THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE

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THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE

by

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ABSTRACT

The major themes of The Castle of Perseverance and their theological aspects are examined, with some discussion of these themes as they appear in other early morality plays. The study also speculates on how these themes might be transposed from printed page to theatrical stage.

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INTRODUCTION

The Castle of Perseverance, the finest example of the full-scope morality play, includes all the major themes of that genre, among them the battle of good and evil, the coming of death, and the debates of the body and soul as well as of the daughters of God. The purpose of this study is to trace these themes within the structure of the play and attempt to deal with their theological implications. The Castle, through the expression of these themes, teaches a lesson about right living. It presents the virtues of a moral life by means of personifications which simplify and dramatize the more complex theological issues.

In Chapter I, the areas of investigation of this thesis will include a consideration of The Castle as a morality play. Its generic form will be analyzed in terms of other plays of this type, specifically The Pride of Life and Everyman. Also, the morality play will be viewed in light of the medieval sermon tradition. Chapter II involves a discussion of the Banns or Prologue of The Castle and a comparison with the Banns of the N. Town Cycle of the Corpus Christi

plays. The purpose here is to demonstrate that there is a structural relationship between the moralities and the mystery plays, both of which form a fundamental part of medieval drama.

The main consideration of this thesis will be presented in Chapters III and IV. Here I shall deal with the most important religious themes in The Castle. The psychomachia, or battle between the vices and virtues, which finds its source in Prudentius' epic poem of that name, is discussed in Chapter III. Here I shall make reference to Langland's The Vision of Piers Plowman, in part a medieval illustration of this theme, and Chaucer's The Parson's Tale. In Chapter IV I shall discuss three other theological themes. They are expressed by David Bevington as "the coming of Death to Mankind, the debate of body and soul, and the parliament of heaven or the debate of the four daughters of God"[1]. These form a smaller structural part of the play, but are theologically essential, since they involve the salvation of mankind.

In the fifth Chapter, I shall investigate briefly the dramatic aspects of all four themes discussed, and comment upon the different critical views concerning the staging of the play.

The Castle of Perseverance offers moral instruction

and presents a system showing man how to live as a proper and thoughtful Christian. I hope to demonstrate by this study that The Castle is an example for its medieval audience, providing an acting out of Christian experience in an interesting and instructive way.

NOTES

Introduction

[1]David Bevington, ed., Medieval Drama (Boston: 1975), p. 796.

I

THE MORALITY PLAY GENRE

> The case of oure comynge you to declare,
> Every man in hym-self for sothe he it
> may fynde,
> Whou Mankynde into his werld born is
> ful bare
> And bare schall beryed be at hys last
> ende.
>
> (ll. 14-17)

In its essence, the morality play presents allegorically a lesson for man's spiritual benefit. The Pride of Life, The Castle of Perseverance, and Everyman (listed in order of date of composition) conform to this basic definition of the morality play. In terms both of structure and of the established date, these plays have much in common with each other and with contemporary English morality plays.

In order to discuss these three plays in the tradition of the morality context, it is necessary to look at the morality genre and establish some basic facts. In its true form, the morality is distinguished from previous drama by certain characteristic themes treated allegorically. These themes include the conflict of vices and virtues for supremacy

in man's life, the coming of Death, the question of man's fate as debated by the Body and the Soul, and the Parliament of Heaven which involves the four daughters of God. They all focus upon man's ultimate salvation and how his secular conduct effects his salvation.

The morality is also characterized by a definite purpose. Whereas the mystery or miracle play brings before the medieval Christian the important facts of the Bible, the morality preaches a dramatized sermon.[1] The basic conflict between good and evil, the fall of man, and his redemption are all part of common medieval religious teaching. Moral instruction which was presented in the morality as part of this teaching had great appeal in the Middle Ages. There seems to have been a great capacity of the medieval mind to construct and to enjoy moral allegory, as evidenced by the fact that there are almost sixty extant morality plays.[2]

Most critics feel that the plays developed out of the lively pulpit literature of the Middle Ages. It is not the purpose of this study to present the historical context of the sermon. However, because of its alliance with the stage, it will be useful to present an overview of the structure of the popular sermon as well as to determine its relevance to the

morality play.

The structure of the traditional medieval sermon contains six parts.[3] The first part is called the theme, which is always expressed in a Biblical text. This text is appropriate for the occasion on which the sermon is to be delivered. Some manuscripts include marginal notes indicating the Sunday for which the sermon is intended. For example, the marginal note for sermon #18 from Middle English Sermons, a collection edited by Woodburn O. Ross, reads: "Dominica prima A[d]uentus Domini". This note indicates that the sermon is appropriate for the first Sunday in Advent.[4] The text for this sermon reads: Abiciamus opera tenebrarum" (Romans 13:12).(a)

The second part, which is sometimes omitted, is called the protheme and is used for a prayer or the introduction of a new theme. Sometimes it is used for some aspect of the original theme which would not be presented later in the sermon. Ross, in his introduction to Middle English Sermons, points out that this part of the traditional sermon was being used less often in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[5] The tendency seems to have been a fusing of theme and protheme.

The third of the main parts of the sermon is

(a)Let us cast off the works of darkness.

the introduction to the discussion of the theme. This introduction serves as an attention-getting device which leads to the fourth part, the division of the theme. In a statement of sub-topics, usually three, this part explains or dilates the meaning of the theme. G. W. Owst, in his analysis of the sermon form, suggests that this number of divisions would not be difficult for the preacher who has "that characteristic medieval love of symbolic numbers"[6]. Sermon #18 from Middle English Sermons contains key words and phrases within the division of the theme, and these reflect the text (quoted above) and serve as guides for the main body of the sermon. To illustrate, the sermon-writer uses such expressions as "derkenes of peyn in hell" (l. 10, p. 106), "ouere-comm oure aduersary þe fende" (l. 14, p. 106), and "feght ȝe with þe old serpent, þat is þe fiend" (ll. 34-35, p. 106). These references are used often in the body of the sermon.

The fifth part of the traditional sermon is the most important. In his introduction, Ross lists several methods which are most frequently used in the sermons which have come down to us. The method which has the most relevance to this study of The Castle of Perseverance is the exemplum or "moralized anecdote"[7], as Owst calls it.

The exempla are collections of commonplace stories which were used to help the preacher make more pointed the doctrine of the sermon. The tradition of the exempla can be traced to the parables of the New Testament. In his study of the relationship between the morality and the sermon, Elbert N. S. Thompson cites several examples of their use by preaching friars (Saint Dominic, Jacques de Vitry, Alain de Lille, Stephen of Besancon),[8] and also lists the broad range of topics they covered ("history of all shades of authenticity, Saints' legends, fable literature and folk-lore, personal experiences...."[9]). There are many different manuals and treatises that were available to preachers and literary writers. Morton V. Bloomfield lists Raymond of Peñafort's Summa casium poenitentiae, Guilielmus Peraldus' Summae de Vicius et Virtutibus, and Friar Lorens' Somme le roy as the three most valuable source-books of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for preaching about the seven deadly sins.[10] For gathering together exempla during this period, there were Jacques de Vitry's Sermones vulgares, John Bromyard's Summa praedicantium, as well as An Alphabet of Tales and Gesta Romanorum.[11] G. W. Owst also includes John Myrc's Festial and Instructions for Parish Priests as being important homiletic compendiums.[12]

There was also Jacob's Well, a fascinating religious encyclopedia of the early fifteenth century. It is a sermon collection punctuated with exempla and structured around an allegory of a well which represents man's soul. The didactic purpose is that man must remove the layers of sin at the bottom of this well in order to reach the virtues beneath.

The most frequently used types of exempla seem to be those taken from sources other than the sacred ones.[13] For example, the following exemplum, taken from Middle English Sermons, criticizes a woman for looking about her in church, a common occurrence, no doubt:

> And þer-fore be-ware þat þou be not like a vomman þat I rede of. I rede þat þer com a grett lorde into a churche. And he loked on ys on side and saw where a grett ientill satt on knees and red on hure primore; but euer as anny man com in-to þe churche or yente owte, she loked aftur hem. Þis seyinge, þis grett lorde, þe maner of þis ientil-womman, þat she loked so aftur euery man and toke none hede to hur preyours, he vent to hur and seide, "Damysell, blessed be youre boke, but myche my[s]auntur com to your lorde.
>
> (ll. 24-33, p. 154)

As we can see from this illustration, the exempla could be drawn from everyday life, perhaps to amuse as well as to instruct.

Dialogue, which is an essential ingredient of the morality play and, indeed, of all drama, appears as a technique within the exempla of the traditional sermon. In fact, Thompson insists that the relating of exempla necessitated dialogue.[14] The conversational style of the long exemplum (88 lines) in sermon #41 from Middle English Sermons is indicative of this technique. The angel Gabriel is sent by God to announce to Mary her impending conception. The dialogue begins with Gabriel addressing God:

> Fadur and Lord of euery heuenly
> and erthly creature, to þei is all
> þinge knowon.
>
> (ll. 23-24, p. 257)

He continues to speak, expressing his concern that Mary may not "ȝeue credence" (l. 36, p. 257) to Gabriel's words, doubting his position as "trewe messanger" (l. 37, p. 257). God assures Gabriel that because he will be marked by God's "signet of grace" (l. 16, p. 258), Mary will receive Gabriel. The angel carries out his mission, assuring Mary of her importance:

> But Ladi, þis Sonne þat þou shalte
> have shall not be litill of valowe,
> but þe naturall Sonne of allmyȝthy
> God.
>
> (ll. 18-20, p. 259)

The familiarity of the dialogue style here creates a dramatic effect, especially since the characters are Biblical.

From Jacob's Well we find an example of dialogue within an exemplum which illustrates a contemporary situation for the medieval congregation:

> Exaumple. Cesarius, a clerk, seyth þat at Parys a ryche man wyth gouyll and fals getyn good wente to mayster Peers, chauntour of Parys, and askyd hym how he myȝte be sauyd. Þe chauntour seyde, "do crye þat þou art redy to restore to alle men!" he dyd so, and restoryd to þe ownerys, and com aȝen to mayster Peers and seyde, "I haue restoryd alle godys falsly gett to my conscyens." Mayster Peers seyde, "Is þere now ony good lefte to þe-self?" Þe man seyde, "Ȝa, I have ȝit good ynow."
>
> (ll. 15-22, p. 208)

The dialogue continues for several more lines. It clearly illustrates that verbal exchange between characters whose personalities would be familiar to a congregation was a useful sermon technique.

G. R. Owst agrees that dialogue plays a large part in the sermon exemplum, particularly as debate. He establishes the term in the following way:

> From quite early times a curious use of the Dialogue is prominent in Christian preaching, by means of which 'extensive imaginary speeches' are put into the mouths of well-known Biblical characters, or of the angelic and diabolic disputants who argue for possession of the souls of men around the Judgement seat of Christ.[15]

The dialogue between Gabriel and Mary which I have

discussed (see page 11 of this thesis), illustrates this idea. It is also evident in Jacob's Well, in the dialogue between angels and fiends contending for a rich man's soul. Four fiends and four angels argue in turn for the soul of a rich man who died in an abbey. The fiends each speak a four-line stanza and then the angels have their say. The fourth angel (who has eleven lines to speak) sums up the debate by admonishing the fiends:

> In þis synfull wyȝt
> haue ȝe no ryȝt,
> þerfore hens slyȝt
> ffeendys ȝe pace!
>
> (ll. 30-33, p. 140)

The dialogue is over and "þe ffeendys wentyn awey; þe aungelys boryn þe soule to blys" (l. 34, p. 140).

From this examination of the dramatic techniques of exemplum and dialogue which the sermon includes, I conclude that this form of writing had an influence on the morality play. The stereotyped warnings of the sermons which are presented in the exempla are dramatized in the plays. The message of both pulpit literature and stage moral literature is the same: the duty of man is to love and obey God, and lead a proper life. This message, with its many implications, is realized in the morality play tradition.

To begin my discussion of specific plays, I have chosen the earliest extant morality, The Pride of Life (c. 1400). The play, as we know it, is a fragmentary work. The Prologue, however, permits a reconstruction of the play, even though it breaks off after 502 lines. The representative mankind figure in this morality is called the King of Life. He fears no one and therefore rejects the advice of his Queen and his Bishop that Death is approaching. He challenges Death in combat and is defeated:

> Sone affter hit befel þat Deth & Life
> Beth togeder i-take:
> & ginnith & striuith a sterne strife
> King of Life to wrake
>
> [Deth] him drivith adoun to grounde,
> He dredit nothing his knizstis;
> & delith him depe depis wounde
> & kith on him his mizstis.
> (ll. 85-92)

This, however, is not the climax of the play. Peter J. Houle in his summary of the plot suggests that the central figure:

> possibly appears before God the Father who, at the request of the Blessed Virgin, grants salvation to the King of Life.[16]

As in The Castle, the representative mankind figure achieves salvation at the end of the play. The difference lies in the method by which this salvation is achieved. In The Pride of Life, the sinful soul is redeemed through

the intercession of "Our Lady mylde" (l. 97). In The Castle, man is saved by God who, after the Four Daughters of God debate, decides in favour of Mercy and Peace. The theme of the Debate between the Body and Soul in The Pride of Life is given special importance by Thompson. He points out that near the end of the play:

> the Virgin begs Christ to allow the King's soul to dispute with his body, and thereby gets a reconsideration of his sentence, and his eventual release from the hands of the devil.[17]

The same theme is found in The Castle. In both plays this debate (which I shall discuss in Chapter IV) comes after Death's arrival on the scene and covers another crisis in man's spiritual journey.

The morality play next in date appears to be The Castle of Perseverance which belongs to the early years of the fifteenth century. All the leading themes which occur singly in other moralities occur here together. According to Mark Eccles, editor of the Early English Text Society's The Macro Plays, the play cannot be dated precisely, but may have been written between 1400 and 1425:

> This is consistent with an allusion to crakows, pointed toes on shoes.... The known references to crakows as a current fashion were probably written between 1382 and 1425.[18]

If such dating is accurate, it means that The Castle is the earliest non-fragmentary morality play.

The play focuses upon the central problem of man's salvation. The central figure is a human being; his varying fortunes as he passes from childhood to old age supply the incidents, and his ultimate destiny completes the action. Around him are grouped the allegorical figures of the seven heavenly virtues and the seven deadly vices, who externalize or dramatize the inner workings of his mind. At his sides are his good and bad angels, while at the end of life waits heaven or hell to receive him. This is the concept of the full-scope morality play, the sermo corporeus[19] as Thompson calls it, a play of man's pilgrimage through life which touches upon four characteristic themes. Since these themes within The Castle are the main subject of this thesis, they will be more carefully examined in Chapters III and IV.

The theme of the coming of Death, a prominent concept in the Middle Ages, is most strongly echoed in the play, Everyman (c. 1500), written approximately a century after The Pride of Life, and the latest of the three morality plays considered in this thesis.(b)

(b) Everyman closely resembles the Dutch play, Elckerlijc, by Peter of Diest. A. C. Cawley speculates that "one of them is a translation of the other" in his edition of Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays (London: 1956), p. 205.

W. Roy Mackenzie suggests that it is a better example of the morality than The Castle of Perseverance or The Pride of Life in its "human interest and tragic pathos"[20]. The theme of the coming of Death occupies much of the play. Death informs the representative figure of Everyman of his approaching demise. Everyman tries to bribe the unwelcome visitor. He fails, but he is allowed to search for any friends who will accompany him on his pilgrimage. Everyman calls in turn Fellowship, Kinsmen, Goods, and Riches. Each request fails. Good Deeds finally permits his sister who is called Knowledge to accompany Everyman. He is led to Confession and, once Penance is completed, Everyman rejoins Good Deeds. After receiving Holy Communion and Extreme Unction, he dies. An Angel welcomes him to heaven and a Doctor ends the play with a speech to the audience:

> This moral men may have in mind,
> Ye Hearers, take it of worth, old
> and young,
> And forsake Pride, for he deceiveth
> you in the end;
> And remember Beauty, Five Wits,
> Strength, and Discretion,
> They all at the last do every man
> forsake,
> Save his Good Deeds there doth he
> take.
>
> (ll. 902-907)

The play is an allegory showing how man faces and overcomes death. The author focuses attention on the closing scenes of man's earthly life and considers briefly the sacraments of the church, penance and shrift. The early part of Everyman's life is only suggested, unlike the journey of Mankind in The Castle, who moves from the cradle to the grave and beyond.

The central Mankind figures of each play, however, respond similarly in their fear of death and in their victory over it; their victories in each case result in a "triumphant expression of Christian faith and Catholic doctrine"[21].

To summarize, then, the morality plays as a generic form incorporate within them a homiletic tone which is concerned with man's salvation. They portray man with his weaknesses and then show how he is able to overcome temptation and despair with repentance and ultimately heavenly grace. The playwrights communicate their messages by means of allegorical representation. The central allegorical figure of mankind emerges from the action as having shown true penitence, and illustrates the truth that man may help himself. When he does, other forces are ready to support him.

As we move on to a study of the Banns of The Castle of Perseverance, we shall see a correlation in the structure and purpose between the morality plays and the miracle or mystery plays. Both morality and cyclical pageant drama are interested in man's spiritual welfare and his relationship with God, and both are religious in meaning.

NOTES

Chapter I

[1]W. Roy Mackenzie, The English Moralities from the Point of View of Allegory (New York: 1966), p. 9.

[2]Peter J. Houle, The English Morality and Related Drama (Connecticut: 1972), pp. vii-viii.

[3]Woodburn O. Ross, ed., Middle English Sermons EETS OS 209 (London: 1940), p. xliv.

[4]Ibid., p. 103.

[5]Ibid., p. xlv.

[6]G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Oxford: 1966), p. 322.

[7]Ibid., p. 149.

[8]Elbert N. S. Thompson, The English Moral Plays (New York: 1910), p. 300.

[9]Ibid., p. 301.

[10]Morton V. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (Michigan: 1952), p. 124.

[11]Ibid., p. 131.

[12]G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England (London: 1926), pp. 296-97.

[13]Ross, p. lx.

[14]Thompson, p. 305.

[15]Owst, p. 537.

[16]Houle, p. 122.

[17]Thompson, p. 354.

[18]Mark Eccles, ed., The Macro Plays EETS OS 262 (London: 1969), p. xii.

[19]Thompson, p. 312.

[20]Mackenzie, p. 206.

[21]A. C. Cawley, ed., Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays (London: 1956), p. 205.

II

THE BANNS

> All goode neyborys ful specyaly
> we ȝou pray,
> And loke þat ȝe be þere betyme,
> luffely and lyth.
> (ll. 136-37)

The Banns of The Castle of Perseverance are the proclamations which give advance publicity to a forthcoming performance. This explicatory device is similar to that used in The Pride of Life in which a speaker recites the plot of the play to the audience. The twelve stanzas of the Banns are read in turn by two vexillators or flagbearers, who are indicated in the nomina ludentium as follows: "in primis ij vexillatores". Their purpose is to inform the people about the substance of the play and the time of the performance.

The twelve verses of thirteen lines each form a neat package in which the essence of the play is presented. The first vexillator begins:

> Glorious God, in all degres
> lord most of myth,
> Þat heuene and erthe made of nowth,
> bope se and lond,
> Þe aungelys in heuene hym to
> serue bryth

And mankynde in mydylerd he
made wyth hys hond,
And our lofly Lady, þat lanterne
is of lyth,
Save oure lege lord þe kynge, þe
leder of þis londe,
And all þe ryall of þis revme and
rede hem þe ryth,
And all þe goode comowns of þis
towne þat beforn us stonde
In þis place.
We mustyr ȝou wyth menschepe
And freyne ȝou of frely frenchepe.
Cryst safe ȝou all fro schenchepe
þat knowyn wyl our case.
(ll. 1-13)

The diction is carefully chosen in order to establish a rhyme scheme for each verse of abababababcdddc. The ninth line is always short. The last four lines of each stanza tend to express in a forceful manner the ideas which the previous lines contain. This stanza form is consistent throughout the Banns, although within the play proper, the playwright occasionally replaces this meter with other stanza lengths and rhyme schemes.

One problem to be considered with regard to the variations reflected in these opening stanzas and those of the play proper is the question of plurality of authorship and whether the Banns were a later addition. In his discussion of the verse form of the play, Eccles points out the many variations in both the stanza lengths and the rhythms of the lines.[1] Unlike Jacob Bennett who believes that there were three

different authors,[2] Eccles states that the variations are plausible for one playwright, since "in all good drama, the rhythm is the rhythm of speech, not of the metronome"[3].

The first stanza, which has been illustrated, begins with a prayer to "Glorious God" (l. 1), celebrating His creation of all things, "se and lond" (l. 2), "aungelys" (l. 3), and "mankynde" (l. 4). There is a reference to "our lofly Lady" (l. 5), and it is interesting to note that the Virgin is not mentioned directly in the main body of the play. This fact may indeed be evidence to support Bennett's theory that the Banns are a later addition. Chambers suggests that this reference "anticipates a conclusion by grace of 'oure lofly lady', the Virgin, who does not in fact appear"[4]. Richard Southern, however, in his thorough study of the presentation of this play, does not consider this possibility when he comments that the "character of the poetry we are later to savour"[5] is evident in the stanzas of the Banns. Certainly, the Banns reflect the intent of the play as a whole, and whether or not the same author created both is of no great consequence to its thematic structure, the study of which is the intent of this thesis.

The topics presented by both vexillators [illegible]

clearly seen as they speak their stanzas. The first stanza recognizes "all þe goode comowns of þis towne" (l. 8). In the second stanza, the vexillator declares the basic theme of the play to follow:

> Þe Goode Aungel coueytyth euermore
> Mans saluacion
> And þe Badde bysytyth hym euere to
> hys dampnacion,
> And God hathe govyn Man fre
> arbritracion
> Whepyr he wyl hymself saue or
> hys soule spyll.
> (ll. 23-26)

This "fre arbritracion" (l. 25) is extremely important to the play. Bevington suggests that this is one of the most important theological precepts upon which the play is based. "Man is given free choice to be saved or damned" and "he is certain though not predestined to fall...."[6] The Good and Bad Angels, who are two of the major characters of the drama, fight over Mankind, but he must in the end use his "fre arbritracion" to save or destroy his soul The action of most of the play shifts back and forth within this framework of choice and sustains the basic question of whether Mankind "wyl hymself saue or hys soule spyll" (l. 26). (This doctrine of free will is discussed in Chapter III). The second vexillator in this stanza also informs the audience that each of its members may find in himself the cause of the performance of the play:

> Þe case of oure comynge ȝou to
> declare,
> Euery man in hymself forsothe
> he it may fynde.
> (ll. 14-15)

The truth of the play may be verified by each individual's experience.

The vexillators continue to outline the argument of the play through the introduction of the allegorical figures. The first vexillator presents "Þe Werlde, Þe Fende, Þe foul Flesche" (l. 29 and their cohorts, the seven deadly sins. The sin of Covetousness is allied with the World; the Devil supports Pride, Wrath and Envy; and the Flesh, "homlyest of all" (l. 36), calls to his side Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery. There is even the suggestion that Mankind has "soylyd wyth synnys" (l. 39) his soul with more than seven sins because Backbiting and Accusation are also there to harass him.

The second vexillator continues to explain the roles of the Good and Bad Angels. When Mankind's soul is in the depths of sin through the enticing of the Bad Angel, the Good Angel sends to him Conscience and Confession and Penance, and through the purifying process, Mankind is called to the Castle of Perseverance by the seven heavenly virtues:

> Mekenesse, Pacyense, and Charyte,
> Sobyrnesse, Besynesse, and Chastyte,
> And Largyte, uertuys of good degre,
> Man callyth to þe Castel of Good
> Perseueraunce.
> (ll. 49-52)

It is interesting to note that "Concyens" (l. 44) is mentioned in the Banns, but does not appear in the play. Only Confession comes to the aid of the Good Angel when the latter laments man's submission to the seven sins:

> Bonus Angelus. Of byttyr balys
> þou mayste me bete,
> Swete Schryfte, if þat þou wylt.
> For Mankynde it is þat I grete;
> He is in poynt to be spylt.
> He is set in seuene synnys sete
> And wyl certys tyl he be kylt.
> (ll. 1311-16)

Penance also helps Mankind by striking him in the heart with his lance, thus inducing "sorwe of hert" (l. 1381) and with it repentance:

> Penitencia. Wyth poynt of penaunce
> I schal hym prene
> Mans pride for to felle.
> Wyth þis launce I schal hym lene
> Iwys a drope of mercy welle.
> Sorwe of hert is þat I mene.
> (ll. 1377-81)

The Banns continue with the spiritual enemies of Mankind doing battle with his allies for possession of his soul. The virtues lose to the more vigorous vices. This battle theme is without doubt the most interesting and dramatic of the play, as we shall see.

Mankind succumbs to the lure of wealth through the influence of the character of Coveytyse. A warning to him is expressed in the illustration that man knows not who he is nor where his money will go:

> Þanne is Man on molde maskeryd in mynde.
> He sendyth afftyr hys sekkatours, ful fekyl to fynde,
> And hys eyr aftyrward comyth euere behynde,
> I Wot Not Who is hys name, for he hym nowt knowe.
> (ll. 101-04)

Nameless, he must face Death, an allegorical figure that appears in the play: "Tyl Deth comyth foul dolfully" (l. 99). In his fear of damnation, he prays for mercy. The theme of the debate for the salvation of his soul is presented in the Banns by Confession and Contrition. The optimistic Christian ending is illustrated in the lines:

> Schal saue Man fro dampnacion
> Be Goddys mercy and grace.
> (ll. 129-30)

The ending of the play described in the Banns is different from the ending of the play itself. In the Banns "oure lofly Ladi" (l. 124) is suggested as the intercessor for the soul of Mankind:

> And oure lofly Ladi is sche wyl for hym mell,
> Be mercy and be menys in purgatory he is,
> In ful byttyr place.
> (ll. 124-26)

As has been mentioned earlier in this Chapter, the Virgin does not intercede for Mankind within the play. Also, there is no mention in the Banns of the Debate of the Four Daughters of God, which occupies the last 550 lines of the play and which is one of the major themes under discussion in Chapter IV of this thesis. Bennett sees these omissions as further argument for suggesting that the Banns and the original play were written by different authors.[7] Ramsay, in his introduction to Skelton's morality play, Magnyfycence, states that although the Banns do not mention the Debate in Heaven, the salvation of Mankind may be presented through the intervention of the Virgin.[8] He goes on to point out that there is a similar reference to "oure lady mylde" in the prologue to The Pride of Life:

> And throgh priere of Oure Lady mylde
> Þe soule and body schul dispyte;
> Scho wol prey her son so mylde,
> Al godenisse scho wol qwyte.
>
> Þe cors þat nere knewe of care,
> No more þen stone in weye,
> Schal wit of sorow and sore care
> And þrawe betwene ham tweye.
>
> Þe soule þeron schal be weye
> Þat þe fendis haue ikaȝte;
> And Oure Lady schal perfor preye
> So þat with her he schal be lafte.
> (ll. 97-108)

Through a comparison of The Castle prologue with The Pride of Life prologue, he concludes that limits must be observed "in taking these advertising preliminaries for faithful abstracts of what was to come"[9]. These critics would seem to conclude that authorship of the Banns and the play proper is different.

The Banns in terms of thematic structure may be divided into four parts. Stanzas two to seven concentrate on the life of Mankind and include the reference to the psychomachia motif: Þus vycys ageyns vertues fytyn ful snelle" (l. 70). Stanzas eight and nine involve the Coming of Death and Mankind's plea for mercy: "Tyl Deth comyth foul dolfully and loggyth him in a lake/ Ful lowe" (ll. 99-100), and "'Mercy, God! be now myn frende!" (l. 116). Stanza ten deals with Mankind's salvation, referring briefly to the Debate of the Body and Soul through the action of the Bad Angel carting Man's soul "into hell" (l. 120), but ultimately being rescued "Be Goddys mercy and grace" (l. 130). The first and last two stanzas deal with the purpose of the presence of the vexillators and of the forthcoming play performance. The first vexillator brings the Banns to an end by notifying the audience of the performance:

Þese parcellys in propyrtes we
purpose us to playe
Þis day seuenenyt before ȝou in syth
At .... on þe grene in ryal aray.
(ll. 132-34)

The blank in line 134 allows for the performance place name, and in the last verse of the Banns there are two blanks for insertion also of the place name. The Banns end with a friendly message from the second vexillator:

Farewel, fayre frendys,
Þat lofly wyl lystyn and lende.
Cryste kepe ȝou fro fendys!
Trumpe up and lete vs pace.
(ll. 153-56)

The Banns of the Corpus Christi Cycle known as the N. Town Cycle, are similar to those of The Castle in both purpose and structure. In order to show the significance of the relationship between the Banns of these two works, I shall outline briefly the nature of this cycle drama.

The drama of these cycles consisted of a number of plays or pageants, which originated from Biblical and other sacred literature. The four principal collections of extant English miracles or mysteries are known by the names of the towns where they were supposedly performed: York, Chester, Wakefield, and N. Town. Their performances were supervised by the corporations of the town, with the episodes or pageants of the cycles being distributed among the guilds and

acted on wheeled stages which were moved processionally from one open place to another within the towns. The number of places or stations at which these wheeled stages stopped and presented their dramas varied from town to town. Scholars disagree concerning these numbers, and, indeed, the time factor involved in presenting over forty pageants in sequence (as would be the case with the N. Town Cycle) presents a problem. For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to recognize that the cycles were medieval religious processions having Biblical significance. Summing up the essential difference between the full-scope morality such as The Castle of Perseverance and the cycle plays, Bevington suggests that the moralities concentrate on the divine history of individual man and the cycle plays "tell the divine history of the human race"[10].

The N. Town Cycle is a collection of forty-three pageants and contains the Banns we wish to compare in this discussion. The term N. Town is derived from an insert at the end of the Banns:

> A Sunday next, yf that we may
> At six of the belle, we gynne our play
> In N .... towne.
>
> (ll. 525-27)

The N is for nomen, the name of the town to be supplied by the vexillators at a given town. The Castle Banns

also end with a provision for the insertion of the place name as has been mentioned earlier in this Chapter. This fact would indicate that both The Castle and the N. Town Cycle were intended to be acted in a variety of locations.

The N. Town Cycle Banns summarize forty of the pageants of the Cycle, using three vexillators instead of two, as in The Castle. Their brief reports outline the cyclical theme of Christianity extending from the Creation to the Last Judgment. They are much longer than those of The Castle, comprising some 527 lines compared to 156 lines for the morality play. The stanzaic form is like that of The Castle with thirteen-line stanzas and a rhyme scheme of abababababcdddde. This form is consistent throughout, although in two places (description of pageants twenty-three and twenty-four, and thirty-seven and thirty-eight) the stanzas are spoken by two of the vexillators instead of one.

It is not my purpose to analyse the N. Town Cycle. Rather, I wish to point out, as I have mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, certain similarities between the two proclamations in order to establish a structural relationship between the Banns of the mysteries and the moralities. They each begin and end with a prayer to God. This invocation is similar in each work in its

direct reference to the people of the audience who are there to see and hear. In the N. Town Cycle, the vexillator asks God to "save all tho that sitt and sese" (l. 3) and at the end:

> Now God them save from trey and tene
> For us that prayth upon that day,
> And qwite them wel ther mede.
> (ll. 522-24)

In The Castle, the vexillator asks God to save "all þe goode comowns of þis towne þat beforn us stonde" (l. 8), and in concluding the Banns, he hopes that Christ may "saue ȝou all!" (l. 145). The purpose in each case is to recognize the present audience with a welcome and a blessing.

Like those of The Castle, the N. Town Cycle Banns summarize the subjects to be presented. There are differences between this list of pageants and the plays themselves. Bevington suggests that the reason for these differences stems from many revisions in the presentation of the Cycle.[11] Hardin Craig agrees:

> the banns or Proclamation represent faithfully the cycle as it once was, but ... the separate plays ... comprise revisions great and small made after the banns were composed.[12]

The Banns of the N. Town Cycle provide for certain motifs which are also presented in those of The Castle. The most notable is the figure of Death which enters into the Death of Herod play. He is

presented allegorically by the third vexillator in the Prologue as follows:

> Than kyng herownde with-owtyn wene
> Is sett to mete at his lykyng
> In his most pride ȝal come gret tene
> As ȝe xal se at oure pleyng
> His sorwexal a-wake
> Whan he is sett at hese most pryde
> Sodeyn deth xal thrylle his syde
> And kylle his knyttys þat with hym byde
> Þe devyl þer soulys xal take.
> (ll. 234-42)

In The Castle, Death is introduced by the second vexillator:

> Tyl Deth comyth foul dolfully and
> loggyth hym in a lake
> Ful lowe
> Þanne is Man on molde maskeryd in
> mynde.
> (ll. 99-102)

This figure of Death is viewed by Chambers as a "stream of allegorical tendency making its way into the drama"[13], and although this process of introducing abstractions into the mystery plays was not carried far, he sees this allegorical presence of Death as a part of the danse macabre of the Middle Ages. The discussion in Chapter IV of this thesis will include this concept. K. S. Block in her introduction to the N. Town Cycle calls the use of the figure of Death the "most dramatic passage in the series"[14], and Craig echoes this attitude: "The appearance and the speeches of Mors in the Death of Herod (ll. 207-84) are, to say the least, impressive...."[15] The Coming

of Death can therefore be seen as an effective theme in both of these dramatic forms.

The Parliament of Heaven, numbered eleven in the Block edition of the Cycle, incorporates one of the themes under discussion, but is not mentioned in the text of the Banns. This same theme is also excluded in the Banns of The Castle, although it is, in my consideration, one of the important themes of the play. Spivack in his critical work, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, calls The Parliament of Heaven one of the "large allegorical intrusions"[16] into the N. Town Cycle. The debate and reconciliation of the Four Daughters of God is placed in the Cycle just before the Annunciation where it presents motivation for the birth of Christ. The result of the debate is expressed by misericordia or mercy (the one who finally champions Mankind in The Castle of Perseverance) as follows:

> Now is þe loveday mad of us fowre fynialy
> Now may we leve in þes as we were wonte
> Misericordia et veritas obviauerunt sibi
> Justicia et pax osculate sunt.(c)
> (ll. 185-89)

The theme is presented in both works and the fact that it is not incorporated into the Banns of either may

---

(c) Mercy and Truth have met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other (Psalms 85:10-11)

justify the notion that the plays went through revisions.

The Seven Deadly Sins are specifically mentioned in Doomsday, the final play of the N. Town Cycle, when the devils are claiming the souls of the damned. In the Banns the reference is not specific, but the implication is there in the line: "Who se that pagent may be agast" (l. 505). The audience is warned of the horror they will witness. In terms of dramaturgy, the scene would make a strong impact, since the medieval audience would be aware of the implications of a life of sin. This warning is also expressed in the Banns of The Castle:

> Whanne al his lyfe is lytyd upon
> a lytyl pinne,
> At the laste,
> On lyue whanne he may no lenger lende
> Mercy he callyth at hys laste ende.
> (ll. 112-15)

Also, as has been mentioned earlier in this Chapter, the reference to the Seven Deadly Sins is found in line 70: "Pus vycys ageyns vertues fytyn ful snelle".

After examining these two Prologues or Banns, my conclusion is that they both served to advertise forthcoming productions and not to outline explicitly the content of the plays. Perhaps they were intended, as Glynne Wickham suggests, "to arouse enthusiasm, and to provoke the lazy-minded into deciding to attend"[17];

and certainly there seem to be omissions in the content of the Banns in relation to the plays they introduce.

What is more important, however, are the many thematic parallels in both the morality and cycle plays. Although as genres they emphasize religious experience differently, they are essentially concerned with similar goals. The majority of the early moralities span the life of a man who represents a Christian; the cycle plays present the story of Christianity in episodic form. The major themes of the morality which I shall discuss in the next two Chapters can be applied in part to the cycle plays. Both types of drama offer the medieval audience models for living.

NOTES

Chapter II

[1]Eccles, pp. xv-xvi.

[2]Jacob Bennett, "The 'Castle of Perseverance': Redactions, Place, and Date", Medieval Studies, Vol. 24 (Toronto: 1962), p. 150.

[3]Eccles, p. xvi.

[4]E. K. Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages (London: 1945), p. 55.

[5]Richard Southern, The Medieval Theatre in the Round (London: 1957), p. 7.

[6]Bevington, p. 798.

[7]Bennett, p. 142.

[8]John Skelton, Magnyfycence R. L. Ramsay, ed., EETS ES XCVIII (London: 1958), p. clxiv.

[9]Ibid., p. clxiv.

[10]Bevington, p. 792.

[11]Ibid., p. 242.

[12]Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama (London: 1955), pp. 243-44.

[13]Chambers, p. 153.

[14]K. S. Block, ed., Ludus Coventriae EETS ES CXX (London: 1922), p. lvi.

[15]Craig, p. 261.

[16]Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil (London: 1958), p. 70.

[17]Glynne Wickham, The Medieval Theatre (London: 1974), p. 82.

III

THE CONFLICT OF THE VICES AND VIRTUES

Spylt is Man spetously whanne he to
synne asent.
Þe Bad Aungel þanne bryngyth hym thre
enmys so stout:
Þe Werlde, þe Fende, þe foul Flesche
so joly and jent.
Þei ledyn hym ful lustyly wyth synnys
al abowt.
Pyth wyth Pride and Coueytyse, to þe
Werld is he went,
To meyñten hys manhod all men to hym
lout.
Aftyr Ire and Envye þe Fend hath to
hym lent,
Bakbytynge and endytynge wyth all men
for to route,
Ful evyn.
But þe fowle Flesch, homlyest of all,
Slawth, Lust and Leccherye gun to hym
call,
Glotony and oþyr synnys boþe grete and
small:
Þus Mans soule is soylyd with synnys
moo þanne seuyn.
(ll. 27-39)

The dominant theme of The Castle of Perseverance is that of the psychomachia, an allegorical battle between the seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues. As anticipated in the Banns, the Bad Angel calls forth:

All þe seuene synnys, to do þat
þey canne
To brynge Mankynd ageyn to bale out of
blys
Wyth wronge.
(ll. 59-61)

This conflict of the vices and virtues for the possession of the soul of Mankind comprises the most dramatic action of the play. Morton W. Bloomfield's historical study of the concept of the seven deadly sins, contributes a great deal to our understanding of what these sins represented to the medieval period. He points out the fascination of the medieval mind with the sins as they entered into everyday life, often personified as men and women, and visualized in literature and art as "concrete devils or demons"[1].

According to Bloomfield, the early medieval tradition of the seven sins begins with two basic lists of sins, the Cassianic and the Gregorian. John Cassian, a monk, was a pupil of Evagrius of Pontus (d. c.400) who was the first Christian writer to use a list of sins.[2] Cassian wrote two influential theological works in the fifth century (De institutis coenobiorum and Collationes), both of which contain his list of eight sins. Except for the position of ira, his list is that of Evagrius: gula (gluttony), luxuria (lust), avaritia (avarice), ira (wrath), tristitia (distress), acedia (sloth), vana gloria (envy), and superbia (pride).[3] In both of Cassian's major works, he discusses the sins with remedies for each. In Collationes, he introduces the image of the tree and roots to represent the sins[4],

a concept that occurred often in medieval literature.

Gregory the Great (d. 604) broadened the scope of the sins from the monastic point of view to include the more theological tradition. He established a new formula and in the process merged two of the sins. His list is as follows: superbia, ira, invidia, avaritia, acedia, gula, luxuria. Gregory justified the placement of pride at the beginning of the list by the suggestion that pride is the "root of all evil", a concept found in Ecclesiasticus of the Apocrypha. According to Bloomfield, this list was the most influential in terms of medieval literature.[5]

As I established in the discussion concerning the medieval sermon (Chapter II), references to the vices and virtues can be found in the manuals and treatises used by the clergy. The thirteenth century devotional work, Ancren Riwle (c.1225), is one of these, considered by Bloomfield to contain the most important treatment of the concept of the seven deadly sins in English.[6] This prose work addressed to nuns has special interest for our discussion in that it contains not only an elaborate treatment of the sins but also the castle image, a motif of great importance in The Castle of Perseverance. The author compares man to a castle defended from the devil by "schaldinde

teares" (l. 31, p. 109). These tears represent a castle moat. These images are presented in the fourth part of the Ancren Riwle, which also includes an elaborate discussion of the individual sins. The sins are classified according to their affiliation with the world, the flesh and the devil. The sin of the world is covetousness. The sins of the flesh are luxury, ease, and self-indulgence. The devil takes pride, haughtiness, envy, and wrath.[7]

In Ancren Riwle, the sins are associated with animals, a treatment consistent with the medieval notion that "the devil could enter animals and change them to his purposes"[8]:

> liun of prude. neddre of attrionde. vnicorne of wredde. beore of dead slouhde. vox of ȝiscunge. suwe of ȝiuerness. scorpiun mid te teil of stinkinde lecherie.(a)

The sins are also treated as individuals, personifications of types: wrathful man, covetous man, the glutton, the sluggard, the lecher (pp. 93-96).

This treatise, and such fourteenth century examples as Myrc's Festial and Instructions for Parish Priests, and Jacob's Well of the fifteenth century,

---

(a) lion of pride, serpent of envy, unicorn of wrath, bear of sloth, fox of covetousness, swine of gluttony, scorpion of lechery.

contains material which indicates how much the seven sins concept impressed the devotional writer of the Middle Ages. The seven sins are woven into the writing of this period, writing which, as has been established, influenced the morality playwrights.

The source for the treatment of the seven sins in conflict with the virtues in The Castle of Perseverance is generally considered to be the Psychomachia (c. 400) of Prudentius, which, according to H. J. Thomson, who translated the works of Prudentius for the Loeb Classical Library, was "the most popular of the poet's works during the middle ages and the ultimate inspiration of much moral allegory"[9]. But the Psychomachia did not represent a new concept. St. Paul had stated the idea in Ephesians 6:11-12:

> Put on your armour of God, in order
> that you may be able to stand against
> the wiles of the devil.
> For we do not wrestle against flesh
> and blood: but against principalities,
> and powers, against the rulers of the
> darkness of this world, against
> spiritual wickedness in high places.

Bernard Spivack views this text as the very fountain-head of Christian faith.[10] The battle as a symbol of man's struggle through life between good and evil impulses appears in Prudentius' work as narrative, and we shall see in examining the action how it developed into the dramatic method as a controlling idea or

theme in The Castle.

The Psychomachia is a classical epic of 915 lines, rich in battle language, and supplies "the generic name for the most common form of medieval allegory"[11]. In order to view more clearly this theme of the psychomachia as dominating the action of The Castle, it will be useful to summarize briefly the story of Prudentius' allegory. It narrates the battle between the personified, feminine leaders of good and evil, with seven separate battle actions taking place. The combat begins with Faith taking the field against Idolatry or, as Thomson translates the figure's name, "Worship-of-the-Old Gods"[12]. Faith, who is considered the "first theological virtue"[13], decisively conquers her enemy:

> The throat is choked and the scant breath confined by the stopping of its passage, and long gasps make a hard and agonizing death.
> (p. 281)

Her attendants, who have been convened "from a thousand martyrs" (p. 281), are jubilant as Faith rewards them for their loyalty with flowers and purple garments.

The vices continue in like fashion to confront the virtues. In each of the conflicts, the vice is defeated. At the end of the seventh conflict the narrative comes full circle when Faith, queen of the

Virtues, throws her javelin through the tongue of Discord. The poem continues beyond this point for some 200 lines. Peace is established and the virtues erect the temple of the soul. The last lines sum up the spiritual battle which Prudentius has described:

> We know that in the darkness of our heart conflicting affections fight hard in successive combats and, as the fortune of battle varies, now grow strong in goodness of disposition and again, when the virtues are worsted, are dragged away to live in bondage to the worse, making themselves the slaves of shameful sins, and content to suffer the loss of their salvation.
>
> (pp. 342-43)

This conflict of good and evil, which is expressed in Prudentius' Psychomachia, appears as a dominant theme in The Castle of Perseverance. Eccles suggests that the playwright "may have known such widely read poems as the Psychomachia of Prudentius"[14]. Mackenzie also points out that in both The Castle and Prudentius' work there is a series of single combats.[15] This theme, however, must be viewed in a larger context than just that of the combat scenes of the castle siege which comprise some 200 lines of the play. The preparations for the battle are important and involve Mankind's enemies, who are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil (as stated in the Banns), as well as the Good and Bad Angels:

Þe Goode Aungel coueytyth euermore
Mans saluacion
And þe Badde bysytyth hym euere to
hys dampnacion,
(ll. 23-24)
Þe Werlde, þe Fende, þe foul Flesche
so joly and jent.
Þei ledyn hym ful lustyly wyth synnys
al abowt.
(ll. 29-30)

An appreciation of the climactic victory of the Virtues at the time of the castle siege (temporary though it may be) can only be realized through an understanding of the enemy figures and the events which lead up to the battle.

Before Mankind is introduced in the play proper, his three enemies, who each speak three stanzas, are presented. The play opens with the World introducing himself in a regal and proud manner, which emphasizes his power over men. He talks of himself and his might:

Al þe world myn name is ment.
Al abowtyn my bane is blowe,
In euery cost I am knowe,
I do men rawyn on ryche rowe
Tyl þei be dyth to dethys dent.
(ll. 165-69)

His language reflects his confidence in his power over men, and his threat of prison to "whoso spekyth ȝeyn þe Werd" (l. 192) suggests a force which is perhaps intended to frighten. He has introduced his treasurer, "Sir Coueytyse" (l. 181), who, because of the important role he will play in manipulating Mankind, has a scaffold

of his own. His alliance with the World here is consistent with his allegorical presentation in Ancren Riwle, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter.

The attention of the audience is then directed to the Devil with his three attendants, Pride, Envy, and Wrath. Belial compares himself to a dragon:

> I champe and I chafe, I chocke on
> my chynne,
> I am boystows and bold, as Belyal
> þe blake.
> (ll. 198-99)

He emphasizes his evil nature by concentrating on the destruction of Mankind:

> In woo is al my wenne,
> In care I am cloyed
> And fowle I am anoyed
> But Mankynde be stroyed
> Be dykys and be denne.
> (ll. 204-08)

He is blunt and to the point. The predominant one-syllable words punctuate the intent of his message.

The third scaffold holds the figure of Flesh. He is undoubtedly intended to appear as a stout character, a "brod brustun-gutte" (l. 235). In his three stanzas he reinforces the position of the three figures as the enemies of Mankind. With his three servants Gluttony, Lechery and Liking or Pleasure, and Sloth, he is ready to destroy Mankind. He is "florchyd in flowrys" (l. 237) and decorates his tower with "tapytys of tafata" (l. 239). He does not care whether his soul

is sinful:

> I loue wel myn ese,
> In lustys me to plese;
> Þou synne my sowle sese
> I ȝeue not a myth.
> (ll. 244-47)

His boasting pulls the three instruments of evil together:

> Behold þe Werld, þe Deuyl, and me!
> Wyth all oure mythis we kyngyes thre
> Nyth and day besy we be
> For to distroy Mankende
> If þat we may.
> (ll. 265-70)

Thus through their speeches the three evil kings with their attendants are used at the beginning of the play "to demonstrate the horrific forces which threaten Man"[16]. Mackenzie suggests that Mankind is "an apt pupil"[17], however, and when he presents himself to his enemies, accompanied by his Good and Bad Angels, he appears to be an easy prey.

Mankind's condition, as he emerges from under the castle, is one of innocence at this point in the play. The most significant detail about him here is his clothing. He says.

> Bare and pore is my clothynge.
> A sely crysme myn hed hath cawth
> Þat I tok at my crystenynge.
> (ll. 293-95)

This chrisom (a white cloth or robe which is put upon a person at baptism as a symbol of innocence) is significant because it establishes that Mankind has had the

stain of original sin removed from his soul. The audience would readily recognize this concept as part of the Christian code. Saint Thomas Aquinas states clearly in his Summa Contra Gentiles that:

> man in his origin was deprived of spiritual life by original sin.... Baptism, therefore, which is spiritual generation, had to have the power to take away original sin.[18]

The inclusion in the play of a reference to the Sacrament of Baptism becomes significant later on in the play when Mankind must bring about a spiritual regeneration of his soul through the Sacrament of Penance. As mentioned in Chapter II of this thesis (p. 27), the allegorical figure of Penance brings to Mankind "sorwe of hert" (l. 1381) and, with it, repentance.

Mankind presents a passive figure as his Good and Bad Angels converse with him. He has difficulty deciding what to do:

> A, Lord Jhesu, wedyr may I goo?
> A crysyme I haue and no moo.
> (ll. 323-24)

These lines are dramatically moving when we consider that he is being pulled in two directions at once. The Bad Angel is eager to draw Mankind to "pa dewylys wode" (l. 308). Mankind is confused about what choice to make. We are reminded of St. Paul's urging that

Mankind put on his armour and battle against "spiritual wickedness in high places" and of the "fre arbritracion" (l. 25) which has been mentioned in the Banns.

This "fre arbritracion" or free will is, according to St. Augustine, a gift from God to man to be used for good or evil. In his treatise, De libero arbitrio voluntatis (On Free Choice of the Will), he establishes through dialogue the doctrine that free choice of will allows man to choose for himself what he will do with his life. Man's freedom of choice remains free within him, although God has foreknowledge of what man will do.[19] In his short work, De agone Christiano (On Christian Combat), St. Augustine has this to say about free will:

> For God created man incorruptible and gave him free choice of the will. Man would not be perfect if he were to obey God's commandments out of necessity, and not by his free will. This is a very simple matter, as far as I can see.[20]

It seems that Mankind must make the choice for good or ill, being morally responsible for his own acts. He makes his decision and succumbs to the lure of "gold and sylwyr and ryche rent" (l. 391), moving in favour of his Bad Angel:

> I wyl go wyth þe and asay,
> I ne lette, for frende ner fo,
> But wyth þe Werld I wyl go play,
> Certys a lytyl þrowe.
> (ll. 394-97)

The first indication that Mankind is to become involved with the seven deadly sins comes from Detraccio, or Bakbyter, the messenger of the World. Mankind has been robed in fine clothes and is ready to continue his downward journey. The following speech marks a transition in the structure of the play:

> For whanne Mankynde is clopyd clere,
> Panne schal I techyn hym pe wey
> To pe dedly synnys seuene.
> Here I schal abydyn wyth my pese
> Pe wronge to do hym for to chese,
> For I pynke pat he schal lese
> Pe lyth of hey heuene.
> (ll. 692-98)

The theme of the psychomachia is established here as Mankind allies himself with Coveytyse (the World's attendant), Pride, Wrath, and Envy (the Devil's attendants), and Gluttony, Lechery, and Sloth (the Flesh's attendants). The army of evil is formed and as part of it, Mankind shows a new-found confidence, a different figure from that insecure, bewildered one at the start of the play. The rather quiet figure of Coveytyse, who has introduced Mankind to the other sins, becomes an important factor in the shaping of the play at its climax. He even has a separate scaffold. He also becomes the figure to transcend the power of the Seven Heavenly Virtues at the time of the castle's siege. After all of his fellow sins have been conquered, the figure of Coveytyse offers to Mankind financial security,

and brings about the tragic fall of Mankind who endorses his decision to embrace Coveytyse in the following lines:

> A, Coveytyse, haue þou good grace!
> Certys þou beryst a trewe tonge.
> 'More and more', in many a place,
> Certys þat songe is oftyn songe.
> (ll. 2713-16)

> Goode Coveytyse, I þe prey
> Þat I myth wyth þe pley.
> (ll. 2722-23)

Coveytyse teaches Mankind what he must do in order to maintain his wealth, and Mankind ascends materially, but descends spiritually. The seven sins form a court around Mankind. They each speak to him with frankness about their natures, and Mankind's Good Angel laments while the Bad Angel rejoices.

These sins, their branches, circumstances and kinds, as well as corresponding remedia, are listed in detail in Chaucer's The Parson's Tale, a treatise on penance and sin. The sins are listed in Gregorian order except for invidia and ira, which are reversed. In the tale, Covetousness or Avarice is described (in lines 739-817) as the lust for worldly treasure. According to Chaucer, it robs Christ of love which is due Him and results in the worship of wealth:

> For it bireveth hym the love that
> men to hym owen, and turneth it
> bakward agayns alle resoun,

> and maketh that the avaricious man
> hath moore hope in his catel than
> in Jhesu Crist, and dooth moore
> observance in kepynge of his tresor
> than he dooth to the service of
> Jhesu Crist.
>
> (ll. 745-48)

Pride, described in Chaucer's Tale (in lines 390-483), is considered chief of the deadly sins and from Pride come the others: Envy, Wrath, Cloth, Avarice, Gluttony, and Lechery, with their various branches and twigs:

> Of the roote of thise sevene synnes,
> thanne, is Pride the general roote
> of alle harmes. For of this roote
> spryngen certein braunches, as Ire,
> Envye, Accidie or Slewthe, Avarice
> or Coveitise (to commune understondynge),
> Glotonye, and Lecherye / And everich
> of thise chief synnes hath his braunches
> and his twigges, as shal be declared
> in hire chapitres folwynge.
>
> (ll. 388-89)

In The Castle, it is the spirit of Covetousness and not Pride, as is commonly preached, which is the prime external cause of the downfall of Mankind. It is interesting to note that in The Parson's Take, one of the suggested remedia for Covetousness is mercy:

> Now shul ye understonde that
> the releevynge of Avarice is
> misericorde, and pitee largely
> taken.
>
> (l. 803)

The parson suggests that Christ suffered death for "misericorde, and forgaf us oure originale synnes" (l. 307). Consistent with this remedy is the ending of The Castle, in which the key to Mankind's salvation

is the allegorical figure of Mercy. This subject will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

Mankind, in allying himself with Coveytyse and the Seven Deadly Sins, has placed himself in a very precarious position. The "grete curse" (l. 854) to which Coveytyse refers in his persuasive speeches is excommunication and carries with it a perilous burden. If Mankind is excluded from the Church, he may not receive any of the sacraments, including that of Extreme Unction, so essential at the point of death in order to achieve salvation. However, unlike Everyman, Mankind, as I have already noted, finds the lure of wealth greater than the fear of damnation.

With Mankind's deliberate separation of himself from God, it is appropriate at this point in the allegorical psychomachia for Shrift and Penance to appear. Along with the Good Angel, they urge Mankind to confess and repent his sins. Like the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of Penance renews the soul, restoring it to a state of grace. The only speech delivered by Penitentia is highly dramatic. He carries a lance, a weapon consistent with the military motif of the psychomachia, and uses it to pierce the heart of Mankind:

> Wyth þis launce I schal hym lene
> Iwys a drope of mercy welle.
> (ll. 1379-80)

The figure of Penance illustrates several basic doctrines, among them mercy (l. 1380) and contrition:

> Trewly þer may no tunge telle
> What waschyth sowlys more clene
> Fro þe foul fend of helle
> Þanne swete sorwe of hert.
> God, þat syttyth in heuene on hye,
> Askyth no more or þat þou dye
> But sorwe of hert wyth wepynge eye
> For all þi synnys smert.
> (ll. 1382-89)

This sorrowing of Mankind for his sins (and he has willingly taken them upon himself) is the first part of Penitence and is called Contrition. Chaucer in The Parson's Tale likens penitence to a tree:

> The roote of this tree is Contricioun
> that hideth hym in the herte of hym
> that is verray repentaunt, right as
> the roote of a tree hydeth hym in
> the erthe./ Of the roote of Contri-
> cioun spryngeth a stalke that
> bereth braunces and leves of
> Confessioun, and fruyt of Satisfacioun.
> (ll. 111-12)

He defines Contrition as the true grief of a man in his heart for his sins leading to confession, penance and resolution to sin no more. In The Catholic Encyclopedia, contrition is defined as "a sorrow of soul and a hatred of sin committed, with a firm purpose of not sinning in the future"[21].

Having become contrite, Mankind is persuaded to accept the advice of Shrift and Penance and leave "þese deuelys seuene" (l. 1338). He confesses to

Shrift who is the priest figure in the play and is granted absolution:

> And I up my powere þe asoly
> Þat þou hast ben to God vnkynde,
> Quantum peccasti (b)
> In Pride, Ire, and Envye,
> Slawthe, Glotony, and Lecherye,
> And Coveytyse continuandelye
> Vitam male continuasti (c)
> (ll. 1500-06)

Mankind enters the Castle of Perseverance for security. The castle as symbol is a favourite in medieval literature. G. R. Owst in Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England devotes several pages to a listing of examples of where and how this symbol is used.[22] It appears in Langland's The Vision of Piers Plowman as the Castle of Truth. In Passus V, it is described:

> Thanne shaltow come to a court
> as cler as the sonne.
> The moot is of Mercy the manoir
> aboute,
> And alle the walles ben of Wit
> to holden Wil oute,
> (ll. 585-87)

In the miracle and morality plays, the castle tradition is seen with the Maudelyn Castle in the Digby Cycle and of course the Castle of Perseverance in The Castle. According to Owst, the word 'castellum' was used at

---

(b) However much you have sinned.

(c) You have evilly continued your life.

an early date to represent the Virgin in which Christ found a "feudal stronghold"[23]. As well as appearing in sermons of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is used to a large degree in Bishop Grossetête's Chasteau d'Amour, a treatise which had an important influence on the English pulpit.[24] This homilist used the castle symbol to represent the Sacraments of the Church, as well as the Church itself, the World, Mankind, and Mankind's Soul. Castles were used also in medieval sermons to represent the Devil and the Seven Deadly Sins.[25] We have already noted its use in Ancren Riwle.

The term 'perseverance' in the theological sense means the perpetual continuance of the elect in a state of grace, the preservation of the state of grace until the end of life. According to the New Catholic Encyclopedia, it is a special help from God, a supreme goal:

> A moral virtue that perfects the irascible appetite so that a person is reasonably inclined to continue in the practice of virtuous action in spite of difficulties arising from the protracted period during which the effort must continue.[26]

This virtue is extremely important in sustaining the spirit so that man will not succumb to evil. This concept is consistent with Mankind's need for the

security of the Castle which symbolizes perseverance.

St. Augustine states in De correptione et gratia (On Admonition and Grace)[27] that perseverance is a gift of God and that man who has been given the freedom of will, which I discussed earlier in this Chapter, achieves this freedom through grace, and through grace, the strength to persevere. Mankind has been given "fre arbritracion" in the beginning. He has been elected here to enter the castle of perseverance and therefore has been chosen to receive perseverance. St. Augustine believed that not everyone is chosen by God and based his belief on the Biblical text: "multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi" (Matthew 20:16).(d) It is curious that The Castle Mankind is one of the chosen, having been elected to enter the castle, yet in the morality tradition, he represents all mankind. The Augustinian doctrine of perseverance, however, is very much in evidence in terms of free will and the idea which the castle represents. St. Augustine has this to say about the possibility of salvation for sinners:

> if he who is admonished belongs to the number of the predestined, the admonition may be to him a health-giving remedy.[28]

(d) Many are called, but few are chosen.

The virtues protecting Mankind in the castle seem to represent this remedy.

The Biblical reference for the term 'perseverance' is Matthew 10:22: "qui autem perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit"[e]. Once Mankind enters the Castle of Perseverance, he will be infused with the grace of God. Such is the nature of perseverance. It is used allegorically here to represent a Castle of Goodness (used as an alternate label for the Castle of Perseverance in lines 1708, 1757 and 2355) or a Castle of Virtue (l. 1896). It is interesting to note that the term 'perseverance' is used in the morality play Mundus et Infans to represent a virtuous figure of that name who is sent to Infans, the mankind figure, in his old age. His purpose is to listen to the confession of Infans and restore his faith through divine mercy:

> Yea, and now is your name Repentance,
> Through the grace of God almight.[29]
> (ll. 969-70)

Mankind should be safe in the Castle of Perseverance, especially since he is guarded by the Seven Heavenly Virtues: Patience, Charity, Abstinence, Chastity, Solicitude, Generosity and Humility. Shrift calls the castle "a precyous place, / Ful of vertu and of grace" (ll. 1555-56).

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[e] He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.

The advance of the legions of sin to besiege the fortress and to engage in battle with the virtues is one of the most famous passages in English medieval drama. As Miyajima describes it, the first confrontation between the two forces "is as stylised, conventional and symmetrical as a minuet"[30]. The three enemies of Mankind to whom we have been introduced previously in this Chapter each make an approach to the castle, and they are accompanied by their attendants. Pride meets with Humility and is met with "a baner of meknes and mercy" (l. 2083). Next, Anger is threatened by Patience in the following lines:

> If þou fonde to comyn alofte
> I schal þe cacche fro þis crofte
> Wyth þese rosys swete and softe
> Peyntyd with pacyens.
> (ll. 2143-46)

Charity's defence against Envy is to "kepe in sylens" (l. 2185).

The Devil is taken aback at the defeat of the three sins and urges them to attack again: "Lasche don þese moderys, all þre" (l. 2189). However, the figures of Pride, Anger and Envy admit defeat, being no match for the three Virtues. The Bad Angel sends them away in disgust:

> Go hens, ȝe do not worthe a tord.
> Foule falle ȝou, alle foure!
> (ll. 2226-7)

He rallies the Flesh, with his three attendants, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery, and the results are the same as those involving the Devil. Gluttony is beaten by Abstinence, Lechery by Chastity, and Sloth by Solicitude. It is interesting to note that Largitas or Generosity is the one Virtue that does not meet with one of the Sins. She is not mentioned by the Bad Angel when he is rallying the forces of the Vices. According to Miyajima, scholars have been unable to explain this omission.[31]

As has been mentioned previously in this Chapter, the figure of Coveytyse is the deciding factor in the tragic fall of Mankind. He is the resource of the World and instead of force, uses his cunning to win Mankind to the forces of evil. Having been summoned by the World, he chides Mankind for lingering in the cold Castle "wyth grete penaunce" (l. 2432). Mankind, who is now an old man, is confused and, like the passive figure that he is, says:

> What wey woldyst þat I sulde holde?
> To what place woldyst þou me sende?
> I gynne to waxyn hory and olde.
> My bake gynnyth to bowe and bende,
> I crulle and crepe and wax al colde.
> Age makyth man ful vnthende,
> Body and bonys and al vnwolde;
> My bonys are febyl and sore.
> I am arayed in a sloppe,
> As a ȝonge man I may not hoppe,
> My nose is colde and gynnyth to droppe,
> Myn her waxit al hore.
>
> (ll. 2480-91)

Nor can the Virtues intercede for him. As Humility says in line 2560: "God hath ȝouyn hym a fre wylle". Man must be allowed to choose. He is an easy prey at this point. Coveytyse gives him a thousand marks and Mankind embraces the sin of avarice.

Thus ends the theme of the psychomachia with victory by Vices over Virtues for the soul of Mankind. Unlike Prudentius' Psychomachia, in which we find a series of single combats between Vices and Virtues in opposition, The Castle of Perseverance presents 'warfare' in human terms. A small part of the Psychomachia is reflected in lines 2061-2405, according to Ramsay,[32] but the general effect is quite different. When Coveytyse enters the drama, the fate of Mankind becomes very important, and the theme of the psychomachia then involves more than just "mimic warfare"[33]. As Thompson points out:

> the subjective forces that in reality belong to man himself in the most personal sense were transformed by the poet into visible, external forces operating upon man as they obeyed, on the one hand, the call of God, or, on the other, the interests of the World and the Flesh.[34]

It is interesting to compare the psychomachia motif in The Castle with its treatment by Langland in The Vision of Piers Plowman. This theme is seen in

that scene in which the allegorical figure of Conscience defends the Castle of Unity:

> And there was Conscience constable
> Christene to save,
> And biseged sothly with seuene grete
> gyauntz
> That with Antecrist helden hard azein
> Conscience.
> (ll. 213-15)

In this confession scene of Passus V (B. Text), the Deadly Sins are vividly depicted as confessing to Repentance. They appear to be "human manifestations of sins"[35] as Potter points out. There is Pride (The Lady Peacock Proud-heart), Lechery, Envy, "to-bollen for wrathe" (l. 83), Anger, with staring eyes, Avarice, "bitelbrowed and baberlipped" (l. 188), Gluttony, and finally Sloth, "al bislabered" (l. 386). They are grotesque figures, each carrying a great load of sin. They are personifications of those forces within Mankind that shape his destiny.

In Piers Plowman, the sins do not actually go through the dramatic process of seducing humanity into accepting their way of life. Rather, they show man already in his fallen state, a state occurring much later in The Castle of Perseverance. Elizabeth Salter calls the portrayal of the Deadly Sins in Langland's work, in particular the description of Avarice, "a vivid piece of work in the genre of grotesque realism"[36].

She does point out, however, that they are more than just "brilliant miniatures"[37]; instead, they are part of a "fierce and comprehensive effort to grasp and understand the place of evil in the world"[38]. Spivack believes that the presentation of the Seven Deadly Sins in Piers Plowman is highly dramatic, with a style that belongs to the sermon tradition of the medieval church.[39] It is clear from the discussion of the sermon in Chapter I of this thesis that homilists used allegory and dialogue to present their messages. The pageantry of the presentation of Langland's sins creates a platform from which the poet can preach. He portrays them as base and horrible.

This portrayal is somewhat consistent with the manner in which the playwright of The Castle presents the sins; that is, interesting, comical, crude and animal-like, and therefore representing what is lowest in Mankind's nature. Pride is "pyth wyth perlys" (l. 909), an ironic choice of jewellery for what is considered to be the greatest sin, since pearls are used traditionally as symbolic of purity and cleanness. Wrath is a "lythyr page"(l. 927) who boasts that "Sum boy schal be betyn" (l. 924). Envy viciously declares that "I breyde byttyr balys in body and in bonys" (l. 935), and Gluttony reminds the audience that he represents

a "staunche deth" (l. 961) for those "wyth here belys" (l. 962). Lechery gloats over the fact that when Mankind is about to go to his grave, "in my wonys wylde wil not out wende"(l. 976). Sloth declares that "Mankynde louyth me wel" (l. 985) and "Men of relygyon I rewle in my ryth" (l. 986). Coveytyse is the most influential sin in that he persuades Mankind:

> Pe Dedly Synnys, all seuene,
> I schal do comyn in hy.
> (ll. 891-92)

In both The Castle and Piers Plowman, the sins are ultimately defeated by a higher authority. In the earlier work, Repentance offers up a long prayer, asking God for mercy:

> And thanne hadde Repentaunce ruthe and
> redde hem alle to knele.
> 'For I shal biseche for alle synfulle
> Oure Saveour of grace
> To amenden us of oure mysdedes and do
> mercy to us alle.
> (Passus V, ll. 478-81)

He describes the theme of redemption through reference to Christ's Passion and Resurrection. He concludes:

> if it be Thi wille
> That art oure fader and oure brother -
> be merciable to us,
> And have ruthe on thise ribaudes that
> repenten hem soore
> That evere thei wrathed Thee in this
> world, in word, thought or dede!
> (Passus V, ll. 503-06)

Thus the conversion of the Seven Deadly Sins in Langland's

poem illustrates man's need for repentance and his struggle to reach that state. So, too, Mankind overcomes the sins and ultimately reaches God through the plea of Mercy at the conclusion of The Castle of Perseverance:

> My mercy, Mankynd, ȝeue I þe
> Cum syt at my ryth honde.
> (ll. 3598-99)

Mercy is actually the key to Mankind's salvation, a point to be discussed in the next Chapter.

NOTES

Chapter III

[1]Bloomfield, p. 43.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

[3]Ibid., p. 69.

[4]Ibid., p. 69.

[5]Ibid., p. 73.

[6]Ibid., p. 148.

[7]Ibid., p. 149.

[8]Ibid., p. 150.

[9]H. J. Thomson, ed., Prudentius Vol. I (London: 1949), p. xiii.

[10]Spivack, p. 77.

[11]Ibid., p. 79.

[12]Thomson, p. 281.

[13]Thompson, p. 325.

[14]Eccles, p. xx.

[15]Mackenzie, p. 59.

[16]Peter Happé, ed., Four Morality Plays (Middlesex: 1979), p. 33.

[17]Mackenzie, p. 61.

[18]Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Charles J. O'Neil, ed., (New York: 1957), p. 72.

[19]Saint Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, Anna S. Benjamin, ed. (New York: 1964), p. 93.

[20]Saint Augustine, The Christian Combat, Robert P. Russell, ed., Writings of Saint Augustine (New York: 1947), p. 327.

[21]Charles G. Herbermann, ed., The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: 1908), p. 626.

[22]Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, pp. 77-79.

[23]Ibid., p. 77.

[24]Ibid., p. 77.

[25]Ibid., p. 77.

[26]John P. Whalen, ed., The New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. XI (Washington: 1967), p. 153.

[27]Saint Augustine, Admonition and Grace, John C. Murray, ed., Writings of Saint Augustine (New York: 1947), p. 286.

[28]Ibid., p. 295.

[29]G. A. Lester, ed., Three Late Medieval Morality Plays (London: 1981), Mundus et Infans, pp. 111-156.

[30]Sumiko Miyajima, The Theatre of Man (Clevedon Avon: 1977), p. 62.

[31]Ibid., p. 62.

[32]Ramsay, p. cliv.

[33]Ibid., p. clx.

[34]Thompson, p. 315.

[35]Robert Potter, The English Morality Play (London: 1975), p. 28.

[36]Elizabeth Salter, Piers Plowman: An Introduction (Cambridge: 1962), p. 33.

[37]Ibid., p. 33.

[38]Ibid., p. 33.

[39]Spivack, p. 108.

IV

OTHER THEMES

> Whanne al hys lyfe is lytyd upon a
> lytyl pynne
> At þe laste
> On lyue whanne he may no lenger lende,
> Mercy he callyth at his laste ende:
> 'Mercy, God! be now myn frende!'
> (ll. 112-16)

The scene following the conflict of the vices and virtues and the ultimate victory of Coveytyse over Mankind illustrates the second of the themes discussed in this thesis, the theme of Death. God's all-powerful messenger summons the soul of Mankind to its accounting and although "Drery Dethe" (l. 2790) speaks only five verses, yet Mankind deeply feels the power of his message. Movingly he responds to Death's impact:

> A, Deth, Deth! drye is þi dryfte.
> Ded is my desteny.
> (ll. 2843-44)

Death is the great leveller of all men and his message is clear. He is indiscriminate in choosing his victims:

> Ageyns me may no man stonde.
> I durke and downbrynge to nowth
> Lordys and ladys in euery londe.
> Whomso I haue a lessun tawth,

> Onethys sythen schal he mowe stonde;
> In my carful clothys he schal be cawth,
> Ryche, pore, fre and bonde;
> Whanne I come þei goo no more.
> (ll. 2792-99)

He points out that the method of death is not a matter of choice, and reminds his audience of the Black Death which struck England in the fourteenth century:

> Ageyns me is no defens.
> In þe grete pestelens
> Þanne was I wel knowe.
> (ll. 2814-16)

The concept of the Coming of Death had a long tradition. Medieval preachers reinforced the art of dying, the ars moriendi, as evidenced from the pulpit literature of the time. Source-books for sermons in general emphasize the concept of Death as:

> a skulking, ghostly tyrant, who flits through all lands from place to place, sparing none, be he rich or poor, high or low, king or emperor, pope or prelate, religious or secular, a dread visitor whose coming is sudden, privy and unannounced.[1]

The following illustration from The Book of Vices and Virtues makes clear that man must prepare himself:

> The man ne dieth not gladly that hath not lerned hit, and therfore lerne to dye and than schalt thou kunne lyve, for ther schal no man kunne lyve wel but he have lerned to dye.... For deth is a passage, that wot every man, and therfore men seith whan a man is ded he is passed.[2]

This sermon continues in this instructional manner.

urging the congregation to lead better lives, thus emphasizing the ever-present nature of death and the necessity of preparing for it.

Bernard Spivack points out that what is noteworthy about the Coming of Death as a dramatic personification is "its terrible effort at realism -- its fascination ... in its most horrible shapes and attitudes"[3] The personification of Death "as animated cadaver or grinning skeleton, strode through literature and art ...."[4] The popular medieval poem, The Dance of Death, presents this figure as all-powerful. He does not hesitate to address "popes, kynges/ ne worthi Emperowrs" (l. 10), as well as the labourers in the field, "For dethe ne spareth hye ne lowe degre" (l. 48). The following is a dramatic excerpt from the Ellesmere manuscript of this poem. It is a satirical exchange between the figure of Death and a king:

Dethe to the Kynge:
O noble Kynge/ moste worthi of renown
Come forth a-noon/ for al ȝowre worthinesse
That somme-tyme had/ a-bowte you envroun
Grete [r]ealte/ and passynge hye noblesse
But right a-noon/ al ȝowre grete hyenesse
Sool fro ȝowre men/ yn haste ȝe schul hit lete
Who most haboundeth/ here yn grete richesse
Shal bere with him/ but a sengle shete.

The Kynge answereth:
I haue not lerned/ here a-forne to daunce
No daunce in sothe/ of fotynge so sauage
Where-fore I see/ be clere demonstraunce
What pride is worth/ force or hye lynage

> Deth al fordoth/ this is his vsage
> Grete and smale/ that yn this worlde
> soiourne
> Who is most meke/ I holde he is most sage
> For [w]e shalle al/to dede asshes turne.
> (ll. 105-20)

This confrontation of the living with Death helps reinforce what the medieval preachers intended in their sermons concerning death. Hardin Craig makes the point that La Danse Macabre or Dance of Death became a popular motif for warning the people of the certainty of death and the importance of the preparation for it throughout one's life.[5] Dramatic versions of this motif were often performed in churches and, like the cycle plays, were performed for religious purposes. It seems logical to assume that these so-called dramas became part of the development of the morality plays.

It will be useful to our discussion of this theme of Death to look again at its development in the two morality plays discussed in Chapter I of this thesis: namely, The Pride of Life and Everyman.

In The Pride of Life, it will be recalled, the King rejects the advice of his Queen and his Bishop that he should heed the approach of Death. He challenges Death to combat:

> Of Deth and of his maistrye
> Qwher he durst com in siȝte,
> Oȝeynis me and my meyne
> With force and armis to fiȝte.
> (ll. 463-66)

As the Prologue tells us, "Deth comith" (l. 81) to meet the challenge and defeats the King in mortal combat: "And delith him depe depis wounde" (l. 91).

This vivid conception of Death as a warrior who "wold none sparye" (l. 84) is consistent with Death's statement in The Castle as he arrives to claim Mankind: "ageyns me may no man stonde"(l. 2792). Death is impartial in his claims. The King in his pride has put the challenge to him. In contrast, Mankind in The Castle asks help of the World in the presence of Death:

> Werld, for olde aqweyntawns,
> Helpe me fro þis sory chawns.
> Deth hathe lacchyd me wyth hys launce,
> I deye but þou me helpe.
> (ll. 2865-68)

But the World knows that when Death arrives: "Ageyns hym helpyth no wage" (l. 2870). Just as the King of Life is destined for Death, so is Mankind.

However, both the King and Mankind achieve salvation. As the Prologue of The Pride of Life tells us, the soul of the King is claimed by fiends:

> Qwen þe body is down ibrozt
> Þe soule sorow awakith;
> Þe bodyis pride is dere abozt,
> Þe soule þe fendis takith.
> (ll. 93-96)

The soul, however, is allowed to ascend to heaven through the intercession of "Our Lady mylde" (l. 97) in the

debate of the body and soul. Thus, the assumption from the Prologue is that the optimistic Christian ending is realized. Death which is necessary in the life-death, cradle-to-grave process is ultimately defeated by the power of God. This concept is also present in The Castle. As has been pointed out in Chapter II which deals with the Banns of the play, "oure lofly Ladi" (l. 124) is suggested as interceding for Mankind at the point of Death. However, the soul of Mankind is raised to heaven in the end through the persuasion of Mercy: "Þi mercy, Lord, lete hym fynde!" (l. 3597). Death once again is necessary in order to bring mankind to his ultimate salvation.

The theme of the Coming of Death dominates Everyman, the third morality considered in Chapter I. Hardin Craig labels this play "a universalized allegory of the Dance of Death"[6]. Having been sent by God, Death, His "mighty messenger" (l. 63), summons Everyman. This summons is explained in the playwright's introduction:

> Here beginneth a treatise how the High Father of Heaven sendeth death to summon every creature to come and give account of their lives in this world, and is in manner of a moral play.

Very early in the play, Death appears dramatically at

the entrance of a sepulchre, a prop which was no doubt used as a reminder to the audience of the fleeting nature of life on earth. He carries a dart which is the instrument of death. The Castle death-figure also carries this instrument.

The lesson inherent in this theme is that Death has the power over all human life:

> I am Deth, that no man dredeth;
> For every man I rest, and no man
> spareth;
> For it is Goddes commaundement
> That all to me sholde be obedyent.
> (ll. 115-18)

Just as Death in The Castle summons Mankind to account for his earthly life in the spiritual world, so does he with Everyman:

> The story sayth: -- Man, in the
> begynnynge
> Loke well, and take heed to the
> endynge,
> Be you never so gay!
> Ye thynke synne in the begynnynge
> full swete
> Whiche in the ende causeth the
> soule to wepe
> Whan the body lyth in claye.
> (ll. 10-15)

Death in Everyman assumes the role of preacher, a role consistent with the theory that there is a close alliance between the pulpit and the didactic nature of the morality play. Miyajima points out that the playwright presents Death as "the Grand Leveller on the one hand, and the doctrinal and homiletic aspect from the

ars moriendi on the other"[7]. For example, the doctrine of Original Sin is presented here in simple terms:

> For, wete thou well, the tide abideth
> no man,
> And in the worlde eche livinge creature
> For Adams sinne must die of nature.
> (ll. 143-45)

Also, the Last Judgment is suggested in the following lines which Death speaks:

> Hie the that thou were gone to Goddes
> magnificence,
> Thy rekeninge to give before his
> presence.
> (ll. 159-60)

At the end of the play, the scholar who delivers the epilogue reinforces the homiletic nature of the play and echoes the advice of ars moriendi:

> For, after dethe, amendes may no man
> make,
> For than mercy and pite doth him
> forsake,
> If his rekeninge be not clere whan
> he doth come,
> God will saye: "Ite, maledicti, in
> ignem aeternum!"(a)
> And he that hath his accounte hole
> and sounde,
> Hye in heven he shall be crounde.
> (ll. 912-17)

Owst agrees with the commonly held theory that Everyman in terms of the theme of Death has a close alliance with medieval sermons:

(a) Depart, ye accursed, into the eternal fire.

> As it is in the more famous morality play [Everyman], so precisely is it in the sermons. The hollowness of earthly friendships and the waning of family affection at death are frequently melancholy themes upon homiletic lips.[8]

The Death figure in Everyman gives full meaning to the Christian acceptance of death in a larger way than in The Castle. However, brief as Death's appearance is in the earlier play, it is no less important in the presentation of its abstract meaning. Its didactic function is clear: man's earthly life is transitory, and he must always think of his spiritual salvation. When Death comes to call on Mankind, he must be prepared to depart with him. Death in The Castle states his position to Mankind:

> Ow, now it is tyme hye
> To castyn Mankynd to Dethys dynt.
> In all hys werkys he is vnslye;
> (ll. 2778-80)

> Whanne I com iche man drede forþi,
> But ȝyt is þer no geyn-went,
> Hey hyl, holte, nyn hethe.
> (ll. 2784-86)

Unlike Everyman, Mankind does not attempt bribery or argument. He accepts his situation. There is no dialogue between him and Death as there is with Everyman. The Castle mankind figure turns to the World for help and consolation. But the World knows that there is no escape from Death. He gives Mankind's possessions

to Garcio, his page. Mankind accepts the fact that he must leave the World and his goods behind him. His last thoughts are those of God and His mercy:

> But God me graunte of hys grace.
> I deye certeynly
> Now my lyfe I have lore.
> Myn hert brekyth, I syhe sore
> A word may I speke no more.
> I putte me in Goddys mercy.
> (ll. 3002-07)

Death seems to have achieved a victory, but, as we find at the end of the play, Mankind through his acceptance of God's grace and mercy comes to his salvation before God. His contrition for his greed for worldly goods is shown in the following lines:

> Now, alas, my lyf is lak,
> Bittyr balys I gynne to brewe.
> Certis a vers þat David spak
> I þe sawter I fynde it trewe:
> Tesaurizat et ignorat cui congregabit ea.(b)
> (ll. 2982-85)

It is important to note here that the theme of Death in The Castle helps give to the play one of its most powerful moments as drama. Apart from the fact that Death is part of the cycle of life that all men must experience and therefore part of the play's didactic purpose, it also helps to show Mankind as experiencing intense human feelings. He is subject to suffering and death. At the end of his life when Death calls for him, he is pathetic in his response. His "hert brekyth" (l. 3005).

(b) Man heaps up treasure, and does not know to whom it will accumulate (Psalms 39:6).

We cannot ignore the dramatic emphasis placed upon the figure of Death here. He is cruel and impartial and probably physically horrible. Mankind's response to his predicament in the face of this thing called Death is one of pathos and passion. His appeal to the audience just prior to death is heartfelt:

> Now, good men, takythe example at me:
> Do for ȝoureself whyle ȝe han spase.
> For many men þus seruyd be
> Þorwe þe werld in dyuerse place.
> I bolne and bleyke in blody ble
> And as a flour fadyth my face.
> (ll. 2995-3000)

In the presence of Death, he recognizes its unrelenting quality.

In his introduction to Skelton's morality play, Magnyfycence, Ramsay says that the Coming of Death is a tragic theme, but that the morality playwrights were "persistently optimistic"[9], and because they were unwilling to allow Death its tragedy, they "contrived to attach an after-scene ... to relieve the gloom of the sinner's final condemnation"[10]. From this point of view, we move on from the theme of the Coming of Death to another in the working out of the full-scope morality play concept of man's journey through life and death, to ultimate salvation.

The Debate of the Body and Soul is the third in the series of allegorical themes I wish to consider in

this thesis. In The Castle of Perseverance this Debate is compressed within a single stanza in which the soul stands over Mankind and cries:

> 'Mercy', þis was my last tale
> Þat euere my body was abowth.
> But Mercy helpe me in þis vale,
> Of dampnynge drynke sore I me doute.
> Body, þou dedyst brew a byttyr bale
> To þi lustys whanne gannyst loute.
> Þi sely sowle schal ben akale;
> I beye þi dedys wyth rewly rowte,
> And al it is for gyle.
> (ll. 3008-16)

There is no dialogue between the body and soul However, Mankind, through the mouthpiece of his soul, points out that "'mercy' was my laste speche;/ Þus made my body hys ende." (ll. 3028-29). A leaf is missing from the manuscript at this point in the play. It seems probable that the argument between the body and soul took place during this gap. There is no clear evidence, however, to prove this theory. Spivack outlines the standard presentation of this debate theme which he suggests is "a motif prolific in the homiletic literature of the whole of medieval Europe"[11]. In essence, the debate involves the Soul blaming the Body for its pursuit of pleasure and the Body in turn lamenting the past when it was attractive. The Body tries to shift the responsibility for its decay to the Soul.[12]

This debate, for which there seems to be no model,

was attached, according to Ramsay, "to relieve the gloom of the sinner's final condemnation"[13]. Sylvia Feldman, in her study of the morality plays, suggests that the debate is a variation of the psychomachia plot because the body and soul struggle with each other in matters involving sin.[14] Just as the vices of The Castle struggle to control Mankind, so does Mankind's body struggle to govern his soul. It is interesting to note how the playwright of the morality play, Mankind (c.1461), illustrates this idea:

> My name ys Mankynde. I have my
> composycyon
> Of a body and of a soull, of
> condycyon contrarye.
> Betwyx þen tweyn ys a grett
> dyvisyon;
> He þat xulde be subjecte, now
> he hath þe victory
> Thys ys to me a lamentable story
> To se my flesch of my soull to
> have gouernance.
> (ll. 194-99)

In The Castle, Mankind's soul emphasizes this "grett dyvisyon" (l. 196) by pointing out the great price it must pay for the pleasures of the body. This harkens back to the theme discussed above, that of the Coming of Death.

The Debate is also suggested in The Pride of Life:

> Qwehn þe body is down ibrozt
> Þe soule sorow awakith;

Þe bodyis pride is dere aboȝt,
Þe soule þe fendis takith.
And through priere of Our Lady mylde
Þe soule and body schul dispyte;
Scho wol prey her son so mylde
Al godenisse scho wol qwyte.
(ll. 93-100)

As has been mentioned earlier in this Chapter, the Debate could take place and, through the intercession of the Virgin, the Soul receive God's grace.

The debate in The Castle of Perseverance is a logical sequence to the arrival of Death and helps to sustain the spirit and the subject matter of the play. It deals with a religious subject and thereby reinforces the teachings for which it was intended. The Body succumbs to sin and the Soul must pay for its excess.

Just as the Debate discussed above contributes to the journey of Mankind from his place beneath the castle to his place at the end of the play on the right hand of God, so also does the Debate of the Four Daughters of God, the fourth and final theme I shall discuss in this thesis. This theme incorporates the essential theological message for the audience. It constitutes some 550 lines of the play and follows directly after the Soul of Mankind is carried off to hell on the back of his Bad Angel who has claimed it as his prize.

This popular medieval allegory was founded upon Psalms 85:10: "Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi, uistitia et pax osculatae sunt".(c) Its literary origin is complex and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace its progress from what is considered to be its origin. According to Thompson, it descended as a heritage to the drama through the copying of homilies, religious treatises, and poetry.[15] Of the ten French plays which contain the debate, the most thorough treatment of the theme is found in Arnould Greban's Mystère de la Passion. This play contains a scene in heaven where Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Peace meet to determine the fate of man. The dispute ends with the decision that only Christ as Son of God can save Man. The result is the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, and for mankind, Salvation.[16] Bernard Spivack suggests that the allegory was cultivated by such churchmen as Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugo of St. Victor.[17] He also lists works which contain the debate, the most important being Chasteau d'Amour, Cursor Mundi, the Meditationes Vitae Christi and Gesta Romanorum.[18] It would seem, therefore, that the debate had a tradition which The Castle playwright was able to use to good

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(c) Mercy and Truth are met together: Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.

purpose. The allegory suited the morality play structure, and the theological implications of the debate were part of man's hope of salvation.

The allegory as it is presented in The Castle of Perseverance is a debate that decides Mankind's destiny. God's four "dowterys dere" (l. 3247) are given equal opportunity to speak. The prosecuting sisters, Truth and Righteousness, are stern in their arguments that Mankind, who committed mortal sin, must suffer in hell:

> Truth: Lord, whov schuld Mankynd be savyd,
> Syn he dyed in dedly synne
> And all þi comaundementys he depravyd
> And of fals covetyse he wolde neuere blynne?
> (ll. 3262-65)

> Righteousness: Ful oftyn he hathe þe, Lord, forsake
> And to þe Devyl he hathe hym take.
> Lete hym lyn in hell lake,
> Dampnyd for euere and ay.
> (ll. 3388-91)

Mercy and Peace, on the defending side of the debate, advocate that Mankind be shown mercy despite his sin:

> Mercy: And mercy, Lord, haue on þis man
> Aftyr þi mercy, þat mekyl is,
> Vnto þi grace þat he be tan,
> Of þi mercy þat he not mys!
> (ll. 3327-30)

Mercy also points out that Mankind has called for mercy

at the point of death:

> A mone I herd of mercy meve
> And to me, Mercy, gan crye and call;
> (ll. 3129-30)

Peace makes the plea "Þat Mankynd schal haue grace" (l. 3547). It will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter III that the term 'perseverance' in the theological sense is an aspect of 'grace' Spivack suggests that one of the aims of The Castle of Perseverance is to communicate "the theological meaning of Perseverance, without which virtue has only a precarious hold on the human heart"[19]. Mercy says that when Mankind cries 'mercy', as he did at the Coming of Death, "Mercy schal be hys waschynge-well" (l. 3145). This sister also points out that sin and the washing away of sin requires mercy at times:

> Ne had mans synne neure cum in cas
> I, Mercy, schuld neuere in erthe had plas.
> (ll. 3323-24)

She reminds God and the audience of the most important factor in this process of granting mercy and receiving grace:

> Lord, þou þat man hathe don more
> mysse þanne good,
> If he dey in very contricion,
> Lord, þe lest drope of þi blod
> For hys synne makyth satisfaccioun.
> (ll. 3366-69)

This word "satisfaccioun" (l. 3369) is the third part of penitence and essential for man's salvation. We are

reminded of Chaucer's The Parson's Tale and, as has been mentioned in Chapter III, the "fruyt of Satisfacioun" (l. 112) of the Tree of Penance.

Justice continues the debate by objecting to what she considers to be leniency, and Truth complains that Mankind is unworthy because of his lack of charity toward others:

> For he wolde neuere þe hungry
> Neyþyr clothe nor fede,
> Ner drynke gyf to þe þrysty,
> Nyn pore men helpe at nede.
> (ll. 3472-75)

It is God who finally gives judgment. He declares that He will not condemn Mankind because a major part of His divinity is His mercy:

> I menge wyth my most myth
> Alle pes, sum treuthe, and sum ryth,
> And most of my mercy.
> (ll. 3571-73)

So Mankind is taken up to God's scaffold, and seated on His right hand. He tells Mankind:

> As a sparke of fyre in þe se
> My mercy is synne-quenchand.
> (ll. 3602-03)

The comparison in these lines effectively depicts the magnitude of God's mercy.

It is obvious that the dominant allegorical figure within this thematic section of the play is Mercy. She triumphs in the end despite the forceful

arguments of her sisters. She represents, as Spivack suggests, "the major bias in the divine nature of her father"[20]. This clemency brings to completion the journey of Mankind.

As an allegorical figure, Mercy has an important role in the later morality, Mankind. This play begins with a sermon delivered by Mercy (a male figure) who preaches that salvation lies only through him:

> I haue be ꝑe very mene for yowr
> restytyucyon.
> Mercy ys my name, ꝑat mornyth for
> yowr offence.
> Dyverte not yoursylffe in tyme of
> temtacyon,
> ꝑat ȝe may be acceptable to Gode at
> yowr goyng hence.
> (ll. 17-20)

At the end of this play, Mercy saves Mankind from 'wanhope' which is the belief that he can never be saved. In Mundus et Infans, another morality of the same period, the character of Perseverance reminds Manhood of Wanhope:

> Nay, nay, Manhood, say not so!
> Beware of Wanhope, for he is a foe![21]
> (ll. 849-50)

The term "wanhope' means, in a literal sense, 'despair'. The author of Jacob's Well, the fifteenth century manual which catalogues the Seven Deadly Sins, labels wanhope as the sixth branch of the last parcel of Sloth. It is described as follows:

> Þe sexte is wanhope, þat makyth a man noȝt to trusten in goddys mercy; ... and wanhope wyll makyn a man to holdyn hymself so synfull and cursed... he wyll noȝt be schreuyn, ne repentyn hym, ne cryin god mercy.
> (pp. 113-14)

It will be remembered that the dying Mankind in The Castle prays: "God kepe me fro dyspayr!" (l. 2991). The central figure of Everyman also appears close to this state of mind after his dialogue with Goods. He says:

> Than of my selfe I was ashamed,
> And so I am worthy to be blamed;
> Thus may I well my self hate.
> (ll. 476-78)

However much the pressure of 'wanhope' is brought to bear, the mankind figures in these plays never despair completely. This fact is in keeping with the morality play tradition of the optimistic Christian ending. Sylvia Feldman suggests in her discussion of the didactic purpose of these plays that repentance comes only after man has overcome the temptation to succumb to despair.[22] Mankind in The Castle turns from the World at the point of his death. He knows that he is damned unless "God me graunte of hys grace" (l. 3002), and in the end, Mercy pleads for his salvation before God. The divine comedy comes to an end. St. Augustine, in his treatise On Free Choice of the Will,

reminds men that if they ask for mercy and the cure of their souls, "then the paths of divine mercy would lead them into wisdom"[23]. The debate of the Four Daughters of God is a working out of this theological concept. The path to follow, according to The Castle of Perseverance playwright, is that forged by Mercy:

> Lo here Mankynd,
> Lyter þanne lef is on lynde,
> Þat hath ben pynyd.
> Þi mercy, Lord, lete hym fynde!
> (ll. 3594-97)

NOTES

Chapter IV

[1]Owst, p. 531.

[2]N. F. Blake, ed., Middle English Religious Prose (London: 1972), p. 132.

[3]Spivack, p. 64.

[4]Ibid., p. 65.

[5]Craig, p. 346.

[6]Ibid., p. 344.

[7]Miyajima, p. 93.

[8]Owst, p. 529.

[9]Ramsay, p. cxlix.

[10]Ibid., p. cxlix.

[11]Spivack, p. 67.

[12]Ibid., p. 68.

[13]Ramsay, p. cxlix.

[14]Sylvia D. Feldman, The Morality-Patterned Comedy of the Renaissance (The Hague: 1970), p. 46.

[15]Thompson, p. 356.

[16]Ibid., p. 356.

[17]Spivack, p. 69.

[18]Ibid., p. 69.

[19]Ibid., p. 101.

[20]Ibid., p. 242.

[21]Lester, Mundus et Infans, p. 151.

[22]Feldman, p. 56.

[23]Saint Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 90.

V

DRAMATURGY

> We thanke ȝou of all good dalyaunce
> And of all ȝoure specyal sportaunce
> And preye ȝou of good contynuaunce
> To oure lyuys endys.
> (ll. 140-43)

The Castle of Perseverance in its day was acted, not read, and medieval audiences would come to the play excited about the prospect of the action. The major characters appeal to the senses through their flamboyant speeches. The World enumerates no less than twenty-four different countries, cities, and provinces in the second stanza he speaks. The Devil describes himself in such a familiar way that the audience must have responded with laughter:

> I champe and I chafe, I chocke on
> my chynne,
> I am boystows and bold, as Belyal
> þe blake.
> What folk þat I grope þei gapyn and
> grenne,
> (ll. 198-200)

The Flesh describes himself as a figure of great self-indulgence, appropriate to his allegorical meaning:

> I byde as a brod brustun-gutte
> abouyn on þese tourys,
> Euerbody is þe betyr þat to my
> byddynge is bent.
> (ll. 235-36)

These examples suggest that the visual and sensual aspects of the play were planned to make a great appeal to the audience.

We know that The Castle was intended for outdoor performance as evidenced by the first vexillator's information given in the Banns: "At .... on þe grene in ryal aray" (l. 134). The chief feature of this outdoor staging was the platea or place through which processions from scaffold to scaffold took place. These processions would no doubt create a highly visual and dramatic effect. We find that, in examining the play, the action begins with the characters moving from scaffold to scaffold. Stanley Kahrl agrees that the play would have to be presented as a play of movement:

> The debate between Humanum Genus and his Good and Bad Angels leads directly to the movement from the World's stage of Lust, Liking and Folly to assist the Bad Angel in tempting Mankind. Mankind's 'fall' is in fact accomplished by his physical movement across the place to World's scaffold, and his decision to join the forces of evil located there.[1]

This "physical movement" occurs not only at the beginning of the play but also, to a large degree, at

the castle siege, a point considered later in this Chapter.

There are several different critical interpretations of the stage plan which accompanies the manuscript of The Castle. The features of the drawing tell us that there is a castle in the centre of the large platea. On the sketch, there are two concentric circles which surround the platea. Outside these circles the five scaffolds are positioned as follows: Flesh to the South, the Devil to the North, the World to the West, God to the East, and Covetousness to the Northeast, between the Devil and God. Richard Southern in The Medieval Theatre in the Round, his book-length study of the play's presentation, supposes that the platea is surrounded by water, taking as evidence the direction: "þis is þe watyr a-bowte þe place...."[2] A. M. Nagler argues that since the play was presented in various places (as suggested in the Banns), the use of a moat would be impractical: "Southern's assumption that in every town the troupe dug a ditch, ten feet broad and five feet deep, simply takes the wrong track"[3]. Southern's theory is that the earth, which would have to be dug in order to create the moat, was used to build a rampart for the audience.[4] This rampart would create a higher viewing area. Mark Eccles disagrees,

pointing out that so large a ditch was not needed and that the looseness of the freshly-dug earth would create an uncomfortable seating arrangement.[5]

Did the spectators use this earth rampart? Critics disagree about whether they sat inside the circles indicated on the stage plan or outside this barrier. Southern theorizes that the spectators sat within the platea (where the earth was piled), and that the "stytelerys" mentioned in the staging information kept order. Glynne Wickham disagrees with this theory. In his study, The Medieval Stage, he presents an interesting parallel to the castle as it is used in The Castle of Perseverance. Wickham sees this castle, which is drawn in the centre of the stage plan, as emblematic of a type of medieval tournament called a Pas d'Armes.[6] This pas (narrow passage) is represented by the castle which acts as a defence for the soul of Mankind. If this symbolic castle can be seen as the centre of an entertainment over which two sides battle, as in Pas d'Armes, then the place surrounding that centre would be clear of spectators. As Wickham says, one of the elementary rules of any game, whether athletic or theatrical, "is a well-defined separation of the areas reserved respectively for performers and spectators"[7].

William Tydeman also disagrees with Southern.

He argues that because of the impediment such an audience would create, the action of the play would be difficult to implement.[8] He also points out that the stytelerys or marshals who are designated to control the crowd were probably the only ones other than the actors who occupied the platea "because it was the only possible area from which they could perform their duties satisfactorily"[9].

These critics disagree primarily on the relationship between audience and actor. My chief purpose in this Chapter is to discuss the relationship between theme and presentation. Madeleine Doran in her chapter "Stage Practice" (Endeavors of Art), discusses the arrangement of scaffolds as decor simultané where the actors have a place from which they speak and "all the places of the drama are equally present to the spectator at once"[10]. It seems to me that in terms of dramaturgy, this concept is the most important. Seeing the stage as a unit in which the plot is represented through the action of the characters is, after all, the drama and the entertainment.

In staging the first of the four themes discussed in this thesis, that of the psychomachia, Southern suggests that perhaps Mankind is surrounded by the Seven Heavenly Virtues safely in the shadow of the castle.[11]

With the arrival of Backbiter, the dramatic action of the scene changes to the sound of alarms. The Devil gives the order:

> Haue do, boyes blo and blake.
> Wirke þese wenchys wo and wrake.
> Claryouns, cryeth up at a krake,
> And blowe ȝour brode baggys.
> (ll. 2195-98)

These warlike preparations are followed by the stage direction: "Tunc pugnabant diu" (a). Southern says that "the fighting must remain a mystery"[12], although the text of the play makes reference to weaponry such as "a faget" (l. 2352), "a spade" (l. 2326), and the virtues use flowers as weapons: "oure flourys lete now flete" (l. 2053).

The siege scene is a highly dramatic one, not only because a sustained battle could be staged, but also because the dialogue of the interesting vice figures lends itself to entertaining theatre. The figure of Wrath warns Patience to put Mankind outside the castle:

> Or I schal tappyn at þi tyre
> Wyth styffe stonys þat I haue here.
> (ll. 2110-11)

Envy, in crude fashion, threatens the virtue, Charity:

> Let Mankynde cum to us doun
> Or I schal schetyn to þis castel town
> A ful fowle defamacyoun.
> (ll. 2156-58)

(a) Then they will fight a long while.

The entertainment factor here cannot be overlooked. The dramatic force of the psychomachia, illustrated through the verbal exchanges of the vices and virtues, is realized not only in an intellectual but also in an emotional way.

The Coming of Death, the second theme discussed in this thesis, is one of the most visually dramatic moments of the play. Southern suggests:

> the Figure who now speaks comes in at the main entrance, slowly walks down the lane in front of it, and will then circle anti-clockwise round the Castle.[13]

This is, of course, speculation. Yet Southern's supposition stems from the fact that Death delivers five stanzas, and that after speaking the first introductory one, he would deliver the other four to each of the four quarters of the circle.[14] Certainly, the emotion engendered would be evident in the audience and this method of delivery, although speculative, can be justified on the grounds that Death as a visual force was familiar to the medieval audience. As discussed in the previous Chapter, the ars moriendi and the danse macabre were very much a part of the literature and art of the time.

The tangible quality of this figure of Death is evidenced in the lines he delivers. He refers to his

"carful clothys" (l. 2797), his deadly "launce" (l. 2807), and the uselessness of "peny nor pownde" (l. 2826). Death points out that material things have no value at his entrance. His lance, which is a weapon of war, gives him the power over Mankind:

> Now I kylle þe wyth myn knappe!
> I reche to þe, Mankynd, a rappe
> To þyne herte rote.
> (ll. 2840-42)

His presence is not unexpected for the audience (the Banns have informed the people that he will be arriving), but his entrance would undoubtedly be a dramatic one.

The immediate follow-up to Death's appearance on stage is the brief debate between the Body and Soul. The Soul is bitter in his condemnation of the Body's past behaviour. One can imagine the Soul lamenting with a wailing voice his disappointment in the Body:

> Body, þou dedyst brew a byttyr bale
> To þi lustys whanne gannyst loute.
> Þi sely sowle schal ben akale;
> I beye þi dedys wyth rewly rowte,
> And al it is for gyle.
> (ll. 3012-16)

The drama is heightened by this debate. It creates a scene where the soul who, according to the play directions has been lying under Mankind's bed under the castle, can leap upon the Bad Angel's back and go "to deuelys delle" (l. 3125). Mankind has died in sin, a state about which the audience would be aware. Although the steps in this life, death and after-life

pilgrimage are well known to the audience, the tension of the action is still effective.

The finale of the play begins with the procession of the Four Daughters of God. They are to be dressed in coloured mantles according to the play's instructions:

> þe iiij dowterys schul be clad in mentelys, Mercy in wyth, rythwysnesse in red altogedyr, Trewth in sad grene, and Pes al in blake, and þei schul pleye in þe place altogedyr tyl þey brynge up þe sowle.

The colours here give a powerful visual effect to the scene, and may have been deliberately chosen for their liturgical meaning, representing the colours of vestments for mass. White represents purity and innocence. It is fitting that the character of Mercy, who brings about man's salvation should wear the colour which represents the Virgin. It is also the colour of Easter vestments and of the Lamb. Red, a colour associated with the Holy Spirit, and used in masses for religious martyrs, is the colour of the mantle of Righteousness. Truth in "sad [dark] grene" wears the colour of spring, representing the Trinity. "Blake" is the choice for Peace, the colour associated with requiem masses (requiescat in pace: rest in peace) and mourning. It is obvious that The Castle playwright was interested in

the colourful spectacle which these four figures would present.

The serious tone of the Heavenly Debate suggests that this scene would have little action. The Daughters speak their stanzas in turn and then God concludes the performance with the pronouncement that the soul of Mankind shall ascend His scaffold and sit on His right hand. God then steps out of character and tells the audience:

> Þus endyth oure gamys
> To saue ȝou fro synnynge
> Evyr at þe begynnynge
> Thynke on ȝoure last endynge!
> (ll. 3645-48)

The discussion of the dramatic aspects of these themes can only be subjective. Apart from the stage plan, we have no accurate documentation of a medieval stage performance. The Castle of Perseverance has been often criticized for its prolixity; one has to agree that to present the play in performance would indeed be a large task. The play, however, has some powerful dramatic moments, moments which incorporate all of the themes I have discussed in this thesis. The battle scenes with the reactions of the Vices are humorous and action-filled. Death is a figure horrible to behold. The Soul on his way to hell on the back of the Bad Angel has to be viewed as comic. The pageantry

of the Heavenly Debate shows that this playwright had a talent for creating a visual effect. The alliterative language of the play indicates a love of sound. The Castle is not just a drama with a message, it is a drama with all of the theatrical elements that create entertainment for an audience.

The Castle of Perseverance, then, is more than moral message. It is a combination of allegory, realism, human emotion, Christian theology, comedy, ceremony and physical action. This profusion of characteristics seems to be consistent with medieval literature as represented by such writers as Langland, Chaucer, the cycle playwrights and other morality playwrights. Michael R. Kelley in his work, Flamboyant Drama, sums up the essence of the morality plays this way:

> Richly various, filled with surprising juxtapositions, the ... moralities please us as dramatic spectacles.... They are moral plays to be sure, but today their message is as much about beauty as it is about goodness and truth.[15]

As part of this tradition, The Castle of Perseverance has a secure position.

NOTES

Chapter V

[1]Stanley Kahrl, Traditions of Medieval English Drama (London: 1974), p. 58.

[2]Southern, p. 18.

[3]A. M. Nagler, The Medieval Religious Stage (London: 1976), p. 50.

[4]Southern, p. 127.

[5]Eccles, p. xxiii.

[6]Wickham, p. 117.

[7]Ibid., p. 117.

[8]William Tydeman, The Theatre in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: 1978), p. 159.

[9]Ibid., p. 159.

[10]Madeleine Doran, Endeavors of Art (Wisconsin: 1954), p. 282.

[11]Southern, p. 189.

[12]Ibid., p. 198.

[13]Ibid., p. 207.

[14]Ibid., p. 208.

[15]Michael R. Kelley, Flamboyant Drama (Illinois: 1979), p. 128.

CONCLUSION

The discussion has shown that the purpose of the morality play is to present the moral struggle of mankind. Its source is generally considered to be the medieval sermon which attempts to teach the laity to avoid sinful actions and concentrate on living a good life. This didacticism is presented dramatically in The Castle of Perseverance. From the psychomachia motif of the conflict of the vices and virtues, through the Coming of Death and the appeal of the Soul, we come to the triumph of Mercy through God.

The play opens and closes with a statement of the religious concepts which are very much a part of the instructional nature of morality drama. The Banns introduce the doctrines of free will and perseverance, and the action of the play proper works them out. The deadly sins battle the virtues for man's soul. In the end, man must accept death when it comes. Salvation is the ultimate goal. Because the thematic structure leads to a merciful dénouement, the movement of the play must be considered comic in nature. The grip of tragic forces which control Mankind because of his sinning is broken finally by mercy. This triumph

reflects the optimism in medieval thinking.

The play rises at times to stimulating drama, despite its prolixity. On the printed page, the allegorical figures often appear unreal. Yet the staged characters create a drama. The lively vices and stoic virtues actually do battle; the figure of Death strikes terror; the Bad Angel carries the soul in triumph; the gentle daughter of God brings the piece to a satisfactory conclusion. Despair is a conquerable state of mind and through God's presence, the divine comedy is complete.

The morality pattern of Mankind as a pilgrim moving from cradle to grave and beyond becomes fused in the Renaissance with the life of a man who has his own personal history. Craig sums it up this way:

> As time went on, the universality of this figure became particularized as individual men were seen in their trades, occupations and environment. Also the Vice figure was becoming an established part of drama.[1]

With the change in time, the morality tradition shifted and although the pattern of temptation, sin, repentance, punishment, and hope of salvation still existed in drama, the medieval system of morality with its comedic ending gave way to the tragedy of the Elizabethan Era.

In terms of the thematic structure of The Castle, the entire play seems to be a summa confessorum, an

acting out of Christian experience. It emphasizes that despair is conquerable through the mercy of God. Mankind is a victim of neither pride nor passion. He represents all men and illustrates the medieval Christian concept that man, although base, can realize the beauty of mercy.

NOTES

Conclusion

[1]Craig, p. 378.

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