

Addressing the Audience of the Towneley Plays

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The Corpus Christi plays, in Coffman's words "were intended to be presented. They were presented. They were popular." Or, as a modern stage director puts it, "the cycles were performed for the people by the people, fleshing out in dramatic action the central truths of Christian teaching."¹ The Towneley Plays were conceived for the people. The extant text is a collection of the individual papers of each craft, composed during the 15th century and performed in the 16th century outside the church. In my opinion, we cannot approach the cycle as if it were just a book to be read, but as the script for a dramatic performance, which, following Kolve's words, in his book *The Play called Corpus Christi*, furnishes images of a superior sort: "the plays are "quike bookis", he says, living books that speak, move, and can imitate whole sequences of events and interactions. They image more vividly and more unforgettably than any other art form of their time"², seeking to lead the spectators into a deeply felt response. The plays are "scores for speech and action whose final artistic life is only suggested on the manuscript page."³ How the spectators are led into such a response is sought in those suggestions on the manuscript pages. Therefore, the present paper aims to be a representative study -albeit not exhaustive in terms of possible devices and data- of addressing the audience. A linguistic examination of the text will answer questions such as who is addressed outside the fiction of the play and by whom and what about. My final aim is the study of the textual evidence suggesting asides and to show that the medieval audience played a very important role, becoming part of the show. The words of another modern stage director remind us that the text required interaction between players and audience "The smallest possible cast for each play varies from four to ten, but in all cases more actors can be used for supporting roles, and members of the audience can be encouraged to participate."⁴

By analyzing how the audience was addressed, how their emotions were appealed to, we may be contributing to a better understanding of the reactions of the medieval audience to these plays, and of the role they played in their production. Moreover, we may be also contributing, in collaboration with theatrical studies, towards a *mise en scène* as similar as possible to that of the Middle Ages; and we may also be contributing to a better understanding of other plays with similar problems, namely that of the lack of written explicit stage directions.

I am afraid I cannot say with Withington that "I am not sure that even the professors could stand the whole of a cycle."⁵ I believe in the appeal of "living books", even if based on a historical interest, and I prefer to side with Coffman when, after accepting the possible dramatic limitations of the scriptural drama, he challenges us "to try to discover how the dramatic or emotional appeal was made actually successful."⁶ A success which kept the plays on the stage for two hundred years, and has awakened the spirit of medieval drama enthusiasts in the 20th century.

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Since the stage directions printed on the manuscript offer no information regarding audience address, it may not be as immediately clear to the reader of the plays that he is being addressed, as it is to the spectator who watches the final product once it has gone through the expertise of a stage director. However, several devices in the construction of the text mark possible halts in the ongoing speeches in order to address the audience, thus being a call for both the reader and the stage director.

On the basis of textual evidence two types of address can be distinguished: the open direct asides and the more subtle kind; both are found embedded in dialogues and monologues, showing a variety of linguistic resources and different discourse functions.

LINGUISTIC RESOURCES

The different linguistic mechanisms that mark a possible aside may be divided into four groups: those related to the actual address, such as vocative expressions, use of apparent “royal we” involving the audience and change of grammatical subject in the middle of a speech; secondly, a mechanism to do with the construction of a speech, namely the long texts with similar sounding paragraphs or repetitions; thirdly, contextual references, where the context goes beyond the play itself and the stage in order to involve the audience’s reality; this is the case of anachronistic references, locative expressions and references to scenic properties. Finally, unsuitable semantic content of certain passages.

1. The actual address

i. Vocatives to the audience

The plays in their role of providers of images to “stir the mind to contemplation and the heart to love “were, in Kolve’s words, “as useful to priests and clerks, lords and ladies, quite as much as they were to the common people.”⁷ The plays were mainly addressed to the unlettered, but the learned were also in the mind of the dramatists. The audience that gathered around the waggons included clergy, aristocracy, burgesses and peasants. If we turn to the text, we find some scenes in which, unless some supporting cast is provided following the decisions of a stage director, the players are addressing no one on stage at all, but, we assume, the audience at large. This is particularly the case of the speeches of great lords such as Pharaoh, Caesar or Herod, and their soldiers and messengers, as well as the prophets. See, for example, Garcio, Cain’s servant, talking on his own, albeit not to himself, and not to any one else imaginable on stage either, and doing this address in the plural:

Garcio. Fellows, here I you forbede
To make nother nose ne cry. (2.10)⁸

The spectators are directly addressed, usually as a whole, in the plural, by means of vocative expressions such as: “old and young, from far and near, all hail!, both of burgh and of town, by fellis and by firth, All ye folk of Israel. // Harkens all, both young and old!” Quite a few of the expressions used are

male-specific, but can probably be taken as involving the whole audience: “fellows, lordyngys, beshewers, gedlings, brodels, both king with crown and barons of birth, sirs.” Sometimes, however, it is clear that only a sector of the public was mentioned, when the speech was only relevant to them. See, for example, an address only to men: “ye men that has wives”. Or only to women: “of wives that are here”. Or the use of vague vocative expressions, particularly, “whoso”, as in:

3 *Shepherd*. Crystys crosse me spede, and Sant Nycholas !
 Therof had I nede; it is wars then it was.
 Whoso couthe take hede and lett the world pas,
 it is euer in drede and brekyll as glas,
 and slythys. (13.118-22)

Such vocative expressions are sometimes inappropriate in the context of the story the play is supposed to depict, and their inappropriateness gives further support to the hypothesis that it is the audience that is being addressed. See, for example, John the Baptist, supposedly preaching the people of Israel, addressing them as “sirs”, which does not sound natural even in the context of a pulpit sermon, but sounds all right in the mouth of someone addressing his superiors, as a player addressing his respectable audience:

John. Syrs, forsake youre wykydnes. (19.275)

I choose the word “respectable” because in the majority of cases, they are so addressed, at least, by mouth, although there are cases of abusive vocatives, such as “harlottys”, as well as authoritarian manipulation of the congregation, as we shall see. Consider, as an example, the address of Tutiullus to the bad souls, which as I suggest below could be aimed at the audience:

Tutiullus. Come to my crofte
 All ye;
 All harlottys and horres,
 And bawdys that procures,
 To bring thaim to lures,
 Welcom to my see!
 Ye lurdans and lyars,
 mychers and thefes, (...)
 All vnto hell. (30. 353-67)

The characters in charge of addressing the audience are as varied as the audience itself: both the authoritarian and the common turn round to the spectators, and women address women, married men advise young men, soldiers and governors frighten the people, shepherds express their laments to their equals, wise men preach and advise, and the devil addresses every single one of them as if the judgement day was that very midsummer afternoon.

ii. Use of apparent “royal we”, involving the audience

Many instances of an apparent “royal we” can be considered as meaning “you and me”, the “you” being the spectators, especially when the speaker belongs to the common people, and appears on stage on his own, monologuing, thus involving the audience in his own experience; in fact, whenever the great charac-

ters, more liable to use the “royal we” speak, they use the first person singular (rather than the plural) in their speeches, however pompous, since they are only referring to themselves, and not involving the spectators.

Consider now the opening lines of the *Secunda Pastorum*, for example, when the 1st Shepherd appears talking to himself in the first person singular:

I Shepherd. I am nerehande dold, so long have I nappyd (...)
 Bot we sely husbandys that walkys on the moore,
 in fayth, we ar nerehandys outt of the doore.
 No wonder, as it standys if we be poore,
 for the tylthe of oure landys lyys falow as the floore (13. 1-13)

This does not seem to be a case of “royal we”, due to the context of a shepherd talking to himself, especially after using the form “I” at the beginning. Having dismissed that interpretation, in my opinion, this is a case of “we” meaning “you and me”, the “you” being the audience, since there is no one else sharing the stage at that moment. This is further proved, when after the above lines he says: “as ye ken.”, (13.14) the “ye” being the public in front of him. From then on, the next “we’s” will be interpreted as a direct address to those among the congregation who are in the same situation as the shepherd.

iii. *Change of grammatical subject.*

The changes are from “you” to “he” and from “he/they” to “you”, in all cases referring to the same persons. The first is characteristic of prayers, in which God is addressed in the second person “you”, and where there is a change of the direction of the speech to a third person “he”, in order to speak to the audience about the former “you”. Let us see a typical example in the opening lines of *Abraham*, when he is praying to God:

Abraham. Adonay, thou God veray,
 Thou hear vs when we to the call
 As thou art he that best may,
 Thou art most socoure and help of all.
 Mightfull lord! to the I pray,
 Let onys the oyle of mercy fall!
 Shall I neuer abide that day,
 Truly yit I hope I shall.
 Mercy, Lord omnipotent ! (4. 1-9)

After nine lines of addressing God, Abraham suddenly refers to Him in the third person singular, thus:

Long syn he this warld has wroght; (4. 10)

To end up telling the history of Man until his time. Is it not likely that all this was addressed to the audience, in the manner of a Sunday sermon ?

A good example of the second change of grammatical subject, from “he/they” to “you”, is the long spe-

ech of Tutiullus when he arrives in hell with more than ten thousand souls and introduces himself to the first demon. Apart from some possible supporting cast, the text is probably meant to be addressed to the audience in order to make it sound more effective. There are several references to “here”, which admittedly could refer to the mob he brings with him, but could also refer to the space shared by players and audience:

Tutiullus. Of femellys a quantite here fynde I parte. (30.254)⁹

Obviously, they could not fit so many bad souls on the stage waggon, while addressing the multitudinous crowds would have served the double purpose of having the players there ready, and doing some direct and relevant sermonising at the same time. Not only that, but after referring to the sinners in the third person (which if addressed to the audience, as I suggest, could have been accompanied by side looks and gesticulation), Tutiullus changes to “you”, after using an in-between “this” reference, which almost sounds as if he was moving nearer and nearer to his audience until possibly physically touching them (for example, by getting off the waggon, or approaching them if in an arena):

Tutiullus. Bot with youre yolow lökkys,
ffor all youre many mökkys,
ye shall clym on hell crokkys
with a halpeny heltere. (30.319-22)¹⁰

2. The construction of long speeches: repetitions

We may guess an intention to address the audience in some long speeches which can be broken down into several paragraphs of a similar enough content. These smaller paragraphs may have been quite likely recited looking at different sectors of the watching audience, since otherwise such a concatenation of similar ideas seems to make no sense. These long texts seem to be aimed at the audience also because of the presence of vocative expressions referring to them and not to other players on stage, making the spectators play the role of imaginary crowds. This could apply to the discussion of sins in the Judgement play, since there are so many sins, that perhaps they could be enumerated looking at different sections of the audience, as if they were the sinners. Also, some of the introductory speeches of great earthly lords, such as Pharaoh or Caesar, could be interpreted in this way. See, for example,

Pharao. Peas, of payn that no man pas;
bot kepe the course that I commaunde,
And take good hede of hym that has
youre helth all holy in hys hande;
ffor kyng pharro my fader Was,
And led thys lordshyp of thys land;
I am hys hayre as age Wyll has,
Euer in stede to styr or stand.

All Egypt is myne awne
To leede aftyr my law;
I Wold my myght Were knowne

And honoryd, as hyt awe.
 ffull low he shall be thrawne
 That harkyns not my sawe,
 hanged hy and drawne,
 Therfor no boste ye blaw;
 Bot as for kyng I commaund peasse,
 To all the people of thys empyre.
 looke no man put hym self in preasse,
 Bot that Wyll do as I desyre,
 And of youre Wordis look that ye seasse.
 Take tent to me, youre soferand syre,
 That may youre comfort most increasse,
 And to my lyst bowe lyfe and lyre. (8.1-24)

where in each of the three sections, Pharaoh commands the audience to keep silent under terrible threats, so that he can talk to them about his great power.

3. Contextual references

i. The use of anachronisms

I believe that the audience is particularly in the mind of the anonymous authors when they sprinkle their dialogues with anachronisms. Their intentionality, to “make the biblical lesson more vivid or the moral teaching more effective,”¹¹ may be justified by their success in conveying a quick direct relevant message to the spectators, apart, of course, from the more human end of provoking laughter. “Thus, the dramatist might be fully as much concerned with driving a point home as with raising a laugh.”¹² Is this not, then, another subtle way to address an audience rather than just the characters on stage? What can the well-known ale of Healey mean to a shepherd in Bethlehem? Could this have been pronounced with a wink at the public?

ii. Locative expressions

There are references to space interspersed in the conversations; some are fairly neutral in meaning, such as “in this place” or just “here”, and could indeed refer to the space of the biblical stories, especially if they do not appear in the context of an address to the audience; however, by analogy with other more specific references, out of place in the context of the story depicted, some of them could be taken as references to the space in which the show is performed, i.e. to the space shared by both players and audience, and thus be an indication of audience address. Conversely, instances of clear asides which include a locative expression, may be clues as to the place and manner of representation of the cycle, a point which is by no means settled among scholars.¹³ Let us examine one example: among other things, Caesar Augustus commands everybody to “sit down still”. If this is an address to the audience, as I believe, this could perhaps refer to the way the spectators were watching the show, that is, sitting down, which would favour the idea of a stationary rather than processional presentation whether indoors or outdoors:

Imperator. Ston stylly ye wold syt downe (9.12).

iii. References to props.

Stage directions do not indicate the scenic properties, or props, which are necessary to perform the plays. But we can guess which ones were needed not only from a logical reading with a mind to put on a show, but also from actual textual reference to some of the main instruments used, some of which were probably meant to stir the minds of the medieval people to some of the most crucial events in the history of Redemption, by stirring their senses first: the stool and veil for the buffeting, the nails and hammer for the crucifixion, the tree for the cross and loads of blood. All this must have been very impressive, helping that idea of a living book. The fact that they are mentioned in the course of conversations rather than as a stage direction for players, might respond to a deliberate intention to draw the spectators' attention to them, therefore constituting an example of indirect address.

4. Semantic content

Whenever the semantic content of a speech does not seem to fit in the development of the biblical story, or is out of place in a particular context, we may be confronting a situation of audience address. The clearest examples of this are cases where deliberate sermonising is at work. See, for example, John baptising Christ:

John. Here I the anoint also
with oyle and creme, in this intent:
That men may wit, where so thay go.
this is a worthy sacrament.
There ar sex othere and no mo. (19. 193-7).

Is John really telling Christ, of all people, how many sacraments there are? Moreover, is this not an utterly out-of-place comment anyway, in the context, when the Sacraments had not been instituted yet? Is he not, deep down, addressing the audience at that moment?

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: CHANGE OF DISCOURSE FUNCTION

All the above linguistic devices may be included in different examples of changes in discourse function. These take place in those passages in which a character starts speaking about something in particular related to the story itself, for example his bad luck in marriage, and ends up addressing the audience present, such as warning young men against marrying. Whenever this takes place, it is usually subtle for a reader of the plays, but must have been very effective on stage, as if the imaginary story came alive all of a sudden, involving all the spectators, who by art of magic become shepherds with the shepherds, or watching Jews being harassed by Roman soldiers, or bad souls being thrown to hell at the Judgement.

Changes of discourse function occur inside both monologues and dialogues. If we turn to the former first, we could ask ourselves what the point of a monologue is in a dramatic performance in the context of the mystery plays. "The monologue", in Diller's words, "is full of concrete details which appeal to the common experience of speaker and audience."¹⁴ In my opinion, they help involve the audience by

sharing their experience with the players, their emotions and real life are appealed to, and thus they become actors in essence themselves, since they feel they have the same experiences as those shown on stage, when in fact the process is the other way round: everyday experiences are taken on to the stage, mirroring life back. It is not a difficult task to address the audience from inside a monologue; in a way, it seems more natural than from inside a dialogue. Let us see some examples of this:

1. Changes from inside a monologue

i. A monologue may become a piece of advice, addressed to the audience, as in:

2 Shepherd. Bot, yong men, of wowyng, for God that you boght
Be well war of wedyng, and thynk in youre thoght. (13. 91-2)

ii. It may also become a sermon, which is not surprising if we bear in mind that in Corpus Christi plays “dramatic effectiveness of the material selected was secondary to moral instruction, and of importance only as it aided the chief purpose of the plays.”¹⁵

John. Syrs, forsake youre wykydnes,
Pryde, envy, slowth, wrath, and lechery.
here gods seruice, more & lesse;
Pleas god with prayng, thus red I;
Be war when deth comys with dystres,
So that ye dy not sodanly.
Deth sparis none that lyf has borne,
Therfor thynk on what I you say;
Beseche youre god both euen and morne
you for to saue from syn that day.
Thynk how in baptym ye ar sworne
To be godis seruandis, withoutten nay;
let neuer his luf from you be lorne. (19. 275-87)

iii. A change in the course of a monologue which suggests an address to the audience also occurs when a character describes or explains something so obvious that it seems out of place in the middle of talking to himself. For example, if the Second Shepherd in *Secunda Pastorum* is monologuing, why does he describe his wife to himself? Is he not describing her to the audience, then, since there is no one else to talk to?:

2 Shepherd. For, as euer rede I pystyll, I have oone to my fere
As sharp as thystyll, as rough as a brere;
She is browyd lyke a brystyll, with a sowre-loten chere;
Had she oones wett hyr whystyll, she couth syng full clere
Hyr Paternoster.
She is as greatt as a whall,
She has a galon of gall;
By hym that dyed for vs all,

I wald I had ryn to I had lost hyr! (13. 100-8)

iv. Another instance is that in which the character stops monologuing in order to gain the agreement and sympathy of the audience, as well as involve them in his situation:

1 Shepherd. I thank it God, hark ye what I mene. (12. 19)

2. A change from inside a dialogue

The same kind of changes can be observed inside a dialogue, which I take to include conversations between at least two characters on stage, and instances of praying, since these imply the existence of an addressee other than oneself or the spectators.

i. In the same way as in the monologues, one character may change from conversing to advising and moralising, as Mak's wife does after her complaint about all the work she has to do:

Vxor. Why, who wanders, who wakys? Who commys, who gose?
 Who brewys, who bakys? What makys me thus hose?
 And than
 It is rewthe to beholde
 Now in hote, now in colde,
 Full wofull is the householde
 That wantys a woman. (13. 415-21).

ii. A most interesting change is that from prayer to sermon, since it involves not only the change of the logical content of the speech, but also a change of grammatical subject, as when Noah is praying to God, addressing him as "thou" during the fourteen opening lines, until he suddenly refers to God in the third person: Noah abandons his prayer and ends up explaining the history of the fall of the angels to the spectators:

Noah. Myghtfull God veray, maker of all that is,
 Thre persons withoutten nay, oone God in endles blis,
 Thou maide both nyght and day, beest, fowle, and fysh;
 All creatures that lif may wroght thou at thi wish,
 As thou wel myght.
 The son, the moyne, verament,
 Thou maide; the firmament;
 The sternes also full feruent,
 To shyne thou maide ful bright.
 Angels thou maide ful euen, all orders that is,
 To haue the blis in heuen: this did thou more and les,
 Full mervelus to neuen. Yit was ther vnkyndnes
 More bi foldys seuen then I can well expres,
 Forwhi
 Of all angels in brightnes
 God gaf Lucifer most lightnes. (3. 1-16).

(...)

Soyne after, that gracyous Lord to his liknes maide man,
 That place to be restord, euen as he began;
 Of the Trinite bi accord, Adam, and Eue that woman,
 To multiplie without discord, in Paradise put he thaym,
 And sithen to both
 Gaf in commaundement
 On the tre of life to lay no hend. (3. 28-34).

iii. One character may address the audience from inside a dialogue on stage in order to gain their agreement and sympathy, the same way as from within a monologue, or to explain something about what is going on, as when Mak's wife comments about her husband:

Vxor. Lo, he coMmys with a lote,
 As he were holden in the throte. (13. 409-10)

Or when Mak does the same thing about his wife:

Mak. Wyll ye here what fare she makys to gett hir a glose?
 And dos nocht bot lakys, and clowse hir toose. (13. 413-4)

Or when Noah explains to the audience about his wife's customs:

Noah. Thou can both byte and whyne
 With a rerd;
 For all if she stryke,
 Yit fast will she skryke;
 In fayth, I hold none slyke
 In all medill-erd. (3. 229-34)

THE MESSAGE OF THE ADDRESS

Once we have identified who are addressed and how this is done, we are in a better position to examine more precisely what the congregation is told during the course of the performance. The players try and connect with their audience, what Brown calls to "establish themselves with the audience as well as with the situation of the drama."¹⁶ They also manipulate them, usually in an abusive manner, and finally they end up preaching to them.

The connecting is done in a number of ways, usually verbally, such as giving advice, particularly in the shape of proverbs, extra information about the story, making a comment about a character, asking for consent. See, for example:

Noah. Yee men that has wifys, whyls thay ar yong,
 if ye luf youre lifys, chastice thare tong. (3. 397-8)

We can also consider extra-textual references that have a direct appeal on the audience's minds and hearts. Although this is the realm of theatrical studies rather than philological analysis, I would like to mention briefly that intonation, gesticulation and looks, accenting the "you's" and "here's, together with appropriate selection of music, would have certainly helped the illusion of the role played by the audience in the play, contributing to making them feel as much of a protagonist as the players themselves, which is what the playwrights might have been after, in order to make the Christian message nearer and contemporary, and above all, alive. Also, I would like to mention those particularly important moments which both players and audience share and which may be missed in a hurried reading of the plays: those that involve silence. Silence typically has to be guessed, but some textual references to it appear. The most obvious example is the refusal of Christ to speak in the presence of Annas and Caiaphas.

The manipulating is done verbally, in the shape of commands and threats, usually clothed in an air of abuse and authority, and without making them move out of their seats. But the imagination of a stage director could produce a performance in which the players actually come into close contact with the spectators, to the point of making them participate as if they belonged to the cast; due to such a manipulation, the audience would come to react physically and collaborate, becoming fully involved in the biblical story. Textual reference show that the spectators are given instructions, particularly to keep silent at the beginning of the show:

Garcio. Bot let youre lippis couer youre ten,
Harlottys euerychon!
For if my master com, welcom hym then. (2. 21-3)

They are threatened, as by Herod in his final address:

Herod. No sufferan you sauys; youre nekkys shall I shak
in sonder.
No king ye on call
But on Herode the ryall,
Or els many oone shall
Apon youre bodys wonder.
For if I here it spokyn, when I come agayn,
Your branys bese brokyn; therefor be ye bayn. (16. 499-506)

They are abused and insulted, as by Garcio at the opening of the play:

Garcio. Felows, here I you forbede
To make nother nose ne cry;
Whoso is so hardy to do that dede,
The dwell hang hym vp to dry! (2. 10-3)

But they are also blessed, as when the 2nd Shepherd of *Prima Pastorum* enters the stage, at the beginning of the play:

2 *Shepherd*. Bensté, bensté be vs emang,
 And saue all that I se here in this thrang!
 He saue you and me, ouerthwart and endlang,
 That hang on a tre, I say you no wrang. (12. 46-9)

The blessing can also take place at the end of a play, in the way of an “adieu”, as when Garcio says good-bye:

Garcio. Now old and yong, or that ye weynd,
 The same blissyng withoutten end,
 All sam then shall ye haue,
 That God of heuen my master has giffen.
 Browke it well, whils that ye liffen;
 He vowche it full well safe. (2. 444-9)

Moral instruction inspired the production of the plays in the first place, and this could not be left to the realm of subtlety: direct sermonising is therefore a must here and there, and this is done at three levels. In the first place, we find biblical exegesis. Thus, the spectators learn about the history of Redemption as explained in the whole of the Bible (from the creation of the world, the fall of the angels, the creation of man, the expulsion from Paradise, etc.) from the mouth of Noah, for example; a similar version is repeated by Abraham; also about the ten commandments; they learn about the prophecies related to the birth of Christ; about Doomsday, and so on. Secondly, there is warning against sinning and spectators are pictorially shown the horrible punishment they are bound to suffer, and thirdly, they are told about ecclesiastical hierarchy and other church-related matters, both earthly and doctrinal, interspersed in the biblical events in the manner of anachronistic interferences, varying from the names of clerical books, such as epistles and graduals, to the existence of the Seven Sacraments.

These plays were produced in order to bring the Christian message nearer to the people, to humanize Christianity, in Rossiter’s words, to get the message down from the altars onto the street. This meant trying to catch people’s attention on a long hot summer’s day, and keep them interested. A constant address to them would manage this, and at the same time, keep them watching. This constant address to the audience, sometimes open, sometimes more subtle, results in their complete involvement in the play that they are watching. The audience becomes part of the show.

This vast crowd watching in the street might have been nodding in consent, laughing in amusement, trembling in fear: their inner feelings were being directly stirred by the realistic dramatization of the biblical story, which was involving them as well. Moreover, an air of social protest and criticism, mingled with religious instruction, imbued the atmosphere of the medieval English towns, the air which that medieval audience was breathing.

This is the feeling one experiences today when watching these performances, particularly, in my opinion, during the Crucifixion and the Lifting of the Cross. I agree with the words of a scholar cited by Coffman¹⁷, who said that he “would gladly have exchanged the stage play or the movie for a day or a week in any one of a hundred towns in medieval England along about Corpus Christi day.” And I would like you to join in and see if you do not feel called when you hear and see the following,¹⁸ against a twentieth century urban background:

Jesus. I pray you pepyll that passe me by,
 that lede youre lyfe so lykandly,
 heyfe vp youre hartys on hight!
 Behold if euer ye sagh body
 buffet & bett thus bloody. (23. 233-7)

Are we not part of the people that pass by, is it not our life that is pleasant, is it not our own hearts that are called at this very moment?

NOTES

¹ Pickering, K. 1986: *The Mysteries at Canterbury Cathedral*. Worthing, Churchman Publishing Limited. p.ix.

² Kolve, V.A. 1966. *The play called Corpus Christi*. Standford, Standford University Press. p.5

³ Kolve. *Op. cit.* p.7

⁴ Brown, J.R. 1983: *The complete plays of the Wakefield Master*. London, Heinemann. p.3.

⁵ Withington, R. 1930: "The Corpus Christi play as drama". *Studies in Philology* 27: 578

⁶ Coffman, G.R. 1929: "A plea for the study of the Corpus Christi Play as drama." *Studies in Philology* 26: 411-24.

⁷ Kolve. *Op. cit.* p.5-6.

⁸ References to the texts of the pageants are by number, as follows:

2. *Mactacio Abel.*

3. *Processus Noe cum filiis.*

4. *Abrabam.*

8. *Pharao.*

9. *Cesar Augustus.*

12. *Pagina Pastorum.*

13. *Alia eorundem.*

19. *Johannes Baptista.*

16. *Magnus Herodes.*

23. *Processus Crucis.*

30. *Judicium.*

Texts number 2, 3, 12, 13 and 16 correspond to the edition by A.C. Cawley; the others to the edition by G. England, & A. Pollard.

⁹ Note other examples:

Tutiullus. That fals swerars shall hider com mo then a thowsand skore (30. 279).

Tutiullus. Yit of these kyrkchaterars, here ar a mence. (30. 296).

¹⁰ Further examples are:

Tutiullus. In sweryng thai grefe godys son (30. 280)

Tutiullus. These laddys thai leven as lordys riall (30. 307).

¹¹ Withington. *Op. cit.* p.578.

¹² Coffman. *Op. cit.* p. 423.

¹³ Moreover, some of these have proved to be a point of discussion and have been used by scholars to prove the pro-

cessional versus the stationary staging of the plays in Wakefield.

¹⁴ Diller, H.J. 1972: "The craftsmanship of the Wakefield Master." In Taylor, J. & A.H.Nelson eds. 1972: *Medieval English Drama*. Chicago, Chicago University Press: 245-259.

¹⁵ Withington. *Op. cit.* p.578.

¹⁶ Brown, J.R. *Op. cit.*

¹⁷ Coffman. *Op. cit.* p.416.

¹⁸ A colour photograph of the Crucifixion taken during a performance in July 1994, at Birmingham Cathedral, is shown at this point. This shows Christ up on the Cross pronouncing the words in 23.233-7 against a twentieth century background.

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