EVERYMAN OUT: PERSONIFICATION DRAMA AND THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the small-troupe Protestant personification interlude, between the split with the Roman church in the 1530s and the rise of the public playhouses in the 1580s. It is premised on the fact that the everyman, the representative of mankind who had been the defining protagonist of the morality play, suddenly falls away after the Reformation. Scholars have long recognized that the loss of such a mankind-figure happens at some point during the sixteenth century. I argue that it was a direct result of the changed conception of human nature in the Reformation, of which personification plays are an unusually direct bellwether. I study how Protestant playwrights consequently used personified virtue and vice to express their ideas and persuade their audiences, with a focus on John Bale in the 1530s, R. Wever around 1550, William Wager in the 1560s, George Wapull in the 1570s, and Robert Wilson in the 1580s.

I frame my discussion in terms of 'interest', which I argue is a fruitful way of understanding how dramaturgy and theology were intertwined in the original morality play. To be interested in something, in its Tudor sense, referred to being a stakeholder, an interested party in it; it also meant a 'right' or 'entitlement' to it; and an 'influence' or control over it. The everyman had made us 'interested parties' in the action of the play, in the sense of making us unexempt – and he had thereby expressed every man's own equal potential for virtue and vice. The idea that man has an equal 'interest' in his own salvation as in his damnation – an empowerment to be virtuous, or to earn Heaven – was what the Protestants fundamentally denied, and what put everyman out of English drama.

Each chapter attempts to consider the theological, pastoral, or polemical use of disinterest in Protestant drama. I also consider aspects of Protestant personification drama which seem to reverse the original 'interest' of morality drama by creating a self-enclosed play-world, to which we are primarily curious bystanders. In chapter 1, I look at the earliest play in which the everyman's absence seems a purposive feature: John Bale's *Three Laws*. I argue that its extreme binary of supernatural vice against divine virtue allowed him to express the new disinterest of sinful man in the providential process of reformation, whether personal and national. Chapter 2 turns to the personification of virtue by Protestant playwrights, and argues for a previously untheorized problem: how should virtue be embodied when the idea of 'human virtue' has been exposed as a heretical lie? Chapter 3 argues for the figure of the reprobate in Protestant drama as a precursor to later humoral character, especially those of Ben Jonson's comical satires. Chapter 4 considers the emergence of the city as an evoked *locus* in personification plays, and argues for George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* as the first city comedy. The final chapter turns to the city comedies of Robert Wilson in the 1580s, the only personification playwright to write for the public playhouses. The effect of the public playhouses on personification drama is also the subject of the conclusion.

What emerges is that the ideas which separated Protestant theology from medieval can also account for broader changes to theatrical fiction from medieval to early modern.

Contents

Acknowledgements iii
Frequently Cited Works iv

Introduction
Part I 1
Part II: Everyman's Interest 26

1. John Bale and the Problem of Evil 44

2. Personification and the Problem of Virtue 82

3. The Reprobate Fool and the Comedy of Humours 123

4. The 'Geneva Humour': Puritan City Comedy 171

5. Robert Wilson: Personification in the 'Second Reformation' 206

Conclusion: Personifications and Third Parties 220

Tables 230
Bibliography 241

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FREQUENTLY CITED WORKS

Unless noted, the dates provided for the composition of plays are those given in Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-), referred to as ‘Wiggins’, and for plays earlier than 1533, the information is taken from Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes, 1300-1580: A Reference Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Bibliographical information about playbooks comes from the *Database of Early English Playbooks*.

I quote the Bible either from the Vulgate, with Douay-Rheims translation, or from the 1560 Geneva Bible, depending on the period; this is noted in the text.

Lost plays and entertainments are cited by entry number in Wiggins. Unless noted, plays are quoted throughout from the below editions, which are not named in the notes:

All for Money

All for money (London: Roger Ward and Richard Mundee, 1578; STC 16949), with line numbers to *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, ed. Edgar Schell and J. D. Schuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

The Castle of Perseverance

The Macro Plays, ed. Mark Eccles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

The Chief Promises of God

The chefe promyses of God vnto man ([Wesel: Derick van der Straten, c.1548]; STC 1305), with line numbers to *The Complete Plays of John Bale volume II*, ed. Peter Happé (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986).

Enough is as Good as a Feast

Inough is as good as a feast (London: John Allde, [c.1570]; STC 24933), with line numbers to *The Longer Thou Livest and Enough is as Good as a Feast*, ed. R. Mark Benbow (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).

Everyman

A treatyse how t[h]e hye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature to come and gyue a counte of theyr lyues in this worlde (London: John Skot [c.1529]; STC 10606), with line numbers to *Everyman and Mankind*, ed. Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

The Glass of Government

The glasse of gouernement (London: [Henry Middleton] for Christopher Barker, 1575; STC 11643), with page numbers to *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, ed. John W. Cunliffe, volume 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910).

Hickscorner

Hycke Scorner (London: Wynkyn De Worde, [c.1515-16]; STC 14039), with line numbers to *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hickscorner*, ed. Ian Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

King Johan

King Johan, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (Oxford: The Malone Society, 1931), with abbreviations expanded, and foliation from San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS HM 3.

The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene
: *The life and repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (London: John Charlewood, 1566; STC 24932), with line references to *Reformation Biblical Drama in England: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: Garland, 1992).

The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art
: *The longer thou liuest, the more foole thou art* (London: William How for Richard Jones, [c.1569]; STC 24935), with line numbers to *The Longer Thou Livest and Enough is as Good as a Feast*, ed. R. Mark Benbow (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).

Lusty Juventus
: *An enterlude called Lusty Iuuentus* (London: Abraham Vele, [1551?]; STC 25148), with line numbers to *An enterlude called Lusty Iuuentus*, ed. Helen Scarborough Thomas (New York: Garland, 1982).

Magnificence
: *Magnyfycence* (London: Peter Treveris for John Rastell, [c.1531]; STC 22607), with line numbers to *Magnificence*, ed. Paula Neuss (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

Mankind
: *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Nature
: *Nature* ([London: William Rastell, c.1530-34]; STC 17779), with line numbers to *The Plays of Henry Medwall*, ed. Alan H. Nelson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1980).

New Custom
: *New custome* (London: William How for Abraham Vele, 1573; STC 6150), with page numbers to *Anonymous Plays: Third Series*, ed. John S. Farmer (London: Early English Drama Society, 1906).

Nice Wanton
: *Nice wanton* (London: John King, 1560; STC 25016), with line numbers to *The Tudor Interludes Nice Wanton and Impatient Poverty,* ed. Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Garland, 1984).

The Three Estates
: *Ane satyre of the thrie estaits* (Edinburgh: Robert Charteris, 1602; STC 15681.5), with line numbers to *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, ed. Roderick Lyall (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1989).

The Three Ladies of London
: *The three ladies of London* (London: Roger Ward, 1584; STC 25784), with line numbers to *An Edition of Robert Wilson's Three Ladies of London and Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, ed. H. S. D. Mithal (New York: Garland, 1988).

The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London
: *The three lordes and three ladies of London* (London: Richard Jones, 1590; STC 25783), with line numbers to *An Edition of Robert Wilson's Three Ladies of London and Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, ed. H. S. D. Mithal (New York: Garland, 1988).

Three Laws
A comedy concernynge thre lawes ([Wesel: Derick van der Straten, c.1548]; STC 1287), with line numbers to *The Complete Plays of John Bale volume II*, ed. Peter Happé (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986).

The Tide Tarrieth No Man
The tyde taryeth no man (London: Hugh Jackson, 1576; STC 25018), with line numbers to *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, ed. Edgar Schell and J. D. Schuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

The Trial of Treasure
The triall of treasure (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1567; STC 24271), with line numbers to *The Trial of Treasure,* ed. Peter Happé (Manchester: Malone Society, 2010).

Wisdom
The Macro Plays, ed. Mark Eccles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

The World and the Child
The worlde and the chylde (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1522; STC 25982), with line numbers to *The Worlde and the Chylde*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

Youth
The[n]terlude of Youth (London: John Walley, [c.1557]; STC 14111a), with line numbers to *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hickscorner,* ed. Ian Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

Introduction

For over a century before Protestant ideas gained a foothold in England in the late 1520s, whenever a playwright wanted to explore man's obligation to his maker, the causes and species of the sin by which we renege on it every day, and the path from that desperate state into redemption – exactly the questions to which Luther's movement was bringing new and disturbing answers – he had to hand an inherited template so instructive but uplifting, familiar but compelling, that it demanded to be reused. It centred on a figure representing the whole of mankind, whom I call the everyman after the most famous European play in which he appears. Sometimes he is called Everyman, Humanum Genus, Mankind, Humanity, or Man, and other times Free Will or Youth, and sometimes he is a king, or a farmer, a merchant, noble heir, or feudal retainer, or in at least one case the female-gendered soul itself. In almost every example, the everyman is tempted into a life of sin, but ends the play converted to true piety and reconciled to God through repentance. Judging by what survives from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when a playwright did not take his story from history, Scripture, or some other existing narrative, this is the story he told. The agents of the everyman's downfall or rise are a cast of trustworthy or untrustworthy personifications of moral virtues and vices – such as Charity, Pride, Humility, Lechery, Confession, Avarice – who attempt to influence the everyman as his guides and tempters respectively. They are walking, talking people, like the actors who played them and the everyman between them, but they interact with their fellows and with the audience as self-conscious agents of his (and our) salvation or damnation. They represent, simultaneously, social influences for good or evil – the spiritual fathers or good courtiers who admonish, or the clowns, gallants, or spendthrifts who mislead – and the rival potentials for good and evil latent in all fallen but perfectible men with the free will to ask God's grace. This is the predicament of the everyman and, by logical implication, of everyone watching, whoever they may be. As the banns of the earliest complete example put it, 'Þe case of oure comynge ȝou to declare, | Euery man in hymself forsothe he it may fynde'.[1]

This thesis is premised on two facts: that the everyman and his distinctive spiritual progress all but cease to appear in English drama after the English Reformation began in the 1530s, but also that Protestant playwrights continued until the threshold of Shakespeare's career to write plays of personified virtues and vices, salvation and damnation, social satire and Christian teaching. My agnostic term for these post-everyman plays of virtue and vice is

[1] *The Castle of Perseverance*, 14-15.

'personification drama'. Almost all surviving plays with personified characters written before 1530 tell the story of the temptation and repentance of an everyman. More plays dominated by personifications survive from the fifty years after 1530 than the 150 years before it, but with almost no exceptions the mould has been broken. There is no representative of mankind as a whole; or the play does not end with repentance; or the commonwealth, not the individual soul, is the focus of reformation. Virtues and especially vices continue to plot and admonish unanchored by the everyman who was once the apple of their eye and whole reason for their appearance. This thesis is the first devoted to this distinctively Protestant tradition during the half-century – between the split with the Pope and the rise of the playhouses – when it was a mainstream of English interlude theatre.

Historians of the morality play have tended to consider the loss of the everyman either as part of a hugely broad teleology about modernity, or in passing, as something more gradual and more optional than I do here. 'What does not last is Mankind,' Bernard Spivack wrote in a classic narrative of the sixteenth century morality play, because the everyman was a casualty of 'the secular revolution that separates the Renaissance from the late Middle Ages', the 'gradual displacement of the general by the particular, of the One by the Many'.[2] The religious concerns of the sixteenth century tended to play no role in narratives such as Spivack's. More recent critics have tended to overcorrect from such grandeur to more circumspect claims about diversity: 'the traditional morality conflict over a central *Humanum Genus* figure was no longer a universal choice', and '[i]n some cases, the dramatic formula centring around a *Humanum Genus* figure suits the playwright's purposes', while '[i]n other instances, […] it does not.'[3] These non-committal claims are taken from the major monographs on two of my own major themes: the English Protestant interlude, and Ben Jonson's inheritance from the moral personification play. However valuable these books otherwise are, I believe that the negative correlation between Protestantism and the everyman can support more specific and robust conclusions than those just quoted.

The morality play was already the 'reformation drama' of the late Middle Ages, shaped by moral and ethical ideas about human improvement, and the Reformation upended them. Rather than being poised between a potential for good and evil, as the morality play had implied, 'every man in himself' could now find only corruption by the Fall and *no* innate potential to earn salvation. The tripartite symmetry of the morality play – everyman between

[2] Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York, 1958), 250.
[3] Respectively, Alan C. Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (Evanston, IL, 1971), 20, and Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge, 1993), 75-76.

vice and virtue – would not accommodate the evangelical understanding of fallen man's fundamentally asymmetrical relationship to these two poles of blame and merit. It is easy to imagine that 'Calvinist' playwrights did not like the 'every' part of the everyman, with the papists or the reprobate the obvious candidates for exclusion from the universal vision, as the goats in the sheepfold of the 'visible' and 'invisible' churches respectively. Much of the material is indeed vehemently polemical, sometimes giving modern audiences an impression of uncharity. I propose to make the political and liturgical emphases of most scholarship on Reformation drama secondary to the more basic Protestant claim about salvation itself.

The reformers were making a stricter claim about human nature than that only 'some' men had the potential to earn salvation: rather, *no* man has the potential to earn salvation. Not only was an evil worthy of damnation held to control Christendom at its very root in Rome, but, more radically, to enthral human nature at the very root of every human heart. It is perhaps no coincidence that Protestant drama involves such a marked increase in the dominance of personified vices and their intrigues. It was not the plays' claim about *every*man but about man*kind*, human nature itself, to which they would have objected.

In what follows, I examine the post-everyman personification play between the propaganda drive of John Bale in the 1530s – *Three Laws* and *King Johan* – and the plays of Robert Wilson for London's commercial playhouses in the 1580s. I seek to trace a neglected canon of new experiments with old 'morality' material: especially the work of William Wager in the late 1560s (*The Trial of Treasure*; *Enough is as Good as a Feast*; and *The Longer thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*) and George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* in the 1570s, but also R. Wever's *Lusty Juventus* and Lewis Wager's *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene*, both Edwardian, and Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* and the anonymous *New Custom*, both Elizabethan.

These are the main, and sometimes mutually influential, survivals in a discrete tradition. They are doctrinally adherent to a Reformed theology of grace, but in most other respects they are more like pre-Reformation morality plays than other emerging mid-Tudor genres. They are dominated by plotting vices and moralizing virtues who expound their own natures; explicitly concerned with salvation and damnation; and set without euphemism in contemporary England, or at least return insistently to its concerns. They are dramaturgically alike, as flexible interludes doubled for re-presentation by a small touring troupes of adult players. However, these plays fundamentally alter the medieval mainstream from which they

otherwise appear to emerge, by removing or ambiguating the structure which once defined it to accommodate new polemical and theological ideas.

The phenomenon of Protestant satirists and propagandists writing for commercial troupes seems to have petered out in hostility to London's purpose-built commercial playhouses after the mid-1570s, which rapidly drew the centre of gravity of vernacular theatrical culture away from the intellectual currents of religious reform. This shift is a recognized part of what Patrick Collinson has called the 'second English Reformation' after about 1580, towards a newly 'iconophobic' attitude to artistic fictions.[4] My attention is on the half-century between these two reformations. Part of my purpose in what follows is to build on the point forcefully made by Paul Whitfield White three decades ago, that many Protestants in this early period 'recognized drama as a morally sound and profitable pastime', and to show the ways in which reformist playwrights engaged with inherited materials to give positive expression to their beliefs.[5]

My concern is with the three categories of character evidently descended from the old morality play: the virtue, the vice, and those more limited mortal characters who took the everyman's place as the objects of the personifications' influence. The first chapter concerns the most notorious polemical use of personified sin in the Reformation: Bale's popish vices, abstract evils such as Ambition and Hypocrisy who assume the identity of monks, bishops, and even the Pope himself. My second proposes for the first time that there was a problem of personified virtue for Protestants – that is, how to give virtue a human shape once the doctrine of total depravity has problematized the whole concept of 'human virtue'. My third concerns the emergence of the humoral caricature who exists to exemplify a human failing, typified by William Wager's Moros ('the Fool'), and its rhetorical utility to reflect the doctrine of predestined reprobation. The fourth chapter considers the replacement of the individual soul by the Christian community as the focus of reformation, by looking at the city as a setting in moral drama, especially in relation to Calvin's Geneva – an underrated influence on the development of Elizabethan city comedy.

This introduction is in two parts. The second will describe the *status quo ante* in morality drama before the English Reformation, describing what I understand to be the essential features of the everyman tradition and unpacking some key concepts for what

[4] Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia* (Reading, 1986).
[5] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, xiii.

follows. This first part sketches the critical context for my argument and the theatrical and historical context for my chosen playwrights.

Everyman Out

The phenomenon at the basis of my study is one which – though ironically rather downplayed and gradualized in accounts of the morality play specifically – has loomed outsize in the history of the transition from medieval to 'Renaissance' or 'early modern' (or simply 'modern') theatre. The presence of a symbolic mankind-figure seems one of the most visible and significant differences between plays in 1500 and in 1600, a seismic shift in the way that plays relate to their audience.

The disappearance, or fragmentation, of 'Humanum Genus' has been invoked in multiple critical narratives, all related and all contested: in the classic model, about the increasing 'secularity' of the stage, from universal and timeless to temporal and this-worldly, and the purported 'concretion' of character away from the abstract and typical to the verisimilar; more recently, about the emergence of 'the subject' in English drama, marked by supposedly greater interiority or individuality; in rhetorical terms, a change in plays' moral designs on their audience, from what might be called instruction to exploration, certainty to open-endedness; and in theatrical and dramaturgical terms, from a supposedly ritualistic and fully participatory theatre toward the more illusory and detached play-world of the apron stage, which sets theatre down the road toward the 'fourth wall' of the proscenium arch.[6] To express the qualitative difference between *Mankind* and Marlowe, critics have evolved various two-column ledgers with the everyman play firmly on one side: Joel Altman famously contrasts 'plays which primarily show' with 'plays which primarily ask'; Robert Potter 'acts of presentation' with 'acts of illusion'; Catherine Belsey 'emblematic' character with 'illusionistic'; and Clifford Leech 'declaration' with 'embodiment'; and Ruth Lunney has argued that early plays are capable, through multiplication of incidental details, of creating 'complicated' characters, but not the 'debatable' interiorities of Faustus or Hamlet.[7]

[6] Some of the major studies are Spivack, *Shakespeare*; David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London, 1962); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London, 1985); Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago, 1995).

[7] Joel Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Berkeley, CA, 1978), 26-27; Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 32; Belsey, *Subject of Tragedy*, 26-33; Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1986), 216; Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition* (Manchester, 2002), 129-32.

By centring those later Tudor plays which seem stuck, rhetorically and dramaturgically if not theologically, on the pre-Reformation side of these equations, I might seem to be choosing a perversely undynamic window onto these debates. My intention in keeping this focus is to study the genre which stood most obviously to change from a changed conception of human nature. I also ask whether there was a change in the relationship of personification drama to its audience once 'every man in himself' was no longer its stated correlate – and I argue that there was. Despite the apparent continuity of the personification interlude, the genre began in Protestant hands to lose the relationships between characters and with the audience which had once defined it.

A good word to express this reorientation of audience relationship to the play is 'interest'. The everyman had *interested* us, not (or not only) in the affective sense of making us unbored, but in the coercive and intellective sense of making us *unexempt*. This is interest as the opposite of disinterest (partiality as opposed to impartiality; a dog in the race or skin in the game, more than just a front-row seat), not uninterest (curiosity rather than incuriosity; passion rather than dispassion; empathy rather than apathy). If we accept the claim that we are, in some more than fictional sense, identical to the protagonist we see before us, then we recognize that we are 'interested parties', stakeholders, in the interactions we witness. This uniquely coercive method of representing us in what we see is what distinguishes the morality play from other genres even of medieval theatre – the difference between Henry Medwall's Man, in *Nature*, and his Lucres. Even more, then, it is one of the major depictive differences between late medieval drama and Shakespearean. At its very broadest, 'interest' is crudely helpful to express a very real disjunction in authorial intention and consequent effect between, say, Humanum Genus and Hal. However much we feel our sympathies or critical curiosity piqued by the latter, we are disinterested observers of him as we are designedly not of the everyman, who 'interests' us in my sense because he 'is' us. I have not seen this term used in this context, and because it has affective as well as intellective consequences for what we now call 'identifying with' a character, I unpack 'interest' more in the second part of this introduction.

Personification is, designedly, the most audience-involving kind of characterisation, in which the figure onstage speaks to us as if he were really a non-fictional force at work in our nature, history, or community. Ruth Lunney puts the case in all its intended naivety: 'the figure of Conscience in a number of plays is, importantly, "your" – and everyone's – Conscience; a Vice-figure […] offers himself as reflecting "your" double-dealing and the

practices "you" can observe in society.'[8] They represent, in Helen Cooper's words, 'principles […] in which everyone, Mankind individually and collectively, participates.'[9] It would seem that any drama premised on such participatory characters will always necessarily resist the movement to a self-contained illusionistic play-world. But what happens when 'Mankind individually and collectively' is no longer supposed to 'participate' in what is personified? This is the question which I attempt to answer, and onto which my consideration of the theology and religious politics of the Protestant Reformation will be a lens.

I intend a complementary departure from studies concerned with the audience-player dynamic as dictated by specific playing conditions. John J. McGavin and Greg Walker have considered such correlations in detail, even down to the area of a hall or street in which a spectator might be standing.[10] Stephen Orgel famously considered the reciprocal influence on the Jacobean masque of the spectating monarch, whose seat commanded the only symmetrical view.[11] (The royal spectator, incidentally, is absent from what follows, given the absence of evidence necessitating a courtly auspice for any of my case studies.)[12] Callan Davies has recently pushed back against the idea that the opening of the Theatre in 1576 was a real turning-point, rather than simply one new stopping-point for touring troupes amongst a varied host of existing ones.[13] By arguing for theatrical changes before this point, and arguing that ideas not practicalities put the everyman out, I seek to trace a rhetorical rather than spatial reorientation between play-world and audience.

Personification was one of the mainstream theatrical devices of the Tudor period, and I will not treat all uses of it as evidence of a 'morality' inheritance. I am concerned with a separate tradition to what Spivack and David Bevington influentially described as the 'hybrid' plays – those which mix personifications into existing stories from myth, legend, or Scripture, such as *Cambises, Horestes*, or *Appius and Virginia*, in which the titular historical persons and their families are influenced by personified abstractions to follow the stages of the pre-existing story.[14] These are valuable evidence of a general taste gratified by the

[8] Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition*, 138.
[9] Helen Cooper, 'The afterlife of personification', in Ruth Morse et al (eds.), *Medieval Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2013), 107.
[10] John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship* (Oxford, 2016).
[11] Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley, CA, 1975).
[12] For the debate about whether the monarch was ever an important spectator of surviving plays, see Jeanne H. McCarthy, 'The emergence of Henrician drama "in the Kynges absens"', *ELR* 39 (2009), 231-66.
[13] Callan Davies, *What is a Playhouse?* (London, 2022), 7, gives an overview of scholarship on this question.
[14] Spivack, *Shakespeare*, 251-303; Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 170-98.

enhanced ethical stakes created by a move toward generality. However, citing the already 'hybrid' Digby play of Mary Magdalene from the late fifteenth century, Merle Fifield has debunked older efforts to trace some progress of concretion from supposedly 'abstract' medieval characters (what might those look like?) through the hybrids to Shakespearean drama.[15] When the same playwright could write *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucres* in around 1500, we are clearly dealing with long-separate traditions between which dramatists would consciously choose when they felt the need. The claim is clearly untenable that personification was somehow an 'earlier' stage in the creation of non-abstract dramatic personhood.

My plays preserve the distinctive quality of the medieval morality plays in that they tell a story of essentially timeless moral problems in an essentially contemporary setting, with more or less formulaic embellishments, drawn from no prior source. The exceptional inclusion I make is of the most famous hybrid play of all, Bale's *King Johan*. My first chapter is devoted to the unique and strange kind of hybridity which *Johan* models, in which Pope Innocent III does not simply confer with Usurped Power but 'is' Usurped Power. As the impulse to personify in Tudor drama – as perhaps in all rhetoric – is always an impulse to transcend the fiction, Bale's refusal to give Innocent any time-bound historical singularity whatsoever is typical: only the King himself, the play's only character who is not 'really' a personification, seems not to realize the events are taking place in the 1530s as much as the 1210s.

Protestantism, personification, and propagation

The playwrights of the Protestant personification tradition run the gamut of John Foxe's 'triple bulwark' against the papacy, of printers, preachers, and players. John Bale, Lewis and William Wager, and Ulpian Fulwell are known to have been ordained vicars of the Church of England, as the otherwise obscure R. Wever is often assumed to have been; George Wapull may have been a clerk of the Stationers' Company; Thomas Lupton also worked in the orbit of the Company as a jobbing pamphleteer and polemicist; and Robert Wilson was a touring-troupe actor, who, like Bale, likely acted in his own plays.[16] Except for Bale, whose vicarage

[15] Merle Fifield, 'Methods and modes: The application of genre theory to descriptions of moral plays', in Donald Gilman (ed.), *Everyman & Company* (New York, 1989), 14.

[16] Biographical information for Bale is cited in chapter 1; what information there is about the rest is gathered in Mark Eccles, 'William Wager and his plays', *English Language Notes* 18 (1981), 258-62, and 'Brief lives: Tudor and Stuart authors', *Studies in Philology*

was in Suffolk, most of these men were probably based in and around London when they wrote their plays. For most of them, this is all that the archive yields. Bale's various activities have left a theatrical paper chain (see chapter 1), and we can infer that Wilson's plays were acted by Leicester's Men and the Queen's Men in London in the 1580s (see chapter 5). Beyond this my plays lack any archival record of performance, but are known only from written witnesses, usually printed – as is the norm for almost every play written in the first three quarters of the century.

Using the internal criteria which David Bevington established, we can see that these personification interludes cohere dramaturgically as they do rhetorically.[17] All of my plays were evidently written with mobility in mind, doubled for between four and eight actors and for performance in an indeterminate, probably indoor, 'place'. (See Table 1 for all plays in this tradition.) If personification drama gave ideas a human shape, one kind of play in particular gave them legs to travel: the touring-troupe interlude, calling for a small cast of players, economical props and costumes, and no scenery beyond a few doors onto an indeterminate playing space. This is not to say that they were not performed in, or indeed written for, the same settings as more elaborate and costly surviving plays; just that they were deliberately unrestricted to them. They appear to be designed for adult men, lacking the large percentage of female characters distinctive of performance by boys (which itself usually correlates with a larger cast). They are accordingly, and agnostically, grouped by Walker and White as 'great hall' and 'professional troupe' plays respectively.[18]

Touring troupes travelling under noble patronage saw a steep rise after England's split with Rome in the 1530s, as Peter Greenfield has recently summarized, and the patronage of John Bale by Thomas Cromwell has led scholars to surmise a propagandist Protestant purpose for many other troupes too.[19] All of the Elizabethan plays I will discuss have been claimed for the troupe patronised by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, between the early

79 (1982), 1-135, and Irving Ribner, 'Ulpian Fulwell and his family', *N&Q* 195 (1950), 444-48.

[17] Unless noted, I am indebted for doubling calculations to Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*. For an overview of the debate about the definition of 'interlude', from E. K. Chambers to the present, see Andrew Hiscock, 'The interlude', in Pamela King (ed.), *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Drama and Performance* (London, 2016), 241-47.

[18] Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1998), appendix 2; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, appendix A. See Madeleine Olivia Robinson, 'Dramaturgy of the anti-Catholic morality in the Tudor hall with special attention to the screen' (PhD, University of Rhode Island, 1980).

[19] See the chart in Peter Greenfield, 'Touring players and their plays before 1570', in King (ed.), *Routledge Research Companion*, 267.

1560s and the early 1580s. With the exception of Wilson's work, who was a member of Leicester's troupe, this is purely speculative, as was freely admitted by the first developer of the idea, Paul Whitfield White, and it has been noted that the surviving plays are doubled for fewer players than Leicester's Men had at their disposal.[20] Ultimately, Sally-Beth MacLean's conclusion is as far as it is safe to go: the Earl of Leicester was certainly 'one of the likeliest to use his patronage of players to promote Protestant propaganda', but if he did so it has left little trace.[21]

White has proposed a more promising auspice. Noting that *The Trial of Treasure* contains a call for white wine from a 'drawer', he proposes that many of the interludes were originally written for touring around inns and houses in London.[22] This would explain why most of the Elizabethan interludes come to satirize, increasingly explicitly, the social issues associated with the unprecedented urban sprawl and mercantile capitalism of the capital city.

Bevington long ago remarked a 'striking' correlation between the 'morality' tradition – that is, plays dominated by personification – and Tudor interludes with 'convincing evidence of popular commercial production'.[23] I believe that this has not been insisted upon enough. The most conspicuous advertisement that a play was written with mobility in mind is the doubling chart printed on the titlepage of some playbooks, showing the distribution of parts. Of the 18 plays with such charts by 1590, all 18 feature personified virtues and/or vices, 11 of them almost exclusively. They include many of my focuses in what follows: *Three Laws* (the earliest play printed with such a rubric, in the late 1540s); *Lusty Juventus*; *New Custom*; the plays of the Wagers; and *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*.[24]

Thus, when I draw comparisons and contrasts, in chapter 3, with Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (acted at the Globe in 1599), it is with a sense of some meaningful theatrical as well as thematic continuity. The humoral comedies of Jonson and Chapman were

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[20] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 62-66. David Bevington proposes smaller troupes such as the Duchess of Suffolk's in 'Staging the Reformation', in Happé and Hüsken (eds.), *Interludes and Early Modern Society* (Amsterdam, 2007), 356. This is preferable to Laurie Johnson's otherwise meticulous *Leicester's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge, 2023), 95-100, which tries to redescribe the doubling to fit Leicester's requirements.

[21] Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Tracking Leicester's Men: Patronage of a performance troupe', in White and Westfall (eds.), *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage* (Cambridge, 2002), 270.

[22] *The Trial of Treasure*, Diii[r], 824; Paul Whitfield White, 'Interludes, economics, and the Elizabethan stage', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Oxford, 2009), 566.

[23] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 10.

[24] This is not discussed in Tamara Atkin and Emma Smith, 'The form and function of character lists in plays printed before the closing of the theatres', *RES* 65 (2014), 647-72.

the first commercial stage satires on the audience's England (admittedly in threadbare continental disguise) since Wilson's *Three Ladies* plays a decade earlier, and Lupton, Wapull, and Wager before those. Andrew Gurr has established that touring across large tracts of England and Wales was the norm until at least the late 1590s even for the Chamberlain's Men, the company responsible for *Every Man Out*, as it had been for Leicester's or Cromwell's Men before them.[25]

The special but understudied relationship between Protestantism, personification, and propagation seems to me to justify a new study of what was being propagated and how. This means attending to what was being personified, and as whom.

Theology

My plays are the most explicitly reformist of the century. In the recent monograph nearest to my focus, Tamara Atkin 'employ[s] the word "reformed" to describe the beliefs and practices of those "reformers" who repudiated papal authority.'[26] By defining reform politically, as an umbrella term for all schism from the Pope, Atkin's approach is as inclusive (as 'catholic') as possible, the only common ground uniting Henry VIII and Theodore Beza. Because my focus is specifically on the morality tradition – a late medieval genre which took its plot and characters from an understanding of the human condition – I am rather narrower: I define English reformism from Bale onwards by a certain basic belief about human sin and salvation.

The doctrine which I make the baseline for all of what follows is that man has been depraved by the fall and is powerless to earn his own salvation. Joerg O. Fichte has said that the theology of the Tudor Protestant interludes is that of the canonical credal documents of Reformation England: the two Books of Homilies of 1549 and 1563, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Articles of the Church of England – first the Forty-Two of Archbishop Cranmer in 1553, and then the Thirty-Nine officially accepted by Convocation in 1563.[27] All of these are as one on the issue of man's depravity.[28] In the words of the Articles drawn up by Edward's archbishop and sworn to as a legal requirement by all of Elizabeth's clergymen:

[25] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Cambridge, 1996), 44.
[26] Tamara Atkin, *The Drama of Reform* (Turnhout, 2011), 15.
[27] Joerg O. Fichte, 'New wine in old bottles: The Protestant adaptation of the morality play', *Anglia* 110 (1992), 68.
[28] See Caroline M. Stacey, 'Justification by faith in the two Books of Homilies (1547 and 1571)', *Anglican Theological Review* 83 (2001), 255-79.

> Original Sin […] is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man […] so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated […][29]

This last sentence is the really distinctive evangelical doctrine: not only is fallen man powerless to save himself, but even when 'regenerated' by divine grace he remains, objectively, as corrupt as before. Man has, however, been given an undeserved way out of damnation. By an act of free mercy, in no way compelled by any desert of man's own, God made Himself man and died to compensate for humanity's failure. God has freely determined that those who put all their faith in Christ's sacrifice will have their personal corruption overlooked in favour of Christ's perfect merits. Thus,

> We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort.[30]

Countless passages to the same effect could be cited from every major gospeller in England, from Tyndale to Perkins and beyond. As James Simpson puts it, 'The central strand of all pre-Arminian Protestant theologies is the strenuous repudiation of human merit: in the face of God's absolute power and inscrutable judgement, human works and merit are wholly worthless.'[31] This was the Reformation's great source of comfort and excitement because, the reformers said, it relieved man of the obligation to *earn* his own salvation – with all the tormenting uncertainties of ever doing enough which that brought.

Surviving interludes follow the general pattern of doctrinal emphasis in the Church of England. The exception was Bale, whose doctrinal views were closer to those of his patron Cromwell, including explicit assertion of human depravity, as I discuss in chapter 1. In Edward's reign, such views became the orthodoxy. Carl R. Trueman has established that the emphasis of the early English reformers until at least 1548 was on justification by faith alone,

[29] Article IX, 'Of original sin or birth-sin'. The Articles are quoted throughout from *The Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford, 2011), 674-85.
[30] Article XI, 'Of the justification of man'.
[31] James Simpson, 'Unwritten virtues, selves, and texts: Early modern self-erasure', *JMEMS* 52 (2022), 415.

and that issues of predestination mainly occupied English theological minds in their exile under Mary and then after their return to Elizabeth's Church.[32] In the mid-century, during Edward's explicitly Protestant catechetical programme, *Lusty Juventus* attacks works-righteousness and promotes the doctrine of justification by faith, while Lewis Wager's *Mary Magdalene* contains passages on grace and salvation versified straight out of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (See chapter 2.) In the 1560s, interludes seem to assume a basic grounding in such doctrines already, and direct their satirical energies increasingly toward socioeconomic targets. At the same time, though teaching the Reformed theology of grace is no longer their primary object, there is no doubting playwrights' adherence to the so-called 'Calvinist consensus' in the Church of England, not least in their matter-of-fact references to the doctrine of predestination. (See chapter 3.)

By centring man's ability to earn Hell but never Heaven, I am studying a version of what Andrew Escobedo has called 'the Protestant asymmetry thesis'. Escobedo coins this phrase in the chapter on Tudor drama in *Volition's Face* (2017), perhaps the only study with a prolonged focus on the effect of the Reformation on personification, and as such a work whose relation to my own should be clarified.[33] As his book's title makes plain, Escobedo's 'asymmetry thesis' relates specifically to how the human will and the relationship of decision to action was expressed through personification. The asymmetry is that, on a Protestant model, 'the will to sin comes from us and the will to repent comes from God.' Because the will even to *want* to become better is entirely the result of predestined grace, then it follows that 'the act of repentance is the consequence, rather than the cause, of divine forgiveness.'[34] He studies Protestant personifications of Conscience and related admonitory faculties, and the way that the 'counterintuitive cause-and-effect relation' between repentance and forgiveness is staged. He claims that virtuous personifications such as Conscience no longer say 'repent so that God will forgive you', but rather 'try to repent in order to find out whether God has already forgiven you.'[35]

Escobedo grasps the nettle of predestination fully and makes an ambitious effort to trace how philosophies of the will changed the behaviour of personified virtues. He argues that mid-Tudor Protestant interludes amount to 'the most sustained example of early

[32] Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy* (Oxford, 1990), 200-1.
[33] Andrew Escobedo, *Volition's Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017); the chapter on Tudor drama is 93-124.
[34] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 107, 106.
[35] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 106-7.

Protestant moral psychology in popular literary form.'[36] However, he is forced to admit that it was not consistently sustained; he cites half a dozen examples in Protestant plays in which the more intuitive statement is made, that we should repent *in order* to be forgiven.[37] Escobedo's study is valuable but risks introducing confusing complexities to plays which aim at the greatest simplicity and directness for their audiences. Most useful for my work is his analysis of how personifications signify their names – that Pride often 'transmits' rather than 'enacts' pridefulness. This will be important for my argument that plays later in the century 'interest' us differently to earlier ones. In terms of Protestant asymmetries, however, I propose the most basic one – that human nature is vicious, never virtuous – as more helpful for studying the morality play, which was after all structured by the opposite symmetry, of rival vices and virtues with Humanity caught in between.

Plays by Puritans

I accept Paul Whitfield White's conclusion in *Theatre and Reformation* that 'puritan theatre' was not a contradiction in terms during the 1560s and 1570s, but that some playwrights – especially William Wager, but also George Wapull – seem to have been supporters of that movement whose plays respond fruitfully to that intellectual context. In what follows, and in chapter 4 especially, I use the famously chimeric word 'puritan' to refer to the protest movement against residually unreformed elements in the Church of England, and the consequent debates about the proper 'discipline' of that Church.

The prehistory of the puritan movement lies in calls for further reform of the Book of Common Prayer after Cranmer first drew it up in 1549. When the Bishop of London in 1550 included 'enterludes [and] plaies' in a list of media prohibited from 'deprauynge or despisyng' the Book of Common Prayer appointed by Cranmer the previous year – words echoed by the Bishop of Lincoln for his own diocese in 1552 – such plays are far likelier to have been proto-puritan than papist.[38] The first flareup, however, came in summer 1566 when dozens of clergymen were suspended for refusing to wear the 'popish' vestments prescribed by the Book. In 1572 Thomas Field and Thomas Wilcox were imprisoned for publishing their sensational *Admonition* calling for the abolition of the episcopate, for which the Cambridge

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[36] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 121.
[37] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 106.
[38] From the *REED* volumes for London (ed. Mary C. Erler, 2008), 4, and Lincolnshire (ed. James Stokes, 2009), 8.

divine Thomas Cartwright had gone into exile in 1570. Though my plays are largely silent on liturgical and hierarchical issues, especially the flashpoint of episcopacy, the associated political issues of church membership and the Royal Supremacy add an implicit charge to some of what is staged.

The career of the two Wagers, probably father and son, illustrates the harmony which some advanced Protestant playwrights found between their medium and their message in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. Lewis Wager is described as a 'learned clarke' on the titlepage of *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* in 1566, and, if he was the rector of St James's, Garlickhithe, of that name, he died in July 1562.[39] A William Wager was married at St James's the October after Lewis's death, and from this it has been assumed that the W. Wager known from playbook titlepages was Lewis's son, who became a playwright-vicar in his turn. (I follow convention in silently expanding the W.) Lewis may have written his heavily Calvinist play under Edward. Its famous apologetic prologue, written as if delivered by the playwright himself, records that the play has been toured 'manie sundrie wayes' to paying audiences, including 'at the vniuersitie | Yet neither wise nor learned would it dispraise'.[40] It is true that some people have 'spitefullie' objected, but Wager vehemently defends the educative value of his 'comely and good facultie' of theatre (Aii[r], 11-12) – proof that an antitheatrical prejudice existed, but also that we cannot generalize about Protestant attitudes to the honesty of playing during this period.[41]

William Wager, the most prolific named playwright between Bale and Lyly, is also the most explicitly connected with the puritan movement. A William Wager was presented to the rectory of St Benet's, Gracechurch, in July 1567; all of W. Wager's plays were printed in the next three or so years.[42] White has noted that the major play-producing inns of early Elizabethan London were close to Wager's parish, and that the first named Elizabethan actor was buried at St Benet's, suggesting a plausible connection.[43] In 1573, Wager was one of the clergymen who subscribed to the Act of Supremacy in the heat of the *Admonition* controversy to avoid suspension from his living. This was much to the disgust of Thomas Wilcox, one of the imprisoned writers of the *Admonition*, who writes at the time of 'one Wager', who 'hath many tymes bin whot [*sic*] in wordes against the Popish Regiment and Ceremonies' of the

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[39] For Lewis Wager, see White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 81.
[40] *Life and Repentance*, Aii[r], 25-27.
[41] See Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA, 1981).
[42] William Wager's clerical career is traced in Paul Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships* (Stanford, CA, 1970), 80, 162, 209-11.
[43] White, 'Interludes, economics', 566.

Prayer Book, but 'now by his Subscription hath allowed all'.[44] If this is the playwright, then his plays for London performance date to the time when he was an active espouser of puritan views, and the texts should be read with this in mind.

Further suggestive evidence ties other men with the movement. In chapter 4, I seek to build on White's conclusions about George Wapull's implicit sympathies with the early presbyterian movement. Amongst Thomas Lupton's other publications is the bizarre *Siuqila*, which has been described by Debora Shuger as a 'puritan disciplinary utopia'.[45] Oddly, the likeliest candidate to be the 'Francis Merbury' who wrote the cheerful *Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* was the puritan of that name who spent most of the later 1570s in jail for preaching against the Supremacy.[46] There is evidence for concluding that the puritans were one of the first theatrical communities in early modern England.

The Moralities and the Critics

My debt to the foundational work of Paul Whitfield White and Andrew Escobedo will by now be obvious. However, any thesis on mid-Tudor personification drama stands on ground covered earlier still by some magisterial surveys whose scope has not yet been equalled: Spivack's *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (1958) and Bevington's *From Mankind to Marlowe* (1962). Robert Potter's *The English Morality Play* (1975) is the last survey to date of the *longue durée* of the genre. These studies are much broader than mine in assuming all personification to prove descent from the morality tradition, whereas I try to avoid overdetermined conclusions about 'concrete' character emerging from 'abstract'. However, I assume some of their conclusions in what follows. Though I do not seek to revive the quest for a 'genuinely national, popular' theatre, which Bevington inherited from Alfred Harbage, I am indebted to Bevington's ingenious discussion of what might be called the moral mechanics of small-troupe drama: that dramatists used the restrictions imposed by doubling to reflect an ethical message through alternations of character.[47] This is especially valuable for the so-called 'homiletic tragedies' of the 1560s, in which the cast is split down the centre into one damned and one saved protagonist.

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[44] Quoted in H. G. Owen, 'The London parish clergy in the reign of Elizabeth I' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1957), 535.

[45] Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke, 2001), 47.

[46] T. N. S. Lennam, 'Francis Merbury, 1555-1611', *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968), 207-22.

[47] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 6; Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York, 1952).

Spivack's central contention was that the villains of the Shakespearean stage, typified by Iago, belong to the lineage of the Vice, the central comedian who dominates mid-century drama. His insight was a powerful one that there are characters in later drama who appear almost motiveless in their compulsion to evil because they are descended from an older and separate tradition of representing evil itself in loquacious human form. I decentre the Vice in what follows, and seek to clarify some new lines of descent, such as what I see as the perhaps more pressing Protestant question of how to personify virtue. This charismatic trickster has engrossed the scholarship as he did the stage, thanks especially to the most influential study since Bevington's, Robert Weimann's *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (1978). Weimann notes that as 'the allegory of *humanum genus* retreated into the background', the Vice emerged as 'the most important agent within the framework of these structural changes'.[48] The Vice makes his first appearance under that label in the plays of John Heywood in the 1520s (where he is an almost benign figure); he becomes associated after 1550 with personified evil, and with doing the bidding of the Devil; and within thirty years has become often the only 'hybrid' element in otherwise non-personification plays, such as the romances *Common Conditions* and *Clyomon and Clamydes* in the 1570s. In these late contexts the Vice has been influentially analysed by Weimann as the *genius loci* (as it were) of what he famously called *platea* staging: the indeterminate space at which the audience-world and the play-world are elided through physical mingling and direct address.

By contrast, my case studies are those plays in which the Vice is only one of many personifications (albeit the most talkative), and the *platea* convention is ostensibly preserved. I seek to add to our understanding of the Vice obliquely, by illuminating the broader schemata in which he played a role: in chapter 1, I look at Bale's Infidelity (a Vice in all but label) in relation to the scriptural mystery of iniquity and the playwright's understanding of the Antichrist; in chapter 3 I look not at the Vice but at the mortal victims whom he seeks to destroy; and in chapter 4 I examine the comedy of intrigues he anchors, in *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*.

In place of the Vice, I give a pivotal role to the Reformation, which is always elided or circumscribed in the studies from Spivack to Weimann. Bevington was attentive throughout his career to the role of Calvinist theology in the early Elizabethan interludes, but he confined his consideration to plays with an expressly predestinarian theme.[49] Spivack

[48] Weimann, *Shakespeare*, 155.

[49] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 152-69, and 'Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Nathaniel Woodes's *The Conflict of Conscience*', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank

meanwhile puts his cards on the table when he refers to Protestantism itself as, ‘depending on the viewpoint, also a form of secularism’.[50] For him, the Reformation was simply one of many sociopolitical themes, from the education of youth to the raising of taxes, which ‘narrowed’ and ‘secularized’ the universal scope of the morality by diverting it towards this-worldly controversy. A series of seminal early articles expressed this view: Rainer Pineas discussed the diversion of the morality play into a weapon to attack the papists, and Louis B. Wright examined the satire on usury, immigration, rack-renting and so on in early Elizabethan plays, arguing that it was perhaps only as a vehicle to treat ‘contemporary conditions of general interest’ that we can ‘account for [the morality play’s] survival at all.’[51] This primarily materialist stance is still reflected in the work of Ineke Murakami (below).

In what follows I contest this limitedness. The Protestant dramatists were undoubtedly writing propaganda attacking certain specific issues, but they were dealing with something no less fundamental and urgent than the old morality playwrights– perhaps even more so, given the scale of the conspiracy they believed had been uncovered. It is a well-understood phenomenon that later Tudor plays become concerned with what Spivack called ‘the jeopardy of the state’ more immediately than ‘the jeopardy of the soul’.[52] Alan C. Dessen has well described the rise of the Vice as a figure whose machinations reflect the wide reach of a particular societal evil; he refers to this by the Jonsonian term ‘public Vice’.[53] Though I do not have space to add to these in what follows, I hope also to complement studies which consider drama as an instrument of propaganda: especially those concerned with promoting the Tudor idea of the nation, politically centralized and religiously Protestant, well-addressed by Andrew Hadfield, Clare McEachern, and Cathy Shrank.[54]

Much of the most exciting work on moral drama over the last fifty years has brought what might seem a flatly homogeneous canon to life by turning the telescope around to reconstruct the originating moments of performance. Greg Walker asks ‘What did it mean, politically and culturally, to perform particular plays under particular conditions at particular

(eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2009), 704-17.

[50] Spivack, *Shakespeare*, 245.

[51] Rainer Pineas, ‘The English morality play as a weapon of religious controversy’, *SEL* 2 (1962), 157-80; Louis B. Wright, ‘Social aspects of some belated moralities’, *Anglia* 54 (1930), 128.

[52] Spivack, *Shakespeare*, 211.

[53] Dessen, *Jonson’s Moral Comedy*, 14ff.

[54] Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity* (Cambridge, 1994); Clare McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood* (Cambridge, 1996); Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580* (Oxford, 2004).

times and places?'[55] Owing to their presumed status as occasional pieces commissioned by patrons, he insists that 'particularity' is 'a feature of all the interludes, owing to the nature of their initial audiences and the playwrights' relationship with them.'[56] This valuable recovery of the preoccupations of a patron at a given moment is shown also in Suzanne Westfall's work on household drama and Fiona S. Dunlop's on interludes' specifically aristocratic concerns (both largely pre-Reformation).[57] Walker's concern with recoverable auspice and political counsel has led him to those Reformation plays which provably received a performance before a monarch or major counsellor: Bale's *King Johan*; David Lyndsay's *Three Estates*; Nicholas Udall's *Respublica*; and Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc*. Through such scholarly treatment, these early plays have come back to life in unexpected ways. With the exception of the first of Bale, my emphasis on explicitly Protestant plays doubled for touring leads me away from this canon to one not yet comparably recovered.

The chapters which follow seek 'particularity' of a different sort: not of specific performances before specific figures, but of the messages which playwrights sought to promote (or to avoid promoting) to wider audiences beyond one original moment. I have made a full synthesis of the cast lists provided in Martin Wiggins' and Darryll Grantley's catalogues of English drama, to track the rise and fall of certain personifications over time; I draw on this material in each chapter.[58] I agree with Vladimir Brljak that by these means we can make a 'distant reading' of the English Reformation.[59]

As well as comparing plays across the divide of England's split with Rome, I also seek to test certain lines of continuity between the mid-century moral plays and the plays of the public playhouses. This was typical of Spivack and Bevington, whose *teloi* were Iago and Marlowe respectively. Willard Farnham made the first really substantial modern analysis of the mid-Tudor plays, in 1936, in order to trace the development of tragedy.[60] In a trio of monographs, Dessen has clarified many of the ways in which Shakespeare and his contemporaries were influenced by the structure and forcefully simple visual tableaux of the

[55] Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1998), 6.
[56] Walker, *Politics of Performance*, 45.
[57] Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance* (Oxford, 1990); Fiona S. Dunlop, *The Late Medieval Interlude* (Woodbridge, 2007).
[58] Martin Wiggins, *British Drama, 1533-1642*, 11 vols (Oxford, 2012-); Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes, 1300-1580* (Cambridge, 2004).
[59] Vladimir Brljak, 'From Everyman to Hamlet: A distant reading' (forthcoming, *Renaissance Studies*; I am grateful to Dr Brljak for sharing this with me).
[60] Farnham, *Medieval Heritage*.

mid-Tudor plays – though, like the older critics, he does not consider these as a specifically Protestant innovation in the theatre, and is mostly concerned with the Vice.[61]

I explore one well-trodden route, to the earliest satirical comedies of Jonson – though I am perhaps more evenly concerned than most critics with discontinuity as well as continuity. The inheritance of Jonson from the moral play is especially associated with Dessen, whose *Jonson's Moral Comedy* argued that Jonson's comedies use increasingly subtle ways to anatomize the societal sin of money-love which had also found expression in the 'public Vice' of the late moral plays. Much more recently than Dessen, Ineke Murakami's *Moral Play and Counterpublic* covers the closest to my spread of topics, examining moral drama from *Mankind* to *Every Man Out of His Humour*, with a chapter devoted to William Wager. Murakami's argument is that moral drama – a broader category than just the 'morality play' of virtues and vices – actually critiqued the very power structures it appears to affirm, thereby 'soliciting and honing the judicative skills of emergent, politically active publics and counterpublics'.[62] Murakami's account is openly Marxist and has a very different emphasis to my own, though we both accept White's analysis of Wager to argue for an oppositional puritan tendency in the Elizabethan plays. I attempt to consider Protestant drama as proleptic of some of Jonson's methods of characterisation and plot, but also to argue that Jonson's humoral comedy ultimately represents the rhetorical reverse of the older personification drama, from 'interesting' the audience as stakeholders in the action embodied in the play to 'interesting' them with a self-contained cabinet of curiosities.

Murakami's work can be placed in a laudable but problematic scholarly trend to recuperate apparently didactic and monological plays – those which John Watkins has grouped together as a fundamentally 'conservative' and 'homogeneous' tradition – as secretly subverting their own certainties.[63] The roots of this reaction lie perhaps in Joel Altman's *Tudor Play of Mind*, which famously discriminates 'plays which primarily ask' from 'plays which primarily show' – those which self-expound their own moral for the audience's benefit, against those whose deliberate irresolution of complexities was, Altman argued, influenced by a 'humanist' pedagogical culture of disputation *in utramque partem*.[64] The entire morality tradition is dealt with *en bloc* in Altman's study because, by its nature, it

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[61] Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy*; *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977), 32-49; *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays* (Lincoln, NE, 1986).
[62] Murakami, *Moral Play and Counterpublic*, 3.
[63] John Watkins, 'The allegorical theatre', in David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999),
[64] Altman, *Tudor Play of Mind*, 26-27.

'primarily shows'. (Personification plays are on these grounds sidelined, and fairly so, in Maura Giles-Watson's new work on disputation in drama.)[65] Critics have subsequently behaved as though to redeem the plays from boringness they must be assimilated to a humanist Renaissance considered as basically self-deconstructing and multivalent. Though Kent Cartwright excluded my plays altogether from *Theatre and Humanism*, he has subsequently attempted to redescribe them as humanistic and exploratory; Katherine C. Little has recently done the same for pre-Reformation morality plays, as 'a symptom and product of humanism'.[66]

One of my main efforts in what follows is to make an apology for 'plays which show' on their own stated terms. They allow us to trace right on the surface a process of influence which is otherwise submerged or inferential: between religious politics and theology and dramatic genre and metaphor. We have not always asked the right questions about *what* exactly 'plays that show' were showing – and avoiding showing. I have accordingly been most influenced in what follows by those studies of personification as a device which emphasize what we might call its generosity as a medium: its power to move between registers of meaning without needing to explain itself. Foremost is Katharine Breen's *Machines of the Mind*, which indicates in its title her emphasis on personification as a tool to grasp concepts more clearly.[67]

Few metaphors stand at such clear proximity to one concept of 'the real' and such clear distance from another as the moral personification. On the one hand, there is the real world as experienced via the evidence of our senses, which tell us that concepts such as Justice do not simply hail us on the street and jostle for our attention. On the other, there are the intellective, unseen but understood, patterns which body discrete one-offs into meaningful classes – whether the Aristotelian genera and species, apprehended by abstraction from experience, or the Platonic sense of an inaccessible but nonetheless literally existent realm of transcendent forms of which all sense-experienced things are merely instances. As Jill Mann puts it, personification allegory 'assumes or implies that abstractions […] are not mere words, but reflections of Ideas that have a real, albeit supra-sensible, existence', in which 'linguistic existence' is 'evidence of their *actual* existence'.[68] Breen has recently attempted a

[65] Maura Giles-Watson, *Performing Arguments* (Leiden, 2024).
[66] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism* (Cambridge, 1999), and 'Humanist reading and interpretation in early Elizabethan morality drama', *Allegorica* 28 (2012), 9-31; Katherine C. Little, *Humanism and Good Books* (Oxford, 2023), 38.
[67] Katherine Breen, *Machines of the Mind* (Chicago, 2021).
[68] Jill Mann, 'Allegory and *Piers Plowman*', in Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 2014), 67.

classification of personification according to the scholastic schools of philosophical realism – Platonic or ‘daemonic’ personifications, ‘moderate-realist’, and so on.[69] In contrast to the mundane presentness of a table or one’s own hands, the abstractions being personified are real in something like the way that we mean when we ask ‘What is *really* going on?’

I am mostly concerned with this revelatory sense and its rhetoric – the sense, common to moralism and conspiracism alike, that a meaningful pattern has been laid bare to one’s eyes and the tools provided to tell wheat from chaff or wolves from sheep. Personification drama, which seamlessly superadds abstract concepts onto a depiction of social relations, allows the acting-out of an ideal as if it were already the truth, and a diagnosis as if it were a documentary. The rhetoric of personification drama – which made it already propaganda even before the sectarian turn of the split with Rome – was to offer an audience a reading of their world which already sounded familiar, acceptable because presumably already accepted. The common language of well-used terms – pride, charity, justice – was combined with the representational decorum of conversation between socially embedded speakers, giving apparently democratic expression to a vision of order, no matter how contentious or incomplete. In the perceptual hierarchy involved, ‘higher’ reality is understood to be more organised and orderly than man can appreciate on his personal bumpy path through the middle of it all. If, far from simply proliferating like random pixels, the inchoate details would resolve themselves into a cleaner and simpler picture the more acutely one could see the world, then the capacity for personification to organise mess into pattern should be seen as a tendency to greater realism not artifice.

This is especially relevant for drama during the Reformation. The battle against the Roman church was perhaps one for minds more than hearts – a battle to promote a new and better understanding of what God wanted – and the personification play offered above all an intellectual vehicle for ideas to be equipped for meaner capacities. We miss the excitement (which perhaps is now irretrievably lost to history) of *finally getting things right*, of new truths which repetition has not yet staled. At a time when a millennium-old heresy was being uprooted and the way to salvation shown to be both simpler and more counterintuitive than anybody had guessed, the didactic *was* devotional. (We might also say that invective *is* affective.)

This leads me to my greatest difference from much of the scholarship on Protestant drama since White: the issue of Protestant theatre’s supposedly intrinsic antitheatricalism. In

[69] Breen, *Machines of the Mind*.

2000, Katherine Eisaman Maus took aim at 'the casual tendency of many critics to conflate the Reformation with antitheatricalism – a conflation that implausibly imagines the period's unprecedentedly robust theatrical enterprises to be drastically at odds with its dominant religious values.'[70] Four years after Maus wrote, the 'turn to religion' was formally anointed as the new millennium's distinctive approach in early modern literary scholarship.[71] The critical representatives of this turn in the field of Reformation drama, while unable to deny the historical fact of its existence, have in fact doubled down on the conflation Maus cautioned against.

Tamara Atkin's recent *Drama of Reform* is typical in assuming that Protestant playwrights' theological commitments were really incompatible with their medium. As she says, 'while reformers were evidently alive to drama's ontological dangers – its potential to confuse, corrupt, and deceive – a number of surviving plays suggest that for a time drama was used to propagate an anti-Catholic agenda', especially 'using the visual resources of drama to highlight the dangerous sensuality of Catholicism.'[72] This forced the earliest example, Bale, into using 'a mode of presentation – sensual, visual, incarnational – that is remarkably similar to the Catholic practices he is most keen to condemn.'[73] This is a particularly common strain in Bale criticism. Greg Walker pictures Bale wrestling with an incarnational mode of theatre which is a 'a creature of the catholic world [he] rejects'; James Simpson describes his plays as 'designed to kill drama stone dead'; and Katherine Gillen adds 'torture' and 'contortion' to this *agon* between dramatist and medium.[74]

I am persuaded instead by the argument of Alice Hunt that Bale uses his work not just to debunk religious ceremonies but to 'recuperate their correct authority', and of Julie Paulson that, for Bale, 'legitimate rituals, like good plays, represent the truth.'[75] This alone could explain his persistence in reviving his own plays when he had the chance for the rest of his life, from Edwardian Bishopstoke and Marian Kilkenny to Elizabethan Canterbury. Other

[70] Katherine Eisaman Maus, review of Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, in *Modern Philology* 97 (2000), 578. She notes that Diehl herself is, on the whole, innocent of this conflation.
[71] Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, 'The turn to religion in early modern English studies', *Criticism* 46 (2004), 167-90.
[72] Atkin, *Drama of Reform*, 7.
[73] Atkin, *Drama of Reform*, 98.
[74] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 194; James Simpson, 'John Bale, *Three Laws*', in Betteridge and Walker (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, 109; Katherine Gillen, 'From sacraments to signs: The challenges of Protestant theatricality in John Bale's plays', *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 80 (2011), 16, 24-25: 'Bale's 'rhetorical contortions', 'tortured rhetorical manoeuvring'.
[75] Alice Hunt, *The Drama of Coronation* (Cambridge, 2008), 109; Julie Paulson, *Theatre of the Word* (Notre Dame, IN, 2019), 143.

than the banal but compelling argument that antitheatricalists don't keep writing plays, still less actually staging them, I believe that the metaphorical exuberance of personified vice in Protestant plays is ample proof of the dramatists' comfort with the form. They exploit the personification interlude's freedom to slide between different registers of meaning, including not only the gamut from abstraction to emotion to English street-realism but in Bale's case the whole span of human history too, from Sodom to Southampton (not to mention, across his surviving plays, staging all three persons of the Trinity). Few playwrights have maintained the playful, fourth-wall-forestalling conventions of the late medieval interlude with less 'iconophobic' anxiety about artifice, or proto-humanist eye to the unities, than John Bale.

The didactic small-troupe interlude, both peripatetic and homiletic, could perhaps become a dramatic parallel to the secular ministry at large amongst their parishioners. Murakami is surely right to wonder whether 'playwriting shared a devotional component with all other forms of public service in the period'.[76] In the hands of vicar-playwrights such as Bale or the Wagers, it surely aspired to a provocatively similar parochial and pastoral duty.

I wish to recover the pragmatic and demotic use made of theatre to a number of reformist ends: to combat the Roman church and clergy; to communicate justification by faith alone; to acclimatize to the doctrine of reprobation; and to call for greater discipline in English society. My four chapters take each of these in turn – and in each case the playwrights are caught having to balance difficult and unwanted implications: first, that infidelity will damn all its adherents, when Bale and other converts knew that there was a way out; second, that virtue could be personified as a man despite human depravity; third, that one might sympathise with the reprobate or worry counterproductively for one's own eternal fate; and finally that the most effective disciplinary regimes in Protestant Europe are incompatible with monarchy. In all cases the playwrights embrace the embodied medium of theatre and the flexible dramaturgy of the interlude, whose traditions they actively advance and innovate: theatre *per se* is in all cases the opportunity, not the problem. This is symbolised by the fact that in reformist hands the satire on vice – the most kinetic and embodied aspect – becomes more variegated and knockabout than ever. Rather, the need to control the medium accompanies their embrace and adaptation of a form once importantly used to communicate a very different understanding of man's spiritual situation, that of the morality play.

[76] Murakami, *Moral Play,* 7.

Introduction, part II:
Everyman's Interest

Inevitably, as a very recent meta-analysis of literary-historical writing warns, 'any starting point presumes the existence of a previous period […] represented as in some ways more homogeneous simply in order to display the variety that emerges from treating the chosen period in greater detail.'[77] The newest assessment of the pre-Reformation morality play has swung entirely the opposite way, concluding that 'there is no such thing as a medieval morality play' but only unalike one-offs bound by a *post hoc* umbrella term.[78] I should thus defend what I see as a remarkably coherent late medieval tradition, unifying almost all surviving personification drama before the split with Rome in the 1530s. The remainder of the introduction has an argumentative and apologetic purpose. I argue for a unified canon of everyman plays which taught a particular 'unreformed' understanding of human merit. I then argue for the complex of relationships between the everyman and the personifications, and between them both and the audience, in terms of 'interest', a word with both fictive and theological connotations for the eventual Protestant departure from the morality form.

The Everyman Tradition

I assume that the following constituted the everyman tradition in England: the fragmentary *Pride of Life* (perhaps Anglo-Irish and maybe as early as the late fourteenth century); the three East Anglian 'Macro' plays, *The Castle of Perseverance* (early fifteenth century), *Mankind*, and *Wisdom* (both c.1460s); *Everyman* (printed in the late 1510s, a translation of the Dutch *rederijkers*' play *Elckerlijc*, of the 1480s); Henry Medwall's *Nature* (perhaps c.1500); *Youth* (c.1510-15); *Hickscorner* (c.1514-16, when it was printed); *The World and the Child* (written in the London area, probably in the two decades before it was printed in 1522); John Skelton's *Magnificence* (usually dated to the late 1510s); and John Rastell's *The Nature of the Four Elements* (an adaptation of *Nature*, written not long before it was printed in c.1519).[79] My claims about the everyman tradition in what follows are made about all or most of these ten plays. (See Table 2 for a list which also includes possible lost examples.)

The only late-medieval performance record of what sounds like an everyman play is unlikely to be any of these: a 'ludus de Mankynd, et alii ludi' in East Retford,

[77] Stefan Collini, *Literature and Learning* (Oxford, 2025), 62.
[78] Katherine C. Little, *Humanism and Good Books* (Oxford, 2023), 39.
[79] The dates are those given in the modern editions in the Frequently Cited list.

Nottinghamshire, mentioned in a will of 1499.[80] This hints tantalisingly at a parochial life for plays on this theme, suggested also by the surviving play of *Mankind*, which riffs on various local Cambridgeshire villages and personalities and was presumably acted in that area; multiple venues have been proposed, from innyard to chapel.[81] Some auspices for the other survivals can be inferred. *Castle*, as is well-known, was seemingly performed outdoors between a complex of scaffolds with the titular castle at the centre. *Everyman* may have been a closet translation of an acting text, though it has been shown to perform powerfully in its own right. The remainder seem to anticipate performance in a 'great hall', with the following candidates speculated by modern scholars: *Wisdom* in the household of the abbot of Bury St Edmunds; *Nature* for Archbishop John Morton at Lambeth Palace, where Medwall was chaplain; *Youth* for the Earl of Northumberland's household in Yorkshire; *Hickscorner* for the Duke of Suffolk's in London; *Magnificence* in a London guildhall, perhaps the Merchant Taylors'; and *Four Elements* may conceivably have been revived on Rastell's own purpose-built stage at his house in Finsbury.[82]

Based on the paucity of performance evidence relative to the mystery cycles, John Wasson claimed long ago that 'morality plays were never part of the mainstream' of fifteenth-century drama.[83] An edited collection was published to answer this challenge by emphasizing the English survivals as one corner of a thriving patchwork of moral personification drama across late-medieval western Europe.[84] I do not have space to engage with this debate here. I will only note that most of the English survivals seem deliberately designed to enable an indefinite afterlife in performance. They are either designed for subsequent small-troupe performance, through doubling (see Table 1) and flexibility of staging; have had touring claimed for them; or claim touring for themselves, in the

[80] Discussed in Alexandra F. Johnston, 'The audience of the English moral play', *Fifteenth Century Studies* 13 (1988), 292.
[81] Summarized in *Everyman and Mankind*, ed. Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen (London, 2009), 29.
[82] See respectively Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion* (Chicago, 1989), 109-13; *The Plays of Henry Medwall*, ed. Alan H. Nelson (Cambridge, 1980), 3; *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. Ian Lancashire (Manchester, 1980), 27-30, 33-34; John Skelton, *Magnificence*, ed. Paula Neuss (Manchester, 1980), 42-43; Maura Giles-Watson, 'John Rastell's London stage: Reconstructing repertory and collaborative practice', *Early Theatre* 16 (2013), 174.
[83] John Wasson, 'The morality play: Ancestor of Elizabethan drama?', *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979), 210.
[84] Donald Gilman (ed.), *Everyman & Company* (New York, 1989), framed as an answer to Wasson in David Bevington's foreword, 4.

implausible case of the seemingly untourable *Castle*, whose banns nonetheless imply presentation in multiple towns.[85]

In the longest-running tradition, the everyman is identified explicitly as a representative of humanness itself. This is the tradition of Mankind in *Castle* (‘Humanum Genus’) and *Mankind*; Man in *Nature*; Humanity in *Four Elements*; and Everyman himself. James Paxson has distinguished such figures from the surrounding personifications of Pride or Humility by calling Mankind an ‘isotype’, a term from statistics indicating that a collective is represented by a member ‘ontologically identical’ to the other members, such as a fleet by a single ship.[86] In other cases, however, the everyman *is* a personification, but always of a faculty which all humans possess alike: life itself (the King of Life in *Pride of Life*); the soul (Anima in *Wisdom*, vicariously corrupted by her separately personified faculties of Mind, Will, and Understanding); free will (the protagonist of *Hickscorner*); or an age in the human life-cycle (the title character of *Youth*, or the protagonist of *The World and the Child*, who runs the gamut from Child through Manhood to Age in the brief space of the play).

The significant characters of the morality play form a structure of mutual relations, both between one another and the audience, in which the audience themselves are represented in the play they watch. A figure representing mankind must choose between trustworthy and untrustworthy influences, with damnation or salvation the explicit, if initially underappreciated, stakes. These companions and admonitors are almost always personifications of the moral vices or virtues of which ‘every man’ is capable. The basic arc too is repeated: the everyman heeds the vices and falls into sin and sometimes worldly disgrace, before being converted to repentance and a new life by the virtues. Usually he begins in easily influenced innocence, still ‘[o]f synfull ded and thought / all innocent’ but able to ‘do what I wyll / be yt euyll or well’ as Medwall’s Man describes himself (*Nature*, b2[r], 384; [a3][r], 224). Sometimes, however, he is already estranged from God (*Pride of Life*, *Youth*, *Hickscorner*). Sometimes he falls into sin after his first repentance and must repent

[85] Even *Wisdom*, which demands complex costuming and six mute dancers besides its six speakers, has been claimed as ‘adaptable for most kinds of playing’ in Donald C. Baker, ‘Is *Wisdom* a “professional” play?’, in Milla Riggio (ed.), *The Wisdom Symposium* (New York, 1986), 86. On *Castle*, see Alexandra F. Johnston, ‘Parish playmaking before the Reformation’, in Oliver Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds.), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington, 2006), 326-27.

[86] James Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge, 1994), 46. This term has been adopted for the morality play by, for instance, Charlotte Steenbrugge, *Staging Vice* (Amsterdam, 2014), 28.

again (*Castle*; *Nature*). The underlying constant is the movement from vice-encouraged sinfulness to virtue-advised repentance, which I refer to as the 'morality structure'.

By a long-recognized irony, the play which gives me my catch-all term for this tradition, *Everyman*, is the only translated morality to survive and the least representative of the insular tradition in its narrative and characters.[87] It dramatizes, not temptation or confirmation in sin, but progressive disillusion on the road to true repentance, as Everyman finds out whom he can and cannot trust. However, this unique irruption from a foreign tradition with its own conventions only heightens how consistently pre-Reformation Anglophone playwrights maintained the structure I am considering.[88]

I follow Kent Cartwright in excluding the three 'wit plays' – John Redford's *Wit and Science* (c. 1540s); the anonymous *Marriage of Wit and Science*; and Francis Merbury's *Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* (c.1570s) – from the morality play tradition, as a separate self-contained phenomenon with their own rules.[89] Redford and his followers transfer the everyman's fall into sin, and eventual salvation through repentance, metaphorically to a pedagogical conceit about Wit's progress toward learning. No everyman is put, even figuratively, through any of these school-plays' chivalric conceits – a quest or a fight with a monster, with the hand of a lady in marriage as the reward.[90]

An important part of the 'isotype' tradition, but under the singularly different conditions of James V's Scotland in the midst of the Reformation debate, is Sir David Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates*, acted in Fife in 1552 and Edinburgh in 1554, whose first part traces a morality structure of the sin and repentance of King Humanity. Though I sometimes make reference to *Three Estates* when King Humanity epitomises a quality of the everyman, I do not have space to do it justice here. The only Scots example and the most French-influenced, it is also a unique case of a theologically conservative play of protest against the papal Church. In many respects it is the 'Reformation drama' *par excellence*, and has been well studied in this context.[91] However, Greg Walker has recently traced its close alignment 'not with John Knox and the protestant exiles' but with a reforming party within

[87] See among many others Katherine C. Little, 'What is *Everyman*?', *Renaissance Drama* 46 (2018), 1-23.
[88] For the European *Elckerlijc* tradition, see John J. Parker, *The Development of the Everyman Drama from Elckerlyc to Hofmannsthal's Jedermann* (Doetinchem, 1970).
[89] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism* (Cambridge, 1999), 55-56.
[90] On mid-Tudor Protestant quest narratives in verse, see Marco Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser* (Cambridge, 2012), 97-116.
[91] See especially Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1998), 117-62.

the Church led by the Erasmian Archbishop of St Andrews, James Hamilton.[92] In its personification of Chastity, its advocacy of the 'deids of mercie', and implicit denial of human depravity – Humanity describes himself as '*Tanquam tabula rasa*', like a blank slate – the play's piety is clearly traditional.[93] Perhaps Lyndsay joined a reformist drama about Scotland's social estates with an everyman play, about Humanity itself, to safeguard an 'unreformed' understanding of human nature against any unwanted implications from his far-reaching political programme. We might say that he pins the blame for Christendom's troubles on the greed, rather than the creed, of the Roman Church.

The everyman endures beyond the early sixteenth century as a sign that something unreformed is going on. The closer that plays after the English split with Rome approach to the everyman formula, the cloudier, or more downright 'Catholic', the confessional context. As we see from Table 2, the only everyman plays datable after the Reformation are in very suggestively unreformed contexts. The only character named 'mankind' in a play from Reformation England appeared in a now-lost play due to be acted at the courtly revels of Christmastime 1553, the first of the Catholic Queen Mary, centring on Genus Humanum, with virtues and vices blending the personal (Reason, Self-Love) and political (Plenty, Scarcity).[94] Much later, the Soul, a pilgrim, is judged by a divine tribunal, including the Four Daughters of God and his own Conscience, in the manuscript play *The History of Purgatory* (c.1600-39), perhaps by Robert Owen, a clandestine Jesuit operating in the Welsh marches.[95] This rare survival from the recusant counter-Reformation is the first English appearance of 'the soul' as protagonist in a play since *Wisdom*.

Merle Fifield's survey of continental analogues shows that the English morality was exceptionally consistent (not to say insistent) in its picture of everyman's repentance and salvation – even if only by the skin of his teeth.[96] French *moralités* since the fourteenth century had not baulked at showing part of their cast finally damned to Hell, and sometimes even their protagonist. This is true even when he is called Chascun ('Each One'), who sees

[92] Greg Walker, 'Blurred lines? Religion, reform, and Reformation in Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*', in Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (eds.), *Staging Scripture* (Leiden, 2016), 42-67. For Lyndsay as Hamilton's fellow 'Erasmian Catholic humanist', see Flynn Cratty, 'Archbishop Hamilton and Catholic reform in pre-1560 Scotland', in William Ian P. Hazlitt (ed.), *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland, c.1525-1638* (Leiden, 2021), 53-55.

[93] *Three Estates*, Q2[r], 3540-41; Biiii[v], 225. On my count, Chastity was only personified in England in pre-Reformation plays.

[94] Wiggins 250; known from Revels Office accounts.

[95] Wiggins 1408.

[96] Merle Fifield, 'Methods and modes: The application of genre theory to descriptions of moral plays', in Gilman (ed.), *Everyman & Company*, 7-74.

the error of his ways too late in *La moralité du lymon et de la terre* (c.1500).[97] It is only in plays associated with the early puritan movement of the Protestant Church of England, by the London vicar William Wager in the 1560s, that the centuries-old European device of a hell-bound protagonist enters English drama. By contrast, the consistency of the fall-and-repentance theme across a century of insular pre-Reformation plays had amounted to an unusually stable and single-minded focus upon human potential.

My emphasis on a combination of character and structure leads me to elide a distinction which has been found important in other studies, between those ‘isotypes’ explicitly identified as representing humanness and those which represent a more specific concept. Some influential accounts accordingly trace the decline of the ‘humanum genus’ tradition to the small-troupe interludes to as early as 1500, alleging that a protagonist such as Youth proves that the once-universal scope of the morality was already being particularized.[98] While I concede that there was much diversification, I believe this argument from specificity to be mistaken.

We read against the grain of the morality plays if we attempt to interpret the hero of *Mankind* as being just, as one old account called him, ‘an English farmer’; Youth an adolescent heir; Humanum Genus and Manhood feudal retainers; or Everyman really ‘Every-Merchant’.[99] Each of these estates contributes a readily understandable metaphor about the human condition: the farmer, every man’s need to work (a scriptural if not sociological fact); the youth, man’s complacency; the retainers, man’s service to man rather than God; and the merchant a rich lexicon of property and liabilities, as well as a general satire on money-love, which unifies almost the entire personification tradition until the end of my period. The mankind-figure is not a prodigal son disgracing his family: we are never shown any parents, siblings, or friends to whom he must be reconciled; he may commit offstage robberies but he is never called on to apologize to his victims; he never seeks pardon from a king or magistrate. The virtues urge him only to make amends to God. As Robert Potter says, ‘[t]he medieval morality plays are a single act, variously celebrated’, that of repentance for sin.[100] This is why Youth’s youthfulness is never mentioned after his conversion; he has exchanged an immaturity of which any age can be culpable for a maturity which has nothing to do with

[97] Fifield, ‘Methods and modes’, 26-27, 42.
[98] Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York, 1958), 207.
[99] Mankind is thus characterized by Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy* (New York, 1943), 58; Everyman by Richard A. Ladd, ‘“My condicion is mannes soule to kill”: Everyman’s mercantile salvation’, *Comparative Drama* 41 (2007), 57-78.
[100] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 57.

age. It is, perhaps, a sign that something a little different is going on in *Lusty Juventus*, R. Wever's Protestant adaptation of *Youth*, when Juventus uses his final speech to the audience to single out '[a]ll you that be yong, whom I do now represent'.[101]

The clearest case of a specific estate translating to a metaphor for the human condition is that of the everyman as king. The most peripheral to the everyman tradition is Skelton's King Magnificence, who personifies a specifically noble quality of magnanimity and comes closest to lacking the overt generality of the others I have named. However, Magnificence ends the play by undergoing a generic trajectory of sinfulness and repentance which reanalyses his kingship into a symbol for human pride before a fall, like the King of Life before him. The royal protagonist of *The Pride of Life* – attended by his courtiers Mirth, Health, and Strength, and eventually slain by Death – is, in Willard Farnham's words, 'not so much the abstract of all kings as he is the abstract of all men so far as they take regal pride in their physical powers', before such complacency is shattered by death.[102] Likewise, the final agents of downfall and regeneration in Skelton's play are Despair and Good Hope rather than anything specifically courtly. Walker has noted a near-complete absence of governmental specifics in *Magnificence*. The generic temptations of boozing, womanizing, and general lassitude familiar from all other moralities are replicated, in a royal household which seems to lack the organs of Privy Council or Parliament which would allow Skelton's satire on human weakness to double as actual political commentary.[103] Such a balance was typical of the morality plays' studied refusal to compromise the everyman's significance. Skelton's king especially shows the reciprocal importance of the structure of fall and repentance – clearly an established motif by the time of *Magnificence* in the 1510s – to bring out the general significance of a protagonist who begins in a seemingly more limited register.

Human-Interest Drama

[101] *Lusty Juventus*, Fi[r], 1141.
[102] Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley, CA, 1936), 186.
[103] Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1991), 64.

To understand how the dynamic of personification drama – both between the characters and between the play and the audience – would be altered by the loss of the everyman, it is important to get straight what the effect of the everyman originally was.

All late-medieval interludes, whatever their subject, forestalled any sense of separation between play-world and audience through direct address, topical or local innuendo, and even physical jostling. The presence of watching men and women in the 'place' is never ignored. T. W. Craik says of the Tudor interlude form that '[e]veryone was in the play' – what David Mills metaphorically calls 'a theatre in the round', in which the play-world encompasses the audience.[104] If so, then those plays in which 'everyman' was also the protagonist represent a special symbolic union of medium and message. It is not quite like the unusually metatheatrical joke of A and B in Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres*, the nameless jobbers coming out of the mêlée in the banqueting hall to discuss the forthcoming play, and resolving to join the action to find employment in the play-world. In the morality play, the pretence (a better word than illusion) is always sustained that the men we are seeing 'are' fundamental qualities in human nature whose familiarity with us logically needs no explanation. There is a special sense of reality not suspended but heightened, or unmasked, when the man passing between the tables or through the screen doors, in and out of the nearby spectators whom he freely addresses, reveals that he 'is' Pride or Charity, or some other quality operative in the human community before, during, and after the entertainment. By virtue of the morality plays' subject, their dramaturgy and ethical purpose come together in a unique way.

The morality play was the interesting drama of late medieval England, in its then-commonest sense of *interesse*, 'the relation of being legally concerned or having part (in the ownership or possession of anything)', and thus any 'concern, part, share'.[105] According to the *OED*, to 'interest' in the familiar modern sense of attracting curiosity, of 'being found interesting', is an early eighteenth-century usage, and to be 'interested' in one's 'interests', in the sense of being 'curious about or intellectually engaged by' one's 'hobbies' or 'passions', is later still.[106] These affective senses are very important, of course, and refer legitimately to many ways in which drama can bid for and gratify our attention. (They are no more

[104] T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester, 1958), 26; David Mills, 'The theatres of *Everyman*', in John A. Alford (ed.), *From Page to Performance* (East Lansing, MI, 1995), 131.
[105] *OED*, 'interess', n. 1a, 1b (pub. 1900).
[106] *OED*, 'interest' v. 5a (earliest citation 1713); 'interested', adj. 4 (earliest 1777); 'interest', n. 1.7 (earliest 1770; all entries rev. 2024).

anachronistic than those Georgian Frenchisms ‘morality play’ and ‘personification’.) However, unless very clearly noted, I only use ‘interest’ and its cognates in its more specialized – and more Tudor – senses of entitlement, entanglement, or control. I never use ‘disinterest’ in the inaccurate colloquial sense of ‘uninterest’ (‘boredom’ or ‘inattention’). I will sometimes use it as a transitive verb, something a play does *to us*. I hope that this has a productively defamiliarizing effect.

The wellspring of the word was the Latin *interest*, ‘it is in between’ or ‘of concern’. As Sir Thomas Elyot translates: ‘it pertaineth to me, the, hym, &c. also it maketh matter […]. Sometime it signifieth to be in the myddes.’[107] It thus refers to various sorts of involution, of taking part whether spatially or contractually. The infinitive *interesse* became a noun for right or entitlement in medieval Latin, whence the Anglo-Norman legal term, of which ‘interest’ became the dominant spelling. The word is rife in parliamentary acts, its synonyms proved by the familiar polynomials of Tudor government: ‘right and interest’, ‘right, title, interest, use, possession’, and so on.[108] A look through *EEBO* for the sixteenth century shows ‘interest’ far exceeding its legal sense of entitlement to become a metaphor for various forms of mutual involvement, both personal but importantly also by proxy. ‘[W]hen the head is hurt, all the members haue interest in the greefe with him,’ one Elizabethan divine wrote; ‘neyther can the head heale the rest, if first hee haue not full cure of his owne greefe.’[109]

Thus from its first emergence, *disinterest* is one’s relationship to somebody else’s problems. ‘It is a pleasure vnto mee,’ Florio’s Montaigne says in the *OED*’s earliest citation, ‘to be disinteressed of other mens affayres, and disingaged from their conten[t]ions’.[110] These may of course be contemplated with great avidity (what would later be called great ‘interest’, in our more familiar sense), but from a certain remove. The everyman was designed to forestall any such remove by making sure that the play ‘pertaineth to me, the, hym &c.’

I will draw out three ways of being interested which, I argue, interlock in the morality play: that of our identity with the protagonist; of the influence or control wielded by the virtues and vices; and of having some potential ‘title’ to both salvation and damnation alike.

I have already quoted the banns of *The Castle of Perseverance*, that ‘Euery man in himself’ may find the ‘case of our comynge’, through attention to our own better and worse

[107] *The dictionary* (London, 1538), Lii^v.
[108] See (at random) the acts of Mary’s final parliament (London, 1558), Aii^r-v, [A4]^r.
[109] *A form of Christian pollicie*, trans. Geoffrey Fenton (London, 1574), M^r.
[110] *Essayes* (1603), quoted in *OED*, ‘disinteressed’, adj. 1 (pub. 1896).

impulses and reflection on our place in the universe. There has been emphasis in recent scholarship on the fact that supposedly ‘elite’ auspices, such as the banqueting halls of noble houses, would in fact play host to quite a varied and unpredictable audience, not unlike the ‘souerens þat sytte and […] brothern þat stonde ryght wppe’ addressed at the start of *Mankind*.[111] Making Mankind the protagonist, or some necessary faculty of humanness, is intended to ensure that a play addressing audiences no matter how geographically or socially disparate will be of concern to every individual. Each of us is the interested party in the everyman’s case.

Twenty-first century audiences and readers might characterize their feeling toward a fictional character as one of ‘identifying with’ them, or not. Thus, John J. McGavin and Greg Walker assume that audiences of the York pageant of the Crucifixion were intended ‘to identify vicariously with the efforts, pains, jibes, and squabbling of the soldiers’ as they go about nailing Christ to the cross, with an informal sense of just another job to do which we might all find familiar.[112] In a recent enquiry into the word, Rita Felski describes identification as ‘an affinity that is based on some sense of similarity.’[113] As she observes, ‘[t]o identify with something is not to be identical with it; we are talking about the rough ground of resemblance rather than pure sameness.’[114] However, identity is precisely what morality plays require us to accept: that we are in some literal sense ‘identical to’ the protagonist. Whether or not we feel any sense of personal identification *with* him, we are asked to identify that, in a sense, we *are* him. This recognition, prior to any affective relationship of identification, is what we might call the price of entry to the fiction. In theory, the everyman pre-empts any impulse we might have to self-exempt from the play’s implications.

It seems to our critical sensibility ripe for deconstruction or resistance that all people should be ‘represented’ – a very contested and politicised term in a modern context – by one well-off and privileged man, or indeed by a male person at all. (Not to say, of course, a baptised Christian.) However, the original logic is surely recoverable. I have already argued that specific estates can yield strong metaphors for the whole human condition. More

[111] *Mankind*, 29; John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship* (Oxford, 2016), 52-64; Peter Greenfield, ‘Touring players and their plays before 1570’, in Pamela King (ed.), *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Drama in Performance* (London, 2016), 261-62.

[112] McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, 8-9.

[113] Rita Felski, ‘Identifying with characters’, in Amanda Anderson et al, *Character* (Chicago, IL, 2019), 79.

[114] Felski, ‘Identifying’, 80.

important than that, *every* person has a social estate. To bring a man into the playing space who had or acquired no estate whatsoever, or somehow all of them, would be to represent nobody at all. John Bale knew this and made a polemical weapon of it. To monster the papists in the 1530s, he dressed Sodomy not simply as a monk but 'lyke a monke of all sectes' – wearing a motley cassock of the different orders – and Idolatry not just as a witch but a gender-swapping witch who 'somtyme wert an he'.[115] In Bale's play, these vices are the adversaries specifically of the Law of Nature. To be particoloured or chimeric in these basic ways is to be unnatural – quite literally unkind – and had no place in a play which sought to offer stable and strengthening truths about human*kind* to fellow labourers under that burden.

M. C. Bradbrook probably spoke for many when she claimed that 'from the spectator's point of view what was to be rejected overtly was the enticing of […] the Vice', but 'what was rejected covertly was his dull, simple dupe', the everyman.[116] It is an understood feature of the morality play that the characters with the most malign intentions are always the ones who make the most engaging effort to entertain us. The carnival spirit of inversion and misrule implicit in such invited affinity with evil has been much studied.[117] However, engaging tricksters are not all made alike, and the cheerfulness we might share with Richard III at his successful wooing is not the same as our preference for Sensuality over Reason in *Nature*. No account of the entertainment value of the morality play can afford to ignore the deceptively technical and unentertaining form of 'interest' which sets it apart as a genre. We recognise our unique kind of complicity with the vices when we remember that we are siding emotionally with the plotters in their plot *against ourselves*, in which, moreover, we can see full well that the plot consists in an attempt to win over the everyman by the very same appeals to ease and recreation by which we feel won over. In the morality play, our sympathy with the devil was a theatrical model of self-destruction: of working against our own best interests.

One of the most important derivations of *interesse*, which modern English has almost entirely lost, encompasses the central power dynamic of the morality play: that of having influence or control over something or somebody.[118] This idea is most nearly preserved now

[115] *Three Laws*, G^{v} ('The apparellynge of the six vyces'), Biii^{v}, 425.
[116] M. C. Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (London, 1962), 129.
[117] See Stanley J. Kahrl, *Traditions of Medieval English Drama* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1974), 99-120, and Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (Baltimore, 1978). It is especially a theme in scholarship on *Mankind*, such as Douglas W. Hayes, *Rhetorical Subversion in Early English Drama* (New York, 2004), 27-43.
[118] *OED*, 'interest', n. 1.3a: 'Ability to affect a person or thing; esp. power to sway […] with regard to actions, decisions, behaviour, etc.'

in the 'controlling interest' which a majority shareholder has in a company, though there the power is executive with none of the negotiations and subliminal finagling permitted by the old sense. Interest applies to any form of non-physical purchase upon another person, including the manipulative (a briber or blackmailer, for instance) and even the zodiacal: Saturn has 'a gret interest in malancoli men,' according to the physician Andrew Boorde, and 'an interest in the clargi or spirituallte for he enducithe diugnite [*sic*] pontificalnes polyce and ingeniousnes'.[119]

This was the commonest poetic use of 'interest' in the fifteenth century, judging from the *Middle English Dictionary*: to attribute the government of human behaviour to abstract vices and virtues – and thereby subtly to personify them. 'Fortitudo had non interesse | Geyn vicious lyuyng to make resistance,' as Lydgate wrote in *The Fall of Princes*.[120] When a century later the evangelical preacher Thomas Becon admonishes us to 'suffer no synne to reygne in thys our mortal body, […] t*ha*t ne[i]ther Satan nor the world, nor yet the flesh, may haue ony interest in vs,' he was using a time-honoured way of referring to the directive power which we surrender to these many hidden claimants upon our soul. He could also be summarizing the banns of *The Castle of Perseverance*.[121]

Personified virtues and vices are defined in the morality play by their efforts to have the controlling interest in the everyman, and logically therefore in all of us. 'What,' exclaims Sensuality in *Nature*, 'haue I none intresse | As well as reason / or innocency[?]' ([a3]^{v}, 1.169-70). In the ceremony which opens Medwall's play, Lady Nature entrusts Man above all to Reason, his 'chyef gyde' (a2^{v}, 103), and his nurse Innocency, and gives Sensuality only a subordinate stewardship. The latter objects hotly that in fact he ought to have the superior 'intresse' in Man, for 'yf reason tykyll hym in the ere' Man will never meet with worldly success ([a4]^{r}, 208). Lady Nature replies 'A rome shall ye haue / no man sayth nay | But reason must be preferred euermore', as God has ordained (212-13). Sensuality will of course usurp Reason's 'rome' by going behind Nature's back and appealing to Man's desire for ease and promotion, setting the narrative of fall and repentance in train.

Personified virtues and vices do not simply epitomise their names through exemplary behaviours, as an exceptionally slothful, avaricious, charitable, or humble person. If a character called Melancholy were to appear in a morality play (which he never does), he

[119] *The pryncyples of astronamye* (London, [1547?]), [B6]^{v}-[7]^{r}.
[120] *The Fall of Princes* 7.1259; quoted in *MED*, 'interesse', n. 2.
[121] *An inuectyue* (London, 1543), [A6]^{r}.

would not need to comport himself like a melancholic at all – and indeed, he would likely join in a song and haunt to a tavern as cheerfully as his fellows. Rather, he would behave analogously to Saturn in my quotation from Boorde, above, by having ‘a gret interest in malancoli men’. (This distinction is the basis of chapter 3.) Interest is one of the key ways in which personification drama naturally refuses to be bounded to the occasion of performance: the vices are at work wherever we cede an interest to them in our lives.

The tableau at the start of *Nature* reveals the power dynamic basic to all everyman plays. Man stands in between (the origin of Latin *interest*, Elyot’s ‘in the myddes’) his higher and lower impulses, and wrings his hands that ‘they be so annexed to me’ (b2ʳ, 376). This annexation is the third kind of interest, which expresses the basic point about human salvation which gave the morality play its shape of temptation and realisation. By bodying forth Mankind’s better and worse instincts as virtuous and vicious people who try to ‘tykyll hym in the ere’, the plays express a basic vision of our nature as capable of both vice and virtue alike. Personification makes our choice of salvation the same as our choice of company. The rhetoric of chosen virtue is that of *Nature*’s Shamefastness, conducted onstage by Reason to instruct Man in proper contrition after his first fall into temptation: ‘Syr *yf ye lust* to haue myne acquayntaunce | *I am redy* to geue you attendaunce’ (my emphasis; E2ʳ, 1371-72.) Man has a natural tendency toward sin balanced by a natural ability for the good, and the freedom to choose between them. That is to say, the sinner has an interest in his own salvation as well as his own damnation: a ‘right’ or ‘title’ to the reward for virtue, and an active empowerment in making amends.

The emphasis on repentance and amendment as meritorious human works only became more pronounced in the morality play in the early sixteenth century, at the same time that the formula was becoming (seemingly) a small-troupe staple. This fact has been little emphasized but is especially significant for these purposes, given that evangelicals adopted specifically this touring-troupe idiom after the split with Rome. Eamon Duffy has driven home forcefully that the distinctly sacramental and traditionalist temper of late medieval devotion was only gaining strength on the eve of the split with Rome.[122] This finds suggestive confirmation in what might be called the ‘post-Macro’ morality plays: *Nature*; *The World and the Child*; *Youth*; *Hickscorner*; *The Four Elements*; *Magnificence*; and *Everyman*. Wherever their hypothesised origins in the dining hall of a merchants’ guild, a northern nobleman, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, these morality plays amount almost to the entire

[122] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

corpus of doubled 'tourable' interludes datable to the early Tudor period (1485-c.1520), and they place especial stress on man's freedom of choice and his innate potential for good, at times to an almost semi-Pelagian extent.

The greater use of personified vices and virtues in these later plays attests to a greater weight placed upon man's own conduct and qualities as the decisive difference between salvation and damnation. In most surviving fifteenth century plays a cardinal role is played by the divine or the diabolical *in propria persona*: God and Belial square off on opposing scaffolds in *Castle*; the title character of *Wisdom* speaks as the second person of the Trinity, and Lucifer himself is the tempter; and in *Pride of Life* and *Castle* heavenly intercession is needed post mortem for a soul in jeopardy of Hell, whether from the Virgin or from God's own 'four daughters'. Mercy is not Mankind's own mercy in the play of that name, but a spokesman for the *divine* mercy and its clerical proxy on earth. By contrast, Pity in *Youth* is not only a pitying elder counsellor but Youth's own capacity for pitifulness, and the opposed personal failing, Pride, is appropriately the ringleader when Pity is put in the stocks. The same is evidently true for the most decisive influences upon everymen, for good or bad, from Medwall to Lyndsay: in *Nature,* Man's Sensuality and deadly sins against his Reason, Shamefastness, and remedial virtues; Folly against Contemplation and Perseverance in *The World and the Child*; Fancy and Despair against Good Hope and Circumspection in *Magnificence*; Chastity against Wantonness in *Three Estates*; and so on. The agents of repentance and regeneration as of temptation and fall in the early Tudor interludes are qualities in which man himself can fully participate. Characters representing human potential, rather than any unmediated or unilateral divinity, were the norm in the small-troupe interlude on the eve of the Reformation. (Bale and his mid-Tudor followers if anything brought the divine back to the touring-troupe play after a certain abeyance, another strike against the iconoclasm thesis.)

On the evidence of the best alternative to non-existent performance records – that is, reissues of printed editions, in which all of the above survive – the most simple and forceful plays on the point of free will and justification by grace-aided good works were the most popular: *Youth*, *Hickscorner*, and *Everyman*. The latter, with four surviving editions from two presses in c.1518-36, was the bestselling play in print when England split with Rome.[123] Unusually clericalist and works-affirming, *Everyman* has been called an '*anti*-Reformation'

[123] Based on a count of *The Database of Early English Playbooks* (*DEEP*).

adaptation of its merely '*ante*-Reformation' Dutch original.[124] We can again read this from a distance through what is personified: Duecht in *Elckerlijc*, which modern translators give as 'Virtue', becomes Good Deeds in the English.[125] This sets up an effective pun about belongings. Everyman, a merchant, discovers to his shock that his Goods (Dutch 'tGoet') cannot travel with him into the afterlife, but will blithely betray him and pass into other hands. His Good Deeds, however, will never leave him. Once Everyman resuscitates her from her sin-oppressed torpor through repentance, confession, and penance (including offstage flagellation), Good Deeds accompanies him to face judgement – so that a play famous for showing man's aloneness at death ends with two figures descending into one grave. There could be no more assertive statement of the potential intimacy of humanity and virtue. The play's central metaphor of a merchant's accounting-book to table one's virtuous assets and sinful liabilities is a vivid extension of the *tabula rasa*. This moral accountancy almost overdetermines the implication that good men deserve some *credit* for their own goodness.[126]

The notion that man has any 'interest in' his own salvation was the heresy against which the evangelical reaction was founded. In the words of an Elizabethan sermon,

> The Scripture and worde of God flatly condemneth all of vs of sinne, and therefore can we challenge no right nor interest in heauen by our deedes, because we haue not done all: but rather our interest for our deeds is of right in hell, because we haue broken some one, yea all, and all againe euen the best of vs all.[127]

Reformers and conservatives alike could agree that Christ's sacrifice had paid a ransom which we were incapable of paying, and he died for us so that, in John Calvin's words, 'the diuell shall not haue any interest [*droit*] in vs.'[128] However, the Protestants denied that, even after this sacrifice, any human activity or quality could confer an 'interest' in Heaven upon us, because this would encroach upon God's freedom by binding Him to repay men for their actions. The morally redeemed hero of a religiously 'reformed' drama must now thank God 't*ha*t he hath made me partaker of t*h*e heauenly inheritage | Of his own mercy and not of my

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[124] C. J. Wortham, '*Everyman* and the Reformation', *Parergon* 29 (1981), 23.
[125] See Jan Pritchard, 'On translating *Elckerlijc*, then and now', *Dutch Crossing* 22 (1984), 44.
[126] See Ladd, 'Everyman's mercantile salvation'.
[127] John More, *Three godly and fruitfull sermons* (Cambridge, 1594), G1^{r}. More (d. 1592) was a preacher in Norwich. Rhetorically his sermon is distinctive of the puritan left of the Church of England, but doctrinally it is no more than Luther had taught, and the English Prayer Book and the Articles all said.
[128] *Sermons* […] *vpon the booke of Iob*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1574), sermon 141, Zziii^{r}; '*le diable n'aura pas nul droit sur nous*', *Sermons* […] *sur le livre de Iob* (Geneva, 1611), [Pp5]^{r}.

deseruynge, | For hell I haue deserued by my synfull workynge'.[129] This, from the Edwardian *Lusty Juventus*, is the same subtly legalistic thought expressed in the sermon just quoted: like all justified sinners, Juventus has been written into an inheritance in which he has no 'interest'. I argue that this disinteresting of man in his own salvation put the everyman out of English drama, and the chapters which follow are an enquiry into what happened next.

Each chapter will attempt to argue for some departure in Protestant drama from the threefold dynamic sketched above – whether our 'interest' in the characters and the virtue or vice they represent, or their interest in one another and in humanity at large – and to consider the theological, pastoral, or polemical motive which may have compelled it. What I hope emerges is that the ideas which separated Protestant theology from medieval can also account for broader changes to theatrical fiction from medieval to early modern.

In chapter 1, I look at the earliest play in which the everyman's absence seems a purposive feature: John Bale's *Three Laws*. I argue that its extreme binary of supernatural vice against divine virtue allowed him to express the new disinterest of sinful man in the providential process of reformation, whether personal or national. Reading *Laws* in conjunction with his *King Johan*, I address the issue of Bale's most conspicuous innovation with the morality play personification – dressing his vices as evil papists – and show that this allowed him to express dramatically how the scriptural 'mystery of iniquity' works in human history. This permits a defence of Bale's propaganda as more than just the demonising vehicle it can easily seem. Chapter 2 turns to the personification of virtue by Protestant playwrights, and argues for a previously untheorized problem: how should virtue be embodied when the idea of 'human virtue' has been exposed as a heretical lie? I argue that Protestants playwrights found a theatrical vocabulary for expressing the doctrine of *aliena iustitia* – 'alien' or imputed righteousness – through personification. I use this to show the difference between the Protestant *Lusty Juventus* and its original, the everyman play *Youth*. By arguing for disinterest as a purposive aesthetic effect, we can recuperate aspects of Protestant dramaturgy which have seemed least 'theatrical'.

Chapters 3 to 5 turn to Protestant personification plays which begin to reverse the original 'interest' of personification drama, moving toward a self-enclosed play-world which bids to gratify our curiosity with a spectacle to which we are primarily curious bystanders.

[129] *Lusty Juventus*, Bi^{r}, 258-60.

They thereby anticipate later genres and characters. Chapter 3 argues for the figure of the reprobate in Protestant drama as a precursor to later humoral characters, especially those of Ben Jonson's comical satires. The important distinction is between catalysts and caricatures – those vices who represent their names by provoking their eponymous quality in others, and those doomed only to live up to their names. I call the latter character-type 'fools', and offer a reading of William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, whose protagonist is Moros ('fool'). Such figures are intentionally disinteresting, actively discouraging introspection and identification on the part of the spectators. I use the caricature reprobate to attempt to resolve certain crucial problems which critics have raised with Jonson's own humoral fools. Chapter 4 considers the emergence of the city as an evoked *locus* in personification plays, and argues for George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* as the first city comedy. I argue that the urban setting was not evoked for its own sake but allowed puritan-sympathising playwrights such as Wapull the space to imagine godly government. This raises the possibility that Calvin's Geneva was an unexpected prototype for a genre more often associated with anti-puritan satire. The final chapter turns to the city comedies of Robert Wilson in the 1580s, the only personification playwright to write for the public playhouses, and argues that his plays' newly self-reflexive irony may have been compelled by a growing official mistrust of Protestant reformist drama.

A final word about the 'fourth wall' in Tudor theatre. Personified virtues and vices throughout my period continue to lecture and joke with the audience directly, and in this the Reformation made no immediate difference. I hope to have shown in this introduction that the morality play was a special case even amongst medieval plays, resting on a far more complex interplay of interests than just an acknowledgement of the audience. Everyone had been 'in the play' – in Craik's terms – in a richer and stranger way than just that everyone was in the same 'place'. I propose, in light of *interesse*, a different term for the change of relationship my chapters are tracing. No fourth wall descended upon personification drama; rather, the spectators increasingly became a 'third party' to it. What follows attempts to explain what that looked like, and why.

Chapter 1
John Bale and the Problem of Evil

In 1538, provincial townspeople gathering in their marketplace or guildhall in the south or east of England might have seen the touring actors of King Henry's most powerful minister, Thomas Cromwell, perform a new play by their leader, the vicar-playwright John Bale. The play's full title made clear the grandeur of Bale's theme and the topical venom of his purpose: *A comedy concerning Three Laws, of Nature, Moses, and Christ, corrupted by the Sodomites, Pharisees, and Papists*. Four years earlier, as Bale's audiences would know from sermons and royal proclamations, Parliament had passed the Act of Supremacy ending England's thousand-year membership of the Pope's Church and installing Henry as Supreme Head of the new Church of England. Every parish church bore witness to the reforming policies of Lord Cromwell and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer: the old Latin rite had been replaced with an English liturgy and readings from an English Bible, and many once-revered saints' shrines had been removed or burned as the superstitious inventions of the Bishop of Rome. Bale and his men were there to justify these unprecedented changes to a possibly disoriented or resistant people.

For two years Cromwell's agents had been targeting the regular clergy, the monks, friars, and nuns who lived together in religious houses under a communal order of life. Their independent wealth and separateness from civil life had made them resistant to centralisation and thus suspect, while their vows of chastity and cloistered privacy made their houses into hotbeds of rumoured immorality. One by one Cromwell's agents were evicting the religious and expropriating their estates to secular landlords, until by 1540 none of England's 800 foundations would be left. The strength of popular feeling against these innovations was shown in 1536-37 by three abortive rebellions in Lincolnshire and the North; the 250 executions which followed, of noblemen, clergymen and commons, showed the price of such conservative resistance. It may have been in response to these events that Cromwell's players were sent on the road in the first place.[130]

When he started his career as a propagandist against Rome, John Bale was the forty-year-old married vicar of Thorndon in Suffolk. For almost thirty years before that, however, he had been a devoutly ordained member of the Pope's Church as a Carmelite friar, having

[130] Seymour Baker House, 'Cromwell's message to the regulars: The biblical trilogy of John Bale', *Renaissance and Reformation* 15 (1991), 126-27.

joined the ascetic order in 1508 at around age twelve.[131] The friars had sponsored his education at Cambridge in 1514, three years before Luther's first protest in Wittenberg; and he rose through the ranks to become prior at Ipswich in 1533 and then Doncaster in 1534 – years in which the antipapal 'Reformation Parliament' ran alongside the King's anti-evangelical persecutions. However, by the time the Pilgrimage of Grace began in 1536 – and the Doncaster Carmelites harboured supporters of the rebels – Bale had apostatised: he had moved to London, married, and entered the new Church of England. The balance between orthodoxy and reform remained perilous, and preachers could still be punished for going beyond denouncing the political impostures of the papacy to questioning traditional doctrine. Bale found this the hard way in January 1537 when he was imprisoned by the Bishop of London for controversial preaching at Thorndon. He later attributed his quick release to the intercession of Lord Cromwell, who had got him out of trouble on other occasions 'ob editas comedias' – for the plays he had written.[132] Payments by Cromwell to 'Balle and his fellowes' for performances in late 1538 and early 1539 suggest that Cromwell, far more evangelical in his beliefs than the King, recognised the firebrand ex-friar's value to the cause.

Bale intended his plays to show that the idolatrous foreign anti-church to which he had recently belonged represented the perfection of the whole history of man's disobedience to God. To expose this immanence of timeless evil within a familiar, contemporary institution, Bale reached for a device long employed in English theatre to reveal the fundamental moral patterns within human behaviour. All of the characters except God Himself are personifications of abstract moral concepts. All of the personified vices are dressed as modern popish clergy. According to the costuming rubric printed with the text a decade later, 'the six vyces, or frutes of Infydelyte' should be dressed as follows:

> Lete Idolatry be decked lyke an olde wytche, Sodomy lyke a monke of all sectes, Ambycyon lyke a byshop, Covetousnesse lyke a Pharyse or spirituall lawer, False Doctryne lyke a popysh doctour, and Hypocresy lyke a graye fryre.[133]

Modern monks are just the ancient Sodomites with a uniform; the modern canon lawyers are just Judaean Pharisees with a university degree. It is likely that Bale had his clerical costumes

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[131] The modern studies of Bale's life are Jesse W. Harris, *John Bale* (Urbana, 1940); Honor McCusker, *John Bale* (Bryn Mawr, PA, 1942); Thora Balslev Blatt, *The Plays of John Bale* (Copenhagen, 1968); Leslie P. Fairfield, *John Bale* (West Lafayette, IN, 1976); Peter Happé, *John Bale* (Woodbridge, CT, 1996); and Oliver Wort, *John Bale and Religious Conversion in Early Modern England* (London, 2013).
[132] Happé, *John Bale*, 8.
[133] *Three Laws*, G1^{v}.

from off the backs of the very same defrocked men his plays were demonising, freed up for players' use by the dissolutions.[134]

Bale's popish villains banter and hatch their plots against the truth in full knowledge of their exposure to the spectators, as vices always had. Their most important quality, however, is not their provocative assimilation of papistry to morality-play villainy but the stark breach from morality-play tradition which leaves them even further in the cold. The universalizing impulse basic to personification has been deliberately checked and limited. Bale visually associates each vice with the institution whose marker of membership he wears, defying general application by emphasizing an unmistakable difference between some men and others. Vices had sometimes been associated through their dress with generic social types, most obviously the overdressed gallantry of Pride. However, the medieval personification play had traditionally centred on a device designed to close any complacent detachment between the spectators and the spectated villains. The everyman had ensured that the relationship of spectators to personifications was mutually 'interested': the spectators were stakeholders in the everyman's progress, while the vices' successful influence upon Mankind represented sin's lurking potential in all men. In *Three Laws* the vices seem to be not yours and mine but 'theirs', and the protagonist who would have mitigated this impression is missing altogether.

Across five tightly patterned acts, the spectators would see God the Father despatch the three Laws of the title to Earth to tell fallen man of his duties to his creator. They see each of them defeated by the play's central jokester and villain, Infidelity, who may have been played by Bale himself.[135] This mysterious comedian seems to be an emissary from the Devil and has been at work in every stage of human history. The other vices are his subordinate 'frutes' whom he summons to join his plot. In the second act he brings in the monk Sodomy and the witch Idolatry, who infect the Law of Nature with leprosy through their superstitious prayers to saints, veneration of relics, and broken vows of chastity. In the third, the bishop Ambition and canon lawyer Avarice blind and cripple the Law of Moses with their economy of merit, church tithes, Our Lady's Psalter, and long incomprehensible Latin liturgy. In the fourth, the friar Hypocrisy and the theologian False Doctrine condemn the Law of Christ for

[134] Paul Whtifield White discusses the sale of proscribed monks' vestments and others by churches in *Drama and Religion in English Provincial Society, 1485-1660* (Cambridge, 2008), 40-41. For sales of 'heathenish church goods' to players in later Tudor England, see James Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire* (Toronto, 2009), 99; also 55, 338, 315.

[135] In the doubling rubric (G1^{v}), Infidelity is assigned to the same actor as 'Baleus Prolocutor' who speaks the prologue and epilogue.

heresy and burn him on a bonfire. Finally, God scourges Infidelity to Hell, restores the three Laws to their original perfection, and sends Christian Faith to preside on earth. The virtues tell the audience to join them in giving thanks that King Henry has 'brought Christes veryte to lyght | Whan he put the pope, with hys fylthynes to flyght.' (G1^{r}, 2026-27.)[136]

Three Laws is often called the first Protestant morality play – but the protagonist who had defined the morality play is nowhere to be seen.[137] Instead of the temptation and repentance of a representative of mankind, we are shown a direct, unmediated clash of good and evil: on the one side, a virtue which is God's alone, remote and inassimilable, and on the other the machinations of an equally supernatural evil whose instruments in the world are seemingly not *all* men but certain heretics who are hardly human at all. Claims that it 'satisfies the generic expectations of the morality comedy' rest on attempts to find a sublimated or implied everyman which have been unconvincing, such as David Bevington's suggestion that Christian Faith (a semi-angelic figure who is introduced only after the resolution) is 'the seldom-seen hero in the centre'.[138] The three Laws are violated and then restored, but they remain undeluded and blameless, the victims of an evil not theirs. Rather, as Thora Balslev Blatt puts it, there is 'no vacillation between virtue and vice' but only 'cosmic forces combating each other.'[139]

I argue that Bale intended *Three Laws* to flout the 'generic expectations' of the old everyman play, and for its lack of an everyman to be both noticeable and meaningful. The absence of an intuitive human centre is so evident that even those in the audience who had not seen a morality play before, and would not have known to expect the fall and rise of a mankind figure, might have wondered where he had gone. The prologue, spoken by the playwright himself as Baleus Prolocutor, made this grammatically obvious, and what begins grammatically in the exposition continues as the structural principle of all five acts:

> Our heauenly maker, mannys lyuynge to dyrect,
> The lawes of Nature, of Bondage, and of Grace,
> Sent into thys worlde, with vycyousnesse infect,

[136] The quarto preserves only an updated prayer written for the Edwardian edition, in which the late Henry is remembered.
[137] Most recently by Julie Paulson, *Theatre of the Word* (Notre Dame, IN, 2019), 147.
[138] Brian Gourley, 'Carnivalising apocalyptic history in John Bale's *King Johan* and *Three Laws*', in Konrad Eisenbichler (ed.), *Renaissance Medievalisms* (Toronto, 2009), 174; David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 129; also Ritchie D. Kendall, *The Drama of Dissent* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 111.
[139] Thora Balslev Blatt, *The Plays of John Bale* (Copenhagen, 1968), 64, 84. Blatt and Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge, 1993), 31, are the only critics I have seen who acknowledge the lack of an everyman.

> In all ryghteousnesse, to walke before hys face.
> But Infydelyte, so worketh in euery place,
> That under the heauens, no thynge is pure *and* cleane,
> So moch the people, to hys peruerse wayes leane.
> The lawe of Nature, hys fylthy dysposycyon,
> Corrupteth with ydolles, and stynkynge Sodometry,
> The lawe of Moses, with Auaryce and Ambycyon,
> He also poluteth. And euer continually
> Christes lawe he defyleth, with cursed hypocresy,
> And with false doctryne, as wyll apere in presence,
> To the edyfyenge, of thys Christen audyence. [Aii[r-v], 15-28.]

The literal sense of these words almost totally displaces man from his own relationship to God. It is the laws themselves, not mankind (the 'us' of the Prolocutor himself), who walk before God's face and please Him with their righteousness. They are of 'hys' (God's) making, their marring is due to 'hys [infidelity's] fylthy dysposycyon', and the effect of infidelity is *their* corruption, pollution, and defilement. The laws' restoration will be God's doing alone, as we are immediately told:

> Of Infydelyte God wyll hymself reuenge,
> With plages of water, of wyldefyre, and of sworde
> And of hys people due homage he wyll chalenge
> Ever to be known for their God and good lorde
> After that he hath those lawes agayne restorde
> To their first bewtye commyttynge them to fayth. [Aii[v], 29-34.]

The laws themselves, not the fallen men who broke them, are restored to beauty; it is His laws, not 'hys people', which God commits to faith. The prefatory banns to *The Castle of Perseverance* had made Mankind the subject or object of almost every one of their 150 lines. In Bale's 35-line prologue only one verb is given to the human race, our almost-passive 'leaning' to Infidelity's perverse ways. What is remarkable is that we are not the object of any verbs either: nothing is *done*, let alone credited, to mankind.

The 'Chrysten audyence' of *Three Laws* might receive the disconcerting feeling of being bystanders not only literally at the performance, standing around the *platea* of the hall or innyard, but at the process of human history, of England's political reformation, and even of salvation itself. If the everyman had interested us by making 'Euery man in himselfe' the central participant in the play, then it seems that Bale deliberately does the opposite: he disinterests us.

This breach with tradition is my starting point, which is in many ways a perplexing feature of Bale's project. Bale addresses an audience about matters of religious belief and political affiliation which, by his own lights, concern everyone. We know that *Three Laws* was written during the heat of the political process in England, not to allegorize it for posterity but to promote it in the present. The vices make clear that they are at work in the world of the audience, anchoring every piece of action in the geographical and political specifics of 1530s England, or in the biblical and historical stories which gave them meaning, that this is deliberately impossible. The vices break out in every act into dozen-line asyndetic lists of proper names, whether monastic orders, pilgrimage sites, theologians, or historical figures – prosaic touchstones keeping the diabolical plot anchored in real people and real places. This is not a drill. Bale wrote what we might call 'public-interest' drama of the most obvious kind – and yet he determinedly omits the character who had always interested the public in the action.

In what follows I address the functions of disinterest in Bale's personification plays: *Three Laws* and the closely related *King Johan*, which he seems also to have written for the Lord Cromwell's Men at this time. On the appraisal I have just given, disinteresting the spectators in the plays' vision of reformation sits oddly with Bale's propagandist purpose, except in one respect: the cold polemical payoff that it excludes the papists from the human fold altogether. From a thing of darkness which we must all acknowledge, the sins are repositioned as an external evil, an unmasked conspiracy whose culprits are specific classes of people: '[f]owle idolaters, and sodomytes poluted, […] covetouse prestes, and […] ambycyouse prelates, | Hypocryticall fryres, false doctoures and false curates' ([F8]^{v}-Gi^{r}, 2018-20). Nobody had so exploited personification's ability to dehumanize. *King Johan* develops this device to its logical endpoint by revealing actual historical figures, such as the Pope himself, to be timeless evils in disguise. Ritchie D. Kendall speaks for many critics when he voices unease and dismay at Bale's 'unreflective' tendency to divide mankind, including his own neighbours, into sheep and goats.[140] It seems from his plays that his ideological enemies are too sunken in sin to be redeemed. However, the former Carmelite knew as well as anybody that such a state was not irrevocable. I argue that a proper understanding of Bale's propagandist purpose can reconcile these inconsistencies and recuperate an easily overlooked humane and pastoral purpose to his provocative rhetoric.

[140] Kendall, *Drama of Dissent*, 94.

I begin by showing that the radical binary of *Three Laws* expresses an evangelical understanding of the unbridgeable gulf separating man's ingrained depravity from the grace of God. I use this to argue for Bale's clergyman-evils, half-man and half-abstraction, as visible symbols of the new intimacy between humanness and sin. Bale aimed to show that infidelity to God caused the devilish and the human to come together. The polemical value of the device, creating and dehumanising a unified evil enemy, is not the divisive, opportunistic straw man it can now appear, but is compatible with Bale's broader understanding of the working of the evil of faithlessness in the world. I trace this through the writings on Antichrist which he produced during his exile in the 1540s to indict the backsliding in the English Church, and argue in particular that Infidelity is to be identified with the Pauline 'mystery of iniquity'. Bale uses the hinterland by which a person *becomes* a personification of evil, or vice versa, as a parallel to the effect of this 'mystery' on the soul.

John Bale: New Wine in New Bottles

Bale listed more than twenty of his own plays in the huge bibliographical catalogue of English writers he prepared near the end of his life.[141] Only five of them survive: the two personification plays *King Johan* and *Three Laws*, and the plays on biblical themes *Johan Baptist's Preaching*, *The Temptation of our Lord*, and *The Chief Promises of God*. *King Johan* survives in manuscript and the others in editions from Wesel in 1547-48.[142] All are bitterly antipapal, and there is evidence that all were first written in or by 1538, presumably for touring by Cromwell's Men. Within a few years of writing, Bale was overtaken by events: the Act of Six Articles in 1539 made it illegal to question many of his most hated doctrinal bugbears, and he lost his safety net with Cromwell's fall and execution in 1540. Bale joined an evangelical exodus into continental exile for the next seven years. This exile saw the first flurry of his vernacular prose polemics, fired against the bishops of the English Church as a conservative fifth column dragging King and country back to the popish Antichrist. Most influential was *The Image of Both Churches*, an almost word-by-word commentary on the Book of Revelation in which the ongoing Reformation, especially its reversals in England, was meticulously contextualised in terms of St John's prophecy. Bale believed himself to live in the sixth of the Book's seven ages of man, when the Devil had dropped all pretence to

[141] *Scriptoru[m] illustrium maioris Britanniae [...] catalogus* (Basel, 1558), [Tt4]^{v}.
[142] See Tamara Atkin, 'Playing with books in John Bale's *Three Laws*', *YES* 43 (2013), 244.

secrecy and '(seinge he can not yet preuaile) […] maketh open warre vpon the re*m*naunt of hyr [the true church's] sede.'[143] This belief was already reflected in the behaviour of his dramatic vices. As Robert Potter and Greg Walker have noted, the villains of Bale's plays make unprecedentedly little pretence of hiding their designs from anybody else, waging defiantly open war upon virtue with none of earlier interlude vices' ironical dissemblance.[144]

He returned from exile under the evangelical King Edward as the vicar of Bishopstoke in Hampshire, before his promotion to Bishop of Ossory in Ireland. He is known to have revived his plays in both locations – including in Kilkenny on the day of Mary's coronation, leading to another rushed departure to Europe. He returned under Elizabeth, and died a canon of Canterbury Cathedral in 1563, a few months before and streets away from the birth of Christopher Marlowe.

Bale's plays frequently go beyond the political polemic on which critics have largely focussed to make doctrinal statements about human nature and salvation. Even though, as Walker has pointed out, he maintains a tactful (and probably tactical) silence on the King's cherished doctrine of transubstantiation, these scruples do not prevent *King Johan*'s notorious attack upon the sacraments of confession and penance, which Henry still defended.[145] T. W. Craik and Tamara Atkin have noted Bale's adaptation of passages from Tyndale's works in his plays, and it is clear that, like his patron Cromwell, he adhered far more than the conservative King to the actual theology of salvation underpinning the continental antipapal movement.[146]

He makes his clearest dramatic expression of these beliefs *in propria persona*, as Baleus Prolocutor again, in *The Chief Promises of God*. He exhorts his audience to attend carefully and bear away with them

> the thynges that shall your inwarde stomake stere
> To reioyce in God for your iustyfycacyon
> And alone in Christ to hope for your saluacyon.[147]

[143] *The image of both churches* (London, [c.1550]), [2f6]r. I quote this, the first one-volume edition, throughout.
[144] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 97; Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1991), 185-86.
[145] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 221. For Bale's parody of the confessional, see Paulson, *Theatre of the Word*, 192-205.
[146] T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester, 1958), 75; Tamara Atkin, *The Drama of Reform* (Turnhout, 2013), 83-91.
[147] *Chief Promises*, A2r, 19-21.

After the play has concluded, the Prolocutor returns to launch a broadside against those beliefs which give man, rather than God, any power over justification:

> For all the worldes synne, alone Christ payed the pryce,
> In hys onlye deathe, was mannys lyfe alwayes restynge,
> And not in wyll workes, nor yet in mennys deseruynge[.]
> […]
> Where is now fre wyll, whom the hypocrytes comment,
> Wherby they report, they maye at their owne pleasure,
> Do good of themselues, though grace and fayth be absent,
> And haue good intentes, their madnesse with to measure,
> The wyll of the fleshe, is proued here small treasure,
> And so is mannys wyll, for the grace of God doth all[.][148]

Note that Bale's attack on 'wyll' is specifically against man's capacity for independent *virtue*. Andrew Escobedo has recently called this the 'Protestant asymmetry thesis': that the will to do good comes only through grace, and the will to evil through man's own fallen efforts.[149] This is as clear a statement as could be wished of Bale's basic adherence to what became the mainstream of English soteriology.

I would argue that the everyman's absence in *Three Laws* was a purposive structural device intended to 'stere' the 'inwarde stomake' of its spectators toward a properly placed faith. It is impossible to have such a faith unless we recognize the impossibility of having any title to or involvement – that is, any interest – in our salvation. Of all Tudor plays, *Three Laws* is the clearest blueprint for a drama structured around the radical binary of the evangelical vision, in which 'grace and fayth' are reserved unilaterally to the divine will. Joerg O. Fichte has called Bale's adaptation of traditional genres to evangelical ends 'new wine into old bottles' – but in the case of the morality play the bottle too had been broken.[150]

Bale has his personified evils-by-definition wreak damage directly upon the goods-by-definition, before the latter are purged and the former restored by the unassisted hand of God Himself. *Three Laws* is the first to present this binary opposition unmediated. Robert Potter has observed that it is a common misconception that the morality play is structured around a 'psychomachia', a battle between virtue and vice.[151] This device takes its name from

[148] *Chief Promises*, [E4]$^{r-v}$, 969-74, 976-81.
[149] Andrew Escobedo, *Volition's Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017), 106-7; discussed in my introduction.
[150] Joerg O. Fichte, 'New wine into old bottles: The Protestant adaptation of the morality play', *Anglia* 110 (1992), 65-84.
[151] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 7. Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York, 1958), 85-91, discusses the few cases of a physical fight between evils and virtues – Newguise, Nowadays and Nought driven off by Mercy in *Mankind*, Iniquity driven offstage in *King Darius*, and the siege in *Castle* – as

the fourth century poet Prudentius' allegorical battle-poem *Psychomachia* ('the soul-war'). Here, vices such as Idolatry and Avarice are personified as grisly warrior-women who sally out from their encampment to be hacked down in single combat with their opposing virtue, Christian warrior-women such as Faith and Good Works.[152] These paragons are the sole combatants, and the *psyche* is their implied battleground. The human soul is the pitch but not one of the players: it is not represented as a participant in its own purgation. The morality play, by contrast, begins and ends as the story of this participation, which is the biography of its everyman.

As Stanley J. Kahrl puts it, endorsing Potter's position, the everyman 'is no inert battlefield over which the forces of good and evil march, but a being with free will'.[153] The vices and virtues seek to make direct interventions in his behaviour; they discredit one another for the effect it will have on *his* conduct and wellbeing, rather than their opponents'. The everyman is not a proxy battleground for a grander conflict; the morality play tells the story of everyday choices between ease and duty – whether to keep the Sabbath in church or to break it in the pub – not as a chapter in the enmity between good and evil, or church and pub, but as the vital stuff of man's basic choice between salvation or damnation. The soul of man is not just the warzone but a combatant and the only spoils too.

The only medieval morality play to contain an undoubted psychomachia is *The Castle of Perseverance*, whose sole surviving manuscript was presumably unknown to Bale. One of this play's encyclopaedia of moral set-pieces is clearly based on Prudentius. The seven deadly sins lay siege to the titular Castle, fight hand-to-hand with the seven cardinal virtues, and are defeated. However, their onslaught is with the specific goal of getting at the everyman, Humanum Genus, and his shelter in a fortress called Perseverance makes it obvious that we are watching a man's better nature overcome his worse (temporarily; this is far from the climax of the play). Belial, ranting from his scaffold, almost never mentions his enmity to the Creator, but remains obsessed by the creature: 'fowle I am anoyed | But Mankynde be stroyed […] On Mankynde is my trost[.]'[154] Catherine Belsey has described how Humanum Genus seems dwarfed into passive insignificance by the 'contest which takes place around him, outside him, largely beyond his understanding'; he is 'a battleground

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if they are vestiges of a traditional psychomachia, but these clearly owe little to a common source.

[152] For Prudentius' personifications, see Katherine Breen, *Machines of the Mind* (Chicago, 2021), 69-108.

[153] Stanley J. Kahrl, *Traditions of Medieval Drama* (London, 1974), 106.

[154] *The Castle of Perseverance*, 206-7, 222.

between cosmic forces, autonomous only to the point of choosing between them.'[155] Nonetheless she notes that all (even God, through his proxies) are competitors for the everyman's 'assent': his centrality is undeniable.[156]

The homocentrism of *Castle* was shared by all later small-troupe moralities. David Bevington's insight about doubling patterns is illuminating here. Unlike the anonymous author of *Castle*, who counted on resources which made doubling unnecessary, the interlude-writers wrote for troupes of limited size and had to choose which characters would never meet onstage, because assigned to the same actor. Doubling reveals the battle between vice and virtue to be importantly irrelevant to the morality play. The surviving examples generally alternate scenes of temptation and admonition, in which the everyman alone might be the common onstage denominator, while the other actors exit to switch between vice and virtue. The clearest case is *Mundus et Infans* (c.1500-22), which is doubled for only two actors, so that vices and virtues never share the stage.[157]

Morality playwrights not only seldom show a symbolic clash between an evil and its opposing good; they double the parts to make one impossible. This is readily apparent in the only morality play we have positive evidence that Bale knew, Henry Medwall's *Nature*, written around 1500.[158] The second half of *Nature* is dominated by the deadly sins' conspiracy to fool Man into damnation. The final section is Man's moral restoration, in which successive cardinal virtues are led onstage with Prudentian orderliness to lecture him. However, the vices have already left by this point, ostensibly to plot their response but really to free up bodies for this final rehabilitation, and are never heard from again. The climactic scene is not an agon but a willing instruction.

The psychomachia proper had to wait in English drama until the *psyche* had itself been decentred. Bale reserves the making and repairing of the Laws entirely and unilaterally to God. True faith alone, which comes entirely from God, can rescue man from his deserved damnation. Because anything short of faith is damnable, Bale's main agent of evil in the play is Infidelity. In the next chapter I discuss the ways in which Bale's successor dramatists bodied forth the almost unstageable doctrine of imputed virtue. My concern here is how we

[155] Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London, 1985), 15, 47-48.
[156] Belsey, *The Subject*, 15.
[157] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 116-24.
[158] Bale's entry for Medwall in one of his pioneering biobibliographies, decades later, says 'he learnedly and elegantly compiled the comedy of *Nature*', and quotes the first line. (*Scriptorum illustriu[m]* [...] *posterior pars* (Basel, 1559), [i4]$^{r-v}$; my translation.)

should understand Bale's peculiar presentation of unfaithfulness in his plays, as a conspiracy in which abstract, timeless evil blurs together with temporal, uniformed human papist.

Personification and the Problem of Evil

How does an evil become a person, with not only a body and voice but a social estate? This is not normally a question that personification drama is required to answer; this is its direct communicative power. Bale's plays come closer than usual to proposing an answer: through disobedience to God. *Three Laws* and *King Johan* are founded on the idea that unfaithfulness brings supernatural evil and human personhood into some strange union. In *Three Laws*, Infidelity himself is the causative agent. In *King Johan*, it is the Pope. In both cases, the play's chief propagator of unbelief and superstition provides the linchpin between the dark, noumenal world of the demonic and the world of men.

It is obvious that, for Bale, infidelity is the wellspring of all human depravity. As Vindicta Dei, the personification of God's wrath, thunders when he finally routs the personification of that evil, 'I neuer stryke but for the[e] Infydelyte.' (*Three Laws*, [F4]ʳ, 1805.) His singularity is underlined by the fact that he is not himself dressed as a clergyman, but seems to encounter the Law of Nature initially as a broom-seller. He makes no attempt to hide his evil designs against God: 'By the masse, I the defye | With thy whole cuckoldrye | And all that with the holde,' he spits at his semidivine adversary ([A7]ʳ, 230-32). Sedition will make an equally open boast of his hatred to the King in *King Johan*. This furthers our sense that something dark and fundamental has been exposed to the air, according to the reformers' belief that the enemies of truth had dropped any pretence to secrecy. Once the Law has left in disgust, Infidelitas resolves to defile him with idolatry and sodomy, and calls out for assistance in what becomes a kind of invocation:

> Where are these vyllen knaues,
> The deuyls owne kychyn slaues,
> […]
> I coniure yow both here
> And charge ye to apere,
> Lyke two knaues as ye be [Biiᵛ, 383-88.]

They answer from outside the playing space, and Infidelitas responds with an almost kabbalistic piece of magic underlining the murkiness of their origins: 'By Tetragrammaton | I charge ye, apere anon | And come out of the darke' (Biiᵛ, 392-94), and Sodomy and Idolatry

enter as a monk and a witch. Though the later minions will appear with less fanfare, the sense of imprecation is preserved, as in Act Four when he asks ‘Chyldren wyll not my voyce be hearde’ (Eii^{r}, 1429). This serves to establish Infidelitas as a drawer-out of the demonic from ‘the darke’ into the flesh. The clergyman-evils are referred to several times as Infidelitas’ ‘frutes’. ‘Thu aperest by thy frutes to be Infydelyte’, the Law of Christ says with distaste (Ei^{v}, 1398), and the casting chart in the printed quarto calls them ‘the six vyces, or frutes of Infydelyte’ (Gi^{v}).

It is to *King Johan* that we must turn for the logical extent of this device. The play dissects one specific moment in English history to expose the working of abstract evil directly within real, named individuals, and with it the personification metaphor almost comes unstuck. The play is effectively a polemical hagiography. Likely performed at Archbishop Cranmer’s residence at Christmas 1538/39, it recasts the titular king’s struggles with Pope Innocent III as a royal paragon’s heroic resistance to foreign imposture.[159] The play recounts King John’s excommunication for refusing the Pope’s choice of Stephen Langton for Archbishop of Canterbury; John’s capitulation to avoid the bloodshed of a papally sponsored invasion of England; Innocent’s calling of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215; and John’s assassination by a monk in 1216. The play’s propagandist message is unconcealed: Henry’s Act of Supremacy in 1534 has achieved what John died trying to do.

John is the play’s only non-personified character, who attempts to defend the widow England and her blind, crippled son Commonalty against the papists who would subdue them in superstition. Despite their structural dissimilarity, a similar estrangement of the popish evils from any everyman pertains here as in *Three Laws*. *King Johan* may have a clear human protagonist, but the play is no less alien to the tradition of *Mankind* or *Nature*. The martyred King is a justified sinner whose unwavering faith in Christ makes him as undeserving of his own treatment as the three Laws of theirs. I do not have space here to deal with the issue of

[159] *King Johan* survives in two manuscript versions, now bound together as Huntington Library, MS HM 3. The earlier version (A) was copied perhaps by 1540 by an unknown scribe, and breaks off before the end; the later (B) is Bale’s autograph revision, copied in the last few years of his life, which extends the ending by another thousand lines. The scenes of vice which concern me are in the A-text. This was presumably the ‘enterlude concernyng King John’, with a strongly antipapal theme, performed in Archbishop Cranmer’s household, probably at Ford in Kent, at Christmastime 1538/39 (as argued in Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 172-78). Despite this auspice, in the audience were certain townspeople whose vigorous disagreement over the play’s depiction of an evil Pope led to the court deposition (for pro-papal speech against the Royal Supremacy) which provides us with the only record of its performance.

Johan's place in the history of the history play.[160] More immediately relevant is that *Johan* has rightly been likened to a Protestant saint-play.[161] Bale (the former Carmelite biographer) presents his Plantagenet paragon with all the exceptional fortitude of the *Golden Legend*, not the exemplary susceptibility of a morality.

Sedition, the play's unabashedly evil compere, brags to Johan that his influence over the three estates of English society – Clergy, Nobility, and Civil Order – is such that the King will be entirely in thrall to the Pope. Sedition is inseparable from the unreformed Church. 'In eu*er*y estate, of t*h*e clargye, I playe a part,' sometimes a monk, a nun, a canon, sometimes 'ower syre Iohan' (a parish priest), a parson, a bishop, a gray or white friar (a Carmelite, like Bale), sometimes 'the purgatory prist'; whichever, he is 'one of ther sorte'.[162] Sedition and Dissimulation bring on Private Wealth (a bishop) and Usurped Power – who turns out to be Pope Innocent III. Sedition is trying to become Archbishop under the alias Stephen Langton, but John has refused the nomination. Pope Innocent/Usurped Power resolves to overthrow the King, and calls a general church council 'to suppresse the gospell*e*' (13[r]; 1014) and increase his dominance over Europe's rightful rulers. In a daring parody of a confessional, Sedition turns Nobility against John, and then does the same to Clergy and Civil Order.[163] Private Wealth, now Cardinal Pandulphus, places England under papal curse. Abandoned by his three estates and threatened by foreign invasion, John is forced to submit – not through weakness but for the unimpeachable reason of averting bloodshed 'that my swete ynglond, perysh not' (20[v], 1639). Within two hundred lines of the interdict being lifted, however, the godly King has been poisoned by the monk Simon of Swinsted – another historical identity assumed for the nonce by Dissimulation. The earliest manuscript of the play breaks off here, but Bale's later continuation may reflect the original ending. Two new characters, Veritas and Imperial Majesty, show the three estates their terrible error in betraying John, and they repent. Imperial Majesty has Sedition and Dissimulation – who of course did not die, though 'Simon of Swinsted' may have done – taken off for execution. With Imperial Majesty, we have reached the temporal and political counterpart of the transcendent reformation effected by God at the end of *Three Laws*.

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[160] For an overview of scholarship, see Philip Schwyzer, 'Paranoid history: John Bale's *King Johan*', in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2012), 499-513.
[161] Benjamin Griffin, 'The birth of the history play: Saint, sacrifice, and Reformation', *SEL* 39 (1999), 217-37.
[162] *King Johan*, 3[r-v], 196-206, 255.
[163] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 219.

Though not personified, Infidelity is part of the vices' genealogy here too – quite literally. Sedition reminds Dissimulation that they are cousins, the sons of two brothers, Falsehood and Privy Treason. '[T]han infydelyte, ow*e*r grandfather ys by reason,' says Dissimulation (who might have been expected to know this already, except that the audience must be told); '[M]ary that ys trewe,' replies Sedition, '*and* hys begy*n*ner antycrist | the great pope of rome, or fyrst veyne popysh prist' (8v, 670-72). Bale was still a few years from his fully developed exposition of Antichrist, where as we will see this rather vague relation between popery, infidelity, and the ultimate enemy would be expounded at greater length. However, this brief and amusing polemical family tree tells us that the Pope and Infidelity should be seen in the same lineage, performing the same function.

The Pope's role in bringing together the planes of evil and human is revealed when Dissimulation introduces Sedition to the clerics Private Wealth and Usurped Power. There follows some physical moralising in which Sedition gets the others to carry him around on their shoulders while he semaphores the correct interpretation to the audience:

> bare me on t*h*i backe, *and* bry*n*g me in also
> that yt maye be sayde, t*ha*t fyrst dyssymulaco*n*
> browght in p*ri*vat welth*e*, to every cristen*n* naco*n*
> *and* that p*ri*vat welth*e*, browght in Vsurpid pow*e*r
> *and* he sedycyon, in cytye towne *and* tower
> t*ha*t su*m* man may know, t*h*e feche of all*e* ow*e*r sorte[…]   [10r, 787-92.]

It is only after fifty lines of this that Sedition suddenly recognises that Usurped Power is not just a personification but a specific person: 'cock*es* sowle, ye are ow*e*r pope | where is yow*e*r thre crovnys, yow*e*r crosse keys *and* yow*e*r cope?' Usurped Power, or Pope Innocent, replies that he has gone amongst his peers to have 'su*m* dalyau*n*ce *and* playe | for I am a man, lyke as an other ys' (10v; 833-36). After all the laborious pageantry, this is an effective coup of clashing metaphorical registers. The audience could already see that Usurped Power was 'a man', walking, talking, and singing with the others – but this was his vehicle, not his tenor. We have just been given a lengthy spiel encouraging us to think of him as the symbolic carrier for a particular concept, usurped power, and somehow less 'a man' than he looks. Now it turns out he is not only a man in vehicle but in tenor too, and a specific man – not 'lyke as an other ys', but as only one man, Innocent III (1161-1216), has ever been. At the same time he is no less another man – Bale's contemporary Pope Paul III, or our Pope Leo – than he is Innocent, because he is the Pope *per se*, the everypope.

Bale riddles us none of this, of course. His personifications are much wittier and more complex than he reveals in his open commentary on the device (as in Sedition's speech quoted above). I would argue that the tension between that over-explanation and this outrageously casual revelation is part of a joke for which Bale has not received credit.

Now the historical person of Cardinal Stephen Langton (c.1150-1228) is casually revealed to be even further removed from actual humanity than Innocent. Usurped Power reveals that John has blocked his choice of Sedition as Archbishop of Canterbury. '[T]han hath he [John] knowledge, t*ha*t his [Langton's] name ys sedycyon,' asks Private Wealth, and gets an affirmative. '[W]hy do ye not saye, his name ys stevyn la*n*gton?' demands Usurped Power. '[T]ush*e* we haue done so,' Dissimulation replies, 'but t*ha*t helpyth not t*h*e mater' (11^{v}, 936-39). Langton is only an alias assumed, temporarily, by treachery itself. Once they have resolved to ruin the King, the stage direction instructs that Usurped Power shall go out and 'drese for t*h*e pope […] *and* sedycyon for a monke', and that 'stevyn lavnton' (i.e., the monk, i.e., Sedition) shall carry in a book, bell, and candle. Usurped Power is now 't*h*e pope' in speech prefix. They excommunicate John in an elaborate rite, and then the Pope gives the remaining vices new names '[t]o colovr*e* this thyng': Private Wealth, now promoted to cardinal, 'shalte be callyd pandvlphus' and act as legate to John, and Dissimulation shall be Raymundus and stir up foreign kings to invade England (13^{r}, 1056-60). The historical Langton and Pandolfo and the at least historical-sounding Raymundus have been reduced to temporary aliases assigned by the Pope. Under such masks can they go amongst men and work their darker purpose.

The Pope is the only vice for whom humanness is somehow more intrinsic than a pseudonym plus an appropriate costume; after all, Sedition recognizes Usurped Power as the Pope even without his regalia. In him, the humanity of Innocent and the ancient diabolism of Usurped Power meet, making him a unique hinge between human nature and supernatural evil. Edward Burns gives this an intriguing formulation in his study of character in *Johan*. The audience are supposed 'to recognise in [the vices'] progression (from personified quality, to "estate" to "historical individual") a revelation of the real identity of evil working in the world.' The Pope's position is 'identified as evil intent, anterior to any of these three modes'.[164] The 'real' Pope was held by his followers to be a point of contact between divinity and humanity through an unbroken succession from Christ, and lesser men to become participants in divinity only by his investiture. (Which allowed reformist propaganda to play

[164] Edward Burns, *Character* (Basingstoke, 1990), 57.

on the combined fears of spiritual error and of foreign control, emanating as they both did through international channels from a political actor in Italy.) In the plotting scene of the four vices, the Pope is the great linchpin not between mankind and the divine but between numinous evil and mankind. It is by him that the demonic forces become participants in human society through a ritual of investiture and renaming. He launders evils into men.

The scene of conspiratorial renaming is a familiar one in the Tudor personification tradition. Julie Paulson has established, without too much exaggeration, ‘the vice disguised as virtue’ as ‘the sixteenth-century morality play’s signature feature’, and studies of this ‘masquerading vice’ convention have been made by John A. Alford and Jane Griffiths.[165] Assumed names such as Ease for *Nature*’s Sloth or Sure Surveyance for Skelton’s Crafty Conveyance tend to humanise the malignant plotters as harmless friends or neighbours. In *Johan* the fraudulent pretence is not of virtue but of humanness itself, and its rhetorical effect is not to humanise the abstract but to dehumanise the men whose identities become simply names to be assumed. *King Johan* is the only play in which human identities are presented as simply the masks worn by metaphors.

Men into Metaphors

Andrew Escobedo does not consider John Bale in his recent discussion of personification and human agency, but he quickly hits on a formulation very apt to Bale’s project: ‘In premodern fictions […] personifications are not trying (and failing) to resemble real human beings or psychologically complex literary characters. Instead, they are channelling energy.’[166] According to Escobedo, we miss this energy through our modern instinct to read personifications from the vehicle (the human) backwards to the tenor (an abstract concept), as if the author took ‘a psychologically deep, mimetically probable literary character and then subtract[ed] from this character until all that remains is a narrow strip’, limited by the received definition of an impersonal idea.[167] Instead, considered from Escobedo’s imagined pre-realist perspective, personification gives ‘animation and vitality’ to inanimate ideas by representing them as human agents – bodying them forth, in the Shakespearean phrase – and

[165] Paulson, *Theatre of the Word*, 140; John A. Alford, ‘”My name is Worship”: Masquerading vice in Medwall’s *Nature*’, in John A. Alford, *From Page to Performance* (East Lansing, MI, 1995); Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority* (Oxford, 2006), 56-78, on Skelton’s *Magnificence*.
[166] Escobedo, *Volition’s Face*, 3.
[167] Escobedo, *Volition’s Face*, 3.

thus the metaphor should be enjoyed for enlivening its tenor, rather than criticised for limiting its vehicle. Reading like this, we will not mistake personifications for what they are not: ‘failed persons’.[168]

The whole scheme of Bale’s plays is a disturbingly non-metaphorical parody of Escobedo’s ‘channelling energy’. Especially in *King Johan*, the vices are emanations of devilish power into the world, who are merely ‘trying […] to resemble real human beings’. With the insolent ease that an actor dons a monk’s habit or bishop’s mitre, abstract ideas are shown assuming human identities. Escobedo’s valuable apologia for personification necessarily excludes such cases, in which the device was positively intended to represent ‘failed persons’ – to expose apparently real people as just the masks behind which an inhuman evil acts in the world. Escobedo requires us to prioritise the *metaphorical* life given to an abstract concept ahead of the *actual* life of which we assume a represented person would otherwise be capable. We should not view something as having been ‘subtracted’. However, when the represented person has an undoubted claim to real personhood – such as Innocent III, but also all of England’s regular and secular clergy – part of the calculated effect of the personification is of radical subtraction: that a zero-sum game has been played between a person and an idea, and the latter has malignly won out.

Importantly, the implication is not that Stephen Langton is so seditious that he ‘becomes’ Sedition, nor is Avarice the canon lawyer in *Three Laws* simply a jurisconsult in the throes of a personal passion for lucre. These are conspirators, who marry a personal passion for evil with a self-conscious desire to promote their eponymous vice in others. As Sodomy boasts,

> In the fleshe I am a fyre,
> And soch a vyle desyre,
> As brynge men to the myre
> Of fowle concupiscence
> […]
> In the first age I beganne,
> And so perseverde with manne,
> And styll wyll if I canne,
> So longe as he endure
> If monkysh sectes renue,
> And popysh prestes contynue,
> Whych are of my retynue,
> To lyve I shall be sure. [*Three Laws*, [B6]^{r}, 563-66; [B7]^{v}, 627-34.]

[168] Escobedo, *Volition’s Face*, 1.

Every one of Bale's villains gets considerable comic and satirical mileage by rehearsing a litany of figures both ancient and recent who have 'used' them, or dwelled with them, or been influenced by them – Pope Julius II by Sodomy; Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, and Simon Magus by Ambition; Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas by Hypocrisy; and so on. As we saw in the Introduction, this was always the defining goal of the personified vice in late medieval and Tudor drama: to have control over – that is, an interest in – others. Bale seizes on this feature to embody all infractions into a co-ordinated assault against God, 'frutes' of the same faithlessness.

We can contrast this to Escobedo's main example, literature's most celebrated case of a human being transformed into the vehicle for an abstract tenor. Malbecco in Book III of *The Faerie Queene* is a miserly cuckold who is eventually driven so mad by the elopement of his young wife that he '[f]orgot he was a man', and becomes a toad-gnawing troglodyte whose new name, and whole identity, is Jealousy.[169] Malbecco's difference from the personifications of Bale's tradition is that they are calculating conspirators, measurable by their effect on others. Malbecco comes to represent only his *own* 'daemon' of jealousy, and does not serve as an outsourced symbol for anybody else's passion. Comparison with Spenser's other personifications suggests that we are dealing in this case with an unusually restricted kind of metonymy, referring to a whole (the jealous man) by a part (his jealousness). Helen Cooper has claimed that this was the dominant rhetorical mode for understanding personification generally, and that 'the great medieval personification allegories' were usually analysed 'in terms of such metonymy'. She cites Conrad of Hirsau's twelfth-century *accessus* to Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, which argues (inaccurately) that the warring vices and virtues are non-metaphorical vicious and virtuous people referred to 'per figuram metonomiam', by a quality which they contain.[170] Conrad's common-sense reading is as inadequate to Spenser's project as to Prudentius' but it fits Malbecco unusually neatly, and points up his difference from the personifications I am considering. There are personifications no less morbidly self-absorbed than Jealousy in *The Faerie Queene* who nonetheless play an active missionary, as well as passive exemplificatory, role, such as the despairing Despair who tempts the Redcross Knight to suicide in I.9, or the careworn

[169] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, and Toshiyuki Suzuki, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, 2013), III.10 stanza 60. See also Louise Gilbert Freeman, 'The metamorphosis of Malbecco', *Studies in Philology* 97 (2000), 308-30, and Kelly Lehtonen, 'The abjection of Malbecco', *Spenser Studies* 29 (2014), 179-96.

[170] Helen Cooper, 'Gender and personification in *Piers Plowman*', *YLS* 5 (1991), 31-48: 42, citing Conrad's *Dialogus super auctores*.

blacksmith Care whose hammering keeps the careworn Sir Scudamore awake in IV.5. Jealousy's retreat to an inaccessible cave, in total isolation from any affairs but his own, symbolises his newfound symbolic irrelevance as much as his morbid solipsism.

Escobedo argues that Malbecco's diminishment into a monstrous cipher is intended to tell us something about jealousy: that it will monster us if we allow it to. Thus, 'Malbecco does not lose his humanity by becoming a personification. He loses his humanity by becoming a personification of *jealousy*.'[171] This is a compellingly nuanced distinction. The challenge of Bale's papists is that they are not simply possessed by a 'daemon': they are shown to be simply temporary masks donned by that daemon, which seeks further victims, and to which they become functionally identical. I argue, in a similar spirit to Escobedo, that this is because of their specific status as 'frutes of Infydelyte'. I will show that the role of Infidelity and the Pope in bringing evil and human together parallels Bale's conviction that unfaith makes men into limbs of the Devil. The name for this incorporation into a single satanic body is Antichrist.

What follows attempts to engage Bale on two fronts: as a theorist of human iniquity, and a polemical propagandist. On the one hand, because all men are members of Antichrist until regenerate by faith, Bale's presentation of the papists was arguably compatible with a goal to win converts rather than divide neighbours. More obviously, however, the revelation of an evil conspiracy, enabled by the loss of the everyman, served a propagandist function in line with the temporary and political objectives of Bale's patron: to create unity against an evil enemy. This should not be minimised, and I will address it first.

Propaganda and the Problem of Evil

For millennia, theologians have attempted to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of a just and omnipotent God, a form of argument which after Leibniz gained the name 'theodicy'. For some forms of propaganda, however, human evil is not a problem but an opportunity, full of vital possibilities. This is constitutive of what Jacques Ellul called 'horizontal integration' propaganda, to create or strengthen a coalition by confirming them against a common enemy.[172] This sort of propaganda does not attempt to *justify* the existence of certain evils, still less to make them compatible with God's existence, but to capitalise on

[171] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 14.
[172] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda* [1962], trans. Konrad Keller and Jean Lerner (New York, 1968), 81.

them. When Ellul wrote, in the wake of the totalitarian Third Reich and in a Europe half-subsumed by the totalitarian Soviet Union, the most concerted efforts at mass propaganda were atheistic, concerned usually with replacing rather than advancing organised religion. However, theodicy was arguably beside the point for the propagandists of the sixteenth century too. The German evangelical playwright Thomas Naogeorgus imagined God's own pithy answer to the problem in his play about the papal Antichrist, *Pammachius* (1540), of which Bale made a lost translation.[173] Naogeorgus imagines that the apostles Peter and Paul are alarmed at the persecution of the true Church on Earth, and they ask Christ why he permits it. '*Quid ni?*' Christ answers – 'Why not? […] Everyone finally chosen shall be tested for his purity by this difficulty of the times.'[174] An ongoing frenzy of theological and emotional work lay behind this answer, but its almost offhand summary by Naogeorgus is representative of the problem's decentred place in the polemical fiction of the sixteenth century. God undoubtably existed, and so undoubtedly did evil people – and this combined reality was an axiom which propaganda accepted before moving on to its real mission, which was one of exposure. Evil was at work and conspiring against the salvation of the whole of Christendom. Thus the 'problem of evil' for the sixteenth century propagandist was more immediate than why: it was how to know it when you saw it, and how to destroy it.

The removal of the everyman served the rhetorical purpose of estrangement. Then as now, the propagandist creating a common enemy need only make a presumption of its evil, and then of two further premises: the enemies' absolute undesirability – they are hateful to God – and impermanence – they are not intrinsic to the world, but can in fact be defeated – and what results is a unificatory obligation upon all good people to resist and overcome them. The propagandist's task is to fashion certain groups as unnecessary evils: if they live abroad, to fashion them as a foreign threat, and if they live at home, to fashion them as a calculating fifth column, enemies of the people, in order to make their continued presence in the community intolerable. As Naogeorgus wrote in dedicating *Pammachius* to Archbishop Cranmer, 'there is no danger of going too far against actions being continually, impiously and criminally carried out', like those of the Roman Church.[175] At least in terms of verbal

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[173] Bale lists a translated *Pammachius* amongst his own works in the *Catalogus* (Basel, 1558), [Tt4]^v^.
[174] *Comoediae ac tragoediae* (Basel, 1541), y4^v^; translated by C. C. Love in 1992 for the Records of Early English Drama (online only): https://ccltlp.artsci.utoronto.ca/appendix.html.
[175] *Comoediae*, [x6]^r-v^.

violence, no holds are barred. *Pammachius*' English translator would live up to this rhetorical sanction with almost unique venom.

The *locus classicus* for the use of drama to demonise a common enemy is the memorandum for Henry VIII prepared by Bale's fellow servant of Cromwell, Sir Richard Morison, soon after the split with Rome.[176] The common, unlearned people must be 'inculked' with hatred for the Bishop of Rome (who in recent memory had still been Christ's vicar) and gratitude to Henry for freeing them from his idolatrous tyranny. To this horizontal-integrative end, Morison recommends a programme of sermons, school lessons, annual festivals, minstrels' songs, and especially plays, because '[i]nto the commen people thynges sooner enter by the eies, then by the eares'. Rather than flummery like the Robin Hood plays (which Morison condemns for their sauciness towards the legitimate constabulary of Nottingham), plays should be staged to 'declare lyvely before the peoples eies the abhomynation and wickednes of the bisshop of Rome, monkes, ffreers, nonnes, and suche like, and to declare and open to them thobedience that your subiectes […] owe unto your magestie.' This moved far beyond the mockery of hypocritical clergy which had been a pillar of medieval satire for centuries, such as the *mimi* who burlesqued monastic misbehaviour in their *triviis* (games or plays) in the tenth century.[177] Morison is explicit that the new loyalist plays should make this misbehaviour seem universal and no laughing matter. It should justify both of Henry's ongoing religious upheavals – the extirpation of the Pope and the dissolution of the regular clergy – by throwing them all together into a single unnecessary evil.

The critic A. P. Foulkes writes of the insidious danger of modern propaganda that it can 'coalesce completely and indivisibly with the values and accepted power symbols of a given society' (something which, he argues, literature offers us the aesthetic distance to expose or disrupt).[178] These dominant tropes are the 'symbols and stereotypes' which Ellul called 'the psychological elements most favourable to propaganda' for their simple power to capture and steer the imagination.[179] In the case of the Reformation, the propagandists' play with symbols took the characteristic form not of camouflage but of violent disruption of received associations, what Stephen Greenblatt calls 'the reinscription of evil onto the professed enemies of evil' by turning upside-down previously inviolable symbols of sanctity

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[176] Printed in Sydney Anglo, 'An early Tudor programme for plays and other demonstrations against the Pope', *JWCI* 20 (1957), 176-79.
[177] According to Edgar of England, quoted in Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore, 1978), 51-52.
[178] A. P. Foulkes, *Literature and Propaganda* (London, 1983), 3.
[179] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 94.

into markers of hidden corruption.[180] The heavily visual, ceremonial, and vestimental culture of late-medieval religion made the Roman Church vulnerable to parody thanks to the very quality – its opulence – which had made it solemn. This was the creative and indeed theatrical culture of iconoclasm: not simply smashing and burning, as gangs of reformist townspeople would do to church monuments under Edward VI, but mocking through performative appropriation and re-enactment, 'emptying out through representation'.[181] Despite the outrageously subversive feel of the results, Greenblatt rightly calls this technique 'one of the characteristic operations of religious authority in the early modern period' – not a statement of revolutionary or anti-authoritarian intent but an officially sponsored action by already established authorities like Cromwell, to rally support behind their own order.[182]

From the mid-1530s to at least the late 1560s, dressing evil characters as popish clergy was the basic visual pun of English polemical theatre. Theatrical costume was the perfect medium for Greenblatt's 'reinscription of evil onto the professed enemies of evil'. Another clergyman seeking Cromwell's patronage in the mid-1530s, Thomas Wylley, claimed to have written a play featuring a nun called Ignorance.[183] This name would continue to be attached to popish priests in William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* and *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, and the anonymous *New Custom*. The visual pun unified the apparently popular idiom of Bale, who brings Satan onstage 'like a religious' in his play of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, with the most rarefied academic settings – such as John Foxe's Latin *Christus Triumphans* (c.1556) with its Franciscan friar Psychephonus and Carmelite Thanatus (a brother of Bale's old order) – and the Court, where Revels Office accounts for Edward record a play of a monk Lechery, a friar Envy, and a priest Gluttony.[184] At least two royal entertainments early in Elizabeth's reign dressed actors as wolves, hogs, asses and baboons who were themselves in the vestments of monks, summoners and bishops.[185]

[180] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford, 1988), 98.
[181] Greenblatt, *Negotiations*, 138.
[182] Greenblatt, *Negotiations*, 98.
[183] Wiggins 40.
[184] For Bale's Satan, '*simulata religione*', see *The Temptation of our Lord*, D1^{v}, 77SD. For Foxe's play at Oxford and Cambridge, see Daniel Blank, 'Performing exile: John Foxe's *Christus Triumphans* at Magdalen College, Oxford', *Renaissance Studies* 30 (2016), 584-601. The lost Edwardian play is Wiggins 170.
[185] The royal entertainments, at Court in 1559 and Hinchinbrooke House in 1564 (Wiggins 310 and 385), are discussed in Martin Wiggins, *Drama and the Transfer of Power* (Oxford, 2012), 27-29, 40.

Greenblatt has described the emptying-out of previously sacrosanct symbols by the Reformation, but this play with costumes is rather different to exposing the inner puppetry of a fraudulent miracle-working shrine. What is really being 'emptied out' in this equation of the papists with the subhuman is not the holiness of the vestments but the humanity of their wearers. What is extraordinary, and often overlooked by scholars who unwittingly echo Bale's polemic by treating the clergy as a basically 'Roman' taskforce, is that the thousands of former monks, nuns and friars did not 'return' to Rome, or to Hell, but to their birthplaces in the parishes of England. They were the children, siblings, and friends (sometimes, as Bale never tired of alleging, the parents) of thousands more parishioners. Brother Bale knew this as well as anyone. After decades with the Carmelites, he must have known and surely befriended dozens of 'religious' who were swept up in the changes he now championed. In 1538, his former brethren at Ipswich, now reduced to poverty, had their friary confiscated, soon followed by Doncaster. In many places the dissolutions were yet to happen. When Cromwell's players brought their anticlerical plays to Thetford, the town's Cluniac priory was still open and receiving pilgrims – and indeed players.[186] The secular priesthood meanwhile continued structurally unchanged. The old historians' hunch that 'anticlericalism' was a widespread attitude before the split with Rome has been heavily tempered in the last half-century. In an influential article, the revisionist Christopher Haigh denied 'the opposition of a self-conscious laity to a distinctive clerical caste' in the late medieval period. He argues that on the eve of Reformation 'the lower clergy and poorer laity had much in common and both were oppressed by their social superiors: each priest was […] a member of the village community, usually working in or near his native parish, and not an alien intruder.'[187] Dramatic propaganda was not aimed over the heads of such mixed communities but straight at them, as if to divide them down the middle.

I argue that, for Bale, the polemical *is* pastoral. Bale is provocative, but he does not provoke only to fear and hostility but to conversion, and the repentance which drives infidelity out. Richard Matheson has described the pamphleteers of the early Reformation as motivated by 'their personal distress and sense of vocation rather than […] a concern for the techniques or social strategies of propaganda', which Matheson characterises hostilely as 'the systematic and often cynical propagation by an interested party of tendentiously presented

[186] See Richard Beadle, 'Plays and playing at Thetford and nearby, 1498-1540', *Theatre Notebook* 32 (1978), 4-11.
[187] Christopher Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), 59, 58.

views'.[188] That vocation is admittedly not always obvious in Thorndon's controversialist vicar. Though Bale wrote in a later tract against the papists that '[o]nlye couete I […] ther amendement yf yt myght be,' his own rhetoric makes it hard to believe him.[189] However, Brother Bale knew better than anyone that it could be done. He wrote in 1537 that some of his Suffolk parishioners had recently rebuked him with the name 'friar', but that he owns this past name as St Paul had owned his old life as a Pharisee and persecutor of the faith.[190] In what remains, I will provide the intellectual context which I believe can reconcile these extremes.

There is no doubt that Bale wrote nakedly sectarian propaganda. However, any distinction between 'sectarian' and 'universal' – Bale in the former and *Mankind* in the latter – is blind to the fundamentals which the early evangelicals saw exposed by the controversy they were living through. For the thinkers of the Reformation, the sectarian was also universal, and the divisions which it exposed were as much a part of the fabric of the world as the flesh-spirit dichotomy accepted by Mankind tilling his field. Bale proposed a fundamental dualism which would make sense of the newly divided Christendom of his own age, but he knew that the fracture did not run obligingly between kingdoms like rivers or mountain ranges along national borders, but spiderlike through parishes, families, and the longest-standing personal relationships, wherever the old unrighteousness persisted.

The Roman Church's institutionalised idolatry was such a pervasive threat to salvation that it sent him back to Scripture for a wholesale rereading of human history in light of what he now knew. What it revealed was a conflict between saving faith and infidelity so basic that no middle ground could be possible. Bale found this expressed in the fight between the Archangel Michael and the dragon in Revelation 12:7. 'So great is the multitude, that none is found out of it,' he explained in his commentary. 'None is ther but are in this army. Eyther they are good or badde, faythfull or vnfaythful, righteouse or vnrighteouse. […] Continued hath this battayl fro*m* the firste beginnynge, and so shal styll to the latter ende.'[191] One of his earliest pieces of polemical prose, the confutation of certain charges against him which he wrote in prison in January 1537, shows that the opposing churches were already uppermost in his mind during the high point of Cromwell's reforms: 'who so euer ys not in

[188] Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1998), 47, 45.
[189] *Image*, N^{v}.
[190] Bale wrote this during his brief imprisonment for heresy in January 1537, in his answer to the charges brought against him; transcribed in McCusker, *John Bale*, 9.
[191] *Image*, [2]ev^{v}-[vi]^{r}.

trew fayth […] ys not of t*h*e church mylytant, but of t*h*e church malygnant'.[192] He puts the same words into the Law of Christ's mouth not long after: 'Thys congregacyon is the true church mylytaunt | Those counterfet desardes are the very chyrch malygnaunt' (*Three Laws*, D8[v]). Rather than virtue and vice within every human soul, Bale's drama expresses faith and unfaith as two giant churches, armies, or bodies at work in the world. One is Christ's, and the other the satanic and self-propagating body of Antichrist.

The Universal Antichrist

The Antichrist is named in a handful of verses in the New Testament, and had been identified for over a millennium with a number of evil figures in other passages. The sixteenth century reformers accepted this synthesis. The epistles of St John prophesy one of whom he explicitly says *hic est Antichristus*.[193] 'Little children, it is the last hour: and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are become many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour. […] Who is a liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is Antichrist' (1 John 2:18, 22); 'every spirit that dissolveth [i.e. does away with] Jesus is not of God. And this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh: and he is now already in the world' (1 John 4:3); 'For many seducers are gone out into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a seducer and an antichrist' (2 John 1:7). This shadowy enemy was importantly assumed to be the 'man of sin' predicted by Paul to the Thessalonians. Paul foresaw a time when

> the man of sin [will] be revealed, the son of perdition […] who opposeth and is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God. […] For the mystery of iniquity already worketh [*mysterium iam operatur iniquitatis*]: only that he who now holdeth do hold, until he be taken out of the way. And then that wicked one [*ille iniquus*] shall be revealed: whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: him whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power and signs and lying wonders. [2 Thessalonians 2:3-9.]

[192] Printed in McCusker, *John Bale*, 11. Bale refers to the *ecclesia malignantium* of Psalm 25:5 (26:5 in the KJV).
[193] I quote the Vulgate and the revised Rheims translation. The ex-friar's familiarity with the Vulgate above all other versions is probably unquestionable, and Cathy Shrank has helpfully shown that Bale and many later Protestant playwrights continue to quote the Latin in their drama; see 'Citing scripture in late medieval and early modern English morality drama', in Chanita Goodblatt and Eva von Contzen (eds.), *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Manchester, 2020), 104-19.

The man of sin would win many followers through the ‘seduction of iniquity’, because God ‘shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying: that all may be judged who have not believed the truth but have consented to iniquity’ (2:10-12). The apocalyptic tenor of this, and especially John’s ‘last hour’, led to the Antichrist being identified with one or all of the monsters subsequently revealed to John in his vision of the end of the world, especially the beast out of the earth who speaks with the voice of the red dragon (Revelation 13:11), symbolic of the Antichrist as a channel for Satan’s power.

The belief that the Pope was the prophesied Antichrist had been articulated by the English Wycliffites and the Bohemian Hussites, and became in turn one of the earliest and most enduring tenets of the Reformation. After all, did the megalomaniac Pope not play the role of the self-exalting ‘man of sin’ predicted by Paul, replacing God with his invented traditions? Christopher Hill puts the commonplace status of this identification beyond doubt by citing passages from over thirty English reformers before 1600 explicitly equating Pope and Antichrist.[194] This replaced the traditional ‘medieval’ understanding of Antichrist, compounded of scripture and apocryphal legend, which had held that a single prophesied man would be conceived by the Devil toward the end of the world, work miracles in Jerusalem, be worshipped as God himself, and persecute the true faith, before being struck dead by the true God. This was the subject of a widely disseminated biography of Antichrist by the tenth century French abbot Adso, which provided the canonical story told by the only extant English Antichrist play, the dyers’ pageant in the fifteenth century Chester cycle.[195] However, Bale spoke for the evangelical mainstream when he described all who believe in ‘an Antichrist to be borne at the latter ende of the worlde’ as ‘most fowlye deceyued’.[196] Since at least 1520, Martin Luther had referred in letters and in print to the papacy as fulfilling the biblical prophecies of a human adversary of Christ. He followed the Wycliffite mainstream in claiming that the papal office itself was Antichrist, not any particular Pope. ‘[T]he Antichrist must not be associated with a person but with an office’, as one Lollard manuscript known to Bale put it, so that ‘the one claiming himself to be pope already residing [in Rome] is equally that great Antichrist, just as whosoever was his predecessor.’[197] This was echoed by Tyndale, Frith, and others, and by the mid-30s was a commonplace among advanced reformists like

[194] Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971), 9-13.
[195] Curtis V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards* (Leiden, 1998).
[196] *Image*, [2i7]ʳ.
[197] The *Opus arduum* of c.1389-90, translated in Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards*, 179. Bostick establishes the *Opus* to be the ‘vnnamed disciple of Iohn Wyckleffe’ whom Bale cites in *Image*, [k7]ʳ.

Bale. It was the subject of *Pammachius*, the German neo-Latin play which Bale claimed to have translated into English, and of the Italian exile Bernardino Ochino's dialogue *The Unjust Usurped Primacy of the Bishop of Rome*, written under Edward VI.[198] Bale refers to the papal Antichrist in his plays and clearly saw no need to defend the proposition, part of a suite of once-heretical concepts with which he anticipated that audiences were now familiar.

However, the reformers did not simply replace a singular future Antichrist, the Judean necromancer, with a singular one at any given time, the Bishop of Rome. They inherited another, deeply intertwined tradition which understood the Antichrist as a greater spiritual collective, in which, although one man shall be uniquely worthy the name as the perfection of evil, nonetheless the *multi antichristi* of whom St John wrote shall be bound together by a common evil. Thus, the standard biblical commentary of the later medieval West, the *Glossa ordinaria*, interpreted the Beast of Revelation 13:1 as signifying 'Antichrist, or generally the total collective of evil persons'.[199] This was typically discussed in terms of a body and its 'members' or limbs, on the basis that Antichrist would be the perfect perversion of the true Church as the body of Christ which St Paul described in detail to the Corinthians: 'you are the body of Christ [*corpus Christi*], and members of one member [*membra de membro*]', and 'all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ' (1 Cor. 12:27, 12). Members of a body and of a congregation are thereby brought together. If Christ was both a part of his mystical body – its head, as he is described in Ephesians (1:22-23) – and the sum of its other members, then the Antichrist could be both a heresiarch heading the false church and the mystical body of its congregants. This mystical anti-Church was of huge importance to the sixteenth century reformers, for whom the true faith was being institutionally suppressed by the whole ecclesial structure of late-medieval Christendom. Bale was the earliest and most influential English reformer to theorise Antichrist in this general sense, stretching far beyond Rome to encompass all who by their faithlessness to the Gospel make themselves into conspirators against God.

How then were the members of Antichrist related to one another, and how would they be involved in the prophesied destruction of the 'son of perdition'? Moreover, what was the relation of this mystical body to the Devil, by whose operation the Antichrist works ('*secundum operationem Satanae*', 2 Thess. 2:9)? As Aquinas pointed out, the Devil is the

[198] Christ himself in *Pammachius* describes the ways in which Pope Pammachius is his diametrical opposite (see Naogeorgus, *Comoediae ac tragoediae* (Basel, 1541), y3^{v}), and Ochino, *Unjust* (London, 1549), Zi^{r}-Bbiii^{r}, imagines a nineteen-page lecture by Archbishop Cranmer to Henry VIII on the papacy as Antichrist.
[199] Discussed in Bostick, *The Antichrist*, 21.

true head of the wicked, of whose body the Antichrist himself will be just a member.[200] Much seemed to hang on what Paul meant by the mystery of iniquity, the force which he warned the Thessalonians was already at work in the world in his own, pre-papal, time. As Peter Lake has said of the Elizabethan generation of anticatholic thinkers, this mysterious 'principle of deceit and evil which could not be identified with any one man' meant that, for the reformers, 'the enemy was more than human'.[201]

The Mystery of Iniquity

Paul's cryptic *mystérion tés anomias* (strictly 'mystery of lawlessness', but known to Bale and his contemporaries by the Vulgate *mysterium iniquitatis*) had been the subject of contention since the early Fathers.[202] Adso, the influential biographer of Antichrist, did not mention it. Most commentators agreed that 'mystery' indicated secrecy, that an evil conspiracy was working out of sight against Paul's Church. John Calvin stopped there, contrasting satanic 'mystery' with divine 'revelation', and noting non-specifically that the Devil was 'carrying on secretly and clandestinely what he would do openly in his own time.'[203] However most accounts went further. One early interpretation, favoured by Augustine in *The City of God*, was that the mystery simply meant a silent minority of pretend Christians within the Church.[204] The *Glossa ordinaria* gave a descendant of this view, that the iniquity is *mystica* because 'shrouded by the name of piety, as some want to be taken for ministers of Christ when they are actually false'.[205] The interpretation which gained most traction in the early to high Middle Ages, however, was that the iniquity was that of the persecuting Roman Emperor Nero, followed after Paul's time by Domitian and Julian the Apostate. According to the ninth-century exegete Haimo of Auxerre – who was the greatest influence on Adso – *mysterium* referred to the secrecy of the Devil in working '*occulte*' (secretly) through idolatrous pagan rulers what he would, at the end times, do '*manifeste*' –

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[200] *Summa theologica*, pars 3, qu. 8, art. 8.
[201] Peter Lake, 'The significance of the Elizabethan identification of the Pope as Antichrist', *JEH* 31 (1980), 166.
[202] A summary of patristic responses to the verse is given in Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries* (Chichester, 2010), 217-23.
[203] *Commentaries on [...] Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Edinburgh, 1851), 333.
[204] Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist* (Washington, DC, 2005), 104. For this interpretation of the 'mystery' as a fifth column of misbelievers, see also 134 (on Rabanus Maurus), 189 (on Lanfranc) and 234 (on Peter Lombard).
[205] Printed in *Walafridi Strabi [...] opera omnia*, 3 vols (Paris, 1852), vol. 2 col. 622; my translation.

openly – ‘*per Antichristum*’. Haimo is clear that the emperors are *membra* of Satan in thus doing his work: ‘The Devil who will be in Antichrist [*in Antichristo erit*] is prefigured secretly and by a mystery in his evil members [*in membris suis malis*]’.[206] Antichrist will be suffused by the same spirit of evildoing which already makes the persecuting Emperors into limbs of Satan’s body. Satan works within Antichrist and his precursors to make them into members of himself.

However, this interpretation stops far short of accounting for the pervasiveness of evil in the present: it concerns only those keynote persecutors whose famous wickedness made them typological for the kingly magician at the end of time, what the *Glossa* calls ‘*umbri futuri Antichristi*’.[207] It was another ninth century commentator on Thessalonians, the Irishman Sedulius Scottus, who extended the corporate identity of Antichrist into a body synthesising a multitude of false believers across time. Whether he was the first to put it this way, Scottus is of particular value here because Bale knew his commentaries.[208] Annotating the *mysterium*, Scottus says: ‘Antichrist works through his members, as John says: There are become many antichrists [1 John 2:18]. The mystery of iniquity works in those who make his path easy through false doctrines, whom the blessed John says to be abroad in the world. Just as Christ works now through his own members [*per membra sua operatur*], so does Antichrist.’[209] Clearly ‘mystery’ here is more than just surreptitiousness or typology, but a spiritual force, both motive and integrative. False doctrines are both the effect of this coalition – the spreaders of error – and the factor which incorporates its members into a body, in a parody of Christ’s body the Church. Even minus his central premise – that a single human Antichrist would one day be born – Scottus’ account of the *mysterium* condenses many ingredients which Bale would use to theorise the whole Roman faith as the Antichrist.

The language of Thessalonians saturated Bale’s polemics during his periods of exile, and two of his titles at this time – *A Disclosing of the Man of Sin* (1543) and *A Mystery of Iniquity* […] *Disclosed* (1545) – show his discernment of the Pauline supernatural conspiracy within the contemporary crisis. He appears to use the phrase ‘mystery of iniquity’

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[206] *Haymonis Halberstatensis Episcopi opera omnia*, 3 vols (Paris, 1852), vol. 2, cols. 780-81; my translation.
[207] *Strabi […] opera*, 2.622.
[208] He assumed they were by the sixth-century writer Caelius Sedulius, and lists them in Caelius’ section of his bibliography of British writers. However, they are clearly Scottus’ from the incipits Bale provides. (*Scriptorum […] posterior pars* (Basel, 1559), A2^{r}.)
[209] *Sedulii Scoti Hyberniensis* […] *annotationes* (Basel, 1538), Xx3^{v}; discussed in Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 143.

interchangeably with the spirit of Antichrist and of Satan.[210] 'Since the worlds beginning,' he annotates Revelation 13:8, 'hath the misterie of iniquitie wrought in Caine and in his posteritie, and so co*n*tinued in the beastly members of Antichrist, and so shall do still to the latter day'.[211]

I argue that for Bale, the mystery of iniquity is infidelity. The prologue to *Three Laws* tells us that God's laws will be overturned because 'Infydelyte so worketh in euery place' (A2r, 19) – the equivalent verb ('*operatur*') used by St Paul and Sedulius Scottus for the *mysterium*. *Three Laws* ends with Vindicta Dei wielding water, sword, and fire against Infidelity, who is driven offstage and implicitly back to the source of his emanation: 'To the deuyll of helle by the messe I wene I go' ([F5]r, 1853). The closest dramatic parallel to this is indeed the Chester play of the Antichrist, in which the evil magician is put to death by the sword of St Michael and taken by devils to Hell as an honoured guest. After Infidelity has been subdued, Deus Pater refers to him as 'that inyquyte' ([F5]r, 1858).

This identification developed a theme basic to the Reformation. As the reformer Johannes Bugenhagen put it in one of the earliest Lutheran commentaries on Thessalonians, 'thus did the noonday demon work secretly in those […] who preferred to exalt anything above the Gospel'.[212] Bale's distinctive contribution was to build a picture of the whole false Church based on the prophecies of Paul and John. Faithlessness is a 'mystery' because it is the spiritual operation of the Devil within mankind, and it embodies all unbelievers into members of Antichrist, which is the body or church of the Devil. Bale was one of the first, and certainly the first and most influential in English, to picture the whole Roman congregation as the modern manifestation of Antichrist, understood in the key reformist terms as dead-letter unbelief opposed to saving faith, with the Reformation understood as a dismembering of the Antichrist's body. An examination of his three dominant metaphors – limbs of a body, soldiers in an army, and congregants of a church – show that they resolve

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[210] Thus, 'neuer afore wrought the sprete of Antichrist, the mystery of iniquite so strongelye as at that tyme,' he writes of Theodorus, ominously appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by the Pope in 666 AD; Theodorus' successor Archbishop Dunstan (d. 998) made 'redye the waye to Satha*n* and hys fylthye kyngedome against hys commynge fourth from the bottomlesse pytt […] whch ys the sprete of Antichrist' (*The actes of Englysh votaryes* (Antwerp, 1546), Eiiv, [I8]v); and the Henrician Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, performs 'a misterie of iniquite, and a workynge of Sathan vnder a deceytfull power' (*A dysclosyng of the man of synne* ([Antwerp], 1543), Cvr).

[211] *Image*, [2]kvr.

[212] *Annotationes […] in .X. epistolas Pauli* (Strasbourg, 1524), I5r ('*Ita*que […] *agebat abscondite hoc Daemonium meridianum, in illis, […] qui aliquid melius quam Euangelium erigere uoluerunt*'); my translation. The 'noonday demon' is from Psalm 90:6.

into the same notion of a coordinated front against God, in which men are bound together by the mystery of iniquity into material instruments of an immanent evil.

Antichrist is no singular person, not even the Pope, but 'a mistery comprehendynge in it but one generall Antichrist for all whyche hath reygned in the churche in a maner sens the Ascention of Christ', and any future antichrist 'shall be but a member of thys.'[213] Infidelity is basic to this corporate identity: as Bale tells the papists, 'the great Antichrist is youre whole clergye with the layte of the same false faythe', and 'all those that consent with them in the Romysh fayth.'[214] This is important: though Bale expended almost all of his vitriol as a writer on the bishops and other senior clergy – those whom he saw actively suppressing the Gospel and reversing the King's reformation – their victims the laypeople, whom they keep in pernicious superstition, are nonetheless members of Antichrist too because of their unwitting 'consent' to the superstition. He expresses this in a revealing remark about the diocese of his *bête noire*, King Henry's Bishop of London Edmund Bonner: 'To be a cytezen of London is no more harme before God than it is to be a dweller in any other quarter of the worlde. But to be of the diocese is to be a member of antichristes kyngedome whych is moche worse in dede.'[215] These identities are coextensive. Like all humans, the English laity participate simultaneously in a multitude of corporate identities – the civic identities of township, craft, or guild, the personal identity of family and kinship, and the ecclesial identities of parishioner, diocesan, and congregant. Bale acknowledges that men and women can lead blameless or upright lives through most of these – but when we consider them as communicants of an unreformed Church, it is as if we have applied a new lens detecting otherwise invisible wavelengths of light, and the outline of the Devil is suddenly discernible in an otherwise peaceable and conscientious everyday life. To pass from this mixed life into ordination as a clergyman is to make the latent outline blatant, because a Londoner in religious dress advertises his ecclesial identity ('of the diocese') over all others. However, we miss the full value of clerical dress to Bale's project of visual propaganda in the 1530s unless we see it as the visible symbol of a truth about faithlessness which stretches far beyond the cloisters.

The prophesied destruction of Antichrist would come through correct understanding of the Scriptures, by which alone one is brought to true faith. This is how Bale identifies the vanquishing 'spirit of God's mouth' in 2 Thess. 2:8, which is prophesied to destroy the spirit

[213] *Image*, [217]r.
[214] *A mysterye of inyquyte* ([Antwerp], 1545), [H6]r; *Image*, Mr.
[215] *The man of synne*, [B7]v.

of iniquity: '[w]ith the myghty breathe of Gods mouthe which is his worde inuincyble / shall youre false kyngedome be co*n*sumed.'[216] Every individual conversion to true faith by the Gospel is thus a microcosm of the eventual overthrow of the general Antichrist. This disposes of the objection that the lack of a character called 'Antichrist' in Bale's plays marks them out as irrelevant to the Antichrist tradition.[217] Confinement to a single onstage person would foreclose the mystery of the collective identity. Antichrist is wherever the 'mystery' of faithlessness is at work.

The mystery began to work in Adam's firstborn son Cain even before he murdered his brother: it arose not from a crime but a credal error. When Cain attempted to make an offering of his harvest to the Lord (Genesis 4:3-5), it was rejected, which Bale interprets to mean that Cain had a misplaced faith in his own vain works. As Bale explained, 'the proud hipocrite Cain at the suggestion of Sathan hys ghostly father, institute[d] a new religion, yea, rather a blasphemous *and* horrible supersticion', based on 'outwarde and blasing ceremonies' rather than 'the inward hart', '[l]ike as our Cainish papistes do now in Englande'.[218] Thus, Antichrist was 'first conceyued in the wycked church of Cain', but could not 'shewe hymself in hys owne lykenesse, that is to saye, Christes ope*n* aduersary, tyll Christ came in the fleshe', whereupon he 'apered all at one tyme with hym, in the malygnaunt churche of the Iewes' who sought to kill him (*Actes*, Dii[r]). The Antichrist was not a post-Incarnation phenomenon, but an immanent pattern throughout human posterity, wherever infidelity made men into members of the church of the faithless.

The congregants of Cain's church are the members of Satan's body, a spiritual figure which Bale uses with freewheeling abandon. The 'great antichrist' he writes, 'ys the beastlye bodye of Sathan, of whom my good lord here [Bishop Bonner] ys a member, and so are all they that worke lyke feates in the same generacyon.' (*Romysh foxe*, [E5][v].)[219] Bale insistently collapses the distinction between man and Devil. Whatever evil 'hath reigned in the deuill for all ages, the same also hath reigned in the wicked membres of hys beastial bodye' (*Image*, [2f8][v]). The implication that Satan could possess such a corporate identity with human beings had provoked earlier exegetes to some nervousness, including Thomas Aquinas. Responding to a gloss similar to Haimo of Auxerre's that the Devil will be '*in Antichristo*', Thomas

[216] *The epistle exhortatorye* ([Antwerp, 1544?]), Biiii[r].
[217] Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages* (Seattle, 1981), 229-30.
[218] *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles* [written 1554] (London, 1561), *iii[v].
[219] See also the clergy as 'the great bodye of sathan which ministreth to the worlde all fylthynesse of ydolatrye and necrolatrie', *A mysterye of inyquyte* ([Antwerp], 1545), [H6][r-v].

explained that the Devil will be 'in him not by personal union, nor by indwelling […] but by the effect of wickedness.' His humanity will not be 'assumed by the Devil into unity of person, as the humanity of Christ by the Son of God'; rather, 'the Devil by suggestion infuses his wickedness more copiously into him than into all others. And in this way all the wicked who have gone before are signs of Antichrist, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity already worketh."'[220] Though Thomas wrote of infusion, he was clear that wickedness is begot 'by suggestion', the influence by which the Devil makes susceptible men into proxy workers of his own evildoing. Clearly the identity of wicked person with Devil is a purely instrumental one, in that it rests on 'the effect of wickedness' rather than on a mutual extension or operation.

Thomas's caveats are helpful here because Bale, whatever his rhetorical heights, is not accusing the unfaithful of demonic possession, with Satan as a kind of puppet-master, still less making any metaphysical point about 'unity of person', whereby man *becomes* Satan. Rather, membership of the Devil's Church through infidelity makes one functionally equivalent to the enemy of God, like the hands to the head whose ends they bring about. 'All one is the deuyll with hys deuylyshnesse,' because the relationship of Satan to the antichrists is that of 'the worke manne with his worke toles' (*Romysh foxe*, Bii[v]). Bale makes clear that hand and tool are functionally equivalent, the latter an extension of the former, when he asks in a near-contemporary tract, '[w]hat other workes can come from the deuyls workynge toles / than cometh from the handes of his owne malygnaunt myschefe?' (*Epistle exhortatorye*, Dii[r]). He refers to an instrumental reality in which workers of evil become extensions of that evil.

Imps and Reprobates

'So longe is this beastly Antichriste, as he worketh the misterie of iniquitie in the reprobate vesselles,' Bale explains in his commentary on the Beast of Revelation 17:8, 'and whan he leaueth that workinge than is he no longer' (*Image*, [2]eiii[r]). This allusion to the 'vessels of wrath' in Paul's epistle to the Romans sounds ominously predestinarian. Bale made no clear statement of predestination in his prose and still less in his plays, but it is likely that, like Thomas Cranmer, he came to believe in salvation as eternally fixed by God. How does Bale's division of mankind into a conflict so basic that 'none is found out of it' (*Image*, [2]ev[v]) map

[220] *Summa theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1918-28), pars 3, qu. 8, art. 8.

onto that other, but irrevocable, division from which none are excluded, of elect and reprobate?

We might say that all reprobate are antichrists, but not all antichrists are reprobate. All humans are antichrists until renovated by a sincere faith. Bale himself had been one, a limb of Antichrist's body, a soldier in the dragon's army, and an instrument of Satan. However, these armies do not map onto the immutable categories elect and reprobate, but onto faithful and faithless, dynamic and porous factions which Luther's movement had brought into plain sight. They are basic camps into which men have always been divided *at any one time*: one cannot be in both, but with God's grace one can move between them. The role of the proselyte was to enable that movement, just as the goal of the tyrannical oppressor – bishop, magistrate, Pope – was to prevent or reverse it.

'If ye axe me,' Bale wrote during his second exile, as if to answer a persistent question arising from his earlier works on Antichrist, 'howe or by what meanes [men] become Sathans me*m*bers, hys apte instrumentes and slaughter menne, I answer you [...] [b]y that they persiste not in the manifest truthe of God, *they become like to hym* [Satan] *and are hys naturall members*, for he (saythe Christe) abode not in the truthe, for there is no truthe in hym.'[221] (My emphasis.) There is a tension here between 'being' and 'becoming', the latter a transitive process of assimilation and the former an organic outgrowing from a 'naturall' centre. Both senses are in play here.

Men are embodied into Antichrist, made limbs of Satan, by what we might picture as a transplant or an infusion: something unifying but vitally also reversible. We can understand such temporary bodily integration through another metaphor which Bale uses, that of engrafting, by which a cutting from one plant is sutured to another trunk to grow as a branch or 'limb' (or member) of the main tree. Bale gives a vegetable valence to the word 'member' in several passages – the papists are 'twygges of the same braunche and sprayes of the same sprygge' (*Mysterye*, [B7]^{v}) – but engrafting is the clearest expression of the effect of the mystery which embodies them. The grafted cutting, called a scion or 'imp', receives the life force of the tree and thus becomes an outgrowth of something from which it did not originally grow. The word had a separate but related sense of cutting or offshoot, which was the origin of the word 'imp' for a small subordinate demon, an outgrowth of the Devil. Although the gremlin sense was not yet operative during Bale's lifetime, the phrase 'imp of

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[221] *A declaration*, *iii^{r}, quoting John 8:44.

the Devil' was already understood for a wicked person.[222] As it could stand for an original growth removed, as well as a separate growth added, imps were particularly expressive of the hinterland in which parts can be reanalysed as wholes and vice versa. Bale's Antichrist belongs to this hinterland.

The engrafting is clearest in Bale's response to the case of William Tolwyn, a London rector forced by Bishop Bonner to make a public recantation of his evangelical opinions in late 1541. From Antwerp Bale published *A Disclosing of the Man of Sin*, a line-by-line commentary on Tolwyn's printed apology, by which Bale sought to expose Bonner as the titular son of perdition. Tolwyn, a good but weak man, has had his conscience forced, and '[o]f a dere chylde of Christ he ys made a sworne chylde of the deuyll by thys newe professyon' ([E7]v). Bale's marginal gloss to this sentence is 'An Impe of hym whych offreth his fete to be kyssed', the Pope. Tolwyn has become engrafted onto Antichrist's body. Bale creates a sense of a continuity of evil between Bonner and Tolwyn by depicting Tolwyn's confession as an act of ventriloquism: 'though the voyce be Tolwyns, the wordes of the voyce are my lords [Bonner's]' (Fiiiiv). Suggestively, every quotation from Tolwyn's published speech is given the heading 'The man of sin', as if Tolwyn and Bonner have been assimilated to a common identity. Their infidelity to the Gospel engrafts them to the Devil as limbs to work his purpose. Tolwyn stands here for the terrifying ease with which otherwise upright men can be incorporated into Antichrist's body and put in jeopardy of Hell; it requires no exceptional assent.

Bale exposed the immanent face of the Devil leering through all unbelievers, but despite the horrible vigour with which he described its features, he was conscious that it was not burned onto man's own face indelibly. To assume that a man needs to be unusually or ingrainedly evil to participate in something monstrous is to ignore the fact – as Bale presents it – that any well-meaning but misguided man is already monstered by his unfaith. If one is not a member of Christ's church one is a member of the Devil's. We criticise Bale for dehumanising his fellow men only because we ourselves are not being reductionist enough.

Conclusion

[222] The *OED* first records the sense of a gremlin in 1584 ('imp', n., 4b) but the metaphor for wicked men in 1526 (4a). Neither sense is in the *MED*.

One does not need to look as far down the line as the twentieth century to feel uneasy about the purported objectivity – that is, the disinterest – with which propaganda can fashion an enemy as less than human. Richard Morison's venomous warning in 1539 against an invasion of England by the Pope's 'M. legions of dyvels' takes on a different hue in light of the execution of members of the clandestine Jesuit mission in the 1580s.[223] However, such hardened camps lay in the future when Bale and Morison were writing. His vices, while extremely effective polemical symbols, express something which is basic to human nature: that unfaithfulness makes us, however unwittingly, into instruments of the Devil. I am suggesting that personification provided Bale with a metaphor to express the effect of the mystery of iniquity at work in the world: it brings man and malign, transhistorical evil together into one.

Bale omitted the everyman from his drama not to cast the popish clergy beyond the pale of the human community, but to show that *all* men, on their own efforts, are reducible to the Devil's half of a perfect, universal binary. In chapter 3 I will consider the emergence of a dramatic figure who expresses the more terminal spiritual condition – that of the reprobate vessel – and show that it may be worse to be a 'fool' in later drama than an 'antichrist' in Bale's. By such means Bale hoped to 'stere' his spectators' 'inwarde stomake' (as he put it in *The Chief Promises of God*) to a correct understanding of how we may rescue ourselves and be justified: that is, 'alone in Christ to hope for your saluacyon.'[224] The only sublunary men onstage in *Three Laws* are agents of the Devil, because such is the human condition until grace intervenes.

Three Laws structurally anticipates the mainstream of all later Protestant interludes. After Bale, drama is increasingly dominated by a central evil string-puller, a comedian named for an abstract evil whose centrality to the plot is mirrored by his linchpin-like role in marshalling and organizing subordinate vices. Bale does not use the word 'Vice' for Infidelity, and it is unclear whether it is etymologically related to human viciousness – as opposed to the 'visor' or mask which the central comedian may have worn in folk plays, as has been suggested, or even perhaps as the 'representative' or vicegerent of the playwright himself – and indeed the only known examples before *Three Laws* are John Heywood's Vices Merry Report and Neither Lover nor Loved, who though cheerfully amoral are hardly evil.[225]

[223] Morison's *Exhortation* (1539), quoted in Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 198.
[224] *Chief Promises*, A2^r, 19-21; quoted above.
[225] See Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1986), 106, for a discussion of the two senses, and Francis Mares, 'The origin of the figure called "the Vice" in Tudor drama', *HLQ* 22 (1958), 12, for all of his appearances.

After Bale however the term quickly becomes attached almost only to personified comedians on Infidelity’s model, who often act on supernatural embassy from Satan himself. The increasingly buffoonish appearance of the Devil in later plays, however, was not learned from Bale. Satan is a noticeable absence from *Three Laws*. However, Bale did not need to dress one of his actors in a bottle-shaped proboscis and a firework in the seat of his pants, to strut around the stage as a ranting conspirator from Hell. The Devil was already onstage in his members.

Vice moved centripetally into the grain of the depraved human condition, and Protestant drama revels in the physical immediacy of different manifestations of fallenness in the world. Virtue however is reserved to a source radically outside man’s nature and control – God himself – and becomes progressively alienated from the action. It is to this alienation that I now turn.

Chapter 2
Personification and the Problem of Virtue

'Vertue? What the devyll is that?'
(A to B, *Fulgens and Lucres*.)[226]

Drama had to change the answer it gave to A's question in the decades following the split with Rome. The 'protest' of Protestantism was not simply against the papacy but against the foundational doctrine of the medieval Church, that salvation could be earned as the reward of morally good thoughts, words, and deeds. The reformers believed this to be nothing but pharisaic 'works-righteousness', because the Fall had rendered all human attributes and behaviours intrinsically sinful, except Christ's. In God's eyes, human virtue was a contradiction in terms. At the same time, everyone knew what the devil virtue was, when they saw it. Love, charity, patience, courage, prudence, justness, humility, sobriety: Scripture is explicit and fulsome about the qualities which please God. Those faithful who modelled such qualities in their conduct were no less praised by Protestants than papists. It remained a matter of (eternal) life and death that we should strive for this standard in ourselves. What needed correcting, reformers insisted, was our understanding of the relationship of the just man's virtue to his justification, and to his own effort, which had been sinfully misunderstood to the great undoing of many. Man has no ownership of his own goodness, which is provoked in him by God's grace; nor can that goodness save him, because we are saved by Christ's merits alone. The who, more than the what, was where the Devil came in.

This chapter is about an important potential division between medium and message in Protestant personification drama, and how playwrights negotiated it. The Protestant denial that man can earn his own salvation affected moral drama at a fundamental level, one of its key features as a genre: the personified character of 'the virtue'. Charity, Humility, Justice, Perseverance – whatever their abstract name, these men (and in Tudor drama, to an almost unique extent, virtues are male) exist to be the undoubted voice of godliness in the play. The virtue as a dramatic spokesman for the good outlived the everyman in Reformation drama – but how does one personify virtue when the whole question of a 'virtuous person' has been unsettled? This question has not to my knowledge been asked, let alone systematically answered. This is a study of which godly qualities were personified – or which qualities of God, a distinction which becomes ever more sharp – and who they were personified *as*,

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[226] *Fulgens and Lucres* [c.1490s], 2.842, in *The Plays of Henry Medwall*, ed. Alan H. Nelson (Cambridge, 1980).

during the vital half-century after the split with Rome when the new doctrines were at their most unfamiliar and drama was a self-appointed part of the solution.

Confessional change can be read from a distance through the personified concepts of moral drama.[227] If, as two of its recent students have put it, ‘allegory was construed as a method of conveying and impressing opinions and truths, as an authorizing vehicle for the dissemination of cultural values’, then the changing value placed on a concept – its centrality to a culture over time – can be partly gauged by its embodiment in the dozens of interludes and dialogues which brought those ‘truths’ to spectators and readers.[228] There has never been a survey of personified virtue in drama along the lines of Charlotte Steenbrugge’s of vice, and it would take a thesis in itself to attempt one with any fullness.[229] I draw only a selective line here – but I hope to build on those who have studied the history of individual personified virtues, either as prolegomena to the study of a theme more diffusely handled on the Jacobean stage (John S. Wilks on the importance of Conscience after the Reformation; Toria Johnson on the figure of Pity), or in their own right, such as William O. Harris on Fortitude and J. Wilson McCutchan and Pat McCune on the increasingly secularised Protestant figure of Justice.[230] Barbara Newman and Katherine Breen have written valuable studies of personified virtue in medieval visual art and poetry which, despite Tudor drama’s singular departures from that iconographical mainstream, will prove fruitful for what follows.[231]

Through this complex territory, I will draw on one thread in particular: Martin Luther’s concept of *aliena iustitia*, ‘alien’ righteousness, which is not infused into the believer but must rather be imputed to them. This was Luther’s first major rebuttal of the understanding that human nature, aided by grace, can ever be capable of possessing a quality meritorious in God’s sight. I explain this concept at some length because it sets up all of the

[227] Vladimir Brljak has recently considered personification as a way of ‘distant reading’ English drama in the sixteenth century, though he does this by charting the frequency of the device *per se* in the surviving canon, rather than considering *what* was being personified. I am grateful to Dr Brljak for sharing a prepublication copy of his article, ‘From Everyman to Hamlet: A distant reading’ (forthcoming, *Renaissance Studies*).
[228] Walter S. Melion and Bart Ramakers, ‘Personification: An introduction’, in Melion and Ramakers (eds.), *Personification* (Leiden, 2016), 13.
[229] Charlotte Steenbrugge, *Staging Vice* (Amsterdam, 2014).
[230] John S. Wilks, *The Idea of Conscience in Renaissance Tragedy* (London, 1990), 44-76; Toria Johnson, *Pity and Identity in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2021), 50-61; William O. Harris, *Skelton’s Magnyfycence and the Cardinal Virtue Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 1965), 71-126; J. Wilson McCutchan, ‘Justice and Equity in the English morality play’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958), 405-10; Pat McCune, ‘Order and justice in early Tudor drama’, *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994), 171-96.
[231] Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses* (Philadelphia, PA, 2003); Katherine Breen, *Machines of the Mind* (Chicago, IL, 2021).

important contrasts on which my discussion will rest: participation and alienation; infusion and imputation; activity and passivity – all of which are conveyed, in personification drama, by the theatrical relations of interest and disinterest.

After describing *aliena iustitia* in more detail, and giving an overview of the form and function of the virtue in moral theatre, I begin with some suggestive negative evidence: that where the virtue before the Reformation had a specifically clerical quality which anchored him in the pastoral realities of the Church, his successors in Protestant drama seem to lack any specific anchorage to time or place, and have little comparable physical embodiment. I then turn to my central case studies, the only surviving instance of a Protestant adaptation of an everyman play: R. Wever's *Lusty Juventus* and its original, the Henrician interlude *Youth*. I read Wever's virtues as bellwethers of a shift from infused to imputed virtue – from the grace which elevates humanity toward the divine, to the *aliena iustitia* which is superimposed upon our sins but does not expunge them. A comparison of these plays' scenes of justification shows how a text which seems in every way to be 'new wine in old bottles' – a union of evangelical message with a morality structure – is in fact another case of the bottle broken.[232] I finally consider the broader implications for our interest in the drama: that when the relationship of humans to God changes, so, in this genre, must the relationship of characters to spectators.

Alien Righteousness

On the system proposed by Aquinas in the thirteenth century and reasserted by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, virtues are divided into acquired and infused. On St Thomas's Aristotelian model, acquired virtues are those for which man has an inborn aptitude. Like all creatures, we have a natural desire to realise the ends to which we are created, and an inborn faculty of reason (however imperfect), by which we apprehend those ends and the means to achieve them. By exercising ourselves to those ends, we develop our ingrained potential into virtuous habits – such as temperance, prudence, courage, and so forth – through our freely-willed efforts against the impediments of the Fall. Infused virtues, meanwhile, are those imparted to man by the Holy Spirit, aiding his imperfect will and effecting a spiritual regeneration over and above man's native abilities. These are the two means by which virtues arise in us – by habitual cultivation or divine intervention. However, Angela McKay Knobel

[232] Joerg O. Fichte, 'New wine in old bottles: The Protestant adaptation of the morality play', *Anglia* 110 (1992), 65-84.

has helpfully explained that the important difference is between 'what kind of fulfilment – natural or supernatural – the virtue is ordered to.'[233] Acquired virtues are 'natural' virtues because they only allow us to reach 'the fulfilment proportionate to our created nature'.[234] However, as Knobel explains, man has a higher fulfilment than this: we are only 'truly fulfilled […] through the participation in the divine life that occurs in supernatural beatitude', the ultimate good of eternal life, which 'utterly exceeds our natural good'.[235]

Knobel refers here to the second Epistle of Peter, that 'all things of his divine power that appertain to life and godliness are given us through the knowledge of him who hath called us by his own proper glory and virtue. By whom he hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature' (1:3-4).[236] Because man has no inborn potential to realise this, Thomas writes, those 'principles by which he might be […] ordered toward supernatural beatitude' must therefore be infused, 'divinely added to man' by grace.[237] These principles are the supernatural virtues, chief among which are the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which orient us toward our ultimate good of eternal life.

Grace has an absolutely cardinal role here. Outside the pharisaic rantings of the papists of Protestant polemic, St Thomas and his fellow 'schoolmen' acknowledged no less than the reformers Christ's necessity to salvation and God's absolute sovereignty over the process. Justifying grace is offered completely unmerited in the first instance. The difference from the Protestant position lies in the claim that infused grace transforms the justified person intrinsically. The Council of Trent, called by Pope Paul III in 1545 in response to the Lutheran movement, upheld this transformative understanding of justification. As Michael Root puts it, in Tridentine terms justification involves not just imputation of Christ's virtue but 'must include interior transformation' too, 'the grace and charity that inheres in the justified, poured out by the Holy Spirit.'[238] Virtue, though infused supernaturally from outside, changes the *inherent* worth of the individual, tending toward the soul's proper perfection, for which eternal life is the condign conclusion.

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[233] Angela McKay Knobel, *Aquinas and the Infused Moral Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN, 2021), 3.
[234] Knobel, *Aquinas*, 49.
[235] Knobel, *Aquinas*, 12.
[236] Unless noted, I quote the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate in this chapter.
[237] *Summa Theologica* I-II, q.62, a.1, c; quoted in Knobel, *Aquinas*, 51. Natural virtues can be either acquired or infused (what Bejczy, *Cardinal Virtues*, 185, calls 'acquired virtues elevated by grace'), but supernatural virtues can only ever be infused.
[238] Michael Root, 'Original sin and justification', in Nelson H. Minnich (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Trent* (Cambridge, 2023), 110.

Luther first articulated *aliena iustitia* in his commentary on the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans in 1518. His scholium on the very first verse is a manifesto for the concept:

> God does not want to redeem us through our own, but through external, righteousness and wisdom; not through one that comes from us and grows in us, but through one that comes to us from the outside; not through one that originates here on earth, but through one that comes from heaven. Therefore, we must be taught a righteousness that comes completely from the outside and is foreign [*aliena*]. And therefore our own righteousness that is born in us must first be plucked up.[239]

'Our own righteousness that is born in us' is, in reality, sinfulness, and deserves only the penalty of damnation. As Paul says, 'all men are under the power of sin' (Romans 3:9). Luther explains that Paul is not referring here to 'men as they are in their own eyes and before men [*coram hominibus*], but as they are before God [*coram Deo*], where all are under sin, namely, both those who even to men are manifestly evil and those who in their own eyes and in the eyes of other men appear to be good'.[240] Good behaviour is humanity only as it pleads for itself before the tribunal of its peers. It is not *coram hominibus*, before other men, but only *coram Deo* that our true moral value is exposed, and there it shows horribly wanting.[241] The first step to spiritual regeneration, then, is to despair of our own power and that of any mere human, alive or dead, and put all of our faith in Christ, the only meritorious man in history.

Aliena iustitia is the essential concomitant of the more famous doctrine of *sola fide*. 'For we account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law,' wrote Paul (Romans 3:28), and Luther argued from this passage that a sincere faith in Christ's sacrifice is the only means by which Christ's righteousness will be imputed to a believer. Imputation consists in what Luther called a *commercium admirabile*, a 'joyful exchange', by which the believer's sin is passed vicariously to Christ and Christ's merits to the believer.[242] The righteousness by which we are redeemed is 'alien' in the most radical sense: not just because its source lies beyond our nature, but because even when it works in us it is *still* entirely separate from our nature. It is never ours, even at the moment when we enjoy its benefits.

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[239] Translated by Walter G. Tillmanns in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 56 vols (St Louis, MO, 1955-86), 25.136-37. Translations of Luther are from this series, cited as *LW*.
[240] *LW* 25.219.
[241] On these two tribunals in Luther's commentary on Romans, see Michael G. Baylor, *Action and Person* (Leiden, 1977), 220-21.
[242] On this *commercium*, see Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy* (Oxford, 1994), 62.

Dennis Bielfeldt has recently made a forceful statement of how this works: ‘God gifts a grace that changes the way that God looks at human beings. […] [M]en and women are righteous not intrinsically, but extrinsically – they are righteous because God establishes a covenant (*pactum*) with them to regard them as such.’[243] In effect, God has agreed to recognize the faithful sinner *as if* he possessed Christ’s merits. This is why we are *simul iustus et peccator* – still as sinful after justification as we were before.

The true saints, Luther wrote elsewhere, are not the monks or hermits who strive through extravagant works to achieve holiness, but all those baptized Christians who put their faith only in Christ. Theirs is ‘a passive, not an active holiness’, because, as they themselves know, an external grace does all.[244] However, in the scholium on *aliena iustitia*, the biblical passages which Luther cites in support all have an obviously active literal sense of spatial movement from one place to another, and a commentary tradition associating them with a regenerative change in the believer themselves:

> Thus we read in Psalm 45:10: “Forget your people and your father’s house, etc.” Abraham, too, was ordered to leave his father’s house in this way [Genesis 12:1]. Thus we read also in the Song of Solomon [4:8]: “Come from Lebanon, my spouse, and you shall be crowned.” Also, the whole exodus of the people of Israel formerly symbolized that exodus which they [i.e., past commentators] interpret as one from faults to virtues [*de viciis ad virtutes*]. But it would be better to understand it as an exodus from virtues to the grace of Christ [*de virtutibus ad gratiam Christi*], because virtues of that kind are often greater or worse faults the less they are accepted as such […].[245]

Our inherited debt to God cannot be discharged by any human means, and to place any trust in oneself is only to worsen one’s inborn blame because it denies the absolute self-sufficiency of God. The exodus from Egypt signifies, not man’s active passage ‘from faults to virtues’, but his passive liberation *de virtutibus*, from virtue itself.

When Luther wrote in 1518, English theatre still reflected the old spatial metaphor of movement ‘from vices to virtues’ in the rival social circles of the morality play: the protagonist commencing his justification by leaving the ‘conversation’ and habitual haunts of one group of men and reconciling himself to another. I argue that *aliena iustitia* is especially useful for comprehending the ways in which later ‘Protestant’ personifications departed from

[243] Dennis Bielfeldt, ‘Virtue is not in the head’, in Gregory R. Peterson et al (eds.), *Habits in Mind* (Leiden, 2017), 61-62, 63.
[244] Commentary on Galatians (1531); the 1570s translation reprinted in *Martin Luther*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York, 1961), 158.
[245] *LW* 25.137.

this earlier formula: both in its use of spatial activity as a metaphor for perfect passivity, and its sense of the irruption of something non-human into the human sphere without any reconciliation of their essential separateness. In what follows, I will argue that Protestant dramatists deliberately resisted personification's natural tendency to humanize by making their virtues less socially embedded, more theocentric, more otherworldly, and less 'realistic'. I refer to this as alienation. If the everyman's progress had originally interested us all in the staged process of justification, these alienated virtues have the opposite effect, suggesting our essential passivity in our own salvation.

Of course, the method by which most Protestant homiletic dramas communicate human depravity is simply to state it plainly to the audience. Passages from many plays could be quoted in which the godliest characters credit their saving faith to an unseen and unearned grace. In the early Elizabethan *Trial of Treasure*, a play which I will discuss more thoroughly in the next chapter, the righteous Just challenges his antitype, the wastrel Lust, to a wrestling match, and throws him to the ground. 'Not of my power I doe thee expell,' the victor intones, 'But by the mighte of his spirite that dwelleth in me.'[246] We have just watched him overthrow his carnal desires, but despite the evidence of our senses we should not mistake what we have just seen as Just justifying *himself*. In Luther's terms, the action *coram hominibus* is not at all the same as that *coram Deo*.

Luther's insight put the onus of salvation both on the radically internal (the sincerity of the faith in one's heart) and also on the radically extrinsic (the divine merit by which the faithful are justified), and left ordinary externals as a dangerous incitement to misplace our trust. These externals of bodily appearance and movement are those in which staged theatre deals. My argument is that the need to insist upon a counterintuitive gulf separating humanness from virtue had subtler effects upon characterisation in Protestant plays. *Aliena iustitia* can account for apparently disparate trends and peculiarities of staging and presentation in Protestant plays: in the sorts of concept chosen for personification in the first place, and their behaviour when they appear.

'The Virtue' in Moral Drama

Like so much in the moral interlude, the virtue in the sixteenth century was an inheritance from at least 150 years of tradition. Like all moral personifications, he can be defined in

[246] *The Trial of Treasure*, [A4]^{r}, 152-53.

terms of his name. Charity, Humility, Justice, Perseverance: such abstract nouns make an instant intellective claim to sympathy, because they are among the received fundamentals with which any definition of Christian godliness must be constructed. There is no irony here: the moral interlude is devoid of onomastic jokes like Shakespeare's garrulous Silence. However, because the Reformation fundamentally changed the kind of virtue which was personified, it is more helpful to define 'the virtue' by his rhetorical style and dramatic function, which remain recognisably constant throughout the Tudor flux. A virtue is a personification inured against carnal temptation or false doctrine, whose role in the narrative is to exhort others to live better, including the spectators, through urgent and unabashed instruction to forsake sin, seek mercy, and avoid damnation. The virtue is not there primarily to exhibit in practice the specific concept after which he is named – Charity is never shown in the act of almsgiving, for instance – but to speak truth and teach repentance. Accordingly he usually speaks in reaction to events: he rebukes error; laments obstinacy; consoles at moments of despair; and encourages and fortifies at moments of resolve. However, in his interaction with the audience, the one unspeaking character who is implicated in all moral interludes, he is not reactive but proactive. Virtues engage the spectators no less constantly than the more 'engaging' vices, not through argy-bargy – as T. W. Craik points out, only 'the comic and the disreputable' ever 'have occasion to ask for room' as they jostle into the playing space – but through a homiletic style which is self-consciously public and even accusatory (albeit at a decorous pitch of generality).[247] In later Tudor interludes the ubiquitous closing prayer for monarch, nobles, and commons is always led by the virtues – the earnest spokesmen for the higher order amidst a play-world of myopics and self-seekers.

The declamatory, orderly, and factual rhetoric of the virtues has not earned them critical affection equal to their moral opponents. In an inspired apology for the style, Alexandra F. Johnston has mapped the imbalance in entertainment value between the virtues and vices of fifteenth-century theatre onto the Augustinian poles of *tranquillus* and *turbulens*: the dignified, fortified, and imperturbable citizen of the city of God, against the noisy, hectic, and insecure citizen of Babylon.[248] She finds this encoded in the dramaturgy of most medieval English drama – Herod in Coventry dismounting the wagon to rave in the midst of the audience; Christ, still and quiet, while his buffeters roam ranting around him – and also in

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[247] T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester, 1958), 20.

[248] Alexandra F. Johnston, '"At the still point of the turning world": Augustinian roots of medieval dramaturgy' [1997], repr. in Johnston, *The City and the Parish* ed. David Klausner (London, 2017), 264. She takes these terms from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*.

the prosody. The orderly end-stopped stanzas of the Magi in the York Masons' play complement the praise of cosmic harmony which they offer, and contrast with the staccato doggerel in which Herod lays deluded claim to heaven and earth.[249] Like Abel, the Magi, the Holy Family, and God Himself, personified virtues speak and act with 'the calm stillness of good', from which they cannot be bullied to break away.[250] If they lack onstage dynamism, it is because they are so empowered in their cause that they do not need to self-generate their own energy.

One important quality of personified virtue in Tudor drama was, I believe, deliberately obtrusive: they are almost always explicitly male. Regardless of the ubiquitous visual iconography which showed Faith, Hope, and Charity, for instance, as ethereal women, whenever Faith, Hope, or Charity appears in a Tudor play, he is a grave and reverend man. This is no doubt partly conditioned by the fact that personification plays were seemingly written above all for companies of adult men, whose repertory, unlike boys' plays, understandably tended to be dominated by adult male characters.[251] However, it is notable that virtues are male even in plays where some cross-dressing is called for. (The biggest exception to the rule about Tudor personified virtue, *Respublica* in 1553, in which female personifications intervene to enact all of the moral reforms, is doubly overdetermined, as it was not only written for boys but as a coronation-season entertainment for England's first queen.) The virginal, ethereal man continues to be the personifier of virtue even after the Reformation. I argue that this continuity is in fact a subtle sign that old symbols of active human holiness have been evacuated.

Ascetic to Aesthetic

The original purpose of the male virtue was to mitigate the splendid self-sufficiency of the citizen of God by giving a strong sense of his social and institutional participation. Though late-medieval virtues often speak as if their origin is in Heaven, they interact like men in the world, and as one specific group above all. Robert Potter has described the late medieval morality play as 'the call to a specific religious act […] the acknowledgement, confession,

[249] Johnston, 'Augustinian roots', 267.
[250] Johnston, 'Augustinian roots', 269.
[251] David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), convincingly shows the correlation between cast size and proportion of female roles: plays whose casts are doubled (and thus are equipped for performance by an adult touring troupe) usually have no female characters at all, while those with large undoubled casts (suggestive of the resources of a school, university, or chapel) are up to half female.

and forgiveness of sin, institutionalized in medieval Christianity as the sacrament of penance.'[252] Personified virtues had their origin as the callers to this act, the provokers to that acknowledgement, and, in the most clericalist of the surviving plays, the administrators of that sacrament. When the Dutch *Elckerlijc* was translated into English as *Everyman*, the female personification of Confession was changed into the 'holy man' we might expect (like Shrift in *The Castle of Perseverance*), who alone in the Church possessed the authority to shrive a dying sinner. In some cases they play a more active role still: Pity in *Hickscorner*, for instance, goes to alert the justices of the peace to apprehend Free Will and his riotous fellows. This de-abstraction toward social reality is central to the strange realism of the interlude.

There is little evidence in surviving scripts for their costuming, but clerical dress has been argued for almost all late medieval dramatic virtues.[253] Regardless of their costuming, the virtues' relationship to the everyman is recognisably curial and parochial, at times explicitly – as when Perseverance in *Mundus et Infans* gives the elderly everyman a sort of catechism in the basics of the faith, or Mercy, Mankind's 'father gostly', gives the characteristic priestly absolution 'go and syn no more'.[254] Some have a suggestion of cloistered discipline: Humility in *Youth* enters having just 'said mine euensong', and Contemplation in *Hickscorner* is a hermit or mendicant, '[t]hat vseth to lyue solytaryly'.[255] The vices sometimes address them contemptuously as 'Sir John', the stereotyped name for a priest (e.g. *Youth*, Bii^r, 491), and they greet one another as 'brother' like fellow religious.

We are not encouraged to make too narrow an identification between virtue and the Church, as if virtue itself was an exclusively clerical preserve. The hints of ordination are never developed by any reference to offstage parishioners, monasteries, bishops or abbots. Charlotte Steenbrugge has helpfully disputed the kneejerk labels 'sermon' and 'preaching' for any long didactic speech, arguing that sermons followed clear generic conventions absent from most virtues' disquisitions, which contemporaries would recognise as 'teaching', rather

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[252] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 16.
[253] Besides the obviously priestly figures such as Confession, Ian Lancashire assumes that Charity and Humility in *Youth* are dressed as priests with chasubles (*Two Tudor Interludes*, note to line 767); Mary Philippa Coogan, *An Interpretation of the Moral Play 'Mankind'* (Washington, DC, 1947), 1-7, argues that Mercy in *Mankind* is dressed as a priest or friar; and Potter, *English Morality Play*, 39, assumes that Conscience and Perseverance in *Mundus et Infans* are friars and the virtues of *Hickscorner* 'clerics' (though one, Contemplation, is a self-described hermit). Paula Neuss notes that Skelton's Good Hope 'speaks like a churchman' (*Magnificence*, ed. Neuss (Manchester, 1980), 31).
[254] *Mankind*, 765, 853.
[255] *Youth*, [B3]^v, 570; *Hickscorner*, Aiii^r, 64.

than the ‘preaching’ reserved to licensed ordained ministers.[256] She argues that English playwrights never simply ‘aligned themselves with an established, ecclesiastical medium to gain a position of authority’, certainly not compared with continental analogues.[257] Steenbrugge seems right that the message far transcends a narrow association with the clergy. The dramatic logic of Perseverance instructing a representative of mankind is not that the instructor alone can achieve perseverance, but that we all can.

‘What me thynke ye be clerkyshe | For ye speake good gibbryshe,’ Youth sneers when Charity quotes a psalm at him (*Youth*, [A2]^{v}, 113-14). By making personifications vaguely clerical (clerks, ish), playwrights imparted a certain attainability to the qualities personified. At once supernatural and mundane, the virtues’ perfection is different in degree but vitally not in kind from the standard to which a real group of Englishmen were held daily. Personification’s intimacy of attachment between abstract name and concrete person intimates powerfully that men are capable, *in potentia*, of living up to those names. The culture of sanctity which venerated holy hermits, Desert Fathers, anchorites, recluses, and contemplatives, and indeed the everyday reality of an entire social caste of Englishmen sworn to celibacy, meant that withdrawal from the world was itself a recognized part of the world, and even a celebrated part. Thus, the chaste unworldliness of the late medieval virtue did not create an impression of abstract fiction, but of a realisable human holiness.

Huston Diehl has described the project of Protestant playwrights as ‘destabilizing their audiences’ relation to images and nurturing new, Protestant ways of seeing’.[258] When John Bale dressed the actors of Cromwell’s Men as popish clergy, named them after moral evils, and made them ape the rites of the Roman Church, the semiotics were clear: a previously stable locus of onstage virtue was undermined, because a grotesque conspiracy of hypocrites had been unmasked. But what was the ‘new, Protestant way of seeing’ which would teach audiences where to locate moral virtue instead? The Reformation might have been expected to demystify virtue and bring it altogether out of the cloister and down to earth.

In fact, moral drama, a genre geared frankly to teaching its audience a Protestant way of thinking, seems to have done no such thing, reflecting neither the visible reality nor the taught ideals of the Protestant world it wished to create. Though vices are often dressed with

[256] Charlotte Steenbrugge, *Drama and Sermon in Late Medieval England* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2017), 44-46.
[257] Steenbrugge, *Drama and Sermon*, 44, 123.
[258] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), 3.

the distinctive markers of the Roman Church, virtues are certainly never associated with its English reformed replacement. Though they constantly teach scripture, there is no explicit link between them and the new English clergy. No Church of England minister appears as a figure of moral purity (or indeed much better than morally deficient) in any surviving interlude. Bale's polemical fumigation of the unreformed clergy from reformed drama did not establish any stable locus of human holiness in their place.

In an exhaustive and influential study, Charles and Katherine George describe the sixteenth century evangelical movement as (by its own lights) rejecting the guarded privileges of a clerical caste and the frantic pursuit of sainthood through extremes of renunciation, to embrace instead the 'central tenet […] that the fullest reaches of religious experience must be totally available to […] ordinary people living ordinary lives.'[259] The doctrine of vocation – one's calling to a job and a family – was one principal expression of the ordinariness of godly responsibility: as Steven E. Ozment says in his discussion of the culture of industry in reformed city-states, '[s]pecial religious good works were not to be required of laymen; normal vocational activity was the way the laity pleased God.'[260] As we will see in chapter 4, a subset of Elizabethan plays closely localised to mercantile London are concerned with the promotion of civic (if not salvific) virtue. Mid-Tudor Protestant plays, whatever their other teachings, make this their headline message when they homilize the commons directly. 'Ye poor men and commons walke in your vocation,' says Heavenly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, echoed verbatim by Trust in *The Trial of Treasure*, and 'walke thou in thy vocation what euer thou hast,' urges the honest but downtrodden Learning Without Money in *All for Money*.[261]

One of moral drama's closest-related genres of demotic literature, the pamphlet dialogue, was all but founded on the elevation of the ordinary layman, with a trade and a family as well as a moral compass and a knowledge of Scripture, to the great, iconoclastic downthrow of the celibate cleric who lacks all of those things. What Peter Matheson calls the confrontation of 'folk wisdom and clerical folly' – an evangelical shoemaker disputing a popish parson; a ploughman against a priest; a soldier against a one-eyed chaplain – were as 'paradigmatic' in Tudor English dialogues as in Lutheran German, as Antoinina Bevan Zlatar

[259] Charles H. George and Katherine George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation* (Princeton, 1961), 265.
[260] Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven, CT, 1975), 119.
[261] *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, B^{v}, 260; *The Trial of Treasure*, Dii^{r}, 756; *All for Money*, Ciii^{v}, 782.

notes.[262] The earthy irreverence of a layman like Luke Shepherd's husbandman John Bon, mocking transubstantiation in the face of a busybody papist who rebukes him for ploughing on Corpus Christi, is in these reverse catechisms a vital sign of honesty and spiritual health – of both 'callings', to work and by the Gospel, going together.

Clerical marriage became legal in England in 1548 (though it was already commonplace amongst evangelicals a decade earlier), and in the thirty years after the split with Rome a majority of the known playwrights were married vicars: Bale himself, Nicholas Udall, Lewis and William Wager, Ulpian Fulwell. '[M]atrymonye […] is afore God, a state both iust and holye,' the Law of Christ pronounces in *Three Laws*, against the popish 'buggerage' promoted by Infidelity. No higher authority could be marshalled.[263] From such widespread reformist endorsement of marriage as a model of ordinary vocation, it has been claimed that '[n]ot only *may* the Protestant saint be married, but in all probability he *will* be married.'[264] Married family men frequently appear in non-biblical, and non-comic, Tudor plays as icons of respectability, their status as *paterfamilias* only underlining their godly honesty: witness the pious parents of Virginia in R. B.'s *Apius and Virginia* and of Grissel in John Phillips's *Patient and Meek Grissel*, and the upright but mistreated fathers of plays about prodigal sons, such as Thomas Ingelend's *Disobedient Child* and George Gascoigne's *Glass of Government*. If artisans, labourers, husbands, and parents could be made figures of exemplary moral authority, why could the same worldly responsibilities not be given to representatives of moral good in itself, men called not John or Hans but Faith, Hope, or Charity?

In fact, when godliness was directly embodied, it was given no such tethers to the world. The personified virtues of Protestant drama have no 'vocation' of their own, for all that they sometimes preach the need of one. The more abstract their name, the more abstract and otherworldly they seem, and any attempt to describe their 'character' would result only in a claustral catalogue of absences: no defined social role or habitation, no wife or children, no possessions, no description of offstage life, and indeed hardly any impression of movement beyond entrance and exit. Virginal and disaffiliated, these men are as close to disembodiment

[262] Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1998), 85; Antoinina Bevan Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions* (Oxford, 2011), 38; such 'satirical coupling' is the subject of 37-50. My examples come from Hans Sachs' *Disputation between a Christian Shoemaker and a Popish Parson*, trans. Anthony Scoloker (c.1546); Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Master Parson* (1548) and *Piers Plowman and a Popish Priest* (c.1550); and Anthony Gilby's *A Soldier of Berwick and an English Chaplain* (c.1566).
[263] *Three Laws*, E^r, 1383-91.
[264] George and George, *Protestant Mind*, 265.

as walking, talking actors can be, as if they are closer to ideas or symbols than people. The figure of the celibate becomes suspect, but virtues acquire no wives; the godly artisan becomes a cultural icon, but virtues acquire no trade; and God's Word is made the foundation of the Church, but virtues receive no benefice. The only dramatic characters who approach the salty idiom of John Bon and the other mocking but upright laymen of the dialogue tradition are the vices, who become only livelier and more 'realistic' as the virtues become more unworldly. It seems that personified virtue only became more radically ascetic once the Reformation had rejected the ascetic altogether.

I argue that these absences *are* positive evidence. Virtue is withheld from worldly attachment not to represent a positive ideal of virginal renunciation but for rhetorical reasons of total contrast with normal humanity: it is not ascetic, in other words, but aesthetic. The ethereal holy man used to serve as an *active* ideal of human sanctity. Rather than ghostly or unreal, his asceticism ironically made him more specific and concrete. He persists in Protestant drama, outliving the discredited ideal, precisely because this detachment from human life has ceased to map onto a defined estate. What we see in the ascetically pure admonitors of Protestant theatre is what we might call de-personification: in the world but not of it, transcending rather than elevating human nature, and kept from full personhood to create an aesthetic distance from an audience admonished not to misplace their confidence in things merely human.

Paul Whitfield White has wondered 'whether the term "character" should be applied at all' to most of these Protestant virtues, 'who introduce themselves as abstractions and explain their significance directly to the audience.'[265] Johnston's tranquillity can look in such cases like a static and declamatory flatness. White concludes by reminding us that, however static and declamatory they seem, 'such figures become at least in some sense lifelike by the very fact that they are represented by human actors performing before an audience, a fact easily overlooked when reading the text.'[266] This reminder is a leitmotif of scholarship on personification plays: 'while the object of the plays is didactic, their effect is mimetic', and 'what the audience sees is not so many abstractions, but people'.[267] I argue that this vivification could also be a rhetorical drawback. Protestant dramatists seized the

[265] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 77.
[266] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 78.
[267] Natalie Crohn Schmitt, 'The idea of a person in medieval morality plays', *Comparative Drama* 12 (1978), 23; John Weld, *Meaning in Comedy* (Albany, 1975), 14. Pointed out in, *inter alia*, Stanley J. Kahrl, *Traditions of Medieval English Drama* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1974), 104; Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition* (Manchester, 2002), 128.

opportunities for vivid, burlesque embodiment which were afforded by vice, but the chance to vividly associate vice with a human speaker – perfect for direct polemical communication – was a liability for virtue.

There is little evidence from surviving scripts about the costuming of Protestant virtue, but what there is tends to support the aesthetic trend I have described. The more a character epitomises godliness, the less like a recognisable contemporary person he must seem. The easiest way to establish distance visually was by giving the reverend old man an appearance of strange antiquity. When Theology, Science, and Art introduce Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* (c.1570-78), all are highly emblematic and stylised but only Theology is actively distanced in this way. Science is a scholar, 'clothed like a Philosopher' and Art is a craftsman with 'certeyne tooles about him of diuers occupations', but Theology is not the university divine we might expect but 'in a long ancient garment like a Prophet'.[268] Another example of temporal distancing is the personification as 'sage'. The figures of Edification and God's Felicity who enter at the end of the anonymous *New Custom* (pr. 1573) are both labelled 'a Sage' in the titlepage cast list. In Robert Wilson's *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (c.1588-89), the 'three Sages' Honest Industry, Pure Zeal, and Sincerity are brought in to reclothe the titular three ladies after their rescue from imprisonment, and leave never to be seen again.[269] The sage in early modern drama was a folk figure not only of wisdom but of exotic antiquity, such as the four 'ancient and Sage men of Britain' who spoke the chorus to *Gorboduc*, or the six who danced a 'masque of Sages' at Whitehall in 1574.[270] Craik, the only critic to discuss such antique Protestant virtues specifically, attributes these costumes to a desire to avoid distracting polemical implications.[271] I would argue that their distance from everyday English society is more deeply symbolic of a remoteness from achievable human effort.

We can see this from *New Custom*, the only play in which the social affiliation of the virtues is not only specified but emphasized. Nothing is known of the play in performance: it has been claimed for the troupe of the Earl of Leicester, though it is playable by a smaller troupe of four men.[272] It contrasts a cabal of old papists led by Perverse Doctrine and Ignorance to the righteous young men Light of the Gospel and Primitive Constitution, who

[268] *All for Money*, Aiii^{r-v}.
[269] *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, A2^{r} ('The Actors names'), 374.
[270] Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *Gorboduc* (London, 1565), 'The names of the Speakers', [A2]^{r}; the masque is Wiggins 555. As a noun rather than adjective, 'sage' was most commonly used for the ancient Sybil, the three Magi, or the 'seven sages' of Greece or Rome; see the quotations in *OED*, 'sage', adj. and n.2.
[271] Craik, *Tudor Interlude*, 56.

are in fact over 1500 years old. (The latter is known by the insulting name New Custom, because the papists cannot recognise the true apostolic antiquity of the Protestant rite.) These virtues give a wholly new meaning to 'foreign' (*aliena*) righteousness, because they are literally foreigners: young 'Geneuian doctours' who have come to popish England from Reformed Switzerland to spread the gospel.[273] We know from Perverse Doctrine's uniquely detailed description that New Custom has 'a gathered frocke, a powlde head, and a broade hatte, | An vnshaued bearde, [and] a pale face' – the sober stamps of a non-English congregation, which make a visual contrast with the gowns and square caps of the papists (Aiii[v], 163).

What is remarkable is that a play founded on such a sharp sartorial distinction between virtue and vice ends by denying the importance of such distinctions altogether. At the end of the play Perverse Doctrine is suddenly converted by the foreign reformers, symbolising the success of the gospel in England, and they rename him Sincere Doctrine. The old papist is ashamed of his vestments and asks for a new dress, 'For I see well that in the Constitution Primitiue: | They vsed no suche garment'. The personification of that Constitution demurs: 'the wearing of a gowne, cap, or any other garment, | Surely is a matter, as mee seemeth, indifferent.' The Light of the Gospel concurs: 'for god waieth not, who is a sprite, | Of any vesture, or outward apparance a mite.' (Diii[v], 198-99.) They introduce him successively to Assurance, Edification, and God's Felicity, and the play ends.

As is well known, *New Custom*'s unique specificity about costume is overdetermined by its political moment. White has established that the playwright was seeking to intervene in the controversy raging in the early 1570s over Elizabeth's insistence to retain pre-Reformation vestments in the Church of England.[274] Defenders of the Queen's right described costume as a religious *adiaphoron* – literally 'a matter […] indifferent', the phrase used by Primitive Constitution. White wonders whether the surviving text grafts a conciliatory new ending onto a polemical puritan play, which originally contrasted properly reformed Genevan vestments to the 'popish' ones still prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer.

New Custom is *sui generis* – but it can, I believe, be cautiously read beyond its moment for a deeper point about the alienation of virtue. As with Just's wrestling victory, it is

[272] Laurie Johnson, *Leicester's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge, 2023), 101-2. A speculated performance by Leicester's Men is reconstructed in Madeleine Olivia Robinson, 'Dramaturgy of the Anti-Catholic Morality in the Tudor Hall with Special Attention to the Screen' (PhD thesis, University of Rhode Island, 1980), 161-84.
[273] *New Custom*, Ciii[r], 184.
[274] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 89-92.

characteristic of Protestant drama, regardless of its place on a political spectrum of conformity, to tell us not to locate holiness in the human externals which we actually see. Craik notes that Sincere Doctrine's failure to change costume is typical: no Protestant play ever uses a change of costume to symbolize moral renovation.[275] The key passage in *New Custom* is the virtues' definition of faith which they give Sincere Doctrine, based on Hebrews 11:1: 'A substaunce of thinges not appering in sight, | Yet which wee looke for' (Diii^r, 197). As the play's final scene goes on, we get closer to witnessing the visible proxies for this invisible force: the ex-papist's justification by faith, symbolised by the entry of its personified consequences. We have moved from distinguishing virtue and vice according to contemporary markers of costume – Calvinists against papists – to being told that neither is an index to the truly important issue. The figures who enter to symbolise this faith are outside the matrix of contemporary costume altogether. Edification and God's Felicity are 'sages', as we have seen. Assurance meanwhile is labelled only 'a Virtue' – the only time that this now-common shorthand for a personified character is used in a Tudor cast list. It seems to deny him a physical appearance altogether. This symbolic succession is what interests me: the closer to the invisible moment of justification by faith a virtue approaches, the more impersonal and unilateral he becomes.

The newly negative symbolism of ascesis in Protestant drama is one part of a general shift of the centre of moral gravity away from human 'being' and towards God alone. We have a unique barometer for this shift in the form of the one Protestant interlude evidently adapted from a pre-Reformation everyman play: R. Wever's *Lusty Juventus*, which is demonstrably an adaptation of the earlier interlude of *Youth*. This is a unique case of a genuine everyman play cross-pollinated by the Bale tradition. Both youth-plays have a morality structure centred on a youthful protagonist – but the way we can tell a major doctrinal shift has taken place is by comparing the plays' virtues: from the infused virtues of Charity and Humility to Good Counsel, Knowledge, and God's Merciful Promises. We can read *Juventus* via *Youth* to see how the audience are discouraged from the old, intuitive feeling of interest in the process of justification.

Youth to *Juventus*

[275] Craik, *Tudor Interlude*, 81-82.

Ian Lancashire has dated the anonymous *Youth* to the five or six years after Henry VIII's accession in 1509.[276] With its simplicity of diction and economy of staging, Bevington called it 'unquestionably popular', but Lancashire has instead associated it with the household of the Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, speculating that the title character was an admonition to the Earl's teenaged son.[277] Fiona S. Dunlop has accordingly considered *Youth* as a lesson in personal virtue for future political players.[278] However, the everyman's heirdom and boasts of near-universal dominion work equally well as metaphors for mankind's complacency in the face of judgement.[279] It is a compact piece of only 750 short doggerel lines, rattling through Youth's unrepentant antics with Pride, Riot, and Lechery to his complete reformation on the persuasion of Charity and Humility. Tracing the most basic morality structure, a two-part trajectory from initial unregeneracy to repentance, it might be called a homiletic farce, in which homily finally wins out.

The play opens with an address from Charity extolling himself as the only way to Heaven; Youth bursts in and extols his own strength, health, wealth, and beauty. Youth scorns all of the 'clerkish' virtue's admonitions to repentance and warnings of youth's impermanence and the certainty of Hell, and eventually Charity leaves to seek advice from 'my brother humilitie' ([A4]^{r}, 185). Youth is joined by Riot, hot from Tyburn where he escaped hanging, and Riot introduces him to Pride as a new retainer. Pride advises him to dress magnificently and treat everybody else with scorn, and fetches him a delectable girlfriend, Lady Lechery. They are about to adjourn to the tavern when Charity interrupts them with warnings; to shut him up, they fetter the old man in a pair of stocks and leave him there, where he laments Youth's turpitude with the everyman play's typical emphasis upon choice:

> O good Lorde it is a pitifull case
> Sith God hath lent man wyt and grace
> To chose of good and euyll
> That man shulde voluntarylye
> To suche thynges himselfe applye
> That his soule shuld spyll. [Cii^{v}, 556-61.]

His 'brother' Humility enters from saying evensong (and, probably, changing out of Lady Lechery's costume) and releases him from the stocks. Riot, Pride, and Youth come upon the virtues and they challenge Youth to repent. After much cocky defiance, Youth suddenly

[276] *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. Lancashire, 24-29.
[277] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 50; *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. Lancashire, 54-56.
[278] Fiona S. Dunlop, *The Late Medieval Interlude* (Cambridge, 2007), 115-20.
[279] See part II of my introduction.

resolves to follow their teaching and be saved, and Pride and Riot leave in disgust. The virtues give Youth a new name, Good Contrition, and set the seal by giving him ‘a new araye | For to walk by the way | Your prayer for to say’, and a rosary (‘bedes for your deuocyon’). The play ends with thanksgiving.

Youth has resolved in effect to become a virtue like Charity and Humility, walking the ways and admonishing other wayfarers to repentance. We hear no more of his heirdom and possessions. He seeks to live up to his new name not only by being personally contrite, but by provoking further contrition. This is typical of the ‘interest’, the influence, which interlude personifications seek in others; both Charity and Pride have this missionary relationship to their eponymous concept.

Charity’s opening speech ([A1]$^{r-v}$, 1-39) is the clearest statement of infused virtue in Tudor drama. Charity (*caritas*; *agape*) was the foremost of the three theological virtues according to St Paul: ‘And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.’ (1 Cor. 13:13.) Accordingly the old man in the playing space calls himself ‘[o]f all vertues […] the kynge’. In Aquinas’ thought, as we have seen, charity is the foremost supernatural virtue, which must be infused into us by grace. Charity’s speech is accordingly full of different images of infusion, the bridging of distance between the divine and man, and between the speaker himself and the divine, in which the two natures converge. He prays that Christ will protect those present, and that they will give him audience, ‘For [I] am come from God aboue | To occupye his lawes to your behoue’. No man can be saved without charity, and all other virtues are fruitless without it. ‘For it is written in the faythe | Qui manet in charitate in deo m[a]net,’ he says, quoting St John (‘He that abideth in charity abideth in God’, 1 John 4:16). Thus, ‘I am the gate […] Of heauen that ioyful citye’, into which nobody may enter unless they have charity; ‘Therfore charitie who wil him take | A pure soul it wyl him make | Before the face of God’. This implicitly prepares us for how to understand the new garment which he will give to Youth after the latter’s repentance. By symbolic putting-on of charity, Youth has put off his old sins in God’s sight. The distinction is collapsed on which Luther would insist: an action occurring *coram hominibus* – Youth’s acceptance of a piece of clothing from an old man – is shown to be an index to the justification of his soul *coram Deo*, and the two tribunals sit together.

Charity is such a perfective possession because it is the divine nature, God’s own identity: ‘In the ABC of bokes the least | It is written *deus charitas est*’ (1 John 4:8). The

scriptural quotation tells us that a bridge is being built between man and God; the choice to attribute it to the 'ABC', the primer for infants, shows that that bridge crosses to the meanest capacity. The final part of the speech is accordingly given to different images of distance overcome. When Christ was on earth,

> I was planted in his hart
> We two might not departe
> Out of hys harte I dyd sprynge
> Throughe the myght of the heauen kinge
> And all prestes that be
> Maye singe no masse without charitie
> And char[it]y to them they do not take
> Thei may not receyue him that did them make
> And all thys worlde of nought.

The playwright intentionally dissolves the hard boundary of inner and outer: charity was planted into Christ's heart, and sprang out from it on the cross like blood, whence it is imbibed like communion wine by the Christian, who is thereby made a participant in the divine. The eucharistic sense of 'receyue' – that is, to eat the consecrated Host – was already played upon by Charity's recurrent verb for being charitable, that of 'taking' charity: the virtue is extended to us from outside, and we can accept it into ourselves and become holier for it.

Charity entered to us initially as if he were an angelic ambassador from a transcendent otherworld, speaking down to us 'from God aboue'. He is the king of virtues; the gate to the new Jerusalem. However, his images of eucharistic miscibility between divine and human *caritas* collapse such distance, because, by infusion, the one partakes of the other. The play's most visually symbolic moment underlines the old man's bodily limitation: the vices put him feet-first into a pair of stocks, from which he only escapes when Humility unlocks him. Nor does this heaven-sent spokesman speak as if immune to the Fall. He instructs Youth consistently in terms of 'us' and 'we', as one sinful creature to another: God 'bought both you and me,' he tells him ([A3]v, 169), and even vows that 'I put me in goddes wyll | Whether he wyll me saue or spyll' (154-55). This is exemplary of how the virtues of Tudor drama talk. If we want the playwright to choose a literal and a metaphorical register and run them cleanly in parallel, to make clear that the man we see speaking onstage is just an allegory for something invisible, we misunderstand the nature of this drama, in which the human and the divine can meet. God is not represented anywhere onstage in *Youth*, as indeed he is not in most moral interludes even before the Reformation. However, with insouciant

freedom, the morality play exploited the embodied medium of theatre to communicate the miscibility of divine virtue and ordinary flesh and blood through infused grace.

Youth far exceeded any narrow coterie to become one of the defining plays of the sixteenth century. The interlude most likely reached print in London in the mid-1510s, one of the first English plays to do so, at around the time that another anonymous playwright adapted its basic plot as *Hickscorner* (c.1515-16).[280] Three editions of *Youth* survive between 1530 and the late 1560s – at least half a century from its composition, the longest afterlife for a playbook in the Tudor period.[281] Whether it was still being performed at this time is impossible to prove, but as a quiet relic of a bygone penitential culture which probably still felt intuitive to many English laypeople, it seemingly became part of the furniture. *Hickscorner* also saw three printings by Edward's reign – when R. Wever, an otherwise unknown evangelical reformer, turned to the original *Youth* as a convenient and perhaps familiar vehicle for a still-unfamiliar new message. *Lusty Juventus* itself reached three editions by the mid-1560s, and would be remembered by Anthony Munday, who puts it into the travelling players' repertory in *Sir Thomas More*, and laces several of Wever's lines into the so-called 'Marriage of Wit and Wisdom' which they perform. In a landscape of only patchy survivals, this genealogy of *Youth* amounts to the biggest footprint of any play before Kyd or Marlowe.

Juventus was almost certainly written in the three years or so before its first edition in c.1551, as it speaks to the early Edwardian reforms far more directly than *Youth* spoke to its own time.[282] Several set-pieces are cribbed directly from the earlier play, as I point out below.[283] 'R. Wever' named in the printed explicit was likely a clergyman, though the

[280] *Hickscorner* shows Free Will living riotously with Imagination and the title character (a satirical cipher for Henry VIII's exiled enemy Richard 'Hick' de la Pole, as demonstrated in *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. Lancashire, 59-65), before he and Imagination are converted by Pity, Contemplation, and Perseverance. *Hickscorner*'s understanding of virtue does not differ from *Youth*'s in any obvious respect.

[281] None would match this span between composition and reprint until at least the fifteenth quarto of *Mucedorus* in 1639 (STC 18241), on my count from *DEEP*.

[282] Helen Scarborough Thomas' argument for the play as late Henrician rather than Edwardian (*Lusty Iuuentus*, ed. Thomas, xi-xxxviii) has not been accepted by other scholars.

[283] The direct influence of *Youth* on *Juventus* has been little argued. White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 109-18, discusses 'Protestant youth plays' including *Juventus* without drawing on pre-Reformation precedent, and Fichte, 'New wine in old bottles', 75-78, and Jane Griffiths, '*Lusty Juventus*', in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2012), 262-75, allude to *Youth* only as one such precedent. *Juventus*' only modern editor does not mention *Youth* at all, speculating instead that *Juventus* was 'a direct reply by a reform cleric to the popular *Everyman*', for which no direct similarities of plot, theme, or phrase can be adduced (*An Enterlude called Lusty Iuuentus*, ed. Helen Scarborough Thomas (New York, 1982), l).

auspices of performance are as usual unknown. However, whether he wrote for boys at a school or for an adult troupe, Wever intended a message for young men specifically.[284] Where Youth's youthfulness falls aside after his reformation, Juventus explicitly addresses 'All you that be yong, whom I do now represent' (Eii^{r}, 1140). Paul Whitfield White points out in his discussion of Edwardian 'education' plays that as much as half of England's population in 1550 was under the age of 20 (including the king himself).[285] Half of the population could not remember the split with Rome, the time by which most parents and grandparents had already reached maturity. More than any other play *Juventus* confronts the social and confessional dangers of immaturity. It accordingly must stage a balancing act: on the one hand, the didactic desideratum that youth be trained up to virtue, inculcated with good and useful habits, and set in an honest vocation; on the other, the doctrinal need to value human virtue as worthless for salvation. Anticipating an audience for whom reformed tenets were still counterintuitive, Wever hollowed out and repurposed *Youth* to stage a catechism in how virtue should really be understood.

Juventus opens with a Messenger, the prologue, explaining that children must be disciplined before man's ingrained tendency to evil can sink them irreversibly. Upbringing is pictured as a struggle against nature:

> For youth is frayle and easy to drawe,
> (By grace) to goodness, (by nature) to yll
> […]
> As in thys Enterlude by youth, you shal se playn:
> From his lust by good counsell, brought to godly conuersation
> And shortly after to frayle natures inclination[.][286]

Superficially, Charity in *Youth* would not have disagreed with this assessment of man's condition, mourning from his stocks that 'Youth is not stable […] And the nature of men is frayle'; nor would John Calvin, whose *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was first published about a decade before Wever wrote, which announced that 'Guilt is from nature, whereas sanctification is from supernatural grace.'[287] We might put it that *Juventus* was written to expose the real difference between Charity's position and Calvin's.

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[284] Griffiths, '*Lusty Juventus*', 270, assumes a touring company.
[285] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 100. This topical context is explored in Nicoletta Caputo, '"All you that be young, whom I do now represent": Doctrine, deception, and discontent in *Lusty Juventus*', *Renaissance Studies* 35 (2021), 357-75.
[286] *Lusty Juventus*, Ai^{v}, 12-13, 19-21.
[287] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1845-50), 2.i.7.

The title character, addressed as ‘Juventus’ and ‘Youth’ in the dialogue, enters blithely singing, hunting around for a minstrel and good company. He is met by Good Counsel who challenges him that ‘there is no such passing t*h*e time apointed in t*h*e scripture’ (this rather sets the tone), and that instead he should ‘walke as you are bound to do, | Accordyng to t*h*e vocation whych god hath called you to’ (Aii^{v}, 81, 84-85). Hearing Good Counsel’s name, and suddenly abashed at his own ignorance, Juventus humbly submits to instruction. The Knowledge of God’s Verity enters to them, ‘[w]hom god hath appoynted to geue t*h*e blind their sight’ (Aiiii^{r}, 178), and exhorts him to follow God’s commandments and to perform good works as the fruits of his faith. The notion that ‘god hath appoynted’ Knowledge is important: though the virtues liberally quote Scripture, there is no suggestion that they are ordained, and they allude to the clergy as if from outside their ranks. Juventus calls Good Counsel ‘father good councell’ (Bii^{r}, 309), but this just means Counsel is old; after Juventus has been corrupted, he calls him ‘old hoorson’ (Diii^{r}, 950). I would argue that their divine appointment means that their unalignment with any worldly or institutional authority is another case of aesthetic distance.

At this point the play shows its affinity with the various master-pupil dialogues printed under Edward, which taught Protestant doctrine dialectically by error and correction.[288] ‘It semeth to me,’ replies Juventus,

> that this is your meaning,
> That whe*n* I obserue gods co*m*maundementes *and* t*h*e works of charite,
> They shal preuail vnto me nothing,
> Except I beleue to be saued therby.

Pupils in catechetical dialogues always say the right wrong thing. ‘No, no, you are deceyued very blyndly,’ answers Knowledge, ‘For faith in Christes merites doth onely iustify, | And make vs righteous in goddes sight.’ Why then should I do any good works, asks Juventus in confusion, ‘[s]eing I shal not be saued by them.’ Because they are ‘the necessary fruites of true repentaunce,’ Good Counsel replies. (Aiiii^{v}, 215-25.) Juventus vows not to follow ‘my elders and parentes […] Trustyng in theyr owne workes which is nothyng but vanitie’, and shows that he has learned this lesson by thanking God for his saving knowledge, which comes ‘Of his own mercy and not of my deseruynge’ (Bi^{r}, 254-59).

Before the virtues leave him to pursue his new godliness, Good Counsel seals the conversion by giving Juventus a ‘testament’, a Bible or gospel-book (Bi^{v}, 276). This is an

[288] See Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions*, 41-43; Ian Green, *The Christian’s ABC* (Oxford, 1996), 45-92.

evangelical rewrite of the prayer-beads given by Humility to Youth. (When the printer William Copland reprinted both plays in the 1560s, the rewrite became reciprocal: perhaps following *Juventus*' Protestant example, Copland printed Humility's line 'Here be beads for your devotion' as 'Here be bokes', which is almost a history of the Reformation in miniature.)[289]

Juventus exits and the plot thickens: the Devil appears, mourning that 'the yonger sort' are abandoning the errors he has sown amongst the elder (Bii[v], 341). He summons 'my child' Hypocrisy, who has been at work throughout history spreading popish superstitions, which he lists for thirty lines (Biii[r-v], 402-42, starting with 'ydolatry | With al kind of filthy Sodometry', straight from *Three Laws*' playbook). Like Bale's Infidelity, Hypocrisy is a Vice in all but name. The Devil tasks this wisecracking comic with reclaiming Juventus for Hell.

Hypocrisy accosts Juventus under the alias of Friendship and soon cajoles him out of going to the sermon, as he intended, but instead to have his cake and eat it: to indulge his lusts while making great show of being a better Protestant than everyone else. This passage is the clearest evidence of Wever's knowledge of *Youth*, where Pride tells the hero:

> Be in company with gentle men
> Iette vp and downe in the waye
> And your clothes loke they be gaye
> The pretye wenches wyll saye than
> Yonder goeth a gentleman[.] [*Youth*, Bii[v], 346-50.]

Hypocrisy adapts this to the most powerful prop in the Protestant hypocrite's arsenal, the Bible:

> Let your booke at your gyrdle be tyed,
> Or els in your bosome that he may be spyed,
> And then it wyl be sayd both with youth and age,
> Yonder felow hath an excellent knowledge [*Juventus*, Ciii[v], 687-90.]

He is to cloak his carnality by becoming what Good Counsel later calls 'a great gospeller in the mouth' (Diiii[r], 1002). This is the concern which distinguishes Wever's play from Bale's: the fear that an overwhelmingly youth-led movement against the old papistry in Edward's England will breed prideful, empty bigotry in its zealots. Hypocrisy introduces Juventus to Fellowship and then the beautiful woman Abominable Living, alias Unknown Honesty. They head off to the tavern singing.

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[289] *The enterlude of youth* (London, [1566-69?]), C4[v]; noted in *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. Lancashire, 770n.

The play's resolution happens in superficially the same way as its unreformed prototype's: a staged scene of justification in which persuasion is followed by dismay, repentance, and a new resolve. Good Counsel rebukes Juventus bitterly for reneging on his godly intentions, in thunderous speeches of impending judgement peppered with Pauline quotations. The virtue finally breaks him down, and Juventus 'lyeth downe' and despairs that he will be damned. Good Counsel now rebukes him for forgetting God's promises of mercy to the repentant, and prays that 'it may please god agayn to open thy eies': 'trust in the lord without any feare, | And his merciful promises shall shortly appeare.' This proves literally true: Juventus yearns to hear those promises, and is told 'The liuing god hath him hether assyned: | Lo, where he commeth euen here by'. God's Merciful Promises enters quoting (with chapter references) God's words to Ezekiel: 'turne vnto me, | And I shal remeady the cause of your departure', and 'I do not delight in a sinners death'. (Diiii[v], 1023-54.) Even in his extremity of doubt and wonder, Juventus spots an inconsistency: Good Counsel has earlier quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that there shall be no salvation for those who hear the Word and then fall away. There is no inconsistency, God's Merciful Promises rejoins: as Augustine interprets it, Paul referred only to 'those which resiste t*h*e truth by vyole*n*ce' and die unrepentant (Diiii[v], 1058). Consoled by the promise of mercy, Juventus rises from his prostration.

God's Merciful Promises now instructs him and us to understand the significance of the spiritual change in terms radically external to Juventus himself:

> For me his mercy sake thou shalte optayne his grace,
> And not for thine owne desertes, this must thou knowe,
> For my sake alone, he shal receyue solace,
> For my sake alone he wil the mercy shew,[290]
> Therfore to him as it is most due,
> Geue most harty thankes, with hart vnfayned,
> Whose name for euer more be praysed [Ei[r], 1070-75.]

As with the wrestling victory of Just in *The Trial of Treasure*, the regeneration of Juventus which we see occurring *coram hominibus* must not be mistaken for an improvement in his condition *coram Deo*, as Youth's allegedly was. As Juventus says when he rises from the floor and addresses a long homily to the spectators, 'Credite not al thynges vnto the outward shew, | But trie them with Gods word' (Eii[r], 1130-31). In particular, he exhorts 'All you that

[290] It is possible that 'he' in the third line is a mistake for 'thou', but we can imagine God's Merciful Promises turning to the audience to speak the third line *about* Juventus and then its parallel *to* him, linked by 'For my sake alone'.

be yong, whom I do now represent, | Set your delite both day *and* night, on Christes testame*n*t' (1140-41). He and Good Counsel lead all present in prayers for the King.

Is *Juventus* proof that the everyman play was compatible with Reformed theology? There is no denying the classic structure of temptation and repentance. Perhaps Juventus' pointed reference to the 'yong' as the really interested party in the play proves him to be less of an everyman than Youth, whose age became as irrelevant to the play's message as Mankind's farm. Moreover, Jane Griffiths observes that Juventus seems 'slightly displaced' from the position occupied by other morality-play protagonists, because 'the subject of the interlude is less Juventus' experience than the means by which he is instructed, and less "education" itself than the over-riding importance of God's Word.'[291] She singles out his passivity as a catechumen in the staged instruction. To this I would add his passive relationship to the means by which he is justified. I argue that the debatable inequality in the interest we are supposed to feel in the protagonist's career is secondary to that which he, and we, are supposed to feel in the virtues around him.

I will single out three devices in *Juventus* which are representative of the alienation of virtue in the Reformation interlude generally. Most obvious is the concluding appearance of a divine visitant to bring about justification as if *ex machina*. This set-piece is indeed the most typical of a 'reformed' dramaturgy, and concludes half a dozen surviving plays. However, I argue that this should be understood as part of a subtler pattern of aesthetic choices, rhetorical hedges against allotting too much power to man. I will look first at Wever's choice of Good Counsel and the Knowledge of God's Verity as provokers to repentance, and his replacement of *Youth*'s Pride by Hypocrisy as the chief tempter. They testify to a realignment of the staged action relative to the most important figure in both plays, unstaged but understood: God Himself.

Knowledge and Hypocrisy

Aquinas had written that the virtues of counsel and the knowledge of God – those virtues personified in *Juventus* – are both contained within charity. *Consilium* and *scientia* are two of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit prophesied by Isaiah to settle upon the flower of the rod of Jesse: 'The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord' (Isaiah

[291] Griffiths, '*Lusty Juventus*', 265.

11:2). According to St Thomas, the only virtues higher than these seven are the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity – the greatest of which is charity, 'so that whoever has charity has all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, none of which can one possess without charity.'[292] A Thomist precedent is hardly persuasive in Protestant literature, of course, but it hardly needs proving that charity's centrality was corroborated in the Gospels and Epistles. Wever's Knowledge quotes further fruits of the Holy Spirit from Paul, which declare a man to have true faith: 'Loue, ioye, peace, long suffering and faithfulnes | Mekenes, goodnes, temperaunce and gentilnes.' (Aiiii^{r-v}, 206-7; Galatians 5:22-23).

There is every sign that a playwright working twenty years earlier would have brought one or more of these infused virtues – charity, humility, temperance, perseverance, fortitude, or hope – into the playing space as an agent of Juventus' moral reformation. Besides Charity and Humility in *Youth*, an active role is played by Pity in *Hickscorner*; Perseverance in *Magnificence*, *Hickscorner*, and *Mundus et Infans*, and also Contemplation in the latter two; Patience, Abstinence, Chastity, and the other remedial virtues against the seven sins in *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Nature*. However, to a degree not yet described in the scholarship, these once-standard personifications all but disappear in Protestant drama. I would argue that this trend allows us to see how dramatists followed Luther's injunction that 'our own righteousness that is born in us must first be plucked up' before we can have saving faith.[293]

Knowing and communicating knowledge are the human abilities most distinctively personified in Protestant drama. Between them they attest to the specialised kind of agency still reserved to man in the process of moral reformation: true knowledge is the apprehension of human powerlessness, and the duty of godly communication is to promote such knowledge. Over both, entirely transcending any mortal capacity as a divinely absolute good, is the figure of Truth, or Verity, or Veritas, the claimed patroness of all ideological sides and the most personified concept of the Reformation period across plays, entertainments, masques, and public triumphs.[294] Usually Truth's sublimity is underlined in these male-

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[292] *The Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1918-28), I-II, q. 68, art. 8.

[293] *LW* 25.137; see above.

[294] I count 15 appearances of Truth in Wiggins to 1580 (a period of 47 years): the interludes *Horestes*, *King Johan*, *Respublica*, *Three Estates*, and *The Interlude of Minds*; the fragments known as 'Somebody, Avarice, and Minister' and 'Detraction, Light Judgement and Verity'; the Edwardian dialogue *Indictment against Mother Mass* (Wiggins 187); the coronation entries of Edward VI (Wiggins 151), Philip and Mary (Wiggins 258), and Elizabeth (Wiggins 311); and a series of lost plays and courtly entertainments (Wiggins 250, 352, 382, 551).

dominated plays by making her female, in rare obedience to the iconographic tradition. The few exceptions are due to other factors. Veritas in *King Johan* is a male historiographer, for example, surely because the play's purported concern is historical accuracy, the fruit of archival legwork rather than passive receipt of revelation.

Rather than representing active virtues, the personifications who play the decisive role in persuading to conversion in *Lusty Juventus* promote the knowledge that no such virtue is possible. As is clear in the moments of catechism, and of mistake and correction, in *Juventus*, a proper faith rests on an informed understanding. R. T. Kendall writes that '[t]he position which Calvin wants pre-eminently to establish (and fundamentally assumes) is that faith is knowledge.'[295] Commenting on the phrase 'the knowledge of God' (2 Peter 1:2), Luther argued that merely catechetical knowledge, the state of being informed, was not enough: 'So may we all well say, there is *a* God, but this we cannot say all of us, that He is *our* God.' He draws the analogy with an unmarried woman, who 'can well say that a man is a husband, but this can she not say, that he is her husband.' Rather, 'This also must be implied, that Christ is yours and you are His, then have you a true knowledge.'[296]

Knowledge was probably the defining personification of the Edwardian Reformation. He appears in court to testify against the popish Mass in two dialogues published in quick succession in 1547-48, as the friend and senior of Freemouth in William Turner's *The Examination of the Mass* and the junior of Verity in *The Indictment against Mother Mass*. In a third, more catechetical dialogue in verse, Knowledge is the instructor of the unlettered Simplicity. Knowledge stood in part for a self-conscious political process of lay emancipation through catechism, sermon, and access to Scripture. In a lost play at Edward's court, known from a costume list in the Revels accounts, Hunger of Knowledge was a London apprentice, whose forward-looking zeal for the truth presumably contrasted with the priest Old Blind Custom.[297] Turner's Knowledge and Freemouth capture the same dual senses of education and accusation as Wever's Knowledge and Counsel: godly teachers of the truths revealed in Scripture, and godly whistleblowers speaking out against Antichrist's conspiracy in the present age. Turner's pair are lay Masters of Art at Oxford and Cambridge, whose superior knowledge abashes the ordained clerics defending Mistress Missa. Freemouth is recognisably a relative of Parrhesia, the rhetorical trope of outspokenness who is personified as the feisty

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[295] R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* [1979], 2nd ed. (Milton Keynes, 1997), 19.
[296] Commentary on 2 Peter (c.1523-24), in *The Epistles of St Peter [...] explained by Martin Luther*, trans. E. H. Gillett (New York, 1859), 122.
[297] Wiggins 156.

old handmaid of Veritas in the Lutheran neo-Latin play *Pammachius* (1538), of which Bale made a lost translation.[298]

Wever's figures are outliers in the Edwardian tradition because they have none of the societal attachments of the evangelical apprentice or the Masters of Art; as we have seen, plays written for performance put their virtues at a greater aesthetic remove from reality than dialogues for reading. However, though knowledge and outspokenness were occasionally permitted more embodiment and biography, they are properly the knowledge of human powerlessness. As the remedies for error and ignorance – whether construed as a state of godless turpitude or vulnerable credulity, with both senses personified in the later sixteenth century – they counteract pride in human works. Before the Reformation, Knowledge appears only in *Everyman*, translating the original Kennisse. There, she (for the play's Dutch origin is shown by Everyman's unusual reliance upon ethereal women) is the sister of Good Deeds, and the knowledge she represents is knowledge of what Everyman must *do* to justify himself. Knowledge in Protestant drama is the knowledge that one cannot *do* anything. In Lewis Wager's strongly Calvinist play of the life of Mary Magdalene, the Magdalene is terrified almost into despair by the dreary figure of the Knowledge of Sin, from which Christ must reassure her.

Knowledge can be likened to the better-studied figure of Conscience, who appears more often in Protestant interludes by 1590 than any others. Conscience fulfils the same basic role as Wager's Knowledge of Sin, that of an accuser of sins already committed; what is significant is that in Protestant plays his efforts to prevent further sin are always impotent, never effective even temporarily.[299] He appears as a lamenting figure pleading with the would-be rapist Judge Apius in *Apius and Virginia*, alongside a sword-wielding figure of Justice. Conscience also pleads with the would-be apostate Philologus in *The Conflict of Conscience*, when under popish interrogation he is tempted by Sensual Suggestion to go over to Rome. These admonitors eventually give up on their human charge in despair. Conscience's own personal complicity is asserted in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*, when the penurious Lady Conscience is won over by Lucre and eventually shares in her hellish punishment. John S. Wilks has made an illuminating study of this figure in Reformation drama, concluding that his or her staged failures 'demonstrate the hopeless

[298] See chapter 1.

[299] By contrast, in his one surviving appearance before the Reformation, in *The World and the Child*, Conscience manages at least temporarily to set Manhood on the correct path.

ineffectuality of conscience upon the will of man'.[300] As Michael G. Baylor has described in detail, the medieval schoolmen and the reformers agreed that we have implanted in us a native faculty of discerning right from wrong: the *synteresis*. According to Baylor, Luther moves from the scholastic conception of *synteresis* as something 'soteriologically efficacious', an inborn faculty for determining which action to choose. Rather, it is 'irrelevant' to man's justification – 'and, if relied upon […] in fact harmful.'[301] Its function rather is as a faculty 'capable of judging the person as a whole', not condemning this or that action but making a blanket condemnation of man's fallen nature and impotence.[302] As Calvin put it, 'the judgement of conscience distinguish[es] sufficiently between just and unjust, and by convicting men on their own testimony, depriv[es] them of all pretext for ignorance.'[303] When Conscience in Protestant interludes attempts to go any further than this salutary accusation, by trying to prevent future sin, it is always fruitless.

The movement from knowledge of what to do to knowledge that one can do nothing can account for the falling-off of the old active virtues from personification in Protestant drama. Table 3 shows the virtues most personified in plays before the split with Rome in 1534, and their appearances after. To avoid the question-begging categories 'Protestant' and 'non-Protestant', I have grouped them purely chronologically, but in fact most cases of continuity are in religiously conservative contexts. The most obvious are the numbered groupings familiar from medieval iconography: the four cardinal virtues, the four 'Daughters of God', and the seven remedial virtues. (The three theological virtues never appeared together in a surviving English play.) Whenever any of these iconographical groupings are personified in an interlude, the context is theologically unreformed. The 'Daughters' are Peace, Truth, Mercy, and Justice, whose reconciliation is the subject of Psalm 85:10; together, they formed the 'Parliament of Heaven', whose debate about mankind's salvation or destruction introduces the so-called 'Mary play' of the N-Town cycle.[304] They make their only sixteenth century appearance in Nicholas Udall's *Respublica*, written for Queen Mary. Though Udall had been an evangelical reformer, and maintains a tactful, and perhaps tactical, doctrinal silence, the presence of the four divine spokeswomen is a suggestive sop to Mary's piety. The interlude *The Four Cardinal Virtues and the Vices Contrary to Them* was probably

[300] Wilks, *Idea of Conscience*, 75. The personification is also the subject of Andrew Escobedo, *Volition's Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017), 93-124.
[301] Michael G. Baylor, *Action and Person* (Leiden, 1977), 181-82.
[302] Baylor, *Action and Person*, 208.
[303] *Institutes*, trans. Beveridge, II.ii.22.
[304] On the Parliament's medieval iconography, see Samuel C. Chew, *The Virtues Reconciled* (Toronto, 1947), 35-68.

written during the final, religiously conservative decade of the reign of Mary's father. It survives only in a fragmentary print from the mid-1540s, from a publisher whose output dependably reflected King Henry's own traditionalism.[305] The play's penitential subject, indicated by its title, speaks loud and clear to this period of reversal in doctrinal reform.

The concept that the soul could be purged of vice by practicing the opposite virtue had its origin in the sacrament of penance. After the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281, penitential training had commonly opposed particular sins to particular virtues, to allow worshippers a more structured and specific confession of wrongdoing, and thus more targeted and effective prescriptions for penance by the priest.[306] This was typified by the seven remedial virtues. *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Nature* stage this explicitly by bringing in the seven remedial virtues to counter each deadly sin we have earlier seen: Humilitas (*Nature*'s Meekness); Caritas (Charity); Paciencia (Patience); Solicitudo (Good Busyness); Largitas (Liberality); Abstinencia (Abstinence); and Castitas (Chastity). With their talismanic sense of an effectual opposition, one nail driving out another – 'preparatyfs most souerayn | Agaynst thy sores whyche be mortall,' as Reason tells Man (*Nature*, [h4][r], 2.1076-77) – these virtues were the most emblematic of human agency in justification.

John Bossy has described the sixteenth century English shift away from unscriptural formulae as 'seven sins into ten commandments'.[307] Bale's famous parody of the confessional in *King Johan* symbolizes moral drama's redeployment against the old culture of penitence: the disguised Sedition shrives Nobility in the Pope's name, and uses the secrecy of the sacrament to persuade him to treason against his honest proto-Protestant King. Bale's parody added national sovereignty to the list of the confessional's casualties – but gravest of all, the 'souerayn' remedial virtues denied the sovereignty of God over salvation. God is 'the physician of the soul', as the Elizabethan 'Homily of Repentance' calls Him, and 'amendment of life' is His work alone; penitence and amends are the 'good fruits' of His

[305] Besides *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (pr. 1545?), the publications of William Middleton (d. 1547) included translations of such medieval favourites as the pseudo-Senecan *Formula honestae vitae* (pr. 1546) and the *Imitatio Christi* (pr. 1545?). A representative passage, relevant to the play, is from *A boke of prayers* ([1546?]), Bi[r]: 'True rep*e*nta*u*nce is to lament *and* be sory for thy synnes, *and* vtterly to forsake the*m*, *and* [...] to vse and practyse t*h*e vertue which is contrary to the vyce wherin ye arre most corrupted.' See Middleton's *ODNB* entry by R. E. Graves.
[306] For a philosophical treatment of the remedial opposition between virtue and vice, see Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (eds.), *The Virtues and their Vices* (Oxford, 2014).
[307] John Bossy, 'Moral arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments', in Edmund Leites (ed.), *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), 214-34; corroborated by Green, *Christian's ABC*, 42.

forgiveness, not the other way around.[308] Men cannot count their sins, let alone counter them. Marlowe's eerily etiolated rollcall of the seven deadly sins in *Doctor Faustus* is their first known theatrical appearance in ninety years.

My table shows a handful of examples of a continuity of personified virtue in plays which are apparently doctrinally Protestant. One of these is deceptive: we have already seen that Justice appears alongside Conscience in *Apius and Virginia*, pleading with Judge Apius not to follow through his evil designs, but eventually giving up. *Apius* stages only a failure of personal righteousness, expressed in the characteristic terms of personification drama, of trying to secure a controlling interest in another's behaviour. (Such mortal characters in whom virtue can secure no interest are the subject of the following chapter.) However, Charity is personified in two interludes after the Reformation, in the anonymous *King Darius* (c.1560s) and Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* (c.1570-78) – in the latter alongside Humility, in his only known post-Reformation outing. What I would emphasize is that when they do appear, it is never in the mould of an everyman play, as the spiritual guide in a staged scene of repentance such as Juventus'. Whether through failure or through an absence of anybody to influence, they are withheld from the former symbolic meaning that man can choose which virtues to cultivate in order to justify himself.

The bizarrely plotless *King Darius* splices scenes from the life of the biblical Persian with irrelevant, self-contained scenes of flyting between, on the one side, Charity, Equity, and Constancy, and on the other Iniquity the Vice (revealed to be the Pope's son), Partiality, and Importunity. The vices banter more like pickpockets or cardsharps than the popish tyrants they are alleged to be, but the virtues speak vaguely like Protestant justified sinners: 'If any thynge we haue that is good,' says Equity, 'It cometh by god, and not by our noble blood' (Ci^{v}). The distinction between personifications and a virtuous or vicious individual is little maintained, and we are probably supposed to view their plotless arguments as a representation of England's political reformation rather than the triumph of a remedial virtue over its contrary vice in the soul.[309] In Lupton's similarly sequential *All for Money*, Charity occupies another self-contained scene, none of whose speakers have earlier appeared.[310] Charity, Humility, and Virtue are brought into the space at the play's end by a figure called

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[308] The Homily of Repentance and True Reconciliation unto God (1563), in *The Books of Homilies*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge, 2015), 504.

[309] This is confirmed when the virtues drive Iniquity off by fire and he cries 'Nay I go to the deuil I fere' (F4^{v}) – clearly borrowed from Vindicta Dei's scourging of Bale's Infidelity, who cries 'To the deuyll of helle, by the messe, I wene I go' (*Three Laws*, F5^{r}, 1853).

[310] *All for Money*, 1447-71.

Godly Admonition – recognisably the same faculty as Wever's Good Counsel. The costuming of these male speakers is undescribed, and they simply address the spectators about the importance of godliness and lead the closing prayers for Elizabeth. The character called Virtue gets only six lines. These oddly bloodless appearances, narratively irrelevant, perhaps themselves suggest the problem of virtue in Protestant drama.

When Charity and Humility appear in other plays, they are vices in disguise. Nothing symbolises the new doubt into which the old active virtues were cast in drama than the use of the virtuous-sounding pseudonym by characters who are really, by definition, evils. Charity, Devotion, Frugality, Honesty, Humility, Justice, Patience, Prudence, Sapience, Sound Doctrine: all are vices' disguises in surviving Reformation plays, and half of them are used only in this context, never personified as a *bona fide* virtue – including 'Reformation' itself, which is the alias of Detraction and Oppression.[311]

In *Youth* the everyman blithely calls Pride and Riot by their names, and when they are chided by Lady Lechery for using hers they simply laugh this niceness off as her faux-modesty. Youth does not care either way – just as, in *The World and the Child*, Manhood finds out Folly's name but still follows him willingly to London. The change from Pride to Hypocrisy in *Juventus* is distinctive of the new climate of unmasked conspiracy in mid-Tudor drama. Hypocrisy assumes the alias Friendship and Lechery's counterpart Abominable Living becomes Unknown Honesty. Wever was seemingly the first to give Hypocrisy the starring role as the lead vice of a play, but he was the really distinctive personification in anticatholic drama. Having never appeared in an English play before, Hypocrisy took a prominent role in five plays in the half-century after the split with Rome. Besides *Juventus*, he is a grey friar in Bale's *Three Laws* and a Franciscan in John Foxe's neo-Latin *Christus Triumphans* (1556); the sister of the popish priest Perverse Doctrine in *New Custom*; and a heavy of the popish Cardinal in Nathaniel Woodes's *Conflict of Conscience*. The threat of a hypocritically virtuous front for evil, however, extends far beyond polemic to almost every

[311] Charity is really Envy in *Impatient Poverty*; Devotion is Flattery in Lindsay's *Three Estates* and Dissimulation in *King Johan*, and never a real virtue; Frugality is Avarice in *New Custom* (a time-honoured one: Avaritia in Prudentius' *Pyschomachia* becomes Frugi), and never real; Honesty is Adulation in *Respublica*, and Unknown Honesty really Abominable Living in *Lusty Juventus*, and never real; Humility is Rigour in *The Cruel Debtor*; Justice with Severity is Cruelty in *New Custom* and Legal (or 'Mosaical') Justice is Infidelity in *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene*; the latter also calls himself Prudence, as does Cruelty in *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool thou Art*, which is otherwise never real; Patience is the Vice Revenge's in *Horestes*, and never real; Sapience is Falsehood in *Three Estates*; and Sound Doctrine is Perverse Doctrine's in *New Custom*, and never real. Reformation is Detraction in the fragmentary 'Detraction, Light Judgement, and Verity', and Oppression in *Respublica*.

Protestant moral interlude. Julie Paulson has described ‘the vice disguised as virtue’ as ‘the sixteenth century morality play’s signature feature’.[312]

Aliases had been in the vice’s toolbox since Prudentius. For instance, Nicolette Zeeman has discussed the ‘hypocritical personification’ in relation to the rhetorical trope of *paradiastole* in *Piers Plowman*.[313] In drama it was comparatively rare: the only pre-Reformation plays in which ‘masquerading vice’ plays a major role are Medwall’s *Nature* and Skelton’s *Magnificence*, which have both been well-discussed.[314] The distinctive uses of the device during the Reformation have been less noted, though Paulson and Jane Griffiths have both perceptively discussed the aliases of *Respublica*.[315] It has not been noted I think how much more destabilising of ‘active’ virtue the Protestant uses of the device are.

The aliases chosen by the vices of Protestant drama are different to those of late medieval plays because many of them are taken from the traditional stock of moral virtues, such as the ones quoted above, with no attempt to distinguish them from undoubted goods. In *Nature* and *Magnificence*, the vices’ aliases attempt to sound desirable and unharmful rather than salvific or perfect. They do not imitate the real moral virtues onstage, such as Skelton’s Measure, Perseverance, and Repentance or Medwall’s Reason, Shamefastness, and Patience, which cannot run harmfully to excess – by definition, in the case of Measure or Reason. The everyman-figures, Man and Magnificence, are reassured by the new names not because they sound like the best way to become good and please God, but because they sound like the most harmless ways to please and dignify oneself. Medwall’s deadly sins choose names which appeal to self-interest rather than any higher ideal of the good: thus, Sloth renames himself Ease, Pride Worship, and Gluttony Good Fellowship, all nice things to enjoy – but Lechery becomes Lust (following one’s desires) and Envy Disdain, which hardly had any holier moral ring in early Tudor English than in modern. Concealing the sins’ extreme toxicity to the soul, these aliases launder danger into safety, not evil into good.

Most of Skelton’s pseudonyms are similar, appealing to pragmatism (Crafty Conveyance becomes Sure Surveyance), appetite (Courtly Abusion becomes Lusty Pleasure), or superficial judgement (Counterfeit Countenance becomes Good Demeanance, which is no

[312] Paulson, *Theatre of the Word*, 140.
[313] Nicolette Zeeman, *The Arts of Disruption* (Oxford, 2020), 55-74.
[314] The subject respectively of John A. Alford, ‘“My name is Worship”: Masquerading vice in Medwall’s *Nature*’, in Alford (ed.), *From Page to Performance*, 151-77, and Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority* (Oxford, 2006), 65-73.
[315] Paulson, *Theatre of the Word*, 138-40; Jane Griffiths, ‘Counterfet Countenaunce: (Mis)representation and the challenge to allegory in sixteenth-century morality plays’, *YES* 38 (2008), 17-33.

more than to behave respectfully, whether or not one means well). Our grasp of what is virtuous and what is not is hardly disturbed by finding that one's preference for ease can really be slothfulness, or one's gratification by worship pridefulness, or one's indulgence in pleasures really harm to bodily or spiritual welfare: the latter involve the former almost by definition, so the former always carried a risk of the latter.

Only Cloaked Collusion's alias, Sober Sadness, troubles the relation of real to apparent virtue, because it sounds interchangeable with the undoubted virtues in the play – so that Sad Circumspection, who is summoned by Redress to offer counsel during Magnificence's repentance, must be trusted on convention and context rather than as a matter of course. Protestant drama made this distinctively hypocritical sort of alias a standard and purposive feature. To use Luther's terms again, the trustworthiness of virtue *coram hominibus* is undermined. Trusting in any of one's own virtues, and putting any trust in human motives, is always, *coram Deo*, to be misled into sin.

Justification by Faith

It is as well-counselled spectators with a true knowledge, therefore, that we should appraise God's Merciful Promises, the only personification without any parallel in *Youth*, and with him the 'sages' who enter to Sincere Doctrine at the end of *New Custom*. God's Merciful Promises enters on direct embassage from God to take over from Knowledge and Counsel to set the seal upon Juventus' justification. 'For me his mercy sake thou shalte optayne his grace,' this otherworldly figure intones to the prostrate adolescent,

> And not for thine owne desertes, this must thou knowe,
> For my sake alone, he shal receyue solace,
> For my sake alone he wil the mercy shew,
> Therfore to him as it is most due,
> Geue most harty thankes, with hart vnfayned,
> Whose name for euer more be praysed [Ei^r, 1070-75.]

This sounds repellently lifeless and totalitarian to students of, say, the Second Shepherds' Play, but it expresses through stately repetition the greatest good news of the Protestant message, that we can trade our fretful doubts of salvation for secure trust in a perfect power: what Luther called the passage *de virtutibus ad gratiam Christi*, from Egyptian slavery into the promised land. If the representative of God's mercy speaks with an imperturbable rhythmical sternness, that is the syntactical reflection of a comfortingly foregone conclusion.

What Johnston calls the 'calm stillness of good' perhaps sounded clearer in Protestant drama, because it came to express the much more profound stillness of an unshakeable foundation, away from the empty noise of merely 'active' holiness.

Wever anticipates one of the characteristic features of Protestant dramaturgy, 'to introduce a series of figures, one after another in pageant-like fashion, to dramatize a spiritual process.'[316] I argue that the 'spiritual process' is imputation, and that the stagecraft of these almost bodiless figures, entering the playing space unbidden, is an effort to stage *aliena iustitia*, what Luther called 'a righteousness that comes completely from the outside and is foreign'.[317]

The divine prerogative over justification is staged explicitly in the last known play to bring Christ onstage, Lewis Wager's play of Mary Magdalene, perhaps written at around the same time as *Juventus*.[318] Despite the freedom with staging the divine – which Wager shares with Bale – there is no doubting the play's reformist credentials: White has demonstrated conclusively that the personified abstractions in the scene of Mary's justification are taken directly from the discussion of justification in Book III of Calvin's *Institutes*, and are introduced in the order Calvin specifies.[319] Mary has been corrupted into sexual immorality by the Vice, Infidelity (Jewish alias: Legal Justification), but then horrified into realisation of her sin by the intervention of The Law, a figure of Moses bearing the tablets of the Decalogue.[320] This realisation is symbolised by Knowledge of Sin, the conscience-like figure noted earlier. Christ enters and casts out Infidelity's devils from her, and she implores him to strengthen her weak faith. 'No man can come to me, that is, in me beleue,' Christ replies, 'Except my father draw hym by his spirite. | Behold Faith and Repentance to thee here I geue'.[321] Faith and Repentance enter with long speeches of instruction for the penitent Magdalene, which are cast in almost exactly the same terms as those of God's Merciful Promises ('Of his owne mercie this to do he hath deuised, | And not of your merites, thus you see plainly'; Gii^{r}, 1519-20).

Meg Twycross has described the direct interventions of Providence as particularly distinctive of the politicisation of the interlude during the mid-Tudor crises of reform: witness

[316] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 77.
[317] *LW* 25.136; see above.
[318] See Wiggins 209, who dates it agnostically to 1550.
[319] Wager's precise borrowings are tabled in White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 181-85.
[320] Wager was clearly writing downstream of Bale's *Three Laws*, with its own personifications of Infidelity and the Law of Moses.
[321] *Life and Repentance*, [F4]^{v}, 1413-150.

the arrivals *ex machina* of Nemesis to punish the wrongdoers at Respublica's court, or Divine Correction for King Humanity's realm in *Three Estates*. The arrival of Light of the Gospel from Geneva in *New Custom* casts this irruption in literal (almost littoral) terms of geography and citizenship. Where 'in the moral interludes the peripeteia is usually engineered by personal Repentance', Twycross writes, '[p]olitical plays crave a more drastic and external reformation of the corrupt status quo, often a divine one: the feeling is that the problem is too great to be solved by ordinary means.'[322] However, the scene just quoted suggests a very different picture of 'peripeteia' – that is, justification – in the moral interlude. It suggests that the grievous damage of original sin is even more terminal to the individual Christian than venal bureaucrats are to the Christian commonwealth, and that the soul requires 'drastic and external reformation' no less than the body politic. The personified Repentance who addresses the Magdalene, meanwhile, seems a very impersonal Repentance indeed.

Elizabethan plays never put a person of the Trinity onstage. When playwrights in the 1560s, including Lewis Wager's probable son William, wished to show the effects of faith on the soul, they did not bring in the divine to speak for His own prerogative.[323] However, this fact does not by itself make any difference from pre-Reformation plays; after all, God had not needed to be explicitly staged in *Youth* for the behaviour of virtue in that play to make Him immediate. In Elizabethan drama, however, the fact that the source of grace is radically offstage works to create an even more marked sense of estrangement. In William Wager's *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, the Heavenly Man is in the middle of chastising his antitype, the Worldly Man, when he is joined abruptly and unbidden by a male figure, who enters saying

> From the Heauenly man I cannot be long absent,
> Which in Gods promises has his consolation:
> Considering that he always is content,
> Patiently to suffer Gods visitation.
> For vnderstand you? my name is Contentation.
> Whome the worldly man dooth mock and deride:
> And wil not suffer him once in his minde to abide.[324]

Contentation is the stoical gratefulness which allows the faithful man to bear whatever happens to him. He seems to join Heavenly Man as if in obedience to a law of nature (he

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[322] Meg Twycross, 'The widow and Nemesis: Costuming two allegorical figures in a play for Queen Mary Tudor', *YES* 43 (2013), 273.
[323] For the relation of William Wager to Lewis, see my Introduction.
[324] *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, [A4]^{r}, 142-48.

‘cannot be long absent’ from him). At the play’s end, after Worldly Man has been struck dead by God and taken off to Hell, the Heavenly Man is joined by another sudden figure, Rest:

> By Gods great goodnes I am sent vnto thee,
> Rest is my name wherin the heauenly shal abide:
> Happy are those persons that come vnto me,
> For I beeing present all troubles I doo deuide. [Gii[v], 1521-24.]

It is distinctive of such otherworldly figures of spiritual reward that they seem at the same time radically internal to a particular character’s psyche and imposed upon the action from outside. This paradox of extreme intimacy and extreme impersonality in fact communicates an important fact about virtue: that God works directly in us, with a power that is in fact perfectly remote from us.

This is the sense of a moral chain reaction which characterizes the justification of Sincere Doctrine in *New Custom*, with which I began. Light of the Gospel has brought in the sage Edification, who announces ‘Where so euer Light of the Gospell goeth before: | There I Edification do followe incontinent [i.e, immediately], | As vnto the same a necessary consequent’ ([D4][r]). The ‘virtue’ Assurance is next to enter, beginning ‘Edification without assurance vayleth not muche’, and he is followed shortly by God’s Felicity: ‘Uerely where Edefication, and Assurance in one are alied: | Goddes Felicitie is at hande, it may not be denied.’ ([D4][v].) As in the tableaux formed around the Magdalene, the Heavenly Man, or Juventus, Sincere Doctrine’s spiritual fruition is here symbolised by an additive process: of something imposed onto the human by an irresistible fiat.

Such figures are embodied only to the extent that they must enter in sequence to form a group. The verbs which Edification uses to express his movement and relationships (‘I followe’) develop the metaphor of interaction hardly beyond a scholastic summary of ideas. Only the pronouns tell us that more is happening here than the ordinary suggestion of life incidental to all noun-verb pairings. Like the abstract virtues in Wager’s play of the Magdalene, who seem scarcely to escape the prose of Calvin’s *Institutes* which suggested them, these are persons who aspire to the condition of a written sentence. However, this process of de-personification is not motivated by some chilly logocentrism, a love of lecture over theatre of which Protestants (despite their lively, bantering vices) sometimes stand accused. Rather, it correlates with the disinterest which the rightly knowing sinner must feel in a process to which he has no title and in which he plays no active role.

Conclusion: Faith and the Fourth Wall

I have tried in this chapter to consider a tension between theatrical medium and Protestant message which lies outside the familiar ‘Protestant’ preoccupations with transubstantiation, the liturgy, or the papacy: that is, the process of justification itself, in relation to personification specifically. I have tried thereby to account for certain stylistic anomalies and discontents in Protestant moral drama in terms which do not assume an essential antitheatricalism or iconoclasm on the part of men who chose voluntarily to be theatrical practitioners. I believe this can account for the real difference between the staged scenes of justification and conversion in plays with deceptively similar morality structures to their pre-Reformation forebears.

We become spectators at somebody else’s spiritual process. There is no ‘fourth wall’ between us and the justification of Sincere Doctrine or Mary Magdalene – the characters are insistently homiletic, fully aware that they are educating more than just the penitent individual in the playing space – but we do become a third party. We are invited attendees at a private spiritual process at which we may feel no ‘interest’. If the tendency in the Protestant interlude is towards de-personifying imputed grace altogether, reserving it to something unstaged and invisible, then we can see the endpoint of this mystery in the figure of the ‘heavenly man’, who is *already* justified before we first see him. I have framed ascesis as an aesthetic deferral from real life, preventing the location of virtue in any recognisable human effort or estate. Unlike Juventus and Perverse/Sincere Doctrine – who are outliers in the Protestant tradition in putting off the ‘old man’ during the play – the heavenly man defers the process of justification by faith to before the play begins.

By the 1560s, Protestant interludes divide their casts down the middle into unwaveringly graceful or incorrigibly graceless protagonists, who end the play respectively exalted or destroyed, with almost no movement across the aisle separating the two foregone conclusions. This is the centrifuge from a neutral human centre for which *Three Laws* shows the workings, as we saw in the last chapter. William Wager’s *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *The Trial of Treasure* contrast the Heavenly Man to the Worldly Man and the Just to Lust respectively; and Ulpian Fulwell’s *Like Will to Like* contrasts a rogues’ gallery of drunks and pickpockets around the Vice, Nichol Newfangle, with the upright Virtuous Living. The Vice’s followers end in poverty or on the gallows, while Virtuous Living is comforted by the *Juventus*-like figure of God’s Promises. As Fulwell’s title suggests, the two sides are like oil

and water and tend to coincide less and less onstage – so that, in Thomas Lupton's *All for Money*, the virtuous and vicious characters are segregated into alternating cameo scenes. The probably Edwardian *Nice Wanton* had shown the death by pox or hanging of two spoiled children against the unwavering virtue of their brother Barnabas, but the play had ended hopefully, with Barnabas' description of his siblings' repentant deaths. The Elizabethan deaths by contrast are impenitent: George Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* (c. 1575) stages the promotion of two good brothers and the destruction of two bad ones without any suggestion of moral improvement. This had clearly become a modish template.

Few protagonists symbolise the loss of 'Everyman' more forcefully than one 'Heavenly Man' and one 'Worldly Man' who end the play respectively giving thanks and being dragged out dead by Satan. What is important here is that both camps in these split-cast plays are defined by their reliance upon or deprivation of something wholly external to the represented action. 'Just' is so named because his justification is a *fait accompli*. A figure made strange by a faith only he can feel, the heavenly man is one in whom, in John S. Wilks's words, '[t]he old Adam has been killed […] by a process dramatically unexplored, because inexplicable.'[325] Some playwrights confer dramatic centrality on a vision of virtue to which they do not reconcile us. This feeling of alienation might not be accidental or beside the point, but rather the truest point about virtue that a playwright can convey.

The protagonists of these plays are neither universal representatives nor personifications defined by the 'interest' they seek in humanity at large, but individual mortals in whom grace or sin have already secured the controlling interest, and by whose exemplary trajectories we are edified or entertained. The Elizabethan dislocation of the personification tradition – the sense that we are being positioned more and more as disinterestedly curious onlookers at an opened cabinet of godly and sinful specimens – is my emphasis in what follows.

[325] Wilks, *Idea of Conscience*, 27.

Chapter 3
The Reprobate Fool and the Comedy of Humours

This chapter and the next concern the movement of personification drama toward a self-contained fictive spectacle, defined by the lateral relations between individual exemplars of viciousness or virtuousness within an evoked play-world. There is still no ‘fourth wall’ – the audience are freely acknowledged and solicited, without any illusion of their absence, but increasingly we are positioned as the beneficiaries of an interaction between usefully clarified types, onto whose behaviour we have been given a privileged vantage. That is to say, personification plays begin to lose their unique demarcation from other genres of English drama – and in so doing anticipate later genres not often associated with militant Protestant didacts. The next chapter argues that one genre anticipated by interludes in the 1570s was city comedy, which gratifies us by the recreation of a location and the web of intrigues between its inhabitants. This chapter examines the emergence of a character type which most epitomises this change of ‘interest’, the humoral caricature. Both the humour and the urban satire in which he would increasingly play a role are associated indelibly with Ben Jonson, and he will loom large in this discussion as a test-case both of continuity with emergent elements of the Elizabethan moral interlude and of discontinuity with its oldest medieval inheritance of personified vice and virtue.

We have seen how the audience of personification drama came to lose the specialized interest we were once given in the everyman play. The rise of the humour allows us to trace a reversal of another of the genre’s most important forms of ‘interest’: that is, the controlling interest sought by personifications in the behaviour of others. As described in my introduction, the legal, investitive sense of *interesse* gave rise since at least the fifteenth century to the sense of control or influence over another person, organisation, or object, whether legal, psychological, or even astrological. Thus the planet Saturn has ‘an interest in the clargi or spirituallte for he enducithe […] pontificalnes polyce and ingeniousnes’, according to the physician Andrew Boorde.[326] Sensuality in Medwall’s *Nature* is indignant that he has been granted a lesser ‘intresse’ in Man than Reason.[327] Medwall does not make Sensuality a blind sensualist in his own right, but a self-aware and even self-disciplined plotter, who wishes to secure a controlling stake in the everyman’s behaviour.

[326] *The pryncyples of astronamye* (London, [1547?]), [B6]^{v}-[7]^{r}.
[327] *Nature*, [a3]^{v}, 1.169; see introduction.

The difference has been stated simply by Andrew Escobedo: some personifications ‘enact’, while others ‘transmit’. He gives the example of the personification of Despair in visual art and literature, ‘who traditionally seeks either to kill himself out of spiritual hopelessness or to cheerfully go about his business of inflicting despair onto others.’[328] That is, a character called Despair has two ways in which to relate to his own name: he might ‘enact’ the state of despair in his personal behaviour, or ‘transmit’ despair to another so that *they* will enact it. He might do both, but as Escobedo’s vision of a cheerful Despair implies, neither entails the other. I aim to show that some complex play was made with this simple distinction.

Because ‘transmission’ conjures up visions of supernatural channelling quite alien to the usually conversational and mundane temptation scenes of moral drama, I prefer ‘catalysis’, which is measured by its effects alone, rather than its means. Catalysis is the defining hallmark of personified vices and virtues in English theatre, in the 150 years between *The Castle of Perseverance* and the plays of Robert Wilson in the 1580s. As Robert Potter long ago noted, interlude vices ‘do not epitomize; rather, they tempt.’[329] Medwall’s Sensuality is a catalyst who seeks an ‘intresse’ in Man by inducing him to become a voluptuary. By contrast, the more pronouncedly a character is personally affected by a quality, the more he or she becomes a caricature of it. While catalysts might also enact, I use ‘caricature’ to refer to purely enactive personifications, those lacking any catalytic effect or intention. It follows that catalysts are intent upon making caricatures of others, and we might call this, analogously to a food chain, a chain of interest which patterns the interactions of personification drama. The everyman had been the bottom of this chain, not only because Man does not attempt to provoke others to humanness but because the surrounding virtues and vices make all their bids for influence upon him, whose company they seek to keep, and in whom they thereby seek an interest.

This important spiritual dynamic is lost when critics assume that enactment is the common denominator of all personifications. For instance, Murray Roston elides the distinction between enactment and transmission when he claims that in the morality play ‘personified human traits […] behaved, as might be expected, entirely in accordance with the Virtue or Vice they were intended to portray’, so that, for instance, ‘Sloth is never brimful of

[328] Andrew Escobedo, *Volition’s Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017), 93-94.
[329] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London, 1975), 38.

energy'.[330] In fact, ever since Sloth in *The Castle of Perseverance* cried 'We may non lenger abyde' in his unslothful zeal to begin the plot against Humanum Genus, vices have been gateways rather than thralls to their eponymous condition.[331]

Escobedo's definition is framed explicitly as a corrective to the earlier account of Angus Fletcher, who influentially framed the behaviour of characters in allegorical fiction as a form of 'daemonic possession'.[332] 'If we were to meet an allegorical character in real life,' Fletcher wrote, he would seem 'obsessed with only one idea', 'driven by some hidden, private force', or even that he 'appeared to be controlled by some foreign force, something outside the sphere of his own ego.'[333] Escobedo noted that Fletcher's model does not fit the reality of personified virtue and vice in Tudor theatre. Some personifications seem dominated by a 'daemon', but more often they work to *be* that daemon in others.

Though Fletcher hardly discusses Jonson, what he calls a daemon might equally be called a humour. Asper, the purported playwright of *Every Man Out of His Humour*, is asked by his interlocutors Mitis and Cordatus about the most important word in his title. '*Humor* (as 'tis *ens*),' he replies – that is, as a basic state of being – is 'what soe're hath fluxure and humiditie, | As wanting power to containe it selfe'. However, this fluidity has a specific meaning in human pathology:

> It may by Metaphore applie it selfe
> Vnto the generall disposition,
> As when some one peculiar qualitie
> Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
> In their confluctions all to runne one way,
> This may be truly said to be a Humor[.][334]

The play which follows is a gallery of caricatures, marked by their different 'affects': Macilente, a man contorted by his bitter envy of others; Sordido, so consumed by miserly rage that he hangs himself in a time of plenty; Fungoso the sponge-like soaker-up of fashions; and so on. Asper himself is defined by his asperity as a bitter satirist. The humoral characters

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[330] Murray Roston, *Renaissance Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), 189.
[331] *The Castle of Perseverance*, 992.
[332] Angus Fletcher, *Allegory* (Ithaca, NY, 1964). Katherine Breen has recently surveyed the debate in *Machines of the Mind* (Chicago, IL, 2021), 133.
[333] Fletcher, *Allegory*, 40-41.
[334] Ben Jonson, *Euery man out of his humor* (London, 1600), Bii^{v}, induction 89-107. I quote the first editions of Jonson's works throughout, with line references to *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge, 2012).

are not defined by the controlling interest which they seek in others, but by 'some one peculiar qualitie' – what Fletcher calls a daemon – of which they are exhibitors. We saw in chapter 1 the paradigmatic case of a purely enactive caricature: Malbecco in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, who is so consumed by jealousy that he *becomes* Jealousy. Unsurprisingly, he is Fletcher's main example. Rosamund Tuve calls Malbecco 'a human so filled with the humour of jealousy that he represents it' – drawing a suggestive line between Spenser's cuckold and the figures who would come to populate stage comedy within a decade of Spenser's poem.[335]

Catalysis ensured that personification drama transcends the 'play-world' conjured up during the performance. The power to influence other, more limited characters onstage is understood as the temporary unmasking of forces invisibly at work wherever men give pride or avarice an interest, before, during, and after the play. A drama founded entirely on the interplay of caricatures ensures that the characters' interests are rounded into the fiction, held up for our disinterested amusement. Jonathan Haynes calls this 'a *demonstrative* realism, always displaying and pointing to its objects', in which the characters 'tend to hold their manners aloft for observation'.[336] The personified vice seeks an influence in the world at large, and thus points us to symptoms far beyond the play; the humour is an exhibition of symptoms and draws our piqued attention into it.

This chapter traces the emergence of the 'demonstrative' caricature in Protestant personification drama. I will show that such caricatures emerged as figures for a particular spiritual state: the reprobate. We have seen that the reliance of the elect on supernatural grace produces a kind of negative caricature, the passive detachment of a man without qualities, and that Protestant playwrights had a particular concern to foster spectatorial disinterest in such figures of virtue. The humoral character first develops in personification drama to express the opposite, a caricature of blind thraldom to a particular vice. My focus is upon the Calvinist interludes written in the first decades of Elizabeth's reign, especially the plays of William Wager, which are the first to stage the successful temptation and destruction of a major character by the personified vices: Lust in *The Trial of Treasure*; the Worldly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*; and Moros in *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*. Such protagonists are evidently those whom God has not elected to save, whose badness in some way shuts out the grace necessary to have saving faith. I read Wager's protagonists,

[335] Rosamund Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), 106.
[336] Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theatre* (Cambridge, 1992), 9.

and especially Moros (his name literally meaning 'fool') in conjunction with the recurrent figure of the fool in the Book of Proverbs and its Reformed Protestant commentary tradition, which shows that this biblical cipher for the wicked provided playwrights with a deliberately bathetic way to represent the mystery of reprobation onstage.

What emerges is 'the fool' as a neglected dramatic type who brings together the scriptural valence of folly as personal gracelessness and spiritual blindness with the dramatic sense of being a self-unaware butt of the joke. Fools are distinct from the personifications who conspire against them, for all that they can seem to resemble them – even to the point of having an abstract noun for a name, such as Greediness or Lust. The difference is that they seem unaware of the true significance of those names, and are ultimately unable to escape them: unlike the true personified vices in English plays, fools suffer mortal deaths and are damned. Reprobate fools are defined by a privation of the kinds of interest I have considered: they lack the conscious ability to catalyse others, and in turn they are withheld from any universal significance and instead exhibited as individuals for our disinterested scrutiny. As Peter Womack has said of a later generation of ciphers, the Theophrastan characters of the seventeenth century, '[w]e aren't invited to imagine being such a person' – still less forced to recognize an identity with them – but only to remark how they behave.[337]

Running through the chapter is a concern with Jonson's humours – caricatures compelled by a dominant flaw which they are too self-unaware to reform. I break the pattern of previous chapters and look beyond the personification tradition to show that the moral predicament of the caricature in earlier Elizabethan drama has explanatory power for later humoral comedy. Jonson's fools appear to be written with the dark bathos of the older reprobates in mind. Folly was always essential to Jonson's understanding of his characters – as in his earliest definition of the word, given by Pizo to Cob in *Every Man In His Humour*: 'a monster bred in a man by selfe loue, and affectation, and fed by folly.' (3.1.141-42; F3v.)[338] As such, it was a leitmotif of Jonson's career. I focus strictly on the early so-called comical satires in the late 1590s, because the reprobate fool can account for a tonal anomaly which has long dissatisfied those plays' critics. The comical satires stand most accused of being plotless anatomies of different flavours of foppery, whose fools seem to be his most one-dimensional, trivial, and oblivious – and yet they are often targeted by some of Jonson's most humourless passages of moral invective. Though the important theme of self-love in Jonson

[337] Peter Womack, *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1986), 54.
[338] *Euery man in his humor* (London, 1601), F3v, 3.1.141-42. Pizo's definition is slightly altered in the Folio version of 1616.

has received some analysis, I believe the humoral predicament is further illuminated by the neglected reprobate sense of folly as graceless blindness.[339]

Predestination of one kind has been a critical commonplace in studies of Jonson: the 'onomastic predestination' of his characters' names, which accurately epitomise their bearers' natures.[340] Macilente ('lean' or 'emaciated') is self-devoured by his envy; Volpone plays on entrenched associations of sly fox and cunning miser; and a name like Sir Amorous La Foole is hardly pretending to be anything but a caption. Such 'cratylic' or 'speaking' names have been well-analysed by Anne Barton, who evolved the term in response to Jonson's practice.[341] Gabriele Bernhard Jackson describes the whole scheme of humoral characterisation as 'poetic predestination', and notes that it is 'ill at ease with [Jonson's] doctrine of man's recurring responsibility for evil', because a character created subject to a single bad idea seems doomed to be condemned for it nonetheless.[342] The tension which unites Jonson's fools to the reprobates of earlier stage satire is the basic one between culpability and incapacity: of being at fault for a nature one cannot change. I will not resolve this tension in what follows – which would be, to say the least, difficult – so much as show its pedigree: that the 'onomastic predestination' of the humoral character is inherited from moral personification drama, in which those who live up to a bad name are doomed to be punished for it.

'In despight of hell': Jonson's Humours

Ben Jonson's first contribution to the vogue for humoral comedy, *Every Man In His Humour*, was acted at the Curtain in Shoreditch in September 1598, a year after George Chapman's *An Humorous Day's Mirth* seems to have begun the fashion. During the opening run of this play, Jonson converted to Roman Catholicism while in prison. *Every Man Out of His Humour* followed at the new Globe in late 1599, and then at Court; *The Fountain of Self-Love* (usually called by its subtitle *Cynthia's Revels*) with the Children of the Chapel Royal at the Blackfriars and at Court in early 1601; and *Poetaster* with the same company in spring of that year, his clearest salvo against Thomas Dekker and John Marston in revenge for perceived recent lampoons of him.[343] The latter three are typically grouped as the comical satires.

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[339] Robert Wiltenburg, *Ben Jonson and Self-Love* (Columbia, MI, 1990).
[340] The phrase is Laurie Maguire's, in *Shakespeare's Names* (Oxford, 2007), 13.
[341] Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984), 170-93.
[342] Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, *Vision and Judgement in Ben Jonson's Drama* (New Haven, CT, 1968), 66.

Though the origin of the 'humour' lies in the medical discourse of the four bodily dispositions, Matthew Steggle notes that it came to mean anything from 'personal mood' to strong personal preference or dislike.[344] It is revealing that Asper's definition, quoted above, omits the medical altogether, skipping from any kind of 'fluxure' in general to the psychological sense 'by Metaphore'. Though James D. Redwine, Jr., may have overstated the case that the humoral comedies' preoccupation is finally with 'neither psychology nor aesthetics, but moral goodness', this moralizing sense is my focus here.[345]

What I would emphasize as a leitmotif in these comedies is that those afflicted by a humour suffer from a diseased nature deserving something worse than its bumbling culprits seem to incur. In his *Works* of 1616, Jonson would describe his humoral characters as 'persons, such as *Comœdie* would chuse, | When she would […] sport with humane follies, not with crimes'.[346] However, this escapist distinction between 'humane follies' and sin is rarely allowed to survive the plays as he originally wrote them. '[I]f that Deities with-drew their guiftes | For humane follies,' asks one of his most unimpeachably virtuous censors, 'what should men deserue | But *Death* and *Darknesse*?'[347] The speaker is the titular goddess of *Cynthia's Revels*, ostensibly about her continuing bestowal of moonlight upon mortals whose behaviour has deserved no such 'guiftes'. In this excerpt, only the plural 'Deities' rules out that this is spoken of the Christian's own total reliance on divine grace.

Up to this point, *Cynthia's Revels* has shown us (with considerable accidie) the pastimes of a group of foolish courtiers and nymphs at Cynthia's court, who seem able only to live up to their names – including Philaute ('self-love'), Hedon, and Madam Moria, named after folly itself. They play games and await the arrival of bottled water from the fountain of self-love – which, when they do drink it, predictably has no effect. What is offered up to us to laugh at, however, strikes the most upright observers onstage as no laughing matter at all. As Jonson's evident favourite, the Asper-like poet Criticus, says, 'my Soule […] Is hurt with meere Intention on their follies' ([C4]^{v}; 1.5.35-37). When Cynthia confronts these hangers-on

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[343] For Jonson's engagement with the *poetomachia*, see Matthew Steggle, *Wars of the Theatres* (Victoria, BC, 1998).
[344] Matthew Steggle, 'The humours in humour: Shakespeare and early modern psychology', in Heather Hirschfeld (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Comedy* (Oxford, 2018), 229.
[345] James D. Redwine, Jr., 'Beyond psychology: The moral basis of Jonson's theory of humour characterization', *ELH* 28 (1961), 330.
[346] Prologue to *Every Man In*, in *The workes of Beniamin Jonson* (London, 1616), A3^{r}, 22-24.
[347] *The fountaine of selfe-loue* (London, 1601), K2^{r}, 5.1.33-35.

in Act Five, even such earlier moments of condemnation have not prepared us for the sternness with which she threatens them, tasking her loyal followers to

> Impose what paines you please:
> Th'incurable cut of, the rest reforme;
> Remembring euer what we first decreed,
> Since Reuels were proclaimd, Let now none bleede. [(L4)^{v}; 5.5.183.]

The threat of execution is laid aside, but it leaves a bad taste behind. As Anne Barton puts it, it seems that the vapid fools 'are damned simply for being themselves'.[348]

The tension is set up in the darkest terms in the Induction to *Every Man Out*. Asper, the purported playwright who introduces his play to its onstage spectators Mitis and Cordatus, rails against the various corrupt estates of the time that 'not one of these but knowes his Workes, | Knowes what *Damnation* is, the *Deuill*, and *Hell*, | Yet howerly they persist, grow ranke in sinne'. Perhaps dismayed by such a beginning to a comical play, Mitis implores 'Forbeare good *Asper*, be not like your name.' (Bi^{v}; Induction 30-35.) And yet it seems that Asper's play is entirely marked by those doomed to 'grow ranke' in their own names. Every character's dominant humour is anatomised for the audience upon his entry in ways which, in Womack's words, makes them 'thing-like and knowable', like automata.[349] Alexander Leggatt speaks for many when he claims that in these early efforts by Jonson, no 'effective *dramatic* link has been established' between 'the voice of serious condemnation' and the vapid caricatures we are shown.[350]

In *Every Man In*, the braggart soldier Bobadilla has exhibited his puffed-up humour throughout the play, and the foolish gull Matheo has simply aped Bobadilla's manners as he does everybody's. However, for a minor scuffle they are condemned by the magistrate Clement (ironically named) to spend the night imprisoned, thus excluded from the night of merrymaking at the end of the comedy, and then to be tied all day to the market cross, Matheo in sackcloth and Bobadilla in a coat of motley with a fool's rod. He has of course spent all play being exhibited as a fool, now made literal. Barton gets to the heart of the genre when she notes that 'the efficacy of the penance is as doubtful as its justice'.[351] Bobadilla responds to his sentence by saying, characteristically, 'I am armd in soule agaynst the worst of fortune' (M1^{v}; 5.3.313). Barton calls this 'a self fortified against change'. The pallid

[348] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 78.
[349] Womack, *Ben Jonson*, 54.
[350] Alexander Leggatt, *Ben Jonson* (London, 1981), 84.
[351] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 50.

copycat Matheo, meanwhile, has 'no self of his own' in the first place, 'nothing that can emerge from punishment and make do henceforth on its own'.[352] This surface existence is the sting in the mock-title by which Clement addresses them, 'my two Signior outsides' (M1^{v}; 5.3.300-1). When he revised the play for publication in 1616, Jonson commuted their sentence to simple exclusion from the house. Originally, however, being too much 'in humour' was itself treated as a threat. Incongruously for a comedic genre predicated on agreement between 'outsides' and insides, there is retribution in store for those who remain too much in character.

Why should the reason for this be sought in plays written mostly before Jonson's birth? It has long been recognised that Jonson's comedies have an unusually strong thematic continuity with early Elizabethan satirical interludes. Alan C. Dessen has argued at length for the comical satires as the resumption of a thread last pursued in the plays of Wager, Fulwell, Wapull, Lupton, and Wilson – for all that their militant Protestantism bore little resemblance to Jonson's attitudes.[353] So single-minded is the satire on money-love and corruption in the personification plays of the 1560s to the 1580s that Paul Whitfield White has called them the 'money' plays.[354] Dessen illuminatingly coins the Jonsonian term 'public Vice' for the central comedians of these plays: Wager's Covetous (that is, covetousness); Fulwell's Nichol Newfangle; Wapull's Courage (recklessness); Lupton's Sin.[355] Sitting like a spider at the centre of a web of often plotless intrigues, the public Vice allows the playwright a shorthand for 'what is wrong with an entire society rather than with a single Mankind figure' – a panoramic diagnosis which, Dessen argues, Jonson refined into a principle of his own casts of interlocking social types.[356] Edgar Schell is one of the many who has argued for Volpone as an inheritor of the central string-pulling Vice.[357] Ineke Murakami has recently considered both Wager's plays and *Every Man Out of His Humour* in a tradition of 'moral play' going back to *Mankind* – plays, in her terms, which encourage their audience to take a critical and oppositional attitude to social abuses.[358] There is not space here to evaluate these claims, but

[352] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 50.
[353] Alan C. Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (Evanston, IL, 1971), 37-69.
[354] See Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge, 1993), 94-99, and 'Interludes, economics, and the Elizabethan stage', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Oxford, 2009), 555-70.
[355] Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy*, and *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays* (Lincoln, NE, 1986).
[356] Dessen, *Shakespeare*, 36.
[357] Edgar T. Schell, *Strangers and Pilgrims* (Chicago, 1983), 131.
[358] Ineke Murakami, *Moral Play and Counterpublic* (London, 2011), 45-72 (on Wager) and 127-54 (on Jonson).

only to conclude that the jump across the religious and dramaturgical divide from the Protestant interlude tradition to the playhouses seems nowhere narrower than to Jonson.

More specific acquaintance is plausible. Jonson would become Jacobean theatre's foremost mocking remembrancer of what he called '*comedia vetus* in England' – that is, interlude theatre at around the time of his own birth.[359] The set-piece which he clearly associated above all with the old morals, the Vice on the Devil's back recalled in *The Devil is an Ass* and *The Staple of News*, is known no earlier than Wager's *Enough* and *Longer* and Fulwell's *Like Will to Like* in the late 1560s. Moreover, their distinctive device of building a play around a proverb seems to have enjoyed a resurgence among companies associated with Jonson at the same time that humoral comedy was enjoying its first vogue: there was a spate of now-lost plays with proverbial titles at Henslowe's Rose and Fortune Theatres in 1597-1603 – including 'licke vnto licke' in 1600, which has prompted many to wonder if Fulwell's play was revived.[360]

Agreeing on the pervasiveness of greed is rather different to agreeing about the doctrine of election, of course. The challenge of squaring a belief in free will with God's predestination had been at the centre of 'Catholic' theology for a millennium before the Reformation. Jonson has not made it easy to conclude from his writings what his own theological beliefs were. Robert S. Miola has found in the poems a writer comfortable with drawing from different confessional lexes when occasion demanded, affirming both salvation by 'good deeds' in Epigram 80 and 'sure election, and predestined grace' in the elegy for Venetia Digby.[361] He was a remorseless mocker of precisely the sort of Calvinist language of vocation, sanctification, and election by the Spirit which all of the focal Protestant playwrights of this thesis use in apparently perfect earnest. However, hypocrisy and bigotry are more obviously Jonson's targets than the actual ideas, and, as is well understood, his 'stage puritans' belong to a distinct post-Marprelate era in which anti-puritanism doubled as a judicious advert for one's political loyalism.[362]

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[359] *Informations to William Drummond*, in *The Cambridge Edition* 7.319-20.
[360] See Wiggins 1056, 1139, 1166, 1173, 1189, 1074 ('Like Unto Like'), 1280, 1317, 1373, 1382. Jonson was on Henslowe's payroll in 1601-2.
[361] Robert S. Miola, 'Ben Jonson, Catholic poet', *Renaissance and Reformation* 25 (2001), 101-15; see also the survey by Alison Searle of 'Ben Jonson and religion' in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Ben Jonson*, available pre-publication online. Searle does not consider the comical satires.
[362] Patrick Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: The theatre constructs puritanism', in David L. Smith et al (eds), *The Theatrical City* (Cambridge, 1995), 157-169. I return to the stage puritan in chapter 5.

Jonson's commonplace collection *Discoveries* reveals his deep preoccupation with the idea that some people are inveterately bad – as in the section labelled '*Ingenia*' ('innate dispositions'), adapted from Quintilian: '*Natures* that are hardned to *evill*, you shall sooner breake, then make straight; they are like poles that are crooked, and dry: there is no attempting them'.[363] To another passage from Quintilian, in '*Ingeniorum discrimina*', Jonson adds 'There is no doctrine will doe good, where nature is wanting.' (N3^{v}, 489.) This is the whole moral of *The Longer Thou Livest*, as we shall see, and expressed by its prologue: 'For neither councell, learninge nor sapience, | Can an euill nature to honest manners allure[.]'[364] Jonathan Haynes has claimed that the difference between the older moral interludes and Jonson's fops is that 'the object of attention' has shifted 'from vices to follies […]: from the spiritual to the psychological, conceived as improbably mechanical.'[365] As we have seen, however, Jonson does not allow such distinctions to be maintained. At times, the hapless determinism of a 'mechanical' caricature and the wilful obstinacy of a sinner seem actively blurred together.

Richard Dutton hits upon a promising formulation in his edition of *Epicene* (1609), Jonson's final play before his reversion to the Church of England. Dutton argues that its continual vocabulary of 'providence, fate, doctrine, sin, suffering, retribution, redemption and martyrdom' cannot be dismissed as 'verbal embroidery' for all that it does not amount to any theological statement. Rather, faith and salvation are 'a comically serious issue' in the play.[366] I argue Jonson's vocabulary of humoral folly is centred unignorably on sin, damnation, and grace, and that this was the (only half-laughing) evacuation of an originally predestinarian language of moral character.

When Crispinus and Demetrius in *Poetaster* are warned by Tibullus to give up their libellous poesy or be 'taken vp for *Lepers*, in *Wit*, and […] irrecouerably forfeyted to the *Hospitall* of *Fooles*', this is an obviously jesting (if rather acidic) threat at the expense of Marston and Dekker, but it expresses the basic tension of humoral folly between a temporary loss of dignity and some more permanent and terrible loss of control.[367] Thorello in *Every Man In* is given an agonized half-awareness of his humour as it overtakes him, cast in just such terms. The 'blacke poison of suspect' – jealousy of a wife he half-knows to be blameless

[363] *Discoveries*, in *The workes […]. The second volume* (London, 1641), M2^{r}; 26-27 in *The Cambridge Edition*. This passage is discussed in Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 65-66.
[364] *Longer*, Aii^{v}, 45-46.
[365] Haynes, *Social Relations*, 19.
[366] *Epicene*, ed. Richard Dutton (Manchester, 2003), 26.
[367] *Poetaster* (London, 1602), N^{r}; 5.3.594-96.

– like ‘a searching vapor spreads it selfe | Confusedly through euery sensiue part’. In an anguished soliloquy Jonson’s old fool mixes the medical metaphor with a deterministic language of sin:

> Ah, but what error is it to know this,
> And want the free election of the soule
> In such extreames? well, I will once more striue,
> (Euen in despight of hell) my selfe to be,
> And shake this feauer off that thus shakes me. [1.4.204-8; D3v.]

Thorello’s problem of ‘election of the soule […] in despight of hell’ recreates the fear of cuckoldry as a losing battle against sinful human nature. (In the version published in 1616, he is renamed Kitely, introducing a note of self-predation which casts doubt whether trying ‘my selfe to be’ might not make the problem worse.) Thorello’s predicament requires our sense that the wages of folly may ultimately be worse than just being laughed at.

It seems that the threat of what Tibullus calls ‘irrecoverable forfeit’ is basic to the comedy of humours. By reading with the grain, and taking the implausible threats of damnation at face value, we will more fully appreciate the comic bathos by which such dark outcomes are, always, averted. The set-piece on which the three later comical satires rest is the dishumouring, when, by some ludic contrivance, the incurable fools are in fact cured of their defining trait. Matthew Steggle claims that the humoral comedies are predicated on ‘just the opposite of a system of fixed character types’, one which in fact ‘celebrates humoral change, not stasis.’[368] I dispute the celebration. There is a character-type in the comedy of humours who seemingly has no resource of self-improvement to fall back upon – indeed, no self beyond his ‘follies’ – and must be put ‘out of humour’ by means both external and unearned. This chapter will end with a consideration of the dishumouring as a seriocomic parody of justification by ‘alien’ grace, as explored in the last chapter. We find that the poet himself has usurped the place of God in making and unmaking evil natures.

For all that Jonson would likely have had little time for Wager and his fellows as workmen, and excerpts from the money plays cannot be expected to rub shoulders with Plautus in *Discoveries*, the fools he had in mind can be better illuminated by ‘*comedia vetus* in England’ than by any influence he more willingly admitted.

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[368] Steggle, ‘Humours in humour’, 231-32.

From Vices to Follies

Two accounts of the prehistory of Jonson's humours in the Elizabethan interlude tradition might be ventured. One was made long ago by Charles Baskervill, who argued that 'Macilente is almost a pure abstraction, a portrayal of Envy in much of the characterization', and thus the 'new humour types' and 'the older medieval treatment of the abstractions' were in a single lineage. Baskervill anticipated Fletcher's daemons by making 'the single trait, the dominant motive, the mastering inclination' into the keynote of personified vice – which, as we have seen, elides the vital distinction between catalysis and caricature.[369] Another is that implied by Anne Barton in her foundational work on dramatic onomastics, tracing the 'cratylic' characters whose 'aptronyms' seem poised between nickname and allegory.[370] These become increasingly common in interludes of the 1560s and 1570s. In *Like Will to Like*, Virtuous Living opposes the Vice Nichol Newfangle and his cohort of Cuthbert Cutpurse, Pierce Pickpurse, and so on; in Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* (pr. 1578), Sin and the title character preside over a courtroom which hears pleas from such figures as William-with-the-Two-Wives, Gregory Graceless, and the aged Mother Croote; and in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (1581), the ladies Love, Lucre, and Conscience mix with Mercadorus the merchant and Gerontus the Jew, and Dissimulation has a henchman whose name, Coggin, anticipates all of the suggestively flavourful names of later drama in its equipoise between habitual pursuit ('cogging', deceiving) and surname.

Bernard Spivack and David Bevington influentially used the term 'hybrid' to refer to such interludes, in which abstractions rub shoulders with non-abstractions.[371] Martin Wiggins' magisterial catalogue of early modern drama provides a numbered total of 'allegorical roles' for each play. Tabulating these, Vladimir Brljak has demonstrated that the hybrid manner of adapting stories enjoyed its high watermark in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.[372] He proves that personification proportionally plummeted in the 1580s, to a marginal insignificance in the repertory of the public playhouses from which it never recovered. The dominance of the cratylic in Jonson's comedies would seem to correlate with the near-death of the old abstractions.

[369] Charles Baskervill, *English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy* (Austin, TX, 1911), 27.
[370] Anne Barton, *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford, 1990).
[371] Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York, 1958), 251-303; David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 170-98.
[372] See the chart of personifications in drama in Vladimir Brljak, 'From Everyman to Hamlet: A distant reading' (forthcoming, *Renaissance Studies*).

Barton gives perceptive consideration to personification in *The Names of Comedy*, but on the understanding that, '[i]n morality drama, names sum up the true nature of their bearers' – that is, their moral goodness or badness – and '[t]here are no exceptions to this rule.'[373] This accurate but limited assessment is shared by Laurie Maguire, who treats 'type and allegorical names, such as we associate with medieval morality drama (Mercy, Mankind, Iniquity)', as a stable counterweight to her real focus, the 'meaningful individual names' which 'test the boundaries'.[374] Clearly, Spivack and Bevington's categories are defined onomastically, by a hybridity which can be gauged before one even sees the play, by reading the *dramatis personae* and treating abstract names as a safe index to an abstract nature. Wiggins' 'allegorical roles' are on one level just the abstract nouns in the cast list.

I argue for a hybridity which lies in between Baskervill's and Barton's positions. The most important ancestor of the humour is the personification who lacks the self-awareness to catalyse others. Even before the falling-off of personification traced by Brljak, an important and revealing dynamic was at work which we miss when we assume that personification goes all by the name.

We can look again at *Cynthia's Revels*. This has been misdiagnosed as a descendant of the morality play when in fact the abstract names of its fools are red herrings: they are simply humoral caricatures. Aptronyms – Asotus ('prodigal', though given his credulous triviality 'a sot' must be in there), the pleasure-seeker Hedon, the nymph Phantaste ('fanciful' or 'fantastic') – mix with apparent abstractions such as Philaute ('self-love') and even Folly itself in the person of Madam Moria. It is easy to conclude from such names that we are witnessing a royal court overrun by personified vices. Ezra Horbury has recently described Asotus as 'embod[ying] the invasion of self-love and folly into the court'.[375] We seem especially close to an archetypal scene of conspiracy in the Act Five masque, in which each of the characters plays the part of the most nearly proximal virtue to their eponymous vice. Moria is disguised as Apheleia or '*Symplicity*', the impudent carper Anaides as Eutolmos or '*Good Audacitie*', and so on ([K4]^r, 5.2.40; L1^v, 5.4.29-30). The Cambridge editors, Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle, note that this appears to echo one of the classic pieces of vice behaviour in the old moral interlude, the adoption of an alias in order to fool unwitting victims.[376] They allude to *Magnificence*, whose titular king's failure of government gives

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[373] Barton, *Names*, 44.
[374] Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names*, 24-25.
[375] Ezra Horbury, *Prodigality in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2019), 97.
[376] 'Introduction' to *Cynthia's Revels*, in *The Cambridge Edition* 1.432.

Folly and Fancy access, just as Cynthia's does Phantaste and Moria. Cynthia sees through these disguises so that, as Magnificence does, she can purge her court.

An audience familiar with the moral interlude tradition would have recognized that there are no personified vices at Cynthia's court. Moria is just a foolish old woman, and Philaute just a self-loving young lady. This most masque-like of the comical satires centres upon a piece of genuine moral catalysis: the 'fountain of self-love' which is cursed by Echo in Act One so that its waters provoke narcissism in its drinkers.[377] However, the nymphs and courtiers not only hatch no plot to promote their eponymous quality in others, but could not: they are blind to the fact that their way of being might be a problem. As Barton puts it, 'the mortal characters of *Cynthia's Revels* appear unaware of the connotations of their own and their associates' names.'[378]

When Folly appeared in English personification plays, he was no fool. In *The World and the Child* and *Magnificence*, Folly gabbles and prances like a buffoonish jester, and perhaps wears motley, but he is a trickster thoroughly aware of the meaning of his own name, and the consequences of living up to it. 'Nay it is I that foles can make,' Skelton's Folly gloats, and resolves to tempt King Magnificence until he is 'brought | From qui fuit aliquid to shyre shakynge nought'.[379] True folly consists in precisely a lack of the clearsighted understanding which Folly himself demonstrates as a manipulator.

The World and the Child, printed in 1522 but written perhaps as much as a century before Jonson's play, reveals this especially clearly. Manhood has been warned by Conscience to 'doubte of foly doynge'. Asked 'what thyng callest thou folye', the clerkish virtue defines it in no uncertain terms:

> Syr it is Pryde Wrathe and Enuy
> Slouthe Couetous and Glotonye
> Lechery the seuente is
> These seuen synnes I call folye[.][380]

Conscience sums up his warning – 'beware of folye and shame' (Biii^{v}, 489) – and then departs. Within a few minutes, Folly has appeared. He boasts to the oblivious everyman of a range of his offstage activities – from tavern-haunting to pleading alongside his fellow

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[377] Discussed in Hester Lees-Jeffries, *England's Helicon* (Oxford, 2007), 234-54.
[378] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 178.
[379] *Magnificence*, Dii^{v}, 1215; Diii^{v}, 1304-5. (The Latin phrase means 'someone who was something'.)
[380] *The World and the Child*, Biii^{r}, 456-60.

Covetous as lawyers at Westminster Hall – which are not ultimately those of a man in the grip of folly but of a man with a self-conscious power to destroy others: ‘For in euery countre where I go | Some man his thryfte hath lost’ ([B4]^{v}, 535-36). Sometimes he runs to the stews, he tells us, and at others he dwells with the friars, monks, and nuns – but in every case his reception by others is more important than his own conduct: ‘euery man made of me as worthy | As thoughe I hadde ben a knyght’; the friars ‘crowned folye a kynge’; and in general ‘alwaye folye doth felowes fynde’ (Ci^{r-v}, 596-605).

The dramatic irony of this scene is characteristic of vice-everyman-audience interaction because the everyman is the only one who misses the obvious. Manhood has been told five minutes earlier to ‘beware of folye and shame’, but even two dozen lines of Folly’s described antics do not tip him off, until Folly formally tells him that ‘I hyght both folye and shame’ (Cii^{r}, 607). The everyman is aghast and resists, but Folly plays on his dislike of being bossed around by Conscience and persuades Manhood to accept Folly as his servant. This is symbolized by Manhood blithely accepting a new name from Folly: Shame. Folly has cheerfully affected to put off this side of his nature by doffing one of his garments: ‘Syr here in this cloute I knyt shame | And clype me but propre folye’ (Cii^{v}, 641-42). He seemingly dresses Manhood in this shameful ‘cloute’ to symbolize the renaming. With a Caliban-like song about changing Conscience for a new ‘man’, Manhood agrees to accompany Folly to London. Going out, Folly turns to us and makes clear his perfect awareness of what is going on:

> Lo syrs this foly techeth aye
> For where conscyence cometh with his cunnynge
> Yet folye full fetely shall make hym blynde
> Folye before and shame behynde
> Lo syrs thus fareth the worlde alwaye[.]   [Ciii^{v}, 694-98.]

There is only one fool in the playing space, and it is not the man in motley.

His new name does not suddenly make Manhood an evil personification of Shame, determined to catalyse shame in others. There is no vampiric sense of personifications creating their own colleagues. Rather, Manhood does not understand the name he has accepted and finds himself doomed to live up to it – or, more importantly, believes that he is. When we next see him he is a miserable, disgraced old man near to death. (The printed speech prefix calls him ‘Age’.) After leading him into brothel-haunting and gambling, Folly long ago abandoned him to be pilloried at Newgate and left in poverty. He is met by

Perseverance, Conscience's brother, who hails him as Manhood. 'Nay syr,' Age replies, 'my name is in another maner, | For folye […] hath clepyd me shame' ([D1]^{v}, 816-18). Perseverance insists that this name should be cast off, but 'Shame' insists that 'where euer I go | He clypped me shame | Now manhode is gone' ([D2]^{r}, 826-28). The *nomen* is becoming a self-fulfilling *omen*: convinced that he is Shame, he has no way out except through the most shameful end of all, by dying in despair. This is what it is to allow folly the controlling interest in one's behaviour. Perseverance of course knows better: he leads 'Shame' in a confession of his sins; catechises him in the faith; and caps it by renaming him again, this time to Repentance. The one thing Perseverance has in common with Folly is the power of renaming, because he is a catalyst: he knows his own nature well enough to promote it in others.

Joyce E. Peterson has positioned the interaction of Folly and Manhood as a hinge in the development of a literal rather than purely symbolic register in the morality play, alleging that 'Folly is no more a pure allegorical figure than Manhood is', but rather 'a worldly, audacious scamp'; his dispute with Manhood is 'not a symbolic verbal conflict between the vices and virtues potential in a man's soul, but rather a debate between *men* whose arguments reflect conflicting values and attitudes.'[381] Peterson's point is a perceptive one about the degree of naturalism in Folly's tactic of persuasion, but she overstates the case. Folly is clearly present *wherever* men complacently endanger their souls, so that his wanderings all over England are not supposed to be reduced to one man's misadventures, and will continue after the play.

Escobedo has rightly said that personifications seem free to do what they want but not to will what they want. They '*want* to do what they do', but though they are 'free to do what they want, they can want only one kind of thing.'[382] Thus, in personification drama the effects of determinism must be measured in a special way: by, on the one hand, the conscious ability to represent *others'* appetites, and thereby to transcend one's own individual situation, or on the other the doom of being reduced entirely to one's own appetites. The whole drama of the scene between Manhood and his deceiver rests on two different ways in which walking, talking men can represent 'folly and shame': Folly by provoking it, and thus by transcending any individual iteration; Manhood by individually epitomizing it, and thus becoming trapped.

[381] Joyce E. Peterson, 'The paradox of disintegrating form in *Mundus et Infans*', *ELR* 7 (1977), 12, 13; her emphasis.
[382] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 23.

The World and the Child is representative precisely because it seems derivative. The convention governing the interaction of fool and vice went beyond any single moral play to be the pattern of the genre as a whole, which dramatists continued to use until the threshold of Jonson's own career. The renaming of Manhood by Folly will allow us to reassess the supposed aliases in Cynthia's masque. Moria's new name is not self-chosen, but given to her by the masque's author (and Jonson's own likely representative), the virtuous Criticus. Jonson inverts the defining activity and self-awareness of the interlude vice into an equally definitive passivity. Vices take names to make fools of others; humours take names to be made fools. The humour is always exposing more about himself to mockery than he either realizes he is exposing or even understands himself to possess in the first place. Madam Moria swears '[a]s I am wise' (G1^{v}; 4.1.27), and as far as she is concerned, she is. Not all of the characters in the comical satires are so robotically opposed to reality in their self-perception, but it helpfully shows the essential dramatic irony which separates a fool from a vice: to have a self so easily known as to be published in one's name, yet to be the last to realise.

Our ironic vantage onto the stage-world is a commonplace of criticism on Jonson's fools: Murray Krieger argues that 'the audience is forced to assume an objective attitude which […] allows it a detached aloofness from the fools they see displaying themselves', and Douglas Duncan that Jonson 'tried to counter' his own evident sympathy for some characters over others 'by encouraging a detached view of the action as a whole.'[383] *Every Man Out* represents the logical endpoint of this style. Leggatt has described its play-within-a-play as 'a structure of irony around the fools', because those who overhear others exhibiting their natures are themselves overheard exhibiting their own.[384] Alvin Kernan noted that the satirical voice in written verse satire, which 'appears to stand on the edge' of a crowd 'and characterize the fools as they pass', becomes itself a part of the pageant once characters onstage commentate on one another: 'the audience no longer stands still with the satirist but sits outside observing both him and the moving crowd of fools.'[385] Concentric rings of observation and obliviousness run outward from the most selfish, superficial, or mannered of the humours, whom everyone mocks, to their sardonic manipulator Macilente, whose own

[383] Murray Krieger, '*Measure for Measure* and Elizabethan Comedy' (1951), quoted in Steggle, 'The humours in humour', 220; Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1979), 133.
[384] Leggatt, *Ben Jonson*, 194.
[385] Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse* (1959), quoted in Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy*, 50-51.

humoral domination by envious misanthropy is gleefully watched by the metatheatrical observers Mitis and Cordatus – who are themselves observed by the playhouse audience. Such a structure means, at times, that nobody onstage is in full control of what they themselves divulge, a situation which the morality play had never admitted. Even Macilente, the most penetrating of Jonson's early humours, has what seems to him his holy fury of satirical insight undermined in our eyes by his evident subservience to the tawdry passion of envy signalled by his name. As we will see, he is the character whose machinations bring him closest to catalysis, and whose dishumouring is thus posed as the most mysterious conversion of all. Until then, however, he never escapes being simply 'your enuious man', as Mitis identifies him on first entry (Cii^r; Induction 330).

The World and the Child reveals that the temptation central to moral personification drama hinges similarly on awareness: those who have accurate knowledge of their own nature possess the self-control necessary to trick others, less aware, into debasing themselves. From the rallying of the seven sins onto the scaffolds of World, Flesh, and Devil in *Castle* to the conspiracy of Fraud, Dissimulation, Usury, and Simony to control London in Wilson's *Three Ladies*, personified vices hatch and execute a conspiracy against the unwitting in which the audience are deliberately given full disclosure, granted a vice's-eye-view of the action. Catalysts curate and control the dramatic irony at the caricatures' expense. The state of unselfconsciousness, knowing less about oneself than the audience and the others onstage, correlates with an inability to catalyse others in one's turn.

Just as Manhood, not the vice who tempts him, is threatened with destruction for his folly, and must be rescued by gracious intervention, so Madam Moria, who is not a vice, is threatened with execution for hers, and reprieved only by gracious sufferance. She is the inheritrix of a condition of considerable spiritual peril in the personification tradition.

Folly is never heard from again in *The World and the Child*, because he transcends any individual predicament. It is basic to the symbolism of moral drama that catalytic vices must be implied to be unkillable, because they persist wherever men allow sin to have an interest in them. Of course, Bale's Infidelity is scourged to Hell at the end of *Three Laws*, and several later Vices also find themselves claimed by Satan after their plots have either succeeded (as with Nichol Newfangle in Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like*) or been thwarted (as with Ill Report in Thomas Garter's *Susanna*). Dessen has noted that the 'public Vice' is often captured by the authorities at the end of Protestant drama and led off for execution.[386]

[386] Dessen, *Shakespeare*, 36.

However, those vices who go to Hell are framed explicitly as *returning* to Hell, and are often the godsons or nephews of the Devil. In the case of the executions, the fact that the deed is only done after the play and out of sight of the spectators is as important as that it is done at all. Vices represent something too ubiquitous to be so easily stopped. ‘Yea, within this moneth […] I wyl be your seruaunt, and your maister to,’ Iniquity says to his captors in the Edwardian play *Nice Wanton*, as they lead him offstage to the gallows; ‘ye, crepe into your brest, wyl ye haue it so?’[387] This is the perennial joke whenever a Vice is seemingly stopped: a sly confidence, or at least a manic hypothesis, that his interest in fallen human nature cannot be so easily revoked.

Around the anchorage of the ‘public Vice’, the chief catalyst, who is either allowed to escape or intimated to return, Elizabethan plays become a gallery of caricatures. This is epitomised by the succession of petitioners of the magistrate All for Money in Lupton’s play, printed in 1578 and probably one of the latest touring-troupe moral plays to survive. Abetted by Sin, the Vice, All for Money is a bribe-taking magistrate who rules in favour of the highest bidders, who have names like Sir Laurence Livingless and Nichol Never-out-of-Law. Once he has departed the courtroom, rich and happy, Sin turns to the spectators: ‘His money brings him to pleasure, and pleasures sends him to me, | And I send him to Damnation, and he sendes him to hell quickly.’ (Ei[v], 1327-28.) We are not shown All for Money’s comeuppance, but Sin need not have told us what it will be. To be a caricature, exhibiting vice in one’s behaviour, but to lack the self-awareness to promote it in others, was to die like a fool.

Where such death scenes do occur in the plays, we can trace the movement of personification into humour. The most playful such extinction comes in George Wapull’s *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (c.1570-76). This seems like the simplest form of ‘hybrid’ play, in which Greediness and Courage rub shoulders with the courtier Willing-to-Win-Worship and estate-characters such as ‘the Sergeant’. However, despite his abstract name Greediness lacks any catalytic power: he is a caricature dominated by the humour of greed, who conspires with the vices to bring about his own self-enrichment rather than to provoke greediness in others. He suffers pangs of conscience at the name Greediness and attempts to assert self-control by asking everybody else to call him Wealthiness. This is no alias; where the true catalysts rename themselves to further their deception (so that Hurtful Help holds the ‘Hurtful’ bit back), ‘Wealthiness’ is a piece of *self*-deception by a caricature squeamish at what the slightest introspection reveals. He is unaware that his supposed friends, led by the Vice

[387] *Nice Wanton*, [B4][r], 428-30.

Courage, who represents reckless self-interest, are conspiring to confirm *him* in his sin. 'Indeede as thou sayest,' Greediness replies to this reassurance, 'it doth me behooue, | Not so rashly to lay my gayning aside, | Least so my selfe a foole I doe prooue'.[388]

The merchant finally proves a fool indeed and exchanges self-euphemising for self-euthanising, committing suicide offstage in despair at his sins. Courage the Vice enters crying to tell the audience the news of his friend's fate: 'Alas pore man he had a great fit, | Before that well he was layde in his graue.' A stage direction interrupts him: 'reasoning with himselfe.' This hitherto single-minded cynic instantly starts questioning his own claims:

> Why but is Greedines dead in good sadnesse,
> My thinkes these newes are not true which you tell:
> Yes truely he dyed in a great madnesse,
> And went with the Tyde boate straight into hell.
> Why foole, Greedinesse will neuer dye,
> So long as couetous people do liue:
> Then you belike doe thinke that I doe lye,
> I am as honest a man as any in your sleeue.
> I am sure he is dead, or one in his likenesse,
> For when he was buryed I stood by[.] [Giii^r, 1653-70.]

Wapull freely admits this paradox in his fiction because avarice must transcend the single greedy individual we have seen, in order for the play to cultivate an activist discontent about the continuing crimes of mercantile London. (These are the subject of my next chapter.) However, we are left in no doubt that the persistence of greediness is not the persistence of Greediness, who has died the fool's death his nature demanded.

In Thomas Garter's *Virtuous and Godly Susanna* (pr. 1578), an early Elizabethan retelling of Susanna and the Elders from the apocryphal thirteenth chapter of the Book of Daniel, the Vice Ill Report is sent to Earth by Satan to destroy the reputation of the blameless Hebrew wife. The story concerns the attempt of two officials to seduce the virtuous Susanna, and then to have her executed for adultery when she refuses them. In the biblical account, the men's lustfulness is cast in terms of a voluntary spiritual blindness: 'the two Elders saw her that she went in daily and walked, so that their lust was inflamed toward her. Therefore they *turned away their mind, and cast down their eyes*, that they should not see heaven, nor remember just judgements' (Daniel 13:8-9; my emphasis).[389] Garter reflects this in his interlude by taking the unique step of naming the Elders after their own violent feelings, Voluptas and Sensualitas. This is the only sixteenth-century case of outright abstract names

[388] *Tide Tarrieth*, Biii^r, 385-87.
[389] I quote the 1560 Geneva Bible in this chapter, unless noted.

attached to protagonists who otherwise show no signs of personification; they are simply the lustful Israelites of the story. They address one another by these names seemingly without awareness that they stand accused by them from the start. As the inward-looking godless gaze of the biblical elders makes appropriate, their names signpost a quality purely within themselves. If the stage direction is to be believed, they are stoned to death onstage, one of the most decisive executions in a moral interlude.[390] Garter allows them to repent before the stones are thrown, but their post-mortem fate goes unconfirmed.

The most telling example of the crossroads between vice and humour comes in William Wager's *The Trial of Treasure*. This play opposes the wastrel Lust to the godly Just. While Just keeps company with Sapience and Trust, Lust falls in with Natural Inclination who introduces him to Elation and Greedy-Gut to go with his existing companion Sturdiness. Inclination is forced into a bridle by Just and Sapience, from which Lust releases him. (The bridling of Inclination would be remembered by Anthony Munday in the interlude-within-a-play of *Sir Thomas More*, three decades later.) Lust is given Treasure for a girlfriend (though he is almost keener to enjoy the company of her brother, Pleasure). This is short-lived, however: God's Visitation enters and bears off Pleasure from them to be given to the Just, and Time takes Lust and Treasure protesting with him. When he re-enters, the sybaritic couple are simply two lumps of dust and rust in his hands. Inclination is again bridled, but swears that he can never be permanently controlled. Just and Trust are joined by Rest, and give thanks.

On their first, and almost only, encounter, the Just challenges Lust to a wrestling match, which becomes a piece of obvious symbolism about the process of justification. I have already alluded to this as a counterintuitive illustration of *aliena iustitia*, the unearned grace by which the Just secures victory. What is interesting here is not only the gulf in grace but in self-knowledge. 'Wrestle, and let Luste seeme to haue the better at the firste' instructs the stage direction ([A4]^r). It is clear from their respective commentaries that only the Just understands the true significance: 'Yea the battell of lust endureth long,' he intones as they grapple. Lust merely thinks a carping prig has insulted his outfit and thrown him on the floor: 'Woundes and fleshe, I was almost down on my back, | But yet I will wrestle till my bones

[390] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 98, wonders whether *Susanna* is a closet play, partly due to the stoning and also because the doubling is uneconomical. I would argue that the stoning is stageable and the sign of even unskilful doubling argues theatrical intent. *Susanna* is read as a performance text in John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship* (Oxford, 2016), 109-28, as an interlude about voyeurism which makes considerable play with 'the problematic of spectatorship' itself (127).

cracke.' Just throws him again, and says 'Not of my power I doe thee expell | But by the mighte of his spirite that dwelleth in me' (142-53). He has been granted the grace to overthrow his own lustfulness. Lust brushes himself off and leaves indignantly with a parting shot that makes it clear he is still oblivious: 'Well goodman Iuste, it is no matter, […] Though from thy company departe I muste, | I shall liue in as much welthynes I truste.' ([A4]^{v}, 157-59.)

Another piece of physical symbolism ensues later. Having fallen in with Natural Inclination, Lust's subdual by his own carnal appetites is symbolized when he suddenly bends double in pain. This, Inclination explains, 'doth signifie nothing in effect | But howe he is bowed by me Inclination' (Biii^{v}, 351-52). However, as in the wrestling match, the worldling does not realize the more-than-bodily significance: 'Out alas what a sodaine passion is this, […] The crampe, the crampe hath touched me ywis' (Biii^{v}, 343-45). 'Passion' is a suggestive word: he is indeed the passive object of others' interest.

We can use the onomastic razor I have proposed to cut through Wager's quirks of naming: despite his abstract name, Lust behaves simply as an exemplar of blithe carnality, whereas the glutton called 'Greedy-Gut' is functionally a personification, a knowing conspirator with the Vice who thereby transcends his own greediness as a catalyst of Lust. The vices are able to give a clearsighted account of what is really going on because they *are* what is really going on. In a genre in which spiritual causes are made as patently obvious as physical ones in normal life, the dramatic irony is unmissable: Lust is a metaphor who did not get the memo. Phoebe S. Spinrad has criticised Wager for 'trouble with his shorthand' in Lust's narrative arc, 'transforming as it does the reprobate into a cast-off property of the elect.'[391] However, just as Peterson disaggregates Folly from Manhood too far, Spinrad implies too little separation of Just and Lust. Lust is both 'Lustes cogitations' expelled from the mind of his godly neighbour ([A4]^{v}, 169), *and* a representative of those graceless people who refuse to reform. As Just himself can see, these registers are simultaneous and do not cancel one another out.

Perhaps because of his unguessed-at doubleness of register, Lust's actual demise occurs offstage, like Greediness'. It is equally decisive: Time re-enters holding a handful of dust. Inclination, a self-aware catalyst, makes the Vice's typical threat of irresolution on his final exit, led off in the painfully short bridle with which Just has subdued him: 'Well yet I

[391] Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus, OH, 1987), 97.

will rebell, yea, and rebell againe, | And though a thousand times, t*ho*u shouldest me restrain' ([E4][r], 1137-38). Unlike such self-aware tempters, Lust is finally reduced to the meagre corporeal register to which he has confined himself the whole play. Writing of the virtuous protagonist of the most famous hybrid play of all, Bale's *King Johan*, Philip Schwyzer claims that '[Johan's] tragedy – and the source of his profound loneliness – is that he is the only character who does not have an allegorical other half, and who does not recognize the deeper game being played.'[392] Lust has an 'other half' and does not know it. Where Johan's dignity lies in his *self*-knowledge in the face of an only half-understood conspiracy, Lust's folly is his entrapment by a nature which everybody but he can understand.

It is in light of Lust's viscerally physical domination by Natural Inclination that we might reappraise the visceral reaction of Jonson's Thorello to the onset of jealousy, as he feels his own humour creep through his veins. He resolves '(Euen in despight of hell) my selfe to be, | And shake this feauer off that thus shakes me.' (*Every Man In*, D3[v], 1.4.207-8.) Thorello has enough of a 'self' independent of this inclination to struggle against it. In such moments, it seems that to be led by one's humour is to be led not by some abstract or 'external' idea, nor by one of four medically manipulable humours, but by 'the flesh' as opposed to the spirit. To feel such a daemon come to dominate, and to be unable to resist, is perilous in these plays.

'Behold the Image of insipient fooles,' the Just tells us while Lust is defying him; 'There are not a fewe euen nowe of thy propertie' ([A4][r], 131-32). What is the 'propertie' which this lustful fool is supposed to caricature? The play leaves us in little doubt. The Just is God's 'deer elect' (D[r], 713), one of 't*h*e children of electio*n*' (Dii[r], 769). He is what I have called the negative caricature of virtue, wholly reliant on a supernatural grace he cannot earn, and *aware* that he is reliant. Lust is a caricature of those to whom such grace is not granted, stuck in a corruptness at once blind and blameworthy. It is to Wager's fools, too sunken in vice to reform and too self-unaware to escape, that I turn now, to argue that one of the uses of disinterest in Protestant drama is to accommodate us to the reality of the irredeemable.

Wager's 'Indurate Wretches'

[392] Philip Schwyzer, 'Paranoid history: John Bale's *King Johan*', in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2012), 509-10.

Never before William Wager had the protagonist of an English interlude died and been damned. Herod and Antichrist had been struck down in their pomp in the biblical pageants, and we are told that Cardinal Wolsey was packed off to the Devil in a spiteful farce acted in the Boleyn household in January 1531, to celebrate his death five weeks earlier.[393] However, these were historical (or undoubted future) demises. To *create* a human character for damnation was, apparently, new. Yet it seemed that a large part of the population of the world really *are* created for damnation. St Paul made as much clear to the Romans:

> Hath not the potter power of the clay to make of the same lump one vessel to honour, and another unto dishonour? What and if God would, to show his wrath, and to make his power known, suffer with long patience the vessels of wrath, prepared to destruction? And that he might declare the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy, which he hath prepared unto glory? [Rom. 9:21-23.]

The vessels of wrath are apparently those sinners Paul has described who, 'as they regarded not to acknowledge God, even so God delivered them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.' (1:28.) God 'hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will, He hardeneth,' the apostle writes about the vessels made for destruction (Romans 9:17-18). The English exiles who produced this translation in Calvin's Geneva in the later 1550s added one of their combative glosses asserting that 'some are made of God to most just destruction: and they [that] are offended with this kind of speech bewray their own folly.'[394] The belligerent glossator states baldly the implication which provoked some other English divines to rhetorical coyness: the doctrine of double predestination, that God no less actively decreed whom to deny grace and damn (the reprobate) as whom to give grace and save (the elect). The reprobates are on this account born irrevocably purposed for damnation. 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' Paul demands of those who question the unknowable justice of this. 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' (9:20.)

Famously, Article XVII of the Thirty-Nine Articles does not name reprobation, and mandates pastoral caution to avoid the 'dangerous downfall of despair' it might cause to the weak-minded. At the same time, there is no doubt that reprobation was part of what has been

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[393] Herod is claimed by Mors in the N-town play, and Antichrist struck down by the Archangel Michael in the dyers' play of the Chester cycle. For Wolsey, see Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1991), 20. Importantly, the offstage deaths of Ismael and Dalilah in *Nice Wanton* are reported to be hopeful and gracious ones, suggestive of election.

[394] Geneva Bible, gloss to Romans 9:21.

called the ‘Calvinist consensus’ in the Elizabethan Church of England.[395] Peter Lake quotes many (what he wryly calls) ‘extreme predestinarian outbursts’ in the writings of even the most conformist bishops.[396] Perhaps most tellingly, the doctrine features in the Elizabethan Book of Homilies, appointed in 1563 to be read in every church on Sundays. In words supposed to be heard by every parishioner every year, the Homily Concerning Prayer openly contrasts ‘the elect and blessed of God’ with ‘the reprobate and damned souls’, and five other homilies name the reprobate.[397] Wager is thought to have been a puritan associate of the future presbyterian Thomas Wilcox and others in the late 1560s, and thus no friend to the Homilies. However, he was also the vicar of St Benet, Gracechurch, from 1567, and his interludes from the same period simply bring home in no uncertain terms a concept with which his audiences (who may also have included his congregants) were now presumed to be familiar. I argue that we find in the determinist caricatures of his plays a balancing act to reconcile audiences to the reality of the graceless, while pre-empting the ‘dangerous downfall’ of self-doubt.

The prologue to R. Wever’s *Lusty Juventus* sets up the opposition of natural inclination to supernatural grace basic to Protestant drama: ‘(By grace) to goodness, (by nature) to yll’.[398] As the virtuous scholar Learning without Money says in Lupton’s *All for Money*, ‘*Quisque sua ducitur natura*’ (‘each is led by his own nature’; Ci^r, 566), and in these plays to be led only by one’s own nature is to be in thrall to sin. Wager’s plays make this a structural principle, divided between Lust and Just in *Trial* and Worldly Man and Heavenly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*. The satisfyingly settled jingle of ‘Lust’ and ‘Just’ points up only their perfectly opposite trajectories, a case of symmetry without sympathy. Martha Tuck Rozett speaks for critical orthodoxy since at least Bevington when she describes the split-cast play as ‘accommodat[ing] the logic of Calvinism’, which a single wavering protagonist could not so forcefully do.[399] *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*

[395] The *locus classicus* is N. R. N. Tyacke, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution’, in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (Macmillan, 1973), 119-43. See also Dewey D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982), 29; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, 1988), 25.

[396] Peter Lake, ‘Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635’, *Past and Present* 114 (1987), 37.

[397] *The Books of Homilies*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge, 2015), 342. The others are the Homily against Peril of Idolatry, 265; An Information for Them which Take Offence at Certain Places of the Holy Scripture, 376; the Homily of Almsdeeds, 384; the Homily for Good Friday, 408; and the Homily for Whitsunday, 443. My count.

[398] *Lusty Juventus*, ai^v, 12-13.

[399] Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), 89. The predestinarian origin of the split-cast play is argued in Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 155.

dispenses with this and simply sends Moros to Hell unmirrored by any virtuous character. All of Wager's antiheroes might be read as adaptations of Wever's play, in which the grace extended to Juventus is simply denied. (Indeed, Lust first enters in *Trial* singing a blithe song evidently inspired by 'In youth is pleasure', which Juventus sings at the start of the older play.) There is a latent determinism in the contemporary fashion for proverbial titles, in which Wager was seemingly most prolific – and of course in the characters' names, whose implications they never finally escape. As the prologue to *The Longer Thou Livest* puts it, 'nothing, God except, is so strong [as] Nature, | For neither councell, learninge nor sapience, | Can an euill nature to honest manners allure[.]'[400]

Worldly Man in *Enough* traces a more ambivalent path than Lust or Moros, because he briefly converts with apparently total sincerity. In the end, however, this seems equally totally forgotten. At the play's opening Worldly Man is a great hoarder of wealth, ostensibly to support his family and to avoid the ruination which overtook his father. Meanwhile, Heavenly Man trusts to the company of Enough and Contentation. Eventually they persuade Worldly Man to embrace a simple godly lifestyle, and he joins in prayers with them dressed with new simplicity. This provokes the Vice, Covetous (that is, the archaic noun 'covetise', covetousness), to plot with Temerity, Inconsideration, and Precipitation to win him back to the world. They succeed, much to the disgust of Enough. '[I]t is an olde saying and a true certainly,' Enough says when Worldly Man defects:

> it wil not out of the flesh t*ha*t is bred in t*h*e bone verily.
> The worldly man wil needs be a worldly man stil:
> Wel chuse you I wil let you alo*n*e doo what you wil. [*Enough*, Diii^{v}, 861-64.]

Worldly Man becomes an insatiably grasping landlord, lending on interest, pricing tenants out of his properties, and paying his servants and labourers a pittance. At the height of his prosperity he hears the words of an offstage Prophet pronouncing doom against him. He summons his chaplain, Ignorance, to construe what he has heard (perhaps a submerged parody of the prophet Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's visions). Meanwhile God's Plague strikes him with sickness, and he drops dead thinking only of his material goods, dictating his will to Ignorance and choking on the testamentary formula 'in the name of God':

> Of, of, of, of, what more? *fall down*. [(F4)^{v}, 1403.]

[400] *Longer*, Aii^{v}, 44-46. Infuriatingly, the only early edition prints this important line as 'strong of Nature'. All modern editors substitute 'as', which the sense clearly demands. I have left the quarto otherwise unchanged.

Covetous turns to the spectators and assures them that ‘The Deuil and I, thou shalt see wil not leaue: | Til we haue made the greatest parte to vs to cleue.’ (G^{r}, 1424-25.) He and Ignorance depart cheerfully, and Satan enters gloating to carry the corpse of Worldly Man away on his back (G^{r-v}, 1428-71).

Of all Tudor caricatures, Moros in *The Longer Thou Livest* is the triumph of the foregone conclusion. If, as Robert Potter has said, the old everyman play had ‘unfold[ed] with the relentlessness of tragedy – toward a happy ending’, Wager’s longest and simplest play unfolds with the relentlessness of slapstick toward damnation.[401] The titlepage of the sole edition, printed around 1570, advertises the play as ‘A Myrour very necessarie for youth, and specially for such as are like to come to dignitie and promotion’. However, the Prologue tells us that Moros cannot be improved and will be destroyed, and so it proves:

> Do we not see at these daies so many past cure,
> That nothing can their crokednes rectefie,
> Till they haue destroied them vtterly?
> The Image of such persons we shall introduce,
> Represented by one whom Moros we do call[.] [*Longer*, Aii^{v}, 43-51.]

Moros is a foolish boy grown too old for infancy to be any excuse for his behaviour. His name, as nobody tires of pointing out, means ‘fool’. The words ‘fool(s)’ and ‘folly’ occur almost 130 times in the play, about once every 15 lines. The titular proverb is also reiterated at significant moments. The play opens during Moros’ boyhood, and the second half deals with his manhood, dotage, and disgrace. His body ages but his mind never improves.

The obvious precedent for Moros is Nabal, the wealthy Calebite landowner who refuses David’s request of goods and is eventually struck down by God (1 Samuel 25).[402] *Nabal* is a Hebrew word meaning ‘shameless’ or ‘senseless’, which Tudor Bible translations commonly render ‘fool’. In the words of his wife, Abigail, ‘as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him’ (25:25). ‘With him’ is the characteristic deixis of personification: in my terms, folly has an interest in him. Wager may have been aware of the Latin school play of the story by the Zurich reformer Rudolf Gwalther, published in 1549 and several times reprinted. When David first resolves to ask Nabal for hospitality, one of his counsellors replies with the classic pun for such a relation of name to nature: ‘*Nomen metuo, ne sit minus læti ominis*.’ (‘I fear that his name may be a less than happy omen’; [B6]^{v}, 1.4.)[403]

[401] Potter, *English Morality Play*, 57.
[402] Nabal is cited as a precedent for the early modern significance of onomastics by Frank Kermode, ‘Literary criticism: Old and new styles’, *Essays in Criticism* 51 (2001), 203.
[403] I translate from *Nabal [...] comœdia sacra* (Strasbourg, 1562).

For a Christian audience the omen of ‘Fool’ is something far worse than simply boorish behaviour.

Moros is used by Christ to describe those whose blindness to the truth makes them imprudent or heedless: ‘Whosoever heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man [*moros*], which hath builded his house upon the sand.’ (Matthew 7:26.) ‘[T]heir foolish heart was full of darkness,’ Paul says of those who have scorned God; ‘When they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools [*emoranthesan*].’ (Romans 1:21-22.) In the parable which compares the kingdom of Heaven to ten virgins who greet the bridegroom before his wedding (Matthew 25:1-12), the five foolish virgins who bring lamps but forget the oil are called *morai*. The bridegroom admits the five wise virgins who remembered the oil, but bars the wedding gates to the *morai*. Like the sheep and the goats or the corn and the chaff, the wise and the *morai* were a basic paradigm for the division of mankind which Paul describes to the Romans, the wise elect and the foolish reprobate.

Moros is no ‘natural’ fool, intellectually handicapped; for all that he seems ingenuous and even friendly, we are supposed to believe he leans into his own foolishness out of ‘malicious Insolentie, | Which procedeth from a wicked harte.’ (B^r, 257-58.) The youth is challenged by Discipline, Piety, and Exercitation (that is, exercise in an honest vocation) to give up his idle gameplay. They discover with mounting horror that he is illiterate, has been encouraged in theft, gluttony, and backchat by his parents, and was brought up a papist. ‘His folly his master did consider,’ Discipline tells Piety, ‘And therfore called him nothing but Moros.’ Piety initially hopes that *nomen* will not be *omen*: ‘Moros is a foole by interpretacion, | But wisdom goeth not all by the name’ (B^v, 261-64). They finally beat him with a rod until he pretends to be quiescent and goes out with Piety.

These virtues seem at first sight to buck the trend described in the previous chapter, away from active moral virtue. Their names suggest a remedial opposition between piety and impiety, honest labour (‘exercitation’) and sluggardy. However, any of the old penitential optimism is soon dispelled by Moros’ unteachable badness. Try as they might, they can secure no interest in him: their efforts to catalyse fall flat. To personify Piety was no longer necessarily to represent an *achievable* potential.

Exercitation’s intuition proves correct, that ‘folly hath so ouercharged his reason, | That he is past redresse in my iudgement’ (C^r, 536-37). Moros never once imbibed any of these lessons, and is instantly talked round by Idleness and his fellows Incontinence and

Wrath. In classic vice style, they conceal their natures with better-sounding pseudonyms, though as Wrath points out there is little need, as Moros 'discerneth not cleane from vncleane, | His minde is all set on foolerie.' ([C3]^{r}, 693-94). Idleness has resolved that 'he shalbe a more foole yet, | When all we three be vnto him annexed' (676). They teach him to be a worse man than he ever was a boy.

The play's second half concerns Moros' sudden and unexplained promotion to worldly prosperity. Wager engineers this by what seems a very un-puritan move, introducing a garrulous Lady Fortune to lecture the audience on her government of the universe. She determines to exalt Moros to high rank as a joke: 'Seing the vulgares will me not prayse, | For exalting good men and sapient,' she complains, 'I will gette me a name an other wayes, | That is by erecting fooles insipient.' (Ei^{r}, 1122-25.) Alexandra Walsham has described uneducated English obeisance to 'the fickle goddess Fortune' as a superstition particularly hated by the more militant Elizabethan Protestants.[404] Wager's reason is clearly the need to deprive Moros of any control. Nicholas Brooke has put it well that to write the tragedy of a tyrant 'means turning the image upside down, to see in bad men, not virtue of course, but *virtú* – the dynamic quality by virtue of which a man has the energy of superiority; the bloody tyrant has to become *also* imaginative visionary.'[405] Wager's bad-tempered goddess drives home that Moros' new eminence has nothing to do with his own 'energy of superiority' – any more than Christopher Sly's would.

Cruelty, Impiety, and Ignorance enter Moros' service. The actual effects of his tyrannical abuses are all compressed into a long speech of complaint to the audience by 'People', who represents Moros' oppressed tenantry. Beyond dark references to religion and the commonwealth coming to ruin when fools have promotion, the speech belongs to the same dreamlike register as Lady Fortune. This is clear from the cratylic 'Alphabete of his officers' which People lists: Anthony Arrogant the auditor, Fabian Falsehood the head farmer, Nicol Never-thrift the notary, and so forth ([F4]^{v}-G^{r}, 1706-34). Lacking any other recourse, People calls on God for redress.

Events immediately overtake Moros. He enters newly aged, with a grey beard, sword-fighting an invisible enemy as if senile. God's Judgement enters 'with a terrible visure' and strikes Moros with a sword of vengeance and he falls to the floor. Like Lust, the fool is oblivious to the spiritual dimension of what happens to his body, attributing his pain to 'the

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[404] Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 21.
[405] Nicholas Brooke, *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy* (London, 1979), 8.

falling sickenes, | Or elles […] the Palsey'. The visitant commands 'If thou hast grace for mercy now call, | Yet thy soule perchaunce thou maist saue,' but Moros calls instead for 'a cuppe of good Wine' to settle his heart (Gii^{v}, 1795-1804). (We remember Lust's misreading of the influence of Natural Inclination as simple bodily cramp.) Moros' punisher does not mince words:

> Indurate wretches can not conuert,
> But die in their filthines like swine. [1805-6.]

'Indurate' means hardened, and we might be supposed to recall Paul's words to the Romans, that 'whom He will, He hardeneth'. Confusion enters with a ghastly visage, '[t]he reward of such fooles all', and strips Moros of his finery and staff of office. Like Bobadilla after him, he is forced into a fool's motley coat. Confusion commands him to accompany him 'to receiue thy hyre, […] And after this life eternall fyre, | Due for fooles that be impenitent.' Moros snaps, 'If it please the Deuill me to haue, | Let him carry me away on his backe' – and Confusion promises to do so. Moros seems to accept this with sangfroid: 'Adew to the Deuill God send vs good speede,' he says, climbing onboard, 'An other while with the Deuill I must go to schole.' And on this cheerful note he is borne out of the playing space to Hell.[406] There is nothing to contradict Confusion's parting claim that 'The world shalbe well ridde of a foole.' (1808-56.)

What is the purpose of the heavy-handed onomastic determinism of this play? The first half of the Prologue stresses the importance of education and self-government, a theme reprised in the virtues' final summing-up. However, almost 2000 lines have been devoted to the abject failure of exactly the methods which the play has urged. Ineke Murakami proposes that Wager was critiquing the whole humanist system of instruction in bridling youth, even as he espoused it.[407] Martha Tuck Rozett, Paul Whitfield White, and Kent Cartwright have all gone further, arguing that a belief in predestination is ultimately incompatible with a confidence in education *per se*.[408] The newest major assessment of early modern 'tragic art' makes such undermining of order basic to tragedy, an art which 'exposes […] as a delusion' the 'unacknowledged fictions to which we cleave in our desperation for things to make

[406] This may have been recalled two decades later by Robert Greene in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, when Bacon's servant Miles blithely departs on a devil's back to seek employment as a tapster in Hell.
[407] Murakami, *Moral Play*, 68.
[408] Rozett, *Doctrine of Election*, 89; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 99; Kent Cartwright, 'Humanist reading and interpretation in early Elizabethan morality drama', *Allegorica* 28 (2012), 11. This perceived incompatibility is disputed in Dorothy H. Brown, *Christian Humanism in the Late English Morality Plays* (Gainesville, FL, 1999), chapter 3.

sense.'[409] David Bevington influentially described Wager's plays as 'homiletic tragedies', and defines tragedies quite simply as 'plays ending in defeat'. He describes the 'restoration of order' after Moros has been carried off to Hell as 'at best a negative compensation, a summary of failure'.[410]

I would resolve part of the inconsistency by arguing that the play offers an important lesson to future governors beyond just 'do not act like Moros'. The lesson is that the virtuous who achieve 'promotion' should be prepared for the reality of the graceless amongst those in their charge. Covetous, Idleness, Ignorance, and their fellows are all still rife, and some will heed them no matter what one does. We can take as simply inevitable the fact that chaff like Moros will continue in the wheat of the world, a reality of God's eternal (and, though incomprehensible, undoubtedly just) choice of whom to give the grace necessary to reform. If reformation will not work upon them it must proceed in spite of them.

This is consistent with Wager's historical moment – a singular period in the dissemination of predestinarian teaching in England, and one apt to be misunderstood by critics more familiar with a later generation of Calvinist divines. The 'Arminian' resistance to the doctrine of predestination – which hardened reprobation into a battle-line separating puritans from 'Anglicans' – lay in the future. So did what R. T. Kendall calls 'experimental' predestinarianism, the pastoral movement encouraging intense self-scrutiny to determine whether or not one was a member of the elect.[411] Based on Peter's injunction to 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1:10), this was emphasized by Calvin's successor Theodore Beza in the 1550s, but seems to have had little influence in England before William Perkins' *Treatise* on the subject in 1589.[412] When Claire McEachern premises her recent discussion of Shakespeare on 'the English absorption of the Calvinist imperative to self-knowledge of one's own ultimate ending', that 'absorption' into the mainstream of pastoral life was only just beginning when Shakespeare began writing.[413]

The experimental method so shaped the introspective self-consciousness of the godly in the seventeenth century (the era of the spiritual autobiography) that it can be difficult to recognize that militant Protestants a century before Bunyan did not urge soul-searching as a

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[409] Rhodri Lewis, *Shakespeare's Tragic Art* (Princeton, NJ, 2024), 225.
[410] Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 161, 164.
[411] R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1997).
[412] See Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford, 2002), 283-87; W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford, 2014), 64-89.
[413] Claire McEachern, *Believing in Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2018), 7.

natural or even desirable response to predestination.[414] Andrew Escobedo's ambitious discussion of the 'Protestant asymmetry thesis' in Elizabethan interludes (discussed in my introduction) is heavily derived from Perkins and later experimental writers, and runs the risk of anachronism.[415] The first Tudor play to confront the issue of self-scrutiny explicitly was the Norwich vicar Nathaniel Woodes' *Conflict of Conscience* (1581) – perhaps a closet drama – about the apostasy of Francesco Spiera (renamed 'Philologus').[416] Here the message is obviously the opposite of the 'experimental' method: such morbid self-examination is itself a sinful indulgence. Philologus spends the protracted fifth act luxuriating in an agony of despair, convinced against all of his godly friends' consolations (including the significantly named Theologus) that his conversion to popery proves that he is a reprobate. Arata Ide has argued that Woodes had puritan sympathies, but we should not be surprised to find such a Calvinist writer warning against introspection: according to Kendall, Calvin himself had made the same warnings.[417]

Rozett is right to say that the discomfort of watching the comeuppance of hell-bound sinners could be defused because 'the audience could view the reprobate protagonist as an "other"'.[418] Juventus turned to the audience and addressed 'All you that be yong, whom I do now represent' (*Lusty Juventus*, Eii[r], 1140). Moros is aware of no such significance, and the prologue to *Longer* asks 'Do we not see at these daies so many past cure, […] Represented by one whom Moros we do call' (*Longer*, Aii[v], 51). In place of Juventus' union of 'you' and 'I', the 'we' and the 'many' are cleanly disaggregated. Wager trains our gaze outward, at the reality of graceless people on the streets, not inward to scrutinise our own signs of election, with all the 'dangerous downfall' which that risked.

Enough is as Good as a Feast arrives at the threshold of such doubts, but ultimately falls back from them. Because of his brief repentance and an ultimately unrealised capacity for dignity, Worldly Man's final ignominious failure to repent has drawn frequent comparison with the death of Doctor Faustus.[419] Moros' piggyback ride to Hell actively

[414] On puritan predestinarian allegory in the seventeenth century, see Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures* (Chicago, 1995).
[415] Escobedo, *Volition's Face*, 93-124.
[416] *Conflict* is assigned closet status by Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 98.
[417] Arata Ide, 'Nathaniel Woodes, Foxeian martyrology and the radical Protestants of Norwich in the 1570s', *Reformation* 13 (2008), 126; Kendall, *Calvin*, 24, quotes *Institutes* III.ii.24 ('we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves'; 'if you contemplate yourself, that is sure damnation').
[418] Rozett, *Doctrine of Election*, 93.
[419] See most recently Maggie Vinter, '*Doctor Faustus* and the art of dying badly', *Renaissance Drama* 45 (2017), 1-23, and David Bevington, 'Staging the Reformation: Power and theatricality in the plays of William Wager', in Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken

creates an antipathetic effect, but Wager is held to have crafted a proto-tragic dimension with the death of Worldly Man.[420] There is an undeniable strange pathos to Worldly Man's destruction, struck with sickness and stumbling around in a panic to get his assets in order. However, it is hard for us who know *Faustus*, as it was not hard for Wager, to feel a dismal thrill at Worldly Man's death without picturing a man calling desperately to be rescued by a faith he cannot feel. Our understanding of both plays is certainly enriched by the comparison, and I would not dispute the important likeness. I will only point out that Wager does little to attribute Worldly Man with Faustus' agonized knowledge of being trapped – an entrapment which may, for all he or we know, be illusory, but is all the more inescapable for it. Once he awakens from his 'foolish dreames' of God's Plague (Fiii[r], 1307), Worldly Man shows no awareness that there is a faith he should be feeling, and far from struggling against his nature, panic drives him more unquestioningly into it. He believes his sickness is just a bodily fit, just as Lust does. We are at a remarkable crossroads in dramatic decorum in which the same denouement could lead to Faustus or to Sir Epicure Mammon.

The agreement between the Worldly Man's name and his nature makes him, to borrow Womack's telling phrase, 'thing-like and knowable'.[421] He is undoubtedly trapped, but this entrapment expresses itself in the ironic gulf between his limited self-knowledge and a self which is so patently easy to know. The black comedy and the (unexploited) potential tragedy of Wager's reprobates derive from exactly the same reduction: they are two-dimensional caricatures for whom two dimensions prove too many to escape.

Wager and his contemporaries were confronted by the problem of representing a guilt which is also an inevitability, and a wickedness which is incurable but must be punished, and of doing so without inviting sympathy for the devil or inciting misplaced introspection. I argue that they did so entirely biblically. The oft-invoked figure of the *nabal* or *ewil* in Scripture provided the thing-like 'other' they needed. In particular, the fool of the Book of Proverbs – evil, ridiculous, and doomed – presented Reformed writers with a disinteresting and bathetic cipher for those whom God has made for destruction.

The Proverbial Fool

(eds.), *Interludes and Early Modern Society* (Rodopi, 2007), 375.

[420] Since at least Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley, CA, 1936), 235-38.

[421] Womack, *Ben Jonson*, 54.

The recurrent figure of the *ewil* or *kesil* or *nabal* in Proverbs was uniformly rendered 'the fool' in the early modern translations. The Solomonic fool is both wicked and dangerously stupid, and his incurability is the subject of many scores of the Book's sayings. The basic contrast is set up in its first chapter and returned to incessantly: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction' (1:7). We are told that 'A reproof entereth more into him that hath understanding, than an hundred stripes into a fool' (17:10); 'He that begetteth a fool getteth himself sorrow, and the father of a fool can have no joy' (17:21); and, most famously, 'Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat brayed with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him' (27:22). We have the sense of a put-case, a character invented to think with rather than feel for. The fool emerges from Solomon's varied pronouncements as a figure about whom many conflicting things need to be true: he cannot be prevented but must be corrected, must be punished but also avoided, and yet will certainly be destroyed. He must be incapable and yet culpable. Annotating the fool in the mortar in his commentary on Proverbs, the English divine Peter Moffett was blunt: 'We are taught in this sentence, that the wickednes of the reprobate is vncurable.'[422]

The contemporary vogue for proverbial titles suggests that moral drama was particularly hospitable to the wisdom books of the Old Testament in the 1560s and 1570s. Far more than any other influence, Wager's plays are saturated by the sensibility of the Book of Proverbs. Moros is the English papist embodiment of this biblical halfwit, and he is hardly developed beyond the aphorisms which birthed him. Proverbs is quoted explicitly with increasing frequency as Moros' downfall approaches – including the famous fool in the mortar, which Discipline quotes verbatim when he renounces Moros once and for all – and Wager builds other proverbs into the action, even personifying one of them. When Confusion is brought to Moros, God's Judgement quotes Proverbs:

> The wise shall haue honour in possession,
> Thus the wise King Solomon doth say:
> But the portion of fooles is Confusion[.]   [Gii^{r}, 1815-17.][423]

God's Judgement also casts Moros as the *insipiens* of the Psalms: 'this impious foole […] Who hath sayd there is no God in his hart' (Gi^{v}, 1767).[424] More often than quotation, Wager

[422] *A commentarie vpon […] the Prouerbes of Salomon* (London, 1592), Ri^{v}; cited as 'Moffett'.
[423] Proverbs 3:35: 'The wise shall have honour in possession: but shame is the promotion that fools shall have'. Wager's Confusion is introduced as 'shame and Confusion' (Gii^{r}, 1807).
[424] Psalms 14:1, 52:1: 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'

simply appropriates the style, scattering aphorisms about 'fools' and 'folly' throughout *Longer* whose tonal if not verbal debt to Solomon and David is obvious.

The first of many English commentaries on Proverbs was printed in 1565, a translation of the Swiss reformer and friend of Calvin, Michel Cop.[425] The wisdom books seem to have drawn avid attention from early modern puritans: besides Moffett, the Elizabethan presbyterian Thomas Wilcox and the deprived Jacobean nonconformists John Dod and Robert Cleaver also published expositions.[426] Wilcox seems to have been an anti-establishment associate of Wager's in the late 1560s.[427] It is not hard to see why the proverbs about good and evil conduct appealed. By their nature, proverbial wisdom does not point up the origins of sin but provides a roadmap for a world in which sin is already established, and indeed almost victorious: 'Men see by experience in this worlde, that fooles haue power, credite, and authoritie, that they are at their ease and prosperitie' (Cop 1580, [Bbbb7]r). As viewed through the many terse, heaped-up facets, the fool allows both certainties about the reprobate to be matter-of-factly combined: his total incapacity, reliant like all men on a power which is entirely God's, and equally total personal guilt. Though modern Hebrew scholars have disputed whether a fixed, deterministic binary was the compilers' original intention, early modern exegetes had no difficulty finding one.[428]

The divines agree that all men are sinners, and '[a]ll sinfull persons are fooles' (Cleaver 1614, [A3]v, [E4]v), and therefore, in one sense, *all* men are fools. It is only by the grace of God that such follies will be put off. Consequently, as Dod and Cleaver explain, 'Gods own elect may also be possessed with such obstinacie, till the time of their conuersion' (Dod and Cleaver 1609, Sv-S2r.) Cop divides the world implicitly into *we* who are foolish but might be regenerate and *they* who are 'the foolish' and will persist: 'Forasmuch as wee must forsake the foolish, and not co*m*municate with their folly, […] it foloweth that we must forsake our selues, resisting strongly, *and* fighting against our nature, which is altogether foolish and wicked' (Cop 1580, [X8]v-Yr]). This is the duality which Lust cannot perceive in

[425] *A true […] exposition vpon the first chapiter of the Prouerbes*, trans. Marcelline Outred (London, 1565), Fir; cited as 'Cop 1565'.
[426] Beside those already cited, the commentaries on Proverbs I refer to are: Michel Cop, *A godly and learned exposition*, trans. Marcelline Outred (London, 1580); Wilcox, *A short, yet sound commentarie* (London, 1589); Robert Cleaver's exposition of chapters 1 and 2 (London, 1614) and Cleaver and John Dod's expositions of chapters 9 and 10 (London, 1606), 15, 16, and 17 (London, 1609), and the whole book (London, 1615), all cited in the text by surname and year.
[427] See introduction.
[428] E.g., James G. Williams, *Those Who Ponder Proverbs* (Sheffield, 1981), 19 ('the aphoristic style […] precludes an abstract, systematic doctrine of causation'); Anne W. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs* (Cambridge, 2016), 80-101.

his wrestling match with Just in *The Trial of Treasure*: Just's victory is the putting-off of his own corrupt nature in his heart, as well as his forsaking of a foolish man on the street.

Solomon's fools are very different from 'natural' fools, the intellectually impaired. Solomon uses this insult 'not so much, because they wanted wit, as because they were destitute of the heauenly light.' (Wilcox, Z1[v].) Wager has God's Judgement reiterate, for the audience's benefit, that 'Wee do not only them fooles call here, | Which haue not the perfight vse of reason' (as Erasmus' Moria describes children and the senile), but rather those who 'stop their eyes through wilfull Ignoraunce' (*Longer*, [G]iii[r]). These are the true fools, those 'giuen ouer vnto a reprobate sense, […] them that are gracelesse' (Dod and Cleaver 1609, S[v], S2[r]).

'Wilful' ignorance is the great mystery which every account of unmerited grace encounters. All the commentators are in no doubt that the fool deserves his own damnation, but if God 'deliver[s] them up unto a reprobate mind' (Rom. 1:28), and hardens their hearts so that they 'cannot repent' (Rom. 2:5), can this be the fool's own obstinacy? Cop quotes Romans 2:5 when he annotates the fool in the mortar, by which Solomon 'reprooueth the foolishe […] of hardnesse of heart' and 'doeth foreshew them priuily their eternal destruction, as Saint Paul saieth' (Cop 1580, [Eeee8][r]). The dominant verbs from Paul are giving over or delivering up, and in order to make sense of this mixture of powerlessness and deserving, Cop reached for grammatical tense. Explaining Proverbs 1:7 ('fools have despised wisdom'), he claims 'Salomon doth shew vs that these fooles well deserue grieuous punishment, seeing they are accustomed to this contempt, and giuen vp therto, the which he signifieth when he vseth the preter tense of a verbe, saying: *they haue despised*.' (Cop 1565, [B8][r-v].)[429] Such evil is a lost cause, no longer a matter of becoming but of being.[430] The figure of the fool in Proverbs amounts to something so deleterious and worthless that the issue of his destruction becomes almost a matter of hygiene rather than punishment.

The commentators on Proverbs were, we can imagine, confronted by the same problem which critics have found with predestinarian Tudor drama. In a chapter on corrective discipline in the biblical wisdom books, Anne W. Stewart describes 'the paradox of rebuke: […] without an innate receptivity to correction, the fool can never profit from rebuke. His nature prevents him from obtaining the very medicine he needs.'[431] Solomon tells us that one

[429] The Geneva Bible reads 'fools despise'.
[430] We saw in chapter 1 the hinterland between 'being' and 'becoming' involved in the engrafted imps of Antichrist.
[431] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics*, 86.

hundred strokes cannot beat sense into a fool, but also that 'Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool's back' (Prov. 26:3). The response to this problem was simply that both are true. 'Let vs therefore vnderstande,' the Genevan reformer Cop wrote about the fool in the mortar, 'that Solomon doeth not pretende to forbid that Iustices should not punishe fooles'. True, if we attempt to do so

> for their sake, and for their profit[,] we loose time, and winne nothing, yet it is very necessary to bray them, that first of all they should serve for example, and other should feare to commit follie. Secondly, that troubles might cease, and that they which loue wisdom, and folowe it, might liue in peace.
>
> (Cop 1580, [Eeee8][r].)

It is for the sake of the elect only that the reprobate must be regulated. Clearly this vision of an achieved peace, by which 'troubles might cease', is realized not by reforming the reprobate but by removing him altogether. This is clear from Cop's gloss to the 'rod to the fool's back' (26:3), which he construes in distinctly terminal terms:

> [God] hath giuen Kinges and Princes, Superiours and Gouernours, the rodde of yron, to wit, the sworde, to chastise fooles. […] Briefly, all those, which haue any preheminence or superioritie, haue charge from God to chastise the foolishe which are committed to their charge. That if the foolishe remayne vncorrigible and obstinate, they shall not onelye feele the temporal rodde, but as one is constrayned to murther and kill the Horse which will in no wyse bee tamed, euen so the fooles that are obstinate, shal perishe euerlastingly.
>
> ([Bbbb6][v]-[7][r].)

The only possible moral to draw from the incorrigible Moros is, ultimately, that the reprobate 'will in no wyse bee tamed'. In the next chapter, we will see how such a disciplinary philosophy led some of Wager's contemporary playwrights to look to London itself as a potential crucible for the 'faithful few' to uproot the unreformable. For now, Cop's commentary shows that we cannot think our way into the reprobate fools of Calvinist comedy if we do not see that two convictions could be held with equal confidence: that evil can never finally be defeated by men, and that men are constantly obliged to try.

Only Fools and Humours

We can return to the purgation of the court of Jonson's Cynthia, and the goddess's disturbing instruction to her loyal followers, 'Th'incurable cut of, the rest reforme'. We can now perhaps appreciate a tradition in which those who seem least able to reform themselves, or even understand themselves, are threatened by the most dire punishments, seemingly both

fruitless and disproportionate: Bobadilla and Matheo are stocked in the marketplace; Asper threatens '*Damnation* […], the *Deuill*, and *Hell*' to those who persist in the fopperies he satirises; and Cynthia raises the spectre of bloodshed against Madam Moria and her vapid fellows. Though the worst threats are never carried out, I hope to have shown that caricatures who are unable to understand themselves had a dark moral charge in Tudor theatre.

'The treasure of a foole is alwayes in his tongue,' Jonson wrote in *Discoveries* (N^{r}, 283), and though this is from Plautus, not Proverbs, it is not hard to find Jonson thinking about evil in a Solomonic spirit. Nor is the predestinarian programme of social discipline in Cop's commentary in fact very remote from him. Gabriele Bernhard Jackson long ago argued for an identical tension between social reformism and moral determinism in Jonson's plays, and a similar solution at the individual's expense. Though 'distasteful to a psychology-minded generation', she wonders whether, for Jonson, 'moral limitation is culpable however it comes about', regardless of personal choice, and thus anyone 'whose character causes him to disrupt the ethical order of society […] is to be condemned.'[432] There are certainly passages in *Discoveries* in which the problem of 'indurate' evil which was embodied in Moros is expressed in the characteristic Pauline terms of hardness and obstinacy: '*Natures* that are hardned to *evill*, you shall sooner breake, then make straight,' he excerpts, and 'It was impossible to reforme these natures; they were dry'd, and hardned in their ill.' (M2^{r}, 26-27; N2^{v}, 403-4.) The latter, paraphrasing Seneca, is spliced with another passage from the Stoic's epistles in which this impossibility comes in tension with the possibility of wilful blindness: 'Wee cannot [be rid of our vice], because we thinke wee cannot […]. That we cannot, is pretended; but that we will not, is the true reason.' (N2^{v}, 395-97.) Here as usual is the tension between reform, punishment, and incapacity which was elided in the scriptural fool.

Of course, Jonson does not follow Wager's lead in giving Moria and her fellows the end they allegedly deserve. Cynthia determines 'to lance these vlcers growne so ripe' ([L4]^{v}, 5.5.180), but does so not by smiting them but by disnaturing them. The foolish nymphs and courtiers are ordered to sing a palinode (a song recanting their wrongdoing) and to shed tears on a stone at a crossroads which will henceforth adopt the name of the Weeping Cross, 'That it may change the name, as you must change' (M^{r}, 5.5.234). They shall 'change' by processing to Helicon, the well of knowledge, and drinking its waters. After a song foreswearing various topical fopperies, they dance off toward Helicon and the play ends.

[432] Jackson, *Vision and Judgement*, 66-69.

The comical satires are premised on fools trapped by their natural inclinations until the intervention of some supernatural remedy *ex machina* cathartically replaces their bad nature with a better one. But what does it mean to 'cure' a caricature of the folly which defines him? Unlike Bobadilla and Matheo, pilloried at the 'market crosse' while still oblivious to their real crime, the act of penance at the Weeping Cross becomes an act of self-unmaking. Exactly what becomes of Moria or Philaute once they cease to be foolish or self-loving is not divulged. Anne Barton describes humoral caricatures as 'particular singularities'; once they have been cured, 'there simply is no underlying personal reality to which they might try and return.'[433] The characteristic behaviour of the moral convert in the comical satires is simply to vanish from the play altogether.

Jonson courts an association with the reprobate fool in his caricatures' self-entrapment, before ludically unmaking this dark suggestion with the purgative *catastrophe*. Cynthia's fools are sent to Helicon; Crispinus is given a pill and literally vomits up the neologisms of a bad poet into a bowl (a joke at Marston's expense); and, of course, every character in *Every Man Out* is eventually shamed, startled, or transfigured into a changed nature. I will conclude by arguing that the device which puts 'every man out of his humour', and thereby seemingly dispels any dark suggestion of predestination, can be fruitfully read as a parody of the unearned and external grace which the true reprobate are denied. It affirms the entire reliance of the sufferer on a cure radically beyond his own powers. The fact that the cures are so contrived actually heightens our sense that, beyond the comforting affordances of a fiction, their Solomonic obduracy would have only one natural end. The governing maxim of Wager, Lupton, and the other deterministic satirists was 'Nothing, God except, is so strong as Nature' (*Longer*, Aii^{v}, 44), and what we are shown in the comical satires is Nature coerced into new courses by purely fictive means: fools brayed in a mortar with the playwright's own pestle.

Every Man Out: Fools in the mortar

Every Man Out of His Humour is one long buildup to what Jonson calls 'so suddaine and strange a cure' (Riii^{r}). The covetous farmer Sordido ('wretch' or 'miser') is saved from hanging himself and instantly becomes an openhanded neighbour; the doting husband Deliro is shown the infidelity of his scornful wife Fallace (their names suggesting 'dupe' and

[433] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 65, 66.

'duper'), and all at once she is abashed into obedience and he into scorn; the fop Fungoso (suggesting a spongy soaker-up or parasite) is shamed out of trying to copy courtiers' fashions; and so on through a dozen characters. Finally, the chief engineer of these byzantine *catastrophai*, the envy-wracked manhater Macilente ('emaciated'), is put out of his own humour into a newfound peace and brotherliness, and so is Asper ('harsh'), the actor-playwright supposedly playing him. Jonson's contrivance to bring about Macilente's cure was a provocative dry run for *Cynthia's Revels*: an actor dressed as Queen Elizabeth walks across the playing space, and '*Enuie* is fled my Soule at sight of her' (5.6.85; Riii^{v}). Jonson removed this flagrant royal compliment after its controversial debut at the Globe, replacing the Queen with Macilente's more muted realization that the others' humours have changed, leaving him nothing to hate. Both endings were printed in the quarto. In all cases, the unmaking of humours occurs as a shock to the sufferer's system from outside, because it cannot be effected from within.

Peter Womack has called the playwright's method 'managerial', a manipulation of a character's interiority 'to subordinate it to one's own word'.[434] We see this clearest in a maxim of Horace's *Ars poetica* which Jonson quotes in *Every Man Out* as a kind of manifesto for humoral character. The scurrilous joker Carlo Buffone has got drunk and is riffing loudly on why God forbade pork to the Jews. One of the play's metatheatrical onstage spectators, Mitis, turns to his fellow Cordatus and complains of Buffone's 'Prophanation'. '*O servetur ad imum, qualis ab incepto processerit, & sib[i] constet,*' Cordatus replies. 'The necessitie of his vaine compels a tolleratio*n*: for, barre this, and dash him out of Humor before his time.' (5.3.122-25; [P4]^{v}.) This is Horace's instruction for the writer who 'dares to create a new kind of character' ('*audes | personam formare novam*'): 'let him be preserved to the end even as he appeared from the beginning, and be self-consistent.'[435] Carlo is preserved in perfect conformity to his own bad nature by the playwright, in obedience to a purely aesthetic 'necessitie'. It is the playwright with whom we must bear until the time is ripe to 'dash' Carlo into a new frame of mind.

Jonson allegorizes his own power in *Cynthia's Revels* by making the climactic moment of accusation a play. Criticus the masque-writer dresses the vicious participants in his revels in the costume of virtues, making them 'muster in their Pompe and Fulnesse' the better to damn them for a pretence they have only blindly exhibited (*Revels*, K^{r}, 4.6.43-45).

[434] Womack, *Ben Jonson*, 54-55.
[435] I adapt from the translation of *Ars poetica* 126-27 given in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ed. Helen Ostovich (Manchester, 2001), 5.3.148-9n.

The promised climax of *Every Man Out* is taken straight from the *de casibus* tradition of abrupt divine intervention, with the poet inserted into the mould of God. Mitis asks how Asper (that is, Jonson) 'should properly call [his play], *Euerie man out of his Humor*, when […] all his Actors so strongly pursue and continue their Humors?' Cordatus replies with an imbrication of aesthetic and moral comeuppance:

> Why therein his Art appeares most full of lustre, and approcheth nearest the life, especially when in the flame and height of their Humors they are laid flat, it fils the eye better, and with more contentment. How tedious a sight were it to behold a prowd exalted tree lopt and cut downe by degrees when it might be feld in a moment? and to set the Axe to it, before it came to that pride and fulnesse, were as not to haue it grow.
> [4.5.131-39; Oi^{v}.]

I think bathos is the keynote of such language, so I would willingly risk bathos by comparing Cordatus' words about the playwright's felling of the fools with a passage from Calvin about God's destruction of the prideful builders of Babel:

> God for a while fared as thoughe he had not seene them, to the ende he […] might the more euidently declare his iudgement. For he doth oftentimes so beare with the wicked, that as one asleepe he doth not only suffer the*m* to take many wicked thinges in hand; but also he maketh them reioyce at the successe of their wicked enterprises, that at the last he may make their fal the greater.[436]

The suddenness of the intervention, and the sheer height of the fall, makes evident the splendour of 'his Art' on the poet's part and 'his iudgement' on God's. Calvin's aesthetic of sudden providence is the same which patterns the fall of Moros and Worldly Man, who have reached their greatest pitch of worldly success when God's visitant irrupts suddenly to carry them away. God's Plague 'commeth on the wicked sudainly' (*Enough*, Fi^{v}, 1244), and Moros literally falls to the floor under the stroke of the 'sword of vengeance' wielded by God's Judgement, who intones the same moral that Calvin applies to Babel: 'For sinne though God suffreth Impietie, […] Yet at length he throweth downe Iniquitie' (*Longer*, Gii^{v}, 1859-61). Coercive transformation in *Every Man Out* takes the place of sudden damnation, but the purpose – to emphasize a creator's equal power to unmake – is the same.

In the busy final act, most of these unmakings are rather summary despatches. Carlo Buffone, for instance, only stops his endless raillery when his mouth is physically sealed with wax, a short-term solution which hardly gets at the root of the problem. Leggatt observes that

[436] Commentary on Genesis 11:5, in *A commentarie of Iohn Caluine*, trans. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), [Q6]^{r}.

the doting husband Deliro and the shrewish wife Fallace are given a combined five words to exhibit their respectively tough and pliant new personalities.[437] As Barton notes, only three characters in *Every Man Out* actually resolve upon a new and better life post-humour, rather than making their final exit only temporarily humiliated or silenced: the miser Sordido; his fashion-enslaved son Fungoso; and Macilente himself. There is only space here to consider the two most spectacular and mysterious, Sordido and Macilente. 'Significantly,' Barton adds, 'none of their conversions is convincing.'[438] For Barton this is significant partly because it shows a hurdle in Jonson's development which he would overcome by moving away from comical satire. However, the significance goes beyond that. The very first of the play's dishumourings, Sordido's in Act Three, provides what is effectively a commentary on its own unconvincingness which reveals that a significantly seriocomic joke about grace is being staged.[439]

Finding that the plentiful Italian harvest will wipe out the surplus value of his grain hoards, Sordido has hanged himself in full view of the audience. A group of *rustici* stumble upon this scene and cut him down, saving his life. He curses them for it; they realize Sordido is the hated 'Caterpiller' who has so impoverished the locals, and curse one another for saving him; and Sordido realizes how hated his miserliness has made him, and all at once is inspired to change: 'Out on my wretched Humor, it is that | Makes me thus monstrous in true humane eies.' In emotional excitement he tells the farmers he will no longer live '[l]ike an vnsauorie Muck-hill to my selfe' but restore all his extortions to his neighbours.

> O how deepely
> The bitter curses of the poore do pierce!
> I am by wonder chang'd; come in with me
> And witnesse my repentance: now I proue,
> "No life is blest, that is not grac't with Loue. [Kii^{v}, 3.2.93-101.]

At which a *rusticus* cries 'O miracle! see when a man ha's grace.' They leave for the promised redistribution, and – typically for an ex-caricature no longer characterized by his defining trait – Sordido never re-enters the play.

This is only half a joke. The speakers all concur in their perfectly orthodox referral of the ultimate credit to a higher power than this: that his heart has been softened by grace, 'by

[437] Leggatt, *Ben Jonson*, 198.
[438] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 66.
[439] The only other analysis of Sordido in terms of the moral tradition is Murakami, *Moral Play*, 133-35, but her frame of reference is a Marxist critique of expropriation and differs entirely from mine.

wonder chang'd'. The inverted commas in Sordido's above-quoted speech are printed throughout the quarto to flag the most collectible commonplaces, and this is offered as a true saying about the working of love. Though we might wonder whether Jonson is doing a Stella Gibbons in this case and marking for its sublimity a passage which he knows to be overblown, the straight face of the emphasis on grace cannot be so easily unriddled.

The real precedents are, counterintuitively, Moros and Worldly Man, who neither despair nor repent. Wager's impenitents are Sordido's direct ancestors in stage satire, greedy extorters with huge grain-barns, cried out against by the poor whose goods and lands they engross.[440] Wager brings the Tenant, Hireling, and Servant to plead fruitlessly with Worldly Man for better livings, but to no avail. 'Wel,' the Hireling replies as they trudge off,

> I beleeue verily that the prayers of the poor *and* his cry:
> Shall ascend into the eares of the Lord God on hye.
> And he wil plague all those that righteousnes withstand[.] [*Enough*, (E4)ʳ, 1149-51.]

This is, as Jonson's *rusticus* says, 'how deepely | The bitter curses of the poore do pierce': as far as Heaven, to bring a redress one way or the other. Worldly Man and Moros withstand righteousness and are suddenly plagued to Hell, and Sordido withstands righteousness but is just as suddenly stricken to conversion, and only grace can explain how their outcomes have diverged. The unconvincing *coup de théâtre* of Sordido's dishumouring is evidently supposed to riff on the unbidden, supernatural operation which alone can reverse a bad nature's descent into ruin.

In light of what is framed as a genuine conversion by divine grace, we can see how much play is made with the trope in the conversion of the character who comes nearest to the catalysis of a true Vice. By the end of Act Five the envious monster has engineered most of the frenetic collisions by which a dozen other characters have been humbled, and has been driven by the extremity of his humour toward outright Marlovian villainy by poisoning Puntarvolo's dog. Macilente's is the really triumphant 'fall' which Cordatus promises to Mitis at the end of Act Four, and true to *de casibus* he is at the greatest pitch of his triumph when his unexpected denaturing occurs. In the original playhouse denouement, Elizabeth enters as if *ex machina*, and Macilente's sudden 'fall' is made literal: 'her *Presence* strikes him to the earth dumbe'. His awe at his sudden unmaking is explicitly providential:

[440] '[H]ow cursed are the poore, that the viper was blest with this good fortune,' swears one of the *rustici* about Sordido (Kiiᵛ, 3.2.72-73), and People curses the 'wicked man fortunable' after Lady Fortune lifts the 'monster' Moros up (*Longer*, [F4]ʳ, 1689, 1693).

> Blessed, Diuine, Vnblemisht, Sacred, Pure,
> Glorious, Immortall, and indeed *Immense*;
> […] in her *Graces*
> All my malitious Powers haue lost their stings:
> *Enuie* is fled my Soule at sight of her,
> And shee hath chac'd all blacke thoughts from my bosome,
> Like as the *Sunne* doth darkenesse from the world. [5.6.78-87; Riii^{v}.]

Macilente has been re-formed from within by a power radically outside himself: 'Shee (whose *Figure* hath effected | This change in me)'. Justifying his controversial use of the Queen's person onstage in the 'Apology' appended to the quarto, Jonson describes Macilente's conversion as a '*Morall* and *Mysterious*' moment, befitting Her Majesty's dignity (Riii^{r}).[441] Putting Macilente out of his misery, this *coup de théâtre* is in all senses a *coup de grâce*.

Royal flattery was of course the primary driver of this conceit – but the scene's significance goes beyond that.[442] The dishumouring could be turned to a wide range of ends, as when in *Poetaster* it is exploited to ridicule Marston. However, we know that the language which Macilente uses was more intrinsic to Jonson's humoral theory than just a cynical ploy for royal favour, because when Jonson rewrote the ending for subsequent Globe performances in 1599, removing the Queen, he actually made the association of folly with damnation and grace and wisdom with salvation more explicit. Left alone onstage in the new version, his plans having come to fruition, Macilente feels his humour of envious rage subside – and be replaced by melancholy of a different sort:

> Why here's a change: Now is my soule at peace,
> I am as emptie of all Envie now,
> As they of Merit to be envied at,
> My Humor (like a flame) no longer lasts
> Than it hath stuffe to feed it, and their vertue,
> Being now rak't vp in embers of their Follie,
> Affords no ampler Subject to my Spirit;
> I am so farre from malicing their states,
> That I begin to pittie 'hem: it greeues me
> To thinke they haue a *being*; I could wish
> They might turne wise vpon it, and be sau'd now,

[441] 'his *Election* [i.e., choice of the Queen] (though boldly, yet respectively) [was] vs'd to a *Morall* and *Mysterious* end.' Jonson liked to court the suggestion of an even deeper mystery by using the word 'election' in this way.

[442] Helen Ostovich considers the dishumouring as a courtly compliment in '"So sudden and so strange a cure": A rudimentary masque in *Every Man Out of His Humour*', *ELR* 22 (1992), 315-32.

So Heauen were pleas'd: but let them vanish Vapors. [Rii[r].][443]

And with them vanishes the burned-out 'Macilente' himself, and Asper the playwright starts to address the audience *in propria persona*: 'And now with *Aspers* tongue (though not his shape) | Kind *Patrons* […] I tender solemne and most duteous thankes'.

Before he disappears, Macilente subtly resumes Asper's original language of sin and damnation from the Induction. What was a triumphalist moment of purgation by Elizabeth becomes a mournful and ambivalent reflection on what it means to be a fool, incapable of self-reform. Macilente's resentment at his fellows' success gives way to a pitying grief at their very existence. They have been put out of their humours but it is very doubtful the 'embers of their Follie' will breed the wisdom necessary for true improvement. We are clearly supposed to feel that Macilente's wish for their obliteration is actually a charitable one, that some worse consequence, otherwise inevitable, be averted. Helen Ostovich tries to avoid this anti-comedic implication by glossing '*being*' as 'position or standing in the world', but this is hardly the word's obvious meaning.[444] Much more natural is to relate it to Asper's definition of humour in the Induction 'as 'tis *ens*' – humour as an essential state of being. In thrall to their own circumscribed natures, these caricatures are likely unable to 'turne wise […] and be sau'd'. We recall the Horatian manifesto for humoral character quoted by Cordatus: 'let him be preserved [*servetur*] to the end even as he appeared from the beginning'. To be preserved (*servari*) in folly and to 'be sau'd' (*servari*) by wisdom are incompatible, and the power is the poet's to make his vessel to mercy or to destruction.

As if disturbed by the fate of such fools were 'his Art' really to come 'nearest the life' (Oi[v], 4.5.134-35), Asper exercises the playwright's final *fiat* and simply denies the whole *dramatis personae* any being in the first place. One moral of the Protestant personification play was that it is better not to let nature take its course.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the personification interlude in the 1560s and 1570s becomes increasingly characterized by caricatures rather than catalysts. Lust, Moros, Worldly Man, Greediness – regardless of their 'abstract' or 'typical' names, these men are no vices. Such caricatures inherit one part of the original function of the everyman, namely to be the

[443] Printed as Appendix B to the play in the *Cambridge Edition*.
[444] *Every Man Out*, ed. Ostovich, Appendix A.II, line 10 note.

victims of the dramatic irony, the unknowing mortal fool in whom others seek an interest. Unlike the everyman, however, these figures are held up to the spectators as objects of a purely disinterested attention, and their folly is carried through to the logical conclusion of punishment. In the special dynamic of the personification play, the caricature became a way to express the contradictory combination of blind entrapment and culpability of the reprobate. The Solomonic figure of the fool provided a precedent for such a disinteresting and ludicrous portrait of evil. Finally, this spiritual condition provides an interpretive tool for understanding the entrapment of later stage caricatures.

I have said that the moral of Moros is that the graceless exist, and that those who cannot be reformed must be cut off for the good of the community. In the next chapter, I take up this theme of communal reformation, which is expressed by the word which Wager personifies as the most schoolmasterly of his virtues: Discipline. Midway through *Longer*, just before Fortune enters to catapult Moros to undeserved social heights, Discipline addresses the spectators with a lament at the widespread idleness which is rotting the youth of England. In his parting words, however, he makes one exception to this bleak picture:

> God preserue London that noble Citie,
> Where they haue taken a godly ordre for a truth,
> God geue them the mindes the same to maintaine,
> For in the world is not a better ordre,
> Yf it may be Gods fauour still to remaine,
> Many good men will be in that bordre. [Diii^{v}, 1032-37.]

Which 'ordre' he means is not exactly clear; perhaps the Common Council's laws regulating apprentices and preventing vagabonds, as Wager's modern editor proposes.[445] For my purposes what matters is the evocation of urban discipline, the city as a self-reforming unit. I will turn to this suggestion in the context of the emergent *locus* of humoral comedy in the Elizabethan interlude: London itself. Wager's contemporaries in an increasingly urban community of reformist playwrights would look to the crowded streets of their own parishes in the capital with a satire bordering on hostility – but also a sense that its mess of capitalists, criminals, and hoi polloi might be disciplined into something better. In the process, a genre which would define the streetwise 'secular' comedy of the 1590s was born, prematurely, from Protestant roots.

[445] *The Longer Thou Livest and Enough is as Good as a Feast*, ed. R. Mark Benbow (London, 1968), 1032-33n.

Chapter 4
The 'Geneva humour': Puritan City Comedy

> For it is vertue that gives glory: That will endenizon a man everywhere. It is onely that can naturalize him. A native, if hee be vitious, deserves to bee a stranger, and cast out of the Commonwealth as an Alien.
>
> (Ben Jonson, *Discoveries*.)[446]

With the machinations of vice against victim in early Elizabethan interludes, we increasingly get the sense of a setting, an evoked and populous world. Within a generation of the loss of the everyman, as the virtues recede to an increasingly marginal stasis and personified evils diversify their targets, the staged relationships of personification drama become increasingly parasitic and thus self-contained: a zero-sum competition between humoral dupes whose purpose was simply to fall victim to a cleverer selfishness. The results are defined more by the pursuit of business interests than by the *interesse* which had patterned the original everyman play. That specialised structure of relationships, between the personifications and the everyman, and the play and the spectators, is replaced by an exhibition of trickery and deception. The virtuous, inoculated by God's grace against the profit motive, lament from a position of narrative irrelevance, while those whose moral blindness leaves them unable to transcend the fray become fodder for the machinations of the Vice and his cronies, those Devil-sent evils whose ever-presence throughout human history gives them the privileged vantage onto this-worldly folly. However, though the Vice may be at the centre of this web of competing interests, as their chief broker and advisor, he is also at its periphery, egging them on from the sidelines and compering the resultant spectacle for our edification and entertainment. This is the story which Robert Weimann has told, of the Vice poised on the threshold between *locus* and *platea*, the 'nonrepresentational' space shared with the audience and 'the increasingly self-contained illusion of reality in the dramatic portrayal of action and character' beyond it, whose tension is the 'basic contradiction of pre-Shakespearean theatre'.[447]

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[446] *The workes of Benjamin Jonson. The second volume* (London, 1641), P2^r; 1066-68 in *The Cambridge Edition*.

[447] Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (Baltimore, MD, 1978), 148.

From the increasingly limited, temporary, and mutual relations of late personification interludes, a clear *locus* emerges: the city, and London in particular. Defined by competitive proximity between social types, the plays start to be patterned by what Gail Kern Paster has vividly described as the 'urban game', in which rakes, criminals, artisans, and brokers 'live not off land, but off each other' with 'ruthless circularity'.[448] Rhetorically, this closed circuit epitomises the reversal I have described in how the plays interest us. However, though the players in the game may be myopic and unimaginative, unwittingly exhibiting their own sharply-drawn vices, their self-centred interactions with allies, victims, and rivals help to evoke a world greater than the sum of its parts – what Paster calls 'a civic dimension, […] expressive not only of the characters but also of an idea of the city as well.'[449] This dimension is not conveyed by painted scenery, but by a sense of citizenship – the impression that a represented person is a member of an unstaged broader community, inchoate and diverse but somehow incorporated.

Paster is writing about the city comedies of Ben Jonson, John Marston, and Thomas Middleton, which played out on the public playhouse stage early in the following century. However, as we will see, city comedy was already emergent before the playhouses opened, and received its greatest boost from unlikely quarters: the puritan playwrights of the 1570s. This final phase of post-everyman moral theatre can tell us much about how the Protestants changed personification drama – and why they seemed to have stopped writing them altogether soon after.

The heart of this chapter is a reading of George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, which I argue to be both the first city comedy and the clearest articulation of a puritan political programme in any English interlude. Paul Whitfield White has argued that the play belongs to the debates over the Royal Supremacy in the English church which broke out in the 1570s, in which Wapull implicitly endorses the presbyterian position against that of the Queen and her bishops.[450] I seek to develop this observation, as I believe that *Tide* responds more fruitfully to this interpretation than White explores – not as an attack on the bishops, whom it prudently never mentions, but as a vision of political government by the elect.

My broader goal is to explain why the city emerged as the dominant *locus* of late personification drama. I argue that it was not only as the most persuasive setting for satire on

[448] Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens, GA, 1985), 157-58.
[449] Paster, *Idea of the City*, 160.
[450] Paul W hitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge, 1993), 92-95.

English vices, closest to an increasingly urban audience's most familiar experiences. Rather, it was for imagining the ideal domain for godly government. Protestant city drama was guided by the example of the free cities of Reformed Europe, and above all Calvin's Geneva – not a city often associated with city comedy except as the butt of its jokes. The city was the characteristic reformative unit of early Protestantism, a space in which discipline – a charged word in the debates about the membership and hierarchy of the Church of England – could be effectively implemented. I quoted at the end of the previous chapter Discipline's praise of London in *The Longer Thou Livest*, that 'in the world is not a better ordre', and '[y]f it may be Gods fauour still to remaine, | Many good men will be in that bordre.'[451] Not for nothing are 'order' and 'border' rhymed here: as a bounded set of raw materials under a common jurisdiction, the city allows the controls to be imposed necessary to make 'good men' of the inhabitants – and the clear limits from which to expel the bad.

Peter Lake has noted that, amongst Elizabethan puritans, '[l]anguage normally applied to the internal process of individual salvation was being applied to the collective cause of national reformation'.[452] Bernard Spivack remarks the same movement from 'internal process' to 'collective cause' in the history of the moral interlude: 'the jeopardy of the soul gives way to the jeopardy of the state.'[453] We might equally say it becomes the jeopardy of the city. It is the spiritual dimension of this jeopardy, and its collective reformation, which I will explore.

The tension between the Genevan ideal and the English reality might partly explain why reformist personification plays drop from the record precipitously after 1580. In 1593, at the time that anti-Marprelate 'stage puritans' were beginning to be seen at the playhouses, the future archbishop Richard Bancroft attacked Marprelate's presbyterian movement in England for heeding those 'Consistorians of chiefe name beyonde the Seas' – including Calvin – 'who (being of the *Geneua* humor) doo endeauour by most vniust *and* disloyall meanes, to subiect to their forged presbyteries, the scepters and swordes of Kings and Princes'.[454] After more than two decades of unrest from the left wing of the Church, the sort of criticisms and calls for further reformation which interludes had been making since Bale – religiopolitical theatre of the sort with which Tudor legislators had never been comfortable – seemed increasingly

[451] *The Longer Thou Livest*, Diii^{v}, 1035-37.
[452] Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, 1988), 31.
[453] Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York, 1958), 211.
[454] Richard Bancroft, *Daungerous positions and proceedings* (London, 1593), D1^{v}.

suspicious to the authorities, at just the time when London theatre was becoming increasingly conspicuous and policeable.

To observe how this affected reformist plays themselves, I will turn in the final chapter from Wapull to the two London plays of Robert Wilson, *The Three Ladies of London* (1581), written for the company of the Earl of Leicester, and *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (c.1588-89), for the successor company the Queen's Men. These are a unique crossover: the last surviving plays in the morality tradition of virtues and vices, and the only ones written for performance at a purpose-built playhouse, probably the Theatre. Wilson uniquely tempers the bitter satire of his depicted city with a self-undermining layer of irony, completely absent from *Tide*, which hints at professional theatre's growing consciousness of itself as an institution. These innovations lay in the future, however, when London first emerged as the scene of the moral interlude.

The Urban *Locus*

City comedy's full-fledged arrival is usually dated to 1598, when Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* and William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* were produced by the Lord Chamberlain's and Lord Admiral's Men respectively.[455] The involvement of both rival companies was an early sign of the form's dynamic appeal. Haughton's play was set on the Royal Exchange, and *Every Man In* in a Florence which is patently London, to which the play was relocated explicitly when Jonson rewrote it for his *Works* in 1616. Humoral character and London comedy were twinned from the beginning: notwithstanding the allegedly Parisian setting of George Chapman's *An Humorous Day's Mirth* in 1597, his characters engage in the pastimes of the contemporary English capital. City comedy's heyday was Jacobean, with Brian Gibbons tracing its maturity to 1605 and the boys' company plays of Middleton and others, and Theodore B. Leinwand to the decade ending 1613; the most expansive definition of the vogue dates it until 1630.[456] These comedies of cuckoldry, moneylending, and marriage are marked by an unglossed density of London particulars, its parishes, liberties, suburbs, and underworld, warehouses, fairs, taverns, and dockyards, and

[455] 1598 is the date offered in, among others, Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy* [1968], 2nd ed. (London, 1980), 1; Theodore B. Leinwand, *The City Staged* (Madison, WI, 1986), 7; and Jean E. Howard, 'London and the early modern stage', in Lawrence Manley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of London* (Cambridge, 2011), 34.
[456] Gibbons, *City Comedy*; Leinwand, *City Staged*; Wells, 'Jacobean city comedy', 37.

employ dialogue rich in local slang and plots which wander in and out of the politics of the Common Council, its aldermen and guilds, their freemen, apprentices, and promoters.

It is no surprise that the English city which birthed city comedy was the one which most transgressed any ideal of orderly containment. Bristol in the 1570s had about 7000 inhabitants; London, more than 150,000. The unprecedented size and sprawl of the city was fuelled by ceaseless immigration from the countryside, young men and families leaving their rural communities to settle in the swelling suburbs, so that by 1590 one in eight Englishmen had been Londoners at some point in their lives.[457] Because the suburbs, outparishes, and liberties so far transgressed the city walls, Susan Wells writes that ‘the ideology of the city was visibly at odds with its real structure’: most Londoners were not technically citizens, members of the livery companies of the City itself.[458] Images of dysfunction and mess are accordingly keynotes of the scholarship: Heather C. Easterling describes the city’s ‘ethos of proliferation and fragmentation’, and Anne Barton finds a model for literary London in Bartholomew Fair’s ‘defiant completeness, a shapeless inclusiveness which baffled the imagination’.[459] Onto this mess, according to Paster, playwrights imposed their own contrived resolution – the marriage of lovers, the comeuppance of gulls or tricksters, the mending of quarrels, and the loss or restitution of fortunes. Thus, in her compelling phrase, ‘[o]rder as a social phenomenon […] yields to order as an aesthetic phenomenon achieved by the playwrights alone.’[460]

Darryll Grantley argues that one of the purposes of city comedy’s profusion of incidental details was to provide ‘recognitive pleasure’ to Londoners, gratified at hearing familiar names and places drawn into the onstage intrigues and thereby energised.[461] Of all genres, city comedy would seem to be the product of a theatrical economy thoroughly embedded in the Thameside playhouses which opened from 1576, in which the shaping influence of local audiences on the repertory had become decisive. Accordingly, when scholars have looked for major stepping-stones to the innovation of 1598, they have seldom looked beyond the playhouses, and almost never to the personification tradition.

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[457] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995), 16.
[458] Wells, ‘Jacobean city comedy’, 39.
[459] Heather C. Easterling, *Parsing the City* (London, 2007), 17; Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984), 194.
[460] Paster, *Idea of the City*, 167.
[461] Darryll Grantley, *London in Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke, 2008), 47.

Stephen Mullaney famously called theatre ‘a territorial art’, which ‘requires a place of its own, in or around a community, in which to mount its telling fictions’.[462] It has been increasingly clear since William Ingram’s *The Business of Playing* that London was a place for commercial theatre long before the Theatre opened in 1576. David Kathman has traced the first posted playbills in London to the 1540s, inviting paying audiences to performances in innyards or private houses, and Mary C. Erler wonders whether Bishop of London Bonner prohibited unlicensed playing in churches in April 1542 due to a spate of ‘religiously oppositional plays’ in the parish in recent years.[463] Ingram argues from evidence of costume rentals that commercial playing was already ‘a thriving business in the City of London’ by the 1560s.[464] White notes that two of London’s famous play-producing inns, the Cross-keys and the Bell, were on Gracechurch Street in William Wager’s parish, and that a vice in Wager’s *Trial of Treasure* calls out to a ‘Drawer’, or barman, for ‘a pynte of white wyne *and* borage’, as if anticipating performance inside a pub.[465]

Such was the spur given to unlicensed London theatre by the anticatholic movement that Elizabeth issued her famous proclamation in 1559, commanding that plays ‘wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonweal shall be handled or treated’ should be performed only before ‘grave and discreet persons’.[466] The tactics by which Elizabethan plays covertly treat political and religious questions have been much discussed.[467] It is worth noting, however, that the small-troupe personification interludes are almost the only early Elizabethan plays which satirize social and religious issues with no euphemistic pretence of being set elsewhere than in contemporary England – rather than Arcadia, fairy-land, or France, or ancient Britain, Greece, Rome, or Persia.

A London base would explain why small-troupe interludes of the 1560s debate issues of crime, commerce, and overpopulation which speak directly to the city: immigration is satirised in *Like Will to Like*, *Wealth and Health*, and *The Pedlar’s Prophecy*; unscrupulous

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[462] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1988), 3.

[463] David Kathman, ‘The rise of commercial playing in 1540s London’, *Early Theatre* 12 (2009), 21; Mary C. Erler, ‘London commercial theatre 1500-1576’, in Jenkins and Sanders (eds.), *Editing, Performance, Texts* (Basingstoke, 2014), 98.

[464] William Ingram, *The Business of Playing* (Ithaca, NY, 1992).

[465] *The Trial of Treasure*, Diii^{r}, 824; Paul Whitfield White, ‘Interludes, economics, and the Elizabethan stage’, in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485-1603* (Oxford, 2012), 567.

[466] Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols (New Haven, 1964-69), 2.115-16; discussed in Martin Wiggins, *Drama and the Transfer of Power in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2012), 21-40.

[467] The *locus classicus* is David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1968); see, most recently, Ivan Lupić, *Subjects of Advice* (Philadelphia, PA, 2019), 88-112.

landlords in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, and *All for Money*; and so on through pick-pocketing to prostitution and corrupt law enforcement. These are the milieux of the humoral fools with their cratylic names discussed in the previous chapter. Elizabethan non-courtly interludes show signs of being written for the same urban communities they satirise and whose concerns they amplify. They increasingly particularise the elements of middling and lower society which had been bundled up into a single iconic figure in courtly plays by Bale or Udall – Udall's widow Respublica with the bumpkin People, or Bale's Widow England and her blind crippled son Commonalty. The survivals from Elizabeth's reign narrow the lens to anatomize the citizens themselves.

It is conceded at the start of a major collection on London drama that '[t]he first moral satire expressly set in London' was a personification play, Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*.[468] The second was Wilson's sequel, *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*. By my calculation, these are the only survivals from a playhouse company's repertory set in contemporary (non-historical) London until at least 1594.[469] However, Wilson's personifications have seen *Three Ladies* written off as a false start, its London really just an 'abstract landscape populated with allegorical figures'.[470] Grantley concurs in his valuable study of the emergence of London in English drama. He points to the probably Edwardian boys' play *Jack Juggler,* with its detailed references to the city's backstreets and shortcuts, as the earliest example of a 'realized locality which is neutral or at least diverse'.[471] By implication, city comedy relies on such raw 'recognitive' data, but in place of neutral locations personification plays offered only biased interpretations.

However, it is upon such interpretations that any 'idea of the city' must rest. Brian Gibbons has claimed a kind of moralised realism for later city comedy too: 'the realism of the significant plays […] is essentially in transforming typical elements of city life into significant patterns, expressing consciously satiric criticism but also suggesting deeper sources of conflict and change.'[472] A merchant called Greediness performs this out in the open: the metaphorical device takes a 'significant pattern' within city life – that is, greed – and bodies it forth as a 'typical element' of that life – a merchant – so that both are present to

[468] Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, 'Introduction: "Our scene is London…"', in Dieter Mehl et al (eds.), *Plotting Early Modern London* (Aldershot, 2004), 12.
[469] That is, before at least Robert Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (dated c.1594-98 by Wiggins 1015) one of whose plots is set in London in summer 1594. The events dramatized in *Arden of Faversham* (c.1587-92) took place in 1551.
[470] Howard, 'London', 34.
[471] Grantley, *London*, 47.
[472] Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 10.

the understanding. It is mistaken to imagine that drama needed to leave 'abstraction' behind to convey inhabitation. Dramatic personification keeps the registers of abstract concept and physical person simultaneously in play – and as such was well suited to communicate the simultaneous dimensions of mundane embodiment and incorporated membership which render a public sinner a private citizen.

However, satirising especially urban vices is not the same as evoking a specifically urban setting. There is certainly no equivalent in any small-troupe interlude to, say, the onstage recreation of Cuckolds' Haven near Rotherhithe in *Eastward Ho* (1605). Small-troupe moral interludes are by their nature usually unmoored to single locations, and even in the most topical Elizabethan examples the contemporary 'England' in which they are set is usually evoked through a stock of formulaic geographical allusions which would travel – which, like 'Youth', 'Avarice', and the other names of interlude-England's personified population, meant the same outside London as in it. Thanks to its national fame, the capital and its satellites provided many of these allusions: the Southwark brothels; the lawyers of Westminster Hall; the prison at Marshalsea; the gallows at Tyburn; the Paul's Cross pulpit; and during the Reformation the heretics' bonfires at Smithfield. However, these are always referred to as offstage locations, some unspecific distance from the interactions we are witnessing. Grantley argues that Southwark as invoked in *Hickscorner* or Westminster Hall in *Wisdom* are not places at all so much as metonymic shorthand for various vices, 'a type of moralized space'.[473]

Jonathan Haynes has argued for the 'tavern scene' in fifteenth century moral drama as the germ of the city realism of Jonson, with the tavern or alehouse 'very often the only social setting defined with any specificity at all in the morality play'.[474] However, he can only cite one example of actually *being* in a pub, in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, whose well-defined scaffold *loci* are unrepresentative of the small-troupe tradition. In his other examples, *Mankind*, *Youth*, and *Hickscorner*, the pub is where the vices either arrive from or look forward to visiting. In fact, there is only one recognisable location which fits the transient goings and comings which we are largely shown in such plays: the street itself.

'About your affaires I haue busines this way,' Covetous tells his employer, Worldly Man, in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, 'And beholde Sir as I traueled the Street, | With these two fellowes I chaunced for to meet' (Eiii^{v}, 1114-15) – that is, Worldly Man's Hireling and

[473] Grantley, *London*, 47.
[474] Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theatre* (Cambridge, 1992), 13.

Tenant, complaining respectively about underpayment and racked rent. ‘Street’ often rhymes with ‘meet’ in personification plays, which sums up the implicit importance of the urban byway to the genre, allowing the apparently random encounters from which significant lessons emerge. A street – a word with instant connotations of a built-up environment – is the implied setting of all of the open-ended transactions of moral drama, whose characters are always killing time or en route to somewhere else, and bump either by chance or design into others of widely varied manners and social rank in a semi-public ‘this place’ or ‘here’, whose detail is deferred offstage. Elizabethan interludes heighten our sense of the street as an importantly public place. The morality tradition had almost always been defined by non-private commerce and traffic, and this made personification drama a particularly promising dramaturgical basis from which to articulate an idea of the city. What idea this was for Elizabethan Protestant playwrights is my subject now.

The ‘Geneva Humour’

It is not hard to see how a sixteenth century thinker could find in the policeable community of the Tudor city a potential seedbed for the disciplined community of worshippers. The city could stand for the nation, with the monarch at its head; it could also stand for the church, with Christ at its head. The city-church was an ancient, familiar metaphor which the Protestant reformers revivified; Augustine’s two spiritual cities of Jerusalem and Babylon were the acknowledged pattern for John Bale’s *The Image of Both Churches*, of Christ’s faithful gospellers and Antichrist’s faithless papists.[475] However, in a Europe divided into tiny independent city-states, each implementing its own reforms, the city-church was more a reality than a metaphor. A Tudor observer only had to look across the Channel to see (what looked like) eminent urban-Protestant success stories against which to measure England, and find it wanting.

It is a truism that Protestantism was an urban phenomenon.[476] The early Reformation had taken root in northern Europe not in its kingdoms and ‘countries’ but in the tiny, self-

[475] See Gretchen E. Minton, ‘*Civitas* to congregation: Augustine’s two cities and John Bale’s *Image of Both Churches*’, *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999), 237-56.
[476] This phenomenon is the subject of many studies. The ones I have mainly used are Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, trans. Mark U. Edwards and H. C. Midelfort (Philadelphia, PA, 1972); Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven, 1975); and Christopher W. Close, *The Negotiated Reformation* (Cambridge, 2009).

sufficient and often republican city-states of the Holy Roman Empire and the Swiss Confederation, which separated unilaterally from Rome and reformed their churches from within rather than as part of a top-down national policy. Tudor observers could not point to any monarchy (certainly not their own) whose population had been so thoroughly religiously corrected as in these concentrated, manageable units. The byword for every major reformer was the city which had used its freedom to adopt his ideas within its limits: Luther's Wittenberg, Zwingli and Bullinger's Zürich, Bucer's Strasburg, Oecolampadius' Basel, and above all Calvin's Geneva. City status already conferred 'special privileges of self-protection and self-administration' beyond ordinary townships in central Europe, but the imperial free cities of Germany were set apart from other cities in their even greater autonomy, belonging to none of the princedoms of the Empire and owing 'no obedience to a local or regional overlord' except (technically) the Emperor himself.[477] The Swiss free cities were free from even this obligation. All were run and legislated by councils elected by the citizens, which appointed their own courts to try cases and impose punishments. Many also governed land and villages beyond the city walls, allowing self-sufficiency in food production. It was in these power structures of civic participation and local privilege, in which popular enthusiasms could be electorally expressed, that the Reformation first percolated into law.

The reformed free cities offered a suggestive parallel to the Church of England inasmuch as the clergy were subject to the same laws as the laity, and citizenship and common worship became conceptually linked. This is an important difference from John Knox's admired presbyterian Kirk in Scotland, which self-governed independently of the reigning Stuarts.[478] The difference from the state church of England, with the Queen as its Supreme Governor, was that the Protestant free cities were by definition republics. However, the actual realities of regulation in England may have approached closely enough to the small, self-governing communities of the continental Reformation that such inconvenient differences could be winked at. Patrick Collinson famously coined the term 'monarchical republic' for the patchwork of overlapping but semiautonomous jurisdictions into which

[477] Christopher R. Friedrichs, 'The Swiss and German city-states', in Robert Griffeth and Carol G. Thomas (eds.), *The City-State in Five Cultures* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1981), 109-10.

[478] See Paul McGinnis and Arthur Williamson, 'Radical menace, reforming hope: Scotland and English religious politics, 1586-1596', *Renaissance and Reformation* 36 (2013), 105-30.

Elizabethan England was broken up.[479] Though this has been debated, the concept is similar to the 'worlds within worlds' which Steve Rappaport has described in Tudor London.[480]

As of 1555, there were 65 free imperial cities in Germany, ranging in population from fewer than 1000 to over 20,000, and eight free cities in Switzerland. Six of the latter had voted to become officially Protestant by this date, and 50 of the former had experienced major Protestant movements, with the most populous five – Nürnberg, Strasburg, Lübeck, Augsburg and Ulm – among those now 'overwhelmingly Protestant'.[481] Wittenberg was not a free city (it was subordinate to the Prince-Electors of Saxony, helpfully Lutherans) – but in any case, for English Protestants in the 1570s it was not Luther whose polity was synonymous with correct Christian discipline, but Calvin's urban republic of Geneva.

'Genevan' is a name for Protestant often found in Elizabethan moral drama. The popish chaplain Ignorance in *Enough is as Good as a Feast* boasts that he has 'spouted with the Geneuians xx. on a rowe' and baffled them all with his Latin (we are not encouraged to believe this).[482] We have already seen that the anonymous *New Custom* dresses its spokesmen for pure religion, Primitive Constitution and Light of the Gospel, as 'Geneuian doctours', with the beards, wide-brimmed hats, and sober plain clothes of that exemplary ministry.[483] In George Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* (printed, and perhaps written, in 1575), the good son Phylomusus resolves to live and preach in Geneva, which sets the capstone on an adolescence of lily-white probity. Peter White has even described non-criticism of Calvin and Geneva as one of the implicit 'ground-rules of Protestant apologetic' in the mid-Tudor period.[484] When the more militant contemporaries witnessed the cocktail of religious and social abuses staged in early Elizabethan interludes, we can plausibly imagine some of them reflecting that such things would not be tolerated in Geneva.

Geneva's celebrity status amongst puritan-leaning Englishmen was owed to its famous sermon-centred pastorate and to the theology of Calvin and his protégé, Theodore Beza, which provided Tudor divines with a gold standard of orthodoxy – but also to the fabled godliness of the city's everyday rules for life. Dedicating his translation of Geneva's

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[479] Patrick Collinson, 'The monarchical republic of Queen Elizabeth I', in *Elizabethan Essays* (London, 1994), 31-57.
[480] Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds* (Cambridge, 1989). Collinson's idea has been debated in John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007).
[481] Ozment, *Reformation in the Cities*, 1.
[482] *Enough is as Good*, Fii^r, 1259.
[483] *New Custom*, Ciii^r, 184; see chapter 2.
[484] Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (Cambridge, 1992), 100.

laws and statutes to Robert Dudley, the soon-to-be Earl of Leicester, the puritan Robert Fills described it in 1562 as 'a Cittie cou*n*ted of all godly men singularly well ordered'. Its detractors may be alarmed by its strictness, but such libertines are unable 'to shewe a common weale of their owne, where so good lawes both of sincere religion and ciuill iustice and honesty, are so dewly put in practise, so reuerentlye obeyd, and so preciselye kept', such that men voluntarily 'forsake the landes of greater libertie of lyfe, to thrall them selfes to such seueritie.'[485]

Contemporary visitors were startled to find that swearing and blasphemy were nowhere to be heard in Genevan streets.[486] Harro Höpfl notes that those streets were 'unusually supervisable: it was possible to keep an eye on things in a city-state of around 13,000 inhabitants enclosed within high walls.'[487] (London had more than ten times as many, most of them beyond the walls.) Such good behaviour was thanks to the Consistory, the disciplinary committee which met every Thursday since Calvin founded it in 1541 to try citizens for immorality, blasphemy, or superstition. Its main weapon was excommunication from the Lord's Supper, until satisfactory repentance had been demonstrated. Genevan justice was not in fact theocratic: half of the Consistory were laymen drawn from the elective councils, and it was chaired by one of the four elected syndics of the city, while civil punishments such as flogging or execution were reserved to the *Petit Conseil*, Geneva's lay court. Nor were the judges ruthlessly rigorist; Calvin himself stressed that all laws 'must be measured against the law of love', and Sara Beam notes the 'spirit of discipline rather than retribution' in the *Conseil*'s sentences on immoral conduct, which were often remitted for first offences.[488] However, civil and religious justice marched to a common drumbeat: as Höpfl says, the church-city was conceived as one congregation bound by the same moral laws, with the power of 'discriminating between those entitled to belong to its fellowship, and those not', and thus there was no conceptual distinction between sin and crime.[489]

Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* gives a snapshot of what Fills calls Genevan 'seueritie' as viewed from Elizabethan London. This prolix, probably closet, play's humourless moralism has been read as the poet's performative renunciation of his old

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[485] *The lawes and statutes of Geneua*, trans. Robert Fills (London, 1562), *iii^r, *v^r.
[486] Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed* (New Haven, 2002), 103.
[487] Höpfl, *Christian Polity*, 57.
[488] *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.xx.13, translated in Harro Höpfl (ed.), *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority* (Cambridge, 1991), 67; Sara Beam, 'Torture and punishment in Reformation Geneva', in Jon Balserak (ed.), *A Companion to the Reformation in Geneva* (Brill, 2021), 331.
[489] Höpfl, *Christian Polity*, 64.

libertine verse, and not to be taken at face value – but even if Gascoigne was only donning a militant Protestant persona, the comedy was presumably that *he* was saying it, rather than *what* he was saying, and we can still admit *Glass* as evidence.[490] The play is set in the Margravate of Antwerp, then one of the wealthiest centres of global trade, under the fictional margrave Severus. (There is no trace of the Dutch revolt against Spanish Habsburg rule in which the city was caught up when Gascoigne wrote.) *Glass* traces the fortunes of two sets of wealthy burghers' sons, the two younger diligent and godly and the two elder lazy and riotous. Gascoigne may well have been inspired by the divided casts of Wager, Fulwell, and other recent interlude-writers, and like theirs his virtuous characters go uncorrupted and end rewarded, while the vicious remain impenitent and meet a sticky end.

Their comeuppances, as recounted to their fathers and the Margrave, become a showcase for urban justice. The two pairs have gone respectively to the Palatinate of the Rhine in the Holy Roman Empire, where the virtuous one has become secretary to the Palsgrave (one of Germany's preeminent Protestant princes), and to Geneva, where the virtuous one has become a preacher. Their waster brothers, however, have been undone. The Palsgrave has had Phylautus executed for committing robbery, while in Geneva, '*Phylosarchus* had bin there (for fornication) whipped openly three seuerall dayes in the market, and was banished the Towne with great infamie, notwithstanding that his Brother *Phylotimus* was an earnest suter vnto the congregation for him.'[491] The refusal of the Palsgrave and the *Conseil* to be swayed by such calls for mercy greatly impresses the Margrave Severus: 'It is a happy common wealth where Iustice may be ministred with seueritie, and where no mediacions or sutes may wrest the sentence of the Lawe.' (Miii^{v}, 87.) The play ends with Severus adopting Genevan justice for (Catholic) Antwerp, to punish the gang of bawds who corrupted the burghers' sons in the first place: he will have them publicly flogged on market-days and then banished the city on pain of death.[492]

Once again, the city is the ideal political unit of moral reformation and purgation, to which writers could turn to envisage human improvement. Banishment was the commonest of the *Conseil*'s severe penalties, which purged the city of bad members just as excommunication purged divine service. In 1560 there were 114 sentences of banishment,

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[490] See the chapter on Gascoigne's 'reformed prodigal' phase in 1575 in Gillian Austen, *George Gascoigne* (Cambridge, 2008), 84-130.
[491] *The Glass of Government*, Miii^{v}, 86-87.
[492] We might recall the fools Bobadilla and Matheo banished the house and stocked in the marketplace in *Every Man In His Humour*; see chapter 3.

most commonly for theft (25), fornication (19), and blasphemy (15).[493] Geneva's ability to expel serious offenders into the socially and religiously uncontrolled countryside shows the disciplinary advantage of defining the 'happy commonwealth' on an urban rather than national scale.

Geneva has been a conspicuous absence from discussions of the city in Tudor and Stuart drama. Paster's influential exploration of the early modern literary city compares London with the purely imagined symbolic cases of ancient Rome and Athens and biblical Babylon and Jerusalem.[494] Debora Shuger has studied the most famous case of city discipline in early modern drama, Angelo's 'puritanical' city-state of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, which she understands as 'an attempt to imagine what Christianity might look like as a political praxis'.[495] Though always incisive and instructive, Shuger traces the ideal of sacred government from Martin Bucer's Edwardine *De regno Christi* to Richard Baxter's Interregnum *Holy Commonwealth* without mentioning the (perceived) achievement of a real Christian polity in a riverport in Switzerland, a few weeks' travel from England.

Admittedly, not one scene in early modern drama is actually set in Geneva, or almost any of the celebrated Protestant free cities.[496] This is in contrast to Wittenberg, where *Faustus* is set, Hamlet goes to university, and Lacy in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* learned to cobble. However, Geneva's absence was surely overdetermined. The late Elizabethan clampdown on left-wing religious dissent, which reached its apex in 1593 with the Act against Seditious Sectaries, cast the presbyterian republic of Geneva as a dangerous anti-monarchist influence, and even moderate puritans' admiration for it became accordingly more politicised and policed. It was at this time that Bancroft made his association of the '*Geneua* humor' with treason. Kilian Schindler has shown that the 'stranger churches' of London – communities of foreign Protestant refugees, allowed to worship with their own liturgies – became the focus of official mistrust in the 1590s as bastions of a rival discipline.[497] Besides its incomparable Reformation resonance, Wittenberg was perhaps like and unlike England in the right ways:

[493] Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, 104.
[494] Paster, *Idea of the City*.
[495] Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke, 2001), 131.
[496] Based on the data in Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642*, which is currently published up to 1636. The same is true of Strasbourg, Augsburg, Zürich, and Basel, to choose four other Reformed centres.
[497] Kilian Schindler, *Religious Dissimulation and Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2023), 181-88.

unlike England it was not theologically ‘Calvinist’ – but it was under the purview of a Protestant prince.

The roots of Geneva’s absence from the Shakespearean stage lie in the debates over discipline which defined the early 1570s – the debates which, I argue, stimulated city comedy in the first place. In 1570, the Cambridge divine Thomas Cartwright had given a series of lectures on the Book of Acts openly espousing the replacement of the English episcopate with a presbyterian system modelled on the apostolic church – the first time that this demand for a Genevan discipline was made openly. The uproar sent him into exile for the rest of the decade. In 1572, two of his presbyterian disciples, John Field and Thomas Wilcox, pulled no punches in *An Admonition to the Parliament*, itemising residual popery in the Book of Common Prayer and calling for a reformation of the Church of England. Appended to their proto-Marprelate salvo were two letters from heads of continental city-churches, Rudolf Gwalther in Zurich and Calvin’s successor Beza in Geneva, criticising English church discipline. This bolt of Protestant disloyalty was aimed at a parliament called to address Catholic disloyalty, in the wake of the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and the abortive Ridolfi Plot against Elizabeth’s life two years later. Field and Wilcox were imprisoned and unsuccessful attempts were made to impound their book.

In 1573, all clergymen were forced to swear an oath of loyalty to the established Church or be defrocked – the oath which William Wager seems to have sworn, to Wilcox’s disgust. That year, the future archbishop John Whitgift published a conformist answer to the *Admonition*, which in its turn was rebutted from exile by Cartwright, beginning a four-book print war. In 1574 Cartwright also published the first presbyterian tract in English, a translation of *A Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline* by his fellow Cambridge puritan exile Walter Travers. Far from all would-be purifiers of English worship, or reformers of English manners, agreed with the presbyterians about abolishing the bishops. However, the association of puritanism with open disloyalty to the Crown (that ‘popular preachers’ would ‘[p]ull people and theyr prince asoonder’, as George Puttenham warned in the late 1570s) saw a huge increase in the imprisonment of the more obstinate ministers, some of whom would die in captivity.[498] The debate refused to go away, however, and one parson

[498] Puttenham’s ‘Partheniades’ were presented to the Queen in c.1578-79; quoted in David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* [1984], 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2002), 64.

complained in 1575 that ‘it is a common thing now for every pragmatical prentice to have in his head and mouth the government and reformation of the church’.[499]

Such pragmatical prentices fired by the *Admonition* scandal may have been in the audience, or even amongst the players, in a London guildhall, inn, or private house in the early to mid 1570s for the performance of a new play, which married the humoral characters of the satirical interlude to the growing ‘Geneva humour’ amongst Protestant moralists, and created something new.

The Tide Tarrieth No Man

The Tide Tarrieth No Man was entered to the Stationers’ Register on 22 October 1576, and the only known edition followed shortly after, dated 1576 on the titlepage. The Theatre in Shoreditch was probably still under construction; Burbage signed the lease on the land in April that year and the first record of performances is from August 1577. The playwright George Wapull, named on the titlepage, may have been the Clerk of the Stationers’ Company of that name in 1571-75.[500] Whether he died in 1575 is unknown, like everything else about him. His job is a suggestive detail, however. The Company was one of London’s guilds, of which Wapull as Clerk was a liveryman and stakeholder, though not himself a merchant or artisan. This slightly detached proximity to London’s commercial politics, dependent upon but critically distant from it, would be not unlike that of, say, Middleton three decades later, in his relation to the City of London and the theatre companies to whom he was contracted.

Suggestively, Wapull’s Prologue addresses himself to the ‘worshipfull Audyence’ (Aii^{v}, 50). Nothing is thinner evidence than the adjectival compliments paid by interludes to their spectators, but given Wapull’s possible membership of the Worshipful Company of Stationers this could intimate a guildhall performance before other liverymen.[501] Paula Neuss has speculated that *Magnificence* – whose vices Wapull’s clearly resemble – was performed at the Merchant Taylors’ hall, which it mentions.[502] As I have noted, players from the 1540s onwards commonly rented the spaces from the livery companies for residences before paying

[499] The Cranbrook vicar Richard Fletcher, quoted in Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints* (Oxford, 1988), 122.
[500] See Mark Eccles, ‘Brief lives: Tudor and Stuart authors’, *Studies in Philology* 79 (1982), 124-25.
[501] Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance* (Cambridge, 1998), 235, also suggests a merchants’ hall on thematic grounds.
[502] John Skelton, *Magnificence*, ed. Paula Neuss (Manchester, 1980), 42-43 (the guild is named in line 1405).

audiences.[503] Whether or not Wapull wrote originally for an audience of the merchants themselves, it would fit *Tide*'s cagey endorsement of honest commerce if an entrepreneurial playing troupe mounted the play's satirical warnings against rampant moneymaking in the heartland of the mercantile class.

The arc of moral reformation in the play is not that of an exemplary individual but of a whole community, made godly through the imposition of law and the purgation of sinners. I would use the example of the city-congregation of Geneva to draw these two strands of the play, the urban and the puritan, together. *Tide* was written within two horizons which it elides in spite of their irresolvable odds: that of a citizen appealing to the common fellowship of a centuries-old corporation, and of a Protestant only one generation removed from the birth of the movement, aware that time is running out and that a majority of humanity will prove resistant to the truth. Such tension is in fact not only analogous but identical to that of reforming a national church, a compromised jumble of sheep and goats, wheat and tares, which must nonetheless be shepherded toward the truth as one flock. A lay moralist with puritan sympathies, Wapull was attentive both to economic issues in his home city and to issues of discipline in the English Church. The result is a puritan city comedy in both senses.

Tide's twentieth-century editors note the play's 'intense London realism'.[504] The play's setting is not in doubt – Greediness sends his heavies into the Sunday crowd at Paul's Cross to arrest debtors – but more evident than any 'realism' of depiction is the idea of 'the city' which emerges. *Tide* may lack the 'recognitive' detail which Grantley finds in the earlier *Jack Juggler*. However, in place of the latter's essentially domestic game of masters and servants, with no sense of wider civic or economic stakes, Wapull lays unprecedented stress on urban interconnection, giving a marked impression that his vices and victims are 'denizened' in an unseen whole.

The play's relation to London begins in its title. The proverb clearly belongs with the other 'platitude plays' enjoying a vogue around 1570. Like them, Wapull's is one of quite few Tudor plays to name itself to the audience in the Prologue ('our matter […] Which the Tide tarieth no man, to name hath token', Aii^{r}, 16-17), but Wapull is more thoughtful in moralising two contrasting senses of his central saying. The Prologue explains that 'ech man doth take the time of his gayne, | Although the same be to others a great payne', and in this

[503] Kathman, 'The rise of commercial playing', 18-19.
[504] *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, ed. Edgar T. Schell and J. D. Schuchter (New York, 1969), 310.

opportunist sense the proverb will be repeated incessantly throughout by the Vice, Courage, who represents headstrong self-interest. However, the Prologue continues, ‘[the] prouerbe right well might be applyed, | To a better sence then it is vsed: | There is time to aske grace […] Of thy sinfull life so greatly abused.’ (Aii^{r-v}, 21-46.) *That* tide certainly will not tarry, but must be seized when God offers it. Like Brutus’ ‘tide in the affairs of men’, both senses of the metaphor sound specifically nautical, picturing life as a great maritime voyage. However, when the Prologue cedes the place to Courage, the Vice’s opening Skeltonic salvo adjusts the scope from ocean to river:

> To the Barge to,
> Come they that will go,
> Why sirs I say whan:
> It is high tyde,
> We may not abide,
> Tide taryeth no man. [Aiii^{r}, 1-6.]

His barge is a riverboat, and the tide is implicitly that of the tidal Thames. Harry Levin reminds us that the ‘centrifugal titles’ of the most famous cluster of city comedies, *Westward Ho*, *Eastward Ho*, and *Northward Ho* (c.1604-7), were ‘river-cries – if not street-cries – of London, when boatmen ferried passengers up and down and across the Thames.’[505] Courage may appear dressed like one of these boatmen, perhaps carrying a bargepole. His waiting barge is a ship of fools, containing a pantheon of rogues – usurers, ‘False-dealers also, | A thousand and mo’, cutpurses, loose wives, unscrupulous servants (11-30) – gathered into the boat under the reckless influence of ‘Corage contagious’ with a predictable destination: ‘And therefore we sayle, | To the Diuell of hell.’ (Aiii^{r}, 71-72.) Though the barge conceit disappears after this speech, only fitfully referred to (when Greediness dies, he goes ‘with the Tyde boate straight into hell’; Giii^{r}, 1664), it is a powerful image of corruption running through the artery of the city. The Prologue opened with a meditation on such infiltration: just as the worm eats the timber where it was born, and the moth the clothes, ‘So many persons are a damage great, | To their own countrey, which hath them relieued’ (Aii^{r}, 5-6). We can contrast Courage’s barge with a much earlier interlude ship of fools, the farcical invasion force launched from France by Hickscorner, who was a cipher for Henry VIII’s would-be usurper Richard de la Pole.[506] Hickscorner’s ship, the *Envy* from London, sinks, in a topical parody of de la Pole’s abortive invasion of England in 1515. Wapull was writing for a

[505] Levin, ‘Notes’, 141.
[506] Manley brings Hickscorner and Courage together in *Literature and Culture*, 82, but without making this contrast.

London audience, with no evidence of *Hickscorner*'s likely noble patronage. His barge of sin is no alien incursion, safely repelled, but the rot allowed to grow unchecked within the heartland of England's prosperity.

The Thames enabled trade deep into England and out into the growing global and colonial market. The play will offer a picture of mercantile profit-seeking driven only by sinful motives: the sole merchant is called Greediness and dies in despair, and there is no positive onstage exemplar of the commercial life for balance. However, the Prologue is careful to cast the play's moral condemnations as an act of indignant civic pride:

> So many citties and townes are defamed,
> By reason that some inhabitauntes is ill:
> So that for ones facte, the whole towne is blamed,
> Although the residue to good doe their will. [Aii^r, 8-11.]

This claim for a virtuous majority is put under increasing strain as the play goes on – in fact it is exploded – but no other moral interlude makes such a clear sop to those 'inhabitauntes' who feel themselves innocent of its charges.

Courage is joined onstage by his fellows Hurtful Help, Painted Profit, and Feigned Furtherance – perhaps a deliberate allusion to Skelton's Counterfeit Countenance and Cloaked Collusion in *Magnificence*. A mixture of brokers, apprentices, and middlemen, they tell Courage that they have been thriving, 'For we doe alwayes take time while time is, | And where euer we goe like counsayle we giue.' (Aiii^v, 112-13.) They have found employment by dropping the incriminating half of their names, and are known to their masters, whom they will betray when their usefulness is up, merely as Help, Profit, and Furtherance. Furtherance is 'a Marchauntes man' ([A4]^r, 148), and his employer Greediness is Courage's friend.

When they have gone, Greediness (who calls himself Wealthiness) joins Courage onstage, his conscience smarting from a conversation he has just had in the street. This passage is worth quoting at length for its evocation of a play-world beyond the 'place':

> As I walked along, through by the streete,
> By such wayes as mine affayres did lie:
> It was my chaunce with a preacher to meete
> Whose company to haue I did not deny,
> And as we two together did walke,
> Amongest other communication we had,
> The Preacher brake out with reprocheable talke:
> Saying that we cittizens were all to bad,
> Some of vs he sayeth are greedy guttes all:

> And euell members of a common welth,
> He sayeth we care not whome we bring to thrall,
> Neyther haue we regard vnto our soules health,
> His talke I confesse my conscience did nip,
> Wherefore no longer I would him abide,
> But soddenly I gaue him the slip,
> And crossed the way to the other syde.
> So alone I let mayster Preacher walke,
> And here by chaunce I stombled in. [Bii^{r-v}, 280-99.]

If *Tide* was originally played inside a merchants' guildhall then the stumbling in of a sweating, guilty merchant from the street to avoid Christian criticism would have an obvious piquancy. However, the identity of 'here' is secondary to the evocation of an outside 'there' in which 'affayres' are transacted. Importantly, we never see this preacher in the play, and Greediness' affairs are kept private. They are not the litany of engagements with familiar trades and places in the audience's world which a vice would advertise as proof of his own ubiquity. Their entire exchange remains 'extra-mimetic' – the sort of offstage reportage which Lorna Hutson calls 'indispensable to the possibility of projecting or inferring a whole fictional world', and which she traces only through the mid-Tudor neoclassical tradition and expressly not the native personification tradition.[507] Though hardly a sustained or vivid *fabula*, the sense of shared citizenship, of larger civic stakes revealed through by-the-way interactions, is palpable.

Courage reassures the foolish merchant to ignore all that religious nonsense, and sends him on his way. Hurtful Help introduces Courage to No Good Neighbourhood, who goes by just Neighbourhood (Good Neighbourhood would sound like boasting; Biii^{v}, 380). He wants to buy a tenement owned by Greediness and evict its poor honest tenant. Courage introduces him to Furtherance to act as a broker with the merchant; Furtherance resolves to take bribes from both Neighbourhood and the current tenant.

Next is Painted Profit's employer, Willing to Win Worship, who enters 'Courtyer like' (Ci^{v}). The Prologue has already cautiously informed us that this character is not a satire on the royal Court per se: 'although that here a Courtyer is named, | Yet thereby is not ment the Courtyer alone', but rather anybody who is forced by overspending to take out a usurious loan (Aii^{v}, 36-37). However, the Courtier's situation is very specific to his class. He is a newly made gentleman who has come to Court because there is no honour and worship to be got in the countryside. Now courtiers must buy themselves finery for a great royal occasion,

[507] Lorna Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2015), 9, 12.

which is going to bankrupt him back to his country cottage. Courage acquaints the Courtier with Furtherance, who takes him off to find Greediness to take out a loan. However greedy the Courtier is, we should note how this usurious relationship powerfully underlines the 'interest', of a graver sort, which greed has in Greediness himself.

The merchant re-enters and tells Courage of his deal with No Good Neighbourhood over the tenement; he is delighted to hear of the Courtier's money worries, which he plans to exploit, and leaves with Painted Profit, who secures a bribe from him. Greediness' evicted 'Tenaunt Tormented' enters and gives a speech of lamentation at the conspiracy of the greedy rich which has now made his family homeless. He tells us he is looking around for 'Christianity, constant and iust':

> I doubte that in bondage he lyeth fast bound,
> Or else he is dead, and lyeth buryed in dust.
>
> But if he be liuing, to fynd him I trust[.] [Di[r], 762-65.]

He leaves, and Courage retakes the stage, still the dominant force in London.

Next to be tempted is the fourteen-year-old girl Wilful Wanton, who is pining hornily for marriage but is forbidden by her mother. She shows the caricature's typical lack of self-knowledge, complaining that her neighbours have nicknamed her unfairly: 'past grace, they say I am quight, | And a wilfull wanton, my name they doe wright' (Dii[r], 790-91). She of course lives up to this billing: Courage tells her to ignore her parents and to elope secretly, which is pushing at an open door: 'Well syr I will no longer tarry, | But some man out of hand will marry' (Diii[v], 856-57), and she hurries off. Though it is standard for a woman in a Tudor interlude to stand for carnal desire, this is the first time that the female personification has a biographical backstory and a sympathetic vulnerability to deception, rather than being a passive but conscious instrument in another's corruption like Abominable Living in *Lusty Juventus* or Lady Treasure in *The Trial of Treasure*.

The vices reconvene to gloat at the money they have made from the Courtier, who has lost most of his remaining savings by bribing all of them and now owes huge interest to Greediness. The merchant joins them on his way to have other debtors arrested out of the crowd at the Paul's Cross sermon. Next, Wilful Wanton – now called Wantonness – reappears with her new husband, Wastefulness. She persuades him to spend their money on pleasures today rather than saving it for tomorrow, a message which Courage and Hurtful Help are happy to second; they all leave cheerfully. A Sergeant enters with one of

Greediness' debtors, whom he has arrested at the sermon. The Debtor refuses to bribe him and is led off to the Counter.

One of the longest interlude stage directions follows: 'Christianity must enter with a sword, with a title of pollicy, but on the other syde of the tytle, must be written gods word, also a Shield, wheron must be written riches, but on the other syde of the Shield must be Fayth.' (Fii[v].) This is a deformation of the shield of faith and sword of God's Word described by St Paul (Ephesians 6:16-17). White notes that the vocabulary of this tableau makes Wapull's puritan credentials obvious.[508] A famous letter from the exiled puritan Anthony Gilby, circulated amongst militant London clergy in 1570, claimed that defenders of England's popish vestments and ceremonies defended the Queen's right to prescribe such matters on expedient grounds of 'policy': 'They say, that it is for pollicie, and I do easely beleue it, that they do care lesse for Christes Religion, than for pollicie […]. Thus cause you them to perishe by your pollicies, for whom Christ hath dyed.'[509] It is surely indicative of the side of this debate which dramatists tended to take that 'Policy' is the commonest vice's pseudonym in Reformation drama.[510]

Christianity tells us not to be shocked at his appearance: he has been mutated because 'the greater part vse greedines,' and

> As the greater parte will, thereto must I yeeld,
> Their cruell force I may not withstand:
> […]
> And still I say, as the greater parte sayeth,
> I am still a christian, and so shall remayne,
> My Christianity say they, no domage doth sustaine:
> But alas they are deceiued, their armoure is not sure[.] [Fii[v], 1348-61.]

As a figure for the faith, Christianity has been deformed not electively, by his own volition, but almost electorally, by the collective. Courage has called himself 'Corage contagious' (Aiii[r], 43), and the spiritual dangers of communal living are shown by the infectious spread of irreligion through the city, like a plague from man to man.

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[508] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 94.
[509] Printed in the puritan anthology *A parte of a register* (Middelburg, 1593), [B4][v].
[510] Policy is the alias of Division in *Albion Knight* and of the personification of Avarice/Covetous in *Respublica* and *Enough is as Good*; it is also commonly used for the Vice, Politic Persuasion, in *Patient and Meek Grissell*.

Christianity is joined onstage by another man, a Londoner whose identity we are not immediately told. This man initially does not see Christianity but makes his own complaint speech:

> Alas I lament to heare the report,
> Which of vs cittizens in euery place is spread:
> It is not long synce I came from the court,
> Where I would haue bene glad to haue hid my head.
> With the spoyle of the symple, there they say [we are] fed,[511]
> So that for the couetous greedines, which some cittizens vse,
> A shamefull ill reporte to the whole ensues. [Fiii^{r}, 1370-76.]

The royal Court is pictured here as a haven from urban vice – though the willingness of the play's Courtier to muddy his hands with the moneylenders suggests the *cordon sanitaire* is a holey one. This honest burgher's speech is a reprise of the Prologue's theme, but there is no attempt to triangulate his picture of 'some' greedy citizens with Christianity's 'greater part'. The tension is brought to the surface when he greets Christianity and is recognised: 'you are faythfull few imbraser of verity.' (Fiii^{r}, 1394.) Nothing could better reveal the tension between an optimistic civic solidarity and a knowledge of the scope of human wickedness than having a character called Faithful Few speak for 'the whole' against the crimes of a supposed minority. Faithful Few tries to 'turn the titles', to reverse Christianity's sword and shield so that Faith and God's Word are again outward – but to no avail, '[f]or as you faythfull, in number are few, | So the power is but small […] [t]o resist the greedy great ones, who are agaynst you.' (Fiii^{r-v}, 1408-10.) Courage and Greediness now enter, and Faithful Few accuses them of forcing the 'Armour of Sathan' onto Christianity ([F4]^{r}, 1458); they have a bad-tempered debate about their selfish love of money, and the vicious men leave defiantly. Christianity prays 'that my reformation be not long delayd', and they leave to await God's help (Gi^{r}, 1537).

There follows a self-contained scene in which Wastefulness, now poverty-stricken, is tempted to suicide by Despair, 'in some ougly shape', but is prevented by Faithful Few, who leads him in a prayer to God to give him strength. He converts to godliness, 'to be a new man' (Gii^{v}, 1730). This is a rare cameo of a moral conversion in a genre increasingly dominated by unchanging moral types. The young man leaves to reform Wantonness too.

Faithful Few departs to seek a figure who has so far been conspicuously missing from the onstage city:

[511] The quarto reads 'say were fed'; Schell and Schuchter emend to 'say we were fed', but the present tense makes more sense.

I marueile where Authority is,
Who should see a helpe for the simple oppressed:
Many thinges that are greatly amisse,
Which by his meanes must needes be redressed.
His absence greatly disquieteth my minde[.] [Gii^{v}, 1647-51.]

Courage now enters weeping: his friend Greediness has gone mad with despair, died, and gone ‘with the Tyde boat straight into hell.’ (Giii^{r}, 1664.) As he is debating with himself whether greediness can ever die so long as the world lasts (discussed in the last chapter), Faithful Few re-enters with Authority. Authority is not described, but he speaks for civic justice and order in a tone reminiscent of Gascoigne’s Margrave Severus:

Iuuenall sayeth, Citties are well gouerned,
Whereas such rebelles are no[t] suffered to liue,
But after their desertes, are iustly punished. [Giii^{v}, 1702-4.]

The end comes speedily. Correction enters and lays hold of Courage, who is neither able to break free nor persuade any henpecked husbands among the spectators to face death in his place. He is led off to prison to await execution. Faithful Few praises such ‘good and godly lawes’, by which Christianity shall be ‘burnished’ (Giiii^{r}, 1731-32.)

A very significant tableau now unfolds. Authority announces that he is ‘able Christianities estate to reforme’, not by his own might but ‘by this sword of Gods power, which to vs is lent’ (1734, 1761) – the typical metaphor for government by the secular magistrate. Christianity enters in his abused armour. Authority now makes a show of delegating his reformative authority to the representative of true godliness, not political status:

as freely as this power vnto vs is lent,
Here we now by force of the same:
To thee faytfull few do here condiscent,
That thou Christianities estate shalt frame. [1761-64.]

Faithful Few accepts this ‘duty’ and turns the sword and shield around, permanently this time. Christianity thanks God for restoring him to his ‘former estate’, and the play ends with his prayer that ‘all Christians may me duly imbrase’ (Giiii^{v}, 1777). It is one of the only plays of the era to omit the spectators – and the Queen – from its prayer.

Tide is a fascinating record of the moral interlude in transition. Prototypes of three characters described by Jean E. Howard as typical of city comedy are present: the ‘grasping merchant’ in Greediness; the ‘feckless gentleman’ in the Courtier; and, arguably, the ‘urban wife’ in Wantonness.[512] Its plot of double-dealing, profiteering, elopement, and one-upmanship is not told through sequential cameos but intertwined, in anticipation of later narrative intricacy. On a deeper level, the play contains the underlying tension between ‘commerce and celebration’ which Susan Wells describes as characteristic of the genre: the moralist’s drive to deflate civic pride combined with the citizen’s involvement in a communal identity.[513] The conclusion designedly makes a separation of city, church, and nation impossible.

However, as well as anticipating later developments of the *locus* of stage comedy, *Tide* is of its time – politically, as I will discuss, but also generically. Its vices, virtues, and fools amount to an epitome of developments we have seen in the Protestant interlude to date, and are worth pausing over.

The narrative dominance of vice and victim, increasingly characteristic after Bale and Wever, is nowhere clearer than here: no godly personification appears until 1400 lines into an 1800-line play. (The only moralizing figures before this, the evicted Tenant and the arrested Debtor, are financially implicated in what Paster calls the ‘urban game’, and lament as disaffected stakeholders.) Courage is the bravura example of what Alan C. Dessen has called the public Vice.[514] A true successor of Bale’s Infidelity, Courage is in the acting space almost continuously, doubled only with the antithetical bit-part of the Debtor, and has been cited in the history of the soliloquy for his many solo addresses to the audience.[515] Robert Weimann has used him as his main case-study of the Vice’s carnivalesque word-games.[516] In my terms, he is the central catalyst, working to promote headstrong ‘courage’ or unscrupulousness in others. He is selfish, of course, but he is also self-conscious. Hurtful Help and the other brokers show the distinctive self-mastery of the conspiratorial vice by adopting revised names. However, this gang of brokers inhabit a grey area in which the awareness of a ‘true’ personification, such as Courage, starts to become indistinguishable from the mere cynicism of so many later stage double-dealers.

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[512] Howard, ‘London’, 34.
[513] Wells, ‘Jacobean city comedy’, 38.
[514] Alan C. Dessen, *Jonson’s Moral Comedy* (Evanston, IL, 1971).
[515] Bernard Beckerman, ‘Playing the crowd: Structure and soliloquy in *Tide Tarrieth No Man*’, in J. C. Gray (ed.), *Mirror Up to Shakespeare* (Toronto, 1984), 128-37.
[516] Robert Weimann, ‘“Moralize two meanings” in one play: Divided authority on the morality stage’, *Mediaevalia* 18 (1995), 427-50.

Courage's friend and chief victim Greediness, as we have seen, is simply a caricature of a greedy merchant. His desire to be called Wealthiness reflects a foolish aversion to a nature he lacks the will to control. Wantonness shows the same self-deception when she complains that her neighbours have nicknamed her unjustly. She and her husband Wastefulness represent primarily their own vices; their names are just a descriptive caption, no less than the courtier's, Willing-to-Win-Worship. Only in marriage do they acquire an element of catalysis, blindly abetting one another's worst instincts just as Lust unknowingly represented the lustfulness of the Just in *The Trial of Treasure*. No device better reflects the turning-inward of personification drama toward purely lateral relations than marriage, the husband and wife having their 'interest' only in one another.

The play contains a rare instance in drama of a fool receiving the grace to convert. Wastefulness is driven almost to suicide, but Faithful Few averts it, and we are led to believe Wantonness too will be redeemed by her husband's persuasion. However, like Jonson's fools after their dishumourings, we are not shown what the 'new' models actually look like: now that they have broken out of the sinful names which defined them, Wastefulness and Wantonness are never heard from again.

The virtues – those entirely outside the 'urban game' – are the most indicative of Protestant change to the morality convention. Faithful Few is not technically a personification at all, but a private citizen. He is an 'isotype', as Everyman or Humanity had been, one member of a collective standing for that collective.[517] Wastefulness undergoes something like an everyman's trajectory in his own miniature subplot, from prodigal spendthrift to godly convert. However, nothing epitomises the new disinterest we feel as observers of such a conversion than the agency of 'Faithful Few' to bring it about. We can see this by comparison with *Magnificence*. Wapull probably remembered the eleventh-hour rescue of Skelton's king, who is similarly delivered from a personified Despair inciting him to suicide by knife or rope. The gracious intervenor who saves Magnificence, however, is an infused moral virtue, Good Hope, who snatches away the proffered knife. Good Hope is one of the three theological virtues and introduces himself to the despairing king as the 'remedie principall' against the 'ghostly foe'.[518] He belongs to the penitential system of remedial opposites, of the soul self-purged of vice by its curative virtue. The interaction of these figures in the playing space reveals how the soul may be cleansed by an infusion of hope.

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[517] James Paxson's term from *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge, 1994); see introduction.

[518] *Magnificence*, Giii^{v}, 2329-30.

Wastefulness' conversion is vitally different: he is simply led in a prayer for grace by another, godlier citizen, and we must conclude simply from externals of his behaviour that he is granted it. It teaches us nothing about a potential in the nature of 'every man' to see that *this* man has proved to be one of the 'faithful few'.

My account differs from Andrew Escobedo's, who has compared the two near-suicides in terms of the Protestant understanding of man's will. He claims that Wastefulness 'perceives despair and contrition as two competing desires within him, one of which might become his will'. However, without grace '[t]his perception does not grant him the power to choose his will – he still has to wait for Faithfulness' in order to 'will the repentance that he wanted.'[519] However, Escobedo elides a vital distinction: he renames Faithful Few 'Faithfulness', and thereby remakes him as the personified moral virtue he is not. I have argued that the tendency in Protestant drama is to de-personify the moment of justification, and Wapull does not personify it at all here, as Skelton had, but keeps the agency of grace itself invisible and essentially mysterious.

Faithful Few is flanked by two personifications who belong on opposite ends of the spectrum of alienated virtue: Christianity and Authority. Both figures spend most of the play troublingly absent, though for different reasons. Christianity, whose armour of God's Word and Faith has been deformed into Policy and Riches, is the clearest case since Bale's *Three Laws* of a vicariously corrupted virtue. Bale's Laws are heaven-sent figures who, though by definition blameless, are lamed or infected with leprosy to reflect mankind's infidelity, not their own. At the end of *Three Laws*, Deus Pater strikes Infidelity to Hell and sends Christian Faith to earth. Wapull's Christianity is one sense the discontented sequel to this latter figure, who has had crimes visited upon him in turn.

Authority and Correction meanwhile are limited, worldly figures: as much an individual magistrate and a jailer-executioner as Greediness is a merchant. Dessen has described Correction, who arrests Courage, as 'a heavenly version of that corrupt sergeant' who earlier arrested the Debtor – who, as Dessen notes, was played by the same actor as Courage, and may visually have brought out the symmetry.[520] However, it is not clear that heavenliness is Wapull's intended connotation here. When the Tenant laments that Christianity is nowhere to be found in the city, he worries that he lies 'in bondage […] [o]r else he is dead' (Di^{r}, 762-63): because this figure of the true religion cannot in himself be

[519] Andrew Escobedo, *Volition's Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017), 120.
[520] Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977), 22.

bad, he can only have been suppressed if evil is flourishing. The same could never be true of mere political power, and there is an unconcealed note of accusation when Faithful Few remarks that Authority's 'absence greatly disquieteth my minde', when there are so many abuses requiring his attention (Gii^{v}, 1651). There is an implication of unheavenly negligence – of political control without *moral* authority – in a Correction so long absent without leave.

Wapull's doubts about the secular magistrate have a specific valence in the debates of the 1570s, but Authority and Correction belong to a broader story about the descent of personified Justice in mid-Tudor drama: from an absolute moral virtue, an infallible quality of the divine, to a faculty directed toward temporary, secular ends, and corruptible by human partiality and limitation. Rosamund Tuve notes that Justice is the virtue 'most caught up in double entendres' throughout its history, and the slippage between blindfolded, sword-wielding Justice and the county JP is perhaps the bathetic result of this inbuilt pun.[521] Pat McCune has listed the proliferation of purely juridical characters in Protestant interludes who deal with vice no longer by penitential methods of redress but by legal mechanisms of retribution: Trial, Proof, and Execution in *Cambises*; 'Judge' Severity in *Like Will to Like*; Judge Daniel in *Nice Wanton*; the Judge in *Liberality and Prodigality* and *Virtuous and Godly Susanna*.[522] Such figures can sometimes err: Master Justice in William Turner's Edwardian dialogue *The Examination of the Mass* threatens at one point to have the Protestant Freemouth arraigned for contravening the hated Act of Six Articles. One scholar has provocatively described 'the evolution of Justice from a theological abstraction to a civil servant' in sixteenth-century drama.[523]

The intimation of Authority's fallibility is essential to the final tableau. We remember that Bale's plays pare human history back to the fundamental forces shaping it, so that God intervenes *in propria persona* at the end of *Three Laws* to resolve the crisis of human faith Himself. Wapull inverts this to picture the providential process of reformation from ground-level, and asks what role human institutions will play as God's instruments in such a project. He implies that the merely temporal organs of the commonwealth are not adequate to it. The representative of the secular judiciary delegates the authority for proper religious reformation – which, as Christianity has not *himself* erred, can only be achieved by policing the

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[521] Rosamund Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), 66.
[522] McCune, 'Order and justice', 180.
[523] J. Wilson McCutchan, 'Justice and Equity in the English morality play', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958), 409.

community – to the representative of the faithful. He implies that the highest government ought to be left to those qualified by faith, not by office.

Wapull's coded expression of mid-Elizabethan militant Protestant ideas and his anticipation of key characteristics of Jacobean city satire go together. By conjuring the Vice's web of messy self-seeking, and then dispelling it, we find what Paster does in the resolutions of Jacobean comedy, order imposed by the playwright onto the mess of urban life. Here, however, the realised order amounts to a political recommendation – one which I would argue is not utopian but Genevan.

The Comedy of Discipline

Christianity is reformed by the imposition of discipline upon the city, which is achieved judicially by a power-sharing coalition of the secular magistrate and the godliest of the citizens – hardly an unheard-of urban project in Protestant Europe. When Faithful Few says 'We shalbe a ioy to ech godly nation, | When Christianity is deliuered from thrall' (Giiii[r], 1751-52), it is not hard to identify these foreign observers as the international Reformed community, in which the puritans felt England to be the sorest thumb and Geneva the shining light.

White suggests that Wapull's proverbial title 'echoes contemporary puritan jargon of not "tarrying for the magistrate" indefinitely in exercising ecclesiastical reform'.[524] This phrase, especially associated with Robert Browne's *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any* (1582), was a denial of the Royal Supremacy, implying that the Church should have the power to self-reform without needing permission from the secular ruler. But, vitally, Faithful Few *does* tarry for the magistrate. It is only once Authority, who rules from God, has formally delegated the reformative office to him that Faithful Few can turn the titles and they stay turned. The sword of Policy becomes God's Word again, but this is not a repudiation of secular politics so much as its rightful subordination to the faith.

This is Calvinism in a guise less familiar to critics of early modern drama, the communitarian Calvin of Book IV of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* on external government, rather than Book III on the internal workings of grace in the unmerited salvation of every individual. Book IV, with its blueprint for a presbyterian rather than episcopal

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[524] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 94.

church government, contained the real bones of contention between Elizabethan conformists and dissenters, far more than any 'Calvinist' doctrine of salvation, on which even the archest separatists admitted the Church of England was orthodox. At the end of the book, Calvin is careful to spell out that Christians owe their obedience to whoever is in power, as Christ taught when he rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's. However, the Genevan was clear what form of government he thought best: aristocracy, government by collaboration between the best men. Human sinfulness was such that democracy or monarchy risked becoming mob rule or tyranny, respectively; only those promoted for conspicuous merit, and 'assisting, instructing, and admonishing one another', could guarantee stability.[525] He uses the clerical term 'minister' for the secular magistrate, an office he calls 'this holy ministry'.[526]

In the near future lay one extreme consequence of an emphasis on the fewness of the faithful: separatism, unilateral withdrawal of the godly from the godless Church of the majority. As Browne, the man who gave his name to Elizabethan separatism, put it in 1581, 'the kingdom of God was not to be begun by whole parishes but rather of the worthiest, were they never so few.'[527] The invisible church of God's elect – the 'few' who will be chosen (Matthew 22:14) – was capable of sublunary realisation in the messy patchwork of this world. Wapull is careful to avert any such implication here. However, the metaphorical alliance of Authority and Faithful Few maps onto a Calvinist system of government in which the authority to reform the Church is possessed ultimately by an aristocracy of the godly.

Writing against Whitgift during the *Admonition* controversy, the exiled Cartwright reached for the edificatory metaphor of a house to describe the relation of 'good men' to the commonwealth: 'Seeing that good men, that is to say the church, are as it were the foundation of the world, it is meet that the commonwealth which is builded upon that foundation should be framed according to the church'.[528] In one swoop the church is exclusively identified with the faithful and society is declared to be best patterned after the church. The political ruptures of his lifetime had opened the possibility that both church and state might be fully reimagined in line with God's purposes, so, writing from continental exile to question the Royal Supremacy, Cartwright returned to first principles. Using the metaphor of 'framing' – designing or disciplining, but also literally constructing from beams – he argued that to frame

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[525] *Institutes* IV.xx.8, in Höpfl (ed.), *Luther and Calvin*, 57-58.
[526] *Institutes* IV.xx.7 (also 12, 17, 19, 22, 25); discussed in Höpfl (ed.), *Luther and Calvin*, 55.
[527] Quoted in Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 204.
[528] *Reply to an answer made of M. Doctor Whitgift* (1573), quoted in Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church* (London, 1969), 164.

the Church according to the commonwealth were ‘as if a man should fashion his house according to his hangings, when as indeed it is clean contrary, that, as the hangings are made fit for the house, so the commonwealth must be made to agree with the church, and the government thereof with her government.’ The Church is not a building within, though independent from, the kingdom; rather, it contains and subordinates the kingdom. Cartwright dismisses objections to this using a word we have already encountered: ‘those voices ought not to be heard, “This order will not agree with our commonwealth; […] this form of government will not match with the policy of this realm”.’[529] This is the puritan buzzword ‘policy’ again. In the notorious lectures at Cambridge in 1570 which prompted his exile, Cartwright had made the first sustained call for the abolition of the English bishops in favour of a presbyterian system – but statements such as the one quoted show the extent to which his political puritanism was in tension with the existence of a monarch at all.[530]

Disciplinarian writers were clear that God’s kingdom extended only to that minority who are elect, and wrote freely in terms of uprooting and purging the reprobate remainder wherever they make themselves known. The *Admonition*’s chief call was for excommunication to be used as a form of public punishment for immorality – the power of the Genevan Consistory. Such public discipline, wrote Field and Wilcox, ‘would be very necessary and profytable for the building vp of Gods house. The final end of this discipline, is the reforming of the disordered, *and* to bring them to repenta*n*ce, and to bridle such as wold offend.’[531] For Travers, ‘where yt is prophesied that in the kingdome off Christe […] the gentiles shalbe shutte out off the citie off god’, this is ‘to be referred also to his Kingdome in this life […] That men off vicious lyfe and geuen to all sinne and wickednes / are to be cast out and banyshed from the churche’ (Bii[r]). Making no distinction between societal morals and the conduct of worship, these writers all pictured edification as a proactive process of limitation, excision, and exclusion.

Tide is similarly trying to square – or rather, asserting the importance of trying to square – the ‘true’ church of the faithful and the everyday community. Like the criminals in Gascoigne’s Geneva and Antwerp, Wapull’s incorrigible Courage is removed from the population (a resolution whose likely impossibility is, for the obvious rhetorical reasons, not underlined as it usually is with Vice’s executions). The play depicts a perfected reformation

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[529] Cross, *Royal Supremacy*, 164.

[530] Though Cartwright himself eventually conformed to the Elizabethan Settlement in the 1580s, the innate presbyterian tension with monarchy was to have far-reaching consequences in the next century.

[531] *An admonition to the parliament* ([Hemel Hempstead, 1572]), [A6][r].

of English Christianity as easily within reach, if a deceptively simple constellation of forces were only permitted, between secular authority and the elect. However, by 1576 it had become obvious from the debate set off by Cartwright and Field and Wilcox that this alignment, its achievability or desirability, was a fundamental divider between the established Church and its opponents – an iceberg, as it were, of which the legitimacy of bishops was the acrimonious tip, and toward which Wapull subtly steers.

White goes so far as to interpret Faithful Few as an allusion to 'Cartwright and his followers', principled puritans losing their livings under greedy conformist bishops.[532] However, such a precise valence for Faithful Few would reduce Wapull's intricately realised picture of the relation between urban citizenship and religious duty into an allegory for a different situation altogether, rather like the patently double-meant husbandmen of *The Shepheardes Calender*, published three years later. Spenser has of course long been understood as the major poetic responder to the church debates of the 1570s.[533] However, the precedent of Virgil, and the good and bad shepherds of Scripture, gave the Renaissance pastoral an unusually overdetermined potential for political innuendo, and I would resist the reductive idea that *Tide* is as little 'about' London as the *Calender* is 'about' livestock. Because of its disciplinary advantage over the messy nation-state, the bounded city allows a self-sufficient Christian government to be imagined.

What is the relation of Faithful Few's Christian commonwealth to the Queen of England? The play's litany of urban abuses takes place practically on the doorstep of the Palace of Whitehall in Westminster. However, 'the Prince' (a gender-neutral term which stops just short of specifying that the ruler is not a King) remains a passive offstage presence throughout. Authority is not a royal figure but something perhaps closer to a justice of the peace, or even a mayor. Both Faithful Few and the venal Courtier, Willing to Win Worship, have been recently at Court – presumably Whitehall. Faithful Few's costume might have made his business at Court clearer by showing us his estate, but the text gives us no clues. All the talk there, he tells us, was disapproval at his fellow citizens' greed, implying that Westminster's independence of the City of London allows the Court an almost Olympian elevation above the rat race, and moral inoculation against it. Lawrence Manley has observed that the centre of English royal power was in the capital city but not of it: 'Even while

[532] White, *Theatre and Reformation*, 94.
[533] There has long been a debate about the relation of the *Calender* to contemporary puritanism. A judicious account of a moderate puritan-sympathising Spenser is given in Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 53-80.

London grew, the city's most important institution, the court, remained peripatetic.'[534] In this case, however, the Court's semi-detachment from London serves a more important purpose: it keeps the sovereign where Wapull needs her, in carefully undefined relation to the urban reformation we witness. Neither criticised for her absence, as Authority is, nor invited to play a role in the solution, the Prince is respectfully displaced from the political centre to a remote and ceremonial eminence.

I would argue that the absence of the Prince from the closing tableau is the more ironic because its static but visually iconic central motif, Christianity's sword and shield with their written 'titles' of God's Word and Faith, seems to have walked straight in out of a coronation pageant. Interlude personifications did not usually dress with such emblematic combinations of image and text, and there is no counterpart in earlier plays to the labels written on Christianity's sword and shield. As Meg Twycross has established, however, such emblematic 'speaking images' were a prominent part of pageantry, in which captioned paintings and sculptures often took their place alongside the actors at key points along the processional route, and speakers were easily identifiable by symbolic props.[535] When the Earl of Leicester accompanied the Duke of Anjou on his triumphal entry to Antwerp in February 1582, for example, they were greeted by a Chariot of Alliance, one of whose riders was the maiden Religion holding 'a swoorde: named *Gods word*'.[536] The victory of the faith and of loyal citizenship were a common subject for royal entries. Processing to her coronation in January 1559, at the Conduit on Cornhill, Elizabeth was shown a throne flanked by True Religion treading Superstition and Ignorance underfoot, Love of Subjects trampling Rebellion, and Justice bringing Adulation and Bribery to heel (each mute figure, according to the official account, 'aptelie and properlie apparelled, so that his apparell and name did agre', typical of the triumph tradition).[537] As in later Jacobean masques, anchored in the watching monarch, the royal personage is the symbolic centre.

The absence of a figure of royalty from *Tide*'s reformation of Christianity shows that its imagined victory of religion over disorder is achieved only by eliding the realities of the English situation. The ceremonial admission of the monarch to the city – Lady Norwich welcoming Elizabeth to the city in 1578; a boy giving the keys of Edinburgh to James VI in

[534] Manley, *Literature and Culture*, 15.
[535] Meg Twycross, 'The ladies of Bohemia and the party friar: An allegorical cast list from the early Tudor revels', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 56 (2012), 400.
[536] *John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Elizabeth Goldring et al, 3 vols (Oxford, 2014), 3.128.
[537] Wiggins 311, pageant 2; the account is quoted in David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558-1642* (Tempe, AZ, 2003), 23.

1579; the maid Antwerp, holding her daughter Knowledge of God, giving Anjou the keys in 1582 – was the defining acknowledgement of the monarch's dominion over citizens and subjects, and his or her consonance with the faith of the whole people.[538] In 1559 the reformation of True Religion was symbolically accredited by the citizens of London to Elizabeth, and Knowledge of God would participate in giving Anjou the keys to Antwerp. In *Tide*, the direction is reversed, and power in correcting Christianity is passed from temporal Authority to the citizen Faithful Few. Quietly and without overt subversion, the city delegates to itself.

It was thanks to Wapull's Protestant reformism, not in spite of it, that he pioneered city comedy thirty years early, and it is thanks to the speaking names of personification that we can 'read' the philosophy which he used the city to articulate. However, where the purifying piety of John Bale in the 1530s had driven him to urgent enthusiasm for the new Royal Supremacy, puritan city comedy arose after more than three decades of the Supremacy as a rebuke to its consequences, the opportunities not seized or abuses suffered to get worse. In the 1570s, in response to those men who carried such a protest furthest, into open disobedience, Elizabeth hardened her position. The situation had changed by the time that Robert Wilson wrote his plays for the Theatre in the 1580s. The two *Three Ladies* plays allow us to see reformist city comedy changed by new political and theatrical circumstances, reflective of a new location of the stage in London as well as London as a new *locus* on the stage. Writing for a public medium increasingly attacked by religious reformists, but with a message increasingly mistrusted by political conformists, Wilson tempers his satire with a new tone of irony and even parody, ludic and perhaps defensive. To move from Faithful Few to Wilson's Judge Nemo – that is, nobody at all – is to question whether the morality tradition ever did make the transition to the public stage.

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[538] The Norwich pageant is Wiggins 637; Edinburgh, Wiggins 675.

Chapter 5
Robert Wilson:
Personification in the 'Second Reformation'

Unlike Wapull or the other urban satirists so far considered, Robert Wilson is known to have made his living through playing.[539] He had been a member of the Earl of Leicester's Men since at least the granting of their royal patent in 1574, and was in Leicester's retinue when the Earl toured the liberated Low Countries as their new Governor General in 1586. *The Three Ladies of London* was apparently performed in 1581.[540] If it is indeed a Leicester's Men play, it would be the only surviving play from that famous company's repertory. Playing companies with noble patronage had begun to spend periods of residence at new purpose-built venues in the suburbs beside the City walls: the Theatre in 1576 and the Curtain probably the next year, which, along with the Paul's and Blackfriars indoor theatres from 1575-76, augmented the circuit of the major inns which had already operated for at least a decade; they would be joined in 1587 by the Rose. The titlepage of the first edition of *Three Ladies* in 1584 advertises it 'as it hath been publiquely played': a milestone, the first surviving playbook to advertise performance beyond Court or coterie, to a fee-paying audience of all comers. (None would again until *Tamburlaine* in 1590.)[541] This is usually presumed to be at the Theatre. Stephen Gosson recalled the play's public success in *Plays Confuted* (1582) – though the scene he describes, in which Ladies Love and Conscience voice their views on stage plays, leaves no trace in the printed text.

Wilson was one of those absorbed into the Queen's Men upon its founding in 1583, for whom he wrote *The Three Lords and Three Ladies* to celebrate the defeat of the Armada. It also contains a speech of tribute to the company's comedian Richard Tarleton, who died in September, a few weeks after the victory. Wilson is one of few craftsmen known to have straddled the pre-playhouse morals and the commercial stage: he collaborated on several further plays after the dispersal of the Queen's Men, including Protestant tub-thumpers such as *Sir John Oldcastle* in 1599, which Michael O'Connell speculates might have been

[539] My survey of Wilson's career is owed to Laurie Johnson, *Leicester's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge, 2023), and Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge, 1998).

[540] The date rests on Simony's recollection that the tax for the Pope (last levied in England in 1554-55) was paid '[n]ot muche more then 26. yeares' earlier (*Three Ladies*, Bii^{r}, 347).

[541] My count, from *DEEP*.

Henslowe's attempt to conciliate a puritan-leaning audience in the capital.[542] He is likely to be the player of that name who died in 1600.

Despite many characters in common, the differences between *Three Ladies* and *Three Lords* are so marked that they would make for a separate study. The first play is written in couplets unprecedented for their doggerel flexibility, like a Tudor Ogden Nash ('Thou haue honestie now? thy honestie is quite gone: | Mary thou hadst honestie at xi. of the clock, and went from thee at noone'; Ciiii^{v}, 988-89). This eccentricity has vanished in *Three Lords*, which is written only in the blank verse and prose fast becoming the dramatic standard. Helen Ostovich has shown the 27 roles of *Three Ladies* to be carefully doubled for eight actors.[543] This includes the unique division of one of the title characters between two: the boys playing Ladies Lucre and Conscience are each instructed to take the much smaller part of Lady Love at different times. Ostovich argues that this designed the play to be acted simultaneously in London and on provincial tour, for which Leicester's Men would divide into two small troupes. *Three Lords* makes no such economy, needing a minimum of 15 actors for its 34 parts – the largest demand by any personification play since *The Castle of Perseverance*.[544]

Indeed, *Three Lords* seems unusually untourable: it is the only surviving Queen's Men play to specify a piece of playhouse architecture, namely a pillar to which Simplicity must be tied blindfold.[545] Likewise, the tribute to Tarleton is clearly calibrated to a returning theatrical public. Framing the victory of 1588 as a triumph for the capital city specifically – who even appears personified as a richly dressed woman to speak the prologue – the play is *for* London as well as about it.

Thus, the first *Three Ladies* is the only small-troupe interlude in the personification tradition of virtues and vices securely datable to after 1580. The falling-off correlates with what Patrick Collinson has famously described as a 'second reformation' in England around this point, in which the energies of religious reformers became directed against many of the artistic media they had once tolerated or even employed.[546] London's new playhouses were perhaps the most conspicuous target. The addition to the touring companies' circuit of prolonged stays at what Peter Womack aptly calls 'an enclosure' – more like a bearpit than a

[542] Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye* (Oxford, 2000), 113.
[543] Helen Ostovich, 'Doubling Love', conference paper at '*The Three Ladies of London* in Context' at McMaster University in 2015, available online at threeladiesoflondon.mcmaster.ca. I cite these papers as 'McMaster 2015'.
[544] Calculated in McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, 189.
[545] McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, 139.
[546] Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia* (Reading, 1986).

banqueting hall or market square – had the predictable consequences which always made the city authorities wary of large pent-up crowds: risk of plague infection, stampede, fire, and structural collapse; high rates of pickpocketing, prostitution, and rowdy disorder.[547] At least as much as anything on the stage, it was the perception of the playhouse enclosures as purpose-built paddocks to shelter vice which provoked the many attempts by the Mayor and Common Council to restrict the companies' activities, and spurred the famous generation of antitheatrical writers after 1580, professedly fearful that the institutions would earn London God's wrath.[548] Though the 'puritan' credentials of a jobbing moralist like Philip Stubbes have been soundly questioned, the animus against the new stages was an uncoincidental part of Collinson's 'iconophobic' shift in militant Protestantism to intensified mistrust of art and artifice.[549] Combined with the slow attrition of the biblical pageants in provincial cities in the 1560s and 1570s – whose last major example, in Coventry, was never revived after 1579 – the picture is of a newly hostile and policed accord between urban theatre and Protestant authority.

Certainly, it is a stark difference from the era of Bale or the Wagers that no clergyman is known to have written for the purpose-built theatres to advance the Protestant message. Jeffrey Knapp has calculated that more ordained playwrights are attested in the second half-century after the split with Rome (1583-1632) than in the first (1533-82); he argues from this that clerics ceased to *print* their plays, rather than to write them in the first place.[550] Knapp is probably right about this, but for my purposes it is much more important that most of the large number he counts were writing for students at the universities – more than half at Christ Church, Oxford, alone – and many of their plays were written in Latin. Reformers from within the Church of England had once written demotic propaganda, intended, as the vicar Lewis Wager records in his prologue to *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene*, to be played both at the universities and also for fee-paying audiences in the provinces.[551] By the 1580s they seem no longer to have accommodated their message in this way to the pragmatic rhetorical and dramaturgical demands of any known commercial troupes.

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[547] Peter Womack, *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1986), 33.

[548] For example, the earthquake on 6 April 1580 which coincided with performances at the Theatre and the Curtain was seized on as evidence of God's displeasure with the playhouses by Abraham Fleming, Philip Stubbes, and other moralists; see Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 133-35.

[549] Collinson himself debunks Stubbes's puritanism in 'Elizabethan and Jacobean puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), 57.

[550] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago, 2002), 3.

[551] See the first part of my introduction.

The decline of the Protestant didactic interlude belongs to the less-told flipside to this 'second Reformation' – not the Protestant iconoclast opposition to an 'unreformed' stage, but the mounting pressure against openly reformist theatre, which made the dramatic profession eventually inhospitable to one of its liveliest purposes since Bale, that of drumming up the discontented appetite for further progress.

The reaction against the presbyterian opponents of the Royal Supremacy in the early 1570s, which we saw in the last chapter, became more stringent. In 1577, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal, was suspended for refusing the Queen's demand to suppress the parish 'prophesyings', grassroots biblical discussion groups involving the laity. Grindal remained in disgrace until his death in 1583. His successor was Cartwright's adversary Whitgift, whose first major act was a campaign of deprivation of puritan preachers. Since the mid-1570s, a new generation of bishops appointed for their loyalism was similarly clamping down on prophesyings and nonconformists in their dioceses. The result, as Collinson describes, was 'a rift between the episcopate and the Protestant nobility and gentry', and the latter's defiant patronage actually increased the political strength and unity of the puritan movement as a result.[552] In 1581 – the year that his playing company acted *Three Ladies* at the Theatre – Leicester secured the *Admonition*-writer John Field a London lectureship, and Walter Travers became chaplain to Lord Burghley. Even Cartwright returned to England in 1585 to the mastership of Leicester's hospital in Warwick. The Parliament which sat in 1584-85 had the largest puritan contingent in the Commons to date.[553] The decade after 1576 for England's disciplinarians was thus one of mounting frustration balanced by growing consolidation and promise. Historians are agreed that this nascent puritan mainstream began to founder once their key motions failed yet again to pass in the 1586-87 Parliament, and that the decisive setbacks came the following year. Field died at the start of 1588; the great reformist patron Leicester in September; and in the intervening summer the defeat of the Spanish Armada gave Elizabeth's status quo an apparently godsent boost in popular confidence. The assault by Martin Marprelate throughout the following year was a rearguard action in recognition of lost ground. In a sign of the changed times, the ageing William Wager himself had served as a press censor in 1589, two years before his death.[554] *Three Lords* may have been in the repertory when the Theatre was also playing host to anti-Marprelate plays.[555]

[552] Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 201.
[553] Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London, 1967), 240-41.
[554] See Mark Eccles, 'William Wager and his plays', *ELN* 18 (1981), 258-62.
[555] For satires against Marprelate in 1588-89, see Wiggins 830.

The stage was set for theatrical satire to become the enemy, rather than the organ, of Calvinist calls for moral renewal. The social reformists became hostile to the new venues and mistrustful of the Christian honesty of playing at the same time that the government was becoming intolerant of too-vocal reformists as disloyal subjects – sufferers of the malignant, republican 'Geneua humor'. The urban puritan emerges after Marprelate as a stock character, the industrious killjoy who declaims ghostly religiose nonsense.[556] It is disconcerting to turn to these from the Protestant personification tradition to find that their expostulations against others, couched in terms of unmerited grace, election, and the Spirit, are those which for decades had badged the sincerity of a Heavenly Man, rather than the hypocrisy of a bigot. The idea that the puritans wrote the comedies had already come to sound like a punchline rather than a possibility.

As Steven Mullaney has said, '[p]lays came to be rehearsed before the Master of Revels not because they were plays' – such a requirement had not been mandated before the playhouses – 'but because they attained a prominence that made them potentially dangerous'.[557] Perhaps only a dozen years separates *Three Lords* from *Tide*, but Wilson, unlike Wapull, wrote for an institutionalised theatre, with new rules. Estranged from the clergy; playing for the Queen but answerable to public taste; and protected by the greatest statesmen but vulnerable to the hostility of the Common Council which came with publicity, the playing companies by the late 1580s had to compromise with a delicate balance of power in the capital city. It is to Wilson's sophisticated negotiation of these pressures that I turn now. Compromising with scrutiny by making politic evasions, while also riffing with the fictionality of its own spectacles, his newly self-reflexive, and even self-parodying, mode of satirical drama brings the thread which this thesis has pursued to an end.

Defining Nemo

The three ladies are Lucre, Love, and Conscience. In the original *Three Ladies of London*, the capital has been overrun by capitalist greed, orchestrated by Lady Lucre with the help of Fraud, Dissimulation, Usury, and Simony, in which the bumpkin Simplicity is exploited,

[556] On the stage puritan as a post-Marprelate convention, see Patrick Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*', in David Bevington, David L. Smith, and Richard Strier (eds.), *The Theatrical City* (Cambridge, 1995), 157-69. The evidence for anti-Marprelate plays is given in Wiggins 830.

[557] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 70.

Hospitality murdered, and the godly preacher Sincerity can receive no benefice. They so rack the rents that the two other Ladies are impoverished, and must eventually capitulate to Lucre. Love consents to marry Dissimulation, and grows a second face on the back of her head; Lucre spots Conscience's face with ink to symbolise her corruption. However, as in Wapull's play, law and order are abruptly restored by an authority-figure who emerges *ex machina* from the preceding lawlessness. All at once the three Ladies have been arrested and are put on trial before a judge who condemns them to what sounds like eternal torment. On that austere note, this uniquely tragic 'Comœdy' ends.

What I have called the lateral relations of city drama are highly developed here, in which characters' interests are wrapped up with others' in the play-world, a closed zero-sum 'urban game' to which the spectators are just a third party, occasionally addressed but personally immune. Wapull's river-barges have given way to outright global traffic, and the *loci* of the play are international: a subplot concerns an Italian merchant who makes a deal with Lucre but is arrested in Turkey on the orders of his Jewish creditor, and cynically converts to Islam to avoid paying, much to the disgust of the Jew and the Muslim who are (pointedly enough) more honest than the Christian.[558] The Italian is Mercadorus and the Jew Gerontus – but Wilson's abstract names mask hybridity of another sort, that of caricature and catalyst.[559] Simplicity is just a clownish, well-meaning yokel, and Sincerity a sincere man of God. Hospitality is named for his own hospitable generosity as a host, for which he is killed offstage by Fraud, and his huge funeral cortege described. His is the apparently irrevocable mortal death possible in moral interludes for those whose name badges only their own behaviour.

This is all wittily to the point: in a city engrossed by self-promotion and self-interest, such blameless men can find no promotion for themselves, let alone promote their eponymous qualities in others – which must, accordingly, die with them. In such a play, the old sense of personified moral virtues seeking an interest in an everyman, as potentials of his nature, is so far gone as to be irrelevant; here, getting attention from *any* man would be nice. If they are not catalysts, it is not for want of trying. Thus, although the play's *locus* and interactions resemble later playhouse drama more than the distinctive dynamics of older personification interludes, it could hardly be to a clearer homiletic end.

[558] On Wilson's international society, Lloyd Edward Kermode, 'The playwright's prophecy: Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* and the "alienation" of the English', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 11 (1999), 60-87, and Brett D. Hirsch, 'Jewish questions in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*', *Early Theatre* 19 (2016), 37-56.
[559] Discussed in chapter 3.

Three Ladies suggests the mixture of frustration and boldness which marked the ascendant fortunes of Leicester's progressive Protestant faction in the early 1580s. The pro-puritan satire is especially blatant in the fortunes of the penniless preacher Sincerity. He is an example of the learned and devout preacher – educated, we are told, at Cambridge, a hotbed of the progressive tendency – passed over by Simony in favour of incompetents who 'mumble seruice once a month' (Aiiii^{r}, 162). All that Sincerity himself can get from Lucre is the parsonage of St Nihil – which, as he must tetchily explain to his cousin Simplicity, 'is nothing' (Cii^{v}. 721). This was Wilson's favourite joke, made again almost immediately when Sincerity spots his last opportunity: 'But heere comes Sir Nicholas Nemo'. This gentleman enters with a hearty greeting:

> You come from Loue and Conscience, as seemeth me heere,
> My special good freends, whom I account of most deere.
> And you are called Sinceritie your state shewes the same:
> You are welcome to me for their sakes, and for your own name.
> […]
> But come in to dinner with me, and when you haue dinde,
> you shall haue *Presently go out*. [Cii$^{r\text{-}v}$, 734-46.]

Nemo has disappeared mid-sentence. 'You shall haue, but what?' says Sincerity bitterly (747). When Simplicity tries to congratulate him on this second benefice to add to St Nihil's, he waves it aside: 'This was Sir Nicholas Nemo, and no man hath no place.' (762.) In a play whose characters live up to their names (their 'state shewes the same'), Nemo lives up to his own in the only 'state' possible.

Sincerity's antitype is Sir Peter Pleaseman, whom Simony appoints as Lady Lucre's chaplain. Sir Peter has no degree, and asked his religion, he replies 'Mary sir of all religions, I know not my selfe very well […] I haue bene a Catholicke, mary nowe for the most part a Protestant' – but whichever Lady Lucre would prefer, 'I warrant you my Religion shall not offend her' (Ciiii^{v}, 938-41). In their *Admonition* of 1572, John Field and Thomas Wilcox had charged that Elizabeth's bishops 'allow, and like wel of popish masse mongers, men for all seasons, King Henries priests, Queene Maryes priests' to officiate at English services.[560] Pleaseman imbibes the principle of the man for all seasons into a humoral trait. (The play's second edition in 1592 subtly romanized Sir Peter's description, from 'like a parson' to the more deniable 'like a priest'.)[561] Paul Whitfield White has argued that the satire here is

[560] *An admonition to the parliament* ([Hemel Hempstead, 1572?]), Aii^{v}.
[561] *The three ladies of London* (London, 1592), C4^{r}.

specifically upon simoniac abuses by lay patrons, and that the Queen herself may have been implicated.[562] The only conscientious lay patron turns out to be Nobody.

Wilson is sailing into the same wind as *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, showing a panorama of unchecked abuses occurring in ambiguous relation to a seemingly remote or negligent magistrate. Wapull resolved this with a union between civil power and the godly which tacitly gave the monarch no part in the solution either. Wilson carries his satire to the logical conclusion by giving no-one at all any part in it. At the height of Lucre's plot, we are told the Ladies have been arrested, and shown the courtroom of a mysterious judge who passes sentence on them. This judge is never named in the dialogue, at least in the surviving text, but his name in the stage directions is Judge Nemo.

Nemo iudex in causa sua is a Justinian legal maxim: no man can be judge in his own case.[563] So common is the crime of the three Ladies for loving wealth more than God that their case implicates everyone; it stands to reason that only Nemo could be impartial enough to judge it. Whether this is a return for Sir Nicholas seems unlikely. Judge Nemo seems more godlike than just godly, poised somewhere between a London courtroom and the Last Judgement. He condemns Lucre in no uncertain terms:

> Thou shalt passe to the place of darcknesse, where thou shalt heare fearful cries.
> Weeping, wayling, gnashing of teeth, and torment without end,
> Burning in the lake of fire and brimstone because thou canst not amend[.]
> [Fiii[r], 1907-10.]

At the same time, he seems like a limited worldly judge, using the services of a clerk, crier, and constable, and defers Conscience's sentencing until 'the day of the generall session' (the quarterly assize held in every English borough, or the Second Coming?). Most importantly, it is implied that the punishment of the three Ladies will have no reformative effect upon London itself. Nemo asks the constable, Diligence, whether Lucre's accomplices have been arrested too. Dissimulation has escaped in disguise, the constable replies, and Fraud was seen 'in the streetes walking in a Citizens gowne'; Usury 'at the Exchainge very lately'; and Simony 'walking in Paules, hauing conference and very great familiaritie with some of the Cleargie' (Fii[v], 1850-58). They are still embedded in the world where Dekker, Jonson, and Middleton would find them twenty years later. In other words, even if the audience do not

[562] Paul Whitfield White, 'Wilson, Tarlton, and the scourge of simony in Elizabethan drama' (McMaster 2015).
[563] See – at random – *Selectæ quæstiones iuris* (Cologne, 1570), [Ggg5][r]: 'Iudex in causa sua nemo esse potest.'

know that the all-powerful judge's name is Nemo, we are allowed to intuit that his power changes nothing.

George Wapull used London to imagine a remote, but realizable, ideal of godly government. Wilson seems to retract the viability of the ideal he presents, and leaves the actual condition of the Christian community exactly as he found it. Nemo's courtroom is no *locus* but a literal utopia, a no-place. *Three Ladies* is the first 'morality' play in which the scene of moral improvement is undermined even as it is staged, as if to admit that its envisioned alternative is a fiction.

Judge Nemo is the lens to understand *Three Lords*, which stages what purports to be a decisive moral reversal of the earlier play, revelling in a suddenly perfect and unimprovable English community with such lusty jingoism that we almost miss Wilson's amused and still-undeceived tone. Wilson had become a member of the Queen's Men, writing no longer under the patronage of the puritan-harbouring Leicester but of the monarch herself, and what was called for after the Armada was a unifying celebration of England's triumph. Wilson did so by reviving his best-known play in order to retract it. The three Ladies are redeemed from punishment ('endless' no longer) to marry the three Lords of London, Policy, Pomp, and Pleasure, who defeat the Spanish in time for the wedding. The marriage of Lucre with Pomp, Policy with Love, and Pleasure with Conscience is ostensibly a symbol of London's civic pride united with its wealth and spiritual health. The union symbolises the interest which the spiritual has in the worldly, in which the purged and purified Ladies will elevate the pragmatic Lords. Meanwhile, Lucre's old associates, Dissimulation, Fraud, Usury, and Simony, have defected to fight for the enemy. Nemo is the *genius loci* of a play described on its titlepage as a 'stately morall', which fuses the moral interlude with the triumphal pageantry of a state occasion in order to undermine both genres.

London herself appears as a richly dressed woman, accompanied by two angels, to welcome the playhouse audience: 'Lo, Gentles, thus the Lord dooth London guard, | Not for my sake, but for his owne delight[.]' Her foes have been scattered, and by extension all of England's, '[n]ot by mans strength, his pollicie and wit, | But by a power and prouidence unseene.'[564] This is the defining disclaimer of the godly in Protestant plays. We recall Just overthrowing Lust '[n]ot of my power […] But by the mighte of his spirite that dwelleth in me', and God's Merciful Promises thundering that Juventus will receive grace '[f]or me his

[564] *Three Lords*, A2v, 5-6, 14-15.

mercy sake […] | And not for thine owne desertes'.[565] It is this abounding grace toward England and its Queen, London continues, which 'hath bred our plenty and our peace,' and these in turn 'doo breed the sportes you come to see' – the play itself (19-20). What I would stress is that the emphasis on unearned providence allows us to expect, in perfectly orthodox and conventional spirit, that the moral renewal of the three Ladies will be a kind of justification, London's purgation by grace, of the kind which Wapull's providential alliance of Faithful Few and Authority achieved. The building-blocks of Wilson's drama are ostensibly those used for a century and more to express the routing of sin in the soul dramatically. The Spanish admirals are even renamed Pride, Ambition, and Tyranny for the purpose, masking themselves vice-like with flattering aliases (though now due to Iberian self-conceit rather than cunning).

Previous Protestant dramatists had expressed man's disinterest in his own justification by reserving the source of grace somewhere radically external to the action itself. The morally infallible agent of justification in *Three Lords* is mysteriously visible: the reverend, semidivine judge who sentenced the three Ladies to eternal punishment and now revokes them from it to cue up a happy ending. Protestant virtues had always had an alien quality, as we have seen. However, that had been the visual correlative to something which defied representation, the mystery of imputed grace. Wilson shows us a fantasy, which correlates with nothing real at all. There is a vital difference between attributing the power of making men virtuous to no man, and attributing it to Nemo.

When the three Lords sue to Judge Nemo to release the Ladies from their punishment, Lord Policy addresses the old man in terms which make him at once a god and a myth:

> Renowmed *Nemo*, the most onelie one
> That drawes no breath but of th'eternal aire,
> That knowest our suit before we bound [*sic*] to speak
> For thou art the very Oracle of thoughts […] [C3^{r-v}, 481-84.]

Peter Womack has pithily discussed what it means for 'Nobody' to appear as a dramatic character. He concludes that such a figure logically must be reanalysed into the third person, as a series of reported predicates – 'Nobody does X', rather than 'I do X'.[566] Understanding such a character means undoing them. 'Nemo that womens minds can constant keepe';

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[565] *Trial of Treasure*, [A4]^{r}, 152-53; *Lusty Juventus*, Ei^{r}, 1070-71.
[566] Peter Womack, 'Nobody, Somebody, and *King Lear*', *New Theatre Quarterly* 23 (2007), 200. I am grateful to Lorna Hutson for sending me this article.

'Nemo that vpright iudge' – Wilson's audience hear many such statements in this play. Womack is discussing the bizarre play *Nobody and Somebody* (c.1605), named for the subplot in which the unscrupulous potentate Somebody conspires to slander Nobody, the paragon of honesty and charity (represented onstage as a man apparently wearing breeches up to his neck: he literally has no body). There, Nobody is by definition powerless to effect real change. In Wilson's play however he effects all change. 'Nemo can from thence redeeme them all,' Lord Pleasure says, and Nemo confirms that their punishment has purged the three Ladies: 'I haue them cleer'd and made them all as free | As they were borne: no blemish left to see.' (C4r.) The whole triumphant urban justification which we witness – the defeat of the Spanish, the triumphs of London, and the wedding – is in the shadow of what Womack would call the implied third person of Nemo's statement. Nobody has redeemed the Ladies in the first place.

Womack describes Nobody in the later play as 'not so much saintly as gaily counter-factual.'[567] Because *Three Lords*' vision of harmony rests on such a contradiction, from which anything logically follows, it is appropriate that everything which follows is a simultaneous assertion and negation. If Wilson evacuates the justification of the Ladies, who are not 'really' redeemed, his celebration of the Lords who defeat the Armada becomes all the more fragile. The play's most celebrated passage is Policy's commission to his fellow lord to contribute to the war effort:

> Lord Pomp, let nothing that's magnificall,
> Or that may tend to Londons graceful state
> Be vnperfourm'd. As showes and solemne feastes,
> Watches in armour, triumphs, Cresset-lightes,
> Bonefiers, belles, and peales of ordinance. [F2v, 1319-23.]

Pomp replies that the 'worthy Citizens' are 'franke and bountiful', and will spare no cost to prove that 'Honor in England, not in Spaine doth grow.' (1338-40.) This of course includes Wilson's own play. However, the infusion from the triumphal tradition involves reversing the meanings which these Lords would have had in any previous moral play. Wilson's overwriting of his original theatrical inheritance is nowhere clearer than in the recuperation of Policy. Only in the pageant tradition was Policy ever bodied forth to speak for honest statecraft. Thus, in the London mayoral pageant for John Allot in October 1590, put on by the fishmongers' guild, Policy spoke in harmony with such figures as God's Truth.[568] The

[567] Womack, 'Nobody', 205.
[568] Wiggins 861.

interlude tradition and the puritan tradition, by contrast, had concurred in making policy the enemy of that truth. As we have seen, Christianity's deformed sword in *Tide* represented Policy overcoming God's Word, and 'Policy' was the commonest vice pseudonym in Reformation drama, for its ability to launder atheism into pragmatism.[569] In the interlude tradition, Pleasure too was always bad: the brother-in-law of Lust in *The Trial of Treasure*; the father (by vomiting him up) of Sin in *All for Money*; and the alias of several vices too.[570] Wilson's palimpsest of older playwrights' moral posture could hardly be clearer than when Lord Policy instructs Lord Pleasure to solemnise the Armada with honest games and plays. The lord replies without apparent irony that 'pleasure vowes with all delightes he can | To doe them good, till death to be their man' (F2[v], 1346-47) – which in any moral play since at least 1400 would sound like a vice's determination to lure souls to Hell.

The whole play-world is conjured through pageantry whose artificiality is continually underlined. In place of *Three Ladies*' lateral business interests, cameos of parasitic vice in the commercial rat-race, *Three Lords* is patterned out of emblems, devices, and tableaux, cameos of purely aesthetic order. The Lords' pages carry their ensigns and expound the pictures at length; so do the Spanish lords ('Ambition, his ympreze, a blacke Horse salliant, with one hinder foote vpon the Globe of the earth, […] his woorde, Non sufficit orbis', etc; G[v]); the English herald, Fealty, wears London's arms on the front of his coat and an olive tree on the back; and so on. The characters' interactions acquire a polished artificiality too. Simplicity reappears from the earlier play, now married to a scolding watercarrier called Painful Penury. (One of the few such marriages in moral drama, along with that of Wastefulness and Wantonness in *Tide*.) '[I]t's prety,' one of the Lords' pages points out, 'that *simplicity* | Hath gotten to his wife plaine painfull *Penury*.' (C2[v]; 447-48.) No less than the labelled soldiers or mottoed flags, even the social injustices are curated for our perusal.

Having overwritten the moral meanings of his play with pageantry, Wilson ends by undermining the pageantry too. After the defeat, Fraud, Usury, and Dissimulation return to London. Usury is branded by Policy with a hot iron to symbolise that only 10% interest is allowed, as per Elizabethan law. Fraud and Dissimulation bribe Diligence and march in the lords' wedding procession, disguised as freemen of the city. The wedding of the three Ladies will clearly change nothing, any more than their punishment had in the previous play. (The

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569 See chapter 4, above.

570 Pleasure was also the alias of Carnal Concupiscence in Lewis Wager's *Mary Magdalene* and of Incontinence in William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest*; and Lusty Pleasure that of Courtly Abusion in *Magnificence*.

whereabouts of Simony go unspecified entirely.) As the wedding procession passes, Judge Nemo lingers onstage in a contemplative spirit. He recalls the murder of Hospitality, such a moment of crisis in the previous play: ‘Simplicity with painefull penurie sits, | For Hospitality that was woont to feed him, | Was slaine long since and now the poore doo need him.’ He sees the celebrants returning and dispels this train of thought:

> But what meane I, one of the mariage traine,
> To mourne for him wil nere be had againe.
> His Ghost may walke to mocke the people rude:
> Ghostes are but shadowes, and doe sense delude:
> I talke too long, for loe this louelie crue
> Are comming backe, and haue perfourm’d their due. [I2^{v}-3^{r}, 2242-56.]

Angela Stock has convincingly proposed that Wilson’s infiltrated procession was parodying the contemporary Lord Mayor’s Shows in order ‘to achieve for the urban sphere […] what earlier Reformation drama had done for the old religion’ – to show, as Bale had for the Latin liturgy or the confessional, that the external beauties of ritual and ceremony can mask a rotten corruption.[571] However, once celebration itself has been ironized, and the envisioned moral reform implied to be unachievable outside the work of a godlike man who is nobody at all, the last link is lost to the tradition which Bale inherited.

I have argued that a later city comedian, Jonson, would play his own games with grace, appearing to evoke the relationship between reprobate and God before ludically unmaking it, as if to assume for the poet the divine role of overmastering nature. Macilente ends *Every Man Out* by dismissing the fiction altogether: ‘let them vanish Vapors.’[572] Wilson’s game with Nemo’s grace does the same thing. To adapt the judge’s words, there are only so many ‘shadowes’ here – and Nemo himself, the only man who seems aware of the cracks papered over by this construction, is one of them, and so are all the fictions which he anchors and which ‘doe sense delude’, conjured only by men on a stage. A fantasia whose artificiality and contradictions are themselves held up for our recognition, *Three Lords* is a creature of the new theatrical enclosures.

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[571] Angela Stock, ‘“Something done in honour of the city”: Ritual, theatre and satire in Jacobean civic pageantry’, in Mehl et al (eds.), *Plotting Early Modern London*, 134.

[572] *Euery man out of his humor* (London, 1600), Rii^{v}; the revised ending, printed as Appendix B in *The Cambridge Edition* of Jonson.

Wilson completes a process his predecessors had begun. It could fairly be claimed that the need to compromise with his new theatrical visibility led Wilson not to trade in his old commitments as a moral dramatist but to upgrade his weapons, to a more sophisticated way of troubling spectators' complacency than any which Bale and his successors had employed. Interest withheld, as Wilson's predecessors had shown, could be as engaging, instructive, or chastening as interest courted, and Nemo's ironic non-justification perhaps marks the logical extent of disinterest as a polemical device within the personification tradition. The more that playwrights came to evoke a world within the play, a *locus* in which a self-consistent *fabula* is acted out, the more that the spectators became third parties to the action. However, the satire had never before required that the *locus* itself be exposed as unreal. No personification play had deliberately fashioned its characters as counter-factual fictions – constructs without real correlates, evoked self-consciously to replace rather than clarify reality. The morality tradition was already over in 1588, and these were just its ghosts.

Conclusion:
Personifications and Third Parties

> Þe case of oure comynge ȝou to declare,
> Euery man in hymself forsothe he it may fynde
> Whou Mankynd into þis werld born is ful bare
> And bare schal beryed be at hys last ende.[573]

For almost 200 years after the Vexillators read their banns in some East Anglian town (it might have been any of them; that was their whole point), plays continued to be written and acted which brought moral virtues and vices in human shape before the spectators, a vision at once of modern life and the inner life, if both could explain themselves without euphemism. It is easy to conclude that the 'case' which players put to their audiences would remain relatively static so long as personifications remained the basis of the action. The times might change – the 'longe crakows' which Pride recommends as footwear (*Castle*, 1059) went out of fashion quickly enough that they have been used to date the play – but human nature would remain constant. Surely the characters of moral drama would too, limited in their behaviour and significance to what 'every man in himself' can find. Perhaps the quality which made such a genre uncompetitive when English theatre became a marketplace, rewarding novelty, by the end of the sixteenth century – that is, its insistence on those things which never change – was the quality which had long given the genre its defining appeal.

In fact, the 'case' had already altered. I have argued that dramatists did not have to exchange personifications as protagonists, moral edification as an aim, homiletic address as a mode, or an undefined, flexible playing 'place' as a setting for the terms of engagement to change decisively between the characters and between the play and its spectators. Before any fourth wall (or walls plural, or even stage), personification plays had repositioned their spectators from an interested party to a third party. Our intuitive tendency to analyse the interaction of personifications as 'every man in himself', which had been fostered by the original morality play, becomes no less purposively controlled, limited, and even rebutted.

We can only appreciate the change if we perceive how interesting morality plays were in the original tradition of *The Castle of Perseverance* – that is, how they were defined by relationships of 'interesse', and how those relationships conveyed the basic theological and ethical point of the genre. I have enumerated what I see as the three main and interrelated forms of interest which set the morality play apart from other genres in which dramatists

[573] *The Castle of Perseverance*, 14-17.

might choose to write: our interest in the everyman; the personifications' interest in the everyman; and the interest we are thereby incited to feel in the process of our own moral reformation.

Morality plays coerced us by insisting on our identity with the protagonist. Some, like *Castle*, did this by naming him after humanness itself; others named him after faculties which all have in common, perhaps counting on the resonance of what was clearly an archetypal structure of fall and repentance to prompt our recognition of our involvement. Like any attempted pressgang, we do not have to accept its justice, but we cannot self-exempt without a conscious struggle. We saw in my final chapter that Peter Womack describes 'Nobody' as a third-person character, whose positive claims about his own behaviour and faculties must be reanalysed into negative claims about human behaviour and faculties.[574] Mankind as an individual character must also be understood in the third person – but to understand him in the third person is, logically, to feel him in the first person, and such was the peculiar interest he held for us.

The everyman was flanked by other men (and more rarely women) who seemed to possess a dimension he lacked: they not only spoke as friends or manipulators of an impressionable person, but as if defined by such a relationship, and constituted by the competition with rival influences which plays out. It was in their nature to affect the natures of others, arriving tautologously enough to tempt or warn 'everyman' fresh from already influencing many other men, in careers not limited to, though typified by, what we are explicitly shown. These interactions told us that virtues and vices seek an interest in us, a controlling stake which we may surrender to them or not.

The morality play was thus patterned by a vision of competing potentials. The everyman will be saved or damned according to whom he heeds. By interesting us in the play, and interesting the virtues and vices in us in their turn, the play communicated our interest – that is, our personal involvement – in our own self-improvement, and a consequent right or title to the consequences. Our sense that the drama is 'about' us, and our impression that the characters walk in and out of our own world without admitting any distinction, was thus not owed to a mere delight in aesthetic immediacy or 'metatheatre'. It was the essential correlative to a moral message founded on involvement of deeper sorts: of flesh and spirit, grace and original sin, in human nature; of our social influences in our moral choices; and of

[574] Peter Womack, 'Nobody, Somebody, and *King Lear*', *New Theatre Quarterly* 23 (2007), 200.

ourselves in our own justification. Indeed, there was no metatheatre in most morality plays, if this means an intimation of fictionality. Judging by surviving texts, the actors were almost never instructed to break the pretence that they *were* the virtues and vices they claimed to be. Their familiarity and proximity to us was surely supposed to indicate that we are as far from fiction as pretence can bring us.

It is a worthwhile reflection that those qualities of the morality play which now, and perhaps always, risk being uninteresting in one sense – that is, boringly unimaginative – are designed to keep things as interesting as possible in another. The reliance on tropes and formulae of human weakness, the interchangeable taverns, brothels, and songs, exchanged frictionlessly for prayer and repentance, may satisfy less than those evoked idiosyncrasies which might prompt us to experience a moment of personal identification or recognition – or else an amused curiosity, if their exaggeration shades toward the ridiculous. There seems a vital difference between such rendering and those not infrequent moments when the everyman seems to behave in an exaggerated and outrageous way – as when Mankind pledges in the space of fifteen lines that he will commit everything from swearing during services to adultery, murder, and highway robbery:

> [NEWGUISE:] Ȝe xall goo robbe, stell, and kyll, as fast as ye may gon.
> "I wyll," sey ȝe.
> MANKYNDE. I wyll, ser.[575]

The call of a recited sin with the response of 'I will' makes this quite literally a litany of abuses – and shows why the morality play's rhetoric of evil, at any rate, would not need to change to be employed as propaganda against an enemy liturgy seventy years later. Mankind certainly makes a fool of himself here, surrendering the controlling interest in his life to the world and the flesh like a true scriptural *moros*. However, the effect of this ostensibly extreme and unusual behaviour is to make him less singular and eccentric even than before. My point is that our sense of what we are all capable of would be compromised if Mankind responded more like any one of us actually would.

The Reformation put the everyman out of English drama and permanently altered the relations of interest I have described. It did this because the morality play articulated a vision of human nature which the Protestants denied: of man the damaged but perfectible middle ground between competing options, with virtue as well as vice a potential in his nature, and himself, with the aid of grace, able to secure an interest in Heaven. They insisted instead that

[575] *Mankind*, 708-9.

humans are totally fallen, and even when we are justified before God our corruption is not actually improved, just divinely overlooked.

The first to reflect this was John Bale for Cromwell's Men in the 1530s, for whom the removal of the everyman served a dual function in edifying the audience: both to attack the papists and to inculcate a proper understanding of human vice. *Three Laws* stages a clash between divine and diabolical from which a neutral figure of mankind is notably absent, and the papists seem assimilated entirely to a co-ordinated malignancy opposed to God, which I argue allowed Bale a metaphor for the workings of the mystery of iniquity in the world. This play is a blueprint for what followed. God, whom Bale clearly felt free to show onstage, acts unilaterally against this supernatural, transhistorical force of unfaith. Protestant interludes in the following five decades seem to have internalised *Three Laws*' implicit unequal movement of vice and virtue relative to the implied human centre: the vices become centripetally embedded in human nature and society – and with it, more active than ever before in the plot – while the virtues seem centrifugally estranged, both socially and narratively.

Protestant dramatists introduced disinterest into the play of virtues and vices once designed to have the opposite effect, not simply by default but as a deliberate part of their project. For all that we are lectured about what we see, we are placed outside it. This is clearest in the scenes of justification which they stage, and which have been a leitmotif of the preceding chapters. The moment of the everyman's moral renewal through repentance was the point at which the interesting relationships I have described in the original morality play converged. Protestant drama makes us a third party to the moral renewals they stage, spectators of somebody else's justification, because *no* man has any title to or involvement in the process, not even the one we see. This unilateral model of grace is emphasized in *Lusty Juventus,* in which all the ties of infused virtue communicated in the original *Youth* are reversed.

We have seen that the tendency in Protestant drama is to de-personify justification altogether: the old active moral virtues cease to be personified, and those which do appear are increasingly negative caricatures, men without qualities, proxies for something unstageable. Rather than a process in which the play involves us, justification increasingly becomes a *fait accompli*: an understood quality of the individual Just or Heavenly Man whom we see. The justification-scene of *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, in which Faithful Few, rather than any personification, is the agent of Wastefulness' repentance, expresses the increasingly

undivulged privacy of imputation. Finally, Robert Wilson evacuates the staged justification altogether by making neither 'everyman' its subject nor even Faithful Few its effector, but a man called Nobody, and with this any claim is over that what we are watching is more than artifice.

The mystery of grace also defines the emergence of characters who inertly exemplify qualities rather than causing them. Without the everyman even an abstraction such as Greediness, whom the presence of Mankind would have reanalysed into *our* Greediness, can become simply a single greedy man. In personification drama, to lack a self-aware influence over others is not to have stepped into another genre but to occupy a place in an implicit hierarchy of interest. Protestant dramatists use such characters to reflect the condition of reprobation. Disinterest has a polemical utility with these caricatures: we are deliberately positioned as observers of the fools we watch, an estrangement which allows us to appraise them rather than risk the 'dangerous downfall' of seeking aspects of them in ourselves. Their inability to control the dramatic irony makes them in their turn increasingly oblivious to the audience. We are made disinterested observers of the effects of grace's absence as much as of its presence.

The caricatures of Wager, Wapull, and others anticipate the comedy of humours – which, in Jonson's hands, would indeed show something of this reprobate inheritance. The cameos of vice and victim create increasingly inwardly directed, lateral relations in the play-world, of blinkered self-interests and business interests rather than any 'interesse' in the spectators, which enables the evocation of an increasingly specific urban *locus* for stage satire. It is no coincidence that the erosion of the old bonds of interest, and our repositioning as a disinterested party, tends toward the evoked self-completion which courts our attention as engaged bystanders across that remove. The decline of one sort of interest seems to have traced the rise of the other. I suspect few would deny that, in some important senses, English drama got more interesting after the men I have studied had ceded the stage.

Personification drama's movement toward a self-contained play-world, toward characters who interact without offering a sense of their influence in the world at large, and who attract our attention as evoked types – all of which struck Spivack, Bevington, and other influential theorists as a symptom of 'Renaissance' secularisation – can be traced instead to the doctrinal and rhetorical requirements of Protestant didacts. To put it crudely, the genre which seems to have been closest to late medieval Christianity and most remote from

'Shakespearean' drama began to move in the 'Shakespearean' direction as much for late medieval Christian reasons as dramatic.

In perhaps the same post-Armada season which saw the return of Wilson's three Ladies of London, another trio of personifications took to an apron stage to inaugurate a very different kind of play. London herself had appeared to speak Wilson's prologue; now, Love, Fortune, and Death arrive to open Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, quarrelling.[576] However, their contention is not about who should preside over London, as that of Love, Conscience, and Lucre had been, but who shall dominate the play which we are all about to watch. '*Fortune* is chorus,' says the lady of that name; '*Loue* and death be gone.' Death intones that he will not return to 'euerlasting night' until he has 'moralliz'd this Tragedy, | Whose cheefest actor was my sable dart.' The remaining lady replies in terms which will be – deceptively – familiar:

> *Loue*. Nor will I vp into the brightsome sphere,
> From whence I sprung, till in the chorus place,
> I make it knowne to you, and to the world,
> What interest *Loue* hath in Tragedies.
> *For[tune]*. Nay then though *Fortune* haue delight in change,
> Be stay my flight, and cease to turne my wheele,
> Till I haue showne by demonstration,
> What intrest I haue in a Tragedie.
> Tush; *Fortune* can doo more then *Loue* or *Death*.
> *Loue*. Why stay we then, lets giue the Actors leaue.
> And as occasion serues, make our returne.[577]

The body of the play is the tragedy of a knight of Rhodes and his lover, set in the Mediterranean of the early sixteenth century, without any personifications' involvement. At the end of each act, however, the induction's three interested parties return as a chorus, to wrangle about who has had most influence over the action.

In one sense, this is the characteristic behaviour of the catalytic personification in a morality play, to show 'by demonstration, | What intrest I haue'. Admittedly, there is little sense of an ethical stake; the three have at best an elemental will to power, rather than any desire to promote vice or virtue. The demonstration is all – though the same had been true when Lady Fortune catapulted Moros to eminence in *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool*

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[576] Wiggins dates this play to 1587-89, and the recent edition by Matthew Dimmock dates it 'in or around 1589'; see *The Collected Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. Brian Vickers (Woodbridge, 2024), 1.342. The company and playhouse are unknown.
[577] *The tragedie of Solyman and Perseda* (London, [1592?]), A2^{v}.

Thou Art two decades before, in exhibition of her strength. The really signal difference is that these figures have themselves come from the audience's world into the playhouse as spectators of 'Actors' on a stage. Their attention is turned away from the spectators, and their 'intrest' is not in the world but *in the play*. None of the characters in the main play speaks a word to suggest such metatheatrical awareness, or indeed any awareness of being observed. It is the half-involved, half-aloof personifications who affirm the fictiveness of what we see.

Personifications' share of the action fell away precipitously in the public playhouses. Before 1580, as a count from Darryll Grantley's catalogue of interludes reveals, slightly more than half of all surviving plays had contained personified characters.[578] Vladimir Brljak finds that, by contrast, 2% of surviving plays datable to the 1590s (a corpus almost equal to the total which came before) have personifications in their narrative.[579] This major shift in theatrical taste is Brljak's subject and it would need another thesis to engage with it here. My concern is with the characteristic new role which personification came to play, and the total inversion of 'interest' it represents: to serve as shepherds of our disinterested interest toward the play itself as an object, a work of artifice worthy of a third party's attention.

Table 4 shows those personifications during the whole medieval and Tudor period who appear as prologue, induction, or chorus to the play which follows – those thresholds at which the curation of a spectacle becomes most self-conscious. The pattern could not be clearer: in English, only one example of a personification in this preliminary role survives before the playhouses in the late 1580s.[580] (Even this is debatable: the figure labelled 'Contemplacio' who addresses the audience at the start or end of several plays on the life of the Virgin in the enigmatic 'N-Town' cycle is never named to the audience, and seems only to speak 'in character' in one of those speeches.)[581] Notably, no small-troupe moral interlude puts a personification in such a metatheatrical context.

[578] Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes, 1300-1580* (Cambridge, 2004); my count. This excludes the biblical cycles.

[579] Vladimir Brljak, 'From Everyman to Hamlet' (forthcoming, *Renaissance Studies*). The high is 47% in the 1550s.

[580] This striking correlation has not been pointed out in the major studies of such metatheatrical devices, such as Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre* (London, 2004), 57-77, and Brian W. Schneider, *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama* (Farnham, 2011).

[581] Contemplacio speaks the introductions to plays 8, 9, 11, 13, and 29. However, only in 11, the Parliament of Heaven, does he address God with an impassioned and reverent tone appropriate to his name; his other speeches are addressed to the audience with the tone of a generic prolocutor, introducing the theme and apologizing for the actors. The label may have been added to the other speeches by a copyist. See Peter Happé, 'Metatheatre in the English mystery cycles: Expositor, Contemplacio, Prolocutor and others', *Theta* 7 (2007), 89-108.

This was not for want of prologues. Brian W. Schneider has found 63 plays before 1590 with a ‘framing’ speech to the spectators at the start or the end.[582] Such speakers are usually labelled simply ‘prologue’; once or twice they are a Messenger (as at the start of *Everyman* and John Rastell’s *Four Elements*), and once or twice a Poet – seemingly the playwright *in propria persona*, most famously Baleus Prolocutor.[583] The plays of Bale, Wever, the Wagers, Wapull, Lupton – all of the major playwrights of this study – employ such prologues, apologising for the actors, explaining the purpose, sometimes naming the play’s title, and praying that what follows will not be too boring. However, they reserve personifications to the main action.

If personification plays never bring a personification into the playing space to introduce the performance, public playhouse plays almost only reserve them to this role. None of the Elizabethan plays in Table 4 employs any personification outside the metatheatrical frame. We might wonder whether Jeremy Lopez is right that Kyd’s Love, Fortune, and Death ‘would have been recognized by playwrights and audiences as part of an older dramatic tradition’, and whether Wilson was drawing on his original theatrical inheritance when he brought London onstage to welcome the punters.[584] It seems to me that spectators who could remember pre-playhouse moral theatre would be struck by the impression of a new era. These are bellwethers of a perfect inversion in the way that personifications are enlisted to interest us. They become what we might call ‘second parties’ to the transaction: half-involved mediators between a self-contained ‘them’ and we who stand around to watch.

I have called *Three Lords* a breach with the morality tradition. This is not because its spectators are not acknowledged, or because its personified vices no longer claim their characteristic ‘interest’ in the world at large. They certainly do. The difference is that the entire play satirically exposes itself as a work of unreality. Personifications were becoming ways in which theatre reflected upon itself. If Kyd’s abstractions resemble anybody, it is not moral virtues or vices but History, Tragedy, and Comedy – personified genres – who vie for supremacy over *A Warning to Fair Women*. Truth speaks in the Queen’s Men’s *True Tragedy of Richard III*, but he speaks only to Poetry.

[582] Schneider, *Framing Text*, 157-273.

[583] See Michelle M. Butler, ‘Baleus Prolocutor and the establishment of the prologue in sixteenth-century drama', in Lloyd Kermode et al (eds.), *Tudor Drama before Shakespeare, 1485-1590* (Basingstoke, 2004), 93-109.

[584] Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2002), 136; he quotes M. C. Bradbrook, F. S. Boas, and others on the characters’ morality inheritance.

Sensuality's 'interesse' in the everyman of Medwall's *Nature* had been just that: the controlling interest of the flesh in every man. This was the transitive relationship by which virtues and vices transcended the play-world. The understood 'interesse' of the personified vice or virtue in the world at large had been the last link with everyman drama. When catalysts appear in playhouse plays, they are likelier to do so as second parties, purporting to exert their influence upon us only to guide us toward the play itself. The career of Envy is especially revealing. The former deadly sin never appears in plays after 1590 except in the liminal outings listed in my table. In *Mucedorus* he appears caked with blood up to the elbows as the enemy not of Charity but of Comedy, challenging her to 'send thy actors forth' so he can do his worst to ruin the outcome the audience are hoping for.[585] Jonson's gorgon Livor, who appears wracked with envious rage at the opening to *Poetaster,* gives a visceral account of her catalytic effect on her disciples – but these are all critics of the playwright, and she is enraged that she can achieve no purchase on Jonson's own spectators at the Blackfriars. She is vanquished not by Humility or Vindicta Dei but by an armoured Prologus, who treads her into an infernal trapdoor. The iconographical difference of this gorgon to the interlude tradition is as nothing to the rhetorical: Envy has been remade as envy of the play's success, and the avid hatred of her gaze is assuredly designed to draw our own to the hated object too.

Personification had served the morality play as a sign that, whatever the amusing suspension of disbelief involved in welcoming players into one's midst, there is something in what we are shown that is more than a fiction. By the age of Jonson, personifications greet us as the clearest sign that what we are watching is *only* a fiction. If 'everyman' in *Everyman* meant everyone on earth, 'every man' in *Every Man Out of His Humour* means every man on the stage, and personification was a party to the change.

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[585] *Mucedorus* (London, 1598), A2ʳ.

Table 1: Personification plays doubled for small troupes, to 1590

Fragmentary or lost plays are excluded. Unless noted, my source for doubling calculations is Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*. The 'White | Walker' column gives the play's description in White, *Theatre and Reformation*, appendix A, and Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, appendix 2.

PLAY	MINIMUM ACTORS	NUMBER OF ROLES	DOUBLING CHART IN WITNESS?	WHITE	WALKER	OTHER INFORMATION
The World and the Child	2	5		n.a. | 'Great hall play'	
Impatient Poverty	4	8	Yes	n.a. | 'Great hall play'	
Lusty Juventus	4	9	Yes	'Protestant nobleman / professional troupe' | 'Great hall play'	
New Custom	4	11	Yes	'Earl of Leicester? / professional troupe' | [uncertain origin; school or college?]	
The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art	4	15	Yes	'Earl of Leicester? Professional troupe / also by boy players? Academic hall setting?' | 'Great hall play'	
The Tide Tarrieth No Man	4	18	Yes	'Protestant nobleman? / professional troupe' | 'Great hall play [merchants' hall?]'	
All for Money	4	32		'Protestant nobleman? / professional troupe' | 'Great hall play'	

Hickscorner	5	6		n.a. | 'Great hall play [Duke of Suffolk's household]'	
Youth	5	6		n.a. | 'Great hall play [Duke of Northumberland]'	
Three Laws	5	14	Yes	'Earl of Oxford/Oxford's players / Cromwell/Bale's players / Bishopstoke, Hampshire (1548), George May's house, Canterbury (1559)?' | 'Household performance'	
The Trial of Treasure	5	15	Yes	'Earl of Leicester? / professional troupe / hall or church setting' | 'Hall or inn setting'	
The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene	5	15	Yes (inaccurately gives 4 actors)	'Protestant nobleman? / professional troupe / hall setting' | 'Great hall play'	
Like Will to Like Quoth the Devil to the Collier	5	16	Yes	'Protestant nobleman? / professional troupe / hall setting' | 'Great hall play'	
Magnificence	5	18		n.a. | 'Great hall play [London merchants' hall]'	

King Johan	5	19		'Lord Cromwell/Bale's players / Cranmer's house, Canterbury (1538/39); Moone's players / Ipswich Hall (1561)?' | n.a.	Doubling calculated in *Four Morality Plays*, ed. Happé, 677-83.
Mankind	6	7			
Wealth and Health	6	7	Yes (inaccurately gives 4 actors)	n.a. | 'Great hall play [possibly children's]	
The Conflict of Conscience	6	18	Yes	'Norwich? Cambridge? Amateur players' | n.a.	Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 57-58, argues *Conflict* is a closet play.
The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom	6	19	Yes		
Common Conditions	6	21	Yes	n.a. | 'uncertain origin'	
Horestes	6 (plus battle-scene extras)	27 (plus battle-scene extras)	Yes (excludes extras)	n.a. | 'Great hall play'	
Everyman	7	17			Doubling calculated in *Everyman and Mankind*, ed. Bruster and Rasmussen, 255-59.
Enough is as Good as a Feast	7	18		'Earl of Leicester? / professional troupe' | 'Great hall play'	
King Darius	7	21	Yes (inaccurately gives 6 actors)	'Professional nobleman's troupe?' | 'Great hall play'	
Nature	7	22		n.a. | 'Great hall play'	Doubling calculated in Sider, '"One man in his time plays many parts"', 381-83.

Susanna	8	16	Yes	‘Oxford University? / student players? / college hall’ | ‘Great hall play’	Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe*, 98, speculates either a closet or at least an amateur drama
Patient and Meek Grissell	8	25	Yes (parts inaccurately distributed)	‘Grammar school / boy players’ | [children’s play?]	
The Three Ladies of London	8	27			Doubling calculated in Helen Ostovich, 'Doubling Love', http://threeladiesoflondon.mcmaster.ca/contexts/HelenOstovich.htm#fn1
Cambises	8	38	Yes	n.a. | ‘Great hall play [or perhaps outdoors]’	
Clyomon and Clamydes	9 (plus extras)	33 (plus extras)			
Wisdom	12 (6 speakers, 6 mute dancers)	36			
The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London	15	34			Doubling calculated in McMillin and MacLean, *The Queen’s Men*, 189.

Table 2: The English everyman tradition

PLAY	EVERYMAN	MORALITY STRUCTURE	DATE	AUSPICE (IF KNOWN)	EARLIEST WITNESS
The Pride of Life	King of Life	sinfulness; repentance.	Before 1400?	Anglo-Irish?	[15th-century MS, now lost; described in *Non-Cycle Plays*, ed. Davis, lxxxv-c.]
The Castle of Perseverance	Mankind (‘Humanum Genus’)	neutrality; temptation; repentance; temptation; repentance.	c.1400-1425	East Anglia, outdoor scaffold play	Washington, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.354 (the ‘Macro Manuscript’).
Mankind	Mankind	neutrality; temptation; repentance.	c.1460s-70s	East Anglia	Washington, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.354 (the ‘Macro Manuscript’).
Wisdom	The Soul (‘Anima’) [Her faculties Mind, Will, and Understanding are personified separately.]	neutrality; temptation [of her three faculties]; repentance.	c.1460s ?	East Anglia	Washington, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.354 (the ‘Macro Manuscript’).
Henry Medwall, *Nature*	Man	neutrality; temptation; repentance; temptation; repentance.	c.1490-1500	Lambeth Palace?	*Nature* ([London: William Rastell, c.1530-34]; STC 17779).

[‘Ludus de Mankynd’?]	[Mankind?]		[1499]	[East Retford, Nottinghamshire]	[Known from a bequest of a jewelled circlet for the image of the Virgin in a ‘ludus de Mankynd, et alii ludi’; discussed in Johnston, ‘The audience of the English moral play’, 292.]
Everyman	Everyman	sinfulness; repentance.	c.1510s ? [*Elckerlijc*, c.1490s]	Printed translation, possibly closet	[*Everyman*] (London: Richard Pynson, [c.1519]; STC 10604). [fragmentary]
Youth	Youth	sinfulness; repentance.	c.1510-14	Earl of Northumberland’s household?	*Thenterlude of youth* (London: Wynkyn De Worde, [c.1530]; STC 14111). [fragmentary]
Hickscorner	Free Will	sinfulness; repentance.	c.1514-16	Duke of Suffolk’s household?	*Hycke Scorner* (London: Wynkyn De Worde, [c.1515-16]; STC 14039).
The World and the Child	The Child (‘Infans’) / Lust and Liking / Manhood / Age	neutrality; temptation; repentance.	c.1500-22	London?	*A propre newe interlude of the worlde and the chylde* (London: Wynkyn De Worde, 1522; STC 25982).
John Rastell, *The Nature of the Four Elements*	Humanity	neutrality; temptation; [repentance? – ending lost.]	c.1517-19?	Rastell’s home in Finsbury?	*A new i[n]terlude and a mery of the nature of the .iiii. elementes* (London: John Rastell, [1520?]; STC 20722).
John Skelton, *Magnificence*	Magnificence	neutrality; temptation;		Great hall (London	*Magnyfycence* (London: Peter Treveris for John

		repentance.		guildhall?)	Rastell, [c.1531]; STC 22607).
[Lost play at Mary Tudor's court]	[Mankind ('Genus Humanum')]		[1553]	Christmas revels for Mary I	[Known only from cast list in Revels Office accounts; see Wiggins 250.]

Table 3: Most-personified virtues in English drama, pre- and post-1534

* = one of the seven remedial virtues
† = one of the 'Four Daughters of God'
~ = one of the four cardinal virtues
[f.] = personified as a woman

3.1: Personified twice or more, pre-1534

Personified virtue	Appearances (pre-Ref)	Plays (pre-Ref)	Appearances (post-Ref)	Plays (post-Ref)	Used as vice's alias?
Humility/Meekness	4	**Castle* [f.]; **Nature* [f.]; *Temperance and Humility*; *Youth*	1	*All for Money*	1 (Rigour, *Cruel Debtor*)
Mercy	3	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]; *Mankind*	1	†*Respublica* [f.]	
Charity	3	**Castle* [f.]; **Nature*; *Youth*	2	*King Darius*; *All for Money*	1 (Envy, *Impatient Poverty*)
Perseverance	3	*The World and the Child*; *Hickscorner*; *Magnificence*			
Abstinence	2	**Castle* [f.] **Nature*			
Chastity	2	**Castle* [f.] **Nature*			
Confession/Shrift	2	*Castle*; *Everyman*			
Contemplation	2	N-town 'Mary play'; *Hickscorner*			

Justice	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	3	~*Four Cardinal Virtues*; †*Respublica* [f.]; *Apius and Virginia*	2 (Infidelity,[586] *Life and Repentance of MM*; Cruelty,[587] *New Custom*)
Nature	2	*Nature* [f.]; *Four Elements*	1	*Horestes* [f.]	
Patience	2	**Castle* [f.]; **Nature*	1	*Grissell*	
Peace	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	2	*Impatient Poverty*; †*Respublica* [f.]	
Truth/Verity	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	4	*King Johan*; 'Somebody, Avarice, and Minister' [f.]; †*Respublica* [f.]; *Horestes* [f.]	

[586] As 'Legal/Mosaical Justice'.
[587] As 'Justice with Severity'.

(excluding *Three Estates* and wit-plays).

Personified virtue	Appearances (pre-1534)	Plays (pre-1534)	Appearances (post-1534)	Plays (post-1534)	Used as vice's alias?
Conscience	1	*The World and the Child*	5	*Impatient Poverty*; *Apius and Virginia*; *Conflict of Conscience*; *Three Ladies*; *Three Lords*	
Truth/Verity	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	4	*King Johan*; 'Somebody, Avarice, and Minister' [f.]; †*Respublica* [f.]; *Horestes* [f.]	
Justice	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	3	~*Four Cardinal Virtues*; †*Respublica* [f.]; *Apius and Virginia*	2 (Infidelity,[1] *Life and Repentance*; Cruelty,[2] *New Custom*)
Charity	3	**Castle* [f.]; **Nature*; *Youth*	2	*King Darius*; *All for Money*	1 (Envy, *Impatient Poverty*)
Constancy			2	*King Darius*; *Grissell*	
Contentation			2	*Trial of Treasure*; *Enough is as Good*	
Diligence			2	*Grissell*; *Three Lords*	
Peace	2	†*Castle* [f.]; †N-town 'Mary play' [f.]	2	*Impatient Poverty*; †*Respublica* [f.]	

Table 4: Personifications as prologues, inductions, and choruses, to 1603

All but the first entry compiled from Wiggins. Plays are ordered by *terminus a quo* in the date-range given in Wiggins.
Shaded = Latin.

PERSONIFICATION	Use	Play	Auspice, if known	Date
Contemplation(?)	Prologue (?)	The N-town 'Mary play'	[Touring play? Civic pageant?]	c.1480-1520?
Nature	Prologue	Sophocles (trans. Thomas Watson), *Antigone*	[University?]	1574-81
Madness	Prologue	Thomas Legge, *3 Richardus Tertius*	St John's College, Cambridge	March 1579
Revenge	Induction/chorus	Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*	[Public playhouse]	c.1585-91
Love; Fortune; Death	Induction/chorus	Thomas Kyd, *Soliman and Perseda*	[Public playhouse]	c.1588-89
London	Prologue	Robert Wilson *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*	The Queen's Men(?)	c.1588-89
Truth; Poetry	Induction/chorus	*The True Tragedy of Richard III*	The Queen's Men	c.1588-91
Devastation	Prologue	Thomas Legge, *3 Solymitana Clades*	[University of Cambridge?]	c.1588-98
Comedy; Envy	Induction/chorus	*Mucedorus*	[Public playhouse]	c.1590-98
The Seven Deadly Sins	Induction	*2 Seven Deadly Sins*	Lord Chamberlain's Men, at the Theatre(?)	c.1590-99

Homicide; Avarice; Truth	Induction/chorus	Robert Yarrington *Two Lamentable Tragedies*	[Public playhouse]	c.1594-98
Time	Prologue and epilogue	*A Larum for London*	Lord Chamberlain's Men, at the Theatre, Rose, or Globe	c.1594-1600
History; Tragedy; Comedy	Induction	*A Warning for Fair Women*	Lord Chamberlain's Men, at the Theatre or Curtain	c.1595-99
Rumour	Prologue	William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*	Lord Chamberlain's Men, at the Theatre or Curtain	c.1596-1600
Time; Eternity	Chorus	Fulke Greville, *Mustapha*	[Closet?]	c.1596 (rev. c.1607-10)
Malice; Craft; Pride; Corrupt Reason	Chorus	Fulke Greville, *Alaham*	[Closet?]	c.1598-1600
Envy (Livor)	Prologue	Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*	The Children of the Chapel Royal, at the Blackfriars	Autumn 1601

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