THE MEDIEVAL CONCEPT OF TIME APPLIED TO THE WAKEFIELD CYCLE

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PREFACE

The history of dramatic criticism concerning the medieval mystery cycles--the individual biblical plays usually arranged together to give an expanded illustration of the doctrine of repentance in celebration of special feast days, most often the Corpus Christi Feast--is indeed mysterious. Evidence exists (both historical and literary) to prove this form of drama was overwhelmingly popular for at least two centuries, if not closer to three. In England records give evidence of mystery cycle production in the 1300's and the plays were still in existence in Shakespeare's (1564-1616) youth. However, this drama received almost no critical attention in its own day, an interesting phenomenon, especially considering the time span of the dramatic activity. From the 17th century on, however, critical commentary has been steady and varied. Its main focus strangely, has been on the insights medieval drama provides into the technique and the subject matter of the Elizabethans. A part of the difficulty of the traditional criticism of medieval drama has been the failure of critics to look at the drama's intrinsic value--the form and structure create a single unity. And that unity is more deeply intensified when viewed through medieval man's concept of TIME.

Medieval drama was written in a theoretical void; this drama, therefore, illustrates the actual birth of drama. The early Greek drama that would correspond did not survive--one can only conjecture concerning it. Many aspects concerning medieval drama cannot be

factually stated; however, much that could be facutally stated has remained unsaid. This study's objective is to illustrate the need for a revised attitude toward medieval drama, an attitude which will allow the art to speak for itself--organically.

This is accomplished by briefly illustrating the scholars' historical and critical approaches or attitudes to medieval drama, proposing and defining some time-related terms which come from the medieval era, and then applying them to four plays of The Wakefield Cycle. Applying medieval man's time-concept allows the organic unity and logical communication of the drama to be more clearly appreciated.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eternal--deathless--everlasting--having no beginning. Eternal and eternity are ideas of great importance to religious man, especially to medieval man whose life was synonymous with religion. Eternal or eternity is a quality of time; one for which there is no earthly objective correlate. However, medieval man's life reflects the eternal time concept as an uppermost quality, each hour of every day. For him, God was equated with Eternity. Genesis 1:1 does not state the beginning of God, only the beginning of the Creation: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Eternity equalled God, and for medieval man, an equation between himself and God existed because in Genesis 1:26 God said: "Let us make man in our [the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost] image, after our likeness. . ."

The base of the Christian religious dogma of redemption, Christ, existed "in the beginning" yet says in St. John 1:1-2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." God is "in the beginning with God," yet present on earth with the disciples, and present now with man through the Holy Spirit--eternal, having no beginning and no end, yet ever present: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," Revelation 22:13.

If God is the Alpha and Omega, He is also ever Present, and He is

present tense action. The essence of "now-ness" and the quality of present action which encompasses past and future action is an intrinsic quality of God for medieval man and is reflected within his time concept and earthly actions. Such a concept is not a daily aspect of today's life.

Time--real and historical--is a supposition which history indicates theologians and philosophers have fought to understand in depth. To understand man and his communication, an understanding of his relationship to the essence or theory of time is an essential, for this relationship affects the sense (logic) of that communication.

A basic requirement of human communication must be that it make sense. Medieval drama, both as an art form and a means of communication, must be bound by this requirement. Too many scholars attempt to explain away the "sense," both of the art and communication, and fail to realize the depth of medieval man's religious time concept. Due to the totality of medieval man's religious life, religion dominated every aspect of medieval man's life, even to the degree of a God-oriented time concept.

If one is prepared, as one should be to approach modern drama and dramatic techniques with a readiness to appreciate and understand, one should approach medieval drama with a similar open-mindedness. Though this attitude has not been reflected traditionally, several studies have been done since 1955 which attempt to allow the medieval drama to speak for itself as a communication and an art form without having neo-classical critical methods forced in application or juxtaposed to it. Eleanor Prosser's work, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Cycles, is a most suggestive work, but she does not go far enough in her

analytical observations and gives no real application of her approach to the drama itself. One senses that she believes the essential meaning of medieval drama is expressed through the impact of its form, but she does not illustrate this belief.

Erich Auerbach's book, Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, explains that medieval man is the appropriate source for the theory to be applied to the dramatic art representing medieval man. Auerbach thoroughly discusses his figura theory, but again no application to the drama itself is made. (See below Chapters IV and V for basic definitions and application.) Auerbach's definitions and terms are those of medieval religious, philosophical thinkers, (St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc.).

The purpose of this study is to offer an interpretative or critical approach to the mystery cycles of medieval drama which will allow a response to the art, not only as the art form it is, but also as logical and sensible communication reflecting medieval man in his religious totality--not as a distorted fragment of humanity. Four episodes from the Wakefield Cycle will be examined specifically; the fourth play, Abraham; the tenth play, The Annunciation; the twenty-fifth, The Crucifixion; and The Deliverance of Souls which is the twenty-seventh of the cycle's thirty-two. The approach will be applicable to the complete cycle as well as to medieval drama in general. This study, the application of time to the drama, is not traditional in that it does not build dramatic emphasis on chronological or modern topical exposition. It is, instead, offered as an alternative to the traditional.

The intrinsic message of the drama's formal and structural unity--an organic communication--has caused a large amount of misunderstanding

among critics or interpreters; they have generally refused to grasp medieval man's concept of time which is a base for his dramatic communication. The aesthetic values of dramatic form and truths of human nature (content) are better served when dramatic art (medieval or any other) is untrammeled by later historic conventions, rules and critical standards. This attitude does not mean that each era should be studied in a total vacuum; rather that the possible vacuum should be considered first before looking outside the era (vacuum) for all the solutions. Modern man very often misses the point in medieval drama and badly distorts the art when attempting to apply rules, philosophies, theories, and forms or structure about which medieval man knew little and, more importantly, could have cared less about.

Concerning medieval drama study, Hardin Craig is scholarly and penetrating but somewhat misleading. Though he states that it is "most desirable" to know the Roman Catholic Mass, he continues:

> A comprehension of Christian worship will enable a student of medieval religious drama to perceive and appreciate the religious symbolism on which the medieval religious drama rested throughout its career. Indeed, the religious drama had no dramatic technique or dramatic purpose, and no artistic self-consciousness.[1]

In reality, comprehensions of the beginning Roman Catholic worship are more necessary for the type of appreciation which Mr. Craig suggests. The dogma, as well as some of the symbolism, has become weakened and is more abstract for modern man than it was for medieval man.

In comparison with the drama of today, the medieval religious drama may appear to lack technique, dramatic purpose and artistic self-consciousness as well as unity. However, Craig has not considered how medieval man, a man for whom the essence of being was God-centered

and secular amusement was an unknown, might react to twentieth century drama when he further states: "... we have here the strange case of a drama that was not striving to be dramatic but to be religious, a drama whose motive was worship and not amusement."[2] Mr. Craig may or may not be Catholic, but it is historically accurate to suggest that Christianity (as applied by the Roman Catholic Church) controlled the West during the medieval era; it appears obvious that if one desires to comprehend medieval drama, he must know of the power behind the man which is reflected by the man via drama--the Church.

If allowed, medieval man can communicate through his dramatic art form, not the form through the man. Medieval man can thereby illustrate that his dramatic communication was, and is, both logical and sensible when "viewed" through his own philosophies and concepts, a most important one being TIME. Perhaps John Ciardi supplies a basic foundation for an understanding of an intrinsic time-concept of form when he writes:

> What I cannot defend, unless you are willing to grant it, is the value of form as the kind of experience that goes most deeply into whatever a man is. Dance, ritual, religious ceremony or poetic encounter--if the form is sound, it is of what is deepest in man. Nothing is more powerfully of man than the fact that he naturally gives off forms and is naturally enclosed by them. To acquire knowledge of aesthetic form is to acquire knowledge of man.[3]

Time both controls and is controlled; medieval man "gave off" the form by which he chose to be controlled, the God-time concept. To acquire knowledge of the dramatic medieval aesthetic form, or concept of God-time, is to acquire knowledge of medieval man, portrayed in and through his drama.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages. (Oxford, 1955), p. 4.

[2]Ibid., p. 5.

[3]John Ciardi, "Poetry as Knowledge," Saturday Review of Literature XLIV/29 (July 22, 1961), p. 39.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MEDIEVAL CYCLES: TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

In order to understand medieval drama, one must attempt to understand and respond to the age in which he lived. At various times and for various reasons, the era is called the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, and the medieval period, among others. The Encyclopedia Americana divides the era into "the Dark Ages" from 476 A.D. to 1000 A.D. and "late medieval history" from 1000 A.D. to 1500 A.D. Basically this study is concerned with the "late medieval history" period, since it is within these approximate dates that liturgical drama, such as the Corpus Christi cycles, flourished. The Wakefield Cycle is generally considered one of the Corpus Christi cycles.

In order to respond appreciatively to medieval drama, one must understand both the why and how of the drama. This attitude is reflected by Prosser when she quotes Alfred Harbage, "'An age cannot respond deeply to a poet, masterful though he be, unless it responds to what that poet stands for.'"[1] A basic concept for both the how and why of medieval drama is religion--the Church--the Christian faith--Roman Catholic dogma. The twentieth century has religion--innumerable churches--several divisions of the Christian faith--and altered Roman Catholic dogma. Twentieth century man of the West is considered Christian; however, twentieth century man is just not Christian with the total self as was medieval man Christian. As Prosser points out

concerning modern man, "Original sin is accepted as a theological tenet, even a psychological fact; for few is it the result of a brief historical moment involving a woman, a serpent, and an apple."[2] Oh, yes, modern man believes these events are history, but his belief is almost totally dissimilar to medieval man's belief in them. Today's man thinks of an abstraction or symbol when Christ's Crucifixion comes to mind; not so for medieval man for whom the crucifixion was ". . .living truth, both past and present. . .this was his forefather Adam, his fall, his Christ whom he daily crucified again by his sin."[3]

The relationship which the drama shares with the liturgy (Mass), not necessarily the creation of the drama from the Mass, needs to be seen from an historical perspective. Today, drama and religion are separate entities--theatre is secular; church is religious. However, for medieval man, drama and religion had a total unity--both in form, content, and structure; form and content in medieval man's life equalled religion. When form and content of church and theatre become one, modern man is often confused; medieval man knew no other structure for his existence. The modern concept of secular did not exist for medieval man--that which was not religious was non-existent at best, pagan perhaps, but it was not secular in the present or traditional sense.

For medieval man, truth was God and God was Being. St. Augustine "wrote of a God at once immanent and transcendent, super-eminent in Being."[4] We are told, "Augustine based all his thought on the Scriptural presentation of God as pure, omnipotent, eternal, infinite Being."[5] Deuteronomy 32:4 illustrates this thought: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and

without iniquity, just and right is he." When one believes in the present existence of this Rock, one repeats Psalms 86:11 in unison with medieval man: "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." And medieval man trusted completely in the Word as stated in St. John 8:31-32: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, propounded a theory of truth in which "truth is the adequation of thought to thing."[6] For St. Thomas Aquinas, the Christian religion presented a different view of the universe than that of Aristotle or Plato (truth or earthly knowledge is imperfect perception of Idea or Form); Thomas distinguished

> various degrees of knowledge only to unite them without confusion. . .there is a knowledge more perfect than dialectic. . .wisdom, the noblest of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. . .for 'he who cleaveth to God is of one spirit with Him.' And therefore the Gift of Wisdom leads to a godlike and explicit gaze at revealed truth, which mere faith holds in a human manner as it were disguised.[7]

St. Thomas Aquinas synthesized Plato and Aristotle's theories with God's statements; this synthesis negated the possibility of a secular concept. The Word of God, Christ and His crucifixion are living truth, past and present, as illustrated in St. John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And in St. John 14:16-17 Christ spoke to each Christian, from Now to the Judgment Day:

> And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

This condition, though a unique or strange one for modern man, dominated all areas of medieval life from birth to death. God, through the Church, was the Good Shepherd and "A father of the fatherless. . . is God in his holy habitation," Psalms 68:5. Medieval man lived on earth only to glorify his "Father which is in heaven" (St. Matthew 5:16) simultaneously as God blessed him "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," (Ephesians 1:3). This dominance and glorification of the Trinity includes the drama.

Whether the Mass gave rise to drama or, the drama developed simultaneously or parallel with the Mass may be important questions, but they are irrelevant to this study. However, a knowledge of the historical background of medieval drama, as traditionally treated, is necessary to understand the unique approach of this study, whose main principle is the totality and complete oneness of form and content of medieval man which the Mass and drama share. Medieval man's life reflects his religion; his religion reflects his life. This unity and omission of "secular" is also found in the theology and philosophy of the era; each was based on religion; the form and content were identical, although existing in different structures.

Traditionally, a division has existed between religious and secular drama since medieval man. Too often modern critics of medieval drama have automatically accepted the traditional approach; they have generally failed to look at the drama from the point of view of its own philosophies and ideals and have, therefore, missed grasping the unity of form and content of the drama. Though Allardyce Nicoll does not state specifically that secular drama did not exist, he is one of the few traditional scholars who allows for the vague possibility, (though

if it existed, he suggests, it was sinful):

> The secular farce, if it existed, was the thing of a despised and, no doubt, generally illiterate vagrant, and we should not expect decent religious writers to soil their parchment by recording its obscenities.[8]

Today, obscenity and mockery are words with secular meanings; however, for medieval man the terms did not connotate vulgarity. Mockery, such as the four special celebrations (one is the activities of the Boy Bishop on Innocents' Day) collectively called the Feast of Fools, was a form of elevated worship. Also, the discussion and demonstrations of body-functions on stage, such as the passing of wind, was not a device used solely for comedy or ridicule--one must remember that the total body of medieval man worshiped his God.

Modern man insists on a need for "explanations"; the <u>secular explanation</u> of medieval drama arises from such a need. Medieval man knew that some things were weakened by logical explanations--the Virgin birth, the resurrection, etc. When the "explanatory" approach is applied to the drama, the unity of content and form of the Mass and drama often becomes distorted.

Scholars have "explained" that the whole of the liturgical plays is "derived from pre-Christian pagan rites";[9] that the Eastern Byzantium religious theatre is the real birth place of the liturgical drama of the West;[10] that "the English drama arose out of two compulsions; the natural instinct to imitate and the evangelical desire to teach";[11] and that the "main source of the modern drama. . . lies outside the domain of literature. It springs. . .from popular religious worship. . . ."[12] Though seemingly dogmatically factual, Vincent Hopper ultimately allows for a possible "unexplained"

beginning: "An accepted fact, also, is that the tropes [amplifications of the Mass from which drama grew] issued from the Church services, or at least appeared in conjunction with them at first."[13]

Hopper would seem to agree with Hardin Craig's attitude that the Church was the well-spring for much of the medieval drama.[14] Karl Young presents the opposite attitude:

> The impossibility of there being impersonification in the liturgy. . .arises from the fact that. . .this rite has been regarded as a true sacrifice. . . . The Mass, then, has never been a drama, nor did it ever directly give rise to drama.[15]

However, none of the scholars quoted illustrate that secular, in our sense, was an unknown concept to medieval man.

When organic content and formal unity of the Mass and the drama are parallel, even though expressed differently (as theology and philosophy express themselves differently), one cannot judge the success of the drama by its lack or abundance of religion, but rather by how the unity is used. Most scholars do not suggest an inter-dependent existence; however, when the Church, which scholars frequently insist gave rise to medieval drama, began to collapse under Henry VIII in England and the Reformation in parts of Europe, the drama which had existed parallel with the Church began to decay. Though Craig does not state an inter-dependence between the Mass and medieval drama, perhaps it is implied in his statement that medieval drama's "life-blood was religion, and its success depended upon its awakening and releasing a pent-up body of religious knowledge and religious feeling."[16] When the source of the "life-blood" was altered, so was man's mind and so was his drama.

In English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages, Mr. Craig correctly suggests that medieval drama scholars have spent too much time with the

irrelevant. Considering the three hundred year success of the drama and the fact that, even now, few consider the Mass illiterate or unsophisticated, Franklin illustrates an irrelevance by going no further in seeking intrinsic worth (as well as illustrating the explanatory approach):

> They [medieval plays] are not so much dramatized versions of Bible stories as imaginative interpretations of them, and a simple, unsophisticated view of the Bible they reveal, too.[17]

Such an "explanation" negates unity of form and content between the two intrinsic expressions of medieval man.

Though Craig makes some revealing comments concerning time in relation to medieval man, the totality or oneness of the form and structural unity of the God-time concept as viewed through either the Mass or the drama is not illustrated by application in his work. Perhaps Prosser meant this omission when she states:

> It should be noted that Craig's study is, by purpose, a compendium of scholarship to date. It is not basically intended as a re-evaluation of the individual plays themselves, and dramatic and religious values are treated only incidentally.[18]

One agrees with Prosser's suggestion that Mr. Craig may not have been as relevant as he intended, for the understanding and application of the God-time concept is one very relevant facet of medieval life and drama.

Though the Mass remains an aspect of twentieth century living, it has undergone drastic alteration--not so much in form as in man's attitude toward religion in society. Just as modern man has difficulty understanding the form of medieval drama and its place in medieval man's world, medieval man would have difficulty understanding the structural position of religion in today's world. Therefore, although Prosser is

not wrong, neither is she totally correct when she states, "The subject matter, not the form confounds us."[19] The Mass is not the subject of the drama; however, the content of both Mass and drama is derived from the same subject. Modern man allows for varying dramatic forms; however, when the structural unity of dramatic content and form is unified, or identical to man's essence of life as reflected in the Mass, modern man is confused. Both the dramatic form and subject matter contribute equally to the confusion.

Thus, one might expect a discussion of the dramatic qualities of the Mass. True, the Mass is communication and communication is an inter-personal concept; therefore, most any communicative form could be considered dramatic or possessing dramatic qualities. Though not of major relevance to the interpretative time-concept application, the approaches and attitudes of scholars concerning the question is relevant to the medieval drama over-view. Basic quidelines concerning dramatic qualities exist. Action, a dramatic essential, is present--the sacrifice of the Mass both is and symbolizes action. Aristotle's famous six dramatic elements--plot, character, thought, diction, music, spectacle--are present in both the presentation and the representation of the Mass. In the primary function of re-enacting aspects of the greatest Sacrifice, the Mass is mimetic; thus it shares with the drama that definitive aspect of mimetic significance: the acting out of something important in human experience. As a presentation of Christ's dramatic death, the Mass has ritual (stage movement), special dress (costume), specific order (script), the alter (stage); all characterize a dramatic quality.

As a historic dramatic element the Mass has been called

> the central artistic achievement of Christian culture. The dramatist Hugo Ball (d. 1927) held the opinion: "For the Catholic, there can really be no theatre. The play which dominates his every morning is holy Mass."[20]

And for medieval man, the play which dominated his very being--not just his every morning--was God's Church. Remembering this intrinsic characteristic of medieval man's dramatic communication is more important than the moot problem concerning dramatic qualities of the Mass.

In basic agreement, Craig states that the first consideration of "incidental but real importance" in English medieval drama study is:

> . . .the relation of the plays to the liturgy out of which they grew and from which they must at a later time have derived guidance and further sustenance. The liturgy of the church is closely related to the earliest medieval religious drama, is almost identical with it. . .but it was not an exemplification of dramatic form. Before drama can be produced there must be present in reasonable balance impersonation, dialogue, and action. All three of these features are to be found in the service of the church. . . .[21]

M. D. Anderson, in a later work, agrees with Craig that the Mass has dramatic qualities; however, he suggests further that not only is the Mass dramatic, but that it is dramatic purposefully, though not ". . .originally considered by Churchmen as <u>being</u> drama."[22] Here, Anderson seems in agreement with Karl Young's comment: "But the liturgy itself, in its ordinary observances, remained always <u>merely</u> worship."[23]

Though appropriately persuasive, Anderson is not automatically accurate: sharing the same content as medieval drama does not necessarily make the Mass the basis of the drama.

> The symbolical gestures of normal ritual and the dialogue implicit in responses and antiphons, prepared the way for the liturgical trope, or playlet. . . . The Church began to introduce this element of mime into its ritual soon

> after Christianity became an officially accepted religion. . . .There are fourth-century references to. . .examples of this mimed illustration of the liturgy, of which the dramatic trope, reproducing the essential action of the event celebrated, was only a further development. . .One may fairly say that the basis of all religious drama and imagery in the Middle Ages was liturgical. . . .[24]

In British Drama, Nicoll seems to agree with Anderson concerning the dramatic-quality relationship of the Mass to the drama:

> The very Mass itself. . .with its accompanying ritual is a symbolic representation of the most arresting episodes in the life of Christ, and it is but natural that the clergy should have attempted to make it even more outwardly symbolic. . . .[25]

Both Anderson and Nicoll give evidence of knowing E. K. Chambers' The Mediaeval Stage (1903) and Bernhard T. Brink's History of English Literature (1892). Surprisingly, considering the modern interpretative approaches in other literary areas, Craig, Nicoll, Anderson, and others follow the basic attitudes of the seventy-five year-old tradition (it is these basic traditional attitudes which Prosser, Salter, Auerbach, and Hurrell oppose). Concerning the dramatic qualities of the Mass, Brink states:

> The Roman Catholic Liturgy contained a multitude of germs for the formation of a drama,. . .: songs alternating between the priest and the congregation, or a choir representing the congregation; recitative reading in appointed parts, as in the story of the Passion; plastic decorations and representations; solemn processions; mimic acting, of which symbolism had sometimes a very realistic coloring; all the elements were thus present, and by their combination and mutual interblending a dramatic form must necessarily have been produced.[26]

Theoretically, medieval drama arose from a pagan past; OR sprang from the Mass; OR existed in recorded form because of Church control; OR possibly, could have had a parallel existence with the Mass. Spending time with moot unknown answers exemplifies study of the

irrelevant aspects of medieval drama--the intrinsic unity of form and content and the interpretative application of the God-time concept are more rewarding paths to a more relevant, in depth understanding of medieval drama.

Also, several Catholic terms need background explanations of their relationship not only to medieval drama in general, but to The Wakefield Cycle specifically.

Though religious fine points of distinction exist, generally the Mass and "liturgy" (meaning the Church rite) are used somewhat synonomously by scholars. However, the Greek derived term "liturgy" changes into modifiers more easily than Mass, i.e., "liturgical" drama is much more relevant than "Massical" or "Massive." During the first several centuries of the Christian era no Mass existed, in the strict sense of the word; rather, a somewhat fluid rite existed which was based upon accounts of the Last Supper, and was later crystallized into four great liturgies from which all Mass is derived. It has been suggested that the Greek "liturgy" was the term applied to the Latin Church ritual because the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, was the Bible of most early Christians.

The Corpus Christi Feast or festival of the Catholic Church is held in honor of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. In special honor of the Holy Trinity, Trinity Sunday is the eighth Sunday after Easter and follows Whitsunday. Whitsunday, the seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorates the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. This time placement puts the Corpus Christi festival in the late spring or early summer, an ideal time for outdoor festivities.[27] The play content

illustrates a specific span from creation to judgment: "Episodes have been carefully selected to fulfill a strictly theological theme: man's fallen nature and the way of his Salvation."[28]

Within individual plays of a cycle one can still find the basic ingredients of the beginning tropes, defined as extra chants "written to accompany Church music on special festival occasions";[29] small insertions of "actual drama" which appeared within the services of the Church which themselves "had strong elements of the dramatic";[30] or as a "playlet."[31] F. M. Salter states that the trope grew or became "too extended to be contained as a mere episode within the Mass,"[32] and when this occurred the groundwork for the Cycle productions had been laid.

With the Corpus Christi Feast (first celebrated in 1247 and extended to the whole Church by papal degree in 1264), a procession of the Host originated about 1275 and became the most distinguished feature of the Feast. When full-blown tropes became a part of the procession of the Host, they became generally known as Corpus Christi Cycles. At the Reformation, Corpus Christi Feast was one of the first holidays abolished by Luther--one possible reason for a sudden diminishing popularity of the cycles in Germany in the 1500's.

The cycles, infrequently called Whitsunday Cycles, are generally referred to as Corpus Christi or "mystery" cycles. The word mystery is also associated with individual plays, though in somewhat the same sense as it is applied to the cycles. Both mystery and miracle are terms applied to the individual plays, although "miracle cycle" is seldom found. However, scholars are not in agreement concerning the accurate use of "mystery" and "miracle." In 1892, Brink stated, "In mediaeval England the popular religious drama is called 'Miracle' without any

regard to its contents."[33] Macgowan and Melnitz agree:

> In France the dramatizations of the New Testament and, later, of the Old were called mystères, or "mystery plays,". . .When modern critics discovered that the guilds turned to the lives of the saints. . ., these aestheticians called the works "miracle plays." But both forms were known as mystères in France and "miracles" in England,. . .[34]

Hardin Craig states that Richard James caused unnecessary trouble for students of medieval drama when he "gave sanction to the baseless idea, destined to live on for centuries, that mystery plays were acted by 'monks' or 'friars.'"[35] Craig later states that the present division between mystery and miracle is a "convenient distinction"[36] which Downer also follows, although he does call the plays "liturgical plays" until they become attached to the Corpus Christi Feast when they become "miracle plays or craft cycles."[37] Gayley considers the outdoor drama "miracles which were the offspring of liturgical drama,"[38] while Nicoll suggests that the mystery cycles were "generally called 'miracle plays' in England" and "rarely were the mystery plays exhibited anywhere except out of doors."[39]

The "out of doors" drama is frequently equated to the slipping control of the Church over the plays because of non-Church settings, guild productions, and use of the vernacular. Concerning both the play name and the cycle productions, Salter introduces a different perspective, one that helps underscore the continuing application of religious intent to the performance of the cycles:

> It is often forgotten that the craft gild [same as guild] was a semi-religious organization. Every craft had its patron saint; and it maintained its own chapel, hospital, or shrine. . . . It was perfectly natural that the Church should turn to the craft gilds for assistance in producing a religious play. The French word mystère signified a craft; and the word mystery as signifying a craft or

> occupation is common in English as early as 1375. When the religious plays have been taken over by the mystery or craft gilds, they are called Mystery plays.[40]

This study uses "mystery" for both a cycle and a play from a cycle, which would not meet with approval from E. K. Chambers who states: "No English play was called a 'mystery' before 1744."[41]

Though manuscripts have not always survived, substantiative records of town clerks prove the cycle productions knew no geographical boundaries in medieval times. Of the four surviving, somewhat complete, medieval English cycles, the York and Wakefield are from the same area. Scholars such as Gassner, Schweikert, Hopper, Prosser, Chambers, and Craig agree on the following chronological order, though not on specific dates for these four: Chester with 25 plays; York with 48 plays now, though believed to have been more; Wakefield with 32 plays; and Coventry with 42 plays. The 1320's is a frequent time given for the origin of the Chester cycle; however, Salter dates it approximately fifty years later.[42]

The cycle productions, from the first records in the early 1300's until Shakespeare's time, approximately 250 years later, were the people's drama and the people kept them popular. Whether "pageant" means the presentation of a complete cycle, an individual play, or the acting area--usually moveable--where the cycle was presented, the cycle presentation was an imposing spectacular exhibition. As the cycles solidified in form

> their chain of dramatic incidents came finally to the presentation of Jewish and Christian sacred history in much detail and in one epic sweep toward the fulfillment in Jesus of God's purpose for the redemption of man.[43]

Since this background illustrates the confusion one encounters

in a study of medieval drama, one should not expect exactness concerning The Wakefield Cycle. Scholars often use "Towneley" because a Towneley family possessed the manuscript for some time; however, internal references indicate the Wakefield geographic area was probably the place of production. The other cycles are known for geographic areas and Schweikert maintains "for the sake of uniformity it seems better to use the name of a place."[44]

Most scholars credit The Wakefield Cycle as "the best which is preserved,"[45] and the only one where single authorship can be praised. This Wakefield master, praised for his use of comedy, his verse dialogue and the dramatic techniques of a common theme and event plus a plot within a plot in The Second Shepherds' Play, is credited with authorship of Noah, The First Shepherds' Play, The Second Shepherds' Play, Herod the Great, and The Buffeting.[46] Downer credits "portions of three, and odd stanzas in four, other plays" to the master.[47]

Originally the individual plays of The Wakefield Cycle were presented in one day, possibly processionally on moving stages or wagons, with the procession beginning as early as 4:30 a.m. Martial Rose adequately presents an opposing viewpoint, which he maintains specifically for The Wakefield Cycle, though applicable to other cycles.

> If at Wakefield the plays were produced by a religious guild, and if shortage of man-power brought about continuity of actors (that is one actor playing Jesus, or Pilate, or Caiaphas, and so on, throughout), it is more than likely that continuity of action took place in a stage-setting which 'remained fixed.'[48]

This fixed set probably had multiple staging necessary for the different levels of heaven, earth and hell, as well as journeys which occur within many of the plays.

Prosser approximates the Wakefield origin around 1400[49] and Rose states that after 1576 no evidence exists of an attempted performance.[50] Written in a 15th century hand, the earliest extant manuscript of The Wakefield Cycle, now in the Huntington Library, San Marion, California, has thirty-two plays, though eight are incomplete. It has been contended that the cycle possibly had thirty-four plays at one time, since some of the present plays suggest combinations; The Conspiracy may combine The Conspiracy and The Capture.[51] This study uses Martial Rose's editing of The Wakefield Cycle, which "is complete and tallies line for line with the original."[52] Rose states that he altered the order of plays from the 1897 reproduction, left six plays incomplete and completed The Creation and Abraham:

> The Creation cries out for completion, and dramatically it seemed feeble to launch this great cycle with a fragment. Abraham. . .requires but a few borrowed lines to make it presentable.[53]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Eleanor Prosser, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays (Stanford, Calif., 1961), p. 182.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

[3]Ibid., p. 14.

[4]David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York), p. 36.

[5]Ibid., p. 14.

[6]William S. Sahakian and Mabel Lewis Sahakian, Ideas of the Great Philosophers (New York, 1966), p. 24.

[7]Knowles, p. 268.

[8]Allardyce Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles (New York, 1963), p. 167.

[9]F. M. Salter, Mediaeval Drama in Chester (Toronto, 1955), p. 7.

[10]Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, pp. 209-213.

[11]Alan S. Downer, The British Drama (New York, 1950), p. 3.

[12]Adolphus William Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature (New York, 1899), p. 3.

[13]Vincent Hopper and Gerald B. Lahey, editors, Medieval Mystery Plays, Morality Plays and Interludes (Great Neck, New York, 1962), pp. 8-9.

[14]Craig, p. 20.

[15]Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, Vol. I (Oxford, 1933), pp. 84-85.

[16]Craig, p. 4.

[17]Alexander Franklin, Seven Miracle Plays (Oxford, 1963), p. 15.

[18]Prosser, footnote #15, p. 208.

[19]Ibid., p. 11.

[20]Joseph A. Jungmann, The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development, Trans. Francis A. Brunner, (New York, 1955), p. 201.

[21]Craig, pp. 3-4.

[22]M. D. Anderson, Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 19-20.

[23]Young, Vol. I, p. 85. (underlining by this author)

[24]Anderson, pp. 20-22.

[25]Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama (New York, 1963), p. 18.

[26]Bernhard Ten Brink, History of English Literature, Vol. II, (New York, 1892), pp. 234-235.

[27]Ibid., p. 247.

[28]Prosser, p. 23.

[29]Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, p. 176.

[30]Salter, p. 6.

[31]Anderson, p. 20.

[32]Salter, p. 7.

[33]Brink, p. 240.

[34]Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1955), p. 60.

[35]Craig, p. 239.

[36]Ibid., p. 320.

[37]Downer, pp. 4-11.

[38]Charles Mills Gayley, Plays of Our Forefathers (New York, 1904), p. 26.

[39]Nicoll, The British Drama, pp. 22-23.

[40]Salter, pp. 8-9.

[41]E. K Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1945), p. 16.

[42]Salter, pp. 41-42.

[43]Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (Berkeley, California, 1936), p.

[44]H. C. Schweikert, Early English Plays (New York, 1928), p. 26.

[45]Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 36.

[46]Martial Rose, editor, The Wakefield Mystery Plays (Garden City, New York, 1962), p. 11.

[47]Downer, p. 21.

[48]Rose, p. 33.

[49]Prosser, p. 17.

[50]Rose, p. 18.

[51]Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[52]Ibid., p. 55

[53]Ibid., p. 54.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM OF MEDIEVAL DRAMA: TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Tradition, the handing down from generation to generation of knowledge, custom, doctrines, etc., has both advantages and disadvantages; however, for today's reader and critic of medieval drama, the disadvantages far out-number the advantages. Too often, traditional attitudes concerning the drama lack fundamental support from medieval man and his philosophies. When critical approaches become tradition, but neither the criticism nor the tradition considers the objectives of the literature and its era, the critical tradition becomes misleading. Concerning critical tradition, T. S. Eliot states:

> It is part of the business of the critic to preserve--where a good tradition exists. It is part of his business to see literature steadily and to see it whole; and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time.[1]

Because Prosser feels the medieval drama, specifically the cycle plays, has not received this critical treatment, she states that criticism of the mysteries "must start from scratch."[2]

Criticism is a much abused word which means many things, from discerning appraisal to irresponsible faultfinding. Too often the critic makes excursions into subjectivity, rather than maintaining objectivity. The failure to allow the drama to speak for itself is one subjective, critical symptom which exists when one looks at the political background (or lack of one), the Church control, the

theological philosophers who occasionally translated from Greek or Latin concerning drama (but never related medieval "plays" to the classical dramatic form), the economic and educational status of medieval man, etc., and concludes that the drama is "damn poor drama, damn poor."

The critic of medieval drama has traditionally approached the drama which was created void of critical theory with critical criteria of his own era. Some have attempted to apply the criteria in reverse. The medieval era existed prior to Shakespeare's era; however, to study medieval drama only for insights into Shakespeare's drama is to do great injustice to medieval man and his three hundred years of dramatic activity.

The critic who sees medieval drama "beyond time" but within its own era looks at or within the drama; the traditional critic has too frequently looked elsewhere. Though today's critic is not able to respond totally to what the medieval poet-dramatist stood for because he does not give complete agreement to medieval man's religious viewpoints, the objective critic can still "respond" aesthetically. This aesthetic response allows The Second Shepherds' Play to be viewed for itself and within its own objective, and appreciates the intrinsic qualities which Mak possesses; it does not treat Mak as a crude beginning for Shakespeare's clever buffoons.

Prosser lists a series of seven "a priori assumptions" which have helped divert attention away from the intrinsic qualities of the drama:

1. We may ignore the religious element in the plays because religion was unimportant to medieval man.
2. The traditional stories did not contain the materials of conflict necessary for drama.

3. Mystery plays had to be conventional because the topics were dictated.

4. Since the serious plots had to follow rigid convention, drama could develop only in comic interpolations.

5. Early plays are, categorically, primitive; skill in dramatic technique gradually evolved.

6. Didacticism and drama have opposing aims and therefore must be in conflict; the greater the interest in the religious point, the poorer the play as drama.

7. Theology is no concern of the scholar of medieval drama.[3]

Hurrell wisely points out that art, specifically medieval drama, defines its essence by its existence. None of the traditional approaches begin with that objective. To superimpose an essence or idea onto an art form, and condemn the form for lacking that essence--whether it be classicism, romanticism or whatever--is to fail totally to respond to what the poet stood for. Hurrell defends his opinion by explaining that:

> What this reasoning does not allow for is an understanding of a form of drama which as a form is not dependent on "unity and economy," not confined to being either historical or contemporary, serious or comic: a drama which we can call "agglutinative" in its effect without using the term pejoratively; a drama which is like this because its authors saw their world as a place with an organic unity of time and place, body and spirit, and had no need for, perhaps would not have understood, the theory of an artifically imposed artistic unity which has no connection with the true facts of human life.[4]

As one can see from reading Prosser's list, none of the traditional methods allow for Hurrell's "agglutinative" principle of dramatic unity. Each method seems to be somewhat apologetic, rather than being confident that it will open up the work for better understanding through application. In defense of examining medieval drama by the guidelines

of the era, Hurrell continues:

> There is really nothing new in the idea, except that it seems not to have been used to investigate the nature of medieval plays, about which two principal questions should be asked: first, "What kind of world is being reflected?" and second, "What kind of dramatic form is it that reflects this world?"[5]

Hurrell's statements and questions are just another way of stating the thesis: a revision of attitude must occur if one is to respond to what the medieval poet-dramatist stood for. One purpose of drama is, as Hamlet stated in his advice to the players, "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature." One finds in medieval drama (if one seeks to respond with the poet) a "mirror" of medieval man, one which reflects the medieval world in totality: economics, history, religion, philosophy, comedy, theology, tragedy, etc., per se. Medieval man has seldom been studied with the use of a "full-length mirror" critical approach. And this is the major weakness of the traditional critical approaches--none is a full-length mirror reflecting the total medieval man; rather each is only a mirror fragment which leaves a distorted illusion of the whole.

If one begins with a reason for English medieval drama's existence such as Downer's--"the evangelical desire to teach"--one almost expects pious drama. Since the usual English peasant supposedly knew little or no Latin, early scholars assume that the Church became overly enthusiastic in her use and application of the drama. Then, when the Church had over-burdened herself with the size and expense of the productions, they were moved outside the Church and became less pious and devout and more secular. Such statements as Albert C. Baugh's, "Once outside the church the performances gradually broke their

liturgical bonds"[6] easily brings visions of excessive piety, as well as the possibility of the secular. Hardin Craig strongly impresses one with a "churchy" atmosphere, whether he wishes to leave that impression or not. Medieval religious drama, he insists, "had no theory and aimed consciously at no dramatic effects,"[7] it had no "dramatic purpose,"[8] and "existed primarily to give religious instruction, establish faith, and encourage piety."[9] Add Charles Mills Gayley's "ecclesiastical ceremony passing into the dramatic"[10] to Nicoll's "hardly recognized as a play at all"[11] and one does begin to perceive a possible "churchy" quality, when little is given to dilute the picture.

If the drama were church originated for the benefit of religious instruction, then would there not be church control over dramatic subject matter, thus maintaining and enforcing the pious characteristics of the beginning tropes? If one assumes an affirmative answer, he has fallen into the traditional trap. However, "cause and effect" logic does not apply here. Hurrell makes an illuminating comment: "The fact that until quite late. . .the medieval drama restricted itself to biblical themes, is no proof that the restriction was anything but self-imposed."[12]

The episodes of the plays were chosen to illustrate the doctrine of repentance, the pathway to salvation. And the basic structure of the cycles remains consistent for better than two hundred and fifty years--long enough for alterations to have been made. John Gassner takes a positive direction, though perhaps does not go far enough, when he states: "It remains to be noted that in spite of a tendency to take a generalized view of the medieval stage we may not overlook its variety."[13]

"Cause and effect" logic should not be applied to terms or phrases in medieval drama which may appear to be overly pious. Perhaps by today's standard the drama of medieval man is pious or "churchy"; however, one must remember that to apply today's environmental standards to an opposing environment will cause distortion of the period being studied.

Apply medieval man's environmental standards and the plays may not have taught God's love enough. For medieval man the horrors of hell could not be made realistic enough--hell was a place to be avoided at all costs--the price paid for man's redemption was overwhelming. And for the saved, Satan could be a source of laughter--the saved man could afford to laugh at the devil. The unsaved may have laughed in their ignorance. However, Satan was usually not a source of laughter in The Creation--here, he is defying God as well as causing the downfall of man, a sad rather than comic, situation. Repentance of mankind was the objective of Christianity in a world that believed man deserved blame for sin--Adam had been created sinless, had chosen to sin, and had been cast from Paradise. No means was too devout if it led man to salvation through repentance.

The Wakefield Cycle specifically relates the story or doctrine of repentance, beginning with the story of the creation of the world followed (in the cycle) by Lucifer's vanity or pride (one of the seven deadly sins) causing him to be cast down to hell, and God's creating man, placing him in the garden, and man through vanity, like Lucifer, sinning and descending to earth. Then one meets the first murderer, Cain. Sin multiplies; God decides to send the deluge, but saves Noah and his family; and so the episodes progress. The doctrine that is

uppermost in the presentation is a most specific "mirror up to nature"; attaining salvation is what life was all about to medieval man. Such a conception may seem exceedingly naive to modern man, but for medieval man, that was the precise way of the world. It is the need, both physical and spiritual, for acceptance of this doctrine that is uppermost in the representation--therefore, the people within the episodes are "real" in the sense that they either need repentance or have the peace gained through repentance. Medieval man believed that God could and would save all who repented--no matter how great the sin.

The "people" characters of the plays were not idealized--they are not idealized in the scriptures, nor was medieval man idealized. This psychological understanding that man "in the beginning" was basically the same as medieval man gave an added depth, both in characterization of man and in the application of God's time to man. Just as God did not desire man to disobey Him "in the beginning," neither does God desire medieval man to disobey Him "now." The Wakefield Cycle portrays the repentance doctrine both physically and spiritually, in man's temporal time and in God's eternal time.

The humor which exists in the episodes is not a violation of the time-concept, of the repentance doctrine, or of medieval man's understanding and relationship to and with God. Medieval man's God had great capacity for humor and created man in His likeness--therefore, man had the capacity for humor. Since man was created in His likeness, humor or laughter was not showing lack of reverence or piety. If Satan's being cast from heaven was humorous to medieval man, then there were also comic elements in Adam and Eve's search for fig leaves to stick together for use as clothing. The use of Christ and God's names

in the Shepherds' plays is not profane--medieval man was not cursing, though he might put Christ's curse on someone. For medieval man, a natural link existed between laughter and joy. A joyous God creating man in His likeness with humor and joy has not been a part of nineteenth and twentieth century man's religious faith--Roman Catholic or otherwise. The Puritans have left their legacy. Modern man has, also, become more humanistic in his religious and philosophical thinking. Man has his highest being, his God, in himself, as advocated by Comte, the French philosopher (1798-1857). This concept has allowed man to be a "Sunday Christian." Such a condition was unknown in medieval times. Modern man's inability to laugh and share joy with his God is also a situation unknown to medieval man.

Perhaps it is modern man's attitude that religious drama must be too devout or exceedingly pious which causes the critics to search for what are considered non-religious qualities to call "good" in medieval drama. However, considering medieval man's devotion and dedication to his God, His church, and His doctrine of repentance, the plays are clearly not overly pious--in fact, medieval man may have attempted to make them more relevant and devout in actual production. The scriptures, which were the ultimate source for the plays, are the same today as they were a thousand years ago--it is man who has changed.

A second criticism, that medieval drama lacks sophistication, is reflected in defining what one calls sophisticated. If one correlates intellect with sophistication, one might decide the plays were unsophisticated when Nicoll states, "It is certain that the simple-minded populace went to the play as much to laugh and be entertained as to weep and be edified."[14] Robert Heilman adds to the

unsophisticated impression that "occasionally a bare hint in their original [source] led them off into a presentation of character and action that was only nominally related to their ostensible theme and such phrases as "tedious exposition," "undramatic rehearshing of Biblical detail," and "the reduction of Biblical origins to a bare framework or afterpiece"[15] contribute to the misconception.

Hardin Craig states, at the beginning of English Religious Drama, that though "medieval people preferred quite naturally things that were interesting to things that were dull," they still "lack sophistication."[16] And from that premise, Craig continues: "The religious drama does not derive its importance from the belief that it led up to something but from its presentation of medieval life, and that life it expresses extremely well."[17] If by modern standards medieval people are unsophisticated, then their drama must likewise be unsophisticated. As do other scholars, Craig assumes an understanding of "cause and effect" logic, not only in reference to specific events but to the whole course of history. He ignores the differences between a modern sense of history and the medieval sense of history. Modern man considers history through the eyes and experience of man; medieval man considered history through the eyes and experience of God.

Craig also suggests that a sophisticated writer would claim authorship; all medieval cycles have anonymous authors. For modern man there is nothing more unintelligible than anonymity, but it was "an established order of uniformity" and that "anonymity was one of the first medieval practices discarded by the Renaissance."[18] Does anonymity of itself cause a work to lack sophistication? Logic indicates the work should be studied, and then the decision reached; not

vice versa.

Twentieth century man often correlates credulousness with being unsophisticated. This attitude may be somewhat appropriate for today's standard; however, it should not be automatically applied to another era. Too often one forgets this fact and allows himself to be misled by a statement such as Craig's: "Credulity and obedience go hand in hand, and the people of the Middle Ages were credulous to a degree we can hardly understand. . . ."[19]

Modern man also considers manners or etiquette a necessary form or by-product of sophistication; therefore, Nicoll's description, like Craig's, is not untruthful--just misleading, for the necessary explanation is lacking:

> With them [medieval people] drunkenness is found with the most mystic adoration, debauchery with the most lofty moral idealism, cynical ridicule with passionate worship, laughter with the solemnity of sacred thoughts.[20]

What Nicoll fails to consider is that medieval man may be the superior in sophistication, for his God enjoyed humor and could appreciate "cynical ridicule with passionate worship," and the fact that we refuse to allow our God that ability or greatness would suggest our own lack.

> But in the Middle Ages God himself had a sense of humor and fully appreciated the absurd and ridiculous. Between that God and us, Puritanism has intervened and dissolved the merriment of Merrie England.[21]

Some critics would claim lack of refinement because the plays were supposedly produced by amateurs, either "ecclesiastics or amateur laymen." Few critics credit the "religious and social gilds which contributed so largely to the development of medieval public life"[22] as well as the actual performance of the plays with any degree of professional competence. In Masks Mimes and Miracles, Nicoll does admit

that "the records do not expressly deny the presence of professional players."[23]

Nicoll leaves the impression that one cause of the oversimplicity is the vastness of the subject-matter of the cycles. In Masks Mimes and Miracles, though seemingly contradictory at times, Nicoll does state that "naiveté there may have been" but "no conception of the medieval theatre could be falser than that which pictures it as a primitive and simple thing."[24] F. M. Salter maintains that businessmen do not pay for services unworthy of pay and that "there can be no escape from the conclusion that the professional actor had a part" in the mystery plays. He does admit that the actor may not be a professional in today's sense; he may have been "talented local folk."[25] Salter's logic is more practical than Franklin's; the latter maintains that

> the acting itself was, no doubt, rough and crude, but what it lacked in skill was perhaps compensated for by enthusiasm. . . . They were amateurs with no professional example to follow.[26]

The conclusion to Downer's discussion also sums up this traditional approach: "They were amateur plays for amateur players and ignorant audiences."[27] Salter and Prosser's books are two exceptions to the tradition.

Though most scholars give The Wakefield Cycle credit for being the most refined, thanks to the unknown Wakefield master, the cycle itself is still labeled unsophisticated. Prosser's opinion that when one approaches medieval drama, one must totally change one's viewpoint is a valid observation. Medieval man was not unconcerned with his relationship to his world nor with a cosmic unknown; but his concern is different from its counterpart in modern man. One sees this

difference reflected in most of The Wakefield Cycle episodes. Man's stay on earth was temporary and his major objective while here was to better his relationship with God--it is this attitude which prevails through the cycle. Had the shepherds been greatly concerned about the "tomorrows," would they have allowed Mak to remain free after stealing the sheep? After some rough-and-tumble antics, they go their way. Medieval man was not lazy--sloth was a deadly sin; but he was not overly concerned with tomorrow, in the earthly sense.

Almost all scholars agree that the plays were popular on all economic and social levels which could lead one to the idea that all medieval men were stupid at worst, naive at best, if one believed the traditional critical opinions. However, minds like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine disprove that opinion, for it took great intelligence, as well as a special kind of sophistication, to combine the ideas of Plato and Aristotle with the doctrine of Christianity, as well as formulate the basic Christian doctrine which still exists. The crowds who gathered to watch The Wakefield Cycle, who laughed as Mak and Gil attempted to fool the shepherds, who appreciated the difficulty the shepherds had in remembering the Angels' song, were not witnessing history of a dead past; rather they were seeing a presentation of a living, present truth.

This study maintains that not only is The Wakefield Cycle sophisticated, but that the sophistication which it represents may even have a greater depth than twentieth century sophistication. Each play within the cycle created a separate impression, but all were a part of the doctrine of repentance; however, they should not be labelled bad drama because their main objective was an act of worship rather than

entertainment by our standards. Medieval man would be appalled by our "lack of sophistication" in that we are not constantly in a state of worship to the mighty Trinity and Creator. And had the Crusades not existed, the medieval era might have been the era when man lived peacefully with man. Unsophisticated? Consider this theater: a drama created in a theoretical vacuum, whose content began with the Creation and continued to the Last Judgment, whose structure unified content and form as well as harmoniously blending dissonants--this is lack of sophistication? Rather, a greater sophistication may exist here than man has known since.

Granted, The Wakefield Cycle is not divisible by the usual components of drama--comedy and tragedy. The cycle encompasses both at the same time, yet not in the sense of comic relief found in Shakespeare's writing, nor in the almost total absence of humor in the neo-classical view of the works of the Greek tragedians. Again, one wonders if the ability to combine the two extremes of life into a unified whole, as did God, the original Creator, is not an indication of unsurpassable sophistication.

A third approach maintains that the medieval drama is a dissonant mixture, a poor mixture, combining the tragic, comic, satirical, and farcical without a recognizable theory and is usually meant derogatorily; however, as has already been suggested, that "mixing" ability is one of medieval drama's stronger assets. Even in the last performance of a mystery play, extremely old elements were present. A part of this "mixed genres" or communal quality of the drama prevents its history from being arranged in "sequence with definitely ascertainable interconnexions."[28] The mixture effect was both conscious

and unconscious on the part of the medieval playwright; it reflected his philosophy that God was both the Alpha and the Omega--for Him (and therefore, for medieval man) the concept of anachronism, either in form or time, did not exist. Noah was henpecked with much the same evidence that would exist today--and "in the beginning," Eve had given evidence of the same ability as Noah's wife, and Adam, the weakness of Noah.

The mixture of time and form is well illustrated in The Second Shepherds' Play where the shepherds discuss present English problems in the representation of the shepherds' part in the nativity story; at the same time the story of a farcical birth is presented. Some scholars consider such interpolation as mockery--again forgetting that medieval man's God was also the Creator of good humor and laughter; mockery was one aspect of worship. The farcical Feast of the Fools was a creation at the alter within the Church; the mockery was a natural aspect of laughter and joy to medieval man.

Too many modern critics refuse to accept the dissonant harmony of medieval drama because it is unrealistic, in modern man's concept of reality. "If anachronisms are the solecisms of the unrealistic historian, the [Wakefield] Master is as reckless as Mrs. Malaprop," states Hopper, after complaining that the trio of shepherds resemble in no way "the remote sheep-tenders of a dark, pre-Christian period, sunk in primeval superstition," yet they are "to thrill with astonishment and wonderment at the coming of the infant Savior. . . ."[29] However, where most critics stop at this point, Hopper does continue and gives a solid, acceptable explanation of why the Wakefield Master wrote as he did and illustrates the functional relationship of the Mak episode with the over-all action of the cycle. The complaints of the shepherds picture

the drabness of the earthly world, Gil's cradle is the foreshadowing of the manger, the stolen lamb represents the Lamb of God whose birth transfigures the world, and at the end "a world and a play that began in sorrow, pining, and loud lament are transformed into song and rejoicing."[30]

Medieval man saw a unity in life which modern man does not (or will not) see. The mixing of bad Latin with the vernacular created a sophisticated humor we seldom grasp--the humor was comprehendable and perceptible on all class levels. There appears to have been an incessant process of separating and uniting; time had no bounds, either past, present or future, and the drama, the music and the architecture follow the same basic pattern. "Older forms of the drama frequently continued along with the new."[31] Medieval man reflects the idea that all things were possible for the believer and this idea is reflected in his works. To believe with totality the full story of the Trinity almost destroys the concept of impossible. The belief in God's unity made no thing anachronistic because God, through the Trinity, glued all things together. One seldom condemns a modern play for lacking realism, so why condemn the medieval drama for lacking the quality? As Prosser points out, "Waiting for Godot" lacks realism, yet is not criticized for this lack. Ironically, "Waiting for Godot" might offend a medieval audience less than most modern ones, since its central theme has a unity that medieval man understood in a more complex application--waiting, an aspect of time.

The critic who wishes to search will find many indications of what he considers dissonant harmony or mixed genres in medieval drama. However, the critic should not consider the technique of "mixing," or of

"realism," out of context. And when viewed through the context of medieval man and his belief, the derogatory criticism of mixed genres is misleading. The seeming inequalities, incongruities and contradictions were irrelevant in the sense that they are important today. To criticize the age for lack of perspective is to miss the point--medieval man may have had the greatest perspective the world has yet known. The ideal and realistic are put together creating a unity in time, both on earth and in heaven. That unity has not existed for people since.

Symbolism--allowing a word, phrase, or object to signify an object which itself has significance--definitely exists in medieval drama; however, medieval drama should not be examined solely upon the basis of its symbolism. Erich Auerbach makes these points concerning symbolism:

> [Its] characteristic feature is that the thing represented must always be something very important and holy for those concerned, . . .is not only expressed or imitated in the sign or symbol, but considered to be itself present. . . . Thus the symbol itself can act and be acted upon in its place . . . the symbol is a direct interpretation of life and . . . of nature.[32]

When treated just as symbolic art, much of the drama's significance is lost, because modern man no longer knows or appreciates much of what was of symbolic importance to medieval man. Only the universal symbols of the Church are pertinent to us; the wide complexity of symbols that referred to ordinary life are as unknown to us as most of our symbols of contemporary life would be to medieval man. The plays and their action should not be dismissed as easily as Downer suggests when speaking of liturgical plays: "The whole tends to be symbolic, in fact."[33]

Even a large portion of religious symbolism is no longer meaningful

to us. M. D. Anderson tells about a statue of an angel in the choir of Lincoln Cathedral who is holding out to an alighting hawk the leg from some large bird and how it confuses people and appears incongruous; however, it really is an integral part of the art work "symbolising the mystical contemplation of Christ's Passion by which a man's soul may be called back from sin and escape eternal condemnation."[34] In the same way, religious symbolism could have existed in the plays in manner of acting or staging, as well as the actual costuming and lines.

Many scholars refer to the first Easter trope, Quem quaeritis, as being symbolic. And no scholar was found who denied the existence of symbolism within medieval drama, yet few went as far as Samuel Hemingway: "The ultimate source of the drama is in symbolism."[35] To react to medieval drama from such a viewpoint will cause one to miss a large portion of dramatic depth. Though the symbolic approach is an attempt at interpretation, only a portion of the drama reaches depth by this method. Symbolism has no direct relationship to or with time.

Though much depth is missed, symbolism can be used as an interpretative or critical process to The Wakefield Cycle. Yes, the stolen lamb can symbolize Christ, the Lamb of God, and the Magi and shepherds can symbolize Christ's coming for all men. Herod can be symbolical of the devil in both The Offering of the Magi and Herod the Great. The raising of Lazarus from the dead can symbolize Christ's rising from the grave. To look at medieval drama symbolically is better than to view it as overly devout, mixed genres, etc. However, one is still not allowing the drama to communicate organically. Without recognizing and applying medieval man's time-concept, one misses much depth. (See Chapters IV and V following.)

The same basic omission of depth occurs when interpreting the drama as pure allegory. An allegory undertakes a doctrine or belief interesting and persuasive through the actions of abstract personifications. The morality play, a later form of medieval drama than the cycles, is usually considered allegorical drama. Allegory is often boring to modern man who lives in an age that vaunts realism. Perhaps this is one reason for labeling medieval drama allegorical--that makes it dull and uninteresting; therefore, one is not expected to read or study it. In allegory, one thing stands for another or represents another, mostly a virtue (love), and evil (idolatry), a passion (greed), an institution (home) or "a very general synthesis of historical phenomena (peace, the fatherland)--never a definite event in its full historicity."[36] And the allegory's failure to relate to definite events of history--time: both man's and God's--is also the reason for its interpretative failure to exhibit the real depth of medieval drama. It has often been said that the Old Testament is an allegory for the New. Then what does this make the Old Testament? Does it not lose its true historicity and become only an ethical system? The Old Testament does indeed relate to the New, but in such a way that it does not lose its rational, concrete, Jewish historicity. (Again, see Chapters IV and V.)

A sixth traditional critical approach is perhaps one of the least scholarly--a dismissal of more than three hundred years of drama simply by labeling it as kindergarten gymnastics in preparation for Shakespeare. The scholar who uses or suggests this critical approach is far from responding to what the medieval poet-dramatist stood for, which is Hurrell's point:

> Medieval drama can certainly be understood by comparing it with Elizabethan drama; the two are far from being distant, either in time or artistic method; but more than a merely external comparison has to be made.[37]

This approach is one of the greatest injustices done to medieval drama, for it makes Mak in The Second Shepherds' Play only a prelude to Falstaff, when neither Falstaff nor Shakespeare's style would have fit the need of the Wakefield writer. Medieval drama existed for its own sake.

The introductory statements made by Robert Heilman are illustrative of this critical attitude:

> The plays of Shakespeare represent the English climax of a development that had been going on in Christian Europe for about six hundred years. This remarkable evolution of a form had begun with simple dramatizations of New Testament stories; then had come complication and a gradual secularization; and within the secular forms which ultimately became dominant there was a somewhat more rapid growth from rather primitive comedies and tragedies to the complex psychological and philosophical drama of Shakespeare.[38]

Katharine Bates uses the same approach:

> The Miracle Play was the training-school of the romantic drama. In England, during the slow lapse of some five centuries, the Miracle, with its tremendous theme and mighty religious passion, was preparing the day of the Elizabethean state. . .[39]

In some ways Nicoll is more responsive to the drama than some scholars; however, he, too, follows the pre-Shakespearean doctrine:

> In these dramas [mystery plays], lay the seeds that were later to blossom out into the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. . . . If with the mysteries we are but on the borders of drama proper we can see clearly the various traditions which later were brought to culmination in the time of Queen Elizabeth I.[40]

Salter is almost pro-medieval drama. He suggests that Shakespeare might have made no improvement on the cycle productions if faced with

the same problems that the medieval playwright faced. Salter places medieval drama before Shakespeare simply because, chronologically, it came first; he attempts to determine what contributions the medieval plays made to drama. The closest heirs happened to be the Elizabethan writers who inherited a physical stage that knew few limitations--trap-door devices, curtained areas, people ascending and descending, etc.,--some characteristics of recognizable stereotypes, and two aspects which were definitely not classically inherited: "the inextricable mixture of tragedy and comedy [and] the capricious freedom with which time and place are handled."[41] But Salter's attitude and approach is rare. One definitely can take Shakespearean characteristics and search for their "crude beginnings" in medieval drama, as Downer seems to have done:

> The convention of direct address to the audience, a cruder parallel of the Elizabethan soliloquy, presumably is an outgrowth of the didactic origin of the miracle plays. . .[42]

However, to attack the problem thusly is not allowing the drama to speak for itself; neither is it even attempting to allow one's self to respond to what the poet stood for.

Two last points of analysis--historicity and economy of form--are more specifically related to medieval dramatic form, where the others could be generally considered as criticism of style or content. To revere either approach is to fragment, and to fragment is failure to comprehend the unity shared by form and content within medieval drama. Medieval drama's form <u>is</u> its content and the content <u>is</u> the form. However, when one insists that the drama lacks historicity, one does not see that unifying quality.

To lack historical progression suggests an existence within a

vacuum, which in a peculiar way could describe medieval man's world--his totality of unity is not recorded prior to his era and it has not been known since. Within that vacuum, man was not concerned with dreams of utopia--his utopia existed in heaven. He was busy relating and comprehending a Supreme Power which was known to him--not a mysterious unknown to find or prove into existence. If man's relationship with God was right, then his relationship to man would be right. This is the kind of historicity or knowledge which forms the center of medieval drama--not a progression of earthly happenings. Medieval man's understanding of God's concept of time was a vital aspect of his relationship with God. This time-concept, an important part of the medieval historicity, is overlooked because it is not a part of modern man's sense of history. However, in attaining a conceptual understanding of God's time, medieval drama becomes a kaleidoscope of forms and structures in much the same way the medieval cathedrals form a total unity--the form is their structure; their structure is their form.

The medieval historicity of man's common unity--direct lineage from Adam and Eve; all have sinned; Christ's redemptive gift to all; creation in God's image--comes from God. Since God's time is NOW, man does not have to experience something to determine if it is right or wrong--he is born with the knowledge because he is now created in the image of God. Medieval man's uppermost interest was not self per se, but self's relation with God. The important historicity for medieval man was that God allows His Son to come to earth as man. That fact might be considered the basic theory from which the medieval playwrights worked. And that fact exists because man had attempted to

interfere with God's time or plan in the Garden of Eden and had been punished. Medieval man lived under the historicity of God; he knew no other way to live and his drama illustrates the rightness of that mode of life. God was medieval man's historical authenticity--not the progression of earthly events. Hardin Craig does not allow for the possibility of this consideration when he states:

> This drama had no theory and aimed consciously at no dramatic effects. . . .its portrayers had not in the modern meaning an historical sense.[43]

The modern sense of historicity also allows for a chronological method of categorizing or classifying. Because of medieval man's time concept, chronological order was not of importance. This attitude allowed both the old and new to exist simultaneously or what modern man might term a "conglomerate mess." Nicoll gives an indication of this feeling when he states:

> In seeking to trace the growth of dramatic writing during this period it is not possible either to follow a strictly chronological progress or to keep distinct the various types of play cultivated by the different kinds of performers.[44]

The neo-Aristotelian sense of rules governing time and place did not apply to the medieval era. Chronological order was not important.

> The stage is <u>where</u> you please and the time is <u>when</u> you please, and goes just as fast as you please, or, if you please to stop it, time stops.[45]

A. P. Rossiter sounds complimentary; however, he continues by describing this "Gothic drama" as "The Grotesque."

Rather than considering that the medieval playwright used great selectivity in choosing his characters, and application of religious historicity, the traditional attitude considers medieval man greatly handicapped. Rossiter's traditional outlook is also the basic

summation of other traditional medieval drama scholars:

> Whereas the craftsmen of the Middle Ages had mastered stone for their own particular purposes--words proved for them too hard a medium. . . . . The vision of the shifting and ironical doubleness of all things is in the Gothic drama at large; but we. . .feel it to the full only when an Elizabethan writes. . . . [Medieval dramatists lack] any possibility of developing its strange juxtapositions, its twists of tone and mood, its harsh and nerve-jarring contrasts, to the edge and poignance of comparable clashes in the Elizabethan dramatists.[46]

Supposedly the Elizabethan writer was a man of historicity; he correlated the past to his present. However, if one considers medieval man's concept and relationship of and with God and His time, medieval man had great historicity.

The last critical attitude to be discussed is the supposed lack of classical economy of form within medieval drama. Rather than possessing the simplicity and unity of effect which characterizes the Greek dramatic form, medieval drama's form rested on one "fixed ideal with a constant effort toward perfection"[47] on the part of man. The criterion for recognition in our modern world is individual difference and man is judged by the form of that difference; class distinction is secondary. For medieval man, individual difference was unimportant--the quality of sameness of idenity which gave an equality was the important criteria or form of society; every man had a soul which could attain immortality in heaven or hell. This philosophy of sameness or equality of all mankind is the basic form also found within the drama. Medieval drama lacks economy of form by Greek dramatic definition; it also lacks the single harmony of the Greek drama because medieval man saw the serious and humorous, the tragic and comic at the same time--with the same eye. However, though few scholars point it out, the form and content being

simultaneously one, creates a unity in medieval drama which is equal to, though different from, the Greek economy of form.

The traditional critical approach has been to find fault with medieval drama because it lacks economy of form in the classical or neo-classical sense. Nicoll states his viewpoint clearly:

> Formless were the plays. . . ., lacking literary style often, and always wanting in 'correct' artistic proportions. . . . These plays cannot be judged critically on any standard such as are applicable to other dramas.[48]

Following tradition concerning the lack of classical dramatic form, rather than considering the possibility that the plays could contribute an original concept of form, Downer states, "chiefly they were lacking in control, in the sense of balance and proportion so necessary to the art of the theater."[49]

Both ancient Greek and modern democracy would find the concept of medieval equality difficult to assimilate. Medieval man was able to illustrate this concept of equality in his religion, his politics, his social life, his entertainment, and to give the total of all these in his drama. How can one say he lacks form or balance or proportion? Granted, his sense of form does not evolve from a "cause and effect" sense of history--it lacks authenticity in that sense--but does that create formlessness?

Chambers comments that medieval drama cannot be classified as comedy or tragedy and that basically those terms "stand, as they stood for Dante, for varieties of narrative poetry, with a cheerful and a melancholy note respectively."[50] Medieval drama went beyond classification. Or perhaps one would be more factual to say that medieval drama encompasses all classifications since it is coextensive

with the complete span of humanity as medieval man knew it. But does this total classification make The Wakefield Cycle formless? Traditionally, the answer would be affirmative. However, The Wakefield Cycle, as well as the individual episodes within the cycle, has form. The remaining chapters of this study attempt to suggest one aspect of basic unity that like the Greek form, has particular, definable characteristics. Today, more care is being taken before tradition is doctrinally followed. Hurrell, Prosser, Salter, and Auerbach represent a new approach to medieval drama study--one of attempting to determine what the poet stood for and how to respond to the poet's work. Today's medieval critics are attempting to meet Eliot's first requisite for a critic: "interest in his subject and ability to communicate an interest in it,"[51] rather than assuming medieval man was dull, ignorant, too devout and that his drama can only be appreciated in light of what followed after it. When Eliot's requisite is used with sincerity, medieval drama will be able to break out of the chains of misunderstanding and miscomprehension with which traditional critical attitudes have encompassed it. However, this over-view indicates the "chains" are far from being destroyed and room for much critical improvement exists.

FOOTNOTES

[1]T. S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood (New York, 1960), pp. xv-xvi.

[2]Prosser, p. 182.

[3]Prosser, pp. 183-191.

[4]Hurrell, p. 599.

[5]Ibid., p. 600.

[6]Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England (New York, 1948), p. 277.

[7]Craig, p. 9.

[8]Ibid., p. 4.

[9]Ibid., p. 15.

[10]Gayley, p. 17.

[11]Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, p. 177.

[12]John Dennis Hurrell, "The Figural Approach to Medieval Drama," College English, XXVI/8 (1965), p. 599.

[13]John Gassner, ed., Medieval and Tudor Drama (New York, 1963), p. xii.

[14]Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, p. 179.

[15]Robert B. Heilman, ed., An Anthology of English Drama Before Shakespeare (New York, 1952), p. vi-vii.

[16]Craig, p. 3.

[17]Ibid., p. 20.

[18]Ibid., p. 15.

[19]Ibid., p. 14.

[20]Nicoll, British Drama, p. 26.

[21]Salter, p. 104.

[22]Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 16.

[23]Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, p. 192.

[24]Ibid., p. 206.

[25]Salter, p. 78.

[26]Franklin, p. 18.

[27]Downer, p. 26.

[28]Craig, p. 95.

[29]Hopper, p. 39.

[30]Ibid., p. 41.

[31]Brink, p. 236.

[32]Erich Auerbach, Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York, 1959), pp. 56-57.

[33]Downer, p. 6.

[34]Anderson, pp. 1-2.

[35]Samuel B. Hemingway, ed., English Nativity Plays (New York, 1964), p. vii.

[36]Auerbach, p. 54.

[37]Hurrell, p. 600.

[38]Heilman, p. v., (underlining by this author.)

[39]Katharine Lee Bates, The English Religious Drama (New York, 1921), p. 35, (underlining by this author.)

[40]Nicoll, British Drama, p. 27.

[41]Salter, pp. 106-107.

[42]Downer, p. 17.

[43]Craig, p. 9.

[44]Nicoll, British Drama, p. 43.

[45]A. P. Rossiter, English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans (New York, 1959), p. 73.

[46]Ibid., pp. 54-75.

[47]Craig, p. 17.

[48]Nicoll, British Drama, pp. 26-29.

[49]Downer, p. 26.

[50]Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 2.

[51]Eliot, p. 37.

CHAPTER IV

THE TIME CONCEPT: EXPLANATION AND DEFINITIONS

The major disadvantage of the traditional critical approaches to medieval drama is that none evaluates the essence of the drama--its form is its content, and the whole is the acting out of something important in medieval man's experience. Most traditional critics approach their task more from the aspect of fault-finding than the consideration of reasons why the poet-dramatist used his type of selectivity. Fault-finding does not open up the drama for better understanding and appreciative analysis; it illustrates how poor the drama must be. The fault-finders usually lack what T. S. Eliot calls "creative interest"[1] and are more "interested in extracting something from their subject which is not fairly in it."[2] Because medieval drama lacks classical economy does not mean that the drama lacks form: because classical economy "is not fairly in it" does not mean the drama failed to "mirror" medieval life.

Eliot supports the viability of Matthew Arnold's definition of critical purpose: "the disinterested endeavour to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind."[3] Eliot says the "disinterested endeavour to know" is not the prerequisite of criticism, but of the critic. The traditional critic of medieval drama has failed to make an "interested" endeavour to know good, much less "the best," in the

drama--he has revealed no response to what the poet stood for. Indeed he has lacked "creative interest" in medieval man and his drama.

If the aim of good criticism is to open up a work for understanding, then the criticism also becomes interpretation or an explanation of the meaning of the drama. To attempt to open up an aspect (the concept of time) of The Wakefield Cycle, and thereby, an aspect of medieval drama generally, as well as the life it mirrored, is the function of this study. "Holding the mirror up to nature" usually suggests varying degrees of realism or characters that are true to life. T. S. Eliot's critical approach to true-to-life characters is relevant to medieval drama: "A 'living' character is not necessarily 'true to life.' It is a character whom we can see and hear, whether he be true or false to human nature as we know it."[4] This is the attitude with which to approach medieval drama, since it reflects a human nature somewhat different from modern man's. Rather than condemn the drama for anachronisms, one should consider that the plays reflect life--a life in which discordant elements were a unified whole--and they represent living man. The plays are as they are because life was the way it was. Medieval man's representation of feeling was the presentation of his thought, especially in connection with his concept of time.

Time--the concept which often puzzles mortal man; time--the concept which challenges philosophical man; time--the concept which influences religious man; time--the concept which remains the greatest unknown, yet known, aspect of life. Passing, yet always present, time remains a reality which also is an illusion. Time is measured in different degrees: seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks which become

months, which become years of a lifetime--the sum total of earthly experience.

Time--the most characteristic form of experience; experience--the most characteristic form of knowledge; knowledge--the most characteristic form of self. Time and self are concretely linked because time and experience are linked. For medieval man, time and self (man) were linked because time and God were linked; for modern man, "what we call the self, person, or individual is experienced and known only against the background of the succession of temporal moments and changes constituting his biography."[5] Medieval man lacked this type of time pre-occupation; time was important to him only as an ineradicable factor in his knowledge of God and eternity. Man's "biography" was his relationship with God; knowledge concerning "self" was of secondary importance. Modern man's concept of time is private or individualistic; he is concerned with his relationship to the sum total of his life. Medieval man's concept of time was universal; the only importance life's "sum total" had was in its relationship to God--the Creator of all.

Modern man acknowledges an interdependence of the unities of time and self; medieval man acknowledged an interdependence of the unities of self and God--time was God's. Modern man relates to time temporally; medieval man related to time spiritually. For modern man, "memory becomes a symbol for the active, creative, regulative functions of the self";[6] for medieval man, God through Christ was the eternal, living example for man's "active, creative, regulative functions." Modern man fears that which he does not know or cannot explain; not requiring logical explanations, medieval man wasted no part of his life, for

through God's truth, he could see the connection between the beginning and the end of his life.

How did "dull, ignorant, simple" medieval man relate to "time" since it (in any concept) would appear to be far beyond his comprehensive ability, if any validity is given to the traditional picture drawn by critics of medieval drama? Paradoxically, medieval man's creative works, specifically the drama, capture the essence of his time-concept experience. And because of the depth of his religious belief and dedication to his faith, medieval man's concept of time is in many ways more complex than modern man's time-concept. Time is too often the search for truth for modern man; medieval man had the Truth--"I am the truth and the way," in St. John 14:6. Medieval man allowed for a logical, though unexplainable existence of a Supernatural God whose time and action was present tense as found in Isaiah 44:6, "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; beside me there is no God." Though often thought to be past-tense action since Christ fulfilled the Old Testament, present tense action is still related by God, as in Exodus 3:14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you." Various scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments reflect God's now-ness or present immediacy of action. Of the many, many possible, only one New Testament reference will be given which reflects the eternal, yet present or "now" action of God through the Son:

> I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. . . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might

> have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, St. John 10:9-11.

With that knowledge for a foundation, medieval man spent his energies in ways other than searching for Truth, whose source he already knew and could learn more about through the Holy Scriptures. Time was God; truth was God; man belonged to God; therefore, man's true time was God's time--the present-tense, Being. God knew no anachronism--he was the all-powerful agglutinant. Religion controlled medieval man's understanding of time and this understanding is communicated through his drama and gives the drama added depth. It is significant to indicate that though medieval man was aware of change (the drama altered during the centuries), he was also deeply aware of a concept of permanence (the form and content of the drama did not alter).

Modern man measures time in a horizontal manner or progression--hours and days which are divided into day and night; the days are divided into a progression of past, present, and future. Craig points out medieval man's lack of real concern over the passage of earthly time: "Its elapse was relatively futile, and there was slight reason to measure it in segments further than those provided by day and night."[7] Medieval man measured time in a vertical manner, without progression--its alteration is a state of present action and, at the same time, incomplete permanence. God, from above, looks down and His vertical sight is both now and eternal. Time, to a slight degree within man's control, is the essence of eternity. Yet, eternity exists <u>now</u>. This medieval, vertical time is mentioned by Craig:

> Time. . .did not travel horizontally from one secular event to another. Time developed here on earth and rose vertically into eternity, and the more completely

> merged with eternity mundane time became, the closer it came to permanence.[8]

Through this vertical time, the Truth which medieval man possessed was conserved.

The old Testament words "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" seem to be a mirror image for New Testament scriptures such as Revelation 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Here one sees the Trinity unified in the Almighty, yet individualized: "which is" is God; "which was" is Christ, the Son of Man; "which is to come" is truly the "Almighty" uniting man with Father, Son and Holy Ghost beside whom "there is no God." Yet, each--the image and the mirror image--is a present fact, real and historical; God and man communed in Eden; God, through the Son, and man communed in Bethlehem; and God, through the Son with the Holy Spirit, communes in the heart of man now--yet the Trinity existed "in the beginning."

Concerning this "now-ness" or sense of present action of God's time-concept, one would expect a religious thinker to give the philosophical approach to the problem. Hans Meyerhoff states:

> St. Augustine was the first thinker to advance an ingenious philosophical theory based entirely upon the momentary experience of time. . . .What happens, happens now, he argued; that is, it is always an experience, idea or things which is "present."[9]

For medieval man, a part of his eternalization was occuring now. St. Augustine also uses the word already concerning relationships and time. Already, meaning "even now" has an impact almost equivalent to always.

A word which encompasses both the concept and the application of

"now-ness" or present-time action is *figura*, defined by Erich Auerbach as "something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical."[10] The background of figura from "Terence to Quintilian" is given by Auerbach who begins the historical background of the word:

> Originally *figura*, from the same stem as *fingere*, *figulus*, *fictor*, *effigies*, meant "plastic form." . . . Perhaps it is no more than an accident that in our two oldest examples *figura* occurs in combination with *nova* [new]; but even if accidental, it is significant, for the notion of the new manifestation, the changing aspect, of the permanent runs through the whole history of the world.[11]

In eighteen pages, Auerbach gives the full background and evolutionary progress of the word as a non-religious term, and concludes that section by stating:

> But the meaning which the Church Fathers gave the word on the basis of the development described in the previous pages was of the greatest historical importance.[12]

The second section of the essay (twenty pages) deals with the Christian application and understanding of the word *figura*. Auerbach states that the first Christian use of the term is in Tertullian who speaks of Joshua as a "figure [shadow] of things to come," meaning Jesus. The objective of this type of interpretation was to illustrate

> that persons and events of the Old Testament were prefigurations of the New Testament and its history of salvation. . . . The prophetic figure is a concrete historical fact, and it is fulfilled by concrete historical facts. The fulfillment is often designated as *veritas* [truth]. . . and the figure correspondingly as *umbra* [a shade or shadow].[13]

The weakness of interpreting medieval drama as *mere* symbolism or allegory can begin to be seen.

If all parts of the Bible are real and literal, neither symbolism nor allegory adequately allows for their concrete history to be

fulfilled by other concrete historical facts. The New Testament could be designated veritas or truth and the Old Testament as umbra, a shade or shadow, yet the shadow had real, concrete history. As Auerbach explains:

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and fulfillment are real historical events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming.[14]

And the New Testament both encompasses and fulfills the Old Testament, a depth of meaning which is lost in simple symbolism or allegory. Using the figura, "Moses is no less historical and real because he is an umbra or figura of Christ, and Christ, the fulfillment, is no abstract idea, but also a historical reality."[15] The Old Testament pre-figures the New in that "figura often appears in the sense of 'deeper meaning in reference to future things.'"[16]

It seems the Church fathers had disagreement over religious interpretation of the Old Testament in relation to the New concerning the "deeper meaning." By one interpretation, the Old Testament was interpreted in a manner that would detract from its historical reality; the opposing view was to maintain the full historicity along with "the deeper meaning." Auerbach states that the latter viewpoint won. St. Augustine was important in verbally stating God's concept of time as expressed by medieval man and he also played a leading role in this

disagreement. Augustine "favored a living, figural interpretation, for his thinking was far too concrete and historical to content itself with pure abstract allegory."[17]

Later in his work Auerbach quotes Augustine concerning the Saint's view of time and its interpretation:

> "For what is foreknowledge but knowledge of the future? But what is future to God who transcends all time? If God's knowledge contains these things, they are not future to Him but present; therefore it can be termed not foreknowledge, but simply knowledge."[18]

Augustine's attitude of total unity concerning time and knowledge--time is knowledge and knowledge is time and both equate to God--is the same basic essence of unity seen within medieval drama--the form is the content and the content is the form and both equate to the intrinsic essence of drama. In this instance the essence is the acting out of an important aspect of medieval man's life.

St. Thomas Aquinas has been considered the originator of scholasticism, a religious philosophy of the medieval era. He has been credited with Thomism, Christianity's first original philosophical system--one that is neither Platonism, nor Aristotelianism, nor Augustinism but, the way of thinking that is ever ancient, yet ever new. And just as medieval drama is critized for being a mixture of genres,

> the great doctor goes remorsely forward through things great and small, following for the most part an invariable sequence of objection, solution, and argument; there is no emphasis, no high lighting, no difference between points that seem trivial or otiose and the supreme problems of existence.[19]

One may assume that St. Thomas' philosophy would in all likelihood fall under the same criticism as the drama of his time--a mixed jumble--for Thomas considers both the trivial and the supreme, just as the drama

considers both the grotesque and the sublime. However, each attains a unity of form and content. And just as the drama altered, yet remained the same, Thomas was "a mind always ready to modify an opinion or an argument in the face of new information or valid criticism,"[20] yet his philosophy remained intrinsically the same--its existence was its essence and its essence was its existence.

For Aquinas, all being (all truth) is derived from a single source; therefore, an order and a harmony exist in all the parts. According to David Knowles, the leading idea which runs through St. Thomas' whole philosophy is that every finite being consists of act and potency, essence and existence; existence brings the potency of an essence into act, but is itself limited by that potency. God alone is all-perfect without distinction between His essence and existence;[21] God told Moses --"I AM THAT I AM." This illustrates the All-Perfect God who has no distinction between essence and existence. The verse illustrates God's concept of time to be AM, present--no yesterdays, no tomorrows. The verse is also a figura for Jesus and His coming to the children of Israel, not only in the historical fact, but in verbal usage, also. For Jesus said--"I am the bread of life."

Now that evidence has been given to illustrate the medieval philosophical attitude and that the figura concept not only follows the attitude but was a precept of the religious philosophy, a further look can be given to the figura and its interpretative values:

> It is precisely the figural interpretation of reality which. . .was the dominant view in the European Middle Ages; the idea that earthly life is thoroughly real, with the reality of the flesh into which the Logos entered, but that with all its reality it is only umbra and figura of the authentic, future, ultimate truth, the real reality

> that will unveil and preserve the figura. . . . The individual earthly event is. . .viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality; so that the earthly event is a prophecy or figura of a part of a wholly divine reality that will be enacted in the future. But this reality is not only future; it is always present in the eye of God and in the other world, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times, or timelessly.[22]

It is important to remember that the figura goes beyond simple allegory and symbolism. Auerbach explains the differences:

> Since in figural interpretation one thing stands for another, since one thing represents and signifies the other, figural interpretation is "allegorical" in the widest sense. But it differs from most of the allegorical forms known to us by the historicity both of the sign and what it signifies.[23]
>
> . . .
>
> The symbol must possess magic power, not the figura; the figura, on the other hand, must always be historical, but not the symbol. Of course Christianity has no lack of magic symbols; but the figura is not one of them.[24]

The figura is history first, prophecy second; when an event is viewed thusly, God's concept of time is applied which intensifies interpretation or meaning. The "bob of cherries" which the first shepherd in The Second Shepherds' Play gives to the Infant Jesus can be symbolical of the coming of spring--but it lacks historicity from the scriptures; therefore, that act is not figural in interpretation. However, the shepherds themselves are figuras--they are historically real at the same time that they become an umbra or shade for a previous historical reality. The figural interpretation establishes a union between two people or events, "the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first."[25] The shepherds in the play are fulfilling the prophecy concerning the first Christmas night when ordinary shepherds concerned

with Nazarene life are confronted with the Holy Birth. The Holy Birth is allegorical, symbolic and a figura, but as Auerbach points out, this is not always the case. Auerbach explains that one reason modern man is so often confused concerning figura is because:

> The strangeness of the medieval view of reality has prevented modern scholars from distinguishing between figuration and allegory and led them for the most part to perceive only the latter.[26]

Shakespeare discloses his historical characters, such as Caesar, in the midst of their earthly existence; an important epoch is brought to life before one's eyes and Shakespeare looks for the meaning of the epoch itself. For medieval man, every life had its class or place in the decreed history of the world, the basic design of which is found in Revelation. Historical man is a figura of Revelation fulfilled--and the fulfillment is more real and has greater significance than the figura, historical man. The more thoroughly the fulfillment is interpreted and the more intently it is integrated with the doctrine of redemption, the more real the figura of man becomes. The more closely integrated to the plan of salvation man is, the more real his essence becomes. Shakespeare's Caesar lacks this spirituality; he is <u>not</u> a figura, that is, both concrete yet partially hidden and needing spiritual interpretation. Shakespeare's Caesar is only the image; he lacks historical fulfillment in the figura sense.

Another aspect of the definition in depth of figura is added by Auerbach:

> The tentativeness of events in the figural interpretation is fundamentally different from the tentativeness of events in the modern view of historical development. In the modern view, the provisional event is treated as a step in an unbroken horizontal process; in the figural system the interpretation is always sought from above; events are

> considered not in their unbroken relation to one another, but torn apart, individually, each in relation to something other that is promised and not yet present.[27]

Is this not another positive definition of "mixed genres?" To consider that a figura is both youthful in its newly created historicity and at the same time as old as history, or time, gives the sense of "mixed forms" for which the medieval drama has been severely criticized. However, has the drama not been true to its birthright? Considering that both the figura and the event that is pre-figured have something provisional and incomplete about them, the conceptual, present tense of time should be present in drama which acts as a figura--it is not time confusion or careless history. Rather it possesses a different concept of time and a different sense of historical authenticity.

Hurrell aptly relates Auerbach's comment to medieval structure or form of medieval drama:

> . . .a drama which is like this because its authors saw their world as a place with an organic unity of time and place, body and spirit, and had no need for, perhaps would not have understood, the theory of an artifically imposed artistic unity which has no connection with the true facts of human life.[28]

One can look thusly at medieval drama if one "is willing to abandon the idea that form and content are separable entities."[29] The Wakefield Cycle, and other medieval drama, represents "a world in which, despite the exterior rigidity of social rank, there is a simple unity of all created things and of all aspects of life, human and divine."[30] Within the drama, nothing is irrelevant or inappropriate for within medieval life nothing is irrelevant or inappropriate. The medieval poet-dramatist is "but a spokesman for the instinctively held conception of the universe shared by his audience, there is, of course, no true

separation at all between 'life' and 'art.'"[31]

Christian converts needed a past or a quality of history to give depth to their new-found state. Christianity made full use of the Old Testament, showing the inter-relationships with the New:

> The figural interpretation changed the Old Testament from a book of laws and a history of the people of Israel into a series of figures of Christ and the Redemption, such as we find later in the procession of prophets in the medieval theater and in the cyclic representations of medieval sculpture.[32]

However, in figural interpretation, the Old Testament did not become mere symbolism--the Jewish laws and history remain factual events. The examples of Biblical figura interpretations are almost innumerable, and the influence of the figura upon the medieval era is immeasurable. Auerbach states: "No student of the Middle Ages, can fail to see how it provides the medieval interpretation of history with its general foundation and often enters into the medieval view of everyday reality."[33]

Just as Moses was <u>figurally</u> present in Christ when Christ prevailed on earth, so likewise is Christ <u>figurally</u> present in man as man prevails on earth. In St. John 17:21-23, Christ continues in prayer to God concerning man:

> That they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me. . . .

For man, the <u>veritas</u> or truth of this state of "oneness" with the Trinity was the magnificent gift of redemption from the Omnipotent, perpetual God through His only Son, who was gloriously obedient to His Father. The figura, Christ, had not only made past history present--man

could again commune with God in a relationship somewhat similar to that which existed in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam--but He determined the perfect model for man's existence, now. Auerbach states:

> The analogism that reaches into every sphere of medieval thought is closely bound up with the figural structure; in the interpretation of the Trinity that extends roughly from Augustine's Trinitate to St. Thomas, I, q. 45, art. 7, man himself as the image of God, takes on the character of a figura Trinitatis.[34]

Auerbach observes that the figural interpretation was the medieval Christian view and the allegorical was adapted from ancient pagan origins to include Christianity.[35] He also surmises:

> The strangeness of the medieval view of reality has prevented modern scholars from distinguishing between figuration and allegory and led them for the most part to perceive only the latter.[36]

Though too often a follower of tradition, Downer does include in his statements concerning anachronisms the fact that yesterday, today and tomorrow were all coexistent for medieval man's God. "The medieval dramatist and his audience, therefore, were lacking in a sense of history, a sense of chronological time, and their plays reflect their philosophical position."[37] Though "philosophical position" implies form, Downer goes no further in explaining that medieval man's sense of history and time-concept varies greatly from modern man's; that the medieval plays have the justifiable right to reflect the "philosophical position" found within them. T. S. Eliot's comments concerning form are appropriate concerning medieval man: "To create a form is not merely to invent a shape, a rhyme or rhythm. It is also the realization of the whole appropriate content of this rhyme or rhythm."[38] Medieval drama, like medieval man's life, is the realization of "the whole appropriate content" of medieval man's philosophy. Medieval drama is

also an art form which exemplifies Eliot's statement that art should not "embody a philosophy"--it should "replace the philosophy."[39] Medieval drama is not a means to the philosophical time-concept; the drama is the time-concept. The drama is not a means to religious philosophy of life; the drama is the religious philosophy of life.

The time-concept of medieval man is the historical sense which "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence,"[40] God's time, or the conception of the total earthly world ". . .as already subjected to God's final judgment and thus put in its proper place as decreed by the divine judgment, to represent it as a world already judged. . ."[41]--the intensifying, "umbra and veritas" of the figura. The figura, or time-concept, of medieval man as reflected in his drama is a "concept of artistic form as a whole which is a mirror of the form God has given to his world."[42] And that form did not destroy or ignore prior history, the form built upon prior history in much the same manner as the Gothic cathedrals were built. Medieval man believed physically, spiritually and historically in Christ's words in Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill."

Time controls the structure of all form--time is form. Therefore, a concept of time is a concept of form. A time-concept is intrinsic to medieval drama; therefore, the drama is not formless. As a traditional critic of medieval drama may quickly note, the drama lacks neo-classical economy of form; however, medieval man's world also lacked that economy--the drama is the reflection or acting out of an important essence of medieval man's experience, i.e., his religion which is synonymous to his life. His time-concept reflects his life--his life

reflects the form of his time-concept. The most comprehensive term for that total condition of eternal "now-ness" is the figura. Through the figura, Psalms 85:10-11 becomes, simultaneously, real history (past tense) and real actuality (present tense):

> "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

Although historically actual, the "now-ness" or present tense action of the Old Testament frigurally presented by the New Testament is relevant and valid. This vertical "now-ness" or the eternal personification of past fact (umbra) through present reality (veritas) is explicitly present in The Wakefield Cycle. The vertical, eternal time-concept occurs as it is because God endured as He did within medieval man.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Eliot, p. 37.

[2]Ibid., p. 24.

[3]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[4]Ibid., p. 132.

[5]Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkely, California, 1968), p. 2.

[6]Ibid., p. 44.

[7]Craig, p. 16.

[8]Ibid., p. 16.

[9]Meyerhoff, p. 8

[10]Auerbach, p. 29.

[11]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[12]Ibid., p. 28.

[13]Ibid., pp. 28-34.

[14]Ibid., p. 53.

[15]Ibid., p. 34.

[16]Ibid., p. 35.

[17]Ibid., p. 37.

[18]Ibid., p. 43.

[19]Knowles, p. 255.

[20]Ibid., p. 257.

[21]Ibid., p. 262.

[22]Auerbach, pp. 71-72.

[23]Ibid., p. 54.

[24]Ibid., p. 57.

[25]Ibid., p. 53.

[26]Ibid., p. 74.

[27]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[28]Hurrell, p. 599.

[29]Ibid., p. 600.

[30]Ibid., p. 601.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Auerbach, p. 52.

[33]Ibid., p. 61.

[34]Ibid., p. 62.

[35]Ibid., p. 63.

[36]Ibid., p. 74.

[37]Downer, p. 16.

[38]Eliot, p. 63.

[39]Ibid., p. 66.

[40]Ibid., p. 49.

[41]Hurrell, p. 602.

[42]Ibid., p. 601.

CHAPTER V

APPLICATION OF THE TIME-CONCEPT

Applying the figural time-concept to medieval drama establishes Auerbach's "connection between events or persons, the first [event] of which signifies not only itself but also the second" within the drama, as well as invalidating the traditional complaint of anachronisms in medieval drama. The shepherds of The Second Shepherds' Play illustrate Auerbach's figural "connection." The first event, that shepherds visited the Nativity, is an historical fact--Nazarene shepherds existed and contended with life's daily problems; the second event, the Wakefield play, is the figura for the first event in its real presentation of the historical representation--the men represent themselves, i.e., English men living in the medieval era faced with the problems of medieval life. For the figura shepherds, discussing English taxes was not an anachronism--the discussion is one aspect of the real historicity of the second event. The "plot" of the medieval cycles is the presentation of the full account of the doctrine of repentance in a representation which both includes and excludes TIME; the plot is spiritual and physical--eternal and temporal. The above description is applicable to The Wakefield Cycle whose action includes now, but excludes past and future tense except as a figura for the present, which may be a figura for a future action.

The reality of medieval man's earthly existence is the worship of

God, "the Alpha and the Omega" who is also actually present Now. Man's reality is divined by the past and future, "the Alpha and the Omega," yet the eternally present action of the doctrine of repentence as bestowed by Christ Jesus, God's Son, gives even deeper meaning to life in its present tense action. Christ's redemptive blood is everpresent because of man's everpresent sinful nature--the hour of need is always "now" as is the hour of worship, praise and prayer. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prayed to the Father in St. John 17:1-3:

> Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou has given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.

Though historically, Christ's prayer is past action, the act and the achievement is evermore eternal present action: Man, with the Holy Ghost, glorifies Christ the Son in order to glorify God the Father. Medieval drama, specifically The Wakefield Cycle is a figura for the real truth (or veritas) of the shade (or umbra) of medieval man's Christian life; the drama comes after the life was created, yet as the life is being created anew; the drama is a fulfillment of the old life made new. The drama appears figurally with Auerbach's sense of "deeper meaning in reference to future things"--The Wakefield Cycle portrays and interprets the present earthly tense of medieval man's life, but with the reference to his fuller, more deeply meaningful life as shared with the Trinity in heaven. The drama is not only a figura for mankind's present life, but for Man's future being. The action of The Wakefield Cycle, which is real and historical (the world), announces something else that is also real and historical (eternity) with its time-span

from the Creation--the Alpha--to the Last Judgment--the Omega.

Basically, much of the New Testament, especially the entire book of St. John, is a figura for Christian man; the medieval drama, specifically The Wakefield Cycle, is a figura of man, viewed from the Christian man's position. Just as the characters in The Procession of the Prophets (Moses, David, Daniel, and Sibyl in the existing script) are a prophecy with historical (as well as symbolic and allegoric) validity--a figura for the coming Saviour, Christ; likewise, Christ's exaltation of God while He is the Son of Man is a figura for the future citizens of heaven--the medieval Christian, as well as today's Christian.

God is both spiritual and physical, united in the same form--Christ Jesus; likewise, medieval drama, The Wakefield Cycle specifically, is both worship and art, united in the same form--drama. For medieval man, each level of reality is inter-related to the point of interdependence --yet each level permits, in fact almost requires, the complete unity that is possible with a time-concept, such as the figura (the vertical essence of time), which allows a person or event to be historical first and prophetic second. Yet all earthly action is present tense within God's eye, though separated by centuries of temporal time. This time-concept is not foreshadowing; the second event, when it occurs, gives added richness to the first, and the richness occurs in present tense, as one now realizes, receives, and comprehends that richness or depth of meaning. Again one sees that the time-concept of God's time--the ever present action of am is necessary to and for this added depth and intensity.

As joyful, earthly worship, The Wakefield Cycle is figura for

rapturous, eternal deification in heaven. The earthly worship, that real and historical "something," announces "something" that both is and will be real and historical--heaven's glory. The idea of the figura having the sense of "deeper meaning in reference to future things" is significantly applicable here. Heaven's future was "something" medieval man could understand, yet paradoxically, could not understand. I Corrinthians 13:12 figurally pictured man's knowledge on earth--a real "something"--to his heavenly knowledge--also a real "something:" "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." The Wakefield Cycle also illustrates this figural "something"--the Prophets speak "through a glass, darkly" for they had not the Holy Ghost; medieval man could see "face to face" for he knew the Trinity through the Holy Ghost. However, the figura continues, for medieval man knows now "in part"; but at the Last Judgment he shall know even also as he is known.

The Wakefield Cycle represents an agglutinative presentation of the main dogma of the Church, the doctrine of repentence. This presentation and its unity is accomplished through the repetition of the prefiguration theme, i.e., Abraham, Moses, etc., are prefigured by Adam, but are also a unifying figural "connection" to Christ who, also prefigured by Adam, is the figural "connection" to the Judgment Day. The figura of Christ (and the salvation which He gives) unifies the Creation and the Judgment Day into "a single apprehension of truth transcending time."[1]

Each play within the Cycle also maintains the unity of the whole. Concerning individual cycle plays in general, Hurrell states:

> Within each play, the acceptance of the idea that behind

> apparent differences of time and place there is a pattern of God-given unity, or that the separate phenomena which we call historical events or geographical locations are in no real (i.e., spiritual) sense isolated from each other, makes it possible for the dramatist to mold an artistic form out of what is usually called his use of anachronisms.[2]

Each play's action is a figura for the Alpha and the Omega; the function of Christ is shown either in its need or in its fulfillment. However, the action occurs in present action, both on the medieval stage as well as in the heart of medieval man.

Since the general relevance of the time-concept to medieval drama has been proposed, specific application to individual plays is essential to evaluate Auerbach's "connection" as an aid to help one respond to what the medieval poet stood for. Medieval man's concept of time is the main foundation for Auerbach's figura. The relevant relationship of the time-concept to four of the Wakefield's thirty-two plays will be considered. In chronological or modern historical order, Abraham occurs before Christ, The Annunciation announces Christ's birth, The Crucifixion portrays the end of Christ's earthly travail, and The Deliverance of Souls envisions Christ's attack of hell-gate. However, the actions comprise an impressive singleness of truth which surpasses temporal time and rises vertically in God's time.

In Abraham, both as an historical fact and as a presentational play, the representation of his faith is uppermost. This faith is seen both within the play's action and beyond the play's action. Abraham is historically real; however, he is a figura for God. Abraham's faith in God is so great that he will willingly sacrifice his most beloved child, Isaac, in an act of love and obedience; God's faith in man is so great that he will willingly sacrifice his Only Begotten Son, Jesus,

in an act of love and grace. The first event (Abraham's decision) attains a greater depth when the truth of God's decision (the second event) is known.

Isaac is a figura for Jesus. Isaac's willingness to obey his father, even after asking,

> Must my flesh be rent?
> What have I done?[3]

and hearing Abraham's reply, "Truly, no ill"[4] is a figura for Christ's willingness to serve God even as Christ prayed in St. Matthew 6:42: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

Abraham and Isaac (the figura) are real history first, prophecy second. Viewing an event thusly applies medieval man's concept of God-time for he was aware of the vertical levels of truth presented. As medieval man viewed the dramatic presentation, he was able to envision Christ's obedience to His heavenly Father as he saw Abraham's obedience to his heavenly Father and Issac's obedience to his earthly father. The events or understandings--Hurrell's "single apprehension of truth"--occurred together, simultaneously.

Chronologically, the events occurred centuries apart, yet Abraham and Isaac are genuine people whose lives give a "deeper meaning in reference to future things." As this study noted in Chapter IV, this idea does not mean foreshadowing: the second event, when it occurs, gives added richness to the first event and the richness occurs in present tense as one simultaneously realizes, receives and comprehends the rich depth of meaning. The role of Abraham represents the historical person, yet it is a figura for God. Isaac, historically, is

Abraham's most loved son, yet both Abraham's love of Isaac and Isaac's obedience to his father are a figura for Christ, God's only begotten Son. Both Abraham and God willingly offer the sacrifice and though medieval man visually saw only the representation of Abraham's willingness to act, he envisioned God's completed, historical, future (at Abraham's time) act figurally. This time-concept gives impetus to Abraham's oneness with God--both spiritually and physically.

The "deeper meaning" applies to a third layer within the time-concept. First, medieval man could see Abraham historically portrayed; second, God figurally portrayed; and third, himself figurally. As the beast (delivered by the angel from God) took the place of Isaac on the alter of sacrifice, so Christ (delivered from and through God) took the place of medieval man on the cross of atonement. Through this reconciliation of God with man through Christ, medieval man was redeemed. At this third level of the time-concept, medieval man endured Abraham and Isaac's torment, chose obedience, and was himself joyfully thankful for salvation. Though the Wakefield Abraham does not call the saving beast a ram, the Bible and other mystery plays do. To consider the saving beast as a ram and the ram as Father of the Lamb, is to give the figura a keen intensity of interpretation: The Father and the Son figuratively take Isaac's place as the sacrifice in the same way that the Father and Son literally take man's place on the cross.

Medieval man also saw the time-concept apply to temptation and freewill. The momentary torment one goes through in temptation is a figura whose fulfillment is obedience, with its reward and glorious joy. Medieval man saw Abraham's torment in temptation and joy in obedience; Abraham's torment is a figura for Christ's; Christ's obedience is a

figura for medieval man who shared the joy of reconciliation with God through Christ on earth, but whose divine source of eternal joy was both known and unknown.

The application of the time-concept to Abraham is unlimited. In broad, as well as specific ways, the play is a figura for the doctrine of repentence, and of man's temptation and use of free-will. In addition to general applications, the time-concept applies to specifics --all actions become specific when viewed through the figura. As Abraham and Isaac travel, Abraham tells Isaac to

> . . .have no dread,
> We shall come home with great loving[5]

which prefigures the relationship shared between God the Father and Christ the Son while Christ was on earth. The New Testament records God's words when Christ was baptised: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," and later while on the cross, Christ speaks to God in St. Luke 23:46: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Father-Son relationship prefigures the relationship between Christ and those who believe on Him. In St. John 14:2 Christ tells his followers: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

The hill which Abraham and Isaac climb in order to give the sacrifice is a figura for Calvary, the hill Christ climbs in order to be the sacrifice for man. When Abraham lays Isaac face-down in order for Isaac to be unable to see Abraham strike him, the act is a figura for God's turning His face away from Christ on the cross. Isaac's concern for his mother is a figura for Christ's concern for His mother. In fact, Isaac's life, his birth occurring after Abraham was a hundred

years old and Sarah had been barren all her life, is a figura for God's wonders, not only Christ's virgin birth but in the joyous daily reconciliation of man with God through Christ's redemptive blood. Abraham's joy in the saving of his son, and Isaac's joy in the saving of his life is shared by medieval man through his vertical time-concept.

The Annunciation action begins with God which prefigures the creation "in the beginning." The Genesis creation of man in the likeness of God becomes an umbra or shade, though real and historical, for Truth--the creation of God (as Christ the Son) in the likeness of man. Since Adam disobeyed and was cast from the Garden of Eden, God seeks a way to grant man grace because:

> For he has suffered sin full sore,
> For these five thousand years and more,
> First on earth and then in hell;
> But long therein he shall not dwell.
> Beyond pain's power he shall be laid,
> I will not lose what I have made.
> I will make redemption,
> As promised, in my person,
> All with reason and with right
> Both through mercy and through might.
> With joy we shall be reconciled,
> For he was wrongfully beguiled;. . . .[6]

God's words are both umbra and truth; physical reality and spiritual eternity; historical past, present and future, yet through the time-concept always present action. Medieval man sees Adam (the beginning of sin) and himself (the end of sin) as the objects of God's love proffered in eternal present action.

The choice of Mary, a woman, as the earthly source of salvation is prefigured in Eve, a woman, as the earthly source of sin. Satan's appearnace in guile to Eve is the figura for the "bright and fair" appearance of God's messenger, the angel Gabriel. Satan's need to hide

or be sneaky signifies his darkness and is the umbra for Christ's veritas or truth, "I am the light of the world," which is the fulfillment of the present action, the annunciation which occurs daily within man's heart.

The news Gabriel tells Mary, about Elizabeth, is the umbra for John's voice in the wilderness which preceeded Jesus, the Truth. The son whose name shall be called Jesus is the fulfillment of the umbra of the Old Testament, yet He too, is a figura for medieval man himself. Mary's wonder and doubt,

> Wondrous words are in thy greeting,
> But to bear God's gentle sweeting,
> How should it?[7]

prefigure medieval man's wonder and questions concerning the great love of God and His plan of salvation for medieval man. Mary's words of obedient faith also are a figura for medieval Christian man:

> Nevertheless, full well I know
> God may work his will below
> Thy words fulfilling.
> . . .
> My lord's love will I not withstand
> I am his maiden at his hand,
> And in his fold.
> Gabriel, I believe that God will bring
> To pass with me each several thing
> As thou hast told.[8]

In these last lines, Mary is the figura for the faithful, as opposed to the later "doubting Thomas" who had to touch Christ's scars with his hands in order to believe. Gabriel tells Mary that God will come to her through the Holy Ghost, which is the umbra for the fulfillment of truth when Jesus sends the Holy Ghost to the disciples:

> Lady, this the secret hear of me;
> The holy ghost shall come to thee,
> And in his virtue
> Thee enshroud and so infuse.[9]

God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost were present "in the beginning," long before God sent Christ and Christ left the Holy Ghost. Man's knowledge did not know this until Jesus came and was crucified upon Calvary; however, medieval man knew this and could see Truth in depth as he heard the angel speak to Mary. Yet medieval man knew only in part.

Joseph is a figura which reaches a fulfillment in doubting Thomas --he does not believe. He loves Mary, as Thomas loved Jesus, but his mind will not believe Mary:

> Should an angel this deed have wrought?
> Such excuses help me nought,
> Nor no cunning that they can;
> A heavenly thing, forsooth, is he,
> And she is earthly; this may not be;
> It is some other man.[10]

Joseph's denial of Mary's truth also has a fulfillment when Peter denies Christ, the Truth. Joseph's decision to turn from Mary,

> In future never with her deal,
> But secretly from her shall steal,
> That meet shall we no more [11]

is the umbra which meets fulfillment if medieval man turns from God. The joyous rewards of obedience and trust which Joseph knows after Gabriel speaks with him are umbra for the joy medieval man receives when he trusts, and the joy of each is only an umbra for the joyousness of heaven's bliss.

Joseph's confession to Mary and his asking for forgiveness is the umbra for medieval man's relationship with his God--man should confess his sins and ask forgiveness. And just as Mary forgave,

> Now all that ever ye said to me
> God forgives as I do thee,
> With all the might I may[12]

so God forgives medieval man, as also does Christ who lends grace, power and might for medieval man to keep until his life's end. The promise of the act is prefigured in Joseph's prayer:

> He that can quench all grief
> And every wrong amend,
> Lend me grace, power, and might
> My wife and her sweet song of light
> To keep to my life's end.[13]

In his prayer, Joseph's words again are the umbra for the coming Light of the World, whose coming is an umbra for the Last Judgment, the ultimate fulfillment. But medieval man's time-concept made him aware of all levels of truth, simultaneously. And simultaneously, he knew he did not know all levels of truth in their total depth.

The need for, as well as the doctrine of, repentance is figurally visible to medieval man in The Annunciation. The action of The Annunciation is an act important to the life of man, for through the annunciation the Alpha and the Omega were made one in man and for man. Christ left his Home in Glory to labor for man on earth. Medieval man knew the end of the action meant crucifixion on the cross for "God's sweeting"; but medieval man also knew that the cross was not the end, but a beginning. Medieval man's vertical aspect of time gave him an understanding of God's eternal present action. Mary and Joseph are genuine people who lived--had they not been historical, Christ would not have been born of Mary. At the same time they are real, they are also a fulfillment of an act begun by Adam and Eve; at the same time The Annunciation seems to be an end, it is the beginning of a fulfillment of which medieval man is an important part. God--ever changing yet ever present; Time--ever changing, yet ever present. Medieval man sensed the change simultaneously with the knowledge of the

permanence of God. The Annunciation reflects both the changeability and the permanence--it is a figura for the changing, yet ever present fulfillment.

As The Annunciation is a beginning and an end--the beginning of the reconciliation of God to man and the end of man's pain in hell. It is also a figura of and for The Crucifixion--the end of Christ's travail on earth and the beginning of His return to His Father. The Crucifixion is payment made for man's reconciliation with the Father, which was prefigured in Eden, but will not attain ultimate fulfillment until the Last Judgment. The Crucifixion, like The Annunciation, is an act completed; but in that completion no end exists, rather the reaching toward a greater fulfillment has begun. The doctrine of repentence is a beginning of an end--the fulfillment occurs at the Last Judgment. But even the Last Judgment is a beginning--it prefigures the eternal bliss toward which the whole of the doctrine of salvation theme points.

Within the action of The Crucifixion, Pilate is a figura for the ever present evil (Satan) and the results of that evil--vanity, conceit, self-exaultation, etc.--

> I am a lord, magnificent in might,
> Prince of all Jewry, sir Pilate, by right.[14]

And as Satan had followers in heaven who were cast down with him, likewise, the representatives of evil on earth have followers--Pilate's four torturers are such within the specific play. They are a figura for life where Satan strives to attain daily fulfillment (medieval man knew this fact) just as Christ's death on the cross attains daily fulfillment in the hearts of man. Adam had been a beginning to an end--Jesus is the way to that end--Satan (evil) is a way to never reach

the end.

Just as evil has not time limits, the acts of evil men know no limits. The physical tormenting of Christ by the four torturers is a figura for the spiritual tormenting of Christ by the sins of medieval man. As medieval man saw the presentation of the action upon the stage, he also knew that his daily acts helped drive the nails into Jesus; the Crucifixion was a figura which both had been and was being fulfilled. The act occurs at present in the eyes of God and the heart of Christ.

The conversation of the four torturers presents verbal evil; simultaneously, it represents the evil of verbal unconcern which medieval man knew existed. Christ's words within the play are a figura for the verbal pictures of His pain which priests and preachers were to give from that day forth. Within His words medieval man could see both the human and the Divine, and the words were aimed at both the physical and spiritual aspects of medieval man:

> Behold if ever ye saw body
> Buffeted and beated bloody,
> Or thus dolefully to die;
> . . .
> My folk, what have I done to thee,
> That thou all thus shall torment me
> That for thy sin I suffer?
> . . .
> What kindness further could I do?
> Have I not done what I ought to
> Made thee in my likeness?
> . . .
> I have shown you kindness, unkindly ye requite;
> See thus thy wickedness! Behold your deep despite!
> To guiltless death ye me consign,
> Not, man, for my sins, but for thine,
> Thus rent on rood am I,
> I would not lose that treasure fine,
> That I marked and made for mine,
> Thus Adam's blood I buy,
> That sunken was in sin,

Within no earthly good,
But with my flesh and blood
That loth was to win.
My brothers that I came to buy,
Have hanged me here thus hideously,
And friends find I few.[15]

Christ's words represent a verbal figura of instantaneousness for medieval man--he was the brother whom Christ came to earth to buy. Christ's words are also unified with God's beginning lines of The Annunciation--redemption is the plan of God for man. The tortures are the figura for the doubts that evil encourages and enlarges--even among the faithful such as Thomas. Mary's earthly concern for her son is a figura for the concern of God the Father for His only Son. Mary's verbal description of Christ's pain and agony within the play is to make the representation of the presentation of the Sacrifice more relevant to medieval man's heart. Her words do not come from the scriptures, but from the breaking heart of mankind. John's comforting of Mary is a figura for the comforting of man by the Holy Ghost--Mary was not left alone, neither is man. Longeus, the physically blind character, is a figura for man's spiritual blindness; also for the sight received when Christ is allowed to reign within man. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, in their concern for Christ, are a figura for God's concern for man, which is both a past and future act, but is also an eternal everpresent condition. By using God's time, medieval man was more accutely aware of the present action of God's love and concern. The Crucifixion is a real, historical fact whose event has intensified future actions--the action of The Crucifixion occurs now in the hearts of mankind and the benefits of the act are proffered in present, continuous action to man.

The Deliverance of Souls is a figura for a future event, which is history and is real in the eyes of God, but which church dogma states has not really happened yet--the souls cannot be totally delivered from hell until the Last Judgment. However, the Last Judgment will occur (it is a play within the cycles) and since all action is present tense in God's eyes, the deliverance has occurred. For medieval man, the play presented what he believed to be a representation of the action--Christ's victory over Satan; the victory of Lightness over Darkness; and souls, such as Adam, Moses, David, Isaiah, John the Baptist, etc., being released from the bonds of sin. Within the play, the different levels of earthly time are united--Moses who foretold Christ's coming and John who baptized Christ talk together. The battle between Satan and Jesus is a figura for the battle which is fought daily in the life and heart of man; Christ's victory over Satan is the umbra for the Truth of Christ's victory within man. If man will choose to serve Him, Jesus will take care of His own--even against the princes of hell.

In The Deliverance of Souls, the realness of the physical production of the play is a figura for "deeper meaning in reference to future things." The figura becomes the umbra of the beginning of glorious eternity in God's heavenly mansions. Satan's lack of knowledge and unwillingness to believe when he is confronted by Jesus and speaks with Him is the figura for man's lack of knowledge, understanding and unbelief.

> Thy father knew I well by sight,
> Carpentry he traded in;
> Mary, thy mother, named aright,
> The utmost end of all thy kin;
> Say who made thee wield such might?[16]

Jesus tells Satan that He is God's Son, to which Satan replies, again illustrating his lack of knowledge, understanding and unbelief:

> God's son! Nay, then might thou be glad,
> For nothing need thou crave;
> But thou has lived ay like a lad,
> In sorrow, as a simple knave.
> . . .
> Now since thou please to pass the laws,
> And boast ye be above all sin,
> For those that thou as witness draws
> Full plain against thee shall begin;
> As Solomon said in his saws [sic],
> Who that once comes hell within
> Never shall escape its claws,
> Therefore, fellow, let be thy din.[17]

Satan is defeated, but pleads that some may always dwell in hell with him. Jesus replies:

> Thou shalt have Cain that slew Abel,
> And all that hastes themselves to hang,
> As did Judas and Achitophel;
> And Dathan and Abaron, and all of their assent,
> Cursed tyrants every one,that me and mine torment.
> And all that will not heed my law,
> That I have left in land as new,
> That they may hold my name in awe,
> And all my sacraments pursue.
> My death, my rising, hold in awe,
> Who believes them not they are untrue;
> Under my doom I shall them draw,
> And judge them worse than any Jew.
> And they that list to hear my law and live thereby,
> Shall never have harm here,but wealth as is worthy.[18]

These words state conditions which medieval man must avoid, as well as naming things he must do in order to avoid Satan's clutches. Christ's action within the play is the figura for His being the "Truth and the Way."

The last lines of the play, spoken by Isaiah, prefigure the attitude and state in which medieval man should abide.

> Therefore now let us sing
> In love of Lord Jesus;

Unto his bliss he will us bring,
Te deum laudamus.[19]

The Creation is separated from the Last Judgment by centuries; however, both exist simultaneously in God's eye. For medieval man, though he saw God's time "in part darkly," he had the faith that he would see God in heaven "face to face," and understand His time fully. To interpret the Bible by use of the figura allows the Hebrew history to remain intact, yet allows an intensity of spiritual understanding of the doctrine of repentence to be visible--the beginning from Adam and Eve to the end at the Last Judgment, daily finds a unified fulfillment in the heart of man.

The application of the figura is unlimited, both in application to the Bible and to medieval drama. Through application of the figura or time-concept, the scope of sophistication of the medieval drama is deepened in width and depth. How can art (or drama) be more universal than when it unifies the complete universe including all time--both God's eternal vertical and man's earthly temporal? How can such art be considered unsophisticated, anachronistic, simple and crude, or lacking a form? Though this study has attempted to indicate a greater depth in medieval drama than considered possible by most traditional scholars, Shakespeare's Hamlet might well say to this author, "There is more depth in medieval drama than is dealt with in this thesis, bold scholar." The author firmly agrees.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Hurrell, p. 603.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Rose, p. 112.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 111.

[6]Ibid., p. 175.

[7]Ibid., p. 178.

[8]Ibid., pp. 178-179.

[9]Ibid., p. 178.

[10]Ibid., p. 183.

[11]Ibid., p. 184.

[12]Ibid., p. 185.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 393.

[15]Ibid., pp. 400-401.

[16]Ibid., p. 453.

[17]Ibid., pp. 453-454.

[18]Ibid., pp. 455-456.

[19]Ibid., p. 457.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In this study, a search has been made for an interpretative approach to medieval drama which would allow one to respond to what the medieval poet-dramatist stood for. Traditional interpretative methods applied to the drama too often have been pilgrimages in fault-finding within the drama instead of attempts to open up the drama for a clearer understanding. Religion, specifically the doctrine of repentance, was the core of medieval man--his life, his work, his art, his entertainment. Failure to give full credence to this condition is to lose proper perspective of medieval man and his activities, including his drama.

A basic conclusion which could be drawn from this study is that, though not totally wrong, the traditional interpretative approaches are far from accurate in their attitudes toward medieval drama. A second conclusion is that the application of medieval man's time-concept--the vertical God-time as explained in the figura--is a more accurate method of interpretation of the drama.

The medieval drama represents one of the longest time spans of dramatic activity in the West; those approximately three hundred years should not be cast aside as mere rudiments of modern drama. The time span was too long, the international influence was too great, and the intellect displayed was too keen for the medieval drama to be cast aside as rude, though sincere, beginnings for the Elizabethan era.

To ignore or "explain away" medieval man's totally religious disposition is to give an incorrect perspective of medieval man's life and drama. The religiously founded vertical time-concept was an important portion of the conditions which produced the drama. To ignore these facts, as the traditional scholars frequently have done, causes distortion not only of the drama, but of medieval man's design and intellect. The medieval play is as it is because medieval man's concept of the world made a harmonious unity of the dissonant and incongruous. The religious time-concept--the eternal present tense of action--created a synthesis of form and content in the drama which has not been known since--and perhaps, was not known before.

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