience gathered for supper, "setting up their play amidst the bustle of the servants, and to spectators seated at long tables" (128). He imagines a "long room with a space cleared for playing at the end of the hall nearest the kitchen. The players make use for exits and entrances of the two doors which led to the kitchens, with a screen set across the door to cut off draughts and the sight of the kitchen" (128). Plays such as Fulgens and Lucrece (1497)³² and Hickscorner (ca 1500-1520)³³ were evidently staged in much this way.³⁴

The players who toured the countryside had to adapt themselves to constantly changing stage conditions. They played in indoor venues whenever these were available. Records show that professional performances sometimes took place in "parish houses with large assembly rooms upstairs and churches" (Goodman, 155). More frequently, the travelling companies gathered up audiences in local market places or the inn-yards, possibly using the inns' galleries as audience seating or as part of the play's staging, and

the inns' gateways to control admission (Gurr 36). There is evidence of performances at various London inn-yards, the Bel Savage, the Bell, and the Boar's Head (Goodman 155). Sometimes these players set up a trestle or stage, the sort of wooden structure which seems to have been erected for The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom (before 1570).³⁵

Shakespeare's mechanicals have to deal with many of these conditions. Three facts of playing make all nonce playing significantly different from all civic drama. First, guild plays spoke to their heterogeneous audiences about everyone's reality, staging players and audience in their dramatizations. The later plays, on the other hand, although they might represent or talk about aspects of the world the spectators knew, offer a reconsideration of it, or urge action in that world, never attempting to represent on their stages the whole everyday, actual world, or the complete space and time of their actors and spectators. The later plays do not stage the audience. Second, most mid-sixteenth-century players, whether they performed solely before elite, or before mixed elite and popular audiences, were not artisans, who otherwise were carpenters, tilers or bakers; their craft and trade was acting. They were workmen whose first job was the entertainment of their public. Whether they were paid by fee for performance, by collection, or by direct subsidy, they were professional

players, paid by the people they entertained. In both elite and popular playing, players were distinguished from their audiences by their status as paid actors. They were not the audience's neighbours. Third, players no longer performed in a space which belongs alike to audience and player. In other words, the places in which these players acted belong primarily to their audiences: to either the social superiors who owned the court or dining hall, or to a community in whose local inn the transient companies set up. Plays were no longer produced and performed by the audience's neighbours, about the audience's whole reality; they were no longer played in the space the audience and the players mutually owned. Those who watched the plays did not know the actors, the story, and for most of them the play space is not their home. By the mid-sixteenth century, plays were not "oure" plays. Audiences gathered temporarily, united briefly for the time of performance. Players set up and moved on, subjects came and went, space was culled out only for performance time. Plays were performed for the nonce. Shakespeare's mechanicals, who wrestle with playing, story, and stage, when they mount Pyramus and Thisbe put on a nonce play.

2.2. OPEN ADDRESS IN NONCE PLAYS

Despite these changed facts of playing, nonce plays themselves continue openly to acknowledge audience presence.³⁶ Many of the old ways of recognizing audiences are still vigorous: the self-introductions, admonitory speeches, calls for room, for admiration, and for adulation. Platea figures still connect the watchers to the play. Characters either notice what the crowds are doing at the moment of performance, or they pick on individuals or factions in the audience. In the early Hickescorner (1500-1520), for example, characters notice that the audience is eating dinner while watching the play. Several times characters in its play world comment on the presence of "sovereigns" and "lords" in the dining hall theatre (2,546,767);³⁷ at one point they order a fresh round of drinks for their audience (158). The play's characters also pick out the young men among the diners (297,568), implicating the youthful male spectators in the play's narrative of grasping ambition by having the rascally Hickescorner enter from among the young men's "bosoms" (297). Youthful audience members at performances of Youth (1513-29)³⁸ come under the scrutiny of its reprobate, where Riot, hunting for the character named Youth, has to pick him out from the young men in the crowd. Both plays draw parallels

between the vulnerable young men on stage and those in the audience to push home the message that to be young is to be at risk. In the Edwardian Lusty Juventus (1547-53),³⁹ to be young is to be heedless. Its protagonist, a young gamester, Juventus, lonely for friends to sport with, turns to the crowd for company, asking them, "What shall I do now to passe away the day? / Is there any man here that will go to game?" (58-9).

Later, Elizabethan playwrights held on to the strategy of noticing the presence of the audience. In The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom (before 1570), a play performed in inn-yards in London or nearby, Idleness, a vice disguises himself to be a local rat catcher, a reasonable job to have in a pub courtyard, and talks informally to his audience:

Have you any rats or mice, pole-cats or weasels?
Or is there any old sows sick of the measles
I can destroy fulmers and catch moles;
I have ratsbane, maidens! to spoil all the vermin
that run in your holes.
A rat-catcher, quoth you, this is a strange
occupation; proclamation out for cozening of Wit
I can go hard by their noses and never be known
Like a rat-catcher, till search be gone. (460-467)

His speech is followed by a stage direction that makes it clear he keeps close contact with his audience: "Here he espieth Search coming in, and goeth up and down, saying, 'Have you any rats and mice?' as in the first five lines" (183). And in another Elizabethan play, Wager's The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Art Thou (1558-69),⁴⁰ the

character Ignorance, who is represented as blind, highlights audience presence at the play by his inability to tell if they are there at all. Peering blindly around, he asks "Is there anybody here in this place?" (1234). Many of the plays, even those presented to an elite audience keep up an intimate, confiding relationship with the people watching the performance, lords and servants alike, treating them as familiar companions, leading everyone into the play.

Heywood's Johan Johan⁴¹ (1520-23), for instance, relies heavily on audience proximity in the dining hall for its effect. Like Noah, Joseph, and bumlbers of the guild plays, Johan guides the audience into the play as sympathetic listeners to his complaints about his life, at one point handing over his coat for one of them to hold, becoming suspicious of the person he has chosen and snatching it back again. Throughout, the humour of this play depends very much on Johan's assumption that the crowd are his--and only his--understanding companions. For example, he confides in them that he intends to beat his wife. What they actually see is his spouse always with the upper hand. He leads the audience into a comic double awareness as he chats to them while fiddling with wax to mend a punctured bucket while, behind his back, his wife fiddles with the local priest.

Nonce plays often begin with an earnest address spoken directly to the audiences. Among the plays of the first

part of the century (plays which often closely follow the morality structure), virtuous platea-type figures instruct their audiences about life. Youth is opened by the figure Charity, who directly blesses the crowd as "you" at length and urges them to see the need for charity in the world:

Jesu, that his arms did spread
 And on a tree was done to dead,
 From all perils he you defend.
 I desire audience till I have made an end,
 For I am come fro God above
 To occupy his laws to oyur behove
 And am named Charity. (1-7)

In Hickescorner, Pity speaks first to the audience, also addressing them as "you":

Now Jesu the gentle, that brought Adam fro hell,
 Save you all, sovereigns, and solace you send!
 And of this matter that I begin to tell
 I pray you of audience till I have made an end.
 (1-4)

Pity warns them about the heedlessness of those wealthy people who forget that they live in an inconstant world. Mundus et Infans (1500-22), an anonymous play performed for popular audiences, also begins with an acknowledgement of audience presence. In this play, though, the opening speech is a vaunt, delivered by wordly Mundus, in a manner typical of the boastful kings of medieval plays. After demanding silence with "Syrs, cease of your sawes, what-so befall, / And loke ye bow bonely to my byddynges" (1-2), he explains to his listeners that he is everyone's king, including theirs:

Lo! here I sette semely in se!
 I commaunde you all abedyent be,
 And with fre wyll ye folowe me. (21-3)

As in the guild plays, fools make close contact with their audience, coquetting about the nonce stages, as they did in the medieval streets, showing off to the crowds, their supposed admirers. In Magnificence, in which Skelton, the play's author, parodies the idiocies and abusive extravagance of court life (the life of many watching the play), foolish characters chat comfortably to the assembly, assuming everyone agrees with what they say. Fancy speaks to the people gathered in the hall:

Now let me see about
 In all this rout
 If I can find out
 So seemly a snout

Among this press,
 Even a whole mess!
 Peace, man, peace.
 I rede we cease. (990-7)

The stage directions indicate that Folly then enters: "Hic ingrediatur Foly quesiendo crema et faciendo multum feriendo tabulas et similia (he enters "shaking a bauble and making a commotion beating on tables and such like" 117). Each of this play's many fools, boasters, and gulls treats the hall as a platea and assumes that he has friendly ears among the dinner guests; Magnificence, bedazzled by Fancy's cunning, thinks he is above the rule of fortune and shares his delight with us around: "For Now, sirs, I am like as a

prince should be:/ I have wealth at will, largesse and liberty" (Magnificence 1458-9). In this play, too, figures of retribution mete out warnings meant to include the contemporary world. Adversity, on striking down stupid and proud Magnificence, explains to the people in the dining hall that his role is like that of death: "For I strike lords of realms and lands/ That rule not by measure that they have in their heds / That sadly rule not their household men" (1939-41).

Carving out a space in which to play for the nonce is vital, and getting through the crowds to the playing area in inn-yards or a hall could be a problem. In Rastell's Four Elements (1517-18), for example, the taverner called in by Sensuall Appetyte complains that he has difficulty reaching the stage through the audience:

SENSUALL APPETYTE: Than I beshrew the[e], page, of
thyne age!
Come hyther, knave, for thyne
avauntage.
Why makyst thou hit so tow?

TAVERNER: For myne avauntage, mary, than I
come.
Beware, syrs! how! let me have
rome!
Lo, here I am! What seyst thou?
(551-556)

At the start of each play, playing space has to be freshly defined and established as other than the audience's space and time. For example, spectators out of doors at town or country inns, or indoors in the dining room, are likely to

be elbowed out of the way by the nonce play's vicious figures, in a style hardly distinguishable from the way medieval bullies and ruffians pushed and shoved their audiences. Though individual characters in the plays may poke fun at or admonish the crowd, the audience is the group from whom playing space must be garnered and who must be asked to suspend their ordinary identities, and assume a new identity as audience. Outdoors or in, characters pretend that the people who watch are obstacles to be pushed aside or weaklings to be cowed by ranting words. The old folk formula of demanding room remains of practical use until the advent of the public theatre with its containing walls and separate stage space. Occasionally the characters establish the play as a play by bullying the audience. In the early plays of the period, like Hickescorner (ca 1500-1520), Mundus et Infans (ca 1500-1520), and Youth (1514), the vicious characters are aggressive to the stage characters and audience alike. In Hickescorner, Free Will, depicted as immoral, a political gangster, and a social snob, insists that the diners in the audience recognize him as their social superior: "Aware, fellows, and stand a-room! / How say you, am not I a goodly person? / I trow you know not such a gest!" Pushing through us, he then mocks everyone as if they were his social inferiors, using words as very similar to the guild plays' Herods':

Make you room for a gentleman, sirs and peace!
 Dieu garde, seigneurs, tout le presse!
 And of your jangling if ye will cease,
 I will tell you where I have been.
 Sirs, I was at the tavern and drank wine.
 Methought I saw a pece that was like mine,
 And sir, all my fingers were arrayed with lime,
 So I conveyed a cup mannerly. (646-653)⁴²

In the Elizabethan period, audiences are also pushed around by the sinister characters. In Lewis Wager's The Longer thou Livest (1558-69), Cuthbert Cutpurse bashes his way through the crowd:

Make room! stand back in the devil's name!
 Stand back, or I will lay thee on the face.
 (636-7)⁴³

In the guild plays, audiences were jostled by ruffians, devils and tyrants in order to stage abusive and insinuating power as involving the modern crowd. In the nonce plays, audience space and playing space coincide--but briefly. The purpose of involving audiences has changed. Now space is wrested from the playgoers to allow the play to go on.

2.3 NONCE AUDIENCES

Anne Richter considers that most of the ways by which dramatists maintain audience contact (the introductions, the bullying, the confiding) constitute awkward moments in the plays, and she regrets that, after the demise of medieval dramatic forms, playwrights insisted on continuing to build

their audiences into their plays. For Righter, plays of the early Tudor period are filled with "meaningless audience address" put there by playwrights who are hampered by, and who have not yet learned to ignore the presence of, spectators (34). The main thrust of Righter's argument is that playwrights work towards an illusionistic theatre, one that does not directly allude to the presence of an audience--a goal which she finds both inevitable and desirable. But Righter misses the way that nonce playwrights make audience address function. They purposefully adapt the native tradition of open address to bear the strains of new playing conditions and to invent a new kind of audience.

In contrast to Righter, T. W. Craik values the way Tudor drama openly recognizes its spectators. Craik considers that the intimate alliance between the two worlds, expressed largely in the strategies of various kinds of open address, is one of the drama's defining characteristics, and for him one of its greatest pleasures:

The special dramatic virtues of the best Tudor interludes . . . are intimacy and spontaneity. The characters from their first entrance, put themselves on familiar terms with the spectators, and will turn aside to address them during the action; the action itself seems unpremeditated, developing from casual encounter between disputants holding opposed principles. (39)

The acknowledgement of audiences, disliked by Righter, admired by Craik, serves the practical necessities of Tudor

drama well. As in guild drama, talking directly to us does not simply serve to characterize or to give us information about a play figure. It is a powerful dramaturgical device used to connect audiences to the plays. Under changed playing conditions, the strategy shifts, but it still functions to tell audiences what to attend to and how to attend to it. In nonce plays, open address by characters makes the play happen, culling out time and space for the play. For example, direct references to audience presence identify us as the people watching a performance--identify us, that is, as audience.

Fulgens and Lucrece (ca 1497) offers an early and remarkable example of the new distinction between player and audience. In his play, Henry Medwall exploits the intimacy and the diversity of the watchers, servants as well as diners, of the dining hall. He uses address from the platea to construct the play. And he makes it do so in a double-layered fashion, by having a platea that notices the audience and a located play that shuts them out. The play presents two interlocked stories: a Roman tale cast partly as an ideological debate about the nature of true nobility, and a tale of two thoroughly English servants. The two servants act as guides leading the audience into both parts of the play. The home-grown story, from which these characters spring, frames and punctuates the distant Roman

story so that two contrasting dramatic modes are interwoven, one native, the other classical.⁴⁴

Medwall in fact, like Bottom and crew in fiction, had a difficult audience to cope with. He was Chaplain to Cardinal Martin, whose dinner this was, so was directly employed by powerful people who would be in the audience and whom he couldn't risk boring, or worse, offending, by potentially unpalatable material in the debate part of his play. In the Roman section, which leads to the debate, Lucrece, a noblewoman, is wooed by two suitors. She chooses as husband a man who has made his own way in the world, someone who has proved his nobility by his actions, rather than by being born rich and aristocratic. While Lucrece's reasoning was in some measure, as Weimann points out, a "subject of genuinely current interest in early Tudor England" (107), it might also have been perceived as a slight to those among the diners who had inherited wealth or power.⁴⁵ One method Medwall uses to defuse the potential touchiness of his audience is to have Lucrece speak directly to us and explain that her choice represents an individual case, not to be taken by us as precedent or model for our modern world. She concludes by asking us to take her decision in the right spirit: "I pray you all sirs as many as be here take not my words by sinister way" (767-8). Whatever the diners may or may not have thought of Lucrece's

decision, Medwall clinches its inapplicability to present company by having the two comics, the English servants, make it very clear that Lucrece has demonstrated poor judgement in opting for "a churl's son" rather than "a gentleman bore" (836). These two workers, staunch upholders of English hereditary class, are thoroughly platea people, and close the play by asking the audience to tell them what they think, apparently assuming (as did guild drama's Mr and Mrs Noah) that the diners will readily split into separate interest groups. Servant A wants to hear the women's opinion: "Is it to your guise to choose all your husbands that wyse? By my truth then I marvel!" (849-851). B warns "wedded men everyone" that, if this case is anything to go by, they had better watch out for themselves. So while Lucrece denies that there can be any general or immediate application of her decision, the servants thrust it straight back into the audience's contemporary world.

From the very opening of his play, Medwall lets the diners know that their contemporary reality is wholly separate from that of his play. A is certain that B's stepping out of the frame and into the play's central action will ruin the evening's entertainment for everyone. But in answer to A's fear that B will "destroy all the play," B assures his friend that everyone is still in an actual world, "the play never begins till now," and urges A to get

himself hired by the other suitor, Flaminius. Throughout the play, A and B take note of the facts of the actual occasion, the progress of the dinner, calling for a break to allow hungry guests to resume their banquet, playing mock hosts and shouting for another round of drinks for everyone: "usher! get them good wine there to fill them of the best" (1419-1420).

A begins the performance by entering the dining hall, where he introduces himself to the guests and servants, as someone outside this posh world that eats its Christmas dinner with a cardinal. Looking in awe, he urges these social superiors to go on with their feast, astonished that anyone eating a free dinner can seem so dull:

For goddes will
 What mean ye, sirs, to stand so still?
 Have ye not eaten and your fill,
 And paid nothing therefor?
 Ywis, sirs, thus dare I say,
 He that for the shott pay
 Vouchsafeth that ye largely assay
 Such meat as he hath in store. (1-8)

Servant B puts at rest A's worries whether the diners are enjoying their evening by assuring him that they will shortly see a play. B is insulted by A's suggestion that he might be a player, explaining that both he and A are simply audience members allowed to enter the hall "By the leave of the marshall" (149) as the other guests have. Shortly after this Cornelius, the rich born suitor, looks for a servant from among the audience ("So many good fellows as [B] in

this hall"). B seizes his chance to make a bit of money and to cross over the dramatic threshold by joining in the play as Cornelius's servant.

After the break, A and B resume their close contact with the audience. A hurries into the dining hall, complaining to them of having to scramble back in time for the second part of the play. Acting as theatrical compere, he recalls for them the story so far, reminds them that they will be able to make up their own minds about the argument, and assures the diners he knows that he and the rest of the actors want to "content / the least that standeth here" (Pt 2 42-43). There is a banging on one of the dining room doors at which A sends one of the audience (perhaps a servant) to check it out: "One of you go look who it is" (175). B enters grumbling that the household has been too slow letting him in. In the second half of the play's central action A and B play out well-known traditional roles of cheeky servants who get messages wrong, invert the meanings of whatever their masters say, and discover sex everywhere.⁴⁶

After Lucrece chooses the poor but noble man, A and B figure out that her decision means the play is over. They wind the entire performance up by drawing attention to the play's author and apologize on Medwall's behalf:

The auctor thereof desyreth
That for this season

At the lest you will take it in pacience
 And yf therbe ony offence--
 Show us where in or we go hence--
 Done in the same,
 It is onely for lacke of connynge
 Is there of to blame. (906-14)

B tells the audience the author has done his best and will accept amendments: "And so he wyllyd me for to say / And that done, of all this play / Shortly here we make an end" (919-21).⁴⁷

Robert Weimann's discussion of Fulgens and Lucrece includes a brilliant assessment of the dynamics of this play:

. . . the significance of the subplot is primarily a theatrical one. All through the play "A" and "B" rub shoulders with the humble folk in the hall; in fact, their social identity is dramatically stylized in a brilliant induction. Before the play begins they stand idly about the hall, but since they are "maysterles" (I, 398), and so in search of work, they hire themselves out to the gentlemen suitors in the interlude. The performance begins before they cross the borderline between the real world and the play world, for such a crossing assumes, at the outset, the function of a dramatic effect and indicates the first phase of a significant movement: "spectators" become actors, the masterless servants in the hall become servants acting on the "place." This extradramatic counterpoint is ironically underlined when "B" energetically denies that he is an actor (46 et seq.), so that "A" then fears he will "disturb the play" (363). (107-8)

In Medwall's plays, there are moments that never appear in medieval drama, in that A and B "cross the borderline between the real world and the play world" (Weimann 108).

The innovative and astonishing fact about Medwall's play is that, for the first time, there is a dramatic threshold to cross, and it is a threshold built by Medwall in response to practical necessities: the social realities of his stage, audience, and his need as playwright not to irritate those who govern his life. For Medwall makes much of the gap between acting and not-acting, and between those who play and us who watch, in his repeated references to the facts of performance. In other words he invents a dramatic boundary: on one side of the imagined fence is the world of acting, playing space and players; on the other (for this particular play) is a world of diners, servants, and eating and drinking.

Medwall sets up this barrier from the moment servant A enters. (A and B purport to belong to neither world.) They lounge about at the opening, but they are very obviously pretending to be servants, an impersonation which is underscored by A's mistake about actors and costume. When they enter what they call the world of the play they are never fully of that world either. Their stagey Englishness, recalling folk performance, jars against the Roman world of debate and verse.⁴⁸ A and B's comic concerns with contemporary realities continue in the classical world. And although their speech style and approach to life might align them with those in the audience, they subvert this social

parallel by also acting as hosts at the banquet, and by claiming to have been let in by the marshall like those who are dinner guests. Robert Jones describes A and B as creating "a realistic frame" for a fictive story (42). But A and B are as theatrical a creation as the rest of the play, except that, and very importantly, A and B, unlike the audience, pretend to know that a play is a play, and they tell them so. This is their most crucial function: to announce the theatricality of the whole event, and by doing so, to define everyone, the diners (those people presumed quick to take offence) and the servants, as audience.

2.4 NONCE SPACE

All the period's professional players, wherever they staged their productions and before whatever class of spectator, were obliged to carve out a physical space and to define it as a playing area, a place distinct from the ground occupied by us, the bystanders. Early in the period, Hickescorner's *Virtuous Living* establishes his own place and time alongside us in the dining hall: "And now here will I rest me a little space / Till it please Jesu of his grace / Some virtuous fellowship for to send" (30-3). Another early play, Mundus et Infans (ca 1500-22), notices the mixed crowd

at the performance in an inn-yard. First Folye speaks to those standing around: "No, ywys, but a lytell on my pouche; / On all this meyne I wyll me wouche, / That stondest here aboute" (560-2); then Perseverance speaks to those who presumably are sitting quietly:

Now good God, that is moost wysest and welde of
wyttes,
This company counsell, comferte and glad,
And sue all this multytude that semely here
sytttes. (749-751)

Increasingly, during this time, open address identifies the crowds as playgoers. Impatient Poverty (1547-1553)⁴⁹ salutes them, noting that they are gathered for a performance (674). They are told that they are a different brand of people from those on-stage and that the place on which they stand or sit is of a different nature from stage space. By Elizabethan times people who attend plays are often explicitly spoken of and to as "audiences," something that had never happened before.⁵⁰ At Enough is as Good as a Feast (1558-69), for example, the crowd is told by the actors that they are "our audience" (236), clearly a category of people different from the play's performers and characters.

In almost every nonce play, a guide greets the audience with some kind of request or explanation, and bids them goodbye with thanks and apologies. Sometimes characters who take a role in the play speak these addresses directly, at

other times expositors outside the central action speak the words. Prologues often make very practical requests like asking the crowd to be a patient audience:

Now Jesu the gentle, that brought Adam fro hell,
 Save you all, sovereigns, and solace you send!
 And of this matter that I begin to tell
 I pray you of audience till I have made an end.
(Hickescorner 1-4)

Occasionally they offer apologies for what audiences are about to receive. Grim the Collier of Croydon (revived 1598) opens with a comic prologue (one which might have been spoken in all seriousness by A Midsummer Night's Dream's mechanicals): "You're welcome; but our plot I dare not tell ye, / For your fear I fright a lady with great belly" (5-6). The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom opens with reference to the players waiting to put on the show: "The proof, the sequel shows, for I have done my charge, / And to the actors must give place to set it forth at large" (260) and goes straight on to characterize the crowd as people gathered specifically to see a performance:

Ah! sirrah! my masters! how fare you this blessed day?
 What, I wean all this company are come to see play!
 What lackest thee, good fellow? didst thee ne'er see men before?
 Here is a gazing! I am the best man in the company when there is no more.(260)

Apus and Virginia (ca 1559-1567), a play performed at court, still needs a guide to state that its players will

"come in to play":

But my goodwill I promised them to do,
Which was to come before to pray of you,
To make them room, and silence as you may,
Which being done, they shall come in to play.
(11-14)

The Interlude of Health and Wealth (before 1570) points out to its audiences that actors will soon assume roles: "Al these partes ye shal se briefly played in their fashion." Respublica lets a noble audience know that the play is a fictional construct, not part of their ongoing world, as "the thing we shall recite" (10).

What emerges from these examples (and from the many others that exist) is that each prologue and epilogue guides audiences to see performance as an event, play as artefact, and themselves as an audience.

The epilogues which round off Skelton's Magnificence illustrate the nonce status of these plays. Magnificence closes with speeches made directly to the audience. After Magnificence has been brought to acknowledge his sinful foolishness and has promised to make amends, three virtues salute the audience and sum up the play's moral import. Redress's speech contains a theatrical as well as a moral message, as he reminds the listeners that the play has been a temporally limited event:

Unto this process briefly compiled,
Comprehending the world casual and transitory
Who list to consider shall never be beguiled,
If it be regist'ed well in memory. (2506-9)

Circumspection reiterates the point that the play speaks to everyone about right conduct. He then explains to the audience how best to understand what they have seen and heard: "A mirror encleared is this interlude, / This life inconstant for to behold and see" (2520-1). The playwright introduces a double metaphor for the play which will appear often on the later Tudor stage, one that combines a theatrical and a moral assertion: the play is a reflection of life, an unreality; at the same time, it clarifies life's moral values, distinguishing sin and virtue.⁵¹ The third virtue, Perseverance, then directs audience attention to the play's nature as a piece of writing constructed for the occasion, that is, for their edification and entertainment as audience: "This treatise devised to make your disport / Showeth nowadays how the world cumbered is" (2534-5). The nonce play is an uncertain thing, capable of yielding truth (particularly to attentive listeners), but holding an ambiguous relationship to everyday reality. Circumspection explains: "This matter we have moved, you mirrths to make, / Pressly purposed under pretence play, / Shoulth wisdom to them that wisdom can take" (2548-50). Redress closes the play by pointing out the distinction between the people on stage and those at the banquet. Just as the play is a limited, special kind of event, the people who watch the play are a particular kind of community, a group come

together temporarily for a specific purpose and a single occasion, people who, now the play is over, will disperse, all going their separate ways. During performance, play and audience have inhabited a nonce world, limited and temporary, true for the moment only.

In nonce drama, when players and dramatists have to carve out a stage space separate from our world, they gain the potential to build around and behind it a world not wholly aligned with the audience's ongoing world. In the nonce plays, characters pop on and off stage--and so in and out of other worlds--with remarkable rapidity. For example, in Hickescorner and Youth, good and bad characters come on-stage apparently from, and go out to, the sleazy parts of London, to an unseen city of debauchery and violence whose off-stage presence helps to shape these plays. Bevington notes that the protagonist, Youth, along with Free Will and Imagination, talk to us a great deal about their experiences in this off-stage place (Tudor Drama 41). By contrast, in The Longer Thou Livest, the wilfully ignorant protagonist, Moros, is relegated to a disciplinary backstage place to learn doctrinal lessons. On stage, his religious instructors, Discipline, Piety, and Exercitation discuss how to reclaim Moros. Behind them, audiences can see the recreant poking out his head from this off-stage schoolroom. (The stage directions read "between whiles let Moros put in

his head" (38).) It is here that Moros is beaten by his teachers, out of sight but well within the audience's hearing.

Staging necessity drove on the invention of the off-stage. As a result of their limited resources, it was a theatrical necessity for many playwrights to have their characters go on and off stage to change costume and become someone else by doubling parts. John Bale used this off-stage world for the small company that performed King John. The play is a vehement denunciation of Roman Catholic dogma and practices. A convert to Protestantism, Bale was a vigorous propagandist for his new beliefs and wanted to reach as many people as possible with his warnings about the ever-present dangers of Catholic tyranny. Under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, Bale wrote King John for a small professional troupe of five actors, to be performed before mixed audiences.⁵² The play dramatizes the story of a king persecuted and finally murdered by members of the insidious network of the papal empire. King John owes a debt to the two major medieval religious dramas: to the morality play for its allegorical figures, and to the guild play for its figural approach to history. The play is essentially a history of England in which the present reign of Henry VIII is figurally connected to a series of other historical moments, from the old and new testaments, from

England's distant past, and from her recent history.

A vital theatrical contribution by Bale is his amazingly skilful use of a small company. Bevington describes Bale as "a pioneer" in the techniques of stage doubling (70). For instance, the same players who appear as weak-minded and spiritually vulnerable courtiers (Civil Order, Noblyte, Clergy), become allegorical figures like Usurped Power, and Private Wealth, and later change into historical figures like Stephen Langton, Pope Innocent III, Pandulphus, and Simon of Swinsett. These shape changers, particularly the arch-villain Sediton, dash on and off stage (much of the exiting and entering would have to be done very quickly), creating the impression of a sinister off-stage world, obscured from us. This off-stage world is constructed and maintained by on-stage open address. For instance, while Noblyte, Clergy, and Dyssymulacyon are changing costumes--and shifting shapes--Sedycyon holds the stage alone as he invites the audience to share his interests, at the same time suggesting the existence of a nearby place of depravity:

Haue in onys a-geyne, in spyght of all my enymyes!
 For they cannot dryve me from all mennys
 companyes;
 And, thowgh yt were so that all men wold forsake
 me,
 Yet dowght I yt not but sume good women wold take
 me.
 I loke for felowys that here shuld make sum
 sporte:
 I mervell yt is so longe ere they hether resorte.

By the messe, I wene the knaves are in the bryers,

Or ells they are fallen into sum order of fryers!
Naye, shall I gesse ryght? they are gon into the
stues;

I holde ye my necke, anon we shall here newes.
(626-635)

We have seen this happen only once before: in the travelling play Mankind, where attention is drawn to the immanent hidden presence of Titivillus, a diabolic figure, who will materialize only if the audience shouts for him and pays over their money.⁵³ Bale creates a much more fully-developed and sustained off-stage world than that of Mankind. Bale's off-stage suggests a place outside anything in the audience's actual lives, places over which they have no control and in which they do not participate. He manages to build around and into his play an ominous other world, a somewhere very close just off stage: the world of sinister monastic practices, political duplicity, and foreign treachery, a somewhere which is not one the audience knows by immediate experience, which rather parallels the events they see in front of them. While some characters disappear to these terrifying places, others, often alone on stage, hold the audience in conversation. Speaking to them directly, some characters engage them, while others change costume.

But while the audience listens, the characters' words are charged with everyone's knowledge that comic or dreadful

transformations are happening somewhere out of sight. The stage is no longer the audience's; they have given it up to the play. In the guild plays everywhere was the stage. Off-stage as well as on-stage used to be the audience's world. Now the audience world is eroded further. Soon there will be nothing outside the stage; the players will have claimed it all. By the end of the period, plays start asserting the ability to define all the space. Whereas audiences used to tell where the play was, now plays declare it, poaching even the stable reality outside the stage.

2.5 NONCE IMPRESARIOS AND THEIR TALK

I have at times used the word "guides" to describe characters who directly address us and who, therefore, lead us into the play. For this part of my discussion, I shall refer to the figure in the native tradition hitherto known as the "vice," as the "impresario." I prefer to call this figure "impresario" for several reasons. Impresarios inherit their dramatic existence from more than the morality play's allegorical vices. They are also, and perhaps more directly and importantly, inheritors of the guild drama's riddling, cheeky servants (such as Pykeharnes, Garcio, and Froward), its extrabiblical rascals like Mak, and, most

significantly, its devils, including Titivillus, the word-tangler. Impresarios' function in nonce plays mixes up a complex heredity. They are often named allegorically as direct parodies of sins or foibles; they turn upside down and reject authority like the rebellious servants; they are inveterate liars like Mak; and they are wordsmiths, arrogant, persuasive, and above all divisive, like the devil. They also like very much to have audiences listen to them and watch them. The term "impresario" implies too, I hope, that particular, always smooth, often sleazy, entrepreneur type who runs the show, directs the action and interposes himself between the central action and the audience.

Impresarios are guides of a peculiar sort, performing functions made necessary by the conditions of nonce performance. As I have said, nonce play impresarios have a voracious appetite for the attention of their audiences. From early morality plays like Mundus et Infans to the Elizabethan hybrid plays (the mixes, the "gallimaufreys"⁵⁴ of history-romance-tragedy) such as Cambises or King Darius, schemers talk intimately with audiences, often at great length. Weimann notes that Inclination, the impresario of The Trial of Treasure, for example, "occupies the stage for three-quarters the acting time" (155).

The figure I have called impresario has often been written of as the most self-consciously theatrical of all Tudor stage figures.⁵⁵ Earlier stages also depicted poseurs. Even in the guild plays and moralities, sinful characters carry an aura of theatricality into their engagements with the crowds. Guild drama's extrabiblical characters, the cheeky servants like Froward, bullies like Den in the N-Town play, devils like Titivillus and especially N-town's flashy villain, cavort about, self-preeningly flamboyant, with something of the impresario about them. They engage with their audiences to lead them into the play's concerns. In the medieval moralities, sins are sometimes deceivers dressed up as virtues, disguised and acting roles in order to gull Mankind figures; in the guild plays the devil is always a false friend to the audience. Weimann shows how the equivocator figure is deeply entrenched in native dramatic tradition, finding the origins for nonce drama's impresario figures in the word play and choric role of folk-drama fools (120). In nonce plays, the latent theatricality of riddlers and word-mongers (whose subversive nonsense especially permeates the Wakefield Master's plays) becomes manifest and, by early Elizabethan times, the impresario's "showmanship" (Spivack, 153) and his part in the performance as "producer, manager, and commentator" (Spivack, 156) define his relationship with his

audience. Ambidexter, the duplicitous impresario of Cambises, is an arch-schemer who drives the central action relentlessly forward. But he also filters what goes on in the play for the audience by commenting on the events, talking to them as an expositor after the Cambises' marriage, when he describes the king's wedding and the "royall and superexcellent" entertainments it afforded:

Running at tilt, iusting, with running at the
ring,
Masking and mumming, with eche kind of thing,--
Such daunsing, such singing, with musical harmony,
Beleeve me, I was loth to absent their company.
(942-945)

He turns this into a disquisition, first on his own ideas about marriage, then on marriage in general, that prods at the audience:

I muse of nothing but how they can be married so
soone;
I care not if I be married before to-morrow at
noone,
If marriage be a thing that so may be had.
How say you, maid? to marry me wil ye be glad?
Out of doubt, I beleeve it is some excellent
treasure,--
Els to the same belongs abundant pleasure.
Yet with mine eares I have heard some say:
"That ever I was married, now cursed be the day!"
(950-957)

Later he enters weeping, crying crocodile tears for the cruel treatment of the queen by her husband:

A, a, a, a! I cannot chuse but weepe for the
queene!
Nothing but mourning now at the court there is
seene.
Oh, oh, my hart, my hart! O, my bum will break!
Very greefe so torments me that scarce I can

speake.
 Who could but weep for the losse of such a lady?
 That cannot I doo, I sweare by mine honestie.
 But, Lord! so the ladies mourne, crying "Alack!"
 Nothing is worne now but onely black:
 I beleeve all [the] cloth in Watling Street to
 make gowns would not serve,--
 If I make a lye, the devill let ye starve!
 All ladyes mourne, both yong and olde;
 There is not one that weareth a points woorth of
 golde.
 There is a sorte for feare for the king doo pray
 That would have him dead, by the masse, I dare
 say.
 What a king was he that hath used such tiranny!
 He was akin to Bishop Bonner, I think verily!
 For both their delights was to shed blood,
 But never intended to doo any good. (1133-1150)

He is the audience's constant mediator with the play, and in doing so he also makes them the potential butts of his jokes and commentaries.

Like the guild plays' devils, tyrants, and extra-biblical figures, impresarios invade audience space. Sometimes the incursion is verbal, taking the form of insistent demands or outright abuse. Audiences are badgered by an insulted impresario in the pre-Elizabethan The Interlude of Wealth and Health (before 1577):

Why is there no curtesy, now I am come
 I trowe that all the people be dume
 Or els so god helpe me and halydum
 They were almost a sleepe.
 No wordes I harde, nor yet no talking
 No instrument went nor ballattes synging
 What ayles you all thus to sit dreaming
 Of whom ye take care?
 Of my coming ye may be glad. (1-9)

Or they may demand action from the people in the inn-yard or hall. In The Longer Thou Livest (1569) Wrath expects his appearance to reduce the crowd to acts of homage:

No God's mercy? no reverence? no honour?
 No cap off? No knee bowed? No homage?
 Who am I? Is there no more good mower?
 I-trow, you know not me nor my lineage. (1038-41)

Just as the guild drama's devil acts as a guide who would, if the audience believed him, break them up into contending individuals, fracture any sense of community that they might have, or that is elsewhere fostered by the play, so the nonce impresario often singles out individual members of the audience. In the Elizabethan Like Will to Like (whose cautionary message is that villains and fools attract their own kind), Nichol Newfangle picks on the women among the crowd: "How say you, woman? you that stand in the angle? / Were you never acquainted with Nichol Newfangle?" (5).⁵⁶ This clothes-horse impresario is also a gamester, and invites the audience to gamble with him. At one point in the play, he enters with a "knave of clubs in hand" which "as soon as he speaketh he offereth up to one of the men or boys standing by" (4). He makes sure that the individual gets the message, insisting, "Stoop, gentle knave and take up your brother." At the end of the play, when Cuthbert Cutpurse and Pierce Pickpurs (who, Newfangle reminds the audience, have plied their trade amongst them while they've been watching the play) get their just deserts, Newfangle is

in at the kill, ensuring that the audience also feels implicated: "he bringeth in with him a bag, a staff, a bottle, and two halters, going about the place, showing it unto the audience" (67).

Nichol Newfangle turns out to be as careless of his own spiritual fate as of that of his companions, riding off cheerfully to Hell on Lucifer's back. All impresarios demonstrate a similar lack of commitment to any moral or ideological values, either in the play or the audience world. They also seem to have no belief whatsoever in the reality of either world.⁵⁷ They erect a rim to stand on where they talk to both, noticing that both audience and the play can be seen but never admitting that either has any substantial actuality. Like the extrabiblical figures of Corpus Christi, their ontological position with regard to play and audience is an ambiguous one. Although famous impresarios, Newfangle, Haphazard (Apus and Virginia), and Ambidexter (Cambises), are part of the narrative of the play's main action, their contract with it and with the audience is eminently unplaceable.

All nonce play impresarios display a particular propensity for talking about, as well as to, their public. They riddle with and unsettle meaning in play and audience worlds, guiding their listeners into a confused world. Early on in the period, impresario figures make it clear

that they will not be tied down to any clear statements about either world:

Lo sirs, here is a fair company, God us save!
 For if any of us three be mayor of London,
 Iwis, iwis, I will ride to Rome on my thumb.
 Alas, a, see! Is not this a great farce?
 I would they were in a mill pool above the arse,
 And then, I durst warrant, they would depart anon.
 (Hickescorner 443-8)

In their self-definitions (something they offer with great frequency), they are just as equivocal, making it virtually impossible to read any certain identity in what they say about themselves. Haphazard gives a voluble and alliterative but indecipherable self-description:

Yea, but what am I? a scholar, or a schoolmaster,
 or else some youth.
 A lawyer, a student, or else a country clown:
 A broom-man, a basket-maker, or a baker of pies,
 A flesh or a fishmonger, or a sower of lies?
 A louse or a louser, a leek or a lark,
 A dreamer, a drumble, a fire or a spark?
 A caitiff, a cutthroat, a creeper in corners,
 A hairbrain, a hangman, or a grafter of horners?
 By the gods, I know not how best to devise,
 My name or my property well to disguise.
 A merchant, a May-pole, a man or a mackerel,
 A crab or a crevis, a crane or a cockerel?
 Most of all these my nature doth enjoy;
 Sometime I advance them, sometime I destroy
 As big as a beggar, as fat as a fool,
 As true as a tinker, as rich as an owl:
 With hey-trick, how troll, troy-trip and troy-
 trace,
 Troll-hazard with a vengeance, I beshrew his
 knave's face;
 For tro and troll-hazard keep such a range,
 That poor Haphazard was never so strange:
 But yet, Haphazard, be of good cheer,
 Go play and repast thee, man, be merry to yere.
 (Apilus and Virginia 181-206)

Although the impresarios' open address is not the disconnected, ritualistic riddling of the folk-play fool, nevertheless the words of these guides do not make full or comprehensible sense either in the world depicted on-stage or in ordinary experience. In The Trial of Treasure, for example, Inclination comes on-stage and describes where he has come from in a way that, while it makes reference to known locations in the audience's world, also so scrambles up geography, history, myth, sense and nonsense that, in the end, he seems to have appeared out of nowhere:

I can remember since Noe's ship
 Was made, and builded on Salisbury Plain;
 The same year the weathercock of Paul's caught the
 pip,
 So that Bow-bell was like much woe to sustain.
 I can remember, I am so old,
 Since Paradise gates were watched by night;
 And when Vulcanus was made a cuckold,
 Among the great gods I appeared in sight.
 Nay, for all you smiling, I tell you true.
 No, no, ye will not know me now;
 The mighty on the earth I do subdue.
 Tush, if you will give me leave, I'll tell ye how;
 Now, in good faith, I care not greatly,
 Although I declare my daily increase;
 But then these gentlemen will be angry
 Therefore I think it best to hold my peace:
 Nay, I beseech you, let the matter stay,
 For I would not for twenty pounds come in their
 hands;
 For if there should chance to be but one Dalila
 By the mass, they would bind me in Samson's bonds!
 (211-2)

The impresario refers his comments directly to the audience, and his pact with them is an immediate one. Yet his words simultaneously deny what they hear in the play or

know as reality. The impresario always imports recognizable fragments of everyday life into the fictional discourse of the play, but he rearranges them and fuses them with nonsense making a new, unrecognizable, unstable reality. This is what he guides his audiences into.⁵⁶

For the impresario takes total charge of both the play and the audience--in other words, he controls a theatre. Play characters and audience people are no longer "us": audiences have become "you," people who are separate from, and do not belong to the play, except as observers. This entrepreneur, barker, master-of-ceremonies tells everyone who they are and what to do. He organizes the crowds as audience to watch a story they do not know. He instructs them that this event, into which they move for the nonce, will ignore the familiar rules of life. His main message to audiences is to leave their daily reality behind them. They do not need it--and it will not help.

2.6 INVENTED AS AUDIENCE

Shakespeare's mechanicals try to round off their nonce play with an epilogue. However, neither Theseus nor Shakespeare allows them a final address to their audience. Instead, Puck gets to make excuses directly to the London

crowd. Puck speaks as impresario of the whole play:

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this and all is mended,
 That you have but slumbr'd here
 While these visions did appear.
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream,
 Gentles do not reprehend.
 If you pardon we will mend
 And as I am an honest Puck,
 If we have unearned luck
 Now to scape the serpent's tongue
 We will make amends ere long;
 Else the Puck a liar call
 So, good night unto you all.
 Give me your hands if we be friends,
 And Robin shall restore amends. (5.1.423-438)

Although the professional player's closing speech is full of open references to the London audience, they are a community very different from the people on-stage. The audience in the playhouse are "you," while the on-stage player-characters are "we." He invites "you," the audience, to approve of "us," the players, and to applaud. The two communities become "we" and "friends" under these conditions only, brought together by the playhouse, where each pursues distinct roles. In Puck's words, we hear Shakespeare's inheritance from the nonce plays: players who are always professional actors, playing on a stage separated from the auditorium, to an audience already invented as audience to a story that is not one they already know before they see the play. Shakespeare inherits, too, an impresario speaker whose function it is to mediate between these disjunctive worlds of "us" and "you." The native tradition of open

address to the audience shifts again when the permanent playhouses set up business.

CHAPTER TWO

NOTES

¹ All references to A Midsummer Night's Dream are to the Riverside edition.

² Some players in the guild drama received payment for their performances. The Herods and Pilates were notoriously the best paid. Occasionally, as in the case of New Romney in 1560, a professional "devyser" or producer was called in to help organize the play. However, guild plays were predominantly amateur. Acting was more commonly rewarded with a good breakfast before the performance than money. See Tydeman 203-7.

³ Using the royal "we," Theseus reminds Hermia that Athenian law rather than he will condemn her if she refuses to obey her father's wish for her to marry Demetrius: "Or else the law of Athens yields you up / (Which by no means we may extenuate) / To death or to a vow of single life" (1.1.119-121).

⁴ Phythian-Adams concludes:

With certain notable exceptions, by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries even the more important towns and cities were under pressure; so much so indeed, that the period 1520-1570, the culminating years of the period, might well be regarded as a time of acute urban crisis. The two major elements in that crisis were,

externally, the threatening growth of rural competition and, internally, the costly disincentives to urban residence. The result seems to have been a trend towards what could be described as de-urbanization from which, apart for the exceptions noted, the leading market towns appear to have been economically but not demographically the main beneficiaries. (183)

Swanson also describes changes in the fortunes of the guilds in late fifteenth-century York, a city that supported a massive play (53).

⁵ Coldewey examines the declining prosperity of cities and their trade guilds during the sixteenth century:

. . . many factors contributed to the demise of the cycle plays, and these varied widely in individual towns and cities. But it is fair to say, given the steady deterioration of their mutually beneficial arrangements, along with the widespread decline, side by side, of towns and guilds in the face of the demographic and economic crises, that the demise of these plays might be forecast from a time well before the reformation. In any case it must be stressed that an important and continuing element to be reckoned with in both the rise and the demise of these craft plays was economic. (89)

On the widespread economic decline see also Phythian-Adams Desolation, Phythian-Adams "Ceremony," and Dobson 265-286.

⁶ Both Wickham and Gardiner assert that from Henry VIII's reign the plays were suppressed by the state and by the Protestant church (Gardiner 47-8; Wickham Stage vol.1 117). Bills, on the other hand, argues that "the notion of a conscious campaign against [the guild] plays, beginning with Henry and culminating with Elizabeth is not credible" (167). Bills considers that religion "was only one factor, and a

late one at that" in the disappearance of the plays. A more significant cause was the "serious economic trouble" towns with guild plays experienced just before the reformation (159).

⁷ York's play was performed for the last time in 1569; Chester saw the final performance of its play in 1575; the Wakefield play's last performance was in 1576, and the last recorded performance of a guild play was in Coventry in 1588 (Tydeman 241-2).

⁸ Bevington "Popular," Bevington, Tudor Drama, Bevington, From "Mankind," Southern Seven Ages, Southern, Staging, Tydeman The Theatre, Weimann, Shakespeare, Wickham, Theatre, Wickham, Stage Vol. 1.

⁹ Bevington comments that Weather

requires ten players, all of whom gather before Jupiter's throne in the closing scene. . . . Two of the roles are women's parts, and the role of the young boy is assigned to 'the lest that can play,' implying that the rest are also boys. All the indications point to boys' courtly drama. No adult troupe of this size is known to have traveled publicly in England before the 1570's, or to have commanded the talents of three or more qualified boys. (From "Mankind" 40)

All references to Play of the Weather are to Bevington's edition.

¹⁰ For example, E.K.Chambers quotes Sir John Paston's letter of 16 April 1473 in which Paston "laments 'the loss of a man Woode, whom he had kept thys yer to pleye Seynt Jorge and Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Notyngham'" (134).

¹¹ Peter H. Greenfield describes a small semi-professional company brought in to entertain and impress the Duke of Buckingham's Gloucestershire neighbours:

The Christmas festivities of 1507-08 clearly aimed at impressing and wooing the Gloucestershire gentry. The nearly 500 guests included not only the duke's client gentry, but several who were considerable landowners in their own right: Maurice, Richard, and James Berkeley, Sir Robert and Anthony Poyntz, and William Kingston. The duke's hospitality was lavish. On Epiphany alone his guests consumed (among other things) 678 loaves of bread, 259 gallons of ale, 33 bottles of wine, 36 rounds of beef, 12 mutton carcasses, 4 pigs, 400 eggs and 200 oysters. To aid digestion, entertainment was provided by two minstrels, six trumpeters, the four waits of Bristol, and our friends, the four "lusores domini de Writell."
(176)

¹² Gurr quotes the Act:

All and everye persone and persones beyng whole and mightye in Body and able to labour, havinge not Land or Maister, nor using any lawfull Marchaundize Crafte or Mysterye whereby hee or shee might get his or her Lyvinge, and can gyve no reckninge howe he or shee dothe lawfully get his or her Lyvinge; & all Fencers Bearewardes Common Players in Enterludes & Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other honorable Personage of greater Degree; all Juglers Pedlars Tynkers and Petye Chapmen; whiche seid Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes Mynstrels Juglers Pedlers Tynkers & Petye Chapmen, shall wander abroad and have not Lycense of two Justices of the Peace at the leaste, whereof one to be of the Quorum, when and in what Shier they shall happen to wander . . . shalbee taken adjudged and deemed Roges Vacaboundes and Sturdy Beggars. (Stage 28)

¹³ Bevington shows how the dramatists of this time cope with limited resources, stage properties, costumes, and actors,

adjusting their plays to meet these physical exigencies by constructing plays with patterns of doubling parts and episodic structure (From "Mankind", 106).

¹⁴ Bevington finds no clear evidence of boy actors in the casting lists of popular plays until Cambises (ca 1561), Marriage of Wit and Wisdom (before 1570), and Mucedorus (ca 1590) (From "Mankind", 78).

¹⁵ Bevington lists 58 plays for the period 1474-1583. They vary in auspices, subject matter and style. Some, such as Fulgens and Lucrece (ca 1497), are humanist dramas of ideas; others are popular moralities or court plays (From "Mankind" 65-7).

¹⁶ Such as The Castle of Perseverance, but more particularly Everyman and Mankind. (All references to these three plays are to Bevington's editions.)

¹⁷ See Potter 105-112. Even so, no vast moralities like Castle of Perseverance, the performance of which must have involved many amateurs in its huge cast, were mounted in the sixteenth century.

¹⁸ All references to this play are to Marie Axton's edition.

¹⁹ All references to this play are to Neuss's edition.

²⁰ Rastell's play offers explanations of new scientific ideas, as well as promoting the commercial settlement of the Americas. (All references to this play are to Richard Axton's edition.)

²¹ Where Rastell's play shows excitement at new discoveries and an urge to promote exploration, Fulwell's is more conservative. It urges the importance of education, stressing study and application, and representing these in a comical but repressive manner.

²² All references to this play are to Manly's edition.

²³ All references to this play are to Happé's edition.

²⁴ All references to this play are to Schell and Schuchter's edition.

²⁵ All references to this play are to Farmer's edition.

²⁶ Potter comments on the adaptation of the morality play:

Its original didactic purpose of calling the sinner to repentance had evolved into socio-political purposes in the plays of Medwall, Skelton, Lindsay, Bale, and Udall.

Although, as he also notes:

Overtly political drama, which had flourished amid the controversy of the Reformation struggle during the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Mary Tudor, quickly expired in the moderate environment of the Elizabethan compromise. King John and Respublica were among the last of the polemical kind. (112)

²⁷ All references to this play are to Manly's edition.

²⁸ All references to this play are to Manly's edition.

²⁹ All references to this play are to Boas's edition.

³⁰ See Bevington 26-48.

³¹ Like the court children's plays, Wit and Science (ca 1530-48), Respublica (1553), Jacob and Esau (1553-58), and Appius and Virginia (1559-67).

³² All references to this play are to Wyckham's edition.

³³ All references to this play are to Lancashire's edition.

³⁴ Tydeman compares hall performances on the late-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to the "lavish production mounted in court circles, in colleges and in the Inns of Court." About the former plays he remarks:

Frequently unrewarding to read, these plays often blossom into life in the warmth of actual presentation. Few depended for their effect on built scenic structures such as mansions, or on grandiose stage devices; when we consider the limited means, both financial and technical, available to the itinerant performers mostly associated with these pieces, we shall understand why their forte was improvisation and "doing without." (81)

³⁵ All references to this play are to Lennam's edition.

³⁶ For simplicity of reference and for the following reasons, I shall call these plays "nonce plays." First, these plays expressly address particular stories. Second, they are compressed, usually short tales, not the omnibus vehicles the civic dramas were, the baggy monsters we called guild plays. Third: the nonce plays make it clear that they entertain us for a brief time only. For the nonce, they set up a temporary stage in space owned by the audience.

³⁷ Lancashire discusses the staging of Youth:

Youth was written, like most interludes, for indoor performance at a hall banquet, "among all this cheer" (205), as Youth says, where a riddle about mustard and salt fish (120) would be topical. Humility's entrance from evensong (570) suits a banqueting hour, and what stage conditions can be inferred from a text with only one stage

direction (389.1) are consistent with a hall play. The staging "place" (640), a term meaning "manor house" as well as "acting Area" offered the interluders a space that, visible to the audience "beforn" (547), must have been at ground level, since Youth enters brushing through the spectators (40-1, 589), and since Riot, as he comes in talking to them, overlooks and discovers Youth in a way that suggests he blends with the crowd. (215-19)

³⁸ All references to this play are to Lancashire's edition.

³⁹ All references to this play are to Nosworthy's edition.

⁴⁰ All references to this play are to Benbow's edition.

⁴¹ All references to this play are to Bevington's edition.

⁴² Like the guild plays' tyrants, Freewill has a mixed vocabulary, a smattering of upwardly social English, with a large amount of scatological English. He also addresses the audience directly:

Cock's passion, my noble is turned to a stone!
 Where lay I last? Beshrew your heart, Joan!
 Now, by these bones, she hath beguiled me!
 Let see: a penny my supper, a piece of flesh ten
 pence,
 My bed right nought; let all this expense--
 Now, by these bones, I have lost an halfpenny!
 (171-6)

In Youth the spectator badgering is carried out by the young protagonist's riotous companions. Youth, led by Riot and Pride into careless and a licentious lifestyle, also picks on the potentially vulnerable among the spectators:

Aback, gallants, and look unto me,
 And take me for your special!
 For I am promoted to high degree.
 By right I am king eternal --
 Neither duke ne lord, baron ne knight,
 That may be likened unto me;

They be subdued to me by right,
As servants to their masters should be. (Youth
589-96)

⁴³ There are many other examples of ways in which hoodlums, braggarts, evil characters bait us to get our ground. Fools make close contact with the crowds. Those people who attended performances of The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom are (like the medieval crowd in Wakefield streets) made the direct recipients of a nonsense proclamation. An announcement by the morally upright Search is reconstituted and distorted by Idleness:

SEARCH First, cry "Oyez" a good while
IDLENESS Very well. SD: he cries too long.
Then SEARCH Cry shorter, with a vengeance.
IDLENESS. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! SD very often
SEARCH Art thou mad. Canst thou keep no mean.
(494-8)

The proclamation continues at length:

Then SEARCH Say, "One, the king's Most Royal Majesty"
IDLENESS King John gave a Royal to lie with Marjorie
SEARCH "Doth charge you, all his true people"
IDLENESS "A barge flew over a steeple"
SEARCH "They watch elsewhere and see in the town"

IDLENESS "That every patch that a man wears on his
knee
Shall cost a crown."
(Marriage of Wit and Wisdom 514-9)

⁴⁴ As Weimann points out, the intermingling of classical and native has an important effect on the meaning of the play as a whole, with the minor plot impinging on and providing rich counterpoint to the nobility debate (107).

⁴⁵ Bevington suggests that Medwall may have needed to be cautious in his dealings with his elite audience (Tudor Drama 50). Jones disagrees with the view "that the humble chaplain-dramatist was simply being tactful (or toadyish) in his presentation of an unpalatable lesson to a wellborn audience":

Surely this would seem overcautious on his part, since the lesson that virtue is the foundation of true nobility was scarcely a radical one. Perhaps it became more commonplace with the development of humanism in England, but it was already a well-worn topic when Medwall picked it up. In any case it is less than tactful to say that the lesson you are presenting "shall stonde with treuth and reason," that "every man that favoereth and loveth vertue" will prefer such truth to false flattery, and then to imply that your audience might after all prefer flattery to this "playne trowth."
("Stage World" 140-1)

⁴⁶ Weimann discusses the servant-Garcio figures, their travesties of action and language, particularly their sexual punning (133-51).

⁴⁷ Later we hear Henry V's Chorus apologize for the "rough and all-unable pen" of the playwright (Henry V, Epilogue).

⁴⁸ It is the kind of jolt we get when Pykeharnes cheerfully introduces the first murderer, or when the Chester tapster follows the patriarchs on-stage.

⁴⁹ All references to this play are to Tennenhouse's edition.

⁵⁰ Gurr discusses the first users of the term "audience":

The Oxford English Dictionary records "audience" and "auditory" from the 1370s, and "auditor" from the 1380s, when Chaucer used it. While "audience" tended to hold the judicial connotation of a

hearing, in both the king's court and in lesser lawcourts, "auditor" meant simply a listener. We have to look beyond OED to locate the terms used specifically for playgoers. In about 1533 a stage direction in the closet interlude Love describes a stage trick with fireworks which survived for more than a century:

Here the vyse cometh in ronnyng sodenly
 aboute the place among the audiens with a hye
 copyn tank on his hed full of squybs fyred.
 (Playgoing 90)

⁵¹ Hamlet is very concerned with this image. He instructs the players: "the purpose of playing . . . both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (Hamlet 3.2.20-24).

⁵² Bevington 51-2.

⁵³ We hear Titivillus roaring somewhere off-stage but if we want to see him, "a man with a head that is of great omnipotence" (460), we must hand over money--preferably not groats, but "red ryallys" (Bevington 464).

⁵⁴ Gurr remarks that these romantic narratives were "evidently the staple of amphitheatre [public] playhouse at first" (Playgoing 116).

⁵⁵ Bernard Spivack, who looks only at the figure's morality origins, describes him as the vice:

The Vice, by natural extension of the theatrical side of his allegorical nature and homiletic enterprise becomes . . . the play maker whose histrionic deceits and beguilements create the action of the play as 'game' or 'sport' for the play goer. (191)

Anne Righter comments on the way the versatile stage figure will survive from Tudor drama through to the later

Elizabethan stage:

It was with the brilliant unscrupulous figure of the vice that the age-old connexion of the actor with the deceiver seems first to have entered English drama. Even before he had acquired a capital letter and command over all other evil forces in the play, the Vice possessed a quality which associated him naturally with the actor.
(55)

⁵⁶ All references to this play are to Happé's edition.

⁵⁷ In Wakefield's *Killing of Abel Pykeharnes* also denies any moral world.

⁵⁸ Jones examines how the vice figure's contract with the audience provokes the spectators to make moral judgements:

We are made to see that our very responses to the play are actual manifestations in ourselves of the better and worse impulses in man that are being represented on-stage; and we can accordingly place our delight in the vices as something in us to be guarded against. This technique is perhaps the fullest theatrical realization of the possibilities of instruction through entertainment in the moral plays. That it serves the instructive purposes of the play does not make the entertainment itself any less lively. ("Vice" 52)

CHAPTER THREE

I KNOW YOU ALL

3.1 THE PUBLIC PLAYHOUSES

Although troupes of players continued to tour provincial towns and villages, setting up temporary stages in innyards, markets, guildhalls or the dining halls of aristocratic homes,¹ by the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the story of English professional theatre is primarily a London one.² Encouraged by the presence of the royal court with its promise of patronage and frequent performance opportunities,³ by the growing prosperity of the capital city (compared with the economic slump in the provinces, especially in the formerly well-to-do Northern towns),⁴ and by London's burgeoning population (the city grew from 150,000 people to about 200,000 during the time of greatest theatrical activity, 1574-1642),⁵ professional players headed for what promised to be a lucrative theatre market. They were further encouraged to get off the roads by

the "Acte for the punishment of vagabonds" (1576-1600). This law, intended to control and limit the wandering and gathering, through the countryside and in the towns, of transients and masterless men, required each troupe of travelling actors to be legitimized as players, by being licensed by either one member of the nobility or by two judicial dignitaries.⁶

At first groups of players set up their trestles in innyards as they had always done. The Bel Savage Inn and the Boar's Head, both within London proper, were winter venues for itinerant players.⁷ Then, in 1567, John Brayne built the Red Lion in Stepney, east of London, an open air structure, about which little is known, but which seems to have been based on a mix of the old innyard playing space and the public arenas where people were entertained by bull and bear-baiting.⁸ London's Puritan authorities, however, frowned on innyard performances, and on any playing in the city. For the City Fathers, plays threatened civic order by promoting unruly gatherings and by taking people from work and worship. In 1559 the London council had tried to oust professional players from the city by issuing a prohibition on playing, and, when this injunction proved ineffectual, in 1574 they forbade all innyard playing unless tavern owners obtained licences from the civic authorities (Foakes 2; Chambers 324). This antagonism made the city proper a

difficult place in which to perform, yet it was clear (partly from the way Puritans fought so hard against it), that late sixteenth-century Londoners had a growing appetite for professional drama. To satisfy this enthusiasm and to take advantage of an opportunity to make money, in 1576 John Brayne, in partnership with his brother-in-law the carpenter James Burbage, moved his Red Lion enterprise outside London's limits to the north of the city. Here, in the liberty of Shoreditch, they built a new playhouse, the Theatre; the next year putting up a second playhouse, the Curtain, in the same neighbourhood.

For the following 40 years, entrepreneurs continued to build playhouses outside London's city limits, drawing enough people to them to make Philip Stubbs, in 1583, complain that Londoners go to "Theatres and curtains" while "the church of God shall be bare and empty" (Chambers II 223). In 1587, Philip Henslowe erected his playhouse, the Rose, in the liberty of the Clink, on the south bank of the Thames. Within this area, a red-light district of brothels, bear-baiting pits and of dubious inns of dubious character, lying beyond London's gates and jurisdiction, two more theatres were built: the Swan, in the liberty of the Manor of Paris garden, in 1595, and the Hope in 1614.⁹ The Puritan civic authorities continued to oppose playing even after it moved outside the precincts of the city. In 1597,

after Nashe and Jonson's The Isle of Dogs (a lost play) attacked national and civic government, the Privy Council issued the order that, according to Thomson, "ought to have spelled the end of the still-youthful professional theatre of England":¹⁰

Her Majestie being informed that there are verie greate disorders committed in the common playhouses both by lewd matters that are handled on the stages and by resorte and confluence of bad people, hath given direction that not onlie no plaies shalbe used within London or about the citty or in any publique place during this tyme of sommer, but that also those playhouses that are erected and built only for suche purposes shalbe plucked downe. (4-5)

But playing companies had the royal court's liking for plays on their side, so the public playhouses continued in business.¹¹ South of the river, at the end of 1598, James Burbage's son, Richard, moved the Theatre playhouse, pulling apart the wooden structure and transporting the boards and beams, by night, across the frozen Thames, using local carpenters to reconstruct it on the Bankside as the Globe.¹² In 1600, to the north of London, just beyond Cripplegate, Philip Henslowe (in co-ownership with the actor Edward Alleyn) put up the Fortune theatre, a wooden building which burned in 1621 and was rebuilt two years later in brick. Near to the Fortune, also north of the city, the Red Bull Inn was rebuilt as a playhouse in 1605.¹³ In spite of a considerable number of difficulties: disputes with civic authorities, bans on playing in Lent, troubles with

ensorship, repeated closures because of the plague, the playhouse business flourished.¹⁴ Steven Mullaney describes the particular way London's public playhouses developed:

By the turn of the century the city was ringed with playhouses to the north and south, posted strategically outside its jurisdiction and beyond the powers of civic containment or control. (18)

These commercial public playhouses, all of them open air, and most of them wooden structures, seem to have held and to have attracted large audiences.¹⁵ Using the rediscovered sites of the Globe theatre and the Rose in Bankside, Andrew Gurr and John Orrell estimate that the Globe was a many-sided polygonal building, measuring probably about 100 feet in diameter from each outside wall, the inside of the walls stretching across about 70 feet (114). At the Globe, the yard may have accommodated about 800 people, while another 2,000 customers could be seated in its various galleries. In the public playhouses, where the prices began at 1d., the lowest entrance fee entitled the audience member to stand in the yard; for 2d., he or she could sit in the first gallery; an extra penny rented a cushion to sit on (63). Once inside, audiences saw a raised flat platform: in the case of the Red Lion, forty feet by about thirty feet (112). At the Fortune, a playhouse built on an 80 foot square, where the yard measured 55 feet along each side, the stage was forty three by fifty-five feet (Gurr, Playgoing 18-19). The platform was set up a little

lower than head height for most of those in the yard, possibly with a low railing around it (Hattaway, Popular 23).¹⁶ The sight in some cases may have been pretty grand. Foakes writes, "The stage façade was highly decorated, and the Elizabethan playhouses offered their public colour, spectacle, and richness" (21). In most playhouses (and certainly at the Globe and Fortune), a canopy hung above the platform stage, its underside painted with stars, moons, signs of the zodiac, resting on elaborately carved pillars (Gurr and Orrell 119). Two doors in the back wall of the stage led to the tiring house, the offstage space and the dressing and storage area. (Dessen, Conventions 8).

The Tudor period had seen its players become professionals. Now, with the building of purpose-built public playhouses, the professional players became members of a much wider commercial enterprise. For although the playhouses were owned and controlled by the entrepreneurs who built them, the plays were mounted by collectives of "sharers," who rented the playhouses from the owners, paying them a percentage of the takings for use of their buildings (Bentley 42).¹⁷ Often the sharers were the company's principal players, men who made enough money from their trade to buy into the venture, and to share costs of whatever was needed for playing.¹⁸ The player-investors had various duties:

the purchase of new costumes and costume materials; paying for new plays by freelance dramatists; getting scripts approved by the Master of the Revels, paying him for licenses for the theater and for occasional privileges, like playing during parts of Lent; paying the company's regular contributions to the poor of the parish, assessing fines against sharers or hired men for infringement of company regulations; calling rehearsals; collecting fees for court and private performances; supervising the preparation and distribution of playbills; and perhaps for paying the hired men. (Bentley 147-8)

Master-players/sharers also hired the rest of the company; the acting members, adult male actors and boy apprentices, along with the technical crew, the stage keepers, wardrobe keepers, prompters (or book holders): everyone who was needed to keep the performances running (Bentley 148).

Under the patronage of, and named for, royal or aristocratic individuals, playing companies, on the whole, made a good living, though the need to tour in the summer months and during theatre closures because of outbreaks of plague made life somewhat unstable (Foakes 19).¹⁹ The individual popularity of companies with their London public waxed and waned. At various times different companies were favourites: Leicester's Men who played at James Burbage's Theatre was the chief London company in 1577. By 1583, The Queen's Company had the edge; by 1588 Worcester's Men had overtaken them; and by 1590 Admiral's and Strange's companies amalgamated to produce the city's most popular group of players. In 1594 the Chamberlain's Men was formed.

This company, later renamed the King's Men, originally owned by James Burbage and his son Richard (the actor who played Tamburlaine, Barabbas, Faustus, Hamlet), offered its chief members, including Shakespeare, shares in the actual playhouse buildings where the company acted, the Theatre, the Globe, and Blackfriars. As Thomson points out, to stay in business the entrepreneurs and the companies had to please their customers--all of them. He adds:

A theatre company that misjudges its appeal rarely lasts long or lives well. . . . An Elizabethan artisan could have afforded the penny admission, but he would have paid it only if his interest was genuine. (24-5)

Because all acting companies were businesses taking financial risks (their outlay was considerable),²⁰ their internal organization was tightly structured. Hattaway describes how rigidly hierarchical the companies were:

Each company had about five or ten 'sharers' who, in return for investing capital in the company, took their profits by dividing among themselves the receipts from one part of the house, first the yard, later the galleries. Shares in companies could be bought, sold, bequeathed, or divided among several individuals. The rest of the takings went to the owner of the playhouse and to support the rest of the organization: the tailors and tire-men who had care of the costumes, the book-holder and stage-keepers, and the gatherers -- as well as the hiremen and the boys. For before he could acquire the status (or the capital) of a sharer, a player often progressed through two stages analogous to the degrees found in most Elizabethan trades, that of apprentice and that of hireman and journeyman. (Hattaway, Popular 70)

By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, London's city fathers showed concern that these formally structured and financially successful collectives of actors were growing dangerously like their own commercial guilds, the bodies that governed the city (Hattaway, Popular 71). A mark of the acting companies' efficiency and business acumen (and of their dramatic talent) is that they attracted Londoners regularly and in considerable numbers to their playhouses, as well as being called on to perform regularly at court.²¹ Gurr writes that for "nearly 40 years London had at least six playhouses and four regular companies performing daily except on Sundays, Lent or plague" (Stage 76).²² He estimates that during this time playhouses regularly attracted nearly 15 to 20% of Londoners,²³ in addition to attracting tourists from Europe.²⁴ Anne Jennalie Cook holds the view that these audiences were composed of both men and women from a largely educated and wealthy class, whose

own ranks were tremendously varied, reaching from bright but impoverished students, younger sons of gentry families set to a trade, and minor retainers of noble households all the way up to lords, ambassadors, merchant princes, and royalty itself. (272)

Gurr rejects her description of audience composition. He argues, first, that Cook uses a misleadingly "generous definition of the privileged" and second, that her estimate of how much of the crowd these people formed is an

"oversimplification," mainly because her description of the playgoers over the period 1576-1642 (the opening to the closing of the playhouses, both public and private) ignores changing patterns in playgoing, particularly the shift after 1599 when playgoers had a variety of playhouses to choose from (Gurr Playgoing 64). Considering evidence from the playtexts, eyewitness accounts, and other writings, including attacks on the theatre, Gurr arrives at a description of audiences at public playhouses before "the revival of the boy companies and the hall [private theatres] in 1599" that is much broader than Cook's:

the artisan and servant classes joined with the citizens and gentry at playhouses. Those few descriptions which suggest that the full range of society was present at plays come from around the 1590s, when only the amphitheatres were open.

(Playgoing 65-66)²⁵

Braunmuller suggests that, once the playhouses were in business, these London customers were always hungry for new plays:

When Elizabethan entrepreneurs risked the capital to erect permanent theatres in the 1560s and 1570s and actors joined into formally organized companies, they created a staggering, and continuing, demand for new material. (53)

An entry from Henslowe's diary shows "15 different plays performed over twenty-five playing days" (Hattaway, Popular 51). Since all the companies worked a gruelling repertory system in which types of plays varied enormously and changed

rapidly, audiences could see as many as five different plays in a week.²⁶ Plays were subject to censorship by the Master of the Revels and had to be approved by his office before they were staged. At times, they were refused a license or required to make alterations to the manuscript.²⁷

Nevertheless, the overall range of plays available to London audiences was remarkable: citizen comedies, romances, dramas of topical events (like the recent contemporary murder that appears in A Yorkshire Tragedy),²⁸ tragedies, histories-- Polonius tries to list them all.²⁹ Margot Heinemann comments that "anyone who could put a penny in the box" had the opportunity to see performed in the commercial playhouses dramatizations of a welter of topics, including current politics (167). Gurr observes that the fecundity of subject matter was largely due to the release that came with the new kind of theatrical business transaction offered by playhouses and audience-customers, playing place and playgoers:

Only when the plays were offered to a crowd which had gathered and paid exclusively to enjoy a play were the poets made free to create offerings like The Spanish Tragedy and Tamburlaine. In the 1560s use of an open market place or a banqueting hall meant that authority's frown was a recurrent danger. Moreover audiences in halls and even at markets usually gathered for reasons more weighty than seeing a play. Plays in banqueting halls were a garnish to the feast supplied by a generous host. Brayne's and Burbage's commercial playhouses thus created the first regular means for every playgoer to buy just the garnish of his or her own entertainment. The plays designed to feed such a

well-focussed hunger came afterwards. (Playgoing 116)

For Andrew Gurr, the opening of the Red Lion in 1567 marks the start of a shift in the history of English Drama, a point at which professional players were emancipated from having to rely on collections from the audiences during or after their performances, or from having to seek accommodation by innkeepers, or from placing their hopes on widespread communities each wanting to see and pay for their playing (Playgoing 6).

3.2 PERMANENT STAGES AND THEIR AUDIENCES

When once players packed up their trestles at the end of their performances, they dismantled a complete theatre; the innyard or hall where they had played resumed its former character. The commercial theatres, the public playhouses (Gurr also calls them "amphitheatres"), owned, controlled, and operated by entrepreneurs, for the first time offered players a permanent acting site: a theatre that was always a theatre. Players no longer needed each time to build a stage, nor to dismantle and disband after every performance.

Public playhouse fittings and their decorations were permanent fixtures, always available as staging. Moreover, instead of having to exit behind a makeshift curtain or

through dining room doors as Tudor players were obliged to do, London players could make entrances and exits through stage doors behind which always lay an offstage world that was not also a kitchen, an inn's walls, or a town market. Perhaps as important, the doors led the commercial players to a tiring house where there was permanent storage for all the material necessities of playing: costumes, props, playbooks (the scripts), musical instruments.³⁰ A durable place to stow things gives the potential for more, and more elaborate, stuff to be stored. Henslowe's diary lists lavish (and pricey) costumes and a range of properties held permanently in his theatre's tiring house. The inventory includes costumes made of expensive materials (satins, velvets, cloth of gold) often bought from rich men and women's wardrobes.

Whether Londoners travelled to the north of the city or crossed the river to Bankside, citizens and visitors went to the plays; the plays did not come to them. As they handed over their entrance fees, these crowds paid to enter a space that belonged primarily to the playhouses' entrepreneur-owners and to the play's investors, the acting companies. They went inside a place to be used exclusively for playing (never as a school, kitchen, refectory, innyard).³¹

These London playgoers, already invented as audience by Tudor playwrights, now walked into a newly invented space, a

commercial one devoted exclusively to plays. For the first time in their nation's history, they entered a theatre used almost exclusively for plays.³² Londoners, however varied or numerous, whether "understanders" (those who stood in the yard) or those who paid more to sit in the galleries, saw their neighbours in the daylight, not on the stage, but among the audience across the side of the platform or up in the galleries.

With the Red Lion and the playhouses that followed it, drama was a commercial enterprise.³³ The stage and auditorium were permanently distinct physical areas. And the platform stage, the playing space, belonged to, and was organized by, the theatre's owners, its resident acting company, and its playwright, not to the audience. In London's commercial theatre, the playhouse actor was a member of a recognized profession, a mystery, a guild that was not like others in the work world. In other words, the working identities of audiences and players did not overlap, nor did audiences lend players their space to work in for the nonce. The big bare stage was primarily the place of the play, a space that, even when empty before the play began, and neutral as far as the play's fiction was concerned, signalled to playgoers a there and a then outside, separate from, the audience's ongoing here and now. Londoners who entered the playhouse were customers,

permitted to enter because they put their pennies in the box. When they did so, they abandoned at the door their city's usual identity and their workaday occupations and identities. Within the walls of the public playhouse, drama was played out in its own self-contained world, not in the audience's city, nor even in an aristocrat's hall or a neighbourhood innyard. It is true that the gulf between stage and audience was always mitigated to some degree because play and audience shared the same daylight, and because actors and audience were close to one another: players could see, hear, and smell the near presence of their audience; but no matter how the London crowds cheered, "mewed," jostled, or boomed in their contemporary Elizabethan space, they did not have power over the play on the platform. Commercial playhouse drama was not "our" play; nor drama set up for the nonce. Its stage was more independent of its audiences than it had ever been. Tydeman regrets the loss of intimacy between play and audience that accompanied the growth of commercial theatre:³⁴

As commercial considerations came to dominate, no longer did hard labour and varied skills, time, talent, and monetary levy, weld together people and presentation; no longer was a public dramatic performance the result of widespread communal activity but something to be purchased like any other commodity; no longer could spectators identify with local performers whose personal habits and usual daily pursuits they recognised and acknowledged. The new theatres might inherit some conventions and customs from an earlier age but now an invisible wall had sprung up between

the paid actor on his apron stage and the paying audience in pit and galleries. It has still to be demolished. (245-6)

This powerful "invisible wall," and the way Shakespeare, by restoring old guild play conventions, does in fact demolish it, is the subject of my following investigation. He is unique among his contemporaries in returning fully to the native dramatic tradition of open address.

3.3 SHAKESPEARE'S CLOSED STAGE

At the start of Shakespeare's career, it seems that the invisible wall closing the commercial platform gave the young dramatist great freedom. When Shakespeare wrote the three part chronicle of Henry VI (1589-1591)³⁵ and Titus Andronicus (1593-4), he made use of all the material assets of the permanent commercial playhouse: access to machinery, to the tiring house and its contents, props and lavish costumes. He had permanent staging, the platform, the trap, the "aloft," a playing area that at every performance could be anything, anywhere the playwright chooses. Most of all, he had a stage that was always and only a stage. He wrote these plays for a permanent company of professional actors, master players, hired men and apprentices, who performed regularly to audiences avid for new plays. He had an

audience, inherited from the nonce plays as audience, who now paid to see his stage, who were sometimes noisy, who interrupted performances;³⁶ but whose world was not necessary for the play to make sense.

Shakespeare's three early histories, Henry VI, performed at the Fortune playhouse by the Admiral's Men, as well as the revenge play, Titus Andronicus, show a heady awareness of all the power available to a playwright with a permanent playhouse and a closed stage. Young Shakespeare employs every asset on the scaffold stage, the doors, the huge size of the platform, the tiring house wall, the upper level. In the first play, for instance, the action moves vertically between the platform from where a French gunner prepares to shoot and the "aloft," the upper level where the English have built a tower "to overpeer the city" of Orleans (1 Henry VI 1.4.11).

The action is sketched bold and fast in these early plays, the spectacle enhanced by the Fortune's sound effects and musical instruments.³⁷ The audience watch sensational comedy accompanied by sound effects in the conjuring scene when the audience see Simpcox faking a miracle: "Here do the ceremonies belonging, and make the circle; Bolingbroke or Southwell reads, 'Conjuro te, etc.'" It thunders and lightens terribly; "then the Spirit riseth" (2 Henry VI, 1.4.S.D. 24). The action is drawn powerful, loud, amazing.

But it is sketched wholly on the stage. It ignores the playgoers in the Fortune.

In the early part of his career, Shakespeare rarely leaves his stage empty. Nor does he allow characters to speak to the people in the Fortune's yard and galleries. Very occasionally characters are left on stage alone (Cade, Talbot, Richard, for example). But when they speak, their speeches do not operate to notice or to connect the audience to the play; they serve rather as narrative or expository links (usually set at the beginning or end of scenes), in a long, episodic drama. Talbot, for instance, appears on stage alone after La Pucelle drives the English army away before her, saying: "Where is my strength, my valor, and my force? / Our English troops retire, I cannot stay them / A woman clad in armour chaseth them" (1 Henry VI 1.5.1-3). He offers a simple elucidation or recapitulation of what has just happened onstage. What the audience hears, even when characters are alone, is declamatory public assertion on the closed stage, rather than intimate talk, speeches that ignore the presence of the audience.³⁸

Jean Howard argues that the Henry VI plays make reference to issues that could touch the Fortune's customers, drawing on current Elizabethan antitheatrical discourse, the writings of Stubbes or Gosson, to track the story of England's past disintegration into social chaos

(Struggle 130-9). Annabel Patterson also points to connections between the trilogy's subject matter and current English events, in particular to the link between the plays' dramatization of Cade's rebellion and "the Southwark happening," a confrontation between Southwark feltmakers and guards at Marshalsea Prison in 1592 (36 and 51).

While the early Henry plays may allude to recent Elizabethan events, they do so in a heavily framed, located fashion. The stage remains closed. The action inside the "invisible wall" may glance at Elizabethan topicality, but it does so by allusion, not by stretching out over the threshold to talk directly to the playgoers and their individual concerns. Their presence in the yard and galleries is ignored by the characters onstage. No one on the scaffold challenges, questions, or appeals to them; no character mediates between them and the play's action, not the angry Cade, malevolent Richard, or honest Talbot.

In the revenge play Titus Andronicus (1593-4), the young playwright again uses everything his stage can offer. As in the Henry trilogy, audiences share the daylight with the play, but their presence again goes unmarked.³⁹ In this play, Aaron the Moor, lover to Tamora, Queen of the Goths, is given time alone on stage. He's a full blown villain who characterizes himself to Lucius with the vaunt: "I curse the day . . . wherein I did not some notorious ill" (5.1.125-7),

or boasts of evil actions from murder and rape to impoverishing small farmers: I "make poor men's cattle break their necks" (2.1.1). Presumably motivated by lust and ambition (like others in this play world), or grotesque excess, his appetite for and relish in evil is like physical greed and Aaron, devil-like, stands slightly to the side of the story of Romans and Goths. But although he echoes faintly devils and villains of native tradition, unlike them, he does not taunt or demand audience presence or invite them in any way at all to participate in the play.

In these early plays, no one on stage, not even Aaron, says "we" meaning both himself or herself and the people surrounding the platform or peering down from the galleries. No one even says "you" and points to the Fortune's customers. At the opening of Shakespeare's career, his stage allows no open address in which characters assume the audience share in their conflicts or delights. The dramatic energies of these plays, however carefully choreographed, are designed to be wholly confined by verges of the platform. The Fortune's audience stands outside an "invisible wall." They are people who have paid to be awed, amazed, thrilled, but not to be consulted.

3.4 CLOSED STAGE AND OPEN ADDRESS

Then, in 1592-3, it seems that a huge bare platform on which anything can happen is too stark, chilly, and fixed a place for Shakespeare. A closed, located stage is potent, has the capacity to thrill; but Shakespeare appears to want more. His plays begin to spill off the stage into the whole playhouse, into the yard and galleries. He starts to play the playhouse as well as the stage, reintroducing audience presence as an essential element in the play's meaning. No longer content to use only the platform, the trap, the aloft, he adds another dimension to the physical stage: the playhouse with its playgoers. He has inherited from the nonce plays an offstage with a presence that is capable of putting pressure on the scaffold action.⁴⁰ From guild and nonce plays he has inherited a rich tradition of making meaning by visual effects⁴¹ or by the grouping of characters on his platform.⁴² He uses all these strategies. He also continues much of the time to make his scaffold a closed place, bounded by threshold and ignoring the proximity of the playgoers. But now he adds to the closed stage an open playing space, where characters notice the presence of, and speak to their audiences, as did speakers in or characters in the guild plays. As his career continues, Shakespeare

rediscovers something of what was lost during the Tudor period: the potential to incorporate into the play the people standing, drinking beer, or sitting on rented cushions. Consistently, increasingly, his plays register the fact that an audience as well as actors are inside the playhouse walls, and that this audience stands or sits very near the scaffold. As in the guild plays, the type and degree of contact with the playgoers varies but it always imports to the play, as it did in medieval drama, those markers of an actual world--the concrete, the real, and the literal. Audiences begin to hear from Shakespeare's platform something like the inclusive address of old platea characters, the old "we," "you," "here," "now," words that served to connect the medieval playworld with that of its audience. Without asking the playgoers to shift their ordinary identities, these words position the audience as contributors to the play. And because the playgoers are located in real lives, Shakespeare, despite the big bare stage, can use them to locate the play.

3.5 OPENING THE PLATFORM

The new dimension starts with Richard III. When he creates Richard, Shakespeare makes a shift in dramaturgy.

This figure plays not just the stage but the whole playhouse. Like a medieval devil who wants to draw everyone onto his side, or like the devil's progeny, the nonce impresario, Richard intends to run the show. With his audience standing around his scaffold, or gazing down at him from their galleries, Richard begins his play:

Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by this son of York;
 And all the clouds that low'r'd upon our house
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
 (1.1.1-4)

These are quite unlike the earlier Richard's expository speeches in 3 Henry VI. His "now" and "our," his deictic address is seductive; he treats his listeners as if they must surely sympathize with his obsessive delight in this now.⁴³

Richard's insistent friendliness, his demanding alliance with the playgoers is important. Richard is modelled, I think, on the guild plays' devils. Like the old devils or their heirs, nonce impresarios, this figure filters the action before the audience gets a chance to see it for themselves. He puts them in a particularly troubling position when he favours them with unpalatable confidences, and forces them to contrast his evil but energetic presence with the lacklustre personalities of many of those around him. It is to these confederates in the yard and galleries that he exults after winning the widow Anne: "Was ever woman

in this humour woo'd? / Was ever woman in this humour won?" (1.2.227-8). The first word of the play signals the nub of the contract Richard demands from his audience. He wants their sympathetic engagement with his idiosyncratic sense of time. He means the playgoers to partake in his urgency to grab the moment, to know the overriding importance of his idea of "now." The prosody of Richard's speech is compelling. He opens with a trochee, in which "now," is so heavily stressed that the word must matter. Richard's "now"--made vital because it opens the action, accessible and memorable because it is short, simple, and said only to the audience--resonates throughout the play. As the audience stand or sit close to Richard, he, like the guild drama's devil, proposes to them that they should think only of the moment, of a present time, constructed, and apparently controlled, by him alone. Because Richard initiates the play, perhaps to the extent of locking eyes with his listeners in the playhouse, his notion of time is always more substantial than the present inhabited by the people around him.⁴⁴ However, almost immediately, his "us" and "our" disengage the audience, those heirs of the civil wars. With a gesture over his hunched shoulders, towards the tiring house doors through which the other characters will appear, he sends a sneering "our" ("our brows," "our bruised arms," "our stern alarms"). Clearly ironic, these

words mark Richard's contradictions, his alliance with and alienation from the rest of the playworld, and his confederacy with and dissociation from the playgoers.

Shakespeare constructs this play on sharp alternations between Richard's open address to the English audience, and his return to the closed world of English politics. When the playgoers see the people Richard disdains, the rest of the English court appear as absorbed by thoughts about time as Richard. Their obsession, however, enervates rather than energizes them. The dying king is gripped by guilt about his past. Clarence foresees his own death and fears the past and the future. Old Queen Margaret, caught up in ritualized past and future terrors, denounces everyone around her. The rest of the court inhabit a paralysed time that stays cut off from the playhouse. Only Richard lives in a present that invites the audience in.

As the play progresses, Richard's position shifts with relation to the audience. His communion with the audience shrivels; even so, real time has been signalled by Richard's direct contact with the audience. The time of a full actual world, marked by their presence, continues to run and can't be wished away. Harried, Richard tries to regain control and make his stage closed by ignoring the audience. He steadily relocates himself within the frame of a "now" that excludes everyone but himself.

King Richard, like a medieval Herod or Pharoah, has believed himself invulnerable, that his now would run forever. In the scene before the Battle of Bosworth Field, Richard lies awake in his tent, hagged by those he has murdered. On a walled-in stage, as if in an enclosed locus, isolated and hopeless, he struggles alone. Although he once flung his words at the playgoers, he no longer sees them. But the audience are there listening, aware of what Richard's fate will be. Richard is imprisoned in a spiralling solipsism:⁴⁵

Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
 What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
 Richard loves Richard, that is, I [am] I.
 Is there a murtherer here? No. Yes, I am.
 Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why --
 Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
 Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
 That I myself have done unto myself?
 O no! Alas I rather hate myself
 For hateful deeds committed by myself.
 I am a villain; yet I lie, I am not.
 Fool, of thyself speak well; fool, do not flatter:
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,
 And every tale condemns me for a villain.
 Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
 Murther, stern murther, in the direst degree;
 All several sins, all us'd in each degree,
 Throng to the bar, crying all, "Guilty! guilty!"
 I shall despair; there is no creature loves me,
 And if I die no soul will pity me. (5.3.181-201)

The playgoers surround him still as he repeats "I." But the stage now signals isolation. It is fatally closed. Richard cannot get over the threshold; he is unable to reach out to them, framed even more by his tent, his psychological and

spiritual isolation doubly contrived. He neither seeks nor hears any response from the audience. There's no one there, no one here. The permanent stage thrusts up its threshold between him and us; the old stage device of locus clamps its frame around him. Barriered thus, Richard discovers that neither "now" nor "I" is or ever was subject to his individual will. The singular self is no longer a source of energy, and the present moment, the "now" he so revelled in, is a terror. The power of this speech derives from Shakespeare's shutting Richard off from the playgoers, his isolation of Richard on a closed stage, in the now of political defeat.

So Shakespeare, maturing as a playwright, moves away from using the big platform as a site for sensational action, intended to thrill and stir the playgoers, but not to invoke their presence. Every play after Richard III shifts its action between a stage closed off from the playgoers and one open to them. The "invisible wall" of the platform will be sometimes impenetrable, sometimes permeable. From now on, Shakespeare derives tension and drama, not from the technical capacities of his stage but from his management of open and closed address. Because I am not offering a reading of all Shakespeare's opus, I skip

over some years of Shakespeare's career. Rather, I propose a way to read the plays, an approach that argues the centrality and continued influence of the old dramatic strategy of open address. Very briefly, in the three to four years between Richard III and 1 Henry IV Shakespeare uses open address on his professional stage. For example, in The Taming of the Shrew (1593-4), the on-stage presence of a bored and staunchly English Christopher Sly frames the Italian play about Petruchio and Katherine. Inside the Italian play, Petruchio and Katherine speak alone onstage. Two acts of Romeo and Juliet (1595-6) are introduced by a chorus who talks openly to the audience about what will happen in the "two hours' traffic of our stage" (Prologue 12). In fact, he proves a faulty guide for the playgoers. Although he promises them a story of "star-cross'd lovers," the central action proves unremittingly earth-centred. In The Merchant of Venice (1593-4), Shylock's asides, Jessica's and Lancelot Gobbo's monologues are open to the audience alone, puncturing but also intensifying the closedness of the Rialto and Belmont playworlds. In 1599, (two years after 1 Henry IV and two years before Troilus and Cressida) Shakespeare gives his audience a persistent and unreliable guide. Henry V is managed throughout by a patriotic chorus, an enthusiast who intervenes repeatedly to persuade the audience that they watch a glorious past. This loyal

upholder of Henry as hero appears by the end to see quite a different play from what actually occurs onstage. He promises, for instance, that they will see a Christ-like king who, with a "liberal eye" (4.Chorus.46) and "largess universal like the sun" (4.Chorus.45), will comfort a dejected English army. This is not what happens. Instead, the ordinary soldiers challenge several notions of heroism and of kingship. Later Henry, alone with audience, talks not about care of these people, and all the English, but gripes about the burdens of being a king rather than a commoner. By the close, the play seems to have escaped the Chorus's control and he can end it only by apologizing to the audience for the playwright's deficiencies, his "rough and all-unable pen" (Epilogue 1). Mapping out Shakespeare's efforts to manage and connect with his audience is to map out his career.

3.6 THE UN-HEROIC STAGE

In 1 Henry IV (1596-7) several worlds are dramatized: the official disillusioned hauteur of the royal court, the emotionally charged and military world of Hotspur and Glendower, and the unofficial world of a London tavern. These as a whole are closed; that is, they ignore audience

presence. But the stage makes two kinds of open contact with the audience, both ambiguous. Falstaff, who calls himself a "vice," fixes himself a comfortable space between the closed world onstage and the one that the audience live in.⁴⁶ He seems to be standing on the platea; but he never says "you" or "we." He never directly addresses the audience, so his connection with the audience remains ambiguous. With a knowing wink at the playgoers, the fat old reprobate sometimes teases them about their familiarity with old stage conventions as he threatens to "beat Hal out of [his] kingdom with a dagger of lath" (2.4.136-7). He talks as if all his listeners (and often these are only the playgoers) share his idiosyncratic way of seeing life, and, like him, believe it to be more substantial than the life followed by other characters in the play. Falstaff assumes that he has a rapport with people who just want to get by, to live lives that are not heroic, who dislike systems that do not acknowledge the supreme importance of a comfortable body.⁴⁷

There are many voices located on the stage side of the threshold: Henry's voice of weary kingship: "So shaken as we are so wan with care" (1.1.1); Hotspur's of pugnacious valour: "Not speak of Mortimer? Zounds I will speak of him, and let my soul / Want mercy if I do not join with him!" (1.3.128-130); Hal's voice of rapid manipulative wit: "Thou

art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldest truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?" (1.2.2-7). Falstaff's voice, insinuating its way over the edges of the scaffold, is an earthy English tongue, often talking about material things: the pleasures of food and drink, how all bodies feel pain and are not sites of honour, that death is to be avoided at all costs. Falstaff lives wholly in the concrete things of a concrete present, and when that present is uncomfortable, he'd like it to be over. Faced with battle, he laments: "I would 'twere bedtime, Hal, and all well" (5.1.126). To him moral values are a nothing unless they can be used: "Can honor set a leg? No. Or an arm? ... What is honor? A word" (5.1.131-135). Alone here, he dismisses honour. Later he attempts to use it for barter when he claims to have killed Hotspur (5.4.142). Falstaff is simultaneously comic and shockingly unadmirable.⁴⁸ So what Falstaff seems to invite his audience to share with him is a life that is often banal and shabby, frequently slippery, and can be cruel and mean-spirited. But its explicit concreteness is close to an audience's sense of actuality, and by that means Falstaff makes a connection with them. His language is familiar, homely, yet he never openly speaks to the audience.

Although Falstaff may be a self-confessed "vice," he is no devil.⁴⁹ He talks about a now and here littered with recognizable, concrete, tangible presences, the literal and often unlovely platea world where people worry about injury and death, where the true crisis is not what kind of death comes to us, but death itself.

Hal's address to the audience, on the other hand, is more disturbing and, curiously in the way it engages the audience, is more in the native tradition of devil-trickster than Falstaff's. Hal speaks to the playgoers only once. After he and his Eastcheap buddies plan to fool Falstaff, the prince, alone onstage, declares who he is and what he plans to do. In language that is strategic and muscular, he refers his words to a disconcertingly ambiguous "you":

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
 The unyoked humour of your idleness:
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That, when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
 (1.2.199-207)

Every other character stays ignorant of Hal's intentions: his drinking companions, his political enemies, even his father. Only the audience in the yard and galleries are privy to Hal's assertion of a "real self," but they are not told in concrete terms what this reformation will entail. If this is open address, it is clearly not open language.

The playgoers alone hear that Hal, using his tavern friends for his own purposes, is biding his time until he sees the right moment to reveal himself to everyone as a royal prince. How he will actually do that is a mystery, lost in his riddling speech. So Hal's address that refuses to confine itself to the stage is ambivalent, revealing and concealing at once.

Hal's self-definition is more equivocal than Falstaff's declaration of himself as a vice. In his address Hal uses images to ally himself to Christ, likening himself to a long awaited, despaired of, Messiah-son, who when he comes will "pay the debt," "redeeming time when men think least [he] will." The revealed prince will be a figure to be "wond'ered at." Hal's speech, as well as making reference to Christ, also recalls the pronouncements God made to the audiences in the guild plays: like a god, Hal will allow the world to run till "he please." But Hal's words are also full of disquieting "quips and quiddities." He is as word-mongering as the quick-tongued Titivillus. His extended image of the beauty of a longed-for Sun obscured by thick, noxious fogs disturbs. It also echoes vain and radiant Lucifer, or the typical devil who hides until his time is ripe who assures audiences: "I am with • ow at all tymes . whan • e to counsel me call / But for A short tyme my-self I devoyde" (N-Town, Passion I, 122- 123). Unlike God's self-

referential speeches in guild drama, Hal harshly polarizes "I" and "they." He is "bright metal"; they are "sullen ground." He has played, and continues to play, an equivocal role with everyone.⁵⁰ Difficult to pin down, he disturbs his father by refusing to give him clear answers about his intentions. He mocks Hotspur; he fools his friends. He is witty, cruelly manipulative, often more unlikeable than Falstaff because he is more clever. Throughout the play, he deliberately leads people on, knowing that they misconstrue him.

In his single address, he directs this kind of snideness at the playgoers. He talks like a devil-impresario who standing on the threshold would control and reduce the audience as he does Francis. Falstaff assures his listeners that nothing matters in life but the concrete; Hal tells them: "I know you all." This is a huge assertion, suggesting that they are simple, degrading characters and audience alike to nonentities. Nothing Falstaff says implies that his understanding is greater than the audience's. By contrast, Hal promotes himself as prince at playgoers' expense: however obliquely, he positions his only listeners in such a way that they cannot be sure whether they are the "base contagious clouds" that get in his way.⁵¹

These contrapuntal voices that flow over the threshold, reject any potential for singleness of vision in the play.

They work in a way similar to the contiguous open addresses in guild drama. Pykeharnes and Cain in *The Killing of Abel* each reached out to the Wakefield crowd to haul them into particular aberrant worlds, each demanding a contract that contradicted the other. Falstaff asks the audience to think of a literal world, while Hal enjoins them to see the pre-eminence of the strategic. Falstaff's world may not be the moral centre of the play; but neither is Hal's. Falstaff talks about common fears of death. Hal speaks about killing. The prince's open address is more troubling than Falstaff's nod at the audience. It is important that Hal's moment alone with the playgoers comes early on in the play. Because of its place in the play, the possibility of disconcerting, devil-like presence worries its way throughout, raising doubts about how this prince regards all English people--including those who have paid to see the play.

Troilus and Cressida offers one of the best examples of a variety of open addresses jostling for the audience's attention. Several characters in this play notice the playgoers. The Prologue and Pandarus both speak directly to them, each identifying the modern audience as a different kind of community.⁵² The playgoers are also made confidants

to many asides, and they are the only people who hear several characters open up about their true feelings.

The play is opened by a Prologue who seems confident that he speaks from a stage capable of displaying the spectacular history of the siege of Troy, a city barred "with massy staples and co-responsive and fulfilling bolts," and contenders all primed to "disgorge their warlike frontage" (12). He gives his audience the language of epic--exalted and high flown. He assures them that armies soon to appear will be made up of youthful, lusty, dynamic soldiers: the Greeks, for example, "fresh and yet unbruised" (14), bristling with "expectation, tickling skittish spirits" (20). However, a curious anxiety creeps into his announcement, though he himself seems unaware of it. His aureate diction matches a great action--the Greeks are "princes orgulous"--but the sound is awkwardly Latinate, overblown and comic.⁵³ The Prologue seems to want massiveness, the solidity of end-stopped lines, sculpted perfection.⁵⁴ Instead his lines are broken, staccato, uncertain sounding. He abandons the aureate for the brusque: "In Troy there lies the scene" (Prologue 1). Because the play is not epic but recalcitrant, it depicts inaction. Accepting the epic convention of beginning in medias res, he foregrounds his obligation to push his audience seven years into the long, drawn-out war, by making

it a problem. And it is a problem, since the play will stay in the impasse and cynicism of mid-war. So although the Prologue makes a brave effort to act the heroic, his introduction to the epic falls apart before he finishes his speech to the playgoers. And his naive promise of a story of energetic heroism is immediately contradicted when the central action starts. The playgoers see Troilus, not arming himself for battle but taking off his gear, yet again:

Call here my varlet; I'll unarm again:
 Why should I war without the walls of Troy,
 That find such cruel battle here within?
 Each Trojan that is master of his heart,
 Let him to field; Troilus, alas! hath none.
 (1.1.1-5)

The inhabitants of both camps, the besieged and the blockaders, are marooned, seven years in, bored by war and sexually frustrated. Trojans and Greeks are all irritable, torpid, watchers of one another; anything but heroes. In the city, Helen, the cause of the war, passes the time by playing with Troilus's beard. In one tent, Achilles sulks like a peevish school boy, play-acting with his friend Patroclus, mocking his companions, his leaders and his fellow soldiers. In a nearby tent, Ajax "groans self-willed," his bad humour fuelled by a cynical Thersites.

On the surface, what the Prologue seems to promise is a world with which the audience would have no connection: a play on classical lines, decorous, and remote from ordinary

life. The stage does resound at times with formal public rhetoric, impersonal aureate words, particularly from the Greek camp. Ulysses, for instance, holds the stage for a considerable time when gives his massive oration on order (1.3.75-137). More often, the stage represents, inside and outside Troy's walls, a thoroughly non-heroic world, a place where everyone is petty, their actions mean. The main action is almost concluded before the audience see any shows of war; even then, these are short brushes, skirmishes between individuals, and the cowardly murder of an unarmed man rather than warlike battles. When eventually spurred to act, both sides manifest snappiness, petulance; their aggression is personal, rather than strenuous and soldierly.

The epic promised was a closed world, perfect in its pastness. But this playworld is anything but closed; it constantly locates itself in the playhouse, repeatedly stretches over the threshold to the audience. The audience again and again are made recipients of asides or short outbursts, becoming the playworld's intimates. They are privy to a gossipy, rumour-ridden play, in which characters constantly catalogue and tot up each other's physical or psychological deficiencies.⁵⁵

Referring to the main action of the play, Jean Howard states there is a great deal of "looking on" (115). She explains: "watching the play, the audience feel they are

seeing a world without truly private dimensions, a world in which action has dwindled to self-display" (116). Howard is right; but what is particularly notable about the play is the fact that vital among these "lookers on" are the playgoers. Over and over again, the audience seem to be forced into being voyeurs. For instance, when Cressida arrives in the Greek camp, they are put in the position of watching Greek soldiers eye the young woman, and of watching her gaze at the Greeks. In another example, in a remarkable four-layered eavesdropping scene, the audience hear Thersites, who watches Troilus and Ulysses, who watch Cressida with Diomed. In a third example, inside the walls of Troy, the Trojan heroes silently parade across the scaffold. Cressida, watching them, stands with Pandarus. As if adjudicating a local talent contest, she and her uncle tot up the assets and defects of the Trojan warriors from "brave" Hector to the common soldiers, the "asses, fools, dolts! chaff and bran, chaff and bran! porridge after meat" (1.2.241-2).

Stuck in a world which has been arrested at a crude superficial level, young Cressida has none of the warmth of Chaucer's Criseyde. Cressida is naive without being innocent, a brittle humourist. She is a street-smart kid who, with her aging uncle, Pandarus, engages in some pretty explicit sexual punning. Yet Cressida is also vulnerable,

touching. Like a wary kid in a dangerous city, she too is a voyeur, but an anxious one, watching everyone, her main concern not to be fooled by anyone. She seems to need to confide in playgoers:

Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full
sacrifice,
He offers in another's enterprise;
But more in Troilus thousand fold I see
Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;
Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing:
Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
That she beloved knows nought that knows not this:
Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is:
That she was never yet that ever knew
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:
Achievement is command; ungain'd, beseech:
Then though my heart's content firm love doth
bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.
(1.2.282-295)⁵⁶

This young woman with no one to trust in the closed world makes intimates of her audience, showing them the two Cressidas, the one who will and must follow the "maxim[s]" of love, and the other who really loves. The confidences of Cressida, alone on the big stage, reach out for the audience's understanding of weakness, not heroism, loss, not victory. Her confidences invoke the audience's immediate, contingent world, not the distant literary world of epic.

The address spoken by Thersites forges another connection with the audience. He is thoroughly disillusioned with everyone around him. Looking over his shoulder, closing out the other characters, he gives the

audience a thumb-nail sketch of each participant: Ulysses is a "dog-fox" (5.4.11), Nestor a "a stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese," (5.4.10), Ajax he calls an "elephant" (3.2.4), a "mongril cur" (5.4.13), Achilles he scorns as "a valiant ignorant" (3.3.303), Agamemnon "an honest fellow enough, . . . but he has not so much brain as ear-wax" (5.1.51-2), Diomed a "false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave" (5.1.88-9), a "Greekish whoremasterly villain" (5.4.7). A self-exile, Thersites mediates between the audience and the play, by forcing the playgoers to listen to his disgust at everyone involved in this travesty of war: "Vengeance on the whole camp! or rather, the Neapolitan bone-ache for that methinks is the curse depending on those that war for a placket" (2.3.18-20). Thersites straddles the threshold making the audience aware of themselves as fellow watchers of a war in which there are no heroes. Disgusted with laziness, selfishness and pettiness around him the seasoned soldier wishes that war were war, that heroes were heroes.⁵⁷ After watching Cressida and Diomed, Ulysses and Troilus, he sums the action up in another aside to the playhouse: "lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery, nothing else holds fashion" (5.2.194-5). Later, observing the fight between Troilus and Diomed, he reduces their duelling to two men "clapper-clawing one-another" (5.4.1). He deflates all putative heroes. Whether Thersites is the moral centre to

the play, Shakespeare makes it hard to determine. Thersites involves his audience in a discussion that in many ways values heroism and is brutally realistic about both Trojans and Greeks; but he also dumps on them a heavy load of invective and drags them into a sour-eyed view of the world. At times, though he has justification, he seems to have some of medieval Cain's view of the world, where he takes as personal slight all the actions and inaction of others. He is impatient, intolerant and surly about everything around him and wants his audience to feel the same way.⁵⁸

Whereas Thersites reminds the audience that this pathetic stalemate was meant to be heroic war, Pandarus is an impresario, an organizer of sexual and theatrical events, who also titillates his audience by invoking their presence in the sex scenes. At the end of the love scene between the young couple, Pandarus offers up a wish for the young women in the audience: "And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here / Bed, chamber, Pander to provide this gear" (3.2.20-21). In other words, Pandarus does what the play does throughout; he makes it clear that the playgoers are eavesdroppers, peeping Toms, salacious witnesses.

In the epilogue, it is no Expositor or Doctor but a pimp who turns his face to the audience. Pandarus gives an open address that is the antithesis of the one that began the play. Instead of a feisty call to arms, Pandarus begs

the playgoers for "a goodly medicine for my aching bones" (35). The old go-between rails against the audience's modern world, where a pimp's job is treated with contempt and "the poor agent is despised." His busy-ness flags. Pandarus seems now to look over the threshold less as an epilogue than as the only man left to finish the story. At this point Pandarus re-invents the audience. At the opening, they were "fair beholders"; now they are traders and bawds. Pandarus extends his personal disenchantment to the people he can see out in the playhouse in seventeenth-century London. He ends with a mix of smutty jokes, prose, song, and these verses:

Good traders in the flesh, set this in your
 painted cloths.
 As many as be here of Pandar's hall,
 Your eyes, half out, weep out at Pandar's fall;
 Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,
 Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.
 Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,
 Some two months hence my will shall here be made:
 It should be now, but that my fear is this,
 Some galled goose of Winchester would hiss:
 Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
 And at that time bequeath you my diseases.
 (5.10.35-56)

The playgoers, who have probably elbowed one another in the yard, or craned from their galleries to get a look at Cressida as she enters the Greek camp, who have struggled over the sound of cracking hazel nuts to catch the dirty jokes, have been told throughout that they, like the Trojans and Greeks, are eavesdroppers, that the whole playhouse is

addressed by a jostling competition of intimate confidences, gossip, rumour, asides. Staring back at these "onlookers," exhausted Pandarus refuses to see anyone amongst them except London pimps, guildsmen of his own hall. No society could be less heroic than the one Pandarus sees in the London playhouse. If the playgoers have been labouring to see heroism on the scaffold, they have not found it among Shakespeare's Greeks and Trojans. Now Pandarus fails to see it in them. Pandarus leaves them with a play that ends up back in modern, red-light Southwark. Pandarus's address, like that of the figures in guild drama, makes a connection between remote history and now, a figural link between the world of the Trojans and Greeks and present-day London; what joins them is not war or heroism or romance. When Pandarus treats his audience as fellow guildsmen what links the two worlds is sex. What began with the audience looking at the stage ends with the stage looking at the audience.

3.7 THIS STERILE PROMONTORY

As I have tried to show, when Shakespeare starts out his career he seems overwhelmed by the technical power of closed staging. Exploiting all the resources of the permanent stage, with its offstage, levels, the vastness of

its platform, he writes plays full of action but confined solely to the scaffold. Then, with Richard III he seems to grow dissatisfied with having only the big bare platform to work on, wanting increasingly to use not just the scaffold but the whole playhouse. He does so by reinventing the old device from the guild plays; he makes his characters on their professional stage notice the audience. Audience address in 1 Henry IV and Troilus and Cressida shapes plays that deny heroism, and that, whenever the action seems to provoke epic, hands it back into concrete reality--the incomplete and changing world of the audience's experience.

In the middle part of his career (1600 to 1606), the time when he wrote the tragedies, Shakespeare used more intensely the permanent scaffold's two possibilities: to support both the closed world of the self-contained stage and the open one of the native tradition. Although I talk here mainly about two plays, Hamlet and King Lear, a similar pattern of using the stage can be found in the other plays of this time: Othello (1604), Macbeth (1605), Antony and Cleopatra (1606-7) or Coriolanus (1607-8). These plays at times completely ignore the playgoers, as if all that exists is a playworld contained on a scaffold. The audience are neutral ground, people whose identities are erased. At other times, the plays acknowledge that these people surround the platform, standing or sitting close to the

players, almost able to touch or be touched by those onstage, within eyeing and spitting distance of the characters.

In the middle plays, Shakespeare alternates these two opposite potentials, much as guild drama used a complex interplay between its enclosing loca and its involving platea to build each play's meaning. When Shakespeare's permanent stage refuses to see the audience, it signals that they are people whose world is insignificant compared with the society onstage. When it turns its gaze on them, it signals that they and their world's values are incorporated into the play.

Most of the stage world in Hamlet ignores the audience, as if Denmark is locked up inside the scaffold. Much of Europe is contained inside this barrier; somewhere behind the tiring house. No one on this boundaried stage finds it easy to get away. Hamlet is stuck in Denmark, unable to go back to university because his stepfather wants him at the Danish court, because his mother likes to have him near her, and because his father comes back from the dead expressly to order Hamlet to stay in Denmark and avenge his death. Laertes goes back to Paris, but even there, he isn't free from Danish eyes. In Denmark itself, observation by others is constant. Although there are many secrets on this stage, nowhere is private. Audiences never see Ophelia left alone.

They hear her harried by her father, by her brother, and by Hamlet. Laertes, off to Paris, catechizes the sister he leaves behind about their prince's attentions and intentions. She is interrogated by her father, and finally "loose[d]" to the prince, like a heifer for a bull (2.2.162). Within a brief period, the audience see several intrusions: Polonius and Claudius eavesdrop on Ophelia and Hamlet; Polonius listens in on Gertrude and Hamlet; Hamlet watches the king at prayer; the Danish audience watches the "Murder of Gonzago," with Hamlet watching them--while the playgoers in the London playhouse look on at everyone. Wherever Hamlet is on this Denmark scaffold, as he well knows, he is closely scrutinized by almost everybody. The scaffold is built as a closed space where everyone is enmeshed with everyone else. Hamlet sums up its claustrophobia by observing that in Denmark "the age is grown so pick'd that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe" (5.1.140-1).

The compressed and suffocating platform is self-referential and unremittingly material. Polonius's parting advice to Laertes sums up Denmark's notions of how to succeed in life. His lengthy instructions are wholly mundane; he give Laertes no spiritual advice (1.3.57-77). The scaffold world is governed by codes and conventions but not ethics; its inhabitants live in it comfortably enough,

but theirs is an undynamic existence, without vision, spirituality, or providence. On the platform, in "this world" of Denmark, as Hamlet will tell us, the customs are "flat, stale and unprofitable" (1.2.133). Shakespeare closes the platform as a claustrophobic, earthbound place, a world where one can, according to Claudius: "in equal scale [weigh] delight and dole" (1.2.13).⁵⁹

In a space so framed and closed, what is immediately tangible and material is the only point of reference. No time matters in this fictional world but its own here and now. Within the onstage temporal frame, time is beaten "out of joint" to accommodate the desires of the Danish elders. Both joys and sorrows are flattened. Death and wedding rites are tacked together so closely that they virtually exchange places, become "mirth in funeral and . . . dirge in marriage" (1.2.12). Gertrude the widow-bride tells her son that brief mourning is a perfectly normal thing: "Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity" (1.1.73-4). The Danes in power get things done very quickly. Claudius's suspicion that his nephew knows more than he says provokes his "hasty sending" for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (2.2.4); later he sends Hamlet "with speed" to England and, he hopes, to death (3.1.169). Briefly persuading the king and queen to agree with him, Polonius rushes to a happy conclusion that the

prince's eccentric behaviour is caused by "the very ecstasy of love" for Ophelia (2.1.99), though he says it in such a long-winded way that it nettles Gertrude, that lover of the expeditious, who soon after tells him to hurry up: "More matter with less art" (2.2.95).⁶⁰ Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are trapped by Elsinore's rush. Claudius explains his urgency to them: "The terms of our estate may not endure / Hazard so near's as doth hourly grow / Out of his brows" (3.3.5-7). With good reason, Claudius worries about the hasty and unceremonious burial he gives Polonius. The ordinary Danish people are upset that Polonius was given only an "obscure funeral," was buried "hugger-mugger" (4.5.84). The Messenger accuses the Danish people of thinking only of now, thinking as if "the world were now but to begin, / Antiquity forgot" (4.6.104-5) when they condemn the king and support Laertes.⁶¹ There is no other time but Denmark's. Shakespeare locates the temporal frame as one that has no contact with audience time, a closed space where the past is eradicated, the future ignored, and eternity does not exist.⁶²

A materialistic world acknowledges only the things of the earth. Completely self-involved, the too solid world onstage divorces itself from the actual world surrounding it. Shakespeare sets up an almost impenetrable threshold around his scaffold. No character but Hamlet is allowed to

look out from a stage that obscures any space or time other than its own, and excludes any realities but Denmark's version of the material and physical. Hamlet speaks of a personal apprehension of a wider universe than Denmark's closed frame when, he assures Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1.5.166-7). Later, toying again with the idea of a wider universe, he describes Denmark as a prison:

HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.
 ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one.
 HAMLET: A goodly one; in which there are many
 confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one
 o' th' worst.
 (2.2.243-247)

The scaffold where Hamlet is trapped has its own particular here and now, contingent, secular, parochial. The platform is shut off from anything outside the walls of the theatre. Whenever there appears to be the possibility of a dimension beyond what the people onstage physically see or hear, the stage clamps down on it. Shakespeare's commercial playhouse could signal, by the use of upper and lower levels, the potential presence in the playworld of a heaven or hell, as did medieval drama. But in this play, Shakespeare makes Hamlet instruct the playgoers that for this play these spaces have been shut down. "Aloft" is not Heaven, it's only a stage canopy; "below" is not Hell, it's simply the "cellerage" under the stage. Whatever flies upwards from the Elsinore scaffold hits the playhouse's

canopy and falls back down to the platform. The ghost seems to have come back to Denmark from a material more than a spiritual world. His afterlife is passed in a "prison-house" (1.5.14). He is "for the day confin'd to fast in fires" (1.5.13), shut up in a place like the smoking Hell mouth of the guild plays. Hamlet reinforces the audience's sense of old Hamlet as a solid presence. From under the platform, the ghost thunders out reminders and instructions to Hamlet, who shouts down through the stage floor to "this fellow in the cellerage" who is "hic et ubique," thumping and bustling about under the stage, and forcing the prince to shift his friends about on the scaffold (1.5.156-64). He bolsters the ghost-as-body, not-as-spirit, when he praises its under-stage busy-ness as if it were a miner working in the pits: "Well said, old mole, canst work i' th' earth so fast? / A worthy pioner" (1.5.162-3).

In despair at finding full meaning in "this" Denmark, on a scaffold so cut off from the real world, Hamlet, with meaning patent only to the audience, uses an analogy to describe his country's wholly phenomenological nature: "this goodly frame, the earth, seems to be a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours" (2.2.298-303). "This"

Denmark, then, is only a wooden apron stage, with an overhanging, decorated roof; Heaven is no more than the stink of the playgoers' breath.⁶³ Desperate to reach a world beyond, Hamlet tries to get over the barrier between the audience and the play, the theatrical threshold that has been made so shockingly impenetrable. He battles at a stage threshold that it seems only he can see, beyond which perhaps there is a world he can contact. There is nothing transcendent on this sterile promontory. This appears to be a closed world.

Struggling against the sterility of his stage world, whenever Hamlet is alone with no other listeners but the audience, he battles to find that world that is not Denmark. In spite of his fellow student Horatio, onstage he is unable to find relief in friendship: he is alienated from Laertes, his own love for his dead father is more hyperbolic than natural, while his father's love for him (one that goes on after death) puts an intolerable burden on him. And in his eyes, he has lost Gertrude as a mother.⁶⁴ Isolated from everyone, Hamlet studies those around him: Danes, English players, Norwegian soldiers--and, in particular he peers to see if there is anyone in the Elizabethan theatre, even "the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise" (3.2.10-12). Hamlet desperately needs the release and relief that comes from

having people to talk to. A victim of the closed world, silenced by it, tortured by its contradictory moral values, its promise, then withdrawal, of spiritual values, he looks outward, past the edge of the platform, towards the yard and galleries, for understanding, for sympathy, for answers to his questions, where his listeners inhabit a full actuality, all the things missing from the stage world.

I shall read three of Hamlet's notorious speeches. I have chosen them as offering different kinds of open address on this alternating stage. In two of the speeches, Hamlet is alone on the scaffold. In the first speech, he opens himself to the playgoers; in the second speech he asks them spurious questions. The third speech is an aside; Claudius is also onstage. In this speech Hamlet begs audience understanding, presenting them with contradictory claims, that what he must do is silly, and that it is important. I read Shakespeare's dramaturgy as if the actor playing Hamlet claims not only a metaphorical space on the fringes of the playworld, but as if he literally, physically moves around the edge of the platform, looking the audience in their eyes, straining his head back to glare up into the galleries, skirting the edge of the platform to bend down to grab at those in the yard, desperate to find someone there in the playhouse. In order to sort out worries about sexuality, life, death, revenge, good and bad behaviour, he

leans towards and grasps at the audience's reality to find meaning for his own life, emphasizing his points with strong gestures, possibly in the highly theatrical style he denounces to the players (3.2.1-14).

Because I think Hamlet talks directly to this audience, I choose to call his big speeches "open addresses" rather than "soliloquies." Here, I differ from several critics. Elizabeth Burns defines "soliloquy" as "a device through which the character can expose more than his immediate motives and intentions by exploring his own consciousness, can appear to be a true thinking aloud" (54). About Hamlet in particular she writes:

Hamlet does not directly address the audience nor does the presence of the audience seem to be necessary for the effectiveness of such speeches. In fact the full implications of these soliloquies are better grasped in reading. It is for this reason that they present the actor with such difficulties. It is almost impossible for an actor to eliminate his consciousness of an audience. (54)

I disagree profoundly, as I hope to show later. Righter shows more awareness of the flexibility of the Elizabethan stage, describing Shakespeare's soliloquy as one of the "mediating devices by which the audience might be referred to indirectly without disturbing the illusion of the play" (86). Righter considers playworld and audience world as essentially and desirably discrete. She privileges play and stage over audience, as does Beckerman. Cautioning that "direct address may undo a play's illusion," he places

Hamlet's speeches in a closed theatrical space, as internal debate not spoken to playgoers, but overheard by them:

Most of Hamlet's soliloquies suffer if the actor insists on using them to confide in the audience. They so much embody internal dissension or dismay at what Hamlet sees about him that efforts to externalize them often dilute their impact. In considering soliloquies, then, we should distinguish between those that are distinctly outward directed, to the audience, and those that have a somewhat different focus. (117)

Weimann holds a view about Hamlet's speeches similar to Beckerman's. For him, as for Righter and Beckerman, they only obliquely acknowledge audience presence:

In Hamlet there are still signs of direct address (4.4.47) but these are admittedly quite rare. More characteristic of a play like Hamlet is an indirect audience contact that operates through an awareness of the theatrical medium itself. Such is the case when Hamlet compares his own inactivity with the effusions of the player moved to tears by the emotion of his role. (222)

Nevertheless, several critics read Hamlet's speeches as making open contact with the people in the playhouse. Greenblatt, for instance, proposes that Hamlet's speeches are said straight to the audience: "the characteristic of [Hamlet's] words--as opposed to modern attempts to record the discourse of interiority--is their public character, the apparent impersonality of the rhetorical structure, their performative mode." He adds that the vital point worth considering is that Hamlet's speech is "delivered in direct address to an enormous outdoor public assembly" (87).

Clemen also argues that

direct address of the audience is important for the understanding of Shakespeare's soliloquies. The open stage protruding right into the pit, with the audience on three sides, favoured close contact, even intimacy, and a secret understanding between the audience and the soliloquizing actor who was able to project his emotions by means of gestures, physiognomy and stage business. (4)

John Russell Brown goes further, making stage and audience always part of the same world, asserting that on the Elizabethan stage "the actors did not address the audience as if it were in another world. There was a reciprocal relationship; the audience could participate in the drama as easily as the actors could share a joke or enlist sympathy" (44). Brown, I think, misses a dynamic peculiar to Shakespeare's dramaturgy, his use of both a closed and an open stage, at times shutting down, at times opening up, a "reciprocal relationship" between play and playgoers.

For several reasons, I choose to use the term "open address" rather than the usual "soliloquy" in writing about Shakespeare's strategies of dramatic address. First, "soliloquy" implies something grander, more closed and finished than many of the speeches Shakespeare allows to his characters. Second, "soliloquy" can be misleading. Characters are not always "solus." Often, as in the case of Thersites, the character is not alone on the scaffold when he or she speaks, but is understood to be heard by no one but the theatre audience. Third, "soliloquy" is often associated with "naturalistic" theatre which concentrates on

internality, on how this kind of address reveals a speaker's psychological processes. However, there are many implicit stage directions in Shakespeare's open addresses signalling that, as well as wrestling aloud with thoughts and feelings, characters on Shakespeare's stage may also engage to varying degrees in the native tradition of questioning, challenging, or confiding in their audiences. Although Styan uses the term "soliloquy" for Hamlet's address, he points out the overriding importance of its stage dynamic, the dual relationship of speaker and audience:

The big speech, with the actor confronting his audience, was a way of directing their response and creating a particular impact, not as oratory but as theatre. The soliloquy was always open to the audience and was never a mumbling into beard or bosom in a simulation of naturalistic thinking, as if the spectator were not there. Thus the attempt to catalogue the soliloquies into genres--as expository, meditative, emotive, sententious, and so in--tells us little about their theatrical impact. (Stagecraft 165)

I prefer to use the term "open address" since it acknowledges explicitly the listening presence of an audience. In order to engage in his "merciless self-interrogation" (Clemen 121), Hamlet must also relentlessly and openly interrogate his audience.

Hamlet's open addresses all express concern about the actual world's universal values. He craves the reality that lies outside the playhouse walls, the one the audience has come in from, to provide answers to his questions. He seeks

release from the prison of Denmark, of the closed stage, of his isolation. Like many of the platea figures in the guild plays, the shepherds, Joseph, or Noah, Hamlet needs to talk to people in an ordinary world, to check that they understand him, to hope that they can help. Like them, Hamlet is simultaneously painful and comic, naive and profound. But because he is also a member of the unreal scaffold crowd, he has to battle with the threshold. Often he is also like the extrabiblical or dislocated figures who addressed medieval crowds, speaking to them in ambiguous and equivocal words, as if they belonged neither to the playworld nor to the world of the audience. To some extent the playgoers' living, listening presence fills the human and existential emptiness of this sterile promontory that terrifies Hamlet, but he is also riddled with anxiety that they may not really exist.

Hamlet's words are not private thoughts; they do not signal a Hamlet withdrawing into an inner self, which in order to hear the audience must behave as if they are not present, granting him a pretend solitude. Following hard on his instructions to the English actors, he tells the audience: "Now I am alone" and begins a bombastic speech: "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I." This is far from naturalism, far from agonized reflection. It is the manipulation of a windbag actor, casting about for some

response from the crowd. Hamlet postures. He wants people there listening. He needs the audience to hear him. As well as declaiming, he truly interrogates; he really wants answers.⁶⁵ He gestures to the audience: "[T]his player here" (my emphasis) again assumes that everyone in the playhouse has just witnessed the English actor's performance. Thirty years of life in materialistic Denmark pre-empts Hamlet from finding in himself any internal or spiritual life to offer answers, so he has to bash about on the fringe, laying things out in front of the audience, hoping that they will somehow supply what he lacks. His questions, I think, push the audience to the brink of answering out loud. His words and implied gestures demand eye contact so insistently that perhaps the audience standing around his scaffold or leaning down to see him may have teetered on the edge of letting him know what they think, as York's citizens may have when the "tortores," their pinners, stood close to them, asking them to admire their work or asked them where the missing hammer was. He becomes a parody of himself, a second-rate actor:

Am I a coward?
 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
 Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face,
 Tweaks me by the nose, gives me the lie i' th'
 throat,
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
 (2.2.571-575)

His performance is stylized and it out-Herods the guild plays' Herod; it is creaky, like A Midsummer Night's Dream's guildsmen, or other nonce players with makeshift beards.⁶⁶ Hamlet doesn't imply that they might really stab, or hit him. What they might do is treat him like a clown, like Tarleton⁶⁷. He is self-deflationary, a conscious joker, prancing, devil-like, around the fringes of the stage, sparring with the playgoers, daring individuals among them to shout or grab at him.⁶⁸ The Globe's customers are the only people on whom he can vent his frustration, and whom he tries to force to react for him. Girdled by their full substantial reality, like the bear in the arena next door, Hamlet ironically denigrates himself as being not fully human, grotesque, a stage fool, and a bad one at that.

Wavering increasingly as the play progresses, Hamlet comes to rely more than ever on the potential responses of the audience. In his first talk with the playgoers, Hamlet stood in front of them trying to dump an all-too physical body (his "too sallied flesh" (1,2,129). In the next open address, during which Ophelia is probably silently onstage, he erases himself altogether from his own words. He pushes the burden of his terror away from himself over to the other side of the threshold, onto the audience, as though he expects them to save him:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? (3.1.55-59)

Not once in this address does he use "I." He casts everything in infinitives and in inclusive plurals. How the speech is to be heard or delivered is notoriously hard to decipher. As Melissa Furrow indicates, Hamlet's persistent use of infinitives in this speech may represent his impotence as a speaker.⁶³ I am grateful, also, to John Baxter for suggesting another point of view, that the point may be not that the speech is impersonal or that Hamlet somehow goes personally missing in it. Rather, the speech is in the mode which Polonius calls "poem unlimited"--in other words, the question is a general one and not a limited case.⁷⁰ I think that many elements, the infinitives, the use of a distancing "that" (rather than "this"), and the shaping of the speech as a universal worry work to implicate the audience in his address. Hamlet refuses to be alone in his dilemma. He sloughs off its burden onto the audience, dropping it over the stage edge into their world.⁷¹ The playgoers know the answers to these questions but they can't make Hamlet hear them.⁷²

The speech is full of what Weimann calls "verbal gestures," gestures towards the audience (267). It is platea address that speaks of familiar, real life fears and connects to the audience exactly like the guild drama. For instance, the shepherds' terrible flat despair spoken to

medieval audiences is echoed by Hamlet's "dread of something after death." Unlike the shepherds Hamlet is equivocal, sometimes a joker, often provocative. Even as Hamlet connects to the playgoers, he shifts his link with them by being indirect and asking unanswerable questions. Whether to kill oneself--at least in the world the playgoers live in--is not a question they can really answer.⁷³ At times like this Hamlet is painful and dangerous. As always, he cannot get to the fullness of their reality. His vocabulary suggests that he can only imagine life and death in physical terms ("slings and arrows"). The universe he imagined is one governed not by providence but by "outrageous fortune." I think Hamlet looks straight at the playhouse for this speech, catches the eye of some reluctant audience member, thereby forcing onto him or her silly, unaskable, but ultimately dangerous questions about the basic laws of an actual universe.⁷⁴ He invites the playgoers to consider the ultimate issue of salvation and damnation, as did the guild play; yet he does so in a way that is equivocal. Most disturbingly, Hamlet wavers on the verge of making the whole thing into a joke. Horror and comedy come as close together here as do Danish funeral and marriage:

To die, to sleep--
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wish'd. (59-63)

He wishes he could escape this sterile existence. But death, as described by Hamlet, is the same as falling comatose at the end of a hard day's work. He provocatively foregrounds the absence of God from this philosophy, of any spiritual dimension, when he echoes Christ's last words ("consummatum est") to talk about suicide, and then uses "devoutly" to modify desire for self-murder. He shifts from the impersonal to the communal, using "we" to pursue the rest of his argument, whistling in the dark, trying to believe the people in the playhouse think as he does:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. (64-67)

This is open address, like the old platea address, an attempt to embrace something beyond the sterile promontory. However, it is a disconcerting mixture of the painful words of biblical characters who speak for everyone, and the extrabiblical or diabolical figures, who riddle, wordplay, confuse. Yet he tells the audience death is a journey on earth, through a wholly material world:

who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
(75-81)

Implicit in Hamlet's words is the assumption that everyone in the audience would rather put up with a troubled

life because dread of the afterlife unsettles their determination, makes them prey to dangerous doubts and uncertainties. He nags at this problem, listing a number of ways all lives are difficult:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin. (69-75)

What he describes--an ordinary messy life--is restricted to social troubles (mostly middle class); it's certainly a life without spirituality. He makes a strange compilation, taunting everyone with the high-flown Latinate legal "quietus" followed a comic drop to simple English, the concrete practical "bare bodkin" (the shoemaker or tailor's needle), something they all know about. Rather than serving to make his meaning clear, this drop to the native makes his words ironic, untrustworthy. The things he lists don't warrant suicide in an ordinary world. Poised now on a threshold close to the audience, speaking out into their playhouse space, he provokes them, people who inhabit a full actuality, to deny what he says. Every question he shoves at them has its potential answer, not in the "nutshell" world of Denmark, but in the real world that goes on outside the playhouse. He battles toward these answers, straining his eyes to see this world across the stage's threshold, but

then turns his back on the playgoers and, moving into the closed world, shrinks back into Danish consciousness:

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. (84-87)

His old, obsessive physicality takes over. Like tradition's native fools, body is all there is; resolution and thought are reduced to bodily complexion and pallor. The highest action he can think of is cast as an image of a sport ("pitch" in falconry is the highest point in a hawk's flight); the best action goes up to a destination which like the canopy-heaven, is limited, never transcendent.

Unable to kill himself, Hamlet wonders if he can kill someone else. This third open address is an aside. As Hamlet and the audience watch Claudius at prayer, he lets them know that this is not the moment to kill the king. His opening words are like a joke aside to the playgoers, trying to finalize the act he contemplates. The audience watches a man with a sword stare at a man apparently at prayer, starting and stopping, rationalizing his reluctance:

Now might I do it [pat], now 'a is a-praying;
And now I'll do't--and so he goes to heaven,
And so am I [reveng'd]. That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father, and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven. (3.3.73-78)

Though the speaking position of the words shifts, the stress falls on repeated "now," "so," "I." The combination

of the comically abrupt "pat" (applied to murder), the three short clauses, and the broken second line, make his resolution suspect. He sounds breathless, unreflective; the idea as speedily dispatched as he wishes Claudius could be. Having pursued with rigid logic that killing Claudius now would not be proper he decides to save the murder for a time when Claudius is "full of bread / With all his crimes broad blown, as flush in May" (80-81). There is nothing heroic about Hamlet's plan for a more effective vengeance. The register, the tone, and the reasons for delaying the murder are spurious and petty:

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At game a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't--
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. (89-95)

He trivializes murder to a man doing a pratfall. Hamlet's use of "relish" for salvation--bodily appetite, not the soul's need--makes for farce, for an ignoble sequence of imaginings. Hamlet here works the playgoers, his only hearers, trying to win their indulgence for both his reluctance and his resolution. It's a lot to ask.

As he dies, Hamlet offers no explanations. Instead he orders Horatio to "report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied" (5.2.338-9). To the end, Hamlet is indirect with his audience. Although he thinks hard and

aggressively, he is not deeply philosophical; he is either muddled or equivocal. It is hard to tell which. At times, he speaks with the genuine plébeian voice; at others, he quibbles and jokes like a dislocated figure. He botches actions, he is obtuse, he misses obvious answers. He cobbles together proverbs, tags, theatrical histrionics, in desperate attempts to touch something real. In the auditorium lie the missing parts of the philosophy he so urgently seeks and which can never be supplied. Out there is the knowledge of "a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will" (5.2.10-11). At the end of the play Horatio says "Good night sweet prince: And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (5.2.359-60). The audience must hope Horatio is right, but they know that this scaffold world has shown little sign of angels hovering in its aloft. The playhouse canopy simply screened out the sky rather than offering a way to heaven; not symbolizing it but blocking it off.

Righter describes Hamlet's recognition of "you that look pale, and tremble at this chance, / That are but mutes or audience to this act" (5.2.334-5) as

radically alter[ing] the structure of the stage on which he stands. Suddenly he is surrounded by actors on all four sides. The throng of playgoers in the pit, the people in the galleries, the gallants in their fine places are all swept inexorably into the drama, swelling the modest ranks of Hamlet's subjects. (147)

Although Righter is correct in her assertion that the stage opens to the audience here, she misjudges its character. Hamlet's words do not "radically alter the structure of the play." They confirm a structure that has been building throughout. At the very last Hamlet does see the audience. But not as Danes. Too late he sees what they really are: playgoers trapped inside the playhouse.

The close to Hamlet's drama implies a doomsday play ending where audience, Heaven and Hell come together in the theatre, and where the end of the play may also offer hope of an after-life. Horatio certainly believes so when he says, "Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (5.2.359-360). But the stage withdraws the possibility. Sadly, "angels" in this theatre are painted cherubs on the underside of the canopy. For the character who was Hamlet, there is no real escape from a closed world like "this Denmark." The playworld shrinks to boards on trestles, where Fortinbras holds up Hamlet's guts. The play is over. Only the "unsatisfied" are left, the Danish court and Fortinbras who will be a new audience to Hamlet's story, but it will be told by someone who never fully knew the prince. Only the playgoers heard Hamlet's full story; even with them, he was indirect. They also are the "unsatisfied"; those playgoers who, for the duration of the play have been equivocated with, yet asked to feel and

respond. Released, they are able to go out through playhouse doors that are now unlocked, to a world with actual sky above it, where lies a potential for a real Heaven and Hell. The play ends in the actual world of these playgoers: the other side of the threshold Hamlet glimpsed but could never reach.

3.8 LOOK THERE, LOOK THERE

In King Lear Shakespeare still derives tension from the alternation of closed and open stage. In this play he shifts the threshold twice. He begins Lear with a stage where "I" dominates, a playing space of closed address, representing England's powerful few. Next, he lowers the threshold, making the scaffold represent the outdoor world of England's countryside. Here he permits characters to address the audience as "you." In a second movement, Shakespeare opens the stage entirely. Here characters say "we" from the scaffold, meaning everyone gathered in the playhouse, including the audience. At the close of Lear Shakespeare recovers the guild plays' fully open address.

The play begins with a tightly closed scaffold inhabited by England's court. Always ignoring the presence of the playgoers, characters speak from behind a stage

threshold as impenetrable as the walls that girdle their castles. Both Lear and his assembly speak a language meant to exclude. As the old king passes on his "rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state" to a new generation, with massive formality, he divides up the "shadowy forests," the "champains rich'd" with "plenteous rivers," and the "wide-skirted meads" of an England that seems to be wholly prosperous and to belong only to the rich (1.1.64-5). To those onstage, this England is an unpeopled tract of land, owned and divided by those in power, excluding any ordinary English people.⁷⁵ Lear's elaborate words alternate with a companion tongue, the echolalic code spoken by his daughters, Goneril and Regan, as they give the old man what he wants to hear, and get what they want for themselves.

Goneril: "Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter; / Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty" (1.1.55-56). Regan: "I am alone felicitate / In your dear highness's love" (1.1.75-76). Lear, himself, vaunting like a Herod or a Pilate: "Come not between the dragon and his wrath. / I loved her most, and thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery" (1.1.121-3). No one inside this scaffold's threshold, king, daughters, or sons-in-law, speaks of responsibility or care for the people who might live and work in the forests, fields, or by the rivers. The

royal, public, "we" on this stage is, in fact, an obsessively self-absorbed and utterly excluding "I."

No one onstage speaks in open address. Only Cordelia on the scaffold's fringes speaks in asides. Here she worries about how to respond to her father's demand for public affirmation of love (1.1.76-78). Her nervous murmurs do not reach any of the characters inside the threshold. She is heard only by the playgoers. For them, her broken murmurs punctuate the extravagant closed pronouncements on the main stage. Her whispered conversation with the audience is tentative and uncertain. Yet, when Cordelia turns her face away from the threshold, looking inwards to the closed royal world, she speaks with a more assured "I" than the one the audience heard. Entering the closed scaffold world, she becomes more the king's daughter than a girl who loves an aging father. On the closed stage, the balanced alternation of "you" and "me," "I," and "you" of her reply is more at one with the main scaffold's closed formality than were her nervous whispers on its edge. In the exclusive world, Cordelia is correct but not generous. Her response is taut: "You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I / Return those duties back as are right fit, / Obey you, love you, and most honour you" (1.1.96-8).⁷⁶

This is a closed world that quickly drives out all non-conformists. Cordelia and her defender, Kent, are banished.

Those who are pushed out by the powerful on this stage must live in the interstices of its world, along the periphery of the scaffold, close to the playgoers. In the first two acts of Lear, the edge of the closed stage is inhabited by people who, like traditional fools, have no central place in its social, political world. In the guild plays, it was the extra-biblical characters, often those cheeky servant figures who owed their genesis to folk plays, who offered commentary to the audience on the playworld and conjured up visions of alternative worlds. People alienated by Lear's elite world talk from the fool's space; the youthful fool (Cordelia), Lear's professional fool; the vicious fool, Edmund; and feigned fool (Edgar); later the genuinely mad fool, Lear.⁷⁷ On the edge of the closed world these characters conjure up visions of alternative worlds.

Edmund, Gloucester's bastard son, can at first move only on the fringes of the closed society. He is alone onstage when he describes his plans to break into the exclusive court. Like Pykeharnes in the guild play, he proposes the existence of an aberrant world, a place where his "services are bound" to Nature's "law" (1.2.1-2). Even though he confides in the audience, Edmund's new world is as "I" centred as Lear's. He speaks to the playgoers, but neither his words nor his vision embraces them. Instead, he spits at them alliterative phrases that repel: "Why brand

they us? / With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?" (1.2.9-10). Like Pykeharnes, Edmund is aggressive towards his listeners. His questions to them are acerbic; he attacks them, insisting that they will see a fashionable weakling in "legitimate Edgar" (1.2.16). This does not happen. Furthermore, Edmund isolates himself from his only listeners by proposing a new society in which he alone will "grow" and "prosper" (1.2.21). In his new universe, Edmund does grow and prosper. Both Goneril and Regan fall for the energetic and handsome young man, vying for his affection, pouring favours on him. When he makes it in the big world, Edmund is absorbed by a closed stage "I." He has no time for the audience. He never speaks to them again.

Like Edmund, Lear's fool confides from the verges of the stage. The professional fool occupies a traditional position in the society and on the stage. In the court he has verbal license, but no power. As a stage figure he can move between playworld and audience world. On the closed stage, he has repeatedly warned his master that a king can't be expected to give up his royal cake and eat it, mocking Lear that "thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away" (1.4.163). Alone on the stage he announces the fool's inconsequentiality, that: "This is a brave night to cool a courtezan." Then, in four-beat doggerel he predicts the advent of a new world:

When priests are more in word than matter;
 When brewers mar their malt with water;
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
 No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
 (3.2.80-3)

The fool predicts a topsy-turvy new world, a universe where the impossible might happen. He also pokes fun at the abuses and stupidities in Lear's kingdom (and in any society, that of London theatre-goers included). But his "prophecy" is the formulaic vision offered by a stock figure from folk plays. His vision of a new "Albion" is a limited one, condemning the present society, but giving no fresh proposal.⁷⁸ Its nonsensical wordplay is no more than an extension of his persistent nagging at Lear in the closed world. Flat, undynamic, the fool's prophecy is a standard picture of legendary England, mythologized as Albion. Unlike the addresses of many stage fools, this one fails to acknowledge openly the presence of listeners. The fool does not see or speak to the people over the threshold, or make them participants. His speech is locked in a predictable fool's "I," as closed as any other on this scaffold. Like Edmund's speech, the fool's address comes from the threshold, but it is not fully open address.

Nor does Edgar speak in full open address when, recreated as a roaming madman, he also has to speak on the fringes of the scaffold. Moving in the marches of society, with no place to stay, neither in wealthy castle nor in poor

village house, he speaks alone onstage explaining that to "preserve" himself, he will "take the basest and most poorest shape / That ever penury, in contempt of man, / Brought near to beast" (2.3.7-9). Edgar inhabits rural England of "low farms," "poor pelting villages," "sheep-cotes," and "mills." This England has outsiders too. Edgar becomes one of the "Bedlam beggars" who wander among the villages using their strangeness to frighten or cajole generosity from countryfolk (2.3. 13-20). Only the audience hear Edgar change his identity to: "Poor Turlygod! poor Tom! / That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am" (2.3 20-21). Nonetheless, in spite of Edgar's position on the threshold, he does not acknowledge the audience. He sounds artificial, using a quaint, rural voice, a contorted syntax, an educated man locked into a stock imitation of the unlettered. His address still says only "I."

Shifting the scaffold to the open heath instead of royal castles, Shakespeare lowers the stage's threshold, forging a closer alliance between scaffold and playhouse at large. Here Lear says "you," not as public rhetoric, but as a real person speaking to another human being, as if for the first time he looks at another person and really sees him. On the heath where both he and his fool are drenched with rain, Lear directs his servant to take shelter from the

storm. Earlier Lear has shouted up at the elements in language as excessive as the words he used at court:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
 Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the
 cocks! (3.2.1-3)

Now Lear sees that the only servant he has left is a person who, like himself, is cold and wet. His voice changes:

Prithee, go in thyself: seek thine own ease:
 This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.
 In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty,--
 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
 (3.4.23-27)

"In, boy; go first": these are vital words. Short, quiet, they characterize the stage moment I call "the drop to the native." This theatrical moment is a complex of staging that draws in the audience. Sometimes it involves, as it does here, a lexical change, a drop to simple native diction. It may involve a literal, physical image, as the figure goes bodily down onto the ground, causing the audience to peer to see, as they would strain to see Christ's stretched on the cross in the York Crucifixion, or bent to the earth in N-Town's *Woman Taken in Adultery*. It may involve the drop from an elevated status within the playworld, as a locus figure becomes a character on the platea, a participant in the audience's everyday world. The voice may drop in volume so that the audience must physically lean towards the figure to hear. In the drop to

the native the onstage figure is an intense theatrical focus; but he or she is never separated from the audience. Rather, the figure is the centre point, the hub of a wheel, of which the playgoers are the circumference, the circle. Most of all, this is a moment that unifies playworld and audience world.

Lear's words, his drop to the native, mark the beginning of the second movement in Shakespeare's use of address. From now on, the stage alternates between the old closed political world and a new open world that recognizes others, a stage that says to the audience "you," not just from its edge but from the main platform. When his fool disappears into the hovel, Lear is alone with the audience, not pushed to the verge, but holding all the stage. He addresses the audience in simple English:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your [loop'd] and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these. O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! (3.4.24-33)

These words involve everyone in the playhouse. The language is intelligible to everyone. The old-style alliterations generate clarity; they do not bring in bombast. Lear takes his listeners with him into the storm. In the last sentence, Lear's realisation of a wider world than he has hitherto known is expressed mainly in simple monosyllables

and ends with "this." He sounds as though he submits what he sees to the audience.

Like Edmund, the fool, and Edgar, Lear proposes here a new possibility for England; however, his vision is of an unofficial, unexalted place, where power's fancy words are futile in the face of the need to survive. From being able only to think about his country as a map, in his mind's eye he sees people beyond himself, the English people missing from the map. At this moment, Lear is overcome by the thought that he, too, is one of those people who may also suffer the discomfort and danger of this storm. He sees himself as a member of a community. Because the stage has earlier been so tightly framed, (much like an enclosed locus), I think that the actor playing Lear may have used the native tradition of *platea* address. He looked out into the playhouse to see the "you" he speaks of, English people like the playgoers. Lear, perhaps, strains outward to see confirmation of his new vision in their presence. All grandiose words disappear. Like *platea* address, Lear's speech drops into simple vocabulary, to homely images. It is a transparent language. Every word must have been understood by educated and uneducated in the audience. Alone with the playgoers, Lear's drop to the native opens up the stage space. I imagine playgoers craning to hear these words. Repeating "you" and "your," Lear stands alone on

stage, with no one but the audience round him. It is a deeply significant moment. The people in the playhouse are made the "this" he has taken "too little care of," the England he ignored. As well as articulating a personal turning point in the character of the king, Lear's speech is a crucial commentary on the whole world of the play. At this moment Lear shifts the threshold of his stage outwards by speaking inclusively, not about an abstract, mapped world, but about a "you." However, Lear does not yet say "we."

This is left for Edgar to say when he sees his mutilated father, blinded and cast out by Regan and Cornwall. The young man speaks what is an aside to the playgoers. His words mark the next shift towards the audience, wholly involving them. When he told them "Edgar I nothing am," he reported to the playgoers, with some detachment, about an England they had not seen onstage, the countryside and its mad wanderers. Now they, too, actually see Gloucester, and watch Edgar's first sight of him. Edgar turns to them, to share his pain at what he and they see: "When we our betters see bearing our woes, / We scarcely think our miseries our foes" (3.6.105-6). "We" and "our" are crucial words. They push outwards towards the audience in the yard and galleries, yoking them to what they see, refusing to allow the stage to carry the experience alone,

locating this agony not just onstage but in the playhouse. From the professional stage for the first time, "we" is heard: a "we" that means everyone in the playhouse, characters and audience. This "we" is carried through to the end of the play. Castle walls never again shut out the playgoers.

In the final scene, Lear carries onstage his daughter's dead body. The moment is both comic and horrible. At first Lear is wordless, howling out like a wounded animal. Then he uses "you." This time he hectors at "you" the people around him, those who, stunned, watch him holding Cordelia's corpse and can only stare dumbly at the old raging man. Like those onstage, the audience must know full well that Cordelia is dead:

O, you are men of stones:
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for
 ever!
 I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
 She's dead as earth. (5.3.258-262)

Lear's accusation is obliquely aimed at the audience too. Presumably they also are silent, stunned by Lear's dreadful contradictions, by his mad assertion of: "I know when one is dead and when one lives," by his flat, dreadful "she's dead as earth," at his abrupt shift to the call for a looking glass. Then he denies the death he has just agonized over. Lear is a fool. No one onstage responds when he asks for the looking glass to see if Cordelia's breath will mist it:

Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives. (5.3.252-264)

The request hovers in the air. It hangs like a fool's question, ridiculous, unanswerable. The audience know when a corpse is a corpse. And yet they perhaps hope for a miracle as they watch Lear struggling to acknowledge and to deny Cordelia's death.

Lear is the platform's centre of interest. There's nothing the audience can do for Cordelia. Their relationship with her is ended; it was always slight. Next Lear insists he can see Cordelia's breath by holding a feather (either real or imagined) to her lips. Like Cordelia, he too must be a body low on the platform, stooping over his daughter as he cries: "This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so, / It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows / That ever I have felt" (266-268). The old man crouching over the corpse is the focal point for everyone, for the characters on the scaffold and for the audience in the playhouse. Foolish old Lear watches Cordelia; all others have their eyes fixed on him. Everyone attends to the living. As Lear bends over Cordelia, listening for her voice, peering to see her breath, possibly the playgoers, those in the galleries straining down over the rails to see, those in the yard rising up to see onto the scaffold, mimic the watchers onstage, as perhaps N-Town did when Christ

wrote on the ground. While everyone gazes, news is brought of Edmund's death; Albion resigns; Edgar and Kent are reinstated; but these events are rushed over. The focus never wavers. It remains with Lear until, as he realizes the old man is dying, Albion cries out. Lear speaks his final words:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
 Never, never, never, never, never!
 Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
 Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
 Look there, look there! (5.3.306-312)

These are all simple native English words. No Latinate terms. No French "champains." No dragons. No cataracts. Implicit in them is a desperate request for anyone to say, "Yes, I see her lips move," to make of the tragedy a romance. It is an ending no one can give him. Surely the playgoers all now strain even harder to see and hear him. They are those people whose existence the mad old fool denied at the beginning of the play, those whose aid he now needs. Lear wants simple help--his clothing loosened. He asks, explains, and thanks in the most direct and ordinary language possible. Dying, he does not bellow or proclaim. The dragon who wouldn't allow anyone close, at this moment wants someone actually to touch him.

Lear's final order: "look there, look there" includes the audience. They are necessary to Lear. His last words

insist that they look with him at Cordelia. He asks everyone onstage and in the playhouse to see her lips move, to hear her voice. Sadly, only the audience knew her voice was "soft and low," when, at the opening of the play, they alone heard her whispers. I imagine a procession carrying its dead back through the tiring house doors. Locked in private grief, Kent cannot help (5.3.320-1). Edgar is perhaps left alone to speak the epilogue:

The weight of this sad time we must obey,
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say:
 The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long.
 (5.3.324-7)

Edgar's words are inadequate. I agree with Peter Brook's assessment of them as "trite," "a strange ambiguity hidden in [a] naive jingle" (104) and with his description of them as a "disturbing statement--a statement that rings like a half-open question" (105). I think the power of Lear's closing lies in Shakespeare's refusal to end the play with a closed certainty. Richard III was left alone, isolated on a closed stage. But Edgar stands, unable satisfactorily to sum up what he and the audience have seen, or to propose a brave new world. The audience too has seen the political "I" destroy itself, the dragon become a "bare fork'd animal." Edgar speaks as one bereft, but he speaks for everyone. Stripped of his colourful adjectives, Edgar is able only to speak clumsily rhymed platitudes. Yet his

speech is moving. The "we" he uses is complex, implying that any hope for the future lies in the community that encompasses the playworld and the actual world. If there is any hope of rebirth, any promise of restitution, it lies not only with Edgar. By the end of this tragedy, the play's centre has moved into the whole playhouse, as its dramatic shape has shifted from closed "I," to "you," and last to "we." The final "we" asserts Edgar's new identity as ruler. But, unlike Lear's early solipsistic "we," Edgar's "we," like his sing-song commonplaces, also places him among ordinary grieving humans, a community that includes the audience.

Throughout the guild drama, the audience's presence was vital to the whole play's meaning. We recall the way guild episodes steadily drew the playworld and audience world together: Cain's Hell was found in Wakefield's local ground; Chester and Hell were physically one; N-Town looked on its own ground, at its own sins, in its final episodes. In all Judgement Day episodes, every distinction between history and present time was swept away. In these episodes, playgoers were "this people," "this world," those who were saved or damned. The final episode of every guild play merged the "now" and "here" of doomsday with the "now" and "here" of the audience. With equal power, Shakespeare invokes audience presence to create meaning in Lear. He re-

opens the playworld to the audience, steadily drawing them in throughout Lear until they too are fully included in Edgar's "we."

Hardison links the shape of Shakespeare's tragedies with the shape of the medieval guild plays. He suggests, too, that

the forms and techniques used in the earliest drama of the Middle Ages are important not only to later medieval drama but to Renaissance drama as well. (292)

Shakespeare's tragedies follow the arc of guild play structure, closing as did each guild drama by invoking the audience. Macbeth, for instance, ends in the playhouse with Macbeth denying his human nature, and attempting to insist that all human life, the audience too, are merely actors on its stage. Hamlet ends, not only on the sterile promontory, but encompassing the whole playhouse, including playgoers. In Lear Shakespeare goes further. He restores the full play-audience dynamic of guild drama. By the close of each tragedy, the presence of the audience is a crucial element in the meaning of the play.

Hardison's connection is crucial, not just because he sees the mixedness of Shakespeare's tragedies, but because he notes that the "forms and techniques" of medieval drama help us understand the workings of renaissance theatre. In his early career, Shakespeare ignored the native tradition of open address, making his stage a place of spectacle,

wholly closed off from his audience. But then he worked steadily towards opening his stage. For example, in Richard III, 1 Henry IV and Troilus and Cressida, he followed the native tradition by opening the scaffold intermittently to the playgoers. In Hamlet he added to his commercial stage guild drama's capacity to alternate closed and open stage spaces. Then in Lear he found the open stage. Using the old conventions of talking to the audience, using inclusive language, simple words, Shakespeare fully rediscovered open address and, in doing so, invented a professional scaffold that can say "we."

CHAPTER THREE

NOTES

¹ Coldewey, "Enterprising" 5-12.

² For the brief account of the growth of London's commercial playhouses I am especially indebted to Bentley, Gurr Stage, Gurr Playgoing, Gurr and Orrell, Hattaway Popular, Thomson, Tydeman and Wickham Stage.

³ In 1558 Elizabeth I herself licensed an acting company. Her patent "specified the permissible scope of the company in unambiguous terms, and came to serve as a model for all patents granted subsequently:

Elizabeth by the grace of God quene of England, &c. To all Justices, Mayors, Sheriffes, Baylyffes, head Constables, under Constables, and all other our officers and mynisters gretinge. Knowe ye that we of oure especiall grace, certen knowledge, and mere mocion have licenced and auctorised, and by these presentes do licence and auctorisie, oure lovinge Subjectes, James Burbage, John Perkyn, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Roberte Wilson, servauntes to oure trustie and welbeloved Cosen and Counseyllor the Earle of Leycester, to use, exercise, and occupie the arte and facultve of playenge Commedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, stage playes, and such other like as they have alredie used and studied, or hereafter shall use and studie, aswell for the recreacion of oure loving subjectes, as for oure solace and pleasure when we shall thincke good to see them, as also to use and occupie all such Instrumentes as they have alreadie practised, or hereafter shall practise, for and during our pleasure. And the said Commedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, and stage plaves, to gether with their musicke, to shewe, publishe, exercise, and occupie to their best commoditie during all the terme aforesaide, aswell within oure Citie of London and liberties of the same,

as also within the liberties and fredomes of anye oure Cities, townes, Bouroughes &c whatsoever as without the same, throughte oure Realme of England. Willynge and commaundinge yow and everie of yowe, as ye tender our pleasure, to permytte and suffer them herein withoute anye yowre lettes, hynderaunce, or molestation duringe the terme aforesaid, anye acte, statute, proclamation, or commaundement heretofore made, or hereafter to be made, to the contrarie notwithstandinge. Provyded that the said Commedies, Tragedies, enterludes, and stage playes be by the master of oure Revells for the tyme beyng before sene & allowed, and that the same be not published or shewen in the tyme of common prayer, or in the tyme of great and common plague in oure said Citye of London. In wytnes whereof &c. wytnes oure selfe at Westminster the xth daye of Maye. (Gurr, Stage, 30-31)

⁴ Phythian-Adams "Urban Decay."

⁵ Gurr Stage 196.

⁶ Gurr Stage 28.

⁷ Innyards in the north of London like the Bull Tavern at Bishopsgate or the Bell in Gracechurch Street continued to act as theatre spaces until the 1590s. See Gurr Playgoing 15. Tydeman comments that:

some of the inn-yard theatres of Elizabethan London involved more than temporary installations, and that permanent stages together with stands for the accommodation of spectators were erected at the Red Lion and Boar's Head Inns at Whitechapel at least, the Red Lion construction being recorded in the Court-Book of the Carpenters' Company for 1567. But dramatic performances at London inns date back at least ten years before this, the earliest records alluding to plays at the Boar's Head and the Saracen's Head in Islington in 1557. (245)

⁸ Gurr calls the building of the Red Lion "the watershed" for all those involved in London theatre: first for all those entrepreneurs who collected the box office receipts, then for the playgoers who had fixed venues to attend

(Playgoing 15). The Red Lion seems to have held a large stage which was surrounded by galleries (Foakes 3).

⁹ Gurr and Orrell 16. The Hope was the last of the open air theatres, and soon became a bear-baiting amphitheatre. The building contract stipulated a trestle stage, one that could be easily taken down to allow for entertainments other than plays (Hattaway, Popular 22).

¹⁰ Thomson comments that:

Either openly, or by inference, The Isle of Dogs criticised the government of the country, and of the City of London too. It was, we presume, the immediate cause of the Lord Mayor's complaint to the Privy Council. It certainly provoked the council not only into concord with the Guildhall, but also into instructing the Middlesex justices to investigate the writing and performing of "a lewd plaie that was plaied in one of the plaiehowses on the Bancke Side, contanyng very seditious and sclanderous matter." (4)

¹¹ In 1596 James Burbage bought Blackfriars, a former monastery, a liberty inside the walls of the city. Burbage converted the building to a theatre; however, in November of that year the area's residents successfully petitioned the Privy Council to ban its use as a public playhouse (Thomson, 15-16).

¹² Thomson describes the move:

On 28 December, under cover of darkness, [Richard Burbage] was with his mother, his brother, a financial backer and friend called William Smith, a carpenter-architect called Peter Street, and about a dozen labourers, outside the empty Theatre. That night, despite attempts to interrupt and prevent them, they began to dismantle it. They carried the timbers, the best preserved of them anyway, down Bishopsgate Street and into the walled city. The Thames was still frozen

on 28 December, and it may be that the timbers were slid across. It would have saved the toll on London Bridge, or the considerable cost of several trips in a Thames ferry. (17-18)

¹³ A venue, owned by the entrepreneur Christopher Beeston, that became famous both for its plays about London's citizens and for its jigs. For an account of Beeston's playhouses, the Red Bull and the Cockpit, see Gurr, Playgoing 170-7.

¹⁴ Although, as Thomson cautions, as in any theatrical enterprise the owners had to take risks and the development of the playhouse business suffered from setbacks. The Globe's success for instance as well as being a story of "business acumen and artistry" is also a story of "small disasters smothered" (35). Gurr also notices fluctuations in the market and that the period 1596-1606, for example, "supply exceeded demand" (Playhouse 18).

¹⁵ According to Gurr "modern estimates of the capacities of the public playhouses converge on about 2,500 as a maximum figure." Of the numbers visiting the playhouses he says: "In 1595 the estimates suggest that the two acting companies were visited by about 15,000 people weekly. In 1620 when 6 playhouses were open, 3 of them the smaller private houses, the weekly total was probably nearer 25,000" (Stage 196).

¹⁶ Gurr and Orrell record that the Swan's stage was about 4 feet 8 inches high and the Red Lion's, "the only case where

the height of an Elizabethan public stage is precisely known," was 5 feet (118).

¹⁷ Even so the acting companies needed to foster a good relationship with the entrepreneurs:

When a company first set up in London it almost always lacked the resources to finance itself, and had to borrow money from an impresario to get started. Travelling in the country required few plays and few costumes, because the venue was constantly changing. In London the one stable venue meant that it was the plays and properties which had to change constantly, and that was expensive. So the companies usually mortgaged their expectations of future prosperity to secure the resources which would make their prosperity possible. In London in the mid-1590s that meant using one of the two impresarios who owned playhouses and the resources that went with them. Philip Henslowe, who owned the Rose playhouse on Bankside, was one. . . . The other impresario, builder and owner of the Theatre playhouse in Shoreditch, was James Burbage. (Gurr and Orrell 72)

¹⁸ Gurr and Orrell observe:

The sharers in the cooperative enterprise put an exact valuation on their shares. If a player took himself out of the company he was paid the agreed value, and a replacement sharer would have to buy his way in. Share prices were high. The Pembroke's Men to whom it is thought Shakespeare may have belonged in about 1592 valued their shares at £80 each. That is rather more than Shakespeare paid for the second largest house in Stratford in 1597. A share in the rival company to Shakespeare's in 1599 was put at £50. The value of a Chamberlain's Men's share in 1594 was probably the same. (70)

¹⁹ For a description of the repertory and procedures of London companies on tour, see Bentley 177-205. Bentley considers that touring, an "inescapable part of the life of London players," was "nearly always an unpleasant and comparatively unprofitable expedient for London misfortunes,

and as the metropolitan companies became more prosperous they resorted to the road less frequently" (179).

²⁰ Gurr quotes Henslowe's inventory of properties for March 1590 (Stage 171); he points out, however, that a large proportion of playhouse budget went on sumptuous costuming:

For example, Alleyn's accounts list some quite startling totals for clothing by present-day priorities: £20 10s. 6d. for a "black velvet cloak with sleeves embrodered all with silver and gold," more than a third of Shakespeare's price for a house in Stratford. No wonder Henslowe had a rule. against players leaving the playhouse wearing his apparel. (Stage 178)

Gurr also lists Alleyn's wardrobe holdings for 1598 of "clokes," "gownes," "Antik sutes," "Jerkings and dublets," "frenchose" and "Venetians"; 83 garments in all, many of them made of velvet, satin or silk, several decorated with gold lace or embroidery (Stage 178-181).

²¹ Under Elizabeth, for example, the London companies performed the same repertoire at court that they mounted in the public playhouses (Gurr, Stage 11). For a brief discussion of court drama under the Stuarts, see Butler.

²² Gurr argues that "the visitations of the plague . . . were the most severely limiting phenomenon the players encountered" (Stage 77).

²³ Gurr Stage 196.

²⁴ The Dutch traveller, Johannes de Witt, made his famous sketch of the Swan in 1596 and recorded his impressions:

There are four amphitheatres in London of notable beauty, which from their diverse signs bear diverse names [the Theatre, Curtain, Rose, and Swan]. In each of them a different play is daily exhibited to the populace. The two more magnificent of these are situated to the southward beyond the Thames, and from the signs suspended before them are called the Rose and the Swan. The two others are outside the city towards the north on the high way which issues through the Episcopal Gate, called in the vernacular Bishopsgate. There is also a fifth [the Bear garden], but of a dissimilar structure, devoted to the baiting of bears, where are maintained in separate caged and enclosures many bears and dogs of stupendous size, which are kept for fighting, furnishing thereby a most delightful spectacle to men. Of all the theatres, however, the largest and most magnificent is the one of which the sign is a swan, called in the vernacular the Swan Theatre; for it accommodates in its seats three thousand persons, and is built of a mass of flint stones (of which there is a prodigious supply in Britain), and supported by wooden columns painted in such excellent imitation of marble that it is able to deceive the most cunning. (quoted in Nagler 117)

The Swiss traveller, Thomas Platter, described his visits to London public playhouses:

Every day at two o'clock in the city of London two and sometimes three comedies are performed, at separate places wherewith folk make merry together, and which ever does best gets the greatest audience. The places are so built that they play on a raised platform, and every one can well see it all. There are, however, separate galleries and there one stands more comfortably and moreover can sit, but one pays more for it. Thus anyone who remains on the level standing pays only one English penny: but if he wants to sit, he is let in at a further door, and there he gives another penny. If he desires to sit on a cushion in the most comfortable place of all, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he gives yet another English penny at another door. And in the pauses of the comedy food and drink are carried round amongst the people, and one can thus refresh himself at his own cost. (quoted in Nagler 117-8)

²⁵ Gurr quotes Sir John Davies who in about 1593 was clearly trying to include all comers in his epigram "In Cosmum." He uses the crowd struggling out of the playhouse at the end of a play as a metaphor describing the confusion of thoughts falling over one another when Cosmus struggles to express them all:

For as we see at all the playhouse dores,
 When ended is the play, the daunce, and song:
 A thousand townsemen, gentlemen, and whores,
 Porters and serving-men together throng,
 So thoughts of drinking, thriving, wenching, war
 And borrowing money, raging in his minde,
 To issue all at once so forwarde are,
 As none at all can perfect passage finde.
 (Playgoing 65-66)

Often these London audiences had little notion of exactly what they would see on the big platform. Playbills put up around the city advertised the time and place of performances, announced whether the play would be a tragedy or comedy, but did not necessarily inform the public about the play's title or subject matter (Hattaway, Popular 46).

²⁶ Gurr and Orrell describe the "hectic level" of the repertory system operated by Henslowe, with "nearly forty plays in their stock in any one year, performing them with a frequency that ranged from six times in one month to a single performance--a fate that befell nearly half of Henslowe's plays" (80).

²⁷ For detailed discussion of regulations and censorship in the period, see Bentley 145-197.

²⁸ An anonymous play performed by the King's Men at the Globe around 1606. Other plays on contemporary subjects, domestic dramas, include Arden of Feversham (1590), A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603), and The Witch of Edmonton (1621).

²⁹ His tedious taxonomy includes "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited" (Hamlet 2.2.396-400).

³⁰ For the inventories of costumes, properties, and expenses received or incurred, see Henslowe's Diaries 319-21.

³¹ Michael Hattaway, who, like Gurr, considers that evidence points to audiences as a mix of social classes, imagines the gathering in the public playhouse to be active, noisy, but not necessarily disruptively rowdy:

The audience was not . . . as some early scholars would have us believe, an unruly, ignorant mob. Nor is it likely, however, that it attended to the play in hushed reverence as a modern audience might do. The mere fact that the public playhouse performances generally took place by daylight meant that the spectators were on show to one another. Gallants took tobacco as they sat conspicuously on the stage (the habit was established by 1596), orange- and beer-sellers plied their trade before the play began and possibly during the performance; and certainly complaints about the distractions of nut-cracking among the audience are fairly common in the plays. Books and pamphlets were also hawked in the auditoria. (Popular 46)

³² Gurr observes:

The Rose was demolished in 1606, though in a sense it grew up again in 1614, when Henslowe and Alleyn decided to replace their other main business venue, its

neighbour the Beargarden, with a new multipurpose playhouse-and-gamehouse, the Hope. The Hope was something less than the last of its kind, for it was designed from the start as a dual-purpose playhouse and bull- and bear-baiting house with a removable stage. (Stage 119)

³³ I have drawn the move to commercial playing in a way that I realise greatly oversimplifies its history, smoothes out what was a complicated, uneven and often contentious process. As well as the authors cited in my text, Michael Bristol, Jean Howard, David Scott Kastan, James Shapiro have informed my discussion.

³⁴ Righter, on the other hand, considers that the acknowledgment of audience presence (particularly in the Tudor period) precluded self-sufficiency, "inhibited the growth of English drama towards the creation on the stage of a three-dimensional image of human life which reflected reality, as represented by the spectators, and yet stood aloof from it, like a dream" (44). She argues that Elizabethan dramatists turned away from the native English tradition and thereby "found in Roman comedy a means of overthrowing the tyranny of the audience, a liberating sanction of the self-contained play" (43).

³⁵ 1 Henry VI was possibly first performed on March 13, 1591 (Baker 587). An entry in Henslowe's diary refers to a performance of Harry the VI (Clark 161). 2 Henry VI was published in 1594 in a bad quarto "thought to be a memorial reconstruction made from the piece as performed" (161). The

date of the first performance is not known. 3 Henry VI was published in 1595, first performed before September 1592 (Clark 165).

³⁶ Hattaway, Popular 46.

³⁷ Dessen, writing about all three plays as theatre, describes the first play in the tetralogy as exhibiting "perhaps the most flexible Shakespearean use of 'place'" (89) and using several examples from all three plays, shows that the stage action is constructed in such a way that for the audience, it "makes the central point unmistakable" (Conventions 36).

³⁸ Francis Berry calls this kind of stage talking "monoplaned language," very like the style of Marlowe's Tamburlaine, where most speeches seem to soar above our heads (Berry, 33). All that Berry says of the young Marlowe's Tamburlaine applies to Shakespeare's early efforts. Describing how Tamburlaine connects to its audiences, he writes: "The psychological distance between audience and stage-spectacle is a constant," and while acknowledging the magnificence of its language he nevertheless observes that, "the verse is delivered within a narrow range of vocal tone and pitch" (32). Berry's central argument about Marlowe's early way of using his stage applies to Shakespeare's early writing. In the early plays Shakespeare, like Marlowe, uses no frontal movement; in

other words, the play stays firmly on the stage rather than reaching out to audiences. Berry finds a flatness to Tamburlaine:

No doubt that in a performance of Tamburlaine in the Elizabethan theatre, as in a modern revival, there would be movements from down-stage to up-stage (and vice versa), but such movements would be purely practical rather than visual fulfilments or equivalents of the language. The effective, and illustrative, movement is on or near the apron, is from left to right or right to left, is processional except when it is punctuated by Tamburlaine's declamations to a frozen stage-audience. (32)

³⁹ This play also offers dramatic display (even more sensational and bloodthirsty fare than in the Henry VI plays), and again follows a heavily patterned and emblematic dramaturgy. Where the Henry VI plays delighted in battles and skirmishes, big public action, the violence in Titus Andronicus is individual, grisly murder, all graphically represented. Shakespeare uses the stage's resources; for example, the trap and levels again for the body of Museus killed by his father, Titus, and then becoming "the blood-stain'd hole" (2.3.210) for Basianus's corpse, where raped and mutilated Lavinia is dumped.

⁴⁰ Brennan examines the way Shakespeare uses the offstage to affect audience understanding of the central action:

Plays are not composed simply of characters enmeshed in sequences of action performed in the presence of an audience. They are a complex weave of actions and reactions, of events that we see and events we hear about performed offstage, and of the differing reactions of characters to events they have acted in on and off stage. An action which occupies only a handful of lines may generate reactions which occupy many hundreds of lines. Reports and the reactions they provoke are vividly recurrent opportunities of presenting the audience with differing versions of the truth and the conflicting viewpoints that are at the very heart of Shakespeare's method of dramatization.
(15)

⁴¹ I am much indebted to Dessen, Viewer's Eye and Conventions, for information on Elizabethan theatrical practice, particularly the stage's flexibility of localization and the patterning of gestures, properties, stage groupings as "linking analogues."

⁴² As with Dessen, Styan's stage-centred criticism in The Shakespeare Revolution and The Elements of Drama has had a deep influence on my thinking about the movement of bodies on the Elizabethan platform.

⁴³ Vickers observes of Shakespeare's characters who make us their intimates:

If the character is forceful, however, as are Iago, Richard III, Macbeth, direct address to the audience involves us immediately with the full range of their intentions, before, during, and after their execution. As I have observed elsewhere, this involvement leads to an intimacy which we would willingly avoid, if we could. There is no-one in the world whose confidence I would rather less care to share than Iago's. (78-9)

⁴⁴ It's hard to overemphasize the dramatic weight carried by a stressed first word, particularly by a "now" that opens the play.

⁴⁵ Later we will disappear from Macbeth's vision, too. Gradually during the course of his play, Macbeth withdraws inside a self-enclosing self, until before his battle he becomes nothing but

a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: [life] is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (5.5.24-28)

⁴⁶ Falstaff tells Hal: "If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath, and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of wild-geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more" (2.4. 136-9). At first sight, Falstaff seems to behave like an amalgam of the guild plays' devils, clowning servants, and the nonce plays' impresarios. For a discussion of Falstaff's inheritance from the Tudor vice, see Spivak and Potter. Empson examines Falstaff's many-sidedness in Pastoral (102-9). In Essays he remarks: "there is a quick answer to the idea that the old brute has no heart If he had no heart, he would have had no power, not even to get a drink, and he had a dangerous amount of power" (66).

⁴⁷ In his pockets he keeps lists of what makes life good: "Item, capon for 2s. 2d., Item, Sauce, Item, Sack two

gallons 5s. 8d. Item, Anchovies and sack after supper 2s. 6d. Item, Bread obolus" (2.4.535-541).

⁴⁸ E. Talbot Donaldson draws parallels between Chaucer's Wife of Bath and Shakespeare's Falstaff. Both are, he says, "though utterly charming, perfectly horrible people." He continues by commenting that both characters are, however, "associated with passages of unrivaled emotional effectiveness, passages that are as splendid tributes to human vitality as any I know" (137-8).

⁴⁹ Clemen argues that Falstaff has a "complex personality operating on many different levels" (38). He finds it impossible to assert a single source for Falstaff's persona and way of engaging the public:

Falstaff's alternative view of the heroic events of the war have precedents in the popular theatre. This popular tradition provided Shakespeare with the figure of the Vice, that mischievous and immoral joker who commented on the dramatic action from a critical distance and maintained his links with the audience by addressing them directly. The construction and arrangement of Shakespeare's stage were particularly favourable for this, but with Falstaff, as so often, Shakespeare goes far beyond all possible precedents and traditions. Whether one looks at the traditional Fool, at the Lord of Misrule or at the miles gloriosus, it is apparent that Falstaff is a more complex, multi-faceted character, and is above all more human than any of the possible prototypes. (43)

⁵⁰ Willard Farnham is more generous to Hal. He regards the speech as an example of Hal's "conscience" at work and the honest words of a man of 'honour' (83-4).

⁵¹ Hal also mocks the patently heroic:

the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.' 'O my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed to-day?' 'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he; and answers 'Some fourteen,' an hour after; 'a trifle, a trifle.' (2.4.102-108)

⁵² Unlike Henry V's Chorus, Prologue offers the audience no apologies for deficiencies of staging.

⁵³ This is a diction that fits him badly, like the king's stumbling French in the guild play.

⁵⁴ John Baxter observes that in Lear: "The heroic couplet, holding out the promise of order in its closed couplet form, becomes an instrument for measuring precisely the violation of that order" (166).

⁵⁵ Kott writes: "War has been ridiculed too. Helen is a tart, Cressida will be sent to the Greek camp and will become a tart. The transfer of Cressida to the Greek camp is not only part of the action of the play; it is also a great metaphor" (79).

⁵⁶ Donaldson observes about this speech:

the rhyming couplets could be taken as memorized advice from her mother, recited by a girl of no experience-- straightforward self-preservative advice based on the not wholly misguided assumption (in Troy at least) that what is to be found in man is lust in action. In his matching soliloquy, just before the lovers meet, Troilus looks forward to an opportunity to "wallow in the lily-beds / Propos'd for the deserver" of

Cressida's favors (3.2.12-13)-- a not unlustful program of action. Cressida's maxims are, like most maxims, ungenerous but sensibly prudent; they were recognized as maxims by the printer of the Quarto of the play, who surrounded three of them with the quotation marks accorded to gnomic sayings in Elizabethan play texts. (91)

⁵⁷ In Antony and Cleopatra, the other play where war and sex contend, Enobarbus also longs for Antony to get on with being a soldier.

⁵⁸ Kott claims "Only the bitter fool Thersites is free from all illusions" (82).

⁵⁹ Dennis Kennedy describes a production of Hamlet in East Germany before the 1989 collapse of the German Democratic Republic:

I saw Siegfried Höchst's production at the Volksbühne in East Berlin, which treated Denmark as a literal prison from which almost everybody was trying to escape, just as almost everybody was trying to escape at that moment from East Germany. The stage was enclosed with three rows of wire fencing, and when Laertes was given permission to return to France in the second scene, he was handed a green document that looked suspiciously like the passports issued by West Germany. The audience howled with delight. (136)

⁶⁰ The countries around also suffer from their controller nation's need to do everything now. Young Fortinbras, forbidden to fight the Danes, races off to fight the Poles, instead, all for a "little patch of ground" (4.4.18).

⁶¹ In Wakefield's Herod the Great a messenger brings the king much the same message:

Bot romoure is rasyed so, that boldly thay brade
 Emangys thame:
 Thay carp of a king:

Thay seasse not sich chatering.
(Herod the Great 76-9)

⁶² As if a corpse was never a man, after killing him, Hamlet degrades Polonius further, saying "I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room" (4.3.19-21).

Hamlet, too, is contained by the materiality of the world. He carries around "this picture./ The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (3.4.53-4), obliges his mother to look in her mirror to see her offence in her physical reflection, rather than urging her to picture it spiritually.

⁶³ Gurr quotes from Dekker's Seven Deadly Sinnes:

their houses smoakt every after noone with Stinkards who were so glewed together in crowds with the Steames of strong breath, that when they came foorth, their faces lookt as if they had been per boylde. (Playgoing 219)

⁶⁴ Later in the main action in the shut-in world of Denmark, he begs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to treat him as a friend, as an equal who shares a past with them. He says: "let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserv'd love, and by what more dear a better proposer can charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no! (2.2.283-8). But they, locked by Claudius in a prison of their own, can't supply what he needs. Even his closest friend and confidant Horatio is cut off from him. Although Hamlet says that Horatio is someone

with whom he can talk: "thou are e'en as just a man / As e're my conversation cop'd withal" (3.2.54-59), this praise seems to me barbed. Horatio is the best Hamlet can find in Denmark. An honourable young man who has "no revenue . . . but [his] good spirits / To feed and clothe [him]" (3.2.58-9), he's nevertheless something of the happy pig, immune to his distasteful world:

. . . one in suff'ring all that suffers nothing,
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
 Whose blood and judgment are so well co-meddled,
 That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
 To sound what stop she please. (3.2.66-71)

The gap between Hamlet and Horatio cannot be bridged.

Horatio is loyal, intelligent, but, unlike Hamlet, although originally an outsider, he can exist in Denmark.

⁶⁵ Michael Bristol observes that in the central action Hamlet often plays the part of the licensed jester, "his jokes and paradoxes acting as real criticism of the madness around him" (9). Responding to this statement, Hattaway writes: "But all too often Hamlet seems to be using the conventional role of madman not only as a psychological safety valve but also as an excuse for cruel and unnatural behaviour" (Hamlet 91). Both these observations on Hamlet's behaviour could equally well apply to the stance he takes towards his audience.

⁶⁶ As in the popular Tudor play Like Will Have Like where the stage direction had "Here entereth Ralph Roister and Tom

Tossport in their doublet and their hose, and no cap nor hat on their head, saving a nightcap, because the strings of their beards may not be seen" (p346). Or like Bottom in *Dream* who "will discharge [a part] in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfit yellow" (1.2.93-6).

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the acting techniques of clowns and tragedians on the public playhouse stage, see Hattaway, Popular 90-5.

⁶⁸ Gurr quotes from the Induction to the anonymous A Warning for Fair Women:

How some damnd tyrant, to obtaine a crowne,
 Stabs, hangs, imprisons, smothers, cutteth throats,
 And then a Chorus too comes howling in,
 And tels us of the worrying of a cat,
 Then of a filthie whining ghost,
 Lapt in some fowle sheete, or a leather pelch,
 Comes skreaming like a pigge half stickt,
 And cries Vindicta, revenge, revenge:
 With that a little Rosen flasheth forth,
 Like smoke out of a Tabacco pipe, or a boyes squib:
 Then comes in two or three like to drovers,
 With taylers bodkins, stabbing one another,
 Is not this trim? is not here goodly things?
 That you should be so much accounted of.
 (Playgoing 213)

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* also refers to using a bodkin as the weapon of revenge (3.1.75).

⁶⁹ Furrow observes:

Hamlet goes out of his way to avoid constructions that force him to link his own suicide with his own self. He never uses the pronoun I in this speech. When he

uses the pronoun we, he is thinking of us all. More often, he avoids personal pronouns ("Who would bear . . .," "puzzles the will") and finite verbs, which require a personal object ("To be or not to be" rather than "Should I kill myself"; "To die, to sleep / To sleep, perchance to dream" rather than "If I died it would be like sleeping, but if I slept, perhaps I'd dream.")

She continues:

All the action of the play depends on Hamlet. . . . Yet in this critical speech, a speech made by Hamlet in crisis, Hamlet himself is missing. It is as if the whole play centred on a single point and it were discovered to be a void, as if the heart of the mystery were hollow.

⁷⁰ J. V. Cunningham describes the rhetorical strategy of "poem unlimited" as Shakespeare uses it in "Plots and errors: Hamlet and King Lear." See particularly pp 216-7.

⁷¹ Clemen describes Hamlet's "self-dramatization" as inviting the actor to explore the theatrical potential, for the text contains indications both of gestures and movements and of changes in tempo. Often, however, self-dramatization means overstatement. At times Hamlet seems to work himself up to extremes of mood, to cascades of words. (121)

⁷² Booth observes: "The play persists in taking its audience to the brink of intellectual terror. . . . Hamlet is the tragedy of an audience that cannot make up its mind" (151-2).

⁷³ Pip, with his friend Herbert, goes to a small London theatre to watch Mr Wopsle, someone Pip knew in his childhood, performing Hamlet. A rowdy Victorian audience find themselves able to offer advice to Hamlet:

Whenever that undecided Prince had to ask a question or state a doubt, the public helped him out with it. As for example; on the question whether 'twas nobler in the mind to suffer, some roared yes, and some no, and some inclining to both opinions said "toss up for it;" and quite a Debating Society arose. (Great Expectations 275)

⁷⁴ Howard Mills proposes a similar way of reading Hamlet's dramaturgy:

There's a smart technical term for this element of dramatic writing: deixis. Hawkes's survey of new critical approaches gives a succinct summary: drama exploits the way that "language itself performs actions"; deixis is "the process whereby language establishes the context in which it is taking place and deictics are those words, such as the pronouns I and you and the adverbs here and now, whose meaning can be pinned down by a specific context" (Hawkes, 1986: 294). This can obviously be related to many passages analysed in the present book, from York's or Capulet's twists and turns to Henry addressing Hal in terms of "you" and "I" versus "him" and "them"; from Hamlet's "On him, on him! Look you there, look how it steals away" to Leontes's "many a man there is (even at this present, Now, while I speak this)" ("yes, you, sir, you in the second row: are you sure you know what your wife's up to while you sit here enjoying the play?") Perhaps this "deictic thrust" (Hawkes's phrase) is what we should hear in Hamlet's "Frailty, thy name is woman!" ("Yes, madam, you in the front row with the low-cut dress and inch-thick, knee-deep make-up: I mean you as well as the rest of your sort"). (212)

⁷⁵ Terence Hawkes describes the shocking "material impact of the map placed before Lear--a whole pre-literate and spiritually conceived culture shockingly reduced to and treated as a physical diagram" (124).

⁷⁶ Kathleen McKluskie views Cordelia's intervention as a "saving love" which "is the central focus of emotion in the scene. Her resistance to her father gains audience assent

through her two asides during her sisters' performances" (99).

⁷⁷ Bristol observes that the fool is closer to the audience than other characters in the play: "the clown who mingles with the dramatis personae of a dramatic text is not simply a character in a play. He traverses the boundary between a represented world and the here-and-now world he shares with the audience" (Carnival 140).

⁷⁸ See Weimann on fools' topsy-turvy visions (20-30).

CHAPTER FOUR

HERE OUR PLAY HATH ENDING

4.1 YOUNG SHAKESPEARE AND THE GUILD PLAYS

In this chapter, I look first at how Shakespeare knew how to end Lear with an open stage, with Edgar's "we" that meant both play and audience. Shakespeare's contact with the open stage began, I suggest, in Stratford on Avon, where he was baptized in the parish church on 26 April 1564. In Shakespeare's early years, his father, John, was a man of some stature in Stratford. A glover and leather worker by trade, in a town that was the "the acknowledged centre of the gloving trade" (Career 9), John Shakespeare held important civic offices, including constable, chamberlain, bailiff. As Stratford's bailiff, he was one of the few officials entitled to grant licenses to travelling players (Clark 3). In this capacity, John Shakespeare was among those civic officials who brought companies of players to Stratford and who hosted "two of the most prominent contemporary acting companies, the Queen's Men at the Guild Hall in the early summer of 1569 and Worcester's Men in August of the same year" (Thomson 10). And, as Thomson

observes, "if [John Shakespeare's] son was too young then, he was old enough to watch Leicester's Men in 1573 or Warwick's Men in 1575" (10).

Less than 20 miles from Stratford, on the road that led through Kenilworth and Warwick, was Coventry, cathedral city and prosperous commercial centre. Coventry's civic records show that the city's guilds were heavily involved in the particularly lavish annual play. It would be strange if guild business, civic or religious duties, or an interest in playing, had not at times taken John Shakespeare to Coventry, possibly accompanied by his young son. Coventry's performances took place on wagons that moved through the city (Twycross 21). However, civic records and the two surviving texts, the Shearmen and Taylors' Nativity and the Drapers' Last Judgement, show that in the Coventry play actors also played in the streets among the crowds. In the Shearmen and Taylors' pageant, for instance, appears the famous stage direction "The iij kingis speykith in the strete," as well as the notorious "Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also" (Craig 99). It is not inconceivable that, in his boyhood, Shakespeare stood in that street, raged at by a sword-wielding Herod (Davidson 18), or that he watched guildsmen in "gilded crowns as well as garments of riche brocade or other expensive-appearing fabric" (Davidson 66), as they bore the Magi's gifts through

Coventry. Undoubtedly, he grew up among people with stories to tell about Coventry's production, perhaps about who among the guildsmen was judged the best of the ranters. His own father would probably have known which Coventry glovers made the "frequently purchased" gloves for Jesus's leather suit (Davidson 42),¹ or how these craftsmen shaped the skin for the naked body of Christ in the Crucifixion (Davidson 46). Possibly in Coventry's streets, young Shakespeare gazed at Judean innocents tossed on spears, as later he made Lady Macduff watch her children killed in game by Macbeth's henchmen. The Coventry play might have offered Shakespeare first-hand experience of the dramatic potential of open address; perhaps he was awed by God, admonished by John the Baptist, taunted by the devil, confided in by Joseph, scorned by tyrants.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's likely early contact with guild plays and their dramaturgy need not be confined to nearby Coventry. While he was young, all over England guild drama, if not still playing, was fresh in people's minds. The critic, Bing Bills, lists towns that during the sixteenth century still possessed guild plays as "Beverley, Bungay, Chester, Coventry, Hereford, Ipswich, Kendal, Lancaster, Lincoln, Newcastle, Norwich, Preston, Wakefield, York, Worcester, and Louth" (159). According to Bills, "it is vital . . . to remember that while the dramas disappeared

as early as the 1560's in Elizabeth's reign, a few were still heard of as late as the Jacobean reign approximately fifty years later" (167). In York, the play continued to rumble through the city streets until 1569 (Stevens 18). Chester's crowds were able to see performances until 1575 (Rose 17). Wakefield's play, although subjected to Protestant revisions, was produced by the town's guilds as late as 1576 (Rose 18). In nearby Coventry, the city's play was performed until the summer of 1579.² So Shakespeare would have been able to watch his entire local guild play until he was fifteen years old, almost a man.³

The first piece of hard evidence of Shakespeare's career in the London theatre is Robert Greene's famous reference to "the upstart crow" in his pamphlet "Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance" published posthumously in 1592. Thomson points out that Greene's reference is to a playwright who, "whilst comparatively new to London, has had time to establish himself there" (55). He speculates that in 1590, when Shakespeare was twenty-five, he might already have been an actor (65). By 1592, he was certainly well established:

one of a new breed: a professional actor who had the audacity to write plays that were not immediately distinguishable from those of the university wits. What Greene could not accept was that Shakespeare was the legitimate offspring of a professional theatre that had, by 1590, the confidence to begin living on its own wits.
(Career 81)

This twenty-eight-year-old playwright must have known a great deal about guild plays from many sources. First, his youth spent near Coventry, site of one of the great guild dramas, and his father's civic and trade duties, both of which might have brought him into direct contact with that city's performances. Second, before 1590, as a young actor making his way in provincial then the London theatre, he must have been surrounded by people who knew about old plays. His fellow actors would be drawn from towns all over England; they might have learned their trade acting in or watching their local town's guild drama. Some might well have been those provincial guildsmen who tried their hands at itinerant acting, eventually making their way to the prosperous London market (Bevington 13).

Shakespeare's frequent references to guild plays make it clear that he, at least, remembered civic drama. In Dream he gives us the mechanicals and extended jokes about guildsmen and travelling players. In Antony and Cleopatra, he makes Cleopatra imagine with terror being played by amateur actors in the streets of Rome, where "mechanic slaves / With greasy aprons, rules and hammers shall / Uplift us to the view" (5.2.209-11). In Hamlet, he creates an itinerant company of actors who are obliged to listen to the prince's lengthy orders to them on good acting, including warnings not to "out-Herod Herod" (3.2.14). As a

novice actor and playwright, surely Shakespeare talked to everybody about everything to do with his trade, including the old guild plays. If he did not see these plays for himself, he heard about them from other players, playwrights, and from audience members. There is little possibility that Shakespeare was ignorant of this long native tradition. Furthermore, as I have shown, Tudor plays employed many of the techniques of guild plays, particularly the native tradition of open address. No one doubts that Shakespeare attended Tudor plays, and that he knew the dramatic strategies of nonce performances thoroughly. There is little doubt that he would also know well the techniques of the guild plays.

I have argued that Shakespeare's career may well be understood not in terms of dramatic genres, but of techniques for connecting with his audiences. The young playwright set out with a stage that mounted spectacle, but that remained closed off from its audiences. In the middle part of his career, he retrieved some of the native tradition of address, working with alternating closed and open stages. In Hamlet, Shakespeare saw the potential for open address, but was still struggling for ways to incorporate his playgoers. In Lear, Shakespeare figured out how to do so. In this play, he used three movements to shift the way his stage connected to his audience, first

shutting them out with a solipsistic "I", second, acknowledging them as "you", finally embracing them as part of the stage's "we." At the end of his career, having alternated closed and open address, Shakespeare casts about for another way to connect to the audience. He makes a full return to the native, going all the way back to guild plays and their consistent open address. The final four plays-- Pericles (1607), Cymbeline (1609-10), Winter's Tale (1610-11), and The Tempest (1611)--mark not a great break from his earlier practices, but Shakespeare's growth towards the familiar old tradition.

4.2 BLACKFRIARS

For three of these last plays (Cymbeline, Winter's Tale, and The Tempest), Shakespeare worked with two theatres. In the summer of 1608, the King's Men, a consortium of shareholders that included Shakespeare leased the Blackfriars playhouse to use as winter playing quarters.⁴ Originally a Dominican priory, Blackfriars had been in use as a private playhouse from 1576 to 1584. Although the building was located within the bounds of London, it had retained its old status as ecclesiastical liberty. Part of the property had been leased to Richard Farrant, Master of the Children's Revels,

until his death in 1580, then to Paul's company. These "little eyasses," The Children of the Chapel and of Paul's, catered to elite audiences with elaborate plays and posh satire. In 1586, James Burbage had bought a second section of the building, the part containing a hall, a stage, at least two galleries, and seats on the floor (Clark 101-2). After 1608, for six days a week through the winter, for nearly eight months of the year, Shakespeare's company played here (Gurr, Playgoing 166).⁵ Nevertheless, they retained the Globe theatre for summer playing.⁶ All four of Shakespeare's last plays were performed at the Globe; only three of the four were performed at Blackfriars.

Higher admission costs at Blackfriars seems the biggest factor separating Blackfriars from the Globe. Everyone went to the Globe; only those who could afford at least sixpence went to Blackfriars. Gurr comments:

Merchants and wealthier citizens could afford the indoor playhouses (Beaumont's Grocer is tricked into paying more than £1 in all for his pleasure at the Blackfriars), but distinctly few of the apprentices and servingmen could. (Playgoing 75)⁷

Since Blackfriars had a smaller auditorium, the relationship of stage and audience was somewhat different. The sides of its stage were bordered by boxes ("lords' rooms") so at Blackfriars wealthy patrons were close to the play, while at the Globe the penny understanders stood close to the scaffold (Playgoing 27). Foakes suggests that this change

in the social composition of the audience nearest the stage altered the manner of playing, and led to a taste "not only for refinement, comfort, and sophistication, but also for a kind of naturalism" (31). One reason for what Foakes calls "naturalism," could be that actors were playing to much smaller houses.⁸ Compared with the Globe's capacity of up to three thousand, Blackfriars could accommodate fewer than 1,000 playgoers, although, because of the higher admission costs, it made more money over one year than the public playhouse.⁹ There were other differences: the whole of Blackfriars was roofed, not just its stage. Continuous playing was impossible at Blackfriars. Because the stage had to be lighted and the candles trimmed, it became a convention at the private playhouse to divide the play into acts, with musicians entertaining audiences with entr'acte music from a large gallery above the stage. They also played quieter instruments than were used at the Globe (Gurr, Stage 160). The drums, hautboys, bagpipes of open air playing were replaced at Blackfriars by violins, flutes, and recorders, instruments more appropriate to indoor performance in a smaller theatre.¹⁰

In spite of the differences between Blackfriars and the Globe, Shakespeare's work played both venues. Shakespeare

did not write romances for Blackfriars; he simply wrote romances. Plays he had written years before for the big platform in the public playhouse appeared successfully in the smaller indoor private stage. There was no break in Shakespeare's repertoire. Since Shakespeare's plays worked as well there as at the Globe, clearly the new playhouse did not dictate how he wrote his last plays. Moreover, the first of these plays, Pericles, was written for and performed at the Globe before the King's men acquired the Blackfriars' lease, and never appeared there. At the end of his career, Shakespeare was a master playwright; Blackfriars playhouse did not confine him. He could do anything he wanted with any kind of stage. He could now afford to write one play a year; he could risk big theatrical gestures (for example, a "resurrection" for The Winter's Tale, a deus ex machina for Cymbeline); he could take chances and experiment. His last plays saw Shakespeare making new aesthetic choices about his dramaturgy. Free of economic pressures, he tried something new.

There had long been a public liking for a certain kind of play, the highly conventional romance. Various kinds of dramatic romances had gone in and out of fashion in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.¹¹ There were folk romances based on old vernacular tales like the anonymous Mucedorus (1590) which proved popular enough to be revived for public

performance in 1610 (Gibbons 209); there were domestic romances about home-grown folk heroes such as George a Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield (1590), which were reincarnated in Dekker's The Shoemaker's Holiday (1599), a play that celebrated London's guild companies (Kastan 153).¹² There was chivalric romance which, along with classical mythology, formed the base for the Elizabethan and Jacobean court entertainments, the ceremonious masques that by allusion and allegory flattered their aristocratic audiences (Butler 127-161).¹³ At the end of his career Shakespeare shifted to the popular romance genre.

Romance of all kinds elevated the familiar into the heroic.¹⁴ Every romance, whether folk, domestic, or courtly, transformed the ordinary or natural into something other-worldly and, in their endings, usually better-worldly.¹⁵ Romance characters inhabited a nowhere and no-when landscape, were quite unlike ordinary human beings, being single-sided rather than complex characters, wholly valiant, peerless, innocent, or vile. Events were rarely under their control. In romance, characters drifted, floated, were transported from place to place by hap or chance, through a universe where "ordinary time, place and causality [was] suspended or reordered" (Gibbons 234).¹⁶

When he wrote his first romance, Pericles, for performance at the Globe, Shakespeare regenerated interest

in this genre. His Jacobean audiences knew what to expect from the dramatic romance and its heavily codified world. The world on-stage would be entertaining and perplexing, flat and stylized, a playworld intended to puzzle, amuse, and distance, rather than to connect directly to their sense of the everyday.¹⁷ By the close of a romance, good people would have triumphed; bad people would die or be punished; the noble and pure would remain noble and pure; the comic would stay funny. The fashionable genre depicted a world that was often posh, usually distant, and always, in the end, comforting, where things came out all right. In other words, the stage romance's conventions ignored the mundane world in the streets outside playhouses. But Shakespeare recovered the old native tradition of persistent open address. Like the medieval guild plays, his romances repeatedly acknowledged the presence of their audiences, also intertwining stories the playgoers already knew with the stuff of concrete everyday lives.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Hardison saw a link between the hope for a new world offered by Shakespeare's tragedies and that of the guild plays.¹⁸ Romances offer the possibility that what we want to happen can really come to pass. In the guild plays, Shakespeare knew a great romance. The overall narrative of the guild plays was one of hope. However, guild drama's authors

relentlessly pulled that hope into the concrete medieval world, turning familiar but distant Bible stories to face the audiences' ongoing, everyday lives. In his romances, Shakespeare makes a similar move. He shifts the genre of romance, making romance's outlandish places, miraculous events, strange characters connect to the actual world of the audience. In them, he refuses any kind of separation-- of class, genres, styles. Like the guild plays, his last plays are mixed. Calling them tragi-comedies, Madeleine Doran notices in them "the inherited tradition of mixture in the medieval drama of the serious and the ludicrous, the pitiful and the farcical" (210). His last plays are not simply Blackfriars plays but Globe dramas, and Shakespeare brings his whole audience along, not just the posh. Like the guild plays, Shakespeare's romances unremittingly talk to and incorporate the messy real world of a diverse audience.¹⁹

So Shakespeare worked last with a fashionable genre that seemed to thrust a shield between itself and the audience world, as if the world on-stage was guarded from contact with the audience, and thus from engagement with it. Shakespeare took up those romance conventions and shattered the insulation of the stories by opening them to the vagaries of the real world of his audience. Shakespeare tangled romance with a dynamic world where people have to

toil but don't always succeed, where material things are important, where what you do, as well as what you are, matters, and where people only get part of what they aim for. He tugged the strange, the miraculous, the exotic, the remote, down from its nowhere, no-when universe into an ordinary platea world of here and now. It is in these plays of strange and amazing events that Shakespeare turned back most explicitly and fully to old strategies of the guild plays, particularly that of persistent open address.

4.3 ANCIENT GOWER

Pericles (1607) is a romance about a hero on the run. The play shifts from country to country, tossing its hero about on stormy seas, robbing him of his wife and daughter, and finally restoring them to him. It also tracks its hero's psychological journey, his flight from himself to his recovery of personal identity.²⁰ Shakespeare puts on his stage an old-style expositor, very like those who led medieval audiences through the guild plays, to aid the audience in following this episodic narrative. Like the old dramatic figures, Gower openly addresses the playgoers. He performs many functions, one of which is to remind his Jacobean audience repeatedly that this will be a play in the

old style. He explicitly connects this story to old oral romances, those tales that were "sung at festivals / On ember eves and holy [ales]" (Prologue 1.6-7).²¹ Gower intimates to the Jacobeans that he is from an ancient tradition, whereas they are "born in those latter times, / When wit's more ripe" (Prologue 1 11-12). He is "ancient Gower" (Prologue 1.2), an author come back from the dead expressly to "sing a song that old was sung" (Prologue 1.1). The resurrection of Gower for this talk turns this man who once lived into a figure of romance himself. Like medieval writers, he turns to an old Latin tag to sum up his thoughts about his tale, and possibly about himself: "et bonum quo antiquius eo melius" (Prologue 1.10) (the older a good thing is, the better). Throughout the play, Gower introduces old style theatre to a modern audience (as did Hamlet). Big events, such as the departure of Pericles and Thaisa from Simonides's kingdom, are acted out in dumbshow, while Gower comments on them for the audience (Prologue 3.14). Gower's words are also old style; for example, in describing how "dovelike" Marina makes Dionysa's daughter look like a "crow," he tells the audience

Be't when they weav'd the sleided silk,
 With fingers long, small, white as milk;
 Or when she would with sharp needle wound
 The cambric, which she made more sound

By hurting it. (Prologue 4. 19-23)

The old man rambles on longer, with more four-beat "drasty rhyming," and a "medieval" vocabulary, apologizing for "the lame feet of [his] rhyme" (Prologue 4.48). All through the action, Gower lets his audience know that old traditions are at work in this play.

The most important old tradition Gower introduces is his persistent use of open address. He appears eight times to talk directly to the audience. As the audience's guide, he signals to them many times what this play will be. Referring to them as "you," or sometimes "we," he actually sees the playgoers, telling them he shares their space. Gower's open address is the audience's primary link with "this" world. It is Gower who again and again yanks the romance into the world the playgoers live in every day. He is their teacher, indicating how this play opens to their world, his "here," "this," "you" repeatedly positioning the play as close to them.²² Over and over again, he assumes the playgoers see what he sees, saying "here her we place" (Prologue 5.11) or "this Antioch, then" (Prologue 1.17), or "this time we waste" (Prologue 4.1), or "Now," "this," "we," and "here," as if he and they share a space in which they can agree on position.

Gower tells his audience he is the resurrected author of Confessio Amantis, on which the story of Pericles is

based. So Shakespeare's Gower has a double ancestry: first, a theatrical one in those earnest guides in Chester or N-Town, who led audiences from episode to episode; second, that of a real man, the medieval writer trusted by Chaucer, "moral Gower," to whom Chaucer dedicated Troilus and Criseyde, his "litel bok."²³ Unlike the other characters in this romance, then, Gower was once a real person. As a mere man, Gower's claims for his own place in the drama are modest. He defines his role as moral guide rather than as a stage impresario or the creator of the tale. He is one who merely "stands in the gaps to teach you / The stages of our story" (4.4.8-9). Nevertheless, as a guide, Gower is utterly reliable. Earlier, we have seen other guides in Shakespeare's work: Romeo and Juliet was introduced by a classical enthusiast; Troilus and Cressida by a Prologue who proposed an epic; Henry V by Chorus who, intervening at every act, gloried in England's past and confidently promised the audience they would see on-stage a heroic king. None was reliable. In the main action, Romeo and Juliet proved to be lovers victimized by a highly material world of flawed human beings, rather than by the stars. The Trojan War that appeared on Troilus and Cressida's stage was no epic. King Harry, when the audience sees his actions and hears his words to them, is as often mean-spirited as he is heroic. Gower lacks these guides' theatrical self-

confidence; he trundles nervously and heavily along; but he is trustworthy. Gower is both the man esteemed by Chaucer as "moral" and the old character from the guild drama, the honest guide who stood on the platea, fully a member of the audience's world.

Old Gower always speaks directly to his audience. Pericles, on the other hand, speaks in asides. Trying to escape Thaliard's vengeance, Pericles is shipwrecked. He enters wet, like Lear, shouting at hostile elements who have "bereft a prince of all his fortunes" (2.1.9). Nearby three fishermen compare fish to men, saying that "the great ones eat up the little ones" (2.1.28). Listening to them, Pericles speaks in asides meant only for the audience. His words echo what Gower has said:

How from the finny subject of the sea
 These fishers tell the infirmities of men;
 And from their watery empire recollect
 All that may men approve or men detect!
 Peace be at your labour, honest fishermen.
 (2.1.47-51)

As when Hamlet talked with the gravediggers, this scene locates itself in real life and work, among the frailties of human beings. In this brief aside Pericles reminds the audience of what Gower constantly tells them, that there is also an ordinary human world here. All through the play, the elaborate paraphernalia of romance are on this stage: its riddles, jewels, spices, altars, tests; but on-stage, as well, are the infirmities of a real world. Simonides warns

Pericles: "jewels lose their glory if neglected / So princes their renown if not respected" (2.2.14). Built into this romance are the markers of the importance of the concrete and material, reminders of the close presence of a real world, where jewels tarnish if not cleaned; that is, a prince's fame is maintained only by being honoured.

At the close Gower offers the playgoers a summing up of what they have seen on this stage. The main action concluded, in his epilogue, he first notes what has happened to the romance hero and villain, Pericles and Antiochus. These figures, whose progress through life was always predetermined, to whom things just happened, meet appropriate endings. Then, he makes sure that his audience have not missed the story of the people who were not able simply to drift through the narrative, living a romance existence. Helicanus, a "figure of truth, of faith, of loyalty," or "reverend Cerimon" (5.3.92-3) have, like himself, had to struggle, to get through life by their own actions. Finally, with a disturbing note, he describes the fate of Cleon and his wife, killed by their own people, of whom he says, "The gods for murder seemed so content / To punish them; although not done, but meant" (5.3.99-100). The broken syntax seems to offer less assured moral judgement than earlier. Here it is not simply acts and facts of a person's life that are judged, but also each

person's intentions. This is far from the superficialities of the usual romance story where only the demonstrable can be considered.

All through, "moral Gower" has been troubled about how to do a difficult job well. He has had to manage the Globe playhouse. He has had to accommodate romance time and space to Jacobean time and space. Harder yet, he has had to align romance events and values with those of an actual London world. While the other characters live insulated in their closed romance world, old Gower is stuck with trying to get two worlds together. In Pericles, Gower's open address is not a clunky old device used only as a joke, or hauled in to estrange the audience from a largely incredible narrative.²⁴ Quite the reverse. Like the guide in the guild plays, Gower is on-stage to foreground what audiences might expect romance to gloss over: all the things of an ordinary infirm world. Like poor old Noah, who got on with building an ark in spite of a "wery bak," Old Gower does his job as well as he can. Most of all, Gower's deictic language places him close to the real living world of the audience, as one who lived as they live. Gower can talk to the audience because he can really see them. He shares a life with them. He has a real body, one that gets tired in the course of the play, a body that in the actual world really died. He knows "this" life. So Shakespeare's Gower prevents this romance

from simply elevating to heroism either people on-stage or among its audience in the playhouse. Whenever it seems about to do so, the playgoers' concrete and messy actuality corrects the play. By acknowledging openly the audience presence, Gower precludes the usual finished closedness of romance. He turns it into a world where jewels grow dull if not polished, where life is a struggle, where to do what is right demands effort. At the very end, he confirms that this stage is open when he says directly to the Globe's audience: "Here our play has ending" (5.3.102). This stage derives meaning from the actual lives of the audience. Gower's closing words anticipate what Shakespeare achieves with the next three romances: the recovery of a fully open stage, the early achievement of the native dramatic tradition.

4.4 COME TO DUST

Cymbeline tells of a legendary England where people are cyphers, their identity residing wholly in their heroism, their innocence, or their villainy. To portray this ancient Britain, Shakespeare uses elaborate, at times bizarre, staging effects. The Globe's and Blackfriars' trap is a grave for the play's heroine and for a headless villain.

The machinery above the stage cranks down an eagle with Jupiter sitting upon its back. Cymbeline, then, is not an ordinary history, but the story of some amazing, impossible past, made more so by startling, obtrusive theatrical stage effects. Nevertheless, Cymbeline's characters behave as did people on the guild plays' platea, as if none of them sees any difference between their world and that of the audience, openly confiding in, lamenting to, or challenging the Globe's and Blackfriars' playgoers. Clemen points out that "Cymbeline has the largest number of soliloquies of any Shakespeare play, and the greatest number of long ones" (73). In Cymbeline again and again characters make the kind of direct contact that Beckerman advocates for rare use only. Used repeatedly, Beckerman argues, open address turns audiences off because it makes them feel "coerced" (121) and he suggests that its use be limited since it easily "degenerates into grandstanding" (121). Beckerman seems to get it wrong. He misunderstands the goal of Cymbeline's relentless open address, which turns from a romance world to steadily confront its audience with a world like theirs. All the conventions of romance are invoked, yet by repeated open address Shakespeare hauls the play into a real material culture. To demonstrate this strategy, I will look at the way three men talk to the audience about the play's heroine.

In Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare muddied the shining face of heroism and removed literary epic to Southwark's brothels. War turned out to be sex. People talked interminably about war, but all the playgoers saw was sex. In Cymbeline, it seems the reverse is true. Posthumus, Jachimo, and Cloten all desire Imogen. The three men seem obsessed by sex. Repeatedly they envisage sex with Imogen, yet there is none. Shakespeare makes this play propose romance's convention of sexual danger, of sexual innocence tested, yet he thwarts the usual expectations. Each time the play seems about to follow the predictable romance path, the high road to sexual tests and dangers, Shakespeare redirects it onto the by-ways in a wholly material, literal world.

As the dramatic romance convention often dictates, the innocent heroine is subjected to what might turn out to be rape. Jachimo, in order to win his bet with Posthumus that Imogen can be seduced, hides in a trunk in her bed chamber. Imogen lies asleep; no one on-stage witnesses Jachimo as he creeps around her room, speaking in asides to the audience. The playgoers only are made Jachimo's confidants while he absorbs "some natural notes" of Imogen's vulnerable sleeping body. But romance is subverted. The scene is not eroticised. In fact, Jachimo spends more time writing down an "inventory" of Imogen's bedchamber: "the pictures . . .

window . . . the adornment of her bed . . . the arras" and so on (2.2.25-6), than observing her body. Rather than a scene of seduction or potential rape this scene is more like a celebration of conspicuous consumption. Jachimo lusts after Imogen's expensive belongings more than her body, attending very closely to the material trappings of her room. Finally looking at her sleeping figure, he notes: "On her left breast / A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops / I' the bottom of a cowslip" (2.2.36-7), a sexual detail that he quickly converts into a legal one, "a voucher, / Stronger than ever law could make" (2.2.39-40). Lust is transformed to avidity and acquisitiveness. According to conventions of romance, he longs: "That I might touch," "But kiss, one kiss!" (2.2.16). Unlike A Midsummer Night Dream's guildsmen, he attributes his conventional lilies and his rubies correctly, describing Imogen's skin as "fresh lily / and whiter than the sheets" (2.2.15-6), her lips as "Rubies unparagoned" (2.2.16). But he doesn't kiss her: instead, he is content to let her lips remain kissing each other, and to compare her skin and her lips to her material goods, her bed linen and jewels. The whole scene is diverted into voluptuous materialism. Clemen claims that the scene is intensely erotic:

When, with the utmost care, he [Jachimo] lifts off her [Imogen's] bracelet, with the twofold 'Come off, come off' and the epithet 'slippery' (for the bracelet [[34;35]]), the moment is full of suspense

and sensuousness, for this time the risk of Imogen's awakening is very real indeed. (78)

I do think, however, that the scene's eroticism is made secondary to its materialism. The sensuousness depends as much on Jachimo's lascivious delight in the feel of jewellery in his hand as in the sexual double entendre of his words. In fact, any double meaning seems turned inside out. He ends up literally, and only, easing off a bracelet, and evidently very much enjoying that act. The erotic here intensifies Jachimo's lingering on the room's opulence; luxury in this room moves towards its modern sense. And Imogen's likelihood of waking up is slighter than Clemen suggests. The event is romance; she is safe. With her bracelet clutched in his hand, Jachimo plans to tell Posthumus that he has "pick'd the lock" of her honour (2.2.41). Jachimo stops there; he is materially "satisfied." Her "treasure" is not a metaphor (2.2.42). What was metaphorical has become literal.

The second man to want sex with Imogen is her step-brother, Cloten, who is obsessed by thoughts of rape. He tangles up sexual lust with lust for money, gambling, social status. Cloten's visions of actual rape are extravagantly ugly, sadistic, and ridiculous. But, as well as being a violent and thick-headed fool, Cloten knows the power of money. Straightforward bribery can get him into Imogen's chamber: "If I do line one of their hands? 'Tis gold / Which

buys admittance (oft it doth), yea" (2.3.66-73). Alone on-stage, he fantasizes that, dressed in Posthumus's clothes, he will violate his step-sister. Highly tuned in to his new social status as stepson to the king, Cloten scorns Imogen's husband, the "low Posthumus" (3.5.74-79). He plans to "conclude to hate" Imogen (3.5.78), stalking her to Milford Haven, where, wearing her husband's clothes, he will rape her. Cloten indulges himself in, and forces on the audience, a grotesque narrative in which he is as much fixated on Posthumus's clothes as on his stepsister's body:

With that suit upon my back will I ravish her;
 first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she
 see my valor which will then be a torment to her
 contempt. He on the ground my speech of insultment
 ended on his dead body, and when my lust hath
 din'd (which, as I say, to vex her I will execute
 in the clothes that she so prais'd), to the court
 I'll knock her back, foot her home again.
 (3.5.137-144)

Near Milford Haven, dressed as Posthumus, Cloten exults to the audience about his appearance. He can see no difference between his physique and Posthumus's: "The lines of my body are as well drawn as his" (4.1.9)--a mistake Imogen also will make. Cloten's address is conventional to some degree. In it are the expected romance signals about the villain planning to violate the heroine. However, Cloten, like Jachimo, is constantly diverted by the material. He lusts after Posthumus's clothes; he is even more obsessed by social status. As much as he wants to rape her, he wants

Imogen to acknowledge that he, Cloten, belongs to a better class than her husband.

Posthumus, Imogen's husband, banished at the outset, will prove to be the branch from which modern Jacobean England sprang. But while exiled in Italy, this father of the nation is capable of betting on his wife's body--wagering on his wife's fidelity. Gulled by Jachimo, he comes to believe Imogen unfaithful. Alone he rages to the audience, forcing them to listen to his views on women as a whole: "Is there no way for men to be, but women / Must be half-workers?" (2.5.1-2). Posthumus tries to stir up support in the playhouse audience for his perspective.²⁵ He snarls at them that men are all good, women are all evil. Even his own mother "who seem'd / The Dian of that time" (2.5.7-8) he now argues must have been by nature sexually unfaithful. His sweeping generalizations presumably also include all females in the audience.

Banished, deceived, Posthumus undergoes many tests. Later, he will prove a courageous fighter. However, in his open address, he is always drenched in self-pity. No hero, he grumbles to the audience about how, during his marriage, Imogen refused to have sex with him: "Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd, / And pray'd me oft forbearance" (2.5.10-11). These memories lash him to a sexual fantasy. As inarticulate as Othello in his jealousy, Posthumus is

able only to stammer out a few words at first: "O, all the devils! / This yellow Jachimo, in an hour - wast not?- / Or less - at first?" (2.5.13-5). He then tortures himself by imagining a lurid sexual adventure between Jachimo and his wife:

Perchance he spoke not, but
Like a full-acorn'd boar, a German [one],
Cried "O!" and mounted ; found no opposition
But what he look'd for should oppose and she
Should from encounter guard. (2.5.15-19)

Posthumus races out of this sexual nightmare worthy of Cloten (or Iago) into more preposterous generalities, cataloguing at length for the men and the women in the audience every female evil there could be--including blaming every woman for all that is wrong with him and all men, and finally resolving to make public his hate for them, which he does to the Jacobean playgoers. After throwing a long catalogue of female vices at the playgoers, he promises he will formally and permanently denounce women. He will

write against them,
Detest them, curse them; yet 'tis greater skill
In a true hate, to pray they have their will:
The very devils cannot plague them better.
(2.5.1-35)

Posthumus "out-Herod's" Herod with threats that go over the top into burlesque. Rather than displaying romantic agony, Posthumus is a young man in a raging tantrum, flailing about because he thinks his wife has got the better of him. Alone with the audience, he has invented a minidrama in which

Imogen willingly has sex with another man, which is doubly galling since she had withheld it from him. He also talks to them more about other women--his mother, all women, the women in the audience--than about his own wife. He may well be distraught; nonetheless, he shows very little knowledge of Imogen or of her body. The real Imogen disappears as much from Posthumus's address as she did from Jachimo's when her body was blocked out for him by the goods in her room, as she did when Cloten saw only himself transformed by Posthumus's clothes. The actual woman is absent from what these men tell the audience. Moreover there is no real sex in what they say. And in Posthumus's talk, there is certainly no real marriage. Posthumus does not know his wife. His grumbles about women in general pull the romance into a contentious material world, where men are in competition with women, where husbands fight their wives for control, but fail to know them as individual, real women.

Posthumus's wife is as absorbed by a material culture as the men who lust after her. Early in the play, Imogen wishes herself away from the corrupting influence of the court, its power, money and goods. The first time she speaks alone on-stage, she longs for a simple life, a romance heroine's existence in an archaic pastoral world: "would that I were a neatherd's daughter / And my Leonatus our neighbour shepherd's son" (1.2.149-50). Lamenting that

her life is real and difficult, she later makes the extraordinary statement: "Had I been thief stol'n / As my two brothers, happy!" (1.6.6-7). The false note here is the false note of romance. She implies that her brothers are happy because they were "thief-stol'n," that they are safe in a romance where things come out all right. But her troubles, she complains, are real, and no one knows how real things end. Later Imogen is shocked to discover that the simple life of poverty does not necessarily make for wholly good people. She is shocked that two "poor folks" misdirect her as she makes her way to Milford Haven (3.6.8). She is also not above using her worldly status to get her own way. Imogen begs the servant Pisanio to kill her because "Against self-slaughter / There is a prohibition so divine / That cravens [my] weak hand" (3.4.76-77). She may plead weakness; however, Imogen actually puts Pisanio to the test. As his social superior she has power over him and she asserts it to protect herself from the sin of "self-slaughter." Imogen would play the martyred saint, or child-like Isaac to Pisanio's Abraham:

Prithee dispatch,
The lamb entreats the butcher. Where's thy knife?
Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding
When I desire it too. (3.4.95-8)

However, the guild plays' Isaac is more real than Imogen's dramatization. In most of the guild plays, a terrified little boy is made to beg his father to kill a sheep instead

of him. This meek "lamb" here herself orders like a "master."

Imogen's problems stem largely from her own false assumptions about money, status and appearance. When Cloten's headless body is laid in the grave beside her, she wakes from her drugged sleep with no notion that the corpse is not her husband's. She says (to the audience only--there is no one else around, other than the corpse)

A headless man? The garments of Postumus?
I know the shape of's leg; this is his hand,
His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh,
The brawns of Hercules; but his Jovial face-
Murder in heaven? How? 'Tis gone. (4.2 307-312)

When Imogen lay asleep in her bedchamber, Jachimo catalogued her body as he ran his eyes over her. Now possibly running her hands over Cloten's corpse, certainly as close to it in the grave as she was to Posthumus in her marriage bed, Imogen talks about this body as if she knows it intimately.²⁶ Yet Imogen backs away from the personal. She trusts to the body's clothes, to material things, to outer layers, to tell her who is lying beside her. Her sex with Posthumus is dutiful not passionate; she had no intimate knowledge of his body. (Posthumus has grumbled about the lack of sex in his marriage.) Ironically, earlier Imogen complained that living as cavekeeper and cook to honest creatures gave her a sense of unreality that was like "a bolt of nothing shot at nothing," where "Our very eyes / Are

sometimes like our judgements, blind." Now fully aware of being awake, able to tell that the corpse exists tangibly outside her brain (4.2.306-7), she touches the body with words if not with hands, labelling its limbs with the names of classical gods. Lee Bliss rightly observes the blend of "despair and comedy" in the scene:

When Imogen awakes next to the headless body she identifies as her husband's, Cymbeline insists on both the tragic intensity of her despair and the grotesque comedy of her mistake, since she in fact mourns over the corpse of the dead villain, Cloten. (254)

Nevertheless, Bliss does not note that Imogen's "mistake" is a very physical, material one. Imogen does not know her own husband's body, even when she touches the body's thighs; she relies on its clothes to identify it; and then she distorts its real flesh into myth. Apparently her eyes and hands both assure her the dead man is her husband.²⁷ Imogen is so hung up on the external world, so ready to judge by clothes and by status, to depersonalize, to un-body a real body (turning human into mythological limbs) that she fails to recognize that this is not the body she has slept with, made love to, spent her married life with. Like her husband, she knows little about the individual body she is married to.

But this play had another body, and another mistake. Guiderius and Averagus, mourning Imogen's apparent death, spoke over her body in an earlier scene, this native charm:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,

Nor the furious winter's rages;
 Thou thy worldly task hast done,
 Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
 Golden lads and girls all must,
 As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.
 (4.2.258-263)²⁸

The chant is a simple one. This is not conventional, stylized poetry about life and death. There is no mythological labelling or de-personalizing. There are no elegant tropes, no luxurious distractions here. The song speaks neither of romance nor of obsessive materialism. Their voices drop to the native. This diction is simple, not learned or elegant; the verse from the old style, a four-stress line. Simple words telling of a real world, where death alone exempts real bodies from tyranny, fear, and pain, the audience's world. Sadly, although it ends with a wish for "quiet consummation," its overall vision is of a world of the dead, not the world of the living the jailer hopes to inhabit, where "we were all of one mind and that mind good" (5.4.203).

From now on everyone on-stage could not be less of one mind. Each character is at cross purposes with the others. Until the last speech, no one speaks again in open address to the audience. The play seems to end in the closed predictable romance world. Things happen very quickly in the final recognition scene when everyone's true identity is established. The wicked (Cloten and the Queen) are wiped out. Those who are able to reform do so; Jachimo, for

instance, regrets his lies, renounces his non-British identity, and is forgiven. Belarius, who has hidden the princes from their father for twenty years, tells Cymbeline who the fine young men are, repents, and is forgiven. A soothsayer reports that Posthumus is the new stock from which modern Britain will flourish. The king's sons are reinstated as princes, their heredity confirmed by a birthmark. In turn, the brothers discover that the young lad whom they liked so much and thought was dead, is, in fact, not only still alive, but their sister. King Cymbeline happily, but somewhat oddly, declares himself "A mother to the birth of three." Yet "come to dust" haunts the ending.

All the recognitions that bring the play to its close are uncomfortable. Even as things are being wound up, real dust dirties the smooth face of romance.²⁹ At the British court, all is not harmony. Class still divides people, as do sex, power, and money. Even while everyone's identities are uncovered, the on-stage action is not harmony, but chaos. The romance heroes, Imogen and Posthumus, fail their final tests. Although he had wanted her dead, Posthumus bewails the loss of "Imogen, / My queen, my life, my wife" (5.5.225-6). Imogen, still dressed in man's clothes, tries to attract his attention, but can only manage "Peace, my lord, hear, hear" (5.5.227). And then, Posthumus, assuming she is a

servant speaking out of place, knocks her down, saying "Shall's have a play of this? Thou scornful page ? There lie thy part" (5.5.228-9). Thus Imogen discovers what real life is like without status or money: one has no right to speak. As usual the level-headed servant, Pisanio, is the only one paying attention to reality. He calls for help for Imogen and chides his master: "You ne'er kill'd Imogen till now" (5.5.231). Neither Cymbeline nor Posthumus copes well with the revelation. Both are made dizzy, literally staggered by their astonishment. The king cries "Does the world go round?" (5.5.232); Posthumus is overcome by "these staggers" (5.5.231). Again, only Pisanio tends to Imogen, as he first tries to "wake" her, then asks her how she fares. When Imogen sees the anxious face of Pisanio, who she thinks has poisoned her, she asserts the full weight of a very non-romance, real life social authority: "Dangerous fellow, hence! Breathe not where princes are" (5.5.237-8). In the contingent world, rank and wealth matter. Over and over again, and particularly at its close, the play returns to a world where reconciliation can only ever be provisional, where problems still have to be worked out.

Even the final new identity for the audience, the picture of "our" England generated by the chronicle is not one of unalloyed joy. The king ends the play with a general proclamation for "all our subjects" to celebrate, for London

to turn out to see its own triumph. He addresses as "we," his fellow Britons, the audience in London:

Laud we the gods;
 And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils
 From our blest altars. Publish we this peace
 To all our subjects. Set we forward: let
 A Roman and a British ensign wave
 Friendly together: so through Lud's-town march:
 And in the temple of great Jupiter
 Our peace we'll ratify; seal it with feasts.
 Set on there! Never was a war did cease,
 Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace.
 (5.5.477-485)

As Cymbeline faces the playgoers, with what is ostensibly a speech of peace and plenty, his words are full of tensions and contradictions. Britain's incense goes up bent, rising to the mundanely physical "nostrils" of a god, who the audience must remember is simply a peevish mechanical bird up in the rafters. Although Roman and British flags wave together, and Posthumus and Imogen are celebrated as father and mother of the English nation, as the play ends, both nations' hands are still covered with the blood of those who died in the cause. Although peace is established, Britain still pays tribute. Thus the court will turn to celebration, but it will do so with bloodied hands. The play ends where the dead remain dead. In a real world, even the most beautiful and heroic will eventually grow weary and old, and will "as muk upon mold . . .widdar away" (Wakefield, Noah 62-3). In "this" England of real dust, there are no romance endings, not even for "golden lads and

girls" (4.2.262); there are only real people who, like real "chimney sweepers," will end up as real dust.

4.5 THE GREAT GLOBE ITSELF

Although for The Tempest Shakespeare's stage represents a literally insulated world, a remote island, the familiar England of the audience is present everywhere. When, for example, Caliban, who "needs must curse" at his treatment by Prospero, describes the island, he talks about somewhere quite unlike convention's exotic land. This is England. Shakespeare has dragged his stage out of the distant Atlantic or the Mediterranean and dropped it into rural England. Alone on this stage, Caliban tells how he is tripped up, not by foreign porcupines, but by English hedgehogs; and the snakes that wind about and hiss at him are England's only venomous snake, the adder (2.2.13). This is the audience's countryside. England reappears in the masque celebrating the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda. This formal entertainment is performed by amazing figures who, Prospero claims, are "spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confine called to enact / My present fancies" (4.1.120-2). The lines spoken by the figures playing Iris, Ceres and Juno describe the audience's

familiar agricultural landscape rather than any foreign place. Ceres describes fertile English earth, producing abundant English crops: rye, barley, fetches, oats, pease, and hay, a landscape dotted with "nibbling sheep." But this is not real England. It is a pastoral vision: romance's perfect rural England, a land of plenty and harmony where everything grows.

When the spirits playing English reapers join in dance those playing nymphs, at the very moment that the masque seems set to celebrate and lock the vision of a perfect England, Prospero aborts the performance with a huge gesture. Like God bringing the world and the guild play to an end, he dismisses the masque. Curiously, though, these entertainers don't flit spirit-like off-stage. Instead, after "their graceful dance . . . to a strange, hollow, confused noise," the spirit-actors "heavily vanish" (Stage Directions after 4.1.138). Prospero's god-like gesture, in fact, is just that of a stage-manager clearing the stage. The masque was not a vision. It was a human entertainment that has been toppled from the remote to the ordinary, from an elite dramatic form celebrating an unreal pastoral England, to actors thumping across wooden boards. As in Cymbeline, the closed perfection of a romance England is subverted, this time by the lumbering off-stage of very substantial actors.

Prospero as magician, ruler, impresario, falls with it. He is only a man, distressed by "real things," which, he says, "have pressed in on" him. No God, he is infirm; he must walk "a turn or two" to still his "beating mind" (4.1.152). Troubled by the "real things," Prospero links the vanishing of the masque to events in a concrete world. He explains both to Ferdinand and to the playgoers in the Globe or Blackfriars:

The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.152-8)

There are many paradoxes in Prospero's speech. In the main, they lie in how he stands in relation to the playhouse. The playgoers have also witnessed "this" masque, a type of entertainment that traditionally invites those it plays to see images of themselves on-stage. He offers Ferdinand and the masque's other audience weighty images: "cloud capp'd towers," "gorgeous palaces," and "solemn temples." These are the things of romances. But then he drops to "real things": to the "great globe," which, as well as being a poetic image, is solid and real. So solid, that the playgoers may, as he speaks, see its wooden walls surrounding them. For the people in the playhouse, the spirits did not, as Prospero asserts, "dissolve"; the

performance was not at all insubstantial: its actors vanished "heavily." However, the vision the masque conjured has indeed disappeared like mist. Perfect England was an "insubstantial pageant"; it vanished.

Now Prospero wants to talk about a world where perfection and endlessness are not possibilities. He drags the masque of a perfect world into difficult real life, among "stuff," the things of a solid, substantial material world. Prospero's words about sleep do not offer a saucy challenge to the audience, like Puck's outrageous suggestion that those who didn't like the play can pretend they napped. This is Prospero telling those on-stage and every member of the audience who "we" are, and to what end "we" all must come. Nevertheless, he is still something of the ruler-magician he has been throughout. His speech does not ask for confirmation or collaboration from his listeners. He dictates who "we" are. His "we" has Cymbeline's self-absorption about it. Prospero defines himself as "our" leader, not as "our" equal. These words still carry some of his earlier insular certainty, reserving to himself the right to define life and death. But his play is not yet over.

The final scene challenges romance notions of reconciliation. As in Cymbeline, all is not harmonious. In the "brave new world" (5.5.183), Stephano and Trinculo are

still drunk ("reeling ripe" 5.1.280), Prospero acknowledges Caliban, "demi-devil" (5.1.272), as his property, dismissing his "thing of darkness" (5.1.275) from the stage. Caliban, disenchanted with the "dull fool" Stephano (5.1.298), still fears Prospero. Antonio speaks only once, and then to speculate about the marketability of Caliban. Miranda and Ferdinand squabble, albeit lightly, about cheating at chess. After seeing his daughter married in Naples, Prospero plans to return to isolation, to "retire [him] to Milan" where "Every third thought shall be [his] grave" (5.1.311-2). His autobiography repeats itself, but with a difference. Now Prospero will pull away from the world, not to disappear into the occult, but to confront real time.

He then withdraws from the play itself. In his famous epilogue, he talks openly to the playgoers, telling them that he's no longer either god or magician: "Now my charms are all o'rthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own, / Which is most faint" (Epilogue 1-3). He hands over his power to them:

Now tis true,
 I must be here confin'd by you,
 Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
 Since I have my dukedom got,
 And pardon'd the deceiver dwell
 In this bare island by your spell,
 But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands
 Gentle breath of yours my sails
 Must fill, or else my project fails,
 Which was to please. (Epilogue 3-12)

Prospero doesn't talk now about his magic; he lists what he's done in an ordinary human world, a political act and a moral one, retrieved his dukedom and forgiven his brother. He is left without a kingdom, without anything he's created. Instead of an island, a bare platform. Power in this world, he says, lies with the audience; only their clapping hands will let him leave the stage:

Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be released by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
(Epilogue 13-18)

He depends on them in an ordinary human way. This is the Prospero Caliban hinted at. This is the Prospero who is human, the person Caliban remembered who "stroke[d] me and made much of me, [would] give me water with berries in't" (1.2.332-3), a Prospero who gave Caliban not simply drink for survival, but a gift, the sort of gift the shepherds in the guild plays are made to give the infant Christ, a spoon with forty peas, a ball to play with, a pretty bob of cherries, a sign of mutual affection.

Prospero is not god (not of the island nor of the stage); Prospero is no longer even a magician. He can't bring the world to an end. Prospero has been arrogant and isolated, has made himself "a bare island." Nevertheless, Prospero has also been a man who inspired loyalty in

Gonzago; who still loves his daughter, yet now relinquishes her because she is a mature woman; who loved and let Ariel go; who in the past looked after Caliban. Prospero in turn has been helped to survive by others: saved from death by Gonzago, from starvation by Caliban who showed him "all the qualities of th'isle, / The fresh spring, brine pits, barren place and fertile" (1.2.337-8). Now this man wishes for community. He does not wish Gonzago's utopian vision of a "commonwealth" (2.1.48), or the perfect world of the masque. Rather he wants a real world. Like Lear, he is old; like Lear, he looks to the audience to help him. Prospero asks to be part of their world, not a romance one, nor one compelled by a magician, but one where all we have is each other, and where indulgence must be freely given. This is the "we" Prospero asks to be admitted to and where he and his audience all must end.

Round the island-stage is the audience's concrete actuality. At this moment Prospero is master neither of an island nor of a theatrical performance. He no longer owns the stage. It belongs also to the playgoers, among whom he is a wholly contingent figure, dependent on them. At the close of his speech, Prospero reaches right out to the world in the Globe or Blackfriars. He speaks to the audience. Here, for the last time, is Shakespeare's drop to the

native--that intensely focused moment--with the kind of stage address that involves the playgoers with words that they may have listened to with their whole bodies. In childlike, four beat broken lines, the rhyme falling on simple single-syllabled words, Prospero begs his audience:

As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.
(Epilogue 19-20)

The signals are there, as they were in guild drama, for everyone to pay close heed. What Prospero says will be unambiguous. He will speak what everyone among the playgoers can understand. As John Baxter suggests, as in guild drama, Prospero's words also make salvation and damnation the ultimate issue--for him and for everyone.³⁰ Prospero does not bring the play to an end alone; he does so as part of the world of the playgoers. Its ending is an act of community, fusing play and audience. This is the closest Shakespeare comes to a dramatisation of community like that of the medieval guild plays. At this moment, The Tempest becomes our play. We applaud because we all depend on one another; players, playwright, audience.

4.6 OPEN ADDRESS ON THE PROFESSIONAL STAGE

So in these last plays Shakespeare reinvents for the professional stage the powerful, relentless "we" of native tradition. The remote, the isolated, the exotic, the magic, the whole stuff of romance is diverted into an encounter with the audience's real world. He does not stage the specifics of the audience's daily work as did the guild drama. These are urban playgoers watching professional plays about courtly or rural England. Nevertheless, he does invoke the audience's social and moral lives. Even though his romances do not stage the audience's particular jobs, they talk to and about a world where people know what it is to work. They ask the audience to bring to bear their sense of what ongoing life is like, its trials, pains, and joys. In each romance Shakespeare obliges his audience to hear a powerful relentless "we."

In Pericles dramatic romance is hauled away from its conventional drifting heroes or fortuitous recoveries, into the audience's actual world where effort, ageing, and struggle matter. It is "our play" about ordinary human "infirmity." In Cymbeline, Shakespeare sets up a highly conventional world, evoking familiar stories, like the calumniated wife, saints' lives, and chronicles of Britain; then he thwarts our expectations. He converts dramatic romance conventions of seduction, lust, and love, into the

things of a wholly material culture: to acquisitiveness, social ambition, clothes, money, goods, snobbery, and physical bodies that die and rot. He corrects Cymbeline's "we" of a closed, legendary England to the audience's, the "we" of the ordinary, provisional world, the "this world" that guild drama insisted its audiences remember. Finally, The Tempest, a play apparently set in a magical, remote world, turns out also to have happened among its audience's English here and now.

Guild plays staged the here and now of the medieval audiences. Medieval audiences owned the playing space; the actors were their neighbours talking to them in frequent open address. For two hundred years, English people watched a great drama that was "our play." Gradually in the Tudor period, economic and religious changes caused the disappearance of guild plays. Players became professionals, playing in spaces that no longer belonged jointly to them and to their audiences. However, the tradition of open address lived on. In Tudor drama, the dramatic strategy of open address enabled plays to happen for the nonce. From the nonce plays, Shakespeare inherited a stage established as a place and a time other than that of the audience; with the growth of the commercial playhouses, he worked with a permanent stage inside a playhouse that audiences paid to enter.

In the early part of his career, he used that stage to create spectacle. His early plays ignored the presence of the playgoers, remaining wholly on the scaffold. Then, with Richard III, Shakespeare allowed his play to spill over into the playhouse. Increasingly, he recovered more of the native tradition of open address. First, he acknowledged his audiences only intermittently. He used guides to lead, or rather mislead, his audiences into the play in Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, and Merchant of Venice, or asides to ally them to part of the stage world, or addressed them obliquely with contrapuntal voices, as in 1 Henry IV. In the middle part of his career, he struggled to invent ways for his permanent stage to notice more fully the presence of the playgoers. In Troilus and Cressida and in Hamlet, he made his stage alternate between closed and open address. With Lear, he made his strategies for connecting to the audience more like those of the guild plays, creating a play that, in three movements, went from a closed to an open stage. In the last plays, more than in any other, he employs the guild plays' unique form of address. At the end of his career, Shakespeare's professional stage addresses its audience, incorporating the playgoers' ordinary, substantial world into the play's meaning. Shakespeare's reinvention of the native dramatic tradition was complete.

"Here now we make an ende" (Chester, Shepherds 695)

"Here our play hath ending" Pericles (5.3.102)

CHAPTER FOUR

NOTES

¹ The Coventry Cappers paid 1s. 4d. for actors' gloves in 1542 (Davidson 1).

² Davidson 69. See also Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony" 238-265. In that last year of playing, the Smiths "hired or borrowed a gown from the Taylors and Shearmen's guild" (Tydeman 210).

³ Particularly when one considers that by nineteen he was married and a father.

⁴ Other members were Richard and Cuthbert Burbage, Heminge, Condell, Sly and Thomas Evens.

⁵ The Children of the Chapel performed Ben Jonson's and John Lyly's plays at Blackfriars. Here the boys gave the first performances of Jonson's Cynthia's Revels (1600) and The Poetaster (1601). Almost all Lyly's work was performed here by boy companies who played Alexander and Campaspe and Endimion, the Man in the Moon.

⁶ Styan, Stagecraft 14.

⁷ Gurr describes the reaction of the playgoing public to the more pricey theatres:

Circumstantial evidence . . . suggests that a mob of apprentices which smashed the Cockpit in 1617 were driven by the removal of its plays beyond their capacity to pay for them. Jonson mentions a 'shop's

the removal of its plays beyond their capacity to pay for them. Jonson mentions a 'shop's foreman' paying sixpence at Blackfriars for a place in the top gallery, but this minimum price could bother even a gentleman. Ann Halkett's decision to arrange parties of ladies to go to the plays was spurred by her overhearing some gentlemen complain how much it cost them. (Playgoing 75)

⁸ Foakes argues:

At the public theatres the groundlings stood nearest to the stage, and spectators paid more to sit further away in the galleries; at the private playhouses, as in modern theatres, the expensive seats were those closest to the stage. At the public theatres, actors would literally play to the galleries, if they played to the most esteemed part of their audience, and in open-air theatres that would require bold and strong delivery of lines. At the private theatres, where for the players the most important part of the audience was seated nearest the stage, a more low-keyed and intimate style was possible. (31)

Foakes bases his argument on the shaky assumption that actors play to, and playwrights write primarily for, the rich in these audiences. This is the kind of logic belied by Shakespeare's open stage. I have argued that open address acknowledges diversity in the audience. In fact, the drop to the native, so vital a part of open address, sets up a dynamic between actor and audience, the very reverse of that asserted by Foakes. The speaker on-stage does not stretch out to shout and gesture up at the galleries; instead, all the people in the playhouse are obliged to strain towards the speaker.

⁹ It cost a minimum of 6d. to enter Blackfriars; a "gentleman's box" alongside the stage cost five times as much: 2/6 (Gurr, Playgoing 27).

¹⁰ Blackfriars had an orchestra of "organs (that is, pipes, lutes, pandores--the ancestor of the modern banjo) violins and flutes" (Gurr, Stage 27).

¹¹ Robert Hanning observes that

the defining attribute of the romance form is its plot, which organizes incidents ranging widely in space and time around the life of the hero without any larger controlling narrative context, action, or system (such as fate, providence, or national destiny). (196)

About the characters who inhabit romance, he comments:

The diverse identities used by romance to explore the nature of personhood include natal (identity of parent and inherited title or situation), qualitative (identity by the intermingling of virtues and vices), circumstantial (who the world judges us to be in a given situation), assumed (strategic disguises), and desired or destined (who we want to be or become again). In a romance world of chance and adventure, where there may be immature stages in a process of growth, the hero cannot always control his identity; yet the unstated principle of the genre is that in time his qualitative identity will enable him to regain his natal, or gain his desired, identity, passing in the course of his quest through various circumstantial (and sometimes assumed) identities. In other words, identity in romance is at once a given, a process, and a goal,--a past, a present, and a future. (202-3)

Some of the aspects of early romance that Hanning describes survive in Shakespeare's last plays. However, Shakespeare writes within a later context and responds to another tradition. By the Jacobean period romance,

particularly in its dramatic form, had lost some of its shape.

¹² Kastan describes Dekker's "strategy of idealization" (153) of Elizabethan London in his play The Shoemaker's Holiday:

it is a realistic portrait only of Elizabethan middle-class dreams--a fantasy of class fulfillment that would erase the tensions and contradictions created by the nascent capitalism of the late sixteenth century. The comic form offers itself as an ideological resolution to the social problems the play engages. (151-2)

¹³ Butler examines Elizabethan to Stuart court masques describing how the romance fiction celebrated their noble audiences.

¹⁴ Gibbons records an example of a performance of this kind of celebratory entertainment in the young Shakespeare's nearby big city, Coventry:

Chivalric romance, which is so prominent an element in the Kenilworth entertainments, was widely circulated in various forms and was extremely popular among non-aristocratic classes. A Coventry citizen, Captain Cox, the chief actor in the Kenilworth Hock Tuesday play, had a collection of chivalric romances, and though his owning so many books might have been exceptional, it is clear that the spirit of the Coventry players accords with the similar type of entertainment offered on the professional stages in London in the 1570s and 1580s. (215)

Kenilworth was on the road between Coventry and Statford, about six miles from the former and fourteen from the latter. The young Shakespeare may well have seen the Kenilworth entertainments.

¹⁵ Gibbons argues:

The essence of romance is an encounter with events so strange that the hero is challenged to the limits, yielding an experience so radical that it produces a transformation. Although erotic love is an important element in heroic romance, and the chivalric ideal personifies virtue as woman, the central concern of heroic romance goes beyond: . . . it is the energy of heroic aspiration, the transcendence of limits, which is the centre. (Gibbons 234)

¹⁶ Dutton argues that Shakespeare's last plays are best categorized as tragi-comedies in which characters are notoriously unable or unwilling to communicate, often seeming less than full individuals; the language becomes incoherent, inanely repetitive or self-reflective; the plays are defiantly strange and disorienting in terms of the audience's expectations--so that the audience vicariously shares something of the perplexity of the characters; the drama is also often self-consciously theatrical and draws attention to its artifice. (15)

Tragi-comedy, then, if not "other-worldly," like romance, is at least "another worldly," not the everyday.

¹⁷ As in the plays of the followers of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher (for example, Philaster, written expressly for Blackfriars).

¹⁸ Madeleine Doran argues that the conventions of romance turn on hope for the miraculous: "'Oh, the pity of it' of tragedy becomes 'oh the wonder of it'" in romance (211).

¹⁹ Although I discuss only three of the last plays (Pericles, Cymbeline, and The Tempest), my argument also

applies to The Winter's Tale where open address insistently alerts the audience to its actual world, particularly the passage of real time. The most obvious example is the figure of Time himself who, telling the audience openly that the play slips over sixteen years, alerts them to the temporal rules of their actuality. In the central action Leontes, especially, would deny time's natural course, wishing to erase the complexities and mixedness inherent in maturity and experience (for example, his aside [1.3.108-119]). The old shepherd encapsulates the play's reflection on natural time's contradictions when he tells his son "Thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born" (3.3.114). In the play as a whole, whenever romance time--either pastoral or literary--seems to hold sway, some marker from the contingent world pulls it back. At Hermione's "resurrection," Leontes (and the audience) confront the necessary--and natural--ravages of real time. The real living woman has aged sixteen years and shows it. Leontes wonders to Paulina: "Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems" (5.3.28-29). In this final scene, the audience is invoked by open address from Paulina and by Leontes. Paulina gives a general order: "Then, all stand still. / Those that think is unlawful business / I am about, let them depart" (5.3.95-97). Leontes follows with: "No foot shall stir" (5.3.98). In other words, the

playgoers are ordered to join in Leontes's act of faith. But unlike Leontes, they, of course, know that they participate in "an art / Lawful as eating" (5.3.101-2), since their sense of real time and of what is actually possible in the real world, have been kept alive throughout.

²⁰ In Confessio Amantis, the source of Shakespeare's story, its protagonist, Amans, like Pericles, needs to understand the past in order to understand himself.

²¹ In Pericles, Shakespeare also draws on the old genre of the saint's life (a type of romance): Marina's purity is unsullied by her time in a brothel. Marion Lomax comments on the appropriateness of Gower's resurrection by Shakespeare for this play: God's desire to create a perfect world intrudes into Book VIII of the Confessio Amantis of which the tale of Pericles is the central part (76). Of Gower she says, "it is appropriate that the basic structure of the play should be provided for by a dead man who has been reborn" (97).

²² Chester's expositor also uses repeated and emphatically positional language. In the Sacrifice, for example, he explains "This deede yee seene done here in this place" (463).

²³ "O moral Gower, this bok I directe / To the" (4.1856-7).

²⁴ Gurr suggests that at Blackfriars Shakespeare had an "audience long accustomed to the sophisticated games of the

'theatre of estrangement'" (Playgoing 168). This, of course, does not apply to Pericles which played only to the Globe's audiences.

²⁵ Brown calls attention to the way that "humour is dispersed throughout the action, but the relaxed enjoyment of comedy is seldom unalloyed" (102). This is particularly true of this play's use of open address that at once invites and repels sympathy.

²⁶ Kirch says that:

the play deals with [Imogen] very strangely. In a scene that is studiously prepared for, she awakens by the headless body of Cloten, who dressed in Posthumus's garments, and mistaking him for her husband, she sings an aria of agony. It is a moving and convincing one, but we cannot help being conscious that Imogen also is very ready to be exploited by frauds. (45)

John Russell Brown, however, notes the absurdity and fantasy of some of Imogen's "nightmare-dream":

For Imogen the experience is specifically like a "dream." The apparent reality as expressed here--
 Pisanio might have kill'd thee at the heart,
 And left his head on.
 --is so absurd that very few actresses have dared to use all the words provided. Bernard Shaw recognized that Shakespeare has successfully created the "dim, half-asleep funny state of consciousness" but he nevertheless advised Ellen Terry to cut "A headless man" from her performance.
 (102)

²⁷ As Emrys Jones aptly puts it, "while an audience inevitably titters" (207), Imogen's misjudgements continue. She mistakes loyal Pisanio for her husband's murderer,

inventing a conspiracy in which again money ("malice and lucre") is a driving force (4.2.323-329).

²⁸ John Baxter observes that this song

registers simultaneously the elements both of tragedy and of romance that are characteristic of the play as a whole, and their conjunction is reflected somewhat in the very structure of the verse. The tetrameter lines of the first three stanzas create a mood of tragic resignation, the recognition that death is universal and inevitable and that both these facts must be accepted. The rhythm, which hovers between trochaic and iambic meters in the first four lines of each stanza, comes out more solidly iambic in the couplet refrain, which drives home this recognition. By contrast the trimeter lines of the fourth stanza, together with the use of feminine endings, seem to transpose the tragic note to another key, invoking protection and solace. These lines are more ritualistically incantatory and more strongly endstopped than most of the preceding. The song is sometimes called a dirge, but in a sense this term applies only to the first three stanzas. The fourth stanza seems to be disarmed, as if by the magic of romance. ("Chastity" 319)

²⁹ Robert Ornstein, referring to what he calls "the silliness of the denouement" of Cymbeline, describes the ending as "artistically indefensible." He states that "in parodying Fletcherian tragicomedy, Shakespeare makes a joke of his own play" (212). I think, however, that while Shakespeare makes comic the usual conventions of romance ending, he also offers an alternative ending, that is at once funny, serious, and disturbing.

³⁰ Private conversation

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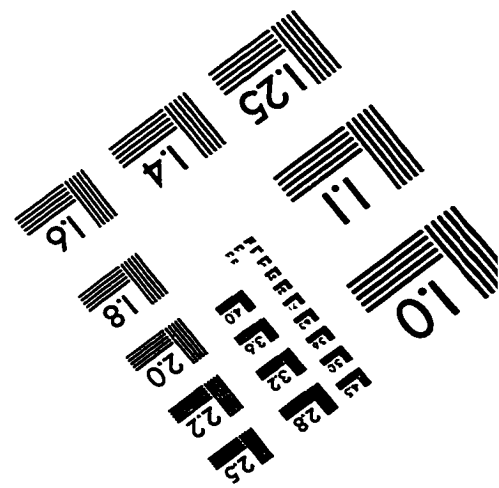
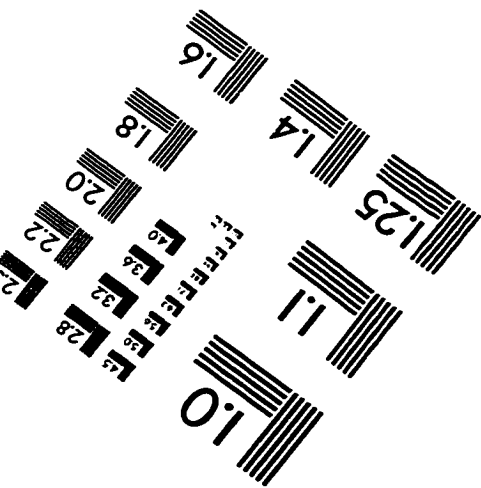
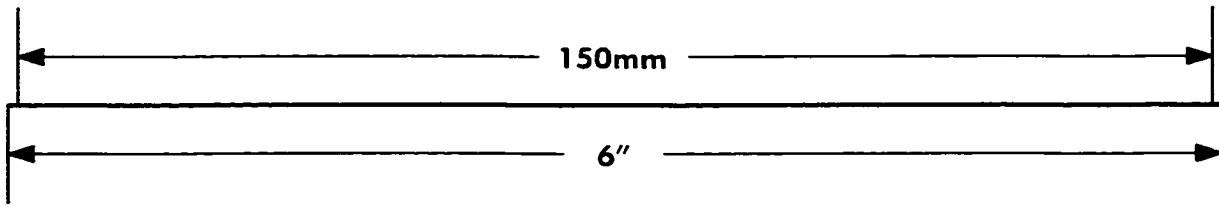
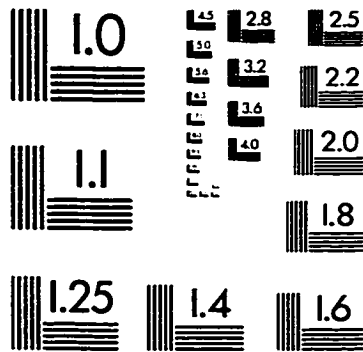
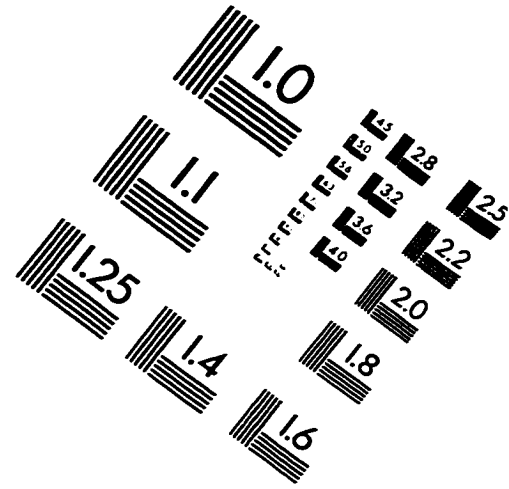
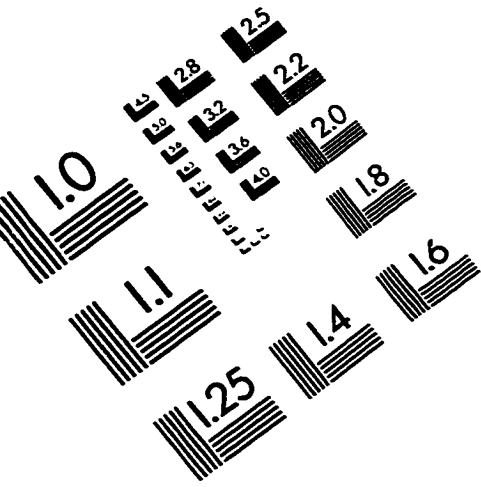
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