GROTESQUE MOTIFS IN THE
MEDIEVAL MYSTERY PLAYS

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

by
Lawrence M. Clopper, Jr., B.A.
The Ohio State University
1965

Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of English
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I Introduction

Our appreciation of the medieval drama as drama has been hampered by a number of assumptions about the drama and the Middle Ages, itself, that are not supported by historical or aesthetic fact. We have assumed that comic and religious themes are incompatible or mutually exclusive, that the "secularization" marked an end of church influence, that comic scenes are secular intrusions bearing no relation to religious themes, and that comic realism is incompatible with the "symbolic" drama that we have presumed the medieval drama to be.

The source of the idea that the comic scenes were intrusions into the sacred drama can be traced to the 1609 Chester banns which were written by a Protestant who was opposed to the continuance of the drama. He says that the playwrights desecrated the sacred literature by

Interminglinge therewith onely to make sport,
Some things not warranted by any writt,
Which to gledd the hearers, he woulde men to tak yt.
(ll. 12-14)

This attitude has by no means abated in the passage of 350 years. In his edition of the Chester plays, Deimling notes that the comic scene of the female tapster was a later interpolation in the Harrowing of Hell playlet, and, therefore, he implies, the scene is not thematically unified with the rest of the playlet. Gordon Crosse, in The Religious Drama notes that the plays contain a great
deal of "irrelevant comic matter." J. B. Moore calls them comic interludes. Hardin Craig assumes that the lady tapster is not an authentic part of the play. D. J. Savage concludes that these comic scenes were "included purely for comic purposes." A. C. Cawley adds that "the final scene of the offending ale-wife, funny though it is, has nothing whatever to do with the rest of the pageant." Until Lumiansky's recent study of this play, there had been no attempt to find any thematic unity in it.

However, the unwillingness to accept broader lines of unity in the plays is reflected in the criticism from other sources. Although he acknowledges the Secunda Pastorum as an example of unified drama, Homer A. Watt excludes the other plays as good drama because there is often a lack of unity and economy in the plays, and the added bits of contemporary realism are foreign to story and mood. The entire effect, in brief, is agglutinative, as though the authors were torn between a responsibility to reproduce the biblical originals and a desire to entertain the audience by odd bits of bickering among characters, monologue acts, and occasional slapstick stuff wedged into the play to provide entertainment but totally unrelated to the main biblical action.

It is precisely because of the unavailability of not just books, but of the sacred knowledge, which had been maintained in its secret tongue, that the cycle plays, among other things, were supported by the Church itself. Because the common man was cut off from the increasingly
more complex body of scholastic knowledge, there was a need for a form of popular religion that explained the concepts and lore of the Church. However, our impressions of the Middle Ages are often a result of our conceptualization of that world as it is embodied in a medieval cathedral or a St. Thomas. We have recognized the predominant symbolization of the actual world, but we have failed to see the real world that lies beneath the symbols. The mixture of the sacred and the profane, the holy and the blasphemous, and the tragic and the comic that we find in the medieval drama seems to be offensive to many modern readers because we tend to separate the religious from the secular.

We are still partially influenced by the Romantic vision of the Middle Ages as a time when men saw the rose purely as a symbol of Christ's passion. No one will deny that the rose had that symbolic value, nor that the symbolism was transferred to the color red itself;10 but we must not assume that the rose did not still remain a rose; its symbolic values only enhanced the value of the rose as a natural product of the world. In terms of the drama, the same dual view is evident. In the twelfth century Mystère d'Adam, for example, Satan sows tares among Adam's wheat after the fall. The tares have various symbolic values in Christian thought, but, in this case, they are a visual reminder of God's punishment for Adam's
disobedience. The scene is obviously a parable; the tare is symbolic; but it was also a fact that life, as every peasant would attest to, was impeded by the imperfections that entered the world through man's disobedience.

Another of the difficulties that has deterred our assessment of the medieval drama is that we have been misled by the term "secularization." Because we have found comic elements in the cycle drama, we have assumed that these are secular incursions into religious matters; however, we should not forget that the comic unction sellers and the raging Herod first made their appearance in the liturgical drama when the drama was very definitely under the complete control of the Church and its clergy. We are also finding that what we called a period of secularization was not really that at all since the Church still played a very important part in the drama. On the grounds outlined above, we can no longer assume, therefore, that the comic elements in the religious drama were irreligious, non-religious, or secular without obscuring their actual role in the mystery plays.

Since our modern society has a tendency to separate the daily concerns of our lives from the religious sphere of events, it is often shocked or disturbed by the mixture of the comic and the serious in the medieval drama. We are quite frequently unresponsive to, or confused by,
those grotesque scenes which intermingle comedy with either serious spiritual episodes or contemporary scenes of complaint. By overemphasizing the comic values of these scenes, we have failed to recognize that these plays often employ the grotesque as an effective means of expressing fear, tenderness, hardship, love, and awe. The grotesque also helps to unify the medieval drama by bringing the audience into an immediate participation in the spiritual drama. It has the ability to express an image of a fallen world which requires the intervention of God if man and the world are to be redeemed. Often the grotesque provides an effective counterpoint which heightens the suffering of a person, as it does, for example, in the passion of Christ; or which makes the people aware of their sinful natures and their pride by having the devil, for example, moralize, in a familiar tone, on the audience's sins.

In order to get at different aspects of the grotesque as it is represented in the medieval mystery plays, I have divided this thesis into three sections. In Chapter II, I will advance a definition of the "grotesque" and illustrate its effect and range in several scenes of the cycle plays. Chapter III will deal with the way in which the grotesque aids in unifying not only one play, but the whole cycle. I will argue that whereas good can exist in the absence of evil, the existence of evil insists
upon the existence of good. The grotesque, with its insistence on the negative qualities apparent in the universe impells the drama toward a reassertion of the principle of good. In Chapter IV, I will deal with the devil as a grotesque character whose presence simultaneously demands a comic and a fearful response from the audience. In the process of delineating his character, I hope to be able to show that, since he is an inversion of the good universe as represented in God and Christ, the devil helps to unify this drama, and that he must be taken more seriously than we have been prone to do in the past.

I do not expect to be able to exhaust the number of events that can be classified as "grotesque" in the drama, but I do hope to be able to make some suggestions about their presence, their effectiveness as comic and serious drama, and their effect on the audience. Before we proceed to a definition and exposition of the grotesque motifs in the drama, however, we should acquaint ourselves with the following passages from Erich Auerbach because they will define my method of approaching the medieval drama:

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

In it \footnote{15} the medieval drama all the heights and depths of human conduct and all the heights and depths of stylistic expression find their morally or aesthetically established right to exist; and hence there is no basis for a separation of the sublime from the low and everyday, for they are indissolubly connected in Christ's very life and suffering. Nor is there any basis for concern with the unities of time, place, or action, for there is but one place - the world; and but one action - man's fall and redemption.
II A Definition of the Grotesque

The Slaughter of Innocents

I

Only in the recent past have critics attempted to define the grotesque as an art form and as a legitimate means of expression. Our recognition of the necessity of defining a grotesque aesthetic is partially a result of our "discovery" of primitive art earlier in this century which pointed to a universal preoccupation with the darker themes of life. The eruption of this style in the paintings of Picasso, in the work of the Surrealists, the Dadaists, and the German Expressionists gave a further impetus to the study of the grotesque. In the present decade, the paintings of Francis Bacon, the work of the Catalan school, and the German and American "Black Novelists" are reminders that this art form is one of the dominant ones in our century. In nineteenth century literature, the poetry of some of the Romantics and the Victorians, and the novels of the Gothic writers attest to their interest in the supernatural and the terrible. The grotesque seems to be a style that has attracted increasing attention over the last one hundred and fifty years, and it has been during that time that the attempt to develop the aesthetic has been most pronounced.

Although every society produces some grotesque forms, we have tended to ignore them entirely, or to regard them,
even in those societies in which the grotesque is an important category in their total artistic production, as so much curious material produced outside the main-stream of the arts. The obvious exception, of course, is the Middle Ages where it is impossible to ignore this form because of the proliferation of the material; nevertheless, the recognition of the grotesque in the Middle Ages has not inspired many critics to attempt to define its qualities, its limits, or its effectiveness as a viable art form. The plastic arts have been treated to a greater degree than the literary, but the treatment has been more historical than artistic; the grotesque has served as a key to the attitudes of the period, but has not invited much critical attention. The commentary on grotesque in literature is almost entirely confined to studies of writers of the last century and a half; consequently, any attempt in this thesis to define and clarify it will rely upon this recent criticism. I hope to advance a broad definition of the grotesque, which, then, can be modified to embrace the dramatic literature of the Middle Ages.

Of modern English critics, John Ruskin has attempted to define the grotesque at greatest length; yet he has also displayed some of the attitudes that have, evidently, deterred critics from evolving a successful definition. Ruskin's refusal, for example, to affront the sensibilities
of his readers by describing the base grotesquerie that flourished during the decline of Venice, leaves us in some doubt about whether he meant he would not discuss bad art or bad grotesque art. He does, however, expatiate on the types of grotesque art and the types of people who produce these items; but, for the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to discuss the rather arbitrary divisions of the latter. In the process of distinguishing the nobler Northern type of grotesque from that of the baser Venetian type, he does provide some important insights into the constitution of this art form. He points out that the grotesque is divisible into two types, "the ludicrous and the fearful"; and adds that

as one or the other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque; but we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects because there are hardly any examples that do not in some degree combine both elements.3

I think we can qualify Ruskin's statement to some extent in order to place more precise limits on this difficulty. Although it is possible to produce examples of the pure grotesque in its terrible aspects, as displayed, for example, in the decaying corpses on fifteenth century tombs, it seems impossible to form its opposite without the ludicrous lapsing into caricature. The major portion of grotesque art, and the primary concern of this paper, is that mixture of the comic and the terrible.
In order to be effective or noble, Ruskin says, the grotesque must be concerned with the serious problems of life, the proper subjects of which are Death and Sin. It is when the artist deals with these concepts that the grotesque takes on its terrible aspects; but, Ruskin admits, this definition presents difficulties also:

The difficulty [that] exists in distinguishing the playful from the terrible grotesque arises out of this cause; that the mind, under certain phases of excitement, plays with terror, and summons images which, if it were in another temper, would be awful, but of which either in wearyness or in irony, it refrains from the time to acknowledge the true terribleness. And the mode in which this refusal takes place distinguishes the noble from the ignoble grotesque. For the master of the grotesque knows the depth of all at which he seems to mock, and would feel it at another time, or feel it in a certain undercurrent of thought even while he jests with it; but the workman of the ignoble grotesque can feel and understand nothing, and mocks at all things with the laughter of the idiot and the cretin.

Ruskin conceives of the master of this art as a man who is engaged in the production of beauty, but who, when he looks up from his work, sees the decaying world around him. He returns to his work, yet that impression of the real world may appear in the work either unconsciously or in a moment of apathy. These intrusions of the rude world into the work of beauty render the work grotesque, but, necessarily, serious.

The other form of noble grotesque that Ruskin acknowledges is that which is mocking or satiric; however,
its purpose is not to mock a fool, rather it aims to contrast the terrible with the beautiful. The artist of the baser form works in this mode out of a perverse inclination to contemplate the brutalities of the world. In this latter form, Ruskin concludes, there is "no Horror, Nature, or Mercy"; but "whenever the satire of the noble grotesque fixes upon human nature, it does so with much sorrow mingled amidst its indignities." 8

Although categorization is often necessary in any attempt to define a complex art form, we should be prepared to find examples of the grotesque that mingle a variety of forms and subject matter. We might also enlarge the area of events that can be considered as proper subjects of the noble grotesque; for example, among those serious concerns of life is not only Death, but the means that one has to stave off Death. In the Secunda Pastorum, as we shall see later in this thesis, the shepherds complain of cold, taxation, starvation, and various other social and natural ills – vital concerns to people living on a subsistence level – yet they often treat these matters humorously or satirically (cf. Prima Pastorum, also). The mode of the Secunda Pastorum is burlesque, but it is quite seriously concerned with pressing social problems.

Thomas Wright emphasizes the point that the grotesque is often a mixture of the comic and the terrible, but adds
that the grotesque is closely akin to caricature because they both emphasize distortion. The only distinction that we must make here is that caricature is entirely humorous in its manner of presentation whereas the grotesque involves not only the physical distortion of caricature, but the accompanying distortions of responses, ideas and attitudes.

Bagehot, in his discussion of Browning as a poet of the grotesque, generalizes to say that the grotesque deals...not with normal types but with abnormal specimens;...not with what Nature is striving to be, but with what by some lapse she has happened to become. This art works by contrast. It enables you to see, it makes you see, the perfect type by painting the opposite deviation. It shows you what ought to be by what ought not to be; when complete, it reminds you of the perfect image, by showing you the distorted and imperfect image.10

Without reading the first statement too liberally, I think Bagehot has conceded that the grotesque has as part of its subject matter those real elements in nature that men are prone to ignore as repulsive or ugly. His latter point adds a further development to the notion of grotesque by suggesting that it is a negative which forces its opposite, the positive. This latter distinction will be important in our discussion of structure and unity in the cycle plays later in this paper.

In her discussion of the grotesque, Lily B. Campbell cites Santayana's observations on the ugly and the
grotesque: "The ugly is usually a source of amusement rather than the cause of any real pain; yet if its suggestions are vitally repulsive, its presence becomes a real evil toward which we assume a practical and moral attitude."\textsuperscript{11} Our attention should be focussed on the remark that the grotesque can be a recognition of "real evil" and not necessarily frivolous, fanciful, or tasteless.

Miss Campbell's discussion of the grotesque is certainly the most detailed among more recent criticism; consequently, I shall summarize briefly those points that have not been covered in the discussion above. In her introduction to her study of Browning, she notes two more functions of the grotesque: (1) to provide surprise; and (2) "to make the world stand on end that people may look at it."\textsuperscript{12} She continues by summarizing Hegel's remarks on the grotesque:

The grotesque arises from the attempt to express the infinite through the finite. The fact that man's limitations are thus farther and farther removed but proves that just so long as they exist man will struggle to remove them or to go beyond them; and just as soon as he endeavors to go beyond them into the unknown and unordered, he enters the realm of chaos and the grotesque.\textsuperscript{13}

There are obviously other attempts to express the infinite in finite terms, notably the tragic and the beautiful, but when the demands of daily life exclude the tragic and the beautiful, the artist may try to express that infinitude
by means of the grotesque. I would like to delay discussion of this particular point until the end of this chapter when I can deal with particular examples that give some validity to this notion.

Miss Campbell concludes her discussion of the grotesque with the following statement: "Whenever the false is portrayed as the true, whenever the object is in itself or in its surroundings incongruous, the result is the grotesque. Thus, also, when the real and the ideal are confused or treated simultaneously, the result is something in the nature of the grotesque."¹⁴ It is evident, I think, that the intrusion of social criticism and observations on the real world result in the grotesque when they are juxtaposed with the ideal world as exemplified by the redemption of man in the cycle plays. The incongruities in the cycle plays not only help to unify the cycles themselves, but also help the audience relate to the plays as real events. That the resulting form is often grotesque is not surprising since it reflects the nature of the actual world.

In general terms, the grotesque is composed of the humorous and the terrible; it often relies upon incongruities, and it tries to express the infinite in finite terms. Although some objects of the grotesque may be purely fanciful, it may also deal with real evils and thus
force its opposite, the good, besides influencing its observer to adopt a moral stance. For the purposes of this paper, we can define the grotesque more narrowly. Since we are dealing with a theological context, I think we can eliminate those elements of the grotesque which J. Cotter Morrison distinguishes as fanciful exhibitions of absurdly comic forms which are saved from the triviality of caricature by a slight touch of the terrible. We can eliminate these minor types since, as I shall attempt to show, the grotesque is present in the religious drama in order to express the nature of the actual world. It is the theological context that forces us to acknowledge as real and serious those elements that we have tended to emphasize as merely comic intrusions. Many of these scenes, moreover, if they were presented outside a theological context would be considered merely comic; but the fact remains that they are inextricably bound up with the story of the fall and redemption of man, and, hence, cannot be considered as other than serious and real.

II

The grotesque motifs in the drama of the late Middle Ages can be divided into two general areas: the comic and the grim or macabre depiction of events. For the purposes of a general delineation of the two types, we might give as examples the colloquy between the two devils in the
Towneley Last Judgment as opposed to the scene of the tormentors in the York, Towneley or Hegge Crucifixion. These distinct types differ only in their emphasis on the comic or on the macabre in the presentation of their respective scenes. For example, the devils' colloquy is essentially one of low comedy; yet the playlet is under-cut by very serious moral and theological implications. On the other hand, the Crucifixion scene is concentratedly brutal, macabre and grimly realistic; however, there remains a comic element in the rough manner in which the torturers abuse each other and in the way in which they nail Christ to the cross. By separating the two for the moment, I think that we can arrive at a better definition of how the grotesque motifs function in the drama, both structurally and thematically, as well as how they reveal the texture of the medieval society.

The buffoon is not only the mask behind which the oppressed can castigate their superiors and their situation, he is also the symbol of chaos. He helps to resolve the fears of the bewildered or unbelieving masses; he drains off the serious threats to any stable system of though which, of necessity, has certain inconsistencies. For example, in a universe constructed on correspondances in which the king, or the pope, is God's representative on earth, and who, therefore, has those qualities on earth that God has in the heavens, the common man may be
disturbed by the presence of a retarded king or a dissolute pope. Since he does not necessarily have the ability to comprehend the semantic tricks of the highly educated, he may not have the means to resolve the inconsistencies that he sees around him. His only resort can be to madness or vicarious madness; the buffoon, thus, becomes the god in whom inconsistencies can exist, and, at the same time, this chaotic character's madness can reaffirm the traditional system.

As I have stated above, it is naive to assume that the common man of the Middle Ages was always looking heavenward, or that he saw a rose purely as a symbol of the Lord's passion. Since he had to wrest his food out of the soil through hard labor, he could not ignore the basic materialism of his world. He was, however, aware of the other, symbolic, immaterial world; he was aware of those correspondences that were supposed to exist. In those individual cases where the system seemed to be faulty, it was necessary to employ some means either to eradicate the inconsistency, or to place it in a position where it could be safely dealt with. In the cases where it was impossible to eradicate the dissoluteness of a pope or the stupidity of the nobility, the common man found comfort in death as the great leveller and in the clown.

Of course, the clown did not always deal with serious
matters; often he was merely the trickster, or the jokester; however, quite frequently, the buffoon played the role of social critic and antagonist. It is in this role that he becomes the grotesque character, because he is dealing with problems that are real to his audience. He suffers the blows of his society; he shows himself at the mercy of the priests or the lords. He forces his audience to laugh at those things which make their lives miserable; but he does not allow them to forget that these events are none the less real.

Let us now turn to a few examples of those scenes that can be classified as grotesque. The comic grotesque can be a means for displaying antagonism against social injustices or a safe means for declaiming against the deity that created a world which seems incompatible with a hierarchical view of the universe. For example, in the Towneley Mactacio Abel, we are confronted with a comic depiction of the first murderer. He is a grumbling, lazy farmer who torments his servant and who, in turn, is made a fool of by his servant. The necessary labor that is involved in the tilling and cultivating of his fields, and in the reaping and harvesting of his crops has embittered him against the deity who created him, the people around him and himself. However, his obscenities, at times, become blasphemous, and even though they remain comic, there is a harsh undertone. To Abel's assertion
that he takes no heed of God in offering such a meagre tithe, Cain replies

    Now and he get more, the dwill me sped!  
    As mych as oone reep, 
    ffor that cam hym full light chepe; 
    Not as mekill, grete ne small, 
    as he myght wipe his ars with all.  (ll. 234-38)

Another kind of comically grotesque scene demands the suspension of the modern reader's disbelief if he is to enjoy it as its contemporary viewers did. I will make only a few brief assertions here because these scenes will be taken up in some detail later in this thesis. The scenes, predominantly those of the Harrowing of Hell and Doomsday, in which the devil, or demons, play out their satire of human affairs, are often comically treated, yet the satire often becomes harsh and crude; it is often directed toward persons of authority, and it is a thin veneer for a very serious moral problem. Although the devil may often play the moralist, he is not a priest; although he often satirizes the sinfulness of men, his actions do not negate his purpose of collecting evil souls. In both the Chester and Hegge Doomsday plays, the devils are present as almost equal arbiters to remind Christ that he cannot have all the souls. In these scenes at court, they are not comic in what they say (they reel off the seven deadly sins), but they are comic because of the reasons that they are there: they are protecting their interests. When Tutivillus enters in the Towneley
Judgment, he gives a long speech on the immorality of sinners. In this latter instance, we have another example of how the grotesque functions. The devils act like ordinary people; indeed, Tutivillius may look like the people in the audience since he is not immediately recognized as a devil by his compatriots and since he says he often appears as a tax-gatherer, as a court rollsman, or as a lollard. Even though the devils imitate human actions, such as drinking and lounging around, they are probably dressed like animals. Tutivillius emphasizes his human characteristics by lacing his speeches with Latin and by describing a universe built on principles that are inversions of the divinely ordained one. In the Judgment play, this parody is emphasized by the trumpet he blows as a low comic counterstatement to the other trumpet of judgment. In this case, the grotesque motif is based on a parody of the actions of man and God: they are devils, but they speak of themselves as, and act like, men.

In many commentaries on the drama, there is a tendency to overemphasize the comic values of the demons and Satan. There is little doubt that the devils were presented humorously and there is every possibility that they created havoc among the audience, but we should not forget that devils were very real beings and the perpetrators of evil and disease, as well as the daily mischiefs, that the men
of the Middle Ages were heir to.

Since a mere recitation of events and characterizations may not be the best means of acquainting ourselves with the wide range of the grotesque, let us investigate a single episode that is treated in a variety of ways. The Slaughter of Innocents can be classified as grotesque in each of the cycles, but there are distinctive features in each of them that may help us to comprehend the nature of the grotesque. The mothers of the slain children are examples of the grotesque figure who appears comical because he fails to react to a situation in a way that is compatible with humane actions. When the soldiers carry out Herod’s orders to murder all the children, they are beaten off by the women and cursed as knaves. We should expect the women to react in a more human and maternal way; instead, these women, in a minor farce reminiscent of the outraged housewife, buffet and beat the soldiers as if they were mere mischief makers whom the good women had caught stealing some trifle. The women are outraged hussies; their actions are incommensurate with what has happened to them. Our first impressions are that a potentially tragic scene has been turned into farce because laughter follows brutality. We have misunderstood this scene, among others, principally because we have not tried to see it within its context.
A cross-cyclic study of it will indicate some of the reasons for the manner of presentation of this segment; it will also show us the breadth of the grotesque tradition and provide examples of those incongruous juxtapositions that have been defined as grotesque.

The range of treatment is from the predominantly comic Digby and Chester playlets to the near tragic Hegge pageant. The audience is aware of what is to happen from past experience; they are informed in the play of what will shortly happen; and they see the murders before their eyes; however, with the exception of the Hegge play, all the cycles include a comic treatment of this horrible deed. In this study, I will concentrate primarily on the encounter of the women and the soldiers since this is the climactic point.

In the Digby Herod's Killing of the Children, we are introduced to the braggart-buffoon Watkyn immediately after Herod exhorts his soldiers to kill all the children under two years old. This character is fully developed by the time he has his ignoble encounter with the women. Before the slaughter, Watkyn begs a boon of Herod that he be knighted and allowed to participate in the slaughter. He assures Herod of his valor (ll. 133-44; 153-57); yet admits that he would be afraid of a woman with a distaff (ll. 158-60). Herod will only agree to knight him if he proves himself in the slaughter. This rebuff only
encourages Watkyn to proclaim his bravery again and again (ll. 177-80; 200-204; 217-22); however, he promises to fiercely kill all the children only "if the ffather and moder will let me haue my wille (l. 172)." After each boast, he reveals his fear of the wives (ll. 181-92; 205-208; 223-24):

but for the wyves, that is all my dought
And if I se ony walkyng a-bought
I will take good hede tell she be goon;
And assone as I aspye that she is oute,
by my feith in-to the houes I will go A-non.

And thus I promyse you, that I shall never slepe,
but evermore wayte to fynde the children alone,
And if the moder come In - under the benche I will /crepe
and lye stille ther tyll she be goon;
than manly I shall come out and hir children sloop,
And when I haue don, I shall renne fast a-way.
if she founde hir child ded, and tooke me ther alone,
be my feith I am sure we shuld make a fray.
(ll. 181-92)

The characterization of Watkyn is certainly comic, but it is a fact that he wants to become a knight in order to kill children. It is also evident that he is hardly brave enough to be a knight. The implied criticism (which is stronger in some of the other plays) is that knights are brave enough only when they are to face defenseless women and children. Since we are well acquainted with the character of Watkyn by the time he meets the women, we are appalled by his crude response to the women's attempt to save their children, because he shows that he is neither knightly, nor brave, nor that the massacre is a battle:
Peas, you folyshe quenys! wha shuld you defende
A-geyns vs amydyd men in this apparaile?
we be bold men, and the kynge vs did sende
Hedyr in-to this Cunbre to hold with you bataile.
(ll. 305-08)

The women curse Herod and begin to mourn their children
whereupon Watkyn calls them traitors. The complete insensitivitiy to human torment that is obvious beneath the
false bravura of Watkyn elicits the only possible response from these women that he will understand — they
beat him (there is a play on words here where they say they will knight him). The stage direction tells us that
they start to beat him and that the other "knyghtes"
rescue him.

The Chester playlet treats the subject in a similar manner, although it does not include a character like
Watkyn. In the meeting between Herod and the knights, the latter are offended when Herod asks them to kill a
mere child (ll. 153-60) because it is beneath their dignity to take up arms against one child. The second
soldier boasts that he would gladly take up arms against any champion, but not a child (ll. 161-68). However, as
soon as Herod explains that he did not mean a single child but a thousand or more, the knights readily agree
to do the task, and in long boasts (ll. 185-248) assure Herod that they are equal to the massacre. In the en-
counter with the women, the soldiers treat the children brutally as they attempt to ascertain whether they are
male or not. Their utter abandon in carrying out the
orders of Herod is revealed by such crude jesting as:
"he must hopp upon my spere,/ and if it any pintle bear,/I must teach him a play (ll. 362-64)." The second child
who is slain is Herod's son, an event which allows the
later development of the theme of Herod's evil being
visited on himself.

The encounter between the women and the soldiers is
quite scurrilous and takes on the aura of a flying match
rather than a slaughter. However, the scurrility provides
an effective counterpoint to the lament that follows the
killing of the children:

Out! out! and woe is me!
thiefe! thou shalt hanged be!
my childe is dead, nowe I see,
my sorrowe may not cease.
Thou shalt be hanged on a tree,
and all they fellowes with thee;
All the men in this contree
shall not make thy peace. (ll. 345-52)

The speech is really a curse, but it is effective as a
lament because it indicates the extent of the mothers'
grief. Juxtaposed to this stanza, however, is an indica-
tion of the treatment the women accord the knights:

Haue thou this! thou foule harlott!
and thou knight to make a knott,
and one buffet with this boote
thou shalt haue to boot.
And thou this, and thou this!
though you both shyte and pisse,
and if you think we do amiss,
goe, buskes you to moote! (ll. 353-60)
The York scene is quite short and more sombre in tone than the other scenes; however, it also includes the buffeting of the soldiers by the women:

Miles  As armes! for nowe is nede,
But yf we do yone dede,
Ther quenys will quelle us here. (11. 207–09)

Admittedly, this is only a suggestion that the women attack the soldiers, but it is quite possible that York follows the most usual treatment of the scene. This particular presentation relies more heavily on theological matters, however, because the women end the scene by taunting the soldiers with the fact that they have not killed the Christ child, and that he has escaped to Egypt. This is the only playlet in which the women act in this prophetic fashion.

The Towneley playwright expands the scene to an extraordinary length in order to explain all the events that bring about the slaughter, and he continues the scene at Herod's palace after the massacre is over. In the first encounter, the Wakefield author displays his ability for fast repartee:

Primus Miles: I hold here a grote she lykys me not
Be we parte; /weyll
Dame, thynk it not yll,
thy knafe if I kyll.
Prima Mulier: what, thefe! agans my wyll?
lord, kepe hym in qwarte!
P. Miles: Abyde now, abyde; no farther thou gose.
P. Mulier: Peasse, thefe! shall I chyde and make here a nose?
P. Miles: I shall reyfe the thy pryde; kyll we these boyse!
P. Mulier: Tyd may betyde, kepe well thy nose, 
    fals thefe! 
    haue on loft on thy hode! 
P. Miles: what, hoore, art thou woode? 
P. Mulier: Outt, alas, my chyldys bloode! 
    Outt, for reprefe. 

Then the woman pronounces her very moving lament:

    Alas for shame and syn! alas that I was borne! 
    Of wepyng who may blyn; to se hir chylde forlorne? 
    My comforth and my kyn, my son thus al to-torne! 
    veniance for this sin I cry, both euyn and morne. 
    (ll. 329-46)

The second woman is more vociferous in her protests:

    Then thi skalp shall I clefe! lyst thou be clawd? 
        lefe, lefe, now bylefe! 
    ffy, fy, for reprefe! fy, full of frawde - 
        No man! 
        haue at thy tabard, 
        harlot and holard! 
        thou shall not be sparde! 
        I cry and I ban! 
    (ll. 353-60)

The women, when first they encounter the soldiers display 
incredulity and become enraged. They finally beat the 
soldiers, who then return to Herod's palace. Their insen-
sitivity is displayed at the palace as they fawn on 
Herod and boast of their brave deeds. The first soldier 
claims to have done the best (ll. 406-08); and the second 
brags of having killed many thousands (ll. 415-48).

The tone of the Hegge play is graver and closer to 
the "terrible grotesque" than the other playlets on this 
subject. There is no evidence that the women beat the 
soldiers, the encounter is very short, and the women's 
speeches are two short, emotional laments for their dead 
children (ll. 89-104). The language is heavily
alliterated and the tone very sombre; the mood is broken only when the soldiers report their success to Herod. Herod invites them to table whereupon, with some glee, they detail their work and the elation they felt while they were carrying it out. Death appears to offer a short speech on the transience of all men; the Devil appears to make his claim on their souls (ll. 233-45). The tone of the entire playlet is echoed in Death’s closing stanza:

Thou I be nakyd and pore of array
and wurmys knawe me al a-bowte
\( \text{\underline{\#\#}} \text{loke 3e drede me nyth and day} \)
\( \text{\underline{\#\#}}} \text{for when deth coyzth 3e stande in dowte} \)
Eyn lyke to me as I 3ow say
shull all 3e be here in bis rowte
When I 3ow make ryght lowe to lowth
and nakyd for to be
Amonges wormys as I 3ow telle
\( \text{\underline{\#\#}}} \text{Vndyr be erth xul 3e dwelle} \)
\( \text{\underline{\#\#}}} \text{and thir xul Eyn both flesch and felle} \)
as bei haue don me. (ll. 272-84)

We should not be surprised by the marked similarity of these scenes since the configuration of most of the playlets is similar throughout all the cycles; however, we might speculate on some possible reasons for the presentation of the Slaughter in this manner. The characterization of the women is a part of that concept of woman that is maintained throughout the plays from Eve to Noah’s wife, to Gill in the Secunda Pastorum, to the female tavern keeper who is proclaimed a suitable mate for the devil. Indeed, the only woman in the cycles who is not
directly presented in this manner is the Virgin Mary; yet even she has aspersions cast upon her by Joseph in the Towneley *Annunciation*. The women are presented as they had been conceived of for some time: as waspish, deceitful, crude, vulgar, and jaded. Nevertheless, in response to Herod's tyranny, they can only react in an ineffectual manner. By reducing them to a group of screeching harridans, the playwrights effectively evoke an impression of the women's futility, not their lack of feeling for their children.

There are more profound reasons for presenting shrews rather than tragedians in this scene and these reasons are basic to our understanding of the nature of the grotesque. If I may be allowed to generalize for a moment, it is worth noting that the production of the grotesque often rises dramatically during those periods when an older tradition is seriously challenged, for example, as it has in our century and, to a lesser extent, as it was in the Victorian period. It often proliferates when there is wholesale slaughter and when, consequently, few people are left untouched by death—as, for example, during great wars, or epidemics, or both. The aftermath of World War I is an obvious example, as are the decades following World War II, of periods during which the grotesque increased extraordinarily, and in some cases, in which it dominated the arts. If we consider the fifteenth century,
we cannot help but recognize that the Hundred Years War (1339-1453), the Wars of the Roses (1454-1485), and the Black Death (1348-49, 60-61, and throughout the next 150 years) contributed to the attitude that is displayed by the grotesque. When a society seeks the appropriate means of expression for its attitudes, it must be able to reconcile the form its art takes with the kind of world that it finds itself in. Without indulging in more than generalization, I think we could say that the aristocracy could afford to submerge itself in romance; the lower classes could not. The Romance can be seen as a denial of facts and as an impulse to fantasticate in order to cover up the actual nature of the world around them; but the common man cannot get far enough away from reality to construct such intricate idealizations.

Although tragedy is not usually the popular form of the dramatic or literary arts, it is impossible to construct tragedies when transience is recognized as the dominant force in nature. It is true that the momento mori, and the themes of chaos and transience were problems that demanded a great deal of attention in the Renaissance tragedies, but behind the sporadic chaotic periods was recognized a larger force: a stable universe. The repeated speeches on "degree" and order, and the eventual "re-righting" of the chaotic world in the Renaissance drama are testimony to the fact that the universe was
essentially stable. The themes of chaos and transience in this later drama indicate the fear the the world is less than stable, but they are not an admission that the world may be chaotic in nature or that there may be an area of chaos equal in force to the stable one.

Since Adam's fall introduced disorder into Eden and since the rest of the drama is concerned with working out that theme of redemption, the return to Eden, it is significant that the fifteenth century placed so much emphasis upon that last chaotic day when chaos and transience would be ended. The drama of the great mystery cycles starts with the creation of order out of disorder; this scene is immediately followed by the readmission of disorder into the universe through Satan's fall and it is heralded by the clanging of pots and pans as Satan issues forth from the mouth of Hell. The introduction of disorder into the world necessitates the elimination of all corruptible things; hence, the acknowledgment that disorder exists is an admission that all created things that have fallen from their state of perfection are transient. With such an eschatological view of the world, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to formulate the tragic figure since all people are reduced by the common enemy, death; all men are made equal by the fact of death and by the fact that they are doomed to live in an imperfect world. The odds against successfully opposing
evil are too formidable for a man to take a tragic
stance; the result of all action is a foregone conclusion.

For many of the same reasons, the other pure form
of drama, the comic, is impossible. Hard work is neces-
sary for survival; life is surrounded by death, decay,
and corruption. All comedy must be tinged with sadness
or sorrow; the viewer is faced with the recognition of
the horrible realities that lie beneath the comic mask.

Whenever it becomes impossible to express such a
world through tragedy or comedy, it may be expressed in
a grotesque form. The comic helps to take the edge off
the reality that is ever present; the element of tragedy
helps to express the deep feeling that one cannot give
way to completely without sinking into total abnegation.
The grotesque is a complex form because it demands too
many different, or opposed, responses simultaneously.
The comic grotesque forces us to laugh at those things
which are horrible; the terrible grotesque appalls us
while we stand at fascinated attention before it. The
incongruous mixtures of events that form the grotesque
are carried over into the emotions we feel when we are
viewing it.

If we return to our consideration of the Slaughter
of Innocents, we can see this complex art form carefully
worked out. If the reaction of the women were merely a
comic intrusion, it would not be necessary to develop
the characters of the soldiers, or of Herod, or of the events that come before and after the slaughter itself. The encounter between the women and the soldiers, in most cases, takes the least number of lines, yet it is the important event that the scene is about. However, as viewers of this drama, we must be treated to the characterization of the tyrant Herod and of the callous, insensitive soldiers. The women are not equal foe to the armed soldiers; they cannot protect their children; they cannot deal in kind with the soldiers. Their response, which is surely low comedy, is as poignant as it is ineffectual; it expresses the helplessness in the face of authority and their inability to assert themselves any more forcefully. When the performance of these good mothers is juxtaposed to the unknighthly, cowardly soldiers, the total effect is even more an expression of the women's futility.

The grotesque is produced by a very simple juxtaposition of, normally, mutually exclusive events. We are forced to move very rapidly from the pathos of the brutal murders to the farcical attack. The women's response is surprising even though they are portrayed as harridans before the murders are committed; we do not expect brutality to be followed by comedy. We do not fully respond to the scene until it is over when we realize that, instead of sympathy, we have displayed crassness. This
emotion is increased when, for example, we are forced to view the fawning soldiers telling Herod of their valorous deeds. These latter revelations are humorous, too, since they are typically human; but we are aware of the grim reality of the deed that is so lightly brushed off by the soldiers and by the audience. As members of the audience, we are forced to share the responsibility for the soldiers' brutality because we have laughed at the slaughter and at the soldiers' boastful retelling of their glorious encounter with the enemy.
III The Grotesque and Structural Unity

The Secunda Pastorum

The repeated emphasis on the harsher themes of this world may temper the audience's response to comic scenes, but this emphasis also helps to unify the drama and to impell it toward the final moment when the ban will be lifted from the world and those men who tried to maintain a righteous existence. If we analyze the Secunda Pastorum, I think we will see how the grotesque effects aid in unifying the playlet and how they psychologically prepare us for the divine birth which is one of the indications that God's curse is to be lifted. I have decided to use the Secunda Pastorum because it is generally accepted as a unified playlet within the cycle drama, and because, once we have determined how the Secunda Pastorum is unified, then we can investigate whether the themes that are stated in this playlet are evident throughout the cycle. Essentially, my argument will maintain that a typological and anti-typological structure exists throughout the entire cycle and that the effect the grotesque has on unifying this particular playlet is evident elsewhere in the cycle.

Many critics have hailed the Secunda Pastorum as a transition to the drama of the Renaissance because its dominant secular interests seem to indicate a change in attitude and a progression toward more worldly concerns. One might assume, since most of the play is an elaborated
folk tale, that it is an indication of a trend toward more secular considerations, but the structure of the play reflects a kind of thinking that was prevalent throughout the medieval period. The *Secunda Pastorum* does suggest a transition in the drama from the predominately religious to a drama that is concerned with social problems; however, we should not be led into fallaciously thinking that the play is not primarily a result of religious motivations.

Although some critics have maintained that the *Secunda Pastorum* is loosely structured, most critics accept it as a unified playlet (some say, the only one\(^1\)) within the general structure of the cycle drama.\(^2\) It is generally conceded that the structure of the *Secunda Pastorum* is an inversion of the normal structure in the mystery plays since the rest of the plays - those that are not directly concerned with Christ - are often parallels to the Christ story. The entire cycle is based on typological figures who presage the coming of Christ by emphasizing the likenesses between Old Testament characters and the Christ, or by prophets who recite the scriptural references to Christ's subsequent sacrifice.\(^3\) It is evident that the Mak story is an inversion of the normal shepherds' play (which is presented in this pageant from the appearance of the Angel to the stable scene). Mak is a false "messenger" who enters upon the
scene singing discordantly; he casts a spell upon the shepherds and commends his soul to Pontius Pilate. Instead of leading sheep, he steals them. Mak is characterized as a devil and as a spawner of evil. Of course, the false birth is a grotesquely funny inversion of the divine birth: instead of finding truth in the crib at Mak's cottage, the shepherds find a changeling first, then a disguised sheep.

Although Mak is presented as a comic character, there is a darker theological side to his nature and to the play as a whole. Mak is the false prophet, and the devil incarnate.\(^4\) He creates the evil in the world and inverts the goodness that should exist in a Christian universe.

To the modern reader, one of the more remarkable aspects of the *Secunda Pastorum* is its use of folk myth within the religious tradition of the medieval cycle plays. The play is, for us, an especially exciting conjunction of folk tale and religious story because we are tempted to see this play as the moment that symbolizes a change of attitude within the drama and the society. Although the juxtaposition of these two stories is the result of the imaginative creation of one man, it is neither surprising that it should occur within the tradition of the religious drama, nor that the shepherds' play should adopt this form.
We should not, however, consider the Mak story as entirely the invention of the author. Cosbey has pointed out the importance of determining how many of the incidents were the result of the author’s imagination and how many were drawn directly from the folk myth itself. In attempting to ascertain the extent of the author’s originality and his debt, Cosbey has broken the tale into fourteen parts:

1) Mak casts a sleeping spell over the shepherds;
2) steals a lamb and takes it home;
3) returns to the shepherds;
4) later puts lamb in a cradle;
5) his wife lies in "childbed";
6) the owners come, demanding the lamb;
7) he sings a lullaby;
8) he invites them to search the house;
9) he urges them to be quiet, as his wife is ill;
10) he swears an equivocal oath;
11) the shepherds, convinced, offer the baby a present;
12) the fraud is discovered;
13) Mak and his wife still try to insist she has borne the child, that it was bewitched;
14) he confesses and is forgiven, escaping with a tossing in a blanket.

Over the years of scholarly study, ten analogues have been offered as evidence that the playwright drew on an old folk myth, and Cosbey relates them in order to ascertain in what ways the Mak story of the Secunda Pastorum deviates from the other variations of the story. The first insertion was Mak’s return to the sleeping shepherds (3), which was to parallel the annunciation of the Nativity. Then, in order to parallel the Nativity family scene, the author places the lamb in a cradle and Gill in a feigned childbed
(4,5). Cosbey has not been able to find a version that includes both of these events in the same tale. Because his wife is in childbirth, Mak requests the shepherds to be quiet (9). Cosbey notes that in any other version in which this request is made, it is made because the child is ill. He adds that this is more reasonable because the object is to keep the searchers away from the cradle. Lastly, to parallel the gifts at the Nativity, Daw offers the baby a coin and thereby discovers the fraud (11, 12). Cosbey assumes that the Wakefield author purposely added these four additions to his script in order to strengthen the myth as an analogue to the Herald and Nativity sections of the playlet.

Although these four additions are analogues to the nativity scene, they are negative analogues. Instead of Mak returning to the shepherds to herald the birth of the Lamb of God, he returns in order to hide the fact that he has stolen the sheep. In contrast to the real birth of Truth, Mak perpetrates a false birth by which he hopes to deceive the shepherds. In his attempts to get rid of the shepherds he tells them to be quiet, although in the stable scene the Virgin invites rejoicing at the birth. The gifts are proffered out of the same honest goodness each time, yet the gift to Mak's child reveals a fraud. The gifts to the Christ, however, result in exultation and a new discovery of hope and joy.
It is obvious that by making these additions, the author was intentionally constructing an inverted Nativity story. This inversion reinforces the view that the world in which the shepherds live is indeed un-Christian and not the kind of world that the divine birth heralded. However, the juxtaposition of these two stories can also be seen as resulting from the same motives that kept the Feast of Fools alive in medieval society. During these rather pagan celebrations, the lower clergy, and even the laity, usurped the positions of the higher clergy for a day and carried on in a blasphemous manner. These celebrations were still occurring at the time of the composition of the Secunda Pastorum. Chambers reports Eustace de Mesnil's condemnation in 1445 of the still persisting Feast of Fools:

Priests and clerks may be seen wearing masks and monstrous visages at the hours of the office. They dance in the choir dressed as women, panders or minstrels. They sing wanton songs. They eat black pudding at the horn of the altar while the celebrant is saying mass. They play at dice there. They cense with stinking smoke from the soles of old shoes. They run and leap through the church, without a blush at their own shame. Finally they drive about the town and its theatres in shabby traps and carts; and rouse the laughter of their fellows and the bystanders in infamous performances, with indecent gestures and verse scurrilous and unchaste.

Although the Secunda Pastorum does not carry the inverted analogue to this extent, it does exhibit the same motivations that inspire the Feast of Fools. Chambers continues:
The ruling idea of the feast is the inversion of status, and the performance, inevitably burlesque, by the inferior clergy of functions properly belonging to betters....The vicars hooted and sang improper ditties, and played dice upon the altar, in a reaction from the restraints of choir discipline. Familiarity breeds contempt; and it was almost an obvious sport to burlesque the sacred and tedious ceremonies with which they were only too painfully familiar.8

This release from the rigidity of life and its duties is undoubtedly one of the great impetuses for comedy throughout all cultures; however, the negative ritual has another effect. It is not only a denial of the divine and sacred, but also a reassertion of those same things. The sheer onslaught of blasphemy and perversity must, of necessity, reassert the sacred principles. In the Secunda Pastorum, then, we must see the Mak story not as a negation of the sacred, but as an affirmation of it. The whole Mak episode compels the Nativity episode.

Another mode of expression that is similar to the negation of the Feast of Fools is evident in the proliferation of grotesque images throughout the Middle Ages. This ferocious morbidity and complete disaffirmation demands a questioning of the impulses which were responsible for the creation of such art forms. One only has to look at the works of Bosch, or the pus-riddled corpse of the crucifixion of Gruenewald, to gain some insight into the negative side of the medieval mind. During the plague years, and in the years that followed, there was an
increased tendency to paint such scenes as the Harrowing of Hell, the Dance of Death, and the death and corruption of human flesh.\textsuperscript{9} Certainly this is a mark of severe despondency, but it also indicates, I think, a means to draw off the evil and corruption that surrounded the people. In the process of cleansing away this evil by its proliferation in the arts, the principle of beauty could be reasserted. In fact, the grotesqueries themselves take on a kind of unholy beauty. They are pictorial representations of the belief that the mortification of the flesh will purify the spirit.

The concern with the themes of death, corruption and ugliness that dominate the closing years of the Middle Ages results from impulses similar to those that maintained the Feast of Fools. I think this concentration indicates a broader dimension of negation than the inversion that the Feast of Fools implies. The inversion of the natural order and the escape into chaos indicate a desire to get away from the rigidity of an ordered world concept. The Feast implies that order exists; the riotous celebrations necessarily exhaust themselves, and by their exhaustion, the divine order is re-imposed. The grotesque concerns of the artist and the morbid contemplation on the ugliness of this world are thus an effective means of enforcing the principles of beauty, indestructability, and order. The denial of beauty does not just imply beauty, it makes
beauty necessary. It does not matter whether that beauty exists here or in the hereafter: life is made meaningful by the fact that since there is ugliness, there must be beauty. We see this complex of motivations in operation in the Secunda Pastorum. The harshness of the world, the sheep-stealers, and the false birth imply the divine vision at the end. In contrast to the very realistic Mak story, the Nativity scene is a symbolic tableau more in the tradition of early religious drama and the symbolic portrayals of the Virgin and child.

Within this social context, the Secunda Pastorum takes on a different kind of unity than we formerly suspected. Although it is not as atrocious as other contemporary grotesqueries, the folk episode functions in a manner similar to these grotesqueries; that is, it is a negative scene which implies its opposite, the Nativity. Since the Mak episode is less malicious than other expressions of its kind, I think we can assume that it indicates a change in direction away from the eschatological concerns of the Middle Ages, to a finer vision of man and his world. If we look through the rest of the cycle plays we are struck by the plays of the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell which are more nearly allied with the horrors of the kind described above. Mak is not punished by being sent to Hell or by being tortured for his treachery; instead, he is tossed in a blanket, a rather
harmless bit of punishment that is designed to attract laughter rather than horror. It becomes even more humorous and appropriate if we remember that pregnant women were tossed in blankets to hasten the birth of a child. However, we cannot fail to see that the point is made explicit that the evildoer is punished.

Having presented a frame of reference, we can now turn to events within the play in order to see if these premises have any validity. When Mak first enters on the scene, he is disguised as a messenger; and, although the shepherds are not fooled by the disguise, Mak still persists in his deception:

What! ich be a yoman, I tell you, of the kyng,
The self and the some, sond from a greatt lordyng,
And sicch.
Fy on you! goyth hence
Out of my presence!
I must haue reverence;
Why, who be ich? (ll. 201-207)

This entrance, of course, counterpoints the entrance of the herald angel, and it has some of the humor of the Feast of Fools. Mak does not fool anyone for a moment and his protestations of high station make him more ludicrous. The pretension to reverence is a remarkable comment on Mak's own ineptitude, while also making fun of the kind of person Mak seeks to imitate. The final disdainful question, "Why, who be ich?" reaches the height of farcical humor as Mak stands with his cloak covering a presumably spotted and wrinkled tunic. His use of rustic
dialect, moreover, makes ludicrous his demand for reverence.

However, beneath the humor and banter, Mak is revealed as a devil. The Second Shepherd says, "Mak, the dewill in youre ee." (l. 217). "The shepherds are not fooled by Mak's pretended goodness either: "And thou has an yll noys/ of stelyng of shepe." (ll. 224-5). In the theological context, this statement is an assertion that Mak is the devil, because it is the devil who leads sheep astray or who steals them from the fold. Then before going to sleep, Mak commends his soul, not to God, but to Pontius Pilate (ll. 266-7) and casts a magical spell on the shepherds (ll. 278-86). When he arrives home, Mak uses perverted religious imagery to tell of his good luck. He tells his wife that he does better than those that "swynke and swette" (l. 312), and says of his good fortune, "Thus it fell to my lott, Gyll; I had sych grace." (l. 314). In relating that he has not had sheep to eat in twelve months, he evokes the image of the eucharist since the eating of the sheep would be recognized as a symbol of the taking of the sacrament. Later, Gill conjures up the same perverted image when she says, "I pray to God so mylde,/ If euer I you begyld,/ That I ate this chylde/ That lygys in this credyll." (ll. 535-38).

Together, this unholy pair hit on the plan of faking a childbirth in order to conceal their theft. The devil
imagery is reinforced upon Mak's return, when Gill says, in reply to Mak's announcement of his presence, "Then may we se here the dewill in a' bande, Syr gyle!" (l. 407). I think the above incidents indicate Mak's religious perversity and that he is an inversion of the man of station, as well as the inversion of the principle of good. He is the devil in disguise, and a character that would be quite familiar to the audience, who were probably plagued with sheep stealers themselves. Beneath their laughter, there must have been an uneasiness created by viewing a character drawn from the audience's daily world.

The themes of disorder and inversion are also evoked by Mak's first entrance when he interrupts a song which the shepherds are singing. Of his vocal abilities, the First Shepherd asks, "who is that pypys so poore?" (l. 195). In contrast to this entrance the First Shepherd remarks of the angels song, "This was a qwant steyvn that euer yit I hard." (l. 647). It is quite clear that Mak is a disrupting force in the otherwise harmonious universe. He is also a false prophet. His song not only counterpoints the angel's chant, but also reasserts the existence of a divine order and harmony. The shepherds learn that there is a divine order at the appearance of the angel, but they re-evoke the more serious theme by complaining about the cold and their weariness (ll. 670-73) before starting to Bethlehem. After they visit the Christ child
they exit singing; order and beauty have been restored and reaffirmed.

But all is not comedy as these last two examples have shown. Underneath the comic facade, there occurs the very serious struggle of good men in what seems like a harsh and ugly world. Each of the three shepherds has his complaints. The First shepherds is plagued by the weather and a secular authority which does not care about his comfort:

Lord, what these weders ar cold! And I am yll happyd. I am nere hande dold so long haue I nappyd; My legys thay fold, my fyngers ar chappyd, It is not as I wold, for I am al lappyd In sorow. In stormes and tempest, Now in the eest, now in the west, Wo is hym has neuer rest Mydday nor morow! (ll. 1-9)

We ar so hamyd, "ortaxed and ramyd, We ar mayde handtamyd With thyse gentlery-men. (ll. 15-18)

This is a complaint that would be understood by all the common folk who had come to see the plays. The shepherd continues his lamentation and covers all the abuses that the gentry inflict on the working classes. Perhaps one of the reasons for the plays' popularity was that they provided the only safe way that the peasants could air their grievances. In fact, the First Shepherd gives his reasons for complaining so much: "It dos me good, as I walk thus by myn oone,/ Of this world for to talk in maner
of mone." (ll. 46-47). This statement takes on a greater significance when viewed in the context that I have proposed. The whole cycle of plays with their contemporary complaints can be interpreted as a means to make the viewer feel better about his plight. These complaints prepare the shepherds for the finer vision they will have at the end of the play: from the darker world of their labor comes a brighter vision of divine beauty and truth; and from the latter comes a better vision of their world.

The Second Shepherd enters bemoaning his hardships in this world and then turns to the subject of marriage. This shift in topic presents the first elements of comedy. But we should be aware that the play has started out on a much darker note and that underneath all the comedy that follows, that darker tone will still be present. The Second Shepherd's speech is important for introducing the first comic overtones, but it also prepares the audience for the portrayal of Gill, who will appear later. The Second Shepherd uses another device, however, that makes the audience an integral part of the play and, therefore, implicates them in the complaints and, at the same time, makes them immediately present before the divine vision. In ll. 91-99, the shepherd turns directly to the audience and gives them advice about "wedyng." This unsophisticated mannerism, enhanced by the spatial arrangement of the pageants, establishes a firm bond between
the audience and the concerns of the drama. It forms a bond which will grow stronger as the list of contemporary complaints increases, and as the audience views the very real problem of sheep stealing. It also forces the audience to accept the divine birth on the same basis as the rest of the play--that is, as a real event in their lives. Therefore, I think, the audience's participation confirms the goodness in the world which is evoked, or promised, by the Nativity scene. In addition, the audience knows how the play will end, so they are unconsciously impelling the play toward that end, while agreeing with the negative analogue that enforces that positive Truth.

Daw enters and contemplates the mutability of this world and the portents that he has seen of some auspicious event. He is young, and more innocent than the others; but he also displays a genuine goodness. It is Daw who remembers to offer the Mak-child a gift and he does it not out of guile, but as a simple good act. When the other shepherds cheat him out of his dinner, we get an enforcement of the harsher themes of the play. Their unkind act must be construed as one which men perpetrate on each other in this cold world. It is evident that the world does not allow men much room for good, but it should be remembered that it is Daw, the innocent and
good shepherd, who restores the lost sheep to the flock. It is from within the grumblings and bleakness of life that goodness and innocence can force the negative aspects of life to give way before the more positive values in the world.

The contemplation of the evil in the world, and of the darker side of life, whether disguised in comedy or viewed as tragedy, does help reassert the goodness we hope exists in the world. To put it more succinctly, the positive values of life are defined and asserted by the negation of those values. That fact that one can formulate the negative implies a positive, and, at the same time, the negative compels us toward the positive.

I have discussed the unity of the Secunda Pastorum at some length because such a consideration will enable us to determine how some of the grotesque motifs function structurally in the cycle plays. If we concede that the comic grotesque does unify this particular play, then we should be better prepared to attribute unity to other playlets that use similar devices, instead of assuming that these comic scenes are intrusions. The small scope of this paper does not permit an investigation of other individual plays, but it does allow an attempt at determining whether any of the themes developed in the Secunda Pastorum have relevance to other plays or theological points made in other plays.
If we look at the themes brought out in the opening lines of the *Secunda Pastorum*, we can gain a better appreciation of the kind of structural unity that is imposed on the cycle as a whole. The first shepherd enters complaining about the cold, storms, his ragged clothes, and the infertility of the land. Surprisingly, he talks about his plight as a ploughman; and complains that he must lend his wain and plough to his lord whenever the latter wants it (ll. 37–9). This depiction of the shepherd as a ploughman is inconsistent with our conception of the role of shepherd; however, the complaint makes sense if we realize that the purpose of this opening speech is to evoke the image of a fallen world. After Adam had provoked the wrath of God by disobeying His orders, he was condemned to work by the sweat of his brow and to plow the now infertile fields:

Adam and Eve, also, yhe  
In ertye þan shalle ye swete and swynte,  
And travaayle for youre fode.  (Y, V, 160–2)

He sendis þe worde and sais bou shale  
lyffe ay in scrowe,  
Abide and be in bittir bale,  
tille he þ borowe.  (Y, VI, 37–40)

We should remember, too, that in the *Secunda Pastorum*, Mak prides himself on the fact that he does not "swynke and swette" (l. 312) for his food. The realistic details at the beginning of the *Secunda Pastorum* have a symbolic value that connects them with the fall of man.
The evocation of the fallen world is also important in this play because it is the play that is concerned with the Man who will re-establish the Edenic state from which man and the world have fallen. When the angel appears to the shepherds, he tells them the importance of this day:

Ryse, hyrd-men heyn, for now is he borne
That shall take fro the feynd that Adam had lorne;
That warloo to sheynd, this nyght is he borne.
God is made youre freynd now at this morne.
(ll. 638-41)

Their unbounded joy is in direct contrast to the opening of the play since they will be permitted to see the child who signals the end of Adam's curse. They also insist upon the fact that He will bind the fiend who has tormented them for so long (ll. 712-14); thus, they presage the Harrowing of Hell playlet.

The Second Shepherd introduces another unifying theme that has an importance in this play, but which also has associations outside of the play. We have noted above that his complaints about his wife prepared us for the characterization of Gill; and, in the previous chapter, we made the brief observation that this speech defines the female characters in the plays from Eve to the female tapster in the Chester Harrowing of Hell and to the women discussed in the Towneley Judgment. However, the theme of the nagging and disobedient wife has a theological connotation. It was through Eve's failure to follow the dictates of her husband that man disobeyed
his God. After Adam finally decided to eat the fruit, he immediately recognized his error and blamed it on Eve:

Allas! what haue I done, for shame! Ille counsaille woo worthe the! A' Eve, pou art to blame To pis entysed pou me (Y. V. 106-09)

As part of her punishment, the angel tells Eve that "buxom shalle pou and othir ma/ to man ay be." (Y, VII, 73-4).

However, we soon discover that women do not follow this last admonition either, for a few plays later we are introduced to Noah's unruly, disobedient wife. In the Towneley Noah play, Noah's own wife displays all the ills that women are natural heirs to, although his daughters-in-law, who do not say very much, seem to be dutiful wives. She pays no attention to Noah's instructions; she is more concerned with having a drink with her gossips; and she beats Noah when he finally tries to force her into the ark. Although the flood sweeps away all the sinners of the world, we are left in little doubt that Eve's bequeathal of temperament will not be lost in the descendants of her heir, Noah's wife.

Gill repeats the type once again, but, in this case, in direct juxtaposition with the Virgin. It is at this point that we can really grasp the effect of the women's character. Since man fell through the agency of a woman, heirs to be saved through a female intermediary. In the burlesque of the Nativity we are reminded of the female's
role in man's sinfulness. We must also recognize on the symbolic level that a woman, in league with a devil again, attempts to thwart man's salvation and to leave him in a lapsed world which is full of the terrors and difficulties that the shepherds have brought to our attention earlier in the playlet. In all the world, God could find but one woman who was without sin to bear His Son; Gill is the perfect example of why he could find only that one.

The introduction of this theme is important in the shepherds' play because this play concerns a woman who is different from the other women in this world: it is necessary for the Son of Man to have a mother who is the opposite of Eve and her daughters. The Towneley Annunciation elucidates the themes that are inherent and unstated in the Secunda Pastorum. After the fall, God sent an angel to Eve to tell her:

Giffe, for pou beswyked hym swa,'
Trauell herto shalle pou ta,
Thy barnes to bere with mekill wa
bis warne I pe
Buxom shalle pou and othir ma
to man ay be. (Y, VII, 60-74)

In contrast, the angel says of Mary that she is "meke and Buxom" (T, X, 336). God makes another distinction in order to provide the contrast between Eve and Mary when he says:

Angell must to mary go,
ffor the feynd was eue fo;
he was foule and layth to syght,
And thou art angell fayr and bright; (T, X, 61-4)
God also places Mary under a special dispensation and says that "She shall of hyr body bere/ God and man wythouten dære." (T, X, 73-4). At the opening of the Annunciation playlet, God explains his plans for man and describes the means by which Adam "Outt of payn...shall be boght" (T, X, 15):

he shall out of preson pas,  
ffor that he begyled was  
Throug the edder, and his wyfe;  
Thay gart hym touch the tree of lyfe,  
And ete the frute that I forbed,  
And he was damped for that ded,  
Ryghtwysnes wyll we make;  
I wyll that my son manhede take,  
ffor reson wyll that ther be thre,  
A man, a madyn, and a tre:  
Man for man, tre for tre,  
Madyn for madyn; thus shal it be.  
My son shall in a madyn light,  
Agans the feynd of hell to fight,  
withouten wen, os son thrugh glas,  
And she madyn as she was.  
Both god and man shall be be  
And she moder and madyn fre.

(T, X, 23-40)

The mock birth pangs of Gill re-evoke the curse that was laid on woman for her participation in man's disobedience and provide an emphatic contrast to the painless birth of Mary as God had announced several plays earlier. We have recognized that one of the motives for the choice of Old Testament stories is that they provide a figura for the Christ. We might say the same of the women in the cycles, although we must conclude that they are negative typologies of the Virgin.
Another association with this theme is introduced by Mak when he enters complaining about the noise created by his multitudinous progeny. Not only were women condemned to bear children in pain, but men were born into this world to weep and moan. The shepherds, themselves, reiterate this notion. However, there are references to the Christ child as meek and mild (SP, 1. 691); he does not weep and "make mone."

The juxtaposition, whether explicitly or implicitly, of Eve and women, in general, with the Virgin is one means of recalling the episodes that have been performed before in the play. It should be obvious that the introduction of realistic and comic scenes is not conceived of by the playwrights as purely a diversion; it has a symbolic function within the playlets and within the cycle.

This concept of women cannot be entirely attributed to the recognition, by men in a man's world, of woman's fallibility. Sermons continually brought up the subject of women's insubordination. Women are recognized as true daughters of Eve and, as such, are responsible, in part, for man's present state in the world. In this drama, most of the female characters function as anti-types; they have a theological connotation in the religious drama. If we recognize them as examples of anti-typological figures, then we must recognize that the Nativity burlesque is not atypical, nor is it likely to be the only example of unity in the cycle.
There is little doubt that the Wakefield author was conscious of these finer points, but he is not totally responsible for introducing them into the drama. The Chester Adoration of the Shepherds uses many of the same themes; consequently, we must assume that these developments came from a common tradition and that the kind of structure that I have suggested for the Towneley cycle is present in other cycles. Although there are parallels between the Chester playlet and the Prima Pastorum and the Secunda Pastorum, there is no evidence that the Wakefield author had the former play before him. In the opening scene of the Chester play, the first shepherd enters and complains of the harsh weather and his weariness (ll. 1-9). He also speaks of the illness of his sheep, a point common to Chester and the Prima Pastorum, which has the obvious symbolic value. The third shepherd introduces the theme of the nagging wife when he says he must scour out a pan he made a salve in or else his wife will berate him (ll. 73-86), and, then, he adds further complaints about his wife (ll. 85-90). Of course, there is no scene such as the Mak episode, but after the appearance of the angel, the shepherds display a certain distrust of the apparition:

By my faith! it was some snie
our sheepe for to steale;

or els he was a man of our craft
for semelie he was and wondrous defte. (C., IX, 405-08)
The significance of the event is established in this play in a manner similar to that in the *Secunda Pastorum*. When the shepherds see the Christ child they hail him as a king born in a maiden's bower (ll. 567-8) as was foretold by the prophets. He is the Emperor of Hell and heaven and will fell the fiend (ll. 575-8). He is hailed by the third shepherd as a prince without peer, and foe to Lucifer who beguiled Eve (ll. 587-90).

It is significant that the Towneley Nativity sequence is preceded by the *Caesar Augustus* playlet and followed by the *Herod* playlet because these two tyrannical rulers are the anti-types of the meek Emperor of the World. The *Herod* play has further significance since it indicates that the birth of the Savior does not satisfy all the requirements necessary for man's salvation; it also reiterates that the world is still inhumane, cold, and fallen. The cycle is impelled toward the brutality of the passion sequence and the *Harrowing of Hell* in which part of the people are returned to the jurisdiction of a beneficent God. However, the movement is only completed by the Second Coming when Christ shall reward those who have been sinned against. The central test of the Judgment reiterates those themes that have reverberated throughout the play. The saved are those who have fed Christ when He was hungry; gave Him drink when He was thirsty; clothed Him when He was naked; visited Him in prison and when
He was sick; and gave Him shelter and a bed when He was tired. We have only to recall the opening lines of the *Secunda Pastorum* to see the importance of the shepherds' complaints. They have little food and are cheated out of that by their "lordyngs" just as they cheat Daw out of what little they have. They are ill-clothed and must sleep outdoors on the cold ground. These conditions will persist because men are sinful and they will continue until Christ comes again to lead the righteous back into paradise.

In this chapter, I have tried to suggest ways in which the grotesque can enforce a structural unity on plays that might seem disorganized. The shepherds' playlet is one that impels the play to its final movement; it depends upon inversions in order to re-assert the positive values that are signalled by the birth of Christ and that culminate in the Last Judgment.

The elements of realism force the audience into an immediate relationship with the divine mystery; consequently, the worldly events that impelled the divine birth also reassert the promise of redemption to the audience who are viewing the play. A unity is established in the plays, therefore, by the inclusion of realistic events that are familiar to the audience, but which also have theological connotations.

I would like to suggest that some of the grotesque
motifs that we have been discussing function in a relationship to the whole cycle in a manner similar to the way in which some of those same themes function structurally in the *Secunda Pastorum*. From the preceding discussion, I think we can conclude that the realistic details in the medieval drama are not intrusions of the secular world into the religious drama; instead, they are inextricably enmeshed in a theologically conceived universe. Just as they grant the spiritual story of the redemption of man reality, so are they raised above the level of mere facts and data into the spiritual realm.
IV The Grotesque Character
Satan and the Devils

It is often difficult for the modern reader to gauge the reaction that the medieval common man must have had when he was confronted with the devil in the mystery plays, because the modern reader does not believe in the actual or physical existence of the devil. Consequently, I suspect that, as a result of our disbelief, we have a tendency to overemphasize the comic values of those scenes in which the devil appears. Since our society is not responsive to the cues in the dramatic texts that conjure up facts from the body of demonological lore that had grown up within the church and the society, we may tend to overlook the serious side of the comic demons. If, however, we analyze the costumes of the medieval devils, the structure of their world, and the part they play in the great cosmic drama, then we will be better able to judge the reaction they must have evoked from the audience. I think we will find that the devil was recognized as an actual being whose job was to torment men either to prove their virtue or to provide their punishment; consequently, we should envision the devil as a grotesque character whose presence on the stage, however comic, would arouse a certain amount of fear in the viewers.

To understand the devils in the drama, we must first turn to the statements of the church on the nature and
role of devils. I shall rely primarily on four sources: the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 because it is a doctrinal statement of the church in convocation; the Summa Theologica because it is accorded a doctrinal status and because it held a respected and central position in theology throughout the period we are discussing; the Malleus Maleficarum because it is a popular document which had a widespread acceptance but which only held a tenuous doctrinal status; and the medieval sermon literature because it was directed toward the general populace.

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 was remarkable for a number of reforms and doctrinal statements among which was the definition of the position of the devil in Catholic doctrine. Essentially, the council pronounced that the devil was able to commit or urge evil by the permission of God as a means of testing virtuous men and as a punishment for wicked men. Later in the same century, St. Thomas Aquinas discussed the role of the devil more fully. The central issue of such discussions was how evil could exist in a world that was created by a God from whom only good could come.

To the question of how good angels could sin, Aquinas answers that they were formed as intellective powers which allowed them to choose good or evil (Pt1 Q63 A2); they were not, however, evil in nature since all created things tend toward God (Pt1 Q63 A4). They could
not choose sin out of ignorance because they were intellectual powers; but they could err from inclination or habit by choosing good in excess of their nature (Ptl Q63 A1). As created creatures they had some pride in their beauty, as is natural (Ptl Q63 A2); but when this pride induced them to aspire to a likeness of those orders higher than themselves, then they committed sin (Ptl Q63 A3).

Aquinas leaves open the question of whether the highest angel fell with other angels or whether only the lower orders, those who had jurisdiction over earthly affairs, fell from their former glorious position. If the highest angel did fall, then some angels from all orders committed sin and were cast out with him, for which the highest angel was responsible since he provided an inducement to the other angels (Ptl Q63 A7–9).

After the angels fell, their natural knowledge remained intact; their knowledge which came of grace and consisted in speculation was lessened; but their love of God was eradicated (Ptl Q64 A1). For our consideration of the drama, the second point is essential because it explains why the devils did not completely understand the Incarnation as their former associates did. "For if they had known," Aquinas says, "That He was the Son of God and the effect of His passion, they would never have procured the crucifixion."
The fallen angels are confined to two places, Hell and the "darksome" atmosphere of the earth. In the latter place their function is to try men's virtue; whereas, in the former, their job is to punish those sinners who have already died (PtI Q64 A4).

Since even sinful creatures do not lose their natural gifts, there is an ordering of the fallen angels (PtI Q109 A1-4). Although there is an order of precedence among them, the authority of the demons is not founded on their justice, but on the justice of God's ordering of all things (PtI Q114 A1).

Aquinas notes that the devil cannot be the cause of a man's sinning because sin is a result of man's will, hence he alone is culpable; however, the devil can aid man in sinning by enticing him through his appetites and by attacking his reason (PtII PtI Q80). In attempting to lead man into sin, the devil may resort to marvels in order to prove his power or to deceive man into thinking him good. Aquinas, however, states that the devil cannot perform actual miracles since a miracle is something done outside the created order of things to which every creature is subordinate. In other words, a miracle involves a substantial change which only the Creator can perform. The devil can perform a miracle, in a less restricted sense, since he can cause changes which to the lower intellective faculties of men seem marvelous (PtI Q114 A5).
Since, as I have noted above, I have some reservations about relying entirely upon the semantic elaborations of the Church, I think we should turn to a more popular document, such as the Malleus Maleficarum, in order to determine whether there are any differences in the conception of these doctrinal matters. I justify my use of the Malleus Maleficarum as a popular document because of the status of its writers, its wide dissemination, and because it was never licensed as dogmatically sound. Innocent VIII, in his Bull, Summis desiderantes affectibus, of 9 December, 1484, commissioned Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger to draw up information about and inquisitorial procedures against witches and sorcerers. Kramer had already held an inquisitorial post which he had had to leave when the local bishops would no longer tolerate his methods; and Sprenger was associated with members of the Theological Faculty of Cologne, although he had no official capacity at that university. Although the Malleus was accepted as an academic defense of orthodoxy and as a guide for courts all over Europe, its claims to such eminence were not as strong as they might seem. Sprenger expected the Theological Faculty to license the work as dogmatically sound. Such a license was favored by junior members of the Faculty, but not by the seniors members. In order to disguise this fact, a notorial act was composed by
the Yeoman Bedell, and the *Malleus* was issued everywhere except in Cologne as if it had been licensed by the Faculty. Appended to the document was the Papal Bull of five years earlier that had commissioned the work. To anyone outside Cologne, the document would seem to be perfectly acceptable as dogma on the subject.\(^8\)

The document is significant because it elaborates on the nature of the devil and the acts he commits against men. In the opening passages the authors attack those people as heretics who disbelieve in witches and devils. About the latter we have this significant statement:

> Therefore, those err who say that...no... devils exist except in the imagination of the ignorant and vulgar and [that] the natural accidents which happen to a man he wrongly attributes to some supposed devil.\(^9\)

The passage is significant because it reasserts that the belief in devils is dogmatic and because it tells us that although some men heretically disavowed a belief in devils, the "ignorant and vulgar" still retained that belief. Although Kramer and Sprenger rely heavily on Augustine and Aquinas, they are not as semantically adept as those Fathers of the Church; consequently, the tone of the document betrays an increased propensity toward discussing the ability of the devils to assume corporeal forms and to enact changes on created objects. I think this predisposition to discuss the devil in physical terms is quite evident in so far as most of the first
two parts of the document is concerned with a detailed analysis of how the devil can have sexual intercourse with his devotees. They even considered whether it were possible for a devil to remove a man's sexual organs or whether an Incubus could carry semen from one location to another. This concentration on Satanic sexuality is defended on the premise that however great the devil's power is, his power remains confined to the privy parts and the navel, the places of the production of the "male and female semen," respectively. However, it is only important for us to recognize that this popular document reflects the total commitment to the idea that devils not only existed, but that they were responsible for the visitation of disease and harm upon all men, and that they were visible and to be feared. Although the Malleus Maleficarum follows the composition of the Towneley plays, for example, by a half century, it indicates that the belief in devils persisted throughout the period we are discussing.

In his discussion on drama and the sermon, Owst notes that we often have a tendency to think of the devil as a character on a "skaffold" rather than as an actual being whose existence was never doubted by the medieval populace. On the contrary, he says "so real and vivid a person was the Prince of Darkness to both sets of expositors [the preachers and the playwrights], that their
imagination conceived of him in a hundred homely
pranks and catastrophes, ceaselessly spying, scheming,
fighting against the sons of the men with every ingenu-
ity, almost as one of their own flesh and blood, an
arch-villain upon the stage of daily life."\textsuperscript{12} Indeed,
so formidable was the devil's cunning that, as one med-
ieval preacher asserts, God had to be cunning in the way
He provided for man's salvation in order to outwit Satan.
The preacher points out that Christ suffered the penance
of circumcision so that the devil would think He was like
all other men. Joseph's marriage to Mary is also an
attempt to obscure the fact that Christ is the son of
God; otherwise, the preacher says, the devil would never
have sought to bring about Christ's crucifixion. The
devils, however, were not always taken so seriously;
often they were viewed as the pranksters who provided
daily amusement by grinning at serious church-goers,
by sitting on the hats of prominent ladies, and by riding
through town on the backs of sumptuous carriages.\textsuperscript{13}
Nevertheless, by the end of the thirteenth century, the
devils were known to everyone by countless numbers of
names and were commonly distinguished as perpetrators of
particular kinds of mischief.\textsuperscript{14} If we recognize that
there were these two classes of demons, the perpetrators
of evil and the pranksters, we can understand some of
the differences between the presentation of those devils
who were taken more seriously and those who were represented as mischievous servants.

If none of these demonic traits were included in the cycle dramas then we would be justified in immediately assuming the comic nature of the devil figures; however, if these traits are evident within the drama, then we have a basis for assuming that the devils were recognized as maleficent and dangerous powers in spite of their comic characterization.

There are indications in the mystery plays that the devils retained their respective positions when they fell. Although the York Harrowing of Hell play only suggests such a demonic hierarchy, the Towneley play develops the idea more elaborately. Ribald, of the Towneley play is evidently the porter of the gates of Hell.\(^{15}\) At the approach of Christ, he calls for assistance from Beelzebub, who, in turn, sends orders to have Astaroth, Anabal, Bell, Berith, and Belial called to conference on the matter.\(^{16}\) After this summons, Beelzubub adds that Sathan, his sire, should be notified and should be asked to stir Sir Lucifer.\(^{17}\) I think this speech gives an idea of the chain of command; Satan is called last because it is an extraordinary threat. It is, of course, Satan, himself, who finally meets Christ at the gates and argues with Him over the disposition of the souls and Hell, itself. In the Chester Descent
into Hell, these same ideas of order are noted. After Satan brags about Christ's coming to Hell to suffer with the rest of mankind, the Secundus and Tertius Demons state that it is inadvisable to permit Christ to enter, and they warn Satan that if he allows this to happen he may be "Degraded of \( \text{His} \)\text{7} degree." (l. 110). One of the demons reminds Satan of Christ's raising of Lazarus; consequently, when Christ does arrive, Satan has begun to be doubtful himself which doubt causes his subordinates to remind him of his position:

Yea, Sathanas, the Soverainty
fayle's cleane, thercfore flee,
for no longer in this See
here shalt thou not sytt.

Goe forth! feight for thy degree!
or ells our Prince shall thou not be,
for now passeth thy postye,
and hence thou must flitt. (ll. 161-8)
\( \text{Iaceant tunc Sathanam de sedge sua.} \)\text{18}

Satan's most important role, however, is to parody the role of God and the forces of good, or to be the antithesis of those forces. In the creation, for example, Satan sits on God's throne after God has left, but we note a distinct difference in the manner and tone of their speeches. God starts

\text{Ego sum alpha et o}
I am the first, the last also,
\text{Oone god in mageste;}
\text{Meruelus, of myght most,ffader, & son, & holy goost,} 
\text{On god in trinyte.} 
(T, I, 1-6)
To which Lucifer says, after he has declared on his beauty, as he settles himself in God's throne:

\[
\text{Say, felows, how semys now me} \\
\text{To sit in seyte of trynyte?} \\
\text{I am so bright of ich a lyn} \\
\text{I trow me seme as well as hym.} \quad (T, I, 104-07)
\]

This conscious parody is made again when, in the Chester Descent into Hell, Satan enters and seats himself "in Cathedra" whereupon he surveys his kingdom and discourses on his mastery of the world and his handling of Christ.

In the Towneley Harrowing of Hell, the parody is even more obvious when Jesus and Satan confront each other. Satan attempts to stop Christ and reminds Him that all men must be confined to Hell. Christ says that He has come to redeem all men; in response to which, Satan quotes the statements of Solomon and Job that no man shall escape the jaws of Hell. To Satan's disrespectful usurpations of scripture, Christ only patiently explicates the full texts and the new law.

There are numerous other examples of this type of inversion. To only mention a few, the songs and noise of the devils are always a parody of angelic harmonies that emanate from heaven. In Ycrk, even at the death of the Virgin Mary, who is under the protection of Christ and the angels, the devil manages to introduce his discordant voice. As the singing angels descend to the dead Mary, the devil enters, and the rubric reads: \text{Cum vno diabolo,} \\
\text{Et cantent antiphona scilecit Aue regina celorum.}
In the Chester *Coming of Antichrist* playlet, the Antichrist raises the dead and performs miracles (ll. 89-104), although the text makes it clear that these are only illusions. Lucken has written a dissertation on the Chester *Antichrist* plays in which he shows that the plays follow closely the Antichrist legend; but his discussion also reveals that the popular conceptions about devils are evident in the plays as well as in the other literary antecedents of the Antichrist legend. In the play we are informed that the Antichrist will be born of a harlot in Bethsaida and raised in Corozaim. His teachers will be enchanters, necromancers, and jugglers. Of the former two's connection with the demonic powers there is no need to comment; however, Louis B. Wright produces evidence that jugglers and practitioners of legerdemain were considered by the populace at large as witches or people in league with the devil, who aided them in performing their illusions. If, however, the Antichrist's connections are as yet not made clear enough, the prophets accuse him of witchcraft and sorcery (ll. 482-3). Antichrist's miracles are exposed as frauds by Eli and Enoch when they produce the Host for the dead men to consume (ll. 529-88). At the sight of the holy sacrament, the men flee; this inability to partake of the sacrament confirms Lucken's observation that the miracles "will be only apparent; devils entering the
dead bodies will cause the illusions."22 After his death, two devils come on and state that Antichrist is one of their brethren, admonish him for having failed in his task, advise him that he will be rewarded with a severe and eternal punishment, and roughly carry Antichrist off the stage (ll. 661-706). The Antichrist play is obviously the clearest statement of parody in the English medieval drama since it immediately precedes the Judgment and since it parodies the whole life of Christ, which it immediately follows.

Of course, there are other incidents in the plays in which the devil takes on a disguise, thus, for all apparent purposes, transforming his appearance in order to carry out successfully his tasks. In the Norwich Crestion and Fall, Satan says that he will appear as an angel of light:

By subtyllty to catch them the waye I do will se; Unto this, angell of lyght I shew myself to be. (ll. 39-40)

Later in the play, however, Eve says he appeared in the form of a serpent, as he does in the rest of the plays. The very tenuity of medieval life is exposed, however, by the fact that the devil could appear in the form of an angel or even Christ himself, as he apparently does in the Antichrist play. It is difficult to believe that such a formidable foe could have not been taken seriously; and it is impossible to believe that the medieval audience
could laugh without reservation at whatever shenanigans the devils in the Chester Doomsday play might have performed after having seen how men were almost damned because of their belief in a man who appeared to be the Christ.

Since the portrayal of the devil does seem to coincide with his presentation in the Summa Theologica and the Malleus Maleficarum, we might begin to suspect that the medieval audience took him more seriously than some critics have; however, we should re-examine the plays in which the demons appear to see if they really are presented comically. The devil appears in the Fall of Lucifer, the Fall of Man, the Harrowing of Hell, and the Judgment Day in all of the major cycles. He appears in a Temptation playlet in York, Chester, and Hegge, but not in Towneley. There are a number of scenes which are peculiar to particular cycles, among which are the Hegge and York Dream of Pilate's Wife, the Chester Coming of Antichrist, the York Death of Mary, the Hegge Prologue of Demon and Herod's Death, and the Chester Slaughter of Innocents. In all these appearances, there are only two scenes that we can unqualifiedly call extended comic devil scenes: the female tapster's scene in the Chester Harrowing of Hell; and the devils' colloquy in the Towneley Last Judgment. We can conclude that the latter part of the Hegge Prologue of Demon is humorous, although it has a
distinct moral undertone, because it parodies the sermon on salvation by merit; but we cannot conclude the same for the first part of the prologue in which Satan elucidates his plans for disposing of Christ. Although we might find the cacophonous rout of the devils after their fall humorous, we cannot be amused when their plan of revenge is revealed. Although we might be amused at Satan’s impending demise and his pomposity in the York and Towneley Harrowing of Hell, we are surprised and horrified when he strikes Christ. If we can find some comedy in these scenes, we cannot react so when Satan details his plans for subverting the salvation of man by appearing to Pilate’s wife; or when he appears at Herod’s death; or when he drags one half the souls off to hell on Doomsday.

It would be inaccurate to conclude that the devil was never comically portrayed; but if he was taken seriously, then we must attempt to understand how it was possible at the same time to present him in a comic manner. In speaking of the Prologue of Demon in the Hegge play, Benkowitz notes that the speech is an inversion of the doctrine of salvation by merits. She also summarizes the importance of the speech and gives us some idea of why the devils could be treated comically:

\[\text{The prologue is a clear revelation of the medieval concept of the person of the devil as a servant of an immanent and transcendent God – immanent in being, in Himself, the constituent of the law that orders the uni-}\]
verse and transcendent in being Himself the cosmic order and in His indeterminable but real universality. God is the prototype of personality, and Satan is an excrescence of this. Therefore Satan is an angel, negative to be sure, whose office is to serve the higher purposes of an omnipotent God. He demands punishment for the wicked, since his adversary is man; and, although he claims the world as his principedom, his power is sham. He, the braggart intriguer, and foolish harlequin, is predestined for defeat.  

After listing the scenes in which the devils appear in the cycle plays, Allardyce Nicoll, in his discussion on devil costumes, concludes that "Obviously the devils were dear to themedieval imagination, and dear not because of their evil, but because of their comic irresponsibility, their posturings, their extravagance." Miss Irena Janicka, after describing the feathered or wooly costumes of the devils, concludes that they indeed must have been quite "ridiculous"; consequently, she adds, they must have been greeted with howls of laughter from the audience. I shall attempt to show that both critics have overemphasized the comic values of the devils and that the costumes would not be laughable at all since the devils were dressed as the common man would expect to see them.

It is difficult to determine how the devils appeared when the cycle plays were first formed because our records of costume purchases do not antedate 1449. However, by utilizing those records, by referring to iconographical evidence, and by referring to the text of the plays we should be able to reconstruct the costumes of the devils.
From the Smiths' account records reproduced in Craig's edition of the Coventry plays, we have the following items paid out for the devils' costumes:

1451, it payd for the demons garment makyng and the stof vs iiijd ob, it payd for col-lyryn of the same garment viijd; 1477, it for mendynge the demons garment, it. for newe ledder to the same garment xxijd; 1490, it. the devells hece (repaired); 1494, it. paid to wattes for dressyn of the devells hece viijd; 1498, it. paid for payntyng of the demones hece. 27

From the Cappers' company, whose accounts were commenced in 1485, we have the following entries:

It. payde for mendynge the devells cote and makyng the devells hece iiijs viijd, it payd to Harrye Benett for mendynge the demons cote and makyng the head vs, it pad. for making the demons head viijd., it payd for a yard of canvas for the devells malle and for makyng viijd, it. payd for payntyng the devells clubbe (several entries)28

From these accounts we can conclude that in the latter half of the fifteenth century the devils wore either a mask or a head covering that probably was the foundation for ears and/or horns; he also wore some kind of coat or garment and carried a club. If we investigate the Fouquet miniature of the "Martyrdom of St. Apollonia," we can see the devils dressed in outer garments of hair or wool with head coverings and carrying clubs with a hook or knob on the end. 29

There may have been some variation in the costumes since, as M. D. Anderson notes in her book, Drama and Imagery in Medieval English Churches, there are several
kinds of head coverings pictured in various churches in England. On a bench end at Charlton Mackrell (Somerset) she has found a figure of a pig-snouted devil, who, as she suggests, is wearing a half-mask that covers the upper portion of his face, thus leaving his mouth free, presumably, for speaking. On a misericord in Ludlow Church, however, she has located a devil with a completely covered head which has a gorget attached to the head-covering, presumably, to mask the juncture of the head and body coverings. On a boss at Norwich, there is a demon who wears a complete costume of shaggy wool and has his face partially masked by a huge beak; however, on a misericord at Gayton (Northamptonshire), the demon is clothed in feathered tights with his face completely unmasked. Curiously enough, the angels were dressed in feathered tights or "Apis skynnes." For effective parody and contrast the medieval costumier might have used similar costumes for angels and devils except for differences in color and except for the general shabbiness of the devils' costumes.

Although it is difficult to ascribe a date to any of these carvings, we can deduce some possible costuming techniques from the plays themselves. On the plan for the staging of the Castle of Perseverence (1425), there is a note on the appearance of the devil: "He that schal plye Belial, loke that he haue gunne-powder brenyn[ge7]
in his handis and in his eris, and in his ers, whanne he
gothe to batel."\(^{33}\) From this description, I think we
can safely conclude that Belial must have worn some head
covering, probably with long ears, to which the pipes
could have been attached; and he must have had some kind
of tail to which a pipe could be attached in order to
accomplish the otherwise difficult task of smoking from
behind.

In the Towneley Creation, we have specific suggestions
for the devils' appearance:

Now ar we waxen blak as any coyll,
and vgly, tatyred as any foyll. \(^{11. 136-7}\)

This transformation could have been accomplished very
easily by blackening the face and putting on a tattered
outer garment. The costume may have been a simple one
like the one preserved in Innsbruck that is made up of
a mask, and black tattered wings and cloth.\(^{34}\)

Although Émile Male does not note any iconographical
changes in the presentation of the devil after the intro-
duction of the drama, he does note that in the scenes of
the Apocalypse on cathedral tympani, the devil gains a
greater prominence as we proceed from the thirteenth to
the fifteenth century.\(^{35}\) The devils are predominantly
carved as having human bodies with animal heads and, often,
claws for hands. The texture of the body covering is
hard to distinguish because of the gradual erosion of the
stone, but some show a distinct rough texture as of
animal fur. I do not think we can safely conclude that the depiction of the devils is a result of the drama's influence, since there are many depictions of apparently animalistic forms predating the drama; however, it does not seem likely that the drama could use anything less by way of costuming than the common man might see around him in his cathedral.

From the material accumulated above, much of which is admittedly speculative, I think we could conclude that almost from its inception, the drama adopted costumes for its devils that would reflect the common perception of the devil as detailed in stories and in the plastic arts. The demons quite possibly wore masks or headdresses with long ears and horns, a body covering of animal fur, shaggy wool, or dyed cloth, and gloves with three fingers. We are fairly confident that they did wear such costumes from mid-century on, since we do have records of purchases for articles necessary for the construction of such costumes.

At other times, however, the devil might appear in a disguise; the most notable time is, of course, when he appears as a serpent to tempt Eve. In the Chester play, Satan appears as a serpent with a woman's face:

A manner of an Adder is in this place, 
that wynges like a byrd she hase, 
feete as an Adder, a maydens face; 
her kinde I will take. (ll. 193-96)
In the Hegge and York plays, there is no indication that Satan appears in feminine guise, but he undoubtedly wore some costume that would indicate that he was a serpent. The *Mystere d'Adam* does not give any description of his costume; it only notes that he who plays the devil should move in an undulatory manner.

If they did wear costumes of the type that I have described, it is difficult to accept the notion that the mere sight of the devils could provoke immediate laughter. As we noted in Chapter II, one of the means of evoking the grotesque is to juxtapose incongruous elements and nothing could be more incongruous than to have a devil who looked like an animal act as if he were a man. It would seem that the more a creature looks like an animal and the more he acts like a human, the greater would be the grotesque effect. I think this kind of effect is evident when, in a scene such as the devils' colloquy in the Towneley *Judgment*, our human foibles are exaggerated, exposed or made fun of.

Even if the devils caroused and rushed into the audience, as they quite probably did, it is difficult to believe that their actions always evoked only laughter. We must remember that a whole group of connotations were clustered around the devil. The local populace could hardly forget that one of the great scenes reproduced all over the western world was doomsday; nor that it was the
scene toward which the cycle drama was moving; nor that the devil was instrumental in the diseases and hardships that were so evident in daily life.

Since there is often a temptation to dismiss as intrusive the comic scenes in which the devil appears, we should try to pierce through what may seem an apparent comic scene in order to determine whether a moral or theological point is developed in the scene. For example, Allardyce Nicoll says of Lucifer's Fall that "the presence of the arch-devil and his companions...tend to intrude into the plays on the Creation" and that, therefore, the scene is a concession to the popular tastes. I cannot see that Nicoll is denying the necessity of the scene as part of the explanation for man's fall, but he does seem to ignore most of the other dramatic and theological points that Lucifer's Fall makes. Dramatically, the scene establishes, at the outset of the play, the parody or inverted world vision that will persist throughout the play. In the Towneley Creation, the delay between Lucifer's fall and his reappearance as Satan not only provides time for a possible costume change, but also enhances the audience's apprehension of the fact that Lucifer has fallen from his position of brightness to that of a lowly serpent testing the strength of a woman who is weaker than himself. Theologically and dramatically, the scene establishes patterns that will be repeated throughout the rest
of the cycle. For example, Lucifer’s unsuccessful attempt at raising himself to God’s position, as does his attempt to fly, indicate that God has power over him. This point is repeated again when Crist withstands the temptation of the devil, as Adam did not; when he defeats Satan at the gates of Hell; and, at Doomsday, when He irrevocably separates the devil and the sinners from Himself. In the Harrowing of Hell, Satan is exposed as being allowed mastery only by God’s permission: Christ does not take all sinners from Hell; the bad will remain to be punished by the devils. When the day of Judgment arrives, the devils appear not to contest the judgment, but to remind Christ that he promised them their quotas of souls. It is also apparent in the plays that God uses the devil as his instrument for testing men of virtue and for punishing the evil. The devil is used as the means for bringing about man’s salvation as the devil himself reveals in the Hegge Prologue of Demon and in the opening speech of the Chester Harrowing of Hell. The Fall of Lucifer playlets juxtapose the clangor of Hell with the heavenly harmonies that have preceded, and introduce the speeches of mutual recrimination reminiscent of Adam’s squabble with Eve after their fall. Since the scenes do establish the basis for parody, and since the actions have some theological and/or dramatic point, I think it is inaccurate to call them intrusions.
Let us look, however, at the way in which the devil is actually treated in other scenes; and from the text, let us try to determine how the audience would react to his appearance. When the devil appears at Herod's death in the Chester Slaughter, the audience, no doubt, felt that Herod was about to receive his just deserts; however, the devil also includes the audience in his future plans:

Warr, warr! for now unwarly wakes you woe! for I am swifter then is the doe. I am comen to fetch this lord you froe in woe euer to dwell.

And with this Croked Cambrock your backs shall I cloe, and all false beleuers I burne in a low, that from the Crowne of the head to the right toe, I leave no wholl fell.

from Lucifer, that lord, hither I am sent, to fetch this kingsis sowle here present, and to hell bring him ther to be lent, euer to lyve in woe.

Ther fyre burnes bloe and bren, he shall be ther, this lord, verament, his place euermore therin is hent, his body neuer to goe froe.

No more shall you, Tapstars, by my lewty, that fills ther measures falcly, shall bear this lord Company; the gett none other grace.

I will bringe this into woe, and come agayne and fetch moe, as fast as euer I may goe, farewell and haue good day.

That last conventional salutation establishes the devil as a well-known friend and has the same effect as the last part of the Demon's prologue wherein the devil speaks as if he already had the sinners in the audience in his grasp.
The speech is also similar in tone, although not in its gruesomeness, to the speech of Mors in the Hegge Slaughter and the interpolated segment of the speech of Lazarus in the Towneley Raising of Lazarus (ll. 125-173). These latter speeches are directed toward the audience and, in familiar terms, the speakers discuss the eventual decay of the body and assert that all men will soon have to undergo this disintegration. The inclusion of the realistic details, or contemporary complaints, aids in establishing that the contemporary men were sinful and, therefore, in full danger of roasting forever. In the same way that we noted in the previous chapter that the inclusion of realistic details makes the spiritual story an actual event, so do such comments from the devils make the existence of Hell a reality.

Since the scenes, such as the above, are, in essence, self-explanatory, let us now turn to the two extended and more complex comic devil scenes in order to determine whether they create laughter to the exclusion of the more serious concerns of the drama. Lumiansky notes that just because the female tapster scene is a later interpolation in the Chester Harrowing of Hell, we should not conclude that it is an intrusion into that playlet's unity, because the author of the scene could link the scene thematically with those that precede it.39 He also points out that the scene's reflection of a common abuse
does not justify its inclusion in the playlet. After removing these two objections about the scene's admissibility in the playlet, Lumiansky suggests that the playlet has two thematic points: Christ harrows Hell because he is carrying out God's will (ll. 177-84); and, to Adam, Christ points out that he and the others are saved because they lived righteously on earth (ll. 185-96). In the third scene, the female tapster laments her fate and predicts the same fate for other wrong-doers in Chester (ll. 285-94). On the basis of this configuration, Lumiansky concludes that "just as the second scene (the harrowing, itself) illustrated Christ's first point in the opening scene, so the third scene presents an illustration, using appropriate contemporary conditions in Chester, of Christ's second point in the opening scene: He removed from Hell only those who lived righteously on earth." I think we might also add that the proposed marriage of the female tapster to the devil, although comic, is rather gruesome on two counts: first, instead of being married to Christ in heavenly bliss, she gets the devil in eternal fires; second, the marriage of a human being to a supernatural being in animal form is morally objectionable because created beings were only to mate among their own kind.

The Towneley Judgment is undoubtedly one of the most difficult to assess because it demands so many different
reactions almost simultaneously. Intermingled with the solemn background of Christ's disposing of the good and evil souls are a humorous discussion between two devils concerning their reactions to the Doomsday summons, a satiric speech on contemporary public morality, and a disorganized herding of bad souls toward hell-mouth. Added to these mixed emotions that the audience derives from the play is their understandable fear of and fascination with Doomsday. As the final dispensations and dooms are noted out, the audience must also have been aware of all the action that had preceded this moment because there are recapitulations of earlier themes and because this is the final moment toward which the whole cycle has been moving.

Unfortunately, the first part of the playlet is lost, but we can assume that it opens with a speech in which God recounts his creation of man, man's fall, Christ's passion, and God's displeasure with the creatures he has created. Evidently, the beginning of our play takes up with the gathering of the souls before the throne of God for the final judgment of their lives. It is a dreadful day for many; and as they wend their way towards judgment seat, they wish they had never been born:

Wo worth euer the fader that gate me to be borne!
That euer he let me stir bot that I had bene forloene;
Warid be my moder and warid be the morne
That I was borne of hir. Alas, for shame and skorne!41

(11. 69-72)
is they approach the place of judgment, they describe their fear of beholding the face and wounds of their terrible justiciar (ll. 13-16, 53-56), recount their sins (ll. 33-40, 61-68), mention the heaviness of the sins that are loaded on their backs (l. 27), and shrink back in fear of the foul fiends that will greet them (l. 31-2).

When they do arrive at the place of judgment, they are immediately separated from the good souls. This dramatic enactment of the bifurcation of the world emphasizes the divisions of power that have existed throughout the cycle. We should imagine a large group of sinners dressed in black\textsuperscript{42} being gradually surrounded by the monstrous hordes of Satan, while, on the right hand of God, the good souls, dressed in white, are administered to by winged angels in flowing robes. After the souls have gathered, Christ announces that he will descend, in the flesh, to sit in judgment as is His Father's will.

At this point, the drama is interrupted in order that we may see the devils' reactions to the sounding of the Doomsday trumpets:

\begin{quote}
\textit{P.} demon It was like to a trumpe / it had sих a sownde; \\
\textit{I} reil on a lumpe / for ferd what I swonde.
\textit{S.} demon There I stode on my stumpe / I stakerd that

\textit{There} chachid I the crumpe / yit I held I my
\textit{halfe} nome.

(ll. 107-111)
\end{quote}

Doomsday for them, however, is quite a chore, for they have got to gather all the scrolls listing the sinners'
names and their sins to take to the judgment seat.
Evidently, these are minor demons, the scribes of Hell (l. 186), and they try to cover their fear with a kind of mock gaiety; they keep urging each other to go (ll. 112-16, 134); but they hang back out of fear (ll. 120-24, 128-33). Then they recount to each other the kinds of sinners they have writ down in their books.

Their entire colloquy is done in a mocking tone in which they complain of the number of women in Hell (ll. 164-69), and that they would have had to make Hell bigger had Doomsday been delayed any longer (ll. 179-80). The devils, however, are making fun of the fate of those same bad souls who were bemoaning their fate at the beginning of the play. To the devils, it is natural that there should be sinners and they consider it just that the sinners be confined to Hell (l. 138). Their frivolous speech makes the preceding scene more poignant and introduces the first notes of their callousness.

As they philosophically and leisurely comment on the inevitability of Doomsday and damnation, Tutivillus, a superior officer, enters and rebukes them for not proceeding with their duties (l. 208). They do not recognize him at first; consequently, Tutivillus recounts his rise through the demonic ranks (ll. 212-13) and brags of having brought in ten thousand souls in an hour (l. 216). Tutivillus' description of himself as tax collector,
court rollsman, and lollard indicates the kind of beaureaucratic structure necessary in Hell, comments on the contemporary scene, and emphasizes the similarities between men and demons. He also indicates that he is a learned man by tacking Latin phrases on the ends of his speeches (ll. 251-2; 285-6; 294; 304-5) causing, no doubt, some discomfort among the clergy.

Though Tutivillus' long satiric speech on sinners, in which he welcomes the audience to Hell (ll. 358; 361-67), is one of the greatest in medieval drama. It creates, however, certain problems in our conceptualization of the devil. It is because of speeches such as this one that the devil often seems to be a moralist, rather than an honest purveyor of bad souls. The implication is that by moralizing, he violates the integrity of his character as the antagonist who wants, out of revenge for his loss of position, to fill Hell with sinners. We must concede that the end effect of the speech is moralistic, but, since it is the devil's speech, there are several layers of irony. He implies that men are such fools because they want to dress in finery when their children are hungry (ll. 233-41); and women are fools for primping and preening themselves when they only end up looking worse than before:

When she is thus paynt,
she makys it so quynte,
She lookyts like a saynt,
And wars then the deyle. (ll. 265-68)
He catalogues a long list of sinners and, from the tone of his speech, we might conclude that he is rather wearied by it all. However, the overall effect is that it would have been very easy for them to do other than they have done, and that they are such fools for falling for the lures of the devil. Tuttivillus is a moralist in his speech, but he is not the kind of moralist that a priest is. Instead of a "Thou shalt not," he intones that they already have committed themselves to him. I think we might add that it is quite probable that he made his pitch directly to the audience; thus, he brings them into a closer association with the Doomsday, and he forces them to acknowledge that they are in his thrall. The speech is an example of the grotesque because the audience realizes that Tuttivillus is laughing at them and that he is right. However, the awareness of their sinfulness is made even stronger because immediately after Tuttivillus' speech Christ descends and shows them his wounds:

Tunc expandit manus suas & ostendit eis Wlnera sua.

here may ye se my Woundys wide
that I suffred for your myselfe
Thruh harte, hede, fote, hande and syde,
not for my gilte but for youre hede.
Behald both bak, body, and syde,
how dere I bought youre broder-hede,
Thise bitter paynes I wold abide,
to by you blys thus wold I blede. (ll. 402-9)\textsuperscript{43}

All this suffred I for thi sake.
say, man, What suffred thou for me? (ll. 432-3)

The central scene of the play is of Christ praising
the righteous for their good deeds and damning the bad souls for having neglected Him. As soon as he has doomed them to eternal damnation, the devils attack and start to herd them roughly off to Hell. The devils pick up the themes that the sinners enunciated earlier in the play, that is, the demons torment them by shouting that the bad souls will wish they had never been born (ll. 541-47; 606), and by reciting, once more, all the evils that they had committed. The devils laugh at the sinners as they push them toward the clanging, smoke-belching hell-mouth and taunt them for their stupidity at choosing material things:

Where is the gold and the good / that ye gederd
\[\text{tossed}\]?
The very meene that yode / hider and their
Gay gyrdyls, iaggid hode / prankyd gowns, whedir?
haue yet wit or ye wode / ye broght not hider
But sorrow,
And youre synnes in youre nekkyes. (ll. 550-55)

These speeches are even more ironic when we remember that they are reminiscent of the devils' own lamentations over the loss of their brightness when they tumbled after Lucifer to Hell.

This series of scenes moves from the farcical devils' colloquy to the final malicious taunting by the devils as they surround the evil souls. The effect on the audience must have been profound since they are rapidly maneuvered from the laments of the lost souls to the devils' jesting about Doomsday, then back to the judgment, itself, and,
finally, to the rout of the demons. In this process the audience has seen what happens to sinners; they have been talked to as if they were already committed to Satan's cause; and they have been rebuked for neglecting their duties to others and to their God. If they have not been effectively tormented by this grand display, then they surely must have been by the sight of the good souls marching away from them to paradise singing the Te deum laudamus.
V Conclusion

I have found it difficult for a paper of this length and scope to take into account all the instances of the grotesque in the medieval mystery plays, or to answer many of the questions that arose while trying to define the term "grotesque"; consequently, I should like to use this chapter to comment on some of the questions that require further exploration. It should be quite clear that this thesis has proven very little; instead, it has been formulated as a suggestion for evaluating another dimension in artistic success. When I first began this thesis, I thought of it as a preliminary exercise in trying to define the grotesque as an artistic device in order to apply, in the future, this concept to other literary works as well as to the medieval drama. By choosing to discuss the medieval drama, I thought that I would have a reasonably stable context against which I could measure the structure and texture of the grotesque. I found, however, that my observations about that concept of a stable universe were not entirely justified; consequently, I was able to speculate on the relationship between a society and the form its literature might take. My suggestion that the grotesque may appear under a particular set of circumstances is certainly only a speculative one, but one which I hope to pursue further.

In this thesis, I have tried to suggest a defi...
for the term "grotesque" as it is applicable to the medieval mystery plays. I think we can say that the grotesque is a literary device that can express maternal love and futility, as it does in the *Slaughter of Innocents*, or it can heighten a feeling of awe, as it does in the passion sequence. It can be an effective device in developing the character of a blasphemously, obscene murderer, or it might help to disguise the fears we entertain about the world.

If we can conclude that realism is an essential element in the medieval drama, then we should also be able to conclude that the grotesque helps to express the disparity that one sees between the world as it is and the world as it is to become after the redemption. In so far as the grotesque can bring in these realistic details, it is a unifying influence that continually evokes the image of the fallen world that requires an intercessor if the ban is to be lifted. The grotesque, then, helps to bring together the spiritual and realistic themes and this combination makes the drama immediately present before the audience as both history and fact.

I discussed the grotesque character, the devil, at some length because an evaluation of that character can grant us a better impression of how the medieval man reacted to his drama. The devil, also, represents one of the great unifying elements in the plays because he
is the parody of inversion of the realm of goodness represented by God and Christ. He provides an effective dramatic foil, creates conflict, and helps to impel the drama through its preparation for, and conclusion to, the redemptive process. Although he may provide many moments of laughter, he is often the figure we fear most; he taunts his audience because of their sins, he blasphemes against God, and he castigates those people in the medieval society who take advantage of the common man. He becomes the foil and the mask for the discontent that the people must have felt; he provides the explanation for the existence of evil; and, consequently, he assures men that a principle of good still exists in the universe.

One of the major difficulties of discussing grotesque art, however, is that we lack a sufficient and precise terminology. For example, it is difficult to express the notion that a putrefying corpse on a tomb "beautifies" a cathedral; yet it would be as inaccurate to say that such a sculpture is "ugly." In the lead cellar at the Bremen Cathedral, in the Capuchin cloister in Palermo, and in the catacombs at Rome, the monks have arranged the mummified bodies and bones of the martyrs into geometric patterns in order to make even death "beautiful." These decorations do project a strange kind of "beauty," but it is often qualified by the intrusion of a mummified
skull or a sunburst made of thigh bones. These configurations have an attractive and repulsive quality for which we have no expressive words.

While writing this thesis, I encountered terminological difficulties particularly in discussing the *Secunda Pastorum* because I was forced to define the grotesque elements of a burlesque. Although these terminological difficulties seem to arise whenever one tries to analyze any of the arts, I mention this point because I have attempted to use the term "grotesque" in a more restricted sense than it is usually used. I have tried to use the term only to denote those moments when we are forced to laugh at those ideas or events that are essential and vital to our lives, or when we are forced to grimace at those recitations of the fears and terrors that we are often exposed to. I have attempted to avoid using the term in the more popular sense, as when one speaks of incongruities of any type, or more accurately, mixtures of things however trivial they may be. In avoiding the latter usage, I may only have been excising those minor responses from our range of reactions to the grotesque, in favor of concentrating on the more active and profound responses that we feel when confronted with vital issues which are presented in an incongruous manner.

I have only made a few suggestions about the reactions the grotesque evokes in its viewers, but I think we might
speculate that the production of the grotesque object is a response to the attempt to make the undefinable terrors that surround us, definable, concrete, and controllable. By giving them some tangible form, we feel as if we have exerted some control over them; but they are still to be feared, and we only know vaguely that which we are fearing. Although the grotesque may be an indicator of more extensive fears, in a successful artistic production, it comes within the realm of comprehensibility; consequently, a person may react with the same intensity of fascination and fear each time he comes in contact with the art object. Since the grotesque object can be isolated or drawn out of the contest of the realm of the "supernatural," it can be viewed as a figure against a much safer ground. Whitmore has said of the supernatural elements in tragedy that the more indistinct they are, and the shorter the sequence is, the more effective the scene is in arousing terror in the spectator.¹ I think a similar observation can be made about the "terrible grotesque," or, perhaps, any kind of grotesque. In the medieval drama, the grotesque scenes are short, and, although we have a very material devil, we are never quite sure of the limits of his power since he may appear as an angel or as Christ himself. Even though a figure like the devil may be depicted in a very realistic manner, he only provides an immediate
apperception of, a symbol for, a whole complex of ideas and emotions; consequently, although the figuration is realistic, the associations are still only vaguely defined.

I have expanded and elaborated here on some of the points in my thesis because I feel that this conclusion should be more concerned with the questions that must be answered if we are to continue with an investigation into this area of the arts. Since I consider this thesis a preliminary exposition, I have used this particular part of my paper as a vantage point from which I can judge whether the theory of the grotesque might be productively applied to other works of literature, and I have used it in order to look forward to the possibility of a more specific consideration of the grotesque in the medieval drama.
Notes - Chapter I


2. II, 311-331.


4. The Comic and the Realistic in English Drama (Chicago, 1925), p. 11.


8. "Comedy and Theme in the Chester Harrowing of Hell," Tulane Studies in English, X (1960), 5-12.


Chapter II

1. Thomas Wright begins his *History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (London, 1865) with the following statement: "It is not my intention in the following pages to discuss the question what constitutes the comic or the laughable, or, in other words, to enter into the philosophy of the subject; I design only to trace the history of its outward development, the various forms it has assumed and its social influence."

Émile Male's *L'Art religieux du XIIIe siècle en France* (Paris, 1948), and his *L'Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge en France* (Paris, 1949) are iconographical descriptions of the art of the Middle Ages in which he attempts to ascertain some of the possible influences for iconographical changes between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries; but he does not discuss an aesthetic for the grotesque.

Huizinga, on the other hand, uses the grotesque art as a means of expressing the morbid attitudes of the Middle Ages in his Chapter, "The Vision of Death." In his two Chapter, "Verbal and Plastic Expression Compared," he discusses the superiority of the plastic over the literary arts in reflecting the attitudes and ideals of the society.


4. Ruskin, p. 139.

5. Ruskin, p. 140.


7. Ruskin, p. 143.

8. Ruskin, p. 149.


Chapter III


4. cf. William M. Manly, "Shepherds and Prophets: Religious Unity in the Towneley Secunda Pastorum," PMLA, LXXVIII (June, 1963), 151-55. Manly suggests that Mak is an Antichrist figure; however, I think the parallels between Mak and the Antichrist figure in legend are too general to permit such an allegorical interpretation. It is safer to say simply that Mak is associated with the devil and is an anti-type of Christ.


6. M. G. Frampton summarizes: "I see no escape from the conclusion...that the Wakefield Master did his work upon our cycle entirely within the reign of Henry VI --more specifically, within the second quarter of the 15th century"; see, "The Date of the Flourishing of the 'Wakefield Master,'" PMLA, L (1935), 631-60.


10. Francis J. Thompson says, "...it is enough to remark how effective it is to have the same shepherds who foreshadow the torments of hell by their 'blanketing'
of Mak... At this level the restraint of the Wakefield
Master is altogether admirable in an age which was
accustomed to see Hell's mouth gaping on the stage"; 
see, "Unity in the 'Second Shepherd' Tale," MIN,
LXIV (1949), 302-306.

Speculum, XXII (1947), 186-90.

12. Nan C. Carpenter, "Music in the 'Secunda Pastorum,'"
Speculum, XXII (1947), 696-700.

Chapter IV

1. Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, tr. Montague
Summers, pub. John Rodker (1928).


3. All citations are from the Summa Theologica, Vol. I,
tr. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province
(New York, 1947).


8. Elliott Rose, p. 31.


10. This observation might give us some key to devils' 
costumes since iconographical evidence shows a face 
over the privy parts (either the stomach or groin 
or both) as does the Fouquet miniature. See also 


13. Owst, p. 112.


15. Ribald does not appear as a character in the York play, but the Secundus Liabolus addresses him thus:

Why rooris pou soo, rebalde? bou royis,
what is be-tidde, canne pou ought telle? (ll. 99-100)

16. Belliall says in the York play:

Wel spere our gates, all ill mot pou spede,
And sette further watches on be wall.
And if he call or cri
To make vs more debate,
Lay on hym bou hardly,
And garre hym gang his gate. (ll. 139-144)

The Towneley play deletes the line altogether. It is worth speculating on whether the line was deleted because it did not fit the staging of the Wakefield plays. If Belial's description is accurate, there must have been walls or places for the devils to stand on in order to man their posts. The stage, then, might have the look of a fortress.

17. The York play has Beelzebub say:

Say to Satan oure sire,
And bidde pame bringe also,
Lucifer lovely of lyre (ll. 117-19)

The Towneley play echoes it:

Say to sir satan oure syre,
and byd hym bryng also
Sir lucyfer, lufly of lyre. (ll. 111-13)

The lines are inexplicable because, presumably, Lucifer and Satan are the same person; he lost one name when he fell and took up the other. It is obvious, of course, that Lucifer never appears on the stage; it is Satan who confronts Christ.

18. Mr. Martin Stevens has suggested that the devils toss him into Hell-mouth. Such action would certainly be effective in getting Satan from his stage to the
gates of hell in order to confront Christ. It would also emphasize Satan's hesitancy and the devils' insistence that he prove himself if he is to remain their overlord.


20. See Cursor Mundi, 11. 2203ff., but esp. 1. 22157.

21. "Juggling Tricks and Conjury on the English Stage Before 1642," MP, XXIV (1927), 269-84. He notes that the belief was so persistent that Reginald Scot, in 1584, wrote the Discoverie of Witchcraft, in order to disprove the supernatural elements of witchcraft, along with the tricks of jugglers and conjurors.


24. Benkowitz, p. 82

25. Masks, Mixes and Miracles (New York, 1963), p. 188.

26. pp. 54, 56.


29. Klaus G. Perls, Jean Fouquet, Belgium, 1940. The plate follows page 80. The miniature was painted about 1450.


32. At Norwich at least. See Osborne Waterhouse, ed., The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays, p. xxxiii. Craig notes that the guild records note expenses for washing the angels' albs and surplices (p. 97) and for the purchase or making of wings, diadems, golden skynnes
(p. 101), and a payment for the gilding of faces (p. 99).


34. Nicoll, p. 189.

35. L'Art...XIIIe, pp. 361-65, 169-79.


40. Lumiansky, p. 12.

41. See also ll. 40; 43; 542-8; and 606.

42. Craig, p. 99.

43. Perhaps the wounds even bled, as is suggested by these lines in the Chester Last Judgment:

   Behould now all men on me,
   and se my Blood fresh out flee,
   that I bledd on rode tree
   for your Saluation.       (ll. 425-8)

   Func emittet Sanguinem de Latere suo

Chapter V

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