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THE CHARACTERS CALLED CORPUS CHRISTI:
DRAMATIC CHARACTERIZATION IN THE ENGLISH
MYSTERY CYCLES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Thomas Patrick Murphy, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1975

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION: CHARACTERIZATION AND THE CYCLES.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTERRELATIONSHIP AND STRUCTURE: NORTHAMPTON AND BROME</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. INTERRELATIONSHIP COMPARISONS: THE COVENTRY SHEARMEN AND TAYLORS' PAGEANT</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CONTINUITY OF CHARACTERIZATION: THE SHEARMEN AND TAYLORS' PAGEANT AND THE WEAVERS' PAGEANT</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CHARACTERIZATION AND THE CYCLE: CHESTER</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION: CHARACTERS AS CORPUS CHRISTI</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION:
CHARACTERIZATION AND THE CYCLES

An intriguing aspect of the English Corpus Christi plays is that, from all indications, more than one actor could play a single character in the course of a cycle. Such apparently casual treatment of the relation between actor and character in the cycles has led critics to assume that extensive study of character as anything but a local, single pageant phenomenon is fruitless and that the cycles do not call for, indeed cannot sustain, extensive analysis of their characterization. Yet it is possible to formulate a general theory of dramatic characterization in the cycles that accounts for the multi-actor problem as well as some of the other problems which have eluded other approaches. This general theory can also supply tools for understanding specific plays.

Constructing a definition of dramatic "character," not yet satisfactorily done for any kind of drama, is further complicated in the cycles by that lack of identity between the person playing the part and the dramatic role. Of course, this complication disappears if, as Eleanor Prosser asserts, the single play is the largest relevant unit and if the single play is defined in terms of a single cast. Such a device oversimplifies the issue, however, since each of the pageants was part of a larger whole. Furthermore, while the pageants may have been separately composed and the whole cycle may not always have been performed, there is a unity in a Corpus Christi cycle that cannot be lightly dismissed. But the solutions suggested by those critics who have confronted the problem of more than one actor per character can tell us much about what they think character is. That their solutions are couched in terms of their basic theories about the cycle drama does not by itself make their observations invalid because, as Northrop Frye states:

In drama, characterization depends on function; what a character is follows from what he has to do in the play. Dramatic function in its turn depends on the structure of the play; the character has certain things to do
because the play has such and such a shape.  

For the most part, critics have used the shape of the cycles as their starting points, and when (or if) they get around to discussing characterization, they assign it a function consistent with their general theory of the cycles. There are three classes of argument about the function of character in the cycles which derive from assumptions about the shape of the play. These are: the game argument, the realism argument, and the theology argument.

The chief exponent of the game argument is V. A. Kolve, though his monumental book, The Play Called Corpus Christi, makes him prominent in all three classes. Kolve's basic assertion is that the cycle playwrights sought not to create an illusion of reality but to construct a game world in which both actors and audience participated. 5 Anne Righeter has more succinctly articulated the position:

In the Elizabethan theatre, the line dividing a world of shadows from reality came to separate the actors from their audience. Medieval drama, on the other hand, drew its boundaries between a fragmentary, secular environment and the cosmos of the play. While the performance lasted, audience and actors shared the same ritual world, a world more real than the one which existed outside its frame. 6

For Kolve, the result of a variety of actors playing a single part is not incoherence, since local tradition kept the characterization relatively consistent; the variety is instead a check against an illusion of reality. Kolve cites as an extreme example those playing God, who "would not have sought to be God, nor to get inside his personality . . . . They presented not the character of God but certain of His actions." 7

Note, first of all, that this is an hypothesis about what the actor thinks he is doing, not about what the actor actually does on stage or how the audience perceives what the actor is doing. A problem with Kolve's absolute application of the game theory is that the point of view is the participant's; while the actor may be involved in the action without a concept of the "character" he is impersonating, his actions may coalesce into a character for an audience. Kolve himself is dubious about the point: just before the passage cited above, he says that the only thing
separating the actors and the audience is the actors' "more generous mimetic gift." The actor must be representing something in imitation of the "real" if he can be judged as having a mimetic gift. But strictly speaking according to Kolve's application of "game," there is not an audience; everyone is a player. In support of the similar role which he sees the actors and audience playing in the cycles, Kolve ends his discussion of "The Corpus Christi Drama as Play and Game" with some examples of the Christ or God figure stepping out of character at the end of a pageant and invoking his own blessing on the audience in the third person. Kolve maintains that the game-oriented medieval audience would not be disturbed by this. But when this contact with the audience is viewed another way, not even a twentieth century audience would be disturbed; they would conclude that the play was over. The three passages Kolve cites from the cycles are highly formulaic and mean in sum, "God save you." Such a practice is roughly comparable to the cast appearing on stage to take bows, or as the boy playing Rosalind in As You Like It, to ask for donations. What is significant about the game theory in this discussion of characterization is its basic hostility toward character: Kolve interprets the details of the cycles in a way which a priori allows no significant place for characterization.

The other end of the spectrum is the realism argument, an example of which is found in the following statement by R. T. Davies:

In processional performances, at least, one character appearing in several pageants, Jesus, say, or his mother, would be played be several different characters. But in real life, medieval folk were more used than we are to responding to the role a man was performing as distinct from the man himself, more used to responding to priest or king than to Robert or Richard.

Leaving aside the question of how much we respond to individuals (I wonder if Davies knows the name of his mailman or even feels the need to know), this passage is an appeal to the social milieu, external to the cycles, in order to explain the nature of cycle characters. Davies' approach is basically related to Rossiter's in which the term "realism" is used in its most restrictive modern sense (i.e., the recreation of the details, usually grubby, of real life for their own sake) in a discussion of cycle characters. The same frame of mind leads to Waldo
McNeir's assertion that the N-Town conspirators' desire to put Christ to death for heresy gives a terminus a quo for this detail, since "the death penalty was not extended to heretics in England until after 1401." These examples have in common the assumption that details of medieval life used in the formation of characters (or of the cycles in general) are not subject to modifications according to their function within the drama.

A less extreme example of a nevertheless similar mentality is Arnold Williams' statement that contemporary elements keep the miraculous from overpowering the cycles and provide social commentary. This approach, while it seems to place the social elements within the structure of the cycles, is actually explaining them in terms of externals. The development of character for social comment is seen by Williams as significant in terms of the social institutions; in the context of the cycles he views such development as structurally a side-show, a nice "touch." His first point, however, is a rhetorical issue, i.e., contemporary elements were used to make the plays more accessible to the simple audience, and it leaves entirely unsettled the question of what characterization is in the structure of the cycle. That the plays became more available to the audience is a possible result of the theory of characterization we are trying to locate, but is not a sufficient explanation.

The theological argument asserts that the shape of the play is dictated by various doctrinal messages, and these in turn determine the dramatic function and nature of the characters. Here at least characterization participates in the essential structure of the cycles. Or so it seems. Rosemary Woolf, for example, argues that the distinction drawn in theology between any sacred image and that which it represents is equally applicable to the actors and their roles in the cycles. This distinction explains why the medieval audience would not be bothered by changes in the actors. However,

under these circumstances any personal mannerisms or gestures, any individual modulations of the voice, even the personality conveyed by individual physiognomy, will have been inappropriate or irrelevant. Continuity between one play and another can have been indicated only by dress and no doubt the dress that iconography had long made instantly recognizable.
Only the most general aspects of characterization are allowed to function; the very details that make the drama differ from pure doctrinal information or the plastic arts are "inappropriate or irrelevant."

The most common kind of theological argument is the one based on typology. Hurrell's approach is an early example:

The cycles as a whole achieve their unity by repetition of the theme of prefiguration, an aspect of the promise of salvation that brings the Creation and Judgement Day together in a single apprehension of truth transcending time. Likewise, within each play, the acceptance of the idea that behind apparent differences of time and place there is a God-given unity, or that the separate phenomena which we call historical events or geographical locations are in no real (i.e., spiritual) sense isolated from each other, makes it possible for the dramatist to mold an artistic form out of what is usually called his use of anachronism.15

Though typology has clarified a structure in the cycle form as a whole more than any previous approach, typological analysis is essentially a process of generalization, and the criticism written under its auspices is primarily concerned with ironing out the differences among characters. As Rosemary Woolf has pointed out in her seminal article on typology in the Abraham and Isaac plays, "the point of resemblance . . . lies in the single action, not in character or situation, and it is this one action, without regard to moral concord, upon which typology usually seizes."16 Claude Gauvin, in his unique study of character based on the N-Town cycle, has made a point similar to Woolf's: "[the cycle] structure allows no place for the notion of 'character.' In effect, the cycle is an historical and theological structure which aims at re-tracing . . . the story of the Fall and of the Redemption."17 Though Gauvin is using "character" (caractère) to describe the distinctive and notable character as opposed to simply a character-agent (personnage), he is eliminating development of characterization on the basis of the essential nature of the cycles dictated by typology. The result of applying typology to the cycles is the same as in Woolf's argument from iconography: the details which produce characterization are irrelevant.
While Kolve is one of the propagators of the typological structure (with the addition of the Seven Ages of Man), he is aware of its inconsistency with character development:

The local dramatic life of these episodes will vary, with other concerns and interests occasionally being substituted for this figural connection with Christ's life; nevertheless it is this connection that gives them their independent importance and accounts for their presence in the cycle...18

Again, however, the development of character, here the province of "local" structure, is isolated from the central structural concern of the whole cycle. Kolve leaves room for a unified concept of character in a moral sense when he later asserts: "Every character who appears on the pageant stage is implicitly defined in terms of his relationship to God. Taken together these characterizations amount to a composite portrait of humankind."19 The God of Kolve's cycle is, however, as was seen under the game argument, not a character but a set of actions, so that the relationship between any character and God will be governed not by how they are related in the play, but by how they are related in moral theology.20

Each of the three approaches to characterization summarized above emphasizes one of a pair of opposing terms. The game argument asserts the absolute dominance of action over character; the realism argument asserts the dominance of the audience's social context over dramatic form; and the theological argument asserts the dominance of heavenly theme over earthly event. Beyond this, the major emphases can be formulated into three general "laws" of characterization which underlie all three arguments. First, Action completely controls character. In the realism argument the action is mimesis and in the theological argument the action is dictated by theology. The key word in the first law is "completely." Second, The audience looks for and sees only what is real in the characters. While in the realism argument the term real refers to the empirical reality of the society, in the game argument this law means that the audience perceives the actor as doing only what he is actually doing (i.e., playing), and in the theological argument they perceive in the characters only what pertains to ultimate (i.e., spiritual) reality. And finally, The meaning of the action lies primarily in knowledge external to the plays. The game argument requires an audience which has been culturally conditioned
to participate in the cycle plays as game, just as the theological argument assumes an audience with a large body of lived theological knowledge. The realism argument works only for an audience familiar enough with daily life in medieval England to know what is being imitated. None of these approaches allows the characterization to develop, apart from the action, any unified contribution, any dimension of the cycle drama which can be resolved only by analysis of the cycles from the point of view of characterization itself.

While Frye's analysis of what characterization is does ultimately appeal to the shape of the play, the result of these three laws (i.e., the cycles are based on an action, fully understood outside the plays, which allows no significant place for characterization in the audience's perception of the plays) is a framework too rigid to explain the characterization which appears in the cycles. My objection is not that the game mentality or the desire for realism or the categories of theology have no place in an analysis of the cycle, but that they are not the only ways of analyzing character in the cycles, and may not even be the best ways. All of them leave too many striking elements of the cycles unaccounted for, and all of them require the critic to claim that any effort to develop character is lost on an audience perceiving the plays properly.

These approaches seem to spend much time exploring the way the cycles must be perceived, or more accurately, must have been perceived by the medieval audience. In a sense they are source studies: each approach tries to discover what was put into the cycle plays, what was the externally motivated point of the plays and hence of the characterization. Their concern for the audience, however, distinguishes these studies from earlier source studies, and the problem is thus qualified: what was put into the plays that the medieval audience would respond to? As the three laws adduced above show, these critics are primarily concerned with the knowledge the audience brought to the plays rather than the knowledge they might have taken from the plays. The theological argument, especially, is guilty of this emphasis, perhaps as a reaction against the view of the "medieval mind" as a paltry thing indeed. Assertions, like Hurrell's, that St. Augustine's emphasis on the use of typology in his sermons is sufficient proof that in medieval England the average Christian would know about this way of viewing history, are obviously too speculative to be useful. But even Kolve's care in assuring the availability of specific kinds of theological knowledge is not sufficient
to make an audience-based study thoroughly convincing, primarily because he must assume a homogeneous audience. Doing so means assuming that a collection of exceptionally good sermons, like Mirk's *Festial*, is typical of the instruction to which the audiences of all the cycles were exposed. On the other hand, how accurate is the assumption that what was available corresponds exactly to what was known? Besides, when you compare the potential effect of sermons and devotional literature with that of a play on the same subject, it would not be unwarranted to conclude that the play might have more effect in determining the audience's attitude toward the subject. My point is not that we should return to the concept of the ignorant audience; my point is that an effort to recreate what the audience knew outside the plays is an inefficient method of analysis. In fact, any effort at literary criticism of the literature of the past which is based primarily on a recreation of the consciousness which existed at the time is built on a shaky foundation. But focussing on the audience is not the only alternative to an approach which focusses purely on the sources of a work of art. Nor does the intermediate structure (i.e., the work of art itself) result from a combined consideration of the sources and the audience. The cycles were the product of men manipulating both the sources and the audience and thereby molding a new structure.

To discuss characterization, however, we must return to the problem of the portrayal of the same character by different actors and determine whether this practice does indeed prevent character from functioning in some unified way in the whole cycle play. All the critics discussed so far have dismissed characterization beyond the single pageant and have based their explanations for this phenomenon on a larger concept governing the cycles. But there are numerous practical and, yes, external explanations for the division of the cycle itself into discrete units; it need not be the task of the critic to explain how this subdividing (or joining together) came about, so long as he explains what it means in terms of the critical perspective he is working from. I see no way to resolve the question of whether a medieval English mental attitude allowed for the performing of the pageants by different guilds or whether the assigning of the pageants among the guilds produced a dramatic form which in turn conditioned the audience. Little documentation survives to show any concerted effort on the part of municipal authorities to assure unity in the cycles before the Reformation. It seems likely that the playwrights and/or directors simply
accepted the lack of control over their characters outside their pageants as one of the conditions of the genre, comparable to the demands of the particular kind of staging they were to work with. We can, however, attempt to understand how they handled their characters in light of the demands of the genre.

Though Hans-Jurgen Diller, in his article on the Wakefield Master, does not consider how different actors would affect development of a character, he does face up to characterization which seems disjointed within pageants. The plays he discusses are all written by the Wakefield Master, and Diller, in effect, uses this single authorship as the principle of unity which allows him to generalize about the development of character. Diller uses the term "realism" to describe the Master's solutions to dramatic problems involving the relations between speech and action, between cause and effect, and between people:

The reflection in the dramatic medium of these relations demands . . . an awareness that no two people are exactly the same, that the relation between them changes with the mood they are in, that they do not normally describe what they are feeling or doing, that one mood generates a corresponding but not necessarily identical mood in the other person.25

Diller is looking at the plays themselves and is indicating a significant point of approach which may be applied to plays besides the Master's—the way the characters relate to one another. Diller's use of the concept of realism can be misleading when taken out of the highly qualified context in which he places it, i.e., realism as a matter of dramatic texture rather than subject matter.26 He sees character development in the Wakefield Master's work as bound up with the action of the play, not an external theological action but the dramatic action intrinsic to the play: "[The Wakefield Master's] mastery of character-drawing is in fact inseparable from his skill in plot construction."27 There is, however, little reciprocity of control between character and plot in Diller's analysis; he uses the underlying principle of "plot over character" to explain why there is less character differentiation in the Secunda than in the Prima Pastorem.28

For Diller, differentiation and character development are nearly synonymous. Few critics will argue against such an assumption, but that assumption obscures how characterization works in cycle drama as a whole as well
obscuring how the Master's development of character relates to his predecessors and contemporaries. For example, Diller supports the general statement that the playwright often subtly distinguishes the first two of a group of three with a reference to the Tortores in the Coliphizacio. The second torturer is occupied with his troubles, but the first torturer is more concerned with threatening Jesus. He talks to the high priests and takes credit for himself without protest from number two. But Diller points out the flexibility of this characterization:

None of this contrast, however, is maintained in the buffeting scene proper (ll. 343-414). It has served its purpose and is abandoned in favor of the more obvious opposition between the first two torturers and their servant Froward.29

He never explicitly states what the purpose of the contrast is and how that purpose could be better served by adding Froward. Implicit in his argument, however, is the assumption that simple opposition between good and evil characters is not realistic.

Of all human relationships, those between enemies (or, at least, opponents) lend themselves most easily to vivid dramatization. But the Wakefield author's vision of life is too complex for him to be satisfied with that. He is careful to distinguish members of one group from one another . . . .30

The function of such mimesis is not connected to the action; for Diller it is merely less important than the action and can be sacrificed as the differentiation of the two Tortores can be abandoned. In pointing out these details, Diller has given some indication of how the parts might be acted, but no significant indication of what their function in the shape of the play is.

The key to the function of characterization in the cycles is that distinctions among characters are less important than combinations. While differentiation of the two Tortores may have been "abandoned" by the playwright later in the play, the relationship created between them continues to operate for the audience. A rough mathematical analogy may clarify the difference between Diller's approach and the one being suggested. Diller's analysis can be stated:

\[(A \neq B) \rightarrow C; C \neq D\]

where \(A\) is the first and \(B\) is the second torturer, \(C\) is
the undifferentiated combination, and D is Froward. The statement is based on dissimilarity (≠) and is only comprehensible in terms of some outside force (i.e., the action), since there is a break (†) in the statement. I am suggesting an approach which can be stated:

\[(A+B)+C=X\]

Where A and B are the same as above, C is Froward, and X is some cumulative effect of the characterization of the three. The joining sign (+) implies the distinction between A and B as two separate things, but focuses on the ability of the individual characters to create some whole larger than themselves. The term I will use to describe the creation of a larger whole from the combination of two (or more) characters is "interrelationship." An interrelationship does not in turn develop the individual characters involved; those individual characters develop the interrelationship and it is through the analysis of interrelationships that the function of character apart from the action can be seen. In the Collizacio, then, the self-interested dominance of the first torturer is one side of the interrelationship between him and the second torturer, who is weaker and self-pitying. The cumbersome term "interrelationship" was chosen because it stresses the reciprocal nature of the bond; "relationship," used in reference to character, will describe an interrelationship from the point of view of one character. When Froward appears the torturers are related to him as masters. That master-servant interrelationship is a function of the one between the two torturers. The second torturer joins his will to that of the first, but Froward will not join his will to theirs, and thus the tension is created. First torturer-second torturer is parallel to Annas-Caiphas, and Froward fits into the scheme as a kind of negative Christ. While the characterization of the torturers is consistent with the demands of the plot (seen more clearly in this analysis than in Diller's), the structural role of that characterization is not exhausted by such a statement. The plot can also be viewed as participating in the creation of interrelationships which are themselves significant.

An emphasis on interrelationships can explain how the cycle playwrights adapted characterization to the demands of the cycle. The characterization of Deus, Kolve's knotty problem, can be developed in the same way any character is developed, because the real issue is not God's personality, but the "personality" of what happens between Deus and Noah, for example. Such an emphasis also means that a different Deus in an Abraham play creates no problem because the point there is how Deus-Abraham is developed. Diller notes that the Wakefield Master's awareness of the
variousness of human relations is rare and is "not called for by the religious conception of the earlier authors." However, such an awareness may have little to do with "religious conception." The Master's innovation is the use, within a single pageant, of a variety of character based on contextual demands inherent in the cycle form. The conflict between the unity of the whole cycle and the multiplicity of responsibility for the pageants means that the focus of characterization must be the interrelationship.

What becomes important, therefore, is the pattern of interrelationships in a cycle, but the pattern is not an immediate and simple generalization. Characters are not like the pieces in a mosaic, comprehensible only when the whole is viewed. A filter comparison might be to the facets of the stones in a piece of jewelry; each stone (i.e., pageant) is complete in itself, shaped and polished, but in turn participates in the whole. Thus, while Adam and Eve are husband and wife and Joseph and Mary are also, little of particular significance can be said of this similarity until the meanings of those interrelationships are developed in the context of the individual pageants. Above all, however, to understand character the focus should be on the dramatic interrelationship created by details used to develop the characters, details essentially ignored in the three arguments set forth above.

An insistence on the examination of the bonds joining characters in the dramatic context is not without problems. One attractive quality of the theologically based study is the wealth of contextual material to draw on. Dramatic characterization, however, depends heavily on the actual staging of the plays, the conventions regarding acting, and in the most particular sense, the way a particular actor or cast of actors performs a play. None of these is as available to the modern critic as is the theological context. The way a given performance of a given play actually affected that play is lost. We can only generalize about the presentation of the cycles, reaching conclusions which, like the average of a set of numbers, may not correspond with any specific performance. But I do assume that the actors of the cycles were able to realize the dramatic potential of their roles. However, as Swart has put it:

We are dealing with acting plays, for which a certain stage tradition must be presumed. Such a tradition is a silent understanding—becoming at best only incidentally vocal—and we need not wonder that it has been
lost. Perhaps the only external evidence we have for it is the reference to the figure of Herod, whom, apart from this, one might just as well have cast into a different shape. The importance of a stage tradition should not be minimized. . . . No amount of familiarity with the text can make up for the lack of such traditional information.33

This is a hard saying, but very little has been gleaned from the plays about how, even generally, the actor plied his craft. Alan Nelson concludes from the scarcity of information in the plays themselves that "evidently playwrights assumed that actors would understand and simulate the appropriate conventions without elaborate instructions."34 Nothing like the Abregles, which gives detailed instructions for the staging of a passion play at Mons in 1501,35 survives for an English mystery cycle, perhaps because the cycles were performed repeatedly in the same town, and the traditions could easily be kept alive. A possible exception to this is the N-Town cycle, which has conspicuously more directions for the actors. Even here the directions are often unclear in intention as far as the method of portraying the characters is concerned.36

The two critics who have discussed acting style at greatest length, Swart and J. W. Robinson, both suggest that the cycles require two kinds of acting, one formally stylized and the other naturalistic, though the formal would dominate.37 Robinson also deduces from stage directions that "in general . . . the players would have been guided by the two elementary necessities: clarity in their gestures and openness in their speaking."38 This latter suggestion may supply some small key to the nature of the stylization, but exaggeration of gestures and speech is, as Robinson admits, "elementary" and the modern critic is left with little beyond modern analogues and negative examples.39

An analysis of character must, therefore, be presented as probable. Though, as Swart has pointed out, the text of a play is no substitute for lost tradition, only a close examination of the text can supply us with the parameters of characterization. Paradoxically, acknowledging the dramatic dimension of characterization means acknowledging that all the details realized from a close reading will not be caught by someone viewing the performance, while on the other hand, the details to support suggestions for performance can only come from a meticulous examination of the play.40 In the former case the critic is looking for what the viewer understood about what he was seeing, and in the latter he is trying to reconstruct
what the player was doing. But our inability accurately to reconstruct actual performances, or the manner of such performances, does not mean that analysis of the cycles can be carried on without considering them as theatre in some respect.

An example of the kind of mistake possible when performance is ignored is Robert Brawer's assertion in a study of the Creation plays, as ostensibly concerned with drama in the cycles as this dissertation is, of the importance of diction in the individualizing of character types. He uses Satan's final lines of the first pageant of the N-Town cycle as support for the importance of diction: "The Ludus Coventriae playwright underscores Satan's perversity by giving him recurrent scatological lines. His words as he is banished to Hell ('Ffor fere of fyre a fart I crake' I,81 ) emblematises his ludicrousness as a fallen angel." First, "recurrent" hardly fits the use of scatological imagery; Brawer cites only one other example which occurs in Pageant 32 and in an analogous situation (Christ sending Satan to hell after the temptation). This second occurrence is too far removed from the first to be at all functional as part of a pattern of repetition. Second, it is possible to question even the immediate impact of the diction. By analogy with the actor playing the part of Belial in The Castle of Perseverence, who is told to "look that he have gunpowder burning in pipes in his hands and in his ears and in his ars when he goeth to battle," it seems likely that Satan's lines in the N-Town pageant were accompanied by some audible pyrotechnic display to which the diction acted only as a key. Brawer, using his method, runs the risk of overemphasizing statement by ignoring action.

There is more information about the general staging of the cycles available to the modern scholar than there is information about the acting. Staging involves more tangible materials (costumes, scenery, props), and we can get a rough idea of the things required for some plays from municipal and guild records and a rough idea of their disposition from other forms of art (when the non-dramatic forms are qualified by their own conventions) and the sparse stage directions. But these sources of information supply only the raw material and are capable of supporting a variety of theses. The status of a general statement about what the staging of a cycle was like is hardly unassailable. The problem becomes even more complex when staging is used as part of a critical analysis of the plays. Often, hypotheses about staging are based on critical analysis of what will aid a reader in understanding the play or on what is necessary to make a particular
point. To use these hypotheses to support in turn further analysis is circular reasoning. Critical studies which feature the staging prominently often tend to be highly speculative and personal.45 Brawer, in the study cited above, was perhaps trying to avoid speculation when he noted: "this study treats specific staging problems in the cycles only incidentally, since it focusses on the internal dramatic structure of the cycles."46 I assume that by using the term "internal" Brawer is eliminating the need to consider audience response, so that he asserts that the staging of a play and its structure are separable. However, a recent study by Stanley J. Kahrl has shown that the demands of its staging are bound up in the "internal" structure of a cycle play: the pageant stage requires a small focus, whereas the place and scaffold requires a play of action to fill the space.47 Given the conflicting demands of a desire to avoid heavy reliance on speculation and a need to consider staging, I will use staging "evidence" in two ways: to show that nothing in the possible staging prevents characterization from being analyzed a particular way and to show that a particular analysis of character favors one hypothesis about staging over others. The first use will sometimes appear in the text, but most often (and in all cases with the second use) such statements will appear in footnotes.

Because we lack vital information about the acting and staging in the cycles, we cannot hope to reconstruct the plays as performed in medieval England with any certainty. Prosser asserts the need for a critical method based on complete reconstruction:

a critical method whereby we may look at the drama as drama, through the eyes of the medieval audience, rather than viewing the plays as historical phenomena through the distorted lens of traditional assumptions.

Besides ignoring the impossibility of what she asks, Prosser is using either/or reasoning: there is more to an historical perspective than merely "traditional assumptions." Despite all the disadvantages connected with our temporal separation from the performance of the cycles, the chief advantage, a historical perspective, ought to contribute something positive to any critical analysis.49 The cycles, like any other work of art, have both a historical nature and an existential nature as unique creations. As James S. Ackerman has said:

Thus the history of the arts can encompass social interpretation, while criticism
preserves the traditional idealist criteria. In literary studies the New Criticism prompted a sort of specialization that assigned these two tasks to different people and different books.

Ackerman goes on to suggest the use of an open value system, which he compares to the judicial system, i.e., the reinterpretation of the past for and to the present. What is most important for our analysis of the cycles is the need to honor both the historical and ideal dimensions of the cycles.

In order to achieve this balance, we must not depend too heavily on the hypothetical effect of a play. An attempt to understand the response to the plays in the past risks confusing our atemporal, ideal response (which is actually tied to our own historical context) with a response in the past which we cannot know. We can hope to understand best the structure of the plays, the configuration of what we have. In studying medieval drama we must pay primary attention to the cause (the plays), attempting to understand how they are made the way they are made with as little necessary reference to an effect as possible. In such a study the perspective of characterization is especially useful. No part of the heterogeneous audience of the cycles would use the methods and terms employed in this dissertation to describe the cycles. The typological approach, for example, discusses the cycles in terms which are consistent with a mental set consciously present in the audience, so that the applicability of the approach varies with the amount of typological knowledge possessed by each member of the audience. By discussing characterization we will be isolating a structure which would resonate differently for each member of the audience, depending on what he brings to the plays, but which is intrinsic to the plays and always present where the plays are. Thus, while the audience will be of little explicit concern in the dissertation, there is an implicit respect for its variety and complexity.

In effect, I will try to understand the cycles by looking at the structure of their characterization, and as I have asserted above and will show, that structure is based on the interrelationship. Such a pattern of characterization helps to balance the lacunae in our knowledge of performance because, though based on the texts of the plays, a study of interrelationships reinforces the dramatic dimension by forcing the critic to look at what is actually happening, how the characters are deployed within the plays.
Chapter I, then, will be a comparison of the Northampton and Brome plays of Abraham and Isaac to show how analysis of interrelationships can point up structural differences in plays with the same basic action. Chapter II will analyze the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant to illustrate how the characterization of a more complex play is organized by the comparison of interrelationships. The Weavers' Pageant, along with the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, will be discussed in Chapter III to indicate how interrelationship comparisons which can be viewed as forming dramatic societies, which are used to connect characterization between and among pageants. Finally, the Chester Cycle will be discussed to illustrate how dramatic societies function within the whole cycle. In the end, it should be clear that characterization in the cycles can be analyzed, and the results are important for understanding the cycle.
NOTES

1 One exception to this is Arnold Williams, The Characterization of Pilate in the Towneley Cycle (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1950). Williams, however, seems to feel that actual production problems can be dispensed with in considering the plays (e.g., see "Typology and the Cycle Plays: Some Criteria," Speculum, 43 [1968], 681), and in his chapter on the production of the cycles in The Drama of Medieval England (Michigan State Univ. Press, 1961), Chapter VII, he does not mention that more than one actor could play a single part. In his book on Pilate, therefore, he ignores the issue.


4 Anatomy of Criticism (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 171. I have cut the passage short of the next step where Frye says that shape depends on genre (i.e., comedy or tragedy) since the applicability of his generic terms to the cycles is a critical issue outside the scope of this study.

5 Kolve, pp. 8-32.

event would exclude the play and game element of the performance altogether" ("Illusion and Reality in the Medieval Drama," *College English*, 32 [1970-71], 454). Steven's argument here and throughout this essay is based on an opposition between ritual and game, which he does not articulate, and which is inconsistent with John Huizinga's position in *Homo Ludens* (1950; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); see pp. 199 ff.

7 Kolve, p. 24.
8 Ibid., pp. 31-32.


17 "Or cette structure ne laisse aucune place à la notion de «caractère». En effet, le cycle est une structure historique et théologique qui vise à retracer... l'histoire de la Chute et de la Rédemption"("Les personnages dans le Théâtre anglais du Moyen Age d'après le cycle de la ville de N. ou Ludus Coventriæ," *Revue d'histoire du Théâtre*, 24 [1972], 120). Despite a number of excellent observations and the basic right-headedness of his essay, Gauvin is guilty of setting forth what seems to me to be the silliest explanation for multiplicity of characterization under the banner of theology: "Qu'en conclure? que le diable est, sur le théâtre comme dans la conscience populaire et dans le dogme, un personnage
multiforme et omniprésent, représenté tantôt par un personnage à plusieurs noms (Lucifer, Satan, Bélial), tantôt par plusieurs personnages distinct" (117).

18 Kolve, p. 82.
19 Ibid., p. 206.
20 Within the moral framework, Kolve distinguishes between the common people in the plays who are morally unconscious and the leaders who are morally conscious and developed in terms of specific sins of which they are guilty (pp. 221-22).

21 Note, for example, that Kolve even adopts the technique and terminology of earlier philological studies in constructing his "proto-cycle" (see pp. 50-55).

22 Hurrell, p. 603-04.
23 Kolve, p. 2.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 257.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., pp. 254-55.
30 Ibid., p. 254.
31 Ibid.
33 Swart, p. 136.
36 McNeir says of the N-Town passion: "It can be said that a reliance on the ability of the players to translate his manual of acting instructions into significant gesture and movement is the characteristic method of this Passion playwright" (621). How that translating was accomplished is the essence of what we lack. Interestingly, the N-Town cycle is the most unlocalized.
39 Stevens uses Brecht to supply a conceptual framework, passion. Kolve cites the Stanislavsky method as the opposite of what he sees as the motive force of the acting (p. 24).
40 See David Mills, "Some Possible Implications of Herod's Speech: Chester Plays VIII, 153-204," NM, 74 (1973), 131-43, for an excellent example of how this can be done.
41 Robert A. Brawer, "Dramatic Technique in the Corpus Christi Creation and Fall," MLQ, 32 (1971), 351.
42 Ibid.
44 See Nelson, "Staging," for a recent survey of most of the major statements on staging, though Nelson grinds a few theses himself, and Kahrl, Traditions, pp. 27-52.
45 See, for example, Prosser and Anderson.
Prosser would, of course, deny that she ignores the historical perspective, since she takes pains to establish the doctrine embodied in the cycles. The information on theology is, however, treated as something to be "gotten around." For example, she cites that if a modern director "fully understands a doctrinal concept underlying a given scene, he will be able to translate its implications into recognizable human terms" (p. 64).

Chapter I
INTERRELATIONSHIP AND STRUCTURE:
NORTHAMPTON AND BROME

Though a Corpus Christi cycle is a complete and coherent dramatic work, the individual pageants have far more independent life than act or scene divisions in post-Renaissance drama. Understanding clearly the nature of the pageant, the part, is, therefore, a necessary prerequisite for understanding the cycle, the whole. What is true in particular is surely true in general; the failure to see how characterization functions in the cycles may well grow out of a failure to see how characterization functions in the individual pageants.

The introduction to this study presented and defined the term "interrelationship" as a tool for analysis of cycle characterization. The illustration presented there, drawn from the Wakefield Coliphizacio, merely indicated how the details used to develop those characters made sense when the characters were viewed as a group. But if characterization is an important element in the structure of a cycle pageant, it must also be shown that the way characters are interrelated significantly affects the shape of the play and is not merely window dressing for a stained-glass window.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to show that interrelationships are important to the structure of cycle pageants through a comparison of the Northampton and Brome Abraham and Isaac plays, two "versions" of the "same" play. John R. Elliott has said of the six English Abraham and Isaac plays, including, of course, these two plays: "Though they differ widely in minor details, [they] exhibit an identical dramatic form." An examination of the characterization of the Northampton and Brome plays, however, indicates that they are radically different in form, not simply different in "minor details."
An important key to understanding the characterization in the Northampton play is the way Deus is developed within the pattern of interrelationships. In his opening speech of the Northampton play, Deus clearly establishes the nature of his relationship with Abraham; Abraham is "my servant," "my man," and

Herebefore he requyred me hye
To have a childe of his body,
And I grauntid hym and hahe on redely.²

Isaac is essentially a boon Deus can grant to a servant, a boon purposely placed in the structure of a lord-servant relationship. The interrelationship between Deus and the angel, the next one introduced, develops the position of Deus as a lord, since, like any ruler within the plays, Deus impatiently sends his messenger off: "Then hye the pat pou were on grounde" (N 30).³ All of this, added to the royal costume Deus would probably wear, makes him a royal figure different in quality but not in kind from any cycle king. Deus verbally establishes the extent of his power, but his exercise of it is in basic social terms.

Abraham enters, addressing Deus in the same way Deus described himself, "O gret God on hye pat al pe worlde madest" (N 35), and calling Deus "Lord" and "souereigne Lord" (N 39, 42), thereby acknowledging his acceptance of the basis of Deus' power and completing their interrelationship. At this point the angel enters and calls Abraham, who challenges:

Who is pere, in pe hye Lordes name, bat al ping shope of nought?
ANGELUS. I am here, messangere of that souereigne Lord entere, perfore herkyn now and here What message I haue brought.

(N 50-55)

Since Deus is the ruler of the dramatic world in this play (no use is made of "intermediate" earthly rulers), his name is invoked both in challenge and response. The angel, then, delivers his message as a command from his lord, and Abraham immediately consents, finishing with "I shal it fulfille/ Without fraude outher cauelacion" (N 70-71). After the angel leaves, however, Abraham immediately articulates what seems to be his previously suppressed first reaction (i.e., he put up a front for the angel)--the problem of Sarah. Abraham is operating under the assumption that he can hide things from God, or at least he is responding to the angel as a faithful human servant would
respond to such a command from his human lord: professing obedience and waiting until he is alone to bemoan his fate. His first line after the angel's exit ("A goode Lord, what is now best to do" [N 72]) is less an address to Deus than an oath; he knows already what his lord wants him to do. In fact, Abraham does not address Deus directly until just before the angel enters to stop the sacrifice, and this address is accompanied by another oath:

This takep me ful nye, God wote,  
Goode Lord, to do pl plesaunce!  
(N 258-59)

Such a statement is an indication that the "God" of the oath and the "Lord" addressed can be viewed as existing on two different planes. Despite the traditional omnipotence assigned to God by the theologians, the Northampton playwright limits the dramatic activity of Deus to that of a temporal lord.

The implications of the Northampton playwright's treatment of Deus are far-reaching. Although Diller, for example, examines relationships (but as pointed out in the introduction, not how the individual characters combine to form interrelationships) in the plays of the Wakefield Master, he maintains that the Master's plays are exceptional in their ability to sustain this kind of analysis:

The normal mystery play reduces personal relations to the simple dichotomy of good and evil. Occasional exceptions grow out of such basic human relations as father-and-son, husband-and-wife. The latter are usually created in numerous scenes without biblical authority, especially in the Noah plays or the scene of Pilate and Percula (York, XXX). These remain largely incidental without affecting the texture of the play as a whole.5

Kolve is even more universal in deprecating the importance of the bonds among characters as they exist on the stage; drawing on Auerbach's distinction between horizontal and vertical (i.e., typological) time, Kolve maintains that direct causation is not the basic theory of time for the cycles.6 For both critics the relationship of a character to God (for Diller morally, for Kolve typologically) is more important than the relationships he has with other characters; they do not consider God a character in the play whose relationship to other characters is controlled by the dramatic context. Such a position, however, is an a priori assumption, not a product of an examination of
the plays. Kolve, for example, asserts that the cycles portray how, when God intervenes in human affairs, "natural man is shocked out of his complacency to testify to the awful otherness of God." But since the cycle drama concentrates on God's intervention in history, such intervention is a commonplace of the cycle world, not a shock, and is dramatized through the divine characters, who are powerful, but not "other." Deus' temporal lordship in the Northampton play is, thus, the specific and definitive expression of his participation in the dramatic world.

If Deus is a character in the cycles, then his role is as much a product of the character's involvement in the web of interrelationships which binds together all of the characters as is the role of anyone else. There are three other major interrelationships in the Northampton play besides that of Deus-Abraham as master-servant. The first of these explicitly mentioned is Abraham-Sarah (husband and wife). Abraham quickly realizes he must ignore Sarah's probable reaction:

No forse, I haue levyr that she displesid be,
Than bat God be wrothe with me.

(N 80-81)

The second interrelationship, Abraham-Isaac, requires more emotional tension for its resolution in light of Deus' command. This father-son interrelationship is affectionate; the words "son" and "gentil father" are used in nearly every exchange, and Isaac's pleas to know how he has trespassed are answered by Abraham's assurance that he is blameless. The central conflict of the play is stated by Abraham:

?type hye Lord bad me to do bis dede,
But my hert grucchep, so God me spede,
My blode aborre to se my son blede,
For all on blode it is.

(N 240-44)

The main issue, then, is Abraham's role as servant versus his role as father. The third and final interrelationship is Sarah-Isaac (mother-son). Isaac's concern for his mother's reaction is touching, I suppose, but Isaac too throws her over: "But farewell nowe, for that is do" (N 215). In effect Isaac renounces the son-mother relationship in favor of the son-father.

In both the father-son and husband-wife (as well as the minor master-servant) interrelationships, Abraham commands. Indirectly he is also the ruling force in the
mother-son interrelationship. His authority, however, is qualified. Though, as cited above (N 70-71), Abraham will obey his lord without fraud, he must deceive both Isaac and Sarah to insure their cooperation. Deus also deceives Abraham by hiding the good thing (that Isaac will live) to exact obedience; Abraham deceives by hiding the bad news to achieve the same effect. When Isaac and Sarah are told about the true nature of the sacrifice, they submit to the will of the lord (N 252-55; 358-61); we cannot, however, be certain that Abraham could have enforced obedience on his own. Isaac protests (N 170-75), questions Abraham's ability to deliver the blow, complains (226-29), and is ultimately more glad to get out than impressed with the importance of what took place (311-15). Abraham is comically bumbling with Sarah, presenting the news of his near killing of Isaac almost as a joke, and Sarah is not immediately submissive.

In this play, then, Deus, a lord testing a servant's loyalty, is portrayed in human terms as part of the same society Abraham lives in. The tension exists not between extraordinary supernatural demands and earthly ones, but between the demands of a master-servant interrelationship and those of a father-son interrelationship. Deus' superiority lies in the flawlessness of his ability to command as measured against Abraham's imperfect ability to do so; as Abraham advises Isaac:

Ye, blessid be pat Lord pat so can'a say  
His servaund in every degré!  
(N 316-17)

Abraham's closing lines to the audience recommend to their attention not so much his own obedience as the reliability of God:

Now ye pat haue sene pis aray,  
I warne you all, bope nyzt and day,  
What God commaundeb say not nay  
For ye shal not lese perby.  
(N 366-69)

Brome is a very different play created from the same basic material. Many critics have admired the pathos of this treatment of the Abraham and Isaac story and have been puzzled by the final comment by the Doctor who draws from the play a moral which the play does not seem to support (that parents should not complain when their children die). Though Abraham does much complaining, this does not seem to be the central action of the play. Yet, the Doctor's comments are not an inappropriate addition;
on the contrary, those comments are crucial to the play when examined in light of the playwright's use of interrelationships.

To begin with, the interrelationships in the Brome play are connected to an internalized problem of heart versus will:

A! Lord, my hart reysyth therageyn,  
I may not fyndygth in my harte to smygth;  
My hart wyll not now thertoo,  
3yt fayn I woold warke my Lordys wyll;  
But thys 3owng innosent lygth so styll,  
I may not fyndygth in my hart hym to kyll,  
0, Fader of Heuyn! what schall I doo?

(B 299-305)

Note that Abraham addresses Deus not only as lord, but also as father. Though Abraham uses "Father" to address Deus primarily at the beginning of the play, in creating Deus-Abraham, the playwright seems to temper the lord-servant interrelationship with some qualities of that of a father-son.

While in Northampton the death of Isaac has a political dimension (since he is the only son and heir), the Brome Abraham has more children, so that Abraham's paternal attachment to Isaac himself is more the issue. The Northampton play also makes more of the earthly nature of Abraham's reward. At the same time, while the father-son relationship of Abraham to Isaac in Brome depends more on affection, the son-father relationship involves primarily obedience on Isaac's part (see B 28-30; 109-13; 124-26; etc.). The lord-servant and father-son interrelationships are thus essentially identical. Both Abraham and Isaac are bound by a similar duty of obedience to their fathers. This parallelism is more prominent in Brome than in Northampton because the father-son undertone of Deus-Abraham reflects Abraham-Isaac.

Just as there is a conflict between Abraham's heart (his role as father) and God's will (Abraham's role as son), Isaac must choose between his mother and father. In Brome there is an effort to parallel the Isaac-Sarah (son-mother) relationship with the promptings of Abraham's heart and hence with the demands of fatherhood. Sarah never appears to reconcile her role as mother with the will of Deus. She represents a course of action, so that the mother can become symbolic of the attachments of the heart. Isaac's desire to see Sarah at the end of the play (B423) is perhaps an indication that Isaac's response to
the sacrifice has been different from his father's. Indeed, if the desire to see his mother is taken to mean that he is still bound by the attachments of the "heart," a number of Isaac's actions which seem inconsistent with a typological interpretation become explicable.\textsuperscript{10}

A common way to approach Isaac in the Brome play is to point out that once he finds out his death is Deus' will, he accepts it without question.\textsuperscript{11} Isaac's statement is curious, however:

\begin{quote}
Now, fader, a\textit{gens} my Lordys wyll
I wyll neuer groche, lowd nor styll;
He mygth a sent me a better desteny
Yf yt had a be hys plecer.
\end{quote}

(B 190-93)

It seems as if Isaac is gruching immediately after claiming he will not.\textsuperscript{12} Isaac's actual motivation for going along with the sacrifice is contained in his next statement: "Nay, nay, fader. God forbes/ That ever ye schuld greve hym for me" (B 196-97). As Abraham stated earlier, Isaac is performing his usual action of making sure "That noo dessece her may I fell" (B 20). Isaac never reconciles himself to dying for the glory of God; he is dying to save Abraham's neck. An identification of Isaac with Christ on any basis of character is severely weakened by Isaac's address to the sheep he fetches for the sacrifice:

\begin{quote}
Thow þou be neuer so jentyll and good,
3yt had I leuer thow schedyst þþ blood,
Iwysse, scheppe, than I.
\end{quote}

(B 364-66)

Here (if the "lamb" is iconographically interpreted) Isaac sounds more like Caiaphas than Christ. When Abraham advises Isaac that they should be happy that they "gracched nott" against Deus' will, Isaac says he is glad that he dreaded God more than his death (B 410). In answer to Abraham's question "Wer thow adred?" (B 411), Isaac concludes, "I wyll neuermore cume there/ But yt be a\textit{gens} my wyll" (B 418-19). After expressing his great desire to speak to his mother again, Isaac reiterates his unwillingness to be a party to anything like this again: "wer I at home/ I wold neuer gou owt vnder that forme" (B 430-31). It should also be noted that these exchanges were preceded by the famous scene in which Isaac, about to bend down to work on the fire expresses fear that Abraham will kill him; Isaac never did understand what took place.\textsuperscript{13}
If the choices presented to Abraham and Isaac, then, are parallel, their reactions are quite different: Abraham rejoices at being able to reconcile his obedient sonship and affectionate fatherhood; Isaac wants to go home to his mother. This use of the mother figure may, in fact, supply a partial explanation for the Doctor's epilogue. A primary target of his criticism is:

thys women that wepe so sorrowfully
Whan that hyr chyldryn dey them froo,
As nater woll, and kynd;
Yt ys but folly, I may wyll awooce,
To groche a4ens God or to greve 3ow,
For 3e schall neuer se hym myschevyd, wyll I know,
Be l6nd nor watyr, haue thys in mynd.

(B 449-55)

Isaac has left the stage seeking the mother figure just prior to the Doctor's entry. In his epilogue the Doctor projects that mother onto the audience and chastises her/them. Since the play argues against succumbing to the promptings of the heart, which Sarah symbolizes (and after all, women are traditionally symbols for emotion, men for intellect), then the entire audience, not just women, is the object of the play's lesson. Ironically the Brome play, often praised for its emotional intensity, contains a condemnation of affection in a way Northampton does not.14

Even though, like Brome's Isaac, Northampton's Isaac wants to see his mother after the sacrifice (N 313), his action lacks the symbolic significance of the Brome Isaac's action, essentially because the Northampton Sarah lacks the symbolic dimension of her counterpart in Brome. Sarah is a character in the Northampton play who chooses between her role as protecting mother and obedient wife. Because Abraham chooses the servant relationship with Deus as the controlling one, Sarah's subjugating herself to her husband is an indirect act of obedience to Deus. In the end, the whole family is reconciled to the Lord.

The two crucial differences between the plays reside in the development of Deus-Abraham and Isaac-Sarah. In the Northampton play Deus-Abraham as an exemplary master-servant interrelationship is contrasted with Abraham-Isaac as father-son. The conflict in the play is resolved in the final reconciliation of the characters, possible because Isaac-Sarah is actually portrayed, so that whatever message is intended by that play has been made thoroughly dramatic and is manifested in the dealings of the characters with one another. The chief contrast in the
play is between Deus and Abraham, and the social harmony at the end of the play serves as a testimony to Deus' rule. Brome, on the other hand, contrasts Deus-Abraham and Abraham-Isaac as two father-son interrelationships, thus creating a less socially complex contrast. Consistent with this, the play also uses Sarah as a symbol in a system of imagery rather than as an opportunity for more dramatic action. Isaac's choice of Sarah at the end of the play (the heart) as opposed to his father (will) is in contrast to the choice Abraham made, so that the audience is presented with two different responses of sons to fathers. Brome seems to present an ethical choice in its chief comparison (between Abraham and Isaac), a proper and improper response to Deus. Both the more literary (as opposed to dramatic) and ethical qualities of the Brome play are also indicated in the epilogue by the Doctor addressed to the audience and concerning excessive affection for children. If Northampton is an exemplum, Brome is the whole sermon.

This distinction between the plays, derived from an analysis of the characterization, receives some support from a consideration of the manuscript sources. The manuscript (Trinity College, Dublin, D. 4.18, ff. 59-85) in which the Northampton play is found (ff. 74v-81r) is primarily useful as negative information. The play is preceded by a miscellaneous collection of English poems, the last group of which are Yorkist political poems, and a list of the kings of England from Alfred to Henry VI (the list is continued in a later hand); the play is followed by a list of mayors and bailiffs of Northampton and other entries of a civic or political nature. All of this material is written predominantly in a single hand. While I do not intend to argue that the surrounding material reflects the concern for social order and Deus' skill as a ruler, whatever the reason for including the play, the context does not reinforce its nature as religious drama.

In contrast, "The Book of Brome," containing the Brome play (ff. 15r-22r), though it too is a potpourri, seems to have originally been intended to contain religious poetry. The play is surrounded by four long narratives and part of a poem on the fifteen signs of Doomsday. Stanley J. Kahrl has concluded "that these texts, all of a decidedly devotional cast, were collected for purposes of meditation." Regardless of whether the play was performed somewhere in the Stuston area, whoever compiled the devotional material thought this play to be of sufficient meditative value to be included. Such a decision is entirely consistent with the conclusions drawn from the characterization about the literary and ethical coloring
Clearly, despite similarities of plot, these are two very different plays. The difference lies predominantly in the characterization. An analysis of the character interrelationships not only points up the differences between the plays, but also supplies a method for articulating those differences. Discussion of characterization in the cycle pageant requires an examination of the interrelationships, the bonds joining the characters, as they exist in the play under consideration. A similar story does not mean similar characterization, and different characterization can mean different plays.
NOTES

1 "The Sacrifice of Isaac as Comedy and Tragedy" (1969); rpt. in Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson, eds., Medieval English Drama: Essays Critical and Contextual (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 164-65. Elliott goes on, after a summary of the form: "The ritual basis of this plot is clear. It is derived not from the biblical narrative, but from the Mass and Easter liturgy" (p. 165). After a quick passage from O. B. Hardison (Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages [Baltimore, 1965], p. 83), equating comic structure with the Mass and Easter liturgy, Elliott has his conclusion: comic structure in the Sacrifice of Isaac plays. First, the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac has as much a comic structure as the Mass, etc., so I see no reason why the plot must be ritual rather than biblical. Second, Elliott ignores the central argument of Hardison's book, that while liturgical drama is ritually based, the vernacular dramatic tradition (the Mystère d'Adam and the Seinte Resureccion, which represent the most probable ancestors of the cycles) is episodically based. See Hardison, Essay VII.


3 The stage direction following line 34 seems to indicate that the Angel was not lowered by a winch onto the stage: "Et vadit angelus ud terram et expectat usque dum Aabrahan dicit." Abraham's soliloquy covers part of the angel's descent and the stage direction seems designed to make clear that the angel should delay his entry. The next stage direction says that the angel should intercept Abraham (after 1, 47).

4 Both Elliott and Woolf ("Typology," pp. 819-20) explain Abraham's immediate assent in all the plays as typologically motivated. Typology may have played a part in the development of Abraham, but his immediate compliance
could also be explained by fear: you don't balk at a command like that. Any lord capable of giving such a command is likely to deal harshly with a servant who argues. In this play Abraham does not resolve the question fully until nine lines after the angel leaves (1. 80).

5 Diller, p. 252.

6 Kolve, p. 119. See also Prosser, p. 30 n.

7 Kolve, p. 217. He says elsewhere: "God was played by a man, but he was distinguished from the order of men by a gilt face" (p. 26). Kolve supports this statement with a reference to Salter, p. 76, where, sure enough, it says: "Item we gave for geldine of God's fase xij d." However, these accounts are for the Smiths' Guild, who in 1554, the year of the records, produced the Purification. God the father does not appear in the text of the Chester Purification; the Christ child is called "Deus" in the line designation, but the records also say "We gave to litall God xij d ......." Because the child appears in a play of the Doctors', an important point is their failure to recognize the child's divinity so that his wearing of the mask is hardly appropriate; the very point of the Incarnation is that God became of the order of men. Having Deus wear a gold mask would be one way of setting him apart from the other characters. However, the mask seems out of place in the records and does not prove Kolve's point conclusively.

8 See Woolf, English Mystery Plays, p. 153.

9 Compare God's final address to Abraham in N 286-300 (where all but the last two lines deal with rewards on earth) with B 389-402 (where only the number of Abraham's progeny is mentioned and the last three lines place the condition of obedience on the reward).

10 John Gardner, in "Idea and Emotion in the Towneley Abraham" (PLL, 7 [1971]), sees Isaac's fear of the sword as a misplaced use of realism which undercut his earlier actions (p. 236). As will be shown below, it is actually the first in a series of actions indicating a shift in Isaac. Woolf seems to miss the possibility of Sarah's symbolic significance entirely by identifying Isaac's concern for Sarah with Jesus' concern for Mary ("Typology," p. 321).

11 E.g., Elliott, p. 168.
12 Davis notes of ll. 192-93: "These two lines apparently replace original lines with rymes on -ill and -ing; cf. 219-27" (p. 48). Since these two lines are the "qualifying" ones, if Davis is right, then the lines were deliberately added. It can be said, however, that their irregularity makes them seem less than integral. Either way, they deserve more notice than they have gotten.

13 A similar point is made by Kolve, pp. 260 and 315.

14 Gardner, in "Idea and Emotion" (cited above), curiously ignores Northampton. Gardner says of Towneley: "The emotional force of the play is a product of the playwright's ideas concerning the relationships between servant and master, child and father, man and God" (238). Gardner's technique differs from mine in a number of ways: for him, as for Diller, the use of relationships is a function of this play, not a universal phenomenon; he focusses on "relationships," not interrelationships, neglecting especially the reciprocal effect on the development of the Deus character; finally, he connects the relationships with "emotional force," a term describing audience reaction rather than the structure of the play. Though for him emotion has an implied position of importance ("The [York] play is by no means a play of emotion, but it to some extent works as art"[234]), such an analysis of character is a more sophisticated version of the school of thought which sees notable characterization as primarily an effort to get the message across to the audience through the use of realism, rather than as an informing principle.

15 For a complete description, see Davis, pp. xlvii-l.

16 "The Brome Hall Commonplace Book," TN, 22 (1968), 159. For a more detailed description of the contents of the MS, see Davis, pp. lix-lxiii.
Chapter II
INTERRELATIONSHIP COMPARISONS:
THE COVENTRY SHEARMEN AND TAYLORS' PAGEANT

The discussion of the two Abraham and Isaac plays establishes the potential importance of characterization in cycle pageants and the viability of the analysis of interrelationships as a method of understanding that importance. These plays are, however, simple plays, unified by a single action in which the characters essentially make choices formulated in terms of interrelationships. The close harmony between the characterization and the action means that interrelationships are developed only insofar as the action requires and the action is elaborated only insofar as the development of the interrelationships requires. While this harmony shows that action does not dominate character, such harmony does not prove that characterization is capable of analysis independent of or in addition to the action, in accordance with its own principles.

Many cycle pageants do not manifest a single completed action, but from the point of view of plot are diffuse and complex. Characters cannot always be understood as making choices, and even in plays where characters do make choices, the configuration of non-choosing (i.e., chosen) characters may be greatly expanded. It is in just such pageants, where the action supplies no clear key to the organization of the interrelationships, that a methodology based on a principle of characterization would be most helpful, indeed essential to understanding the structure of the pageant.

Pageants with more than one action also present problems more like those of a complete cycle than do the single-action Northampton and Brome plays. An analysis of interrelationships in a cycle based entirely on the paradigm of the two Abraham and Isaac plays would rest on the assumption that a single sweeping cosmic action is the primary organizing principle within the cycle at all levels. Such an assumption, however, ignores many discrete dramatic actions, which become one "action" only on a different and more general level, where the essential
distinctiveness of characterization loses some of its force. Since dramatically the cycles contain both a number of discrete actions as well as a single major action, if characterization functions dramatically beyond the single pageant, it must be able to bridge the gap between two different actions. The way this joining of actions takes place within a complex pageant indicates possible ways in which pageants within a cycle may be joined by characterization.

The aim of this chapter will be to illustrate a methodology for the analysis of interrelationships among the characters of a more complex play, the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, a methodology based on a schema of three types of interrelationship comparisons. It will also be shown that while the two main actions of the play are joined by an interrelationship comparison, the main burden of the bonding is carried by a dramatic society which is the product of those comparisons. As it is used in this discussion, a "dramatic society" is the product of the interrelationship comparisons, especially the Type I's. A dramatic society is not a complete or random recreation of contemporary English society, but is the disciplined development of the thematically significant social elements which, at once, are products of and a context for the interrelationship comparisons within the half-pageant. The thematic concerns of the dramatic societies of individual half-pageants are the vehicles for connecting their characterizations within the whole pageant. The following chapter will analyze the Shearmen and Taylors' companion play, the Weavers' Pageant, to illustrate a different use of the concept of dramatic society within that pageant, as well as the way the characterization of these two independently controlled pageants is coordinated also through the use of dramatic societies. The analysis of these two pageants should, therefore, supply an indication of some principles of characterization in the cycles.

The two Coventry plays are an attractive proving ground because they have been underrated and neglected. Thanks to Shakespeare, the stage direction, "Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also," from the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant is probably the best known in all of medieval English drama. It is, however, most often cited to make a negative point about the naivete of the early drama. Hardin Craig, the most recent editor of the Coventry plays, does little to advance them in his history of medieval drama: "The Coventry plays, as far as preserved, are the least learned, show the least clerical or ecclesiastical influence, and are the most popular of
all the mystery plays of which we are able to form an opinion"; elsewhere he calls them "simple, direct, and naive." Kolve calls the two plays "sequences" (i.e., several short related scenes linked only to allow a larger narrative line).

Compared to the same material in the other cycles, the Coventry plays do sprawl: the material covered by the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant generates, on the average, six pageants in other cycles. There is also an arbitrary quality to the Weavers' Pageant, which includes both the Presentation and the Disputation with the Doctors. Perhaps if we knew more about how the plays were staged, we could see more clearly the rationale for joining together so much material, but unfortunately we know rather little. In his edition of the plays, Craig divides them as follows:

Shearmen and Taylors

Prologue (1-46)
the Annunciation and the Nativity (47-331)
a learned dialogue (332-474)
the Adoration of the Kings and the
Slaughter of the Innocents (475-900)

Weavers

the Prophet Play (1-176)
the Purification (177-721)
the Disputation in the Temple (722-1191)

These divisions are Craig's own, yet in his Dramatis Personae, by listing characters more than once within a pageant (e.g., Mary is listed in both the second and fourth divisions of Shearmen and Taylors), he gives the divisions the aura of separate plays. Since he is much concerned with the relationship between the Disputation part of the Weavers' Pageant and the similar parts of the other cycles, he treats that section of the pageant as almost a play in itself. But such splintering is too facile and ignores shadings in division and connection. It is more suitable to talk about "half-pageants": S, 1-331; 332-900; W, 1-721; 722-1191. The divisions are not technically "halves" (the second half of S is twice as large as the first half; the reverse is true for W), but each half contains a separate action, and quantity of lines is not the measure of dramatic importance, especially since such a unit of measure does not allow for the visual dimension. The term "half-pageant" is used rather because each half-pageant does bear half the dramatic
weight.

The interrelationships of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant clearly cannot be analyzed as merely the products of choices based on a single action, since, even within half-pageants, there are numerous actions of comparable importance. The form of the choices in the Northampton and Brome plays, however, suggests a method of analysis for more complex plays based on the comparison of interrelationships, as in Deus-Abraham vs. Abraham-Isaac. Since the half-pageant division in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant is so clear, the basic dramatic unit for the exemplary analysis will be the half-pageant. I wish, therefore, to posit three general types of interrelationship comparisons: the first two types are applicable to a pageant not divided as the Shearmen and Taylors', but the third applies only to pageants divided into half-pageants.

Type I is a comparison between two interrelationships developed around a central character within a single half-pageant. This type is modelled directly on the Deus-Abraham vs. Abraham-Isaac comparison in which attention is focussed on Abraham as a nexus of two different interrelationships. The comparison was the same for both the Abraham and Isaac plays, despite their basic dissimilarity, suggesting that the Type I comparison is a general pattern which is capable of any number of particular developments, even when the characters in each position are the same. Another quality of the Type I comparison as it appears in both Abraham and Isaac plays is that the differing characters (Deus and Isaac) do not interact on stage. As a result, the differing characters can more easily represent opposite poles, since the two characters do not confuse their "symbolic" significance with contact on stage; the conflict between the two poles resides in the central character. As will be seen, both Coventry plays preserve this distancing between the characters acting as the two poles.

Type II is a comparison within the same pageant without a common character. This type is perhaps the least dramatic approach, since the two interrelationships are compared on the basis of parallelism, rather than on the basis of anything that happens on the stage. Type II comparisons appear only in highly complex pageants like the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant.

Type III is a comparison of interrelationships which contains a central character, but spans half-pageants. This comparison applies to half-pageants only, and like the Type II is based primarily on parallelism. Since the contexts in which that character appears can be so different,
even though one character is repeated, this type tends to
be too general to be useful in anything but a limited way.

Of the three types the first is clearly the most sig-
nificant for the analysis of the cycles, because it depends
most heavily on the theatrical reality, the actual presen-
tation of the play, and appears even in the simplest play.
All three of these types, however, operate in the Shearmen
and Taylors' Pageant as follows:

Type I: Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary
Shepherds-Child vs. Joseph-Child
Herod-Kings vs. Child-Kings

Type II: Herod-Soldiers+Messenger vs. Child-Kings
Soldiers-Women vs. Kings-Mary

Type III: Shepherds-Child vs. Kings-Child

That these comparisons are not imposed externally but are
inherent in the play as part of the technique of character-
ization and as an important element in its structure it
shall be my intention to demonstrate.

The first comparison, that of Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-
Mary, is developed in lines 47-203 and supplies, in many
respects, the key to the rest. Gabriel is a noble and
courteous messenger from a lord, sent to court a girl of
common circumstances who yet possesses noble qualities.
In calming Mary Gabriel states his mission in these terms:

From hevin a-bowe hyddur am I sent
Of ambassage from that Kyng of blys
Unto the, lade and vir-gin reyuerent!
Salutyng the here asse most exselent,
Whose virtu aboue all othur dothe abownde.
(S 56-60)

Gabriel's usual term of address to Mary is, as above,
"lade" (cf. 11. 50, 80, 81, 96), but at one point he ad-
dresses her as "turtill" (75), a "term of endearment," as
Craig says in his glossary. That term comes in a line
meant to reassure Mary ("These wordis, turtill, the be
full tru"), and may merely be indicative of Gabriel's af-
fectionate concern for this poor maiden in the face of so
unexpected a message from her lord. In actual presenta-
tion the nobility and magnificence of the angel may make
it seem that Mary, not yet the queen of heaven, is indeed
honored by such familiarity. In one sense, at least,
"turtill" is a term of honor since the turtle-dove is
"often mentioned as a type of conjugal affection and
constancy." Either way, the result of the scene is to create a special aura around Mary, to bestow nobility upon her.

The term is also significant in relation to the next scene: Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy. Rosemary Woolf says about the use of the January-May theme in "Joseph's Trouble about Mary" in the cycles generally: "The fabliau world exists only in Joseph's imagination, while Mary still lives in the spotless and serene world of the Annunciation." While this observation does articulate a valid difference between Mary and Joseph, Woolf implies that Joseph's "world" is somehow less real than Mary's. Joseph's appeal to the fabliau tradition is only part of his presentation as a commoner. Gabriel, Mary, and Joseph are all in the same world, but they occupy different positions. Gabriel calls Mary "lade"; Joseph calls her "dame" and "woman." Even after the situation is made clear to him, Joseph is not "noble" in the sense of courteous and refined. He is, for example, very polite and respectful to Mary on the trip to Bethlehem, but that courtesy breaks down if an actor delivers Joseph's response to Mary's labor the way that seems most obvious:

Loo! blessid Mare, here schall ye lend,
Cheff chosyn of owre Lorde and cleynis in degre;
And I for help to towne woll I wende.
Ys nott thys the best, dame? what sey ye?
(S 192-95)

That last line of abrupt, direct address is perhaps the real Joseph showing through again.

Joseph is never spontaneously noble; each of the actions which he performs (the reconciliation, the flight into Egypt) which advance Christ's survival is motivated by messengers from the lord: it is the lord who watches out for his "wife" and "child." The two actions which Joseph performs of his own volition are the unnecessary trip for "Sum helpe of weâen" (S 202) and warming the Child with the breath of beasts. The use of this latter detail is unusual. Normally the warming of the Child by the beasts is not motivated by any of the human characters; rather it is taken as a sign of the animals' acknowledgement of the Child's divinity. In this pageant, however, Joseph picks up the Child and (presumably) holds him near the breathing beasts (see S 289-96). Joseph makes it an occasion to draw a lesson which is the exact opposite of the traditional point drawn above:
He mysht haue had bettur, and hym-selfe wold,  
Then the breytheung of these bestis to warne hym with.  
(S 291-92)

Instead of a gesture of deference, this act becomes a sign of the Child's worldly poverty.

Yet Joseph is not the only commoner in the pageant; an important element in this play is provided by the Shepherds, who come to pay formal tribute to their new lord. These commoners are treated as a homogeneous group. Diller was especially impressed at the "differentiation" of the Torturers in the Coliphisacio of the Wakefield Master, but such separate development of characters within a group is not always called for. Woolf maintains that the Third Shepherd is the leader, apparently feeling that this differentiation is praiseworthy. This view does not accurately reflect what is happening, however; while the Third Shepherd does suggest the meal and note the star and angels first, the Second Shepherd notices the First Shepherd's call and the First Shepherd initiates the trip and the gift-giving. The Coventry playwright seems to have balanced the three purposely, and placed them in contexts (reuniting after separation, eating a meal, singing in imitation of the angels) which emphasize their brotherhood. The main term of address among them is "Brother" (S 218, 224, 234, 242, 266, 268) followed by "fellois" (205*, 217, 273) and only once, "fryndis" (226). Their equality and harmony make them a group exemplifying a single set of qualities. Because the closeness of the brotherhood is not affected by the Shepherds' contact with the Child, that solidarity functions as a quality of the group rather than as an attribute of Shepherds-Child.

Much of what is said in this pageant, and in all of medieval drama for that matter, is "doctrinal" in the classic sense of the word. Gabriel's statement on the Trinity, for example, is doctrinal information. But to claim that this information is of paramount importance is to pervert the force of the visual dramatic presentation. My assertion that Gabriel is a noble messenger is, admittedly, also a perversion, since it requires inordinate emphasis on some elements of the way he is portrayed over others. But the emphasis on the details which make a noble messenger out of Gabriel gives weight to aspects of the written text which would come across more strongly in actual production, certainly more strongly than the purely doctrinal statements. Joseph, for example, functions "doctrinally" in this play as a witness to Christ's divinity in the resolution of his "trouble" about Mary. Dramatically, however, his function is just the opposite;
the Shepherds are commoners, and while they are given the
courtesy of an announcement of the birth by the Angels and
present gifts to the Child, they are separated by their
class from direct, intimate contact with him. They ap­
proach him as a lord to whom they owe honor. Dramatically,
there would be a gulf separating them from their lord.
Joseph bridges that gap; he illustrates graphically that
the Child is approachable, since he is actively involved
in the actions of the half-pageant relating to Mary's
pregnancy and Jesus' birth. While the Shepherds treat
Jesus as lord, Joseph treats him as infant and his mother
as wife.

In the schema given above, I have not mentioned any­
thing about the Angels-Shepherds interrelationship, in
what would most likely have been a Type II comparison with
Gabriel-Mary or a Type I comparison with Angel I-Joseph.
The Angels (who do not include Gabriel) merely proclaim
messages, and are introduced largely to inform. Any func­
tion they serve beyond information manifests the action of
their lord. The Shepherds' response to the Angels does
highlight the Shepherds' common status, but the Shepherds'
contact with the Angels is, in a sense, an extension of
their contact with the Child, where they again manifest
commonness in their gifts. The pipe, the hat, and the
mittens are, like Joseph's warming of the Child with the
breath of the beasts, practical and suited to the immedi­
ate situation, yet acknowledge the kingship of the Child
in a limited way. It is left to the Kings, who are nobles,
to present gifts which properly acknowledge the Child's
position. The Angels, on the other hand, do not react to
the lord; they emanate from him and become attributes of
him. They are, therefore, considered as component parts
of the interrelationships in which their lord, the Child
partakes. Such treatment of the Angels is based on their
dramatic use rather than their doctrinal nature.

Though there is, so far in this pageant, a consistent
use of "noble" and "common" in the creation of interrela­
tionships, this use is by no means "mimetic." Nobility is
apparently an aspect of divinity. While common men may be
in the service of their lord, their qualities are connec­
ted with the human, the physical details of life. Fit­
tingly, Mary (as indicated in her participation in both
Gabriel-Mary and Joseph-Mary) partakes in both classes,
though the obvious direction of her movement is toward the
noble.13 However, the polarity of noble vs. common is not
a moral one; Joseph and the Shepherds, especially, are
sufficient proof of this. Nor does it mean in real life,
outside the world of the play, that only the noble were
saved or even that nobility and salvation had anything to
do with each other. The identification of nobility with divinity and commonness with humanity is part of the symbolic system of this pageant which gives the pageant dramatic form. Admittedly, ranking the noble above the common is consistent with medieval political theory and, of course, the King was viewed by many to rule in loco Dei, thus being associated with the divine, but an explicit connection of the drama and the philosophy does not seem to be the purpose of the symbolic system.

In its most restricted sense, the noble-common dichotomy mirrors the dual nature of the Child, the universal availability of redemption, the need for harmony among all classes, and so on. All the sententia inherent in this noble-common system take the form of a paradox: the harmonious reconciliation of seemingly irreconcilable opposites. The interrelationships so far discussed articulate within the pageant the life-giving tension of paradox which keeps the play from becoming flat and oversimplified.

To use the characters in this way, the playwright must, on the one hand, keep them from becoming too individual, too specific, so that too many of their actions seem a product of the idiosyncratic individual. On the other hand, he must keep the characters from polarizing into types which can be arranged into too pat a system. In each of the two Type I comparisons discussed in this half-pageant (Gabriel-Mary and Joseph-Mary; Shepherds-Child and Joseph-Child) the two dissimilar characters in each comparison have no significant dramatic interaction with the other. Though we can assume that Joseph is present at the presentation of the Shepherds' gifts, they say nothing to each other, and the Shepherds do not acknowledge Joseph's presence. The intermediary characters in each case (Mary and the Child), because he/she is participating in two "different" interrelationships, seem to take on qualities of both the characters (and the Shepherds function as a single character) to which they are related: Mary is both noble and common and the Child is both distanced and approachable. Beyond this, because Mary and the Child are mother and son, they can be easily seen as sharing these qualities, so that the Type I interrelationships in the first half-pageant are used to create paradoxical, albeit "mysterious" characters.

It may be slightly troubling that so many qualities have been attributed to the Child, who may have been a mere prop in actual staging. Though in theology (and to a certain extent in Gabriel's address to Mary [572-77] and the First Angel's address to Joseph [149]) there is a division of labor among the Trinity in effecting the
In incarnation, in this pageant such distinctions are blurred. The first indication of such blurring is Mary's final assenting response to Gabriel:

Now, and yt be thatt Lordis wyll
Of my bodde to be borne and forto be,
Hys hy pleysuris forto ful-fyll
Asse his one hande-mayde I submyt me.

(S 88-91)

While this is too slight a twist of language to be immediately noticed, Mary has simplified the Trinity's participation so that the lord to whom she submits herself is the one she shall bear. Gabriel, despite his earlier distinction, implicitly assents to the identification of the lord with the Child: "And God conseyvide in Trenete" (S 95). In the nativity scene, both Joseph and Mary call the Child "Makar of Man" (284, 294) as well as "Kyg of Blis" (283, 294 Mary only) and "Kyg of al Kyngis" (289 Joseph only). The playwright is not careful to keep the function of the Trinity separated, perhaps because he is willing to sacrifice that lesson for the more dramatic "lesson" of Christ as God. Nonetheless, this handling of the divine figure means that the Angels and Gabriel are his messengers and manifest the Child's wishes (and nobility).

That the Child is significant as a lord in the play, acting through his agents, supplies the basic foundation for the analysis of the last Type I comparison in the schema: Herod-Kings vs. Child-Kings. With this set of interrelationships we begin the second half-pageant, divided from the first by what Craig calls "a learned dialogue." The Second Prophet asks the First Prophet questions. Both questions and answers deal heavily with the kingship of Christ, the lineage of Mary, and the humbleness of Jesus' birth. The First Prophet indicates that the source for this knowledge has been the Shepherds, and the Second Prophet asks:

Yett do I marvell
In whatt pyle or castell
These herdmen dyd hym see.

I Profeta. Nothur in hallis nor yett in bowris
Born wold he not be,
Nother in castellis nor yet in towris
That semly were to se;

But att hys Faithurs wyll
The profeci to full-fyll
Here again the noble-common paradox is asserted, and with good dramatic reason. The Prophets must bolster up the kingship of Christ since his appearance in the first half-pageant was in the most common of circumstances, and the audience is about to be presented with an opulent display of costuming in Herod and the Kings.

The Messenger's opening address in French to the audience as part of Herod's court is, I think, an effort by the playwright consciously to manipulate "grandeur" to his purposes. Herod says he is creator (§ 488-89), infinite (450), capable of bestowing in the sight of his person something comparable to the beatific vision (512-13), and he is of divine ancestry and king of all princes (516-20). He is claiming the same kingdom Christ does. Mimetically, of course, such assertions could only be comic, but within the world of the play, where Christ too is a character, Herod becomes a significant enemy of God and is a danger to the life of the Child. Though Herod claims the power of a god, he does so primarily in negative terms, by emphasizing the powers of destruction only implicit in the speeches of God-figures in creation. If the purpose of Herod's inflated claims is merely to portray him through caricature as a warning against pride, then much time is wasted presenting a character with little applicability to the lives of the audience and who is not even suitably punished at the end of the play, beyond some frustration. The time spent on Herod's opening boast, like the dialogue of the Prophets, is to make clear that the two combatants in the play are Herod and Jesus, and that they are fighting for the same territory, the world.

The three Kings are not the same kind of kings, and never claim to be. For one thing, their kingship can accommodate brotherhood; they address each other as brothers (§ 637, 719, 723, 750, 761). The Shepherds were a brotherhood also, but the Kings become one as a direct result of their service to their lord, and they themselves view their meeting as brought about by that lord:

And thankid be Jesus of his sonde,
That we ii j to-geder soo suddenly schuld mete,
Thatt dwell soo wyde and in straunge lond.

(§ 742-44)

(See also 755-56 and 764). As in the Annunciation, there is some confusion about the responsibilities of the
Trinity: the Angel, who warns them about Herod, says "The Wholle Gost thys knoleyge hath sent" (732), but in the presentation of the gifts the First King begins "Hayle, Lorde thatt all this worlde hathe wroght!" (699) and again, after they decide to avoid Herod, he says "The Child that we haue soght, gyde vs the wey" (710). The First King, then, ascribes both the creative faculty of the Father and the guidance faculty of the Holy Ghost to the Child. In the presentation of the gifts, the Kings all address the Child as "Lorde" (S 699, 705, and 709) and acknowledge his divine power. They make no claim to any power at all, and ascribe to Christ all the power, almost point for point, which Herod claims for himself in his opening speech. The Kings are not "equal" to Herod; they are ultimately subjects of a Lord who does claim power equal to Herod's

The qualities attributed to the Type I comparisons in the first half-pageant (no contact between dissimilar characters) hold true here, since Herod and the Child never confront each other directly, and the central characters, in this case the three Kings, become the focus of interest. While their loyalty is never in question, and they are never faced with a decision, the Kings are in danger of being tricked into doing something which will harm their Lord. Also similar to the first half-pageant is the playwright's use of the concept of nobility as a controlling factor in the handling of the interrelationships; in this half-pageant, however, the dichotomy is between noble and anti-noble. Herod is by no means a commoner, because he is actively engaged in trying to destroy those who are noble, and takes on the appearance of nobility in his deception of the Kings. As in the first half-pageant, the criterion of nobility is dignity of language and bearing. Herod understands this criterion, for he says to the Messenger as he sends him off to interrogate the Kings: "But I warne the that thy wordis by mylde" (S 619), "And loke that thow beyre the eyvinly" (628). In his interview with the Kings, Herod is the soul of courtesy, even addressing the Kings as "Brethur" at one point (S 656), so that his desire to see the Child carries the implication that he wishes to be part of the brotherhood of the Kings. He also appears generous in giving them "pase-porte for a C deyis" and "spesschall grante" to take whatever they need (S 670-73); Herod concludes the interview: "There ys nothyng in this cuntre/ But for youre one ye schall yt take" (678-79). After they depart, however, Herod immediately reminds the audience that his nobility is a ruse: "these vyle wreychis to deyth the shalbe broght" (S 683), and the ultimate refutation of his nobility is his raging in which no trace of noble language or bearing remains.16
The true nobility of the Kings makes them vulnerable to Herod's deception. They are courteous to each other upon meeting (see S 568-602) and are courteous to Herod, though none of them calls him "Brother." They acknowledge Herod's right to rule his kingdom; e.g., the Second King responds to Herod's request that they return, "Sir, your commandement we wol fullfyll/ And humbly abaye owreself there-tyll" (S 664-65), and the Third King concludes with "Now fare-well, kyng of hy degree,/ Humbly of you owre leyeve we take" (S 674-75). They are under the impression, however, that Herod is in turn subject to the same lord whom they are subject to.

The main points of contrast between Herod's treatment of the Kings and Christ's are primarily negative; i.e., Christ does not deceive or threaten them. They are guided to Christ by the star; they are, they feel, brought together in good company by their lord; and they are promised "gostely reywarde" (716) by Mary in return for their presents. Mary also tells them "The provysion off my swete sun your weyls whom reydres" (715); it is in securing their safe return to home that their lord acts most openly. The Angel addresses all three by name in their dreams, also naming their kingdoms (725-27). They are given the advice which saves them and are promised that "In-to those parytes when ye cum downe,/ Ye shalbe byrrid with gret reynowne" (730-31). This is a peculiar reward, but it may also mean that they are delivered from an ignominious death at Herod's hand and can return home to die, eventually with honor.

These three Type I comparisons exhibit a similar basic structure, a comparison of two interrelationships with a central character present in both interrelationships. The pattern of comparison depends heavily on control of dramatic contact, the interaction of characters in the playing area. The more a character has direct dealings with other characters, especially characters very different from each other, the more the perspectives from which the audience can build an impression of that character and the more complex and diffuse that character becomes. The Type I comparisons of interrelationships are developed so that Joseph and Gabriel, for example, who stand as contrasting poles of commonness and nobility can be individualized in their interaction with Mary; yet the playwright does not confuse their meanings by involving them in direct dealings with each other. At the same time, however, the dynamics of the interrelationships have been shown capable of some variation. The first, Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary, develops Mary's character as part of both a noble and a common interrelationship so
that she becomes a paradoxical character embodying opposing elements. She cannot, however, be abstracted from this statement since the paradox is not resolved in her single characterization; she remains the focal point of a comparison, not an individual complex character. The second Type I comparison, Shepherds-Child vs. Joseph-Child, is also paradoxical, embodying both the Child's distance from the Shepherds as commoners and his approachability to the commoner Joseph. Both comparisons, then, are structurally harmonious with the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the subject of the play. The third Type I comparison, Kings-Herod vs. Kings-Child, is structured more like the comparisons found in the two Abraham and Isaac plays, since the Kings choose between the two lords and do not embody any of the elements of the lord not taken.

Each Type I seems to give a basic action its shape, the first dominating the Annunciation and Nativity, the second, the visit of the Shepherds, and the third, the entire second half-pageant concerning Herod's attempt to destroy the Child. But the three are not equally separate. The first two comparisons are made within a similar social context: Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary contrasts a noble and a commoner interrelationships and Joseph-Child vs. Shepherds-Child differentiates between two noble-commoner interrelationships in such a way that it emphasizes the nobility of the Child in the latter and his common circumstances in the former. Both comparisons develop the same social paradox reflecting the Incarnational paradox. The social concerns of the third Type I, and hence of the second half-pageant, are different, however. In Herod-Kings vs. Child-Kings, the first interrelationship is based on what has been called anti-nobility, which is opposed to the nobility of the second interrelationship. The first two Type I comparisons produce and operate in a similar social context, and since they appear in the first half-pageant, the distinction between their social context and that of the second half-pageant establishes the half-pageant division as a significant one in the analysis of characterization.

The noble vs. anti-noble dimension of the Herod-Kings vs. Child-Kings Type I comparison receives further development in the two Type II comparisons, both of which occur in the second half-pageant. Even though they are not a brotherhood, the Messenger and the two Soldiers have been grouped together in Herod-Soldiers+Messenger vs. Child-Kings, the first Type II. They constitute Herod's court and, as such, display the qualities of Herod, just as Christ's men display his qualities, but because Herod's court also reacts to him, they participate in
interrelationships on their own. Much has been said about how the Kings, Gabriel, and the angel figures embody nobility, but nothing has been said about these "evil" figures. The term "evil" is not absolutely accurate, because if they were thoroughly evil, they would give the evil Herod too much dramatic resonance; Herod's power would be too solid. Like Herod, however, "anti-noble" would be a better term to describe them. The qualities of anti-nobility, it will be recalled, are the manipulation of the forms of nobility, dignity of language and bearing, for the purpose of defeating genuinely noble characters.

The Messenger, Calchas, is especially adroit at manipulation of the attributes of nobility. His first appearance does not give clear indication of this, since, although it is in French, the speech is designed to quiet the audience and was probably delivered with gesticulation. The Messenger seems to have the "natural energy" which Kolve sees as typical of the "common" characters in the cycle. Despite his subsequent ability to handle the Kings properly, the Messenger is not naturally inclined toward dignity of language and bearing; after Herod advises him that his "wordis be mylde" the Messenger responds:

Lorde, I am redde att youre byddyng
To sarve the ase my lord and kyng;
For joye there-of, loo, how I spryng
With lyght hart and fresche gamboldyng
Alofte here on this molde!

(S 622-26)

These comments were almost surely accompanied by leaps and jigs, thus prompting Herod's appropriate response:

Then sped the forthe hastely,
And loke that thow beyre the eyvinly.

(627-28)

But if this shows that the Messenger's natural bent is toward the overexuberant, his telling of the escape of the Kings shows his ability to use polite address:

Hayle, kyinge, most worthist in wede!
Hayle, manteinar of curt ese throgh all this world wyde!
Hayle, the most myghtyst that eyuer bestrod a stede!
Ha[y]ll, most monfullist mon in armor man to abyde!
Hayle, in thyne hoonowre!

(S 768-72)
It seems most obvious to read this introduction as an effort by the Messenger to avoid Herod's wrath from the news that follows it. But there is also much dramatic irony in this passage: not only is the "Hayle . . ." form a parody of the Kings' address to the Child (just as S 622-23 may be a parody of Mary's fiat), but the description of Herod as maintainer of courtesy is about to be given the lie by Herod's violent response to the news; each of the lines referring to his worthiness as a warrior only emphasizes his impotence in this case. When the Messenger delivers the final message to Herod, that Christ has escaped, he is blunt "All thy deisis ys cum to noght" (889). It is as if there is no more reason to deceive; all is lost. Herod leaves the stage, raving; at its heart, there is no nobility in Herod's court. Herod-Messenger, therefore, serves as a sign of Herod's weakness and a barometer of his decline.

Before all this happens, however, the important characters, the Soldiers, are introduced. Their actions are not the product of natural energy and they offer a more clearly articulated critique of Herod. They are consistently developed to condemn the killing of the Innocents from two points of view. The First Soldier objects because he thinks that "To see soo many yong chylde dy ys schame" (S 795), and after the slaughter he notes that the Women were "gretty reybykyngh chewaldry" (S 872) and says "I feyre moche wegance ther-off woll cum" (S 876). All of his objections are based on an ideal code of honor. The Second Soldier is a more practical and political man. He opposes the slaughter because "Soo grett a morder to see of yong frute/ Wyll make a rysyng in thi noone cuntrey" (S 799-800), and his response to the First Soldier's theoretical objections after the slaughter shows him again applying a practical political sense:

E! brother, soche talis may we not tell;  
Where-fore to the kyng lett vs goo,  
For he ys lyke to beyre the perell,  
Wyche wasse the cawser that we did soo.  
(S 877-880)

As is clear from this passage, the Soldiers come closest to proposing a complex moral problem, still hotly disputed in twentieth-century America. They object to the task they have been asked to perform and Herod tells them "My wyll vttely loke that yt be wroght,/ Or apon a gallowse bothe you schall dy" (S 803-04). Herod also threatens the Messenger with death if he does not bring the Kings before him for their original meeting (S 613), and threats against those who do not comply with his wishes
occur throughout the half-pageant (cf. S 685-88; 782-83; 895-96). Herod exacts obedience because he presents it as the only alternative to death. The Soldiers both respond with professions of absolute obedience after the threat of their deaths: the First Soldier calls him "Cruell Erode" but professes obedience, and the Second Soldier swears upon Herod's sword with the same ironic effect as the Messenger's praise of Herod before the bad news:

And I woll swyere here apon your bryght sworde,  
All the chylder thatt I fynd, scayne the schalbe;  
Thatt make many a moder to wepe and be full sore aferde  
In owre armor bryght when the hus see.  
(S 810-13)

The use of the sword reinforces the chivalrous aspect of loyalty and obedience to one's lord, but at the same time the obedience results in the violation of a basic tenet of romance knighthood, the protection of the weak. As a result, the armor of the knight (as the Second Soldier points out) becomes a cause of fear rather than relief for women and children. The Soldiers choose blind obedience over their own objections and reiterate that they are following orders (S 842 and 845-46).

But the applicability of the Soldiers' actions and deliberations to current moral disputes should not be allowed to distort their primary role. They are most important within the dramatic society as critics of Herod's actions. Because of their reasons for hesitating, they indicate that Herod's power is not as unquestionable as Herod maintained in his opening address. The Second Soldier's suggestion that the slaughter might "make a rysyng" touches off a violent reaction from Herod (801-02). Even more strikingly, in the most visual terms, the Soldiers participate in stripping away the veneer of false nobility from Herod. The last thing Herod says to them before they go to the slaughtering is "But whan the be ded I warne you bryng ham be-fore my syght" (S 817). The final lines of the Soldiers indicate that, indeed, some prop was probably used in connection with their report to him:

Yett must the all be boght hym to  
With waynis and wagyns fully fryght;  
I tro there wolbe a carefull syght.  

I Myles. Loo! Eyrode, kyng, here mast thow see  
How many M' thatt we haue slayne.  
II Myles. And nedis thy wyll full-fylldid must be;  
There ma no mon sey there-ageyne.  
(S 881-87)
This grizzly proof of Herod's cruelty and lack of nobility is punctuated and driven home by the Second Soldier's final assertion of obedience to Herod. The Messenger then enters to show how Herod's will has not been fulfilled.

The final Type II comparison turns on the different treatment the two lords' men give the women and children in the half-pageant. Admittedly, the development is lopsided, since the dramatic action surrounding the slaughter of the children and the Soldiers' treatment of the three women is more graphic and dramatic than anything involving the Kings and Mary, although the royal presentation of gifts could be staged in a spectacular manner. Because the Kings treat Mary's child with courtesy, Mary can respond with noble words. The Soldiers, however, polarize the Women so that they must fall back on their common and domestic background. The First Woman calls attention to the gross violation of chivalry which the slaughter constitutes: "Sir knightis, of youre curtessee, / Thys dey schame not youre chevaldre" (S 847-48); the Second Woman threatens "strokis" on anyone who harms her child "Be he skwyar or knyght" (856-57). The Third Woman articulates most clearly the effect of the fight between the Soldiers and the Women:

Sytt he neyuer soo hy in saddull,  
But I schall make his braynis addull,  
And here with my pott-ladull  
With hym woll I fyght.  
I schall ley on hym a[s] thogh I wode were,  
With thys same womanly geyle;  
There schall noo man steyre  
Wheddur thatt he be kyng or knyght.  
(S 862-69)

By performing their actions, the two Soldiers abdicate their claim to nobility and are forced to fight common women wielding household utensils. Though a similar device is used comically in Ralph Roister Doister, the dramatic effect of the scene of knights in armor with swords and shields striking at women with pots and ladles is not necessarily laughable. The boasts of the Second and Third Woman could easily be played to emphasize their courage. But even if the scene is played comically, a mode which seems inconsistent with the nature of the scene, the effect is the debasement of the Soldiers.

The mournful lullaby which the Women sing as they enter indicates that they know of Herod's intentions, and the subsequent requests by the Second and Third Woman (S 833-36) that Christ protect them is problematic,
since he does not protect them as he did the Kings. While they do indeed call upon Christ, the Women are not inter-related with him; the primary function of the Soldiers-Women interrelationship is to develop anti-nobility, not to represent nobility. They only pray to the noble Child (and that before, not during, the slaughter). They do not, like the Kings, have contact with him on stage. Regardless of its actual efficacy, prayer is not as theatrically effective as direct contact with Christ, so that the relationship of the Women to the Soldiers is stronger than any verbal relationship to Christ. The burden of this scene as theatre is to make clear the power of evil rather than the weakness of good.

Both Type II comparisons clarify and refine the noble vs. anti-noble context to which the Type I comparison is the key. Where Jesus protects his retainers and obtains loyalty, Herod threatens and obtains grudging compliance; where Jesus' retainers honor his mother, Herod's debase themselves and the mothers of the Innocents. The comparisons are, however, uneven in their development, the anti-noble receiving the lion's share of the Type II comparisons. Actually this greater development of the anti-noble tends toward the creation of a balance within the half-pageant, since the central characters of the controlling Type I comparison, the Kings, "choose" nobility. The action of the play, thus, is resolved in terms of the noble, so that the anti-noble needs the additional development afforded by the Type II comparisons to bolster it as the opponent of the noble and, perhaps, to assure the audience that evil continues in the world, despite Jesus' birth into it. The Type II comparisons, then, make the distinction between the two half-pageants even more forceful by reinforcing the social context of the second half.

The distinction between the half-pageants, created by the consistency of the social elements used in the interrelationship comparisons within each half-pageant, severely weakens the dramatic force of the Type III comparison, Shepherds-Child vs. Kings-Child. Though the Child is a central character, present in both interrelationships, he is not actually the same in both cases. The Christ of the Shepherds' action, who is both approachable and distanced, human and divine, and the Christ of the Kings' action, a royal figure whose powers are tested and who is no longer at the crucial center of the play, are not the "same" character. The consequent looseness of the comparison allows too much room for thematic speculation to be analyzed at length. The general similarity of the actions which the Shepherds and Kings perform, however, demands acknowledgement. The action
surrounding the presentation of the gifts by the Shepherds is, like the Shepherds themselves, simple. Their gifts apply to the situation and emphasize Christ's humanity. The Kings, on the other hand, are part of a more complex action, and their gifts, like the action of their half-pageant, reflect the divinity and power of Christ as a savior. In the presentations of the gifts, however, there are two subtle differences that indicate how deeply the noble/common distinction runs in the playwright's concept of what he is doing. The First Shepherd addresses the first five lines (S 307-11) of his little speech to Mary, the Second Shepherd refers to Mary (314), and it is not until the Third Shepherd that Mary is no longer mentioned. Mary, in turn, responds:

Now, herdmen hynd,
For youre comyng
To my chyld schall I prae,
Asse he ys heyvin kyng,
To grant you his blessyng.

(S 325-29)

The Kings, on the other hand, do not acknowledge Mary at all, and she does not offer intercession only. She first refers, as they have been shown to do, to the lord's agency in their coming (714) and concludes: "The provys-sion off my swete sun your weyis whom reydres,/ And goste-ly reywarde you for youre present!" (S 715-16). The distinction is slight: to the Shepherds she promised to ask; for the Kings she asks on the spot and the tone is less intimate, as if what her son will do for them is between them and him. This is indeed as it turns out, since the angel appears to them later.

The Type III comparison is hardly a sufficient connection to bind together the elaborate patterns of characterization observed in the two half-pageants of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant. The interrelationship comparisons seem to operate primarily within the half-pageants, giving form to the dramatic action and supplying a social context for the other comparison or comparisons within its half-pageant. When all the comparisons are taken together, they become a dramatic society. This society is not "complete," but is based on dominant thematic considerations. As a result, the comparisons have particular resonance when understood within the context of their dramatic societies and cannot be detached from them. The connection between the half-pageants must, therefore, be on the level of the dramatic societies, rather than on the level of interrelationship comparisons. The dramatic societies of the Shearmen and Taylors'
Pageant "interlock" by sharing the quality of nobility, which is, in both cases, defined as dignity of speech and manner and is related to the divine.

The method for approaching cycle characterization presented in this chapter depends on the analysis of interrelationship comparisons. The analysis of three basic types of comparisons produced a complex and carefully handled dramatic society in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant. The Type I comparisons, comparing interrelationships with a central repeated character, were shown capable of variation, either based on paradox, with the central characters, Mary and the Child, embodying elements drawn from the other two characters of each comparison, whose polar opposition is preserved by a lack of dramatic contact, or based on a choice between two alternative lords who also do not have contact on stage. The first two Type I's produce a society thematically unified by a concern for the contrast between nobility and commonness, which is operating in both those comparisons. The third Type I comparison, reinforced by the two Type II's (a comparison within a half-pageant containing four different characters), imaged a society based on the opposition between noble and anti-noble. The Type III comparison was used in the analysis of this pageant primarily to show the weakness of the interrelationship comparison as a connector of half-pageants.

The Type I comparisons are more important than the other two types, since the Type I's are major factors in giving shape to the basic action which each comparison is most involved in. Because the Type I's are also most concerned with and careful of the contact between characters, the interrelationship comparison is evidence of a consciousness on the part of the playwright that the play is to be performed. The interrelationship comparison represents the crucial juncture where the abstract "action" becomes actualized, translated into actors playing to one another. The use of patterns of characterization which can be analyzed as interrelationship comparisons also means that the development of the details of characterization, the words and gestures which the actors employ to create the dramatic reality, is at the very heart of the cycle pageant, directly connected to the ultimate shape of the action.

The half-pageant division of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant is significant not only in terms of the action, but also as an indication of a shift in characterization. The Type I comparisons within a half-pageant can be generalized into a thematically focussed
dramatic society, each of the halves of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant containing a different society. The connection between the dramatic societies of the two half-pageants, based on the use of nobility as a key contrast in both halves, is an indication of how separate pageants might be connected by characterization. The next chapter will take up this idea, and, after indicating how the Weavers' Pageant produces a different kind of connection between its half-pageants, will show how the dramatic societies allow for coordination of the characterization in both the Coventry plays.
NOTES

1 "Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant" in Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays, ed. Hardin Craig (1957; rpt., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), 11. 783-84 s.d. Hereafter cited in text (S lines); the Weavers' Pageant will be cited (W lines).


3 Kolve, pp. 53 and 42. Admittedly, his use of sequence here may be intended to show the effect of the plays' detachment from the cycle, which supplies context. But clearly Kolve means that there is minimum cohesiveness within the plays as we have them.

4 The Coventry play was performed on pageant wagons, though the stage direction indicating Herod raged in the streets as well as on the pageant wagon suggests that place and scaffold dramatic techniques might also be required. For a selection of material concerning the performance of the cycle at Coventry, see Two Coventry, Appendices I and II, pp. 72-109.

5 Two Coventry, p. 1.

6 Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxxiv.

7 Ibid., p. 127.


10 S 100-142 is a fabliau in both content and form: Joseph unites the January-May theme with the "angel excuse" (Woolf, Ibid., refers to its use in Boccaccio), and he even draws the moral for the audience as is typical of the fabliaux.


13 Such a view of nobility is in stark contrast to another tradition in cycle criticism which sees the plays as more sympathetic to the common people and almost hostile to the noble, especially kings. See Stephanie Dien, "Oppressors in the Mystery Cycles: 'Ther shall com a swane as a po,'" Parergon, 3 (1972), 3, for a survey and Kolve, p. 143, for an example of this tradition.

14 This assumes, justifiably I think, that Gabriel and the First Angel are not identical.

15 Kolve, p. 224.

16 See Mills for a discussion of a similar phenomenon in Chester VIII.

17 "Nese harde de frappas" (S 781) may indicate that he carried some object with which to threaten the audience, perhaps a padded sword or bladder with which he may even have struck members of the audience, Herod's "subjects."

18 Kolve, p. 221.

19 The repeated reference to a wagonful of dead babies, however, could also mean that there really was no wagon and repeated verbal references may be designed to make up for the absence. But it seems likely that the producers would have taken advantage of the opportunity to dress up a wagon, perhaps with a painted canvas or straw dolls. In this case the guild records would be extremely helpful.


21 Two Coventry, "Song II," p. 32.
Chapter III
CONTINUITY OF CHARACTERIZATION:
THE SHEARMEN AND TAYLORS' PAGEANT
AND THE WEAVERS' PAGEANT

The primary concern of this study up to this point has been how the characters in the Corpus Christi cycles can be analyzed in units of interrelationships, comparisons, and finally dramatic societies. Attention has been restricted to single pageants—the Brome Play, the Northampton Play, and the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant—which by definition are discrete, whole dramatic pieces. But a pageant must also fit into the larger context of the cycle and each pageant (except the first and last) follows one and precedes another; the playwrights hired by the guilds would need to take such placement into account, knowing not merely what the contiguous subjects were, but also something about their dramatic development. Thematically unified dramatic societies consciously manipulated by cycle playwrights would be an effective way of insuring consistency in the aspects of characterization shown to be important thus far. There is no way to prove that the playwrights' concept of what they were doing corresponds to the terms and methods employed here; it seems very unlikely. But the pattern of characterization in the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' and Weavers' Pageants indicates careful attention to the handling of character groups which produce a discernible consistency between the two pageants.

Both of the Coventry plays can be divided into two half-pageants, two distinct actions (see p. 38 above). The methods used to make each of the pageants a unified whole can indicate, in the more certain context of a single pageant, potential ways to join whole pageants under the control of different guilds. The Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant employs dramatic societies organized around the primary concerns of noble vs. common in the first half and noble vs. anti-noble in the second; each half has one similar element (noble) and one differing element so that from this perspective the structure resembles that found in the Type I comparison (e.g., Herod-Kings vs.
The foci of the halves are not identical, therefore; they are obliquely related so that the society of each half has enough in common with the other for them to be compared, but not enough for them to be considered the same. The structural effect, analogous to the overlapping of bricks, can be called "the interlocking method."

The playwright of the Weavers' Pageant, though still basing his technique firmly on the presence of dramatic societies, joins the two half-pageants of his play differently. The dominant contrasting elements of the first half-pageant are learning vs. ignorance, but in the second the most significant contrast is between youth vs. age. At the same time, both Simeon and Joseph in the first half are old men much concerned with their old age; the Doctors in the second half are learned teachers confronted by a Child more knowledgeable than they are, while both they and the Child's parents seem to emerge ignorant of the true nature of the Child. The resulting bonding is a "chiasmic" structure, in which the main contrast of one half-pageant is a sub-current in the other. Furthermore, the first half-pageant of the Weavers' Pageant is joined to the Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant by the same chiasmic method; besides youth vs. age, a second subcurrent of noble vs. common is present in the first half of the Weavers' Pageant. In the second half of the pageant, however, the playwright eliminates the use of nobility in the creation of that society as a way to make the radical change which occurs in Mary acceptable. Such structural complexity is not totally surprising in a play sponsored by the Weavers', traditionally the most intellectual of the guilds. But most important, a sure handling of the social context can be seen in the play and leads to the conclusion that the Weavers' playwright was careful of character groups.

The schema of interrelationship comparisons in the Weavers' Pageant can be represented as follows:

Type I
- Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk
- Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary
- Simeon-Jesus vs. Joseph-Jesus
- Joseph(+Mary)-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus

Type III
- Simeon-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus
- Joseph-Mary-Jesus A vs. Joseph-Mary-Jesus B

A systematic analysis of these comparisons will illustrate how the thematic elements of learning, and the like, are manifest in the interrelationships which in turn develop the thematically unified societies.
The prologue of the two Prophets, which actually begins the pageant, will be discussed later in the chapter when the connection between the two Coventry plays is considered. We will, therefore, begin with the first Type I comparison, Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk. The two requests Simeon makes to the Lord in his opening prayer/soliloquy suggest the two different kinds of knowledge that will be important in the first Type I comparison. He asks:

Truly to expownde this seyde wholle profece
And also of that kyng that I ma haue a syght.
(W 200-201)

The "profece" is clearly treated in the soliloquy less as direct revelation from God than as learned works. Simeon is troubled by thoughts of man's fallen state only:

Tyll thatt I reymembur the grett comforde ageyne
Of anceant profettis with ther sentens swete
Whose fructuus syence of profownde larnyng depe
In there awturs aperith to hus right manefestly.
(W 193-96)

With the use of the word "sentens" (probably a plural), Simeon gives the works of the prophets the aura of critical commentary. By analogy, then, knowledge of the works of the prophets becomes a symbol of education, since Lombard's Sentences was a standard text for the Faculty of Theology. The second part of the request, for the actual presence of the Lord, introduces, in a rudimentary form, the problem of protocol, the knowledge of the proper ceremonial for such an occasion. Any direct statement of these issues in the soliloquy has little dramatic impact and they might go unnoticed if the reception of the Child directly followed it. However, both issues, the knowledge of prophecy and the knowledge of ceremonial, are dramatized in the first Type I comparison: Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk.

Simeon-Anna operates primarily as a teacher-student (or perhaps spiritual director-nun) interrelationship to illustrate how Simeon's learning, his knowledge of prophecy, leads to a sense of expectation (the first request in his opening prayer) which creates the proper frame of mind for the actual reception of the Messiah. Simeon's response to Anna's statement to him about her waiting for the Savior promised by prophecy (and at least indirectly to her prayer that she live to see the Lord) (W 224-32) is to cite a passage from Isaiah, a peculiar choice given the many possibilities available to the playwright: "In
facie populum," this did he say, "Cum venerit sanctus sanctorum cessabit uinctio vestra" (W 241-42). Simeon introduces the prophecy by pointing out that "the lyght of Leyve . . . schuld be boght and sold" (W 235-36), and glosses it by saying that good things will come "when owre ryght blod schall seye" (243). He also mentions this prophecy in his opening soliloquy (W 204). All of these prophetic statements refer to the Messiah's relationship to Simeon's priesthood. Simeon was probably portrayed as a bishop: his costume included an amice and a miter. Anna's initial address to Simeon contains the statement that he "of owre gloreose tempull hath the gouernance" (W 220). The content of the prophecies explicitly referred to in this half-pageant seems to reflect more strongly on Simeon's position than Christ's. They show that the whole purpose of Simeon's existence is focussed on this coming. A sense of expectation is inherent in Simeon's social position.

The exchanges between Simeon and Anna emphasize the teaching aspect of his episcopacy. The next scene, in which, after Simeon prays, two angels tell him of the Lord's coming, signals a shift to an emphasis on Simeon's knowledge of ritual. The Second Angel's message to Simeon is:

Therfore spede in all that thow may,
That the tempull in ordur be
This prynce to reseyve with all vmelete.
(W 311-13)

Asserting the importance of the preparation and illustrating Simeon's knowledge of the appropriate "ordur" of the temple for the reception of Christ are the burden of the next interrelationship in the schema—Simeon-Clerk. The kind of "learning" at issue has shifted from prophecy to ceremonial, but Simeon-Clerk, like Simeon-Anna, is a teacher-student interrelationship. The Clerk's response to Simeon's directive to prepare makes this clear:

To serue a prynce of soche magneffecens
Sir, I wasse neuer wont there-to.
Sythe ye therin hathe more inteligence,
Instructe me, Sir, how that I schuld do,
Lest thatt I do offende.
(W 342-46)

Simeon, as teachers still do today, compliments the Clerk on being smart enough to ask a question when he is unsure (W 351-52) and proceeds to give some simple directions: one clerk will hold a candle, the other the sacrifice
(presumably the doves), and Simeon will kneel between. The Clerk mentions clothes for the altar and flowers to be strewn on the ground, and Simeon concludes with the direction that the clerk with "conyng" should sing with him and the other ring the bells when the lord approaches (353-66). These instructions are enough to give an audience the effect of a rehearsal, and if, as it is reasonable to assume, this rehearsal reflects how the actual reception will be staged (see W 633-66), then the audience will be conscious both of the fact of the preparation and of the difference between the mere actions and their solemnity in the context of the actual reception. The pseudo-rehearsal emphasizes the careful attention Simeon gives to his office.

In the Type I comparison composed of the two interrelationships so far discussed, Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk, Anna and the Clerk are not polar opposites; like the Shepherds and Joseph of Shepherds-Child vs. Joseph-Child in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, who differentiate two aspects of commonality, they are instead vehicles for developing two aspects of learning: Anna, the learning which produces knowledge of prophecy, and the Clerk, the learning which produces knowledge of ceremonial, necessary for the proper reception of Christ. The lack of contact between Anna and the Clerk (though they are both present when Christ is presented to Simeon, they never interact) is an effective metaphor for the lack of direct connection between Simeon's knowing of Christ's coming and the actual coming. Simeon is warned of Christ's imminent arrival by the Second Angel. He does not, therefore, discover the time and place himself; his ultimate knowledge of Christ's coming is not a direct product of his learning. The message does, however, come after Simeon's learnedness as an indication of his devotion to his office has been clearly established so that his being chosen to receive the message could be seen as a product of that learnedness. Whether the gap between learning and knowing is intentional (i.e., as a lesson in faith as a gift of God) or not, the Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk comparison reflects that gap, while creating a pervading sense of the importance of the learned atmosphere of Simeon's temple.

On the other hand, there is Joseph, whose homely knowledge and reluctance to prepare for the ceremonial in the temple are in sharp opposition to Simeon's learning and attention to preparation. The second Type I comparison in the schema, Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary, develops Joseph's ignorance and thereby completes the pattern of contrast in the first half of the Weavers' Pageant.
"Ignorant" throughout this discussion means uneducated or of common (as opposed to sophisticated) understanding. As in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, Joseph's commonness is contrasted with Gabriel's nobility: Gabriel calls Mary "lade" (W 373, 381) and Joseph enters calling her "dame" (W 406). In the first half of the Weavers' Pageant, however, Joseph's commonality is made even cruder by the irony of his contradictory responses; in a sense, he does not even understand what he himself says. When at first Joseph asserts to Mary, "You neuer cawll but I am reddy," she responds, "Ye speyke full gentylle" (W 417-18). But "gentilesse" is clearly lacking in his subsequent lines; for example:

Ey! dame, ey! God helpe hus all!  
Me-thynke youre meymorre were small,  
On me soo whomly eyuer to call:  
You mynde nothynge myne age  
But the weykist gothe eyuer to the walle:  
Therefore go thyself, dame; for me thow schall,  
Ye, or ellis get the a nev page.

MARE. Husebande, these be no womens dedis.  
(W 443-50)

The irony grows in part from the verbal echo of "You neuer cawll but I am reddy" in "on me soo whomly eyuer to call" and is reinforced by his accusing Mary of shortness of memory when he displays it so strikingly by reversing his recent proffer of service. Joseph further gives the lie to Mary's description of him as "gentylle" by protesting that the task is below him, "soo whomly," and by turning around the idea of nobility in his sarcastic suggestion that Mary get "a nev page," implying that she is putting on airs. Mary's response indicates how completely Joseph misunderstands the situation: as the head of the family it is his duty to provide the sacrifice. Joseph is blind even to that, though the importance of his participation is emphasized by Gabriel's insistence to Mary that Joseph participate (W 380-82; 387-88).

Even more explicit in developing Joseph's ignorance is his method of reasoning; while Simeon argues from the authority of the prophets, Joseph depends on proverbial, sententious sayings like "the weykist gothe eyuer to the walle" in the passage cited above to bolster his arguments. He also seeks support from the audience for his argument that wives, especially young ones, are tyrannically demanding (W 463-78), thus bringing the issues and techniques of the fabliau tradition into play. While the saws he uses are themselves indicative of a common
mentality, his appeal to the mundane, actual experience of the audience to describe his relationship to Mary, emphasizes Joseph's lack of the higher learning of Simeon.

The third Type I comparison, Simeon-Jesus vs. Joseph-Jesus, is more than merely the joining of the attributes of learning and ignorance. If this comparison were the same as the previous Type I's, Simeon and Joseph would not meet on the stage and address each other, but they do (W 645-56). While it is hardly logical to say that a lack of contact between the differing characters in a Type I comparison is a "law" which the Weavers' playwright violates, he does seem conscious of some kind of usual practice since, despite the fact that Simeon and Joseph are the two most highly developed characters in the half-pageant, they have only this one exchange totaling thirteen lines. Moreover, the burden of the exchange is not the issue of learning and ignorance, in which they are opposing poles, but that of age and youth, in which they together develop the first element—age. Simeon says:

And ye, Josoff, of soo gett age
Thatt soche a babe forth can bryng,
In whom all owre reydemcion dothe hyng,
And off this worlde ys lorde and kyng;
This wase a graceose mareage.

(W 645-49)

These lines call attention to the advanced age of both these men involved with an infant. Simeon's reaction to Joseph's age and fatherhood can easily be viewed as an expression of his concern for his own advanced age. Traditionally, one of Simeon's most salient characteristics is his fear that since he is so old, he will die before the redeemer comes. Simeon in the Weavers' Pageant, expresses this fear (W 205-11, 218-18) which is further amplified by Anna's comment on the length of time they have waited together (W 222-24). But a reading of the above exchange based on a mimetic analysis of the consciousness of the characters does not work well, since mistaking Joseph for the father of the Child is hardly credible in Simeon who knows the prophecies so well.

Some inconsistency in characterization may also seem reflected in Joseph's subtlety in answering Simeon, admitting only indirectly that he is not the father in the last line of his statement: "Asse thogh he were myn oone!" (W 656). Such willingness, however, is less the manifestation of sophistication than a consistent outgrowth of Joseph's previous actions in the preparation for the episode in the temple. He repeatedly protests that he is
too old to be able to catch the doves (W 424, 435-38, 446, 510-11) and complains about weakness and exhaustion which are a function of old age (W 494, 515, 518-19), yet when he returns to Mary with the doves given to him by the angel he says to her "Am not I a good husbonde?" (W 544) in an effort to take credit as a good provider. Both in the procuring of the doves and in the exchange with Simeon, Joseph make an effort to usurp actions made by the lord (acting as husband of Mary)--the conception of the Child and the procuring of the doves--which his old age prevents him from having done. Joseph's virtual ignoring of the divinity of the Child in his response to Simeon in favor of "Ys nott this a prette bewey/ Asse eyuer thow hast knone?" (W 652-52) places greater emphasis on Christ as child and, along with Simeon's attribution of fatherhood to Joseph, seems to be best explained as an effort to make the youth vs. age theme more prominent in Joseph-Jesus vs. Simeon-Jesus.

This theme (youth vs. age) is brought to a resolution in the final scene of the half-pageant. Simeon supplies us information about something that happened in the missing section of the play when he tells the audience: "I wasse lame of fote and hand,/ And now am whole ase ye ma see" (W 709-10). Simeon, who at the outset of the play invoked the lord to help him survive despite his age, is granted a concrete response when he comes into contact with that lord. Joseph, on the other hand, has attempted to use the lord's help to his own advantage and just before Simeon's address to the audience, exits with the following lines:

To goo before now I woll asaye,  
Thogh thatt me fetemanscipe be not full gaye.  

(W 701-02)

He is as infirm and grumbling as ever. Such an ending is consistent with the element of death and rebirth in Simeon's priesthood and with Simeon's knowledgeable preparedness. It is also harmonious with Joseph's ignorance, since throughout the play he acts out the lord's will, but almost against his own will and without a sense of commitment.

Social connections based on age and youth operate in the first half-pageant in a less central way than they do in the second. The Type I interrelationship comparison which dominates this half-pageant also undergoes significant permutation. In Joseph(+Mary)-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus, first, the differing characters are group characters and second, the differing characters have extensive
interaction on the stage. This second factor, the contact, is a significant exception to what has been established as common practice in Type I comparisons, and is a direct result of the particular use to which the characters are put. As was illustrated in the first half-pageant, Simeon and Joseph exchange words which reflect on the element they have in common—age. In the second half-pageant Joseph and Mary and the Doctors interact extensively because both are structurally on the side of age, i.e., both groups seek to exercise control over Jesus because they are older authority figures, and Jesus is only a child. That these two groups contact each other on the stage and thereby become similar in function despite differences is further proof that symbolic polarity and lack of dramatic contact are related in the cycle playwright's repertoire of dramatic devices. Such a conflict between youth and age is inherent in the story, which is essentially about the young Jesus' efforts to assert himself; the triumph of age and authority is also latent in the story since this episode appears in the life of Christ as an anomalous bubble in his life between birth and age thirty. Yet how clearly these elements emerge in the play depends upon whether the playwright develops them, and the Weavers' playwright does develop these elements by means of a Type I interrelationship comparison.

Joseph is the clearer spokesman for the relationship that the parents bear to the child Jesus, though nothing Mary says contradicts Joseph's position. As in the scene with Simeon, Joseph ignores the divinity of Jesus and treats him as an exceptional child essentially the same as any other. For example, Joseph says to Mary:

Now, dame, he ys a prette page
And, as ye sey, full well cum on.
I kno non soche on of hys age;
I pra God make hym a right good mon. (W 734-37)

While the irony of his prayer is an effective way to show the inaccuracy of Joseph's conception of his relationship to Jesus, some of Joseph's remarks, by using a comparison between himself and Jesus, imply an identification between them akin to the way a father might view a son:

Thogh thatt my vthe frome me be worne,
Yet in his dedis I have moche joie;
For, in feythe, he woll preve evin a prette bwey. (W 751-53)
Such doting on Jesus (see also 791-97), especially by Joseph, adds to the feeling that Joseph and Mary have forgotten who Jesus' real father is. This forgetfulness makes Jesus' reminder to them (W 1065-68) both logical and necessary; the reminder does, in fact, supply sufficient motivation for the whole episode.

When they are setting out, Joseph objects to Mary's suggestion that they seek company for the journey:

Dame, I kepe noo moo but evyn this lad;  
For you nor I canot be sade  
Thatt day that we hym see.  
Mary, you kno thatt I am olde,  
And in cumpany canot be soo bolde,  
Asse I wasse wont to be.  

(W 762-67)

This passage reinforces the role that Jesus plays for Joseph, somehow compensating for his old age. On the return journey, however, Jesus must be separated from Joseph and Mary, and to accomplish this the playwright portrays Joseph as rejuvenated by the ceremony:

Mare, my spretis be ravisschid cleyne,  
And clerely cast owt off all woo  
With these solam syghtys thatt we haue seyne  
In yondur tempull that we cam froo.  

(W 815-18)

This uplifting of Joseph's spirits explains both why he is willing to travel in company on the return (W 823-26) and why he is sanguine about Jesus' absence (W 831-34). Though the connection between Joseph's consciousness of his old age and his need for Jesus is subtle and could easily go unnoticed in performance, the shift in his behavior would be obvious immediately after the singing of the anthem (stage direction after W 805), and it is during the passage cited above that "Iesus steylyth awey" (stage direction after W 814).

But neither Joseph nor Mary is moved to distraction by Jesus' precocity with the Doctors or by his assertion that "My Fathurs wyll I mvst fullfyll/ In eyuere pwynt, for well or woo" (W 1067-68). Joseph's response to the Doctors' suggestion that Jesus remain with them is clear proof that the hierarchy of the family—in which Joseph and Mary are the authority and Jesus is the child bound by obedience—has survived intact as far as he is concerned:
Noo, Sir, in good feyth, that I nyll,
Nor neyuer forgoo hym be my wyll,
Nodur for frynde nor foo.
A long whyle we have hym myst,
And gone he wasse, or thatt I wyst;
But hade I hym wonis be the fyst,
He schall noo more doo soo!

(W 1092-98)

Joseph's solution to the problems posed by Jesus' action in this episode is not a redefinition of Jesus' position in the family, but a forceful reassertion of it, backed up by a threat of physical punishment.

Though after they find Jesus, Mary is the first to speak to him (Joseph is afraid of the Doctors as "men of myght," but Mary avoids the whole problem by addressing Jesus directly), her role in the play is passive; she is the barometer of the condition of the family. When the family is introduced, Mary is happy, telling Jesus: "Thow art he thatt I love most dere,/ My joie, my myrthe and all my pley!" (W 740-41), and Jesus responds:

I thanke you, my modur, in all thatt I may;
And at youre hand, I am here
To do you serves, bothe nyght and dey,
And redde alwey to make you chere.

(W 742-45)

Joseph's comment on this exchange, "How glad he ys his modr to pleyse!/ And eyuer hathe byn syth he wasse borne" (W 749-50), emphasizes the habitual nature of this proper state of interrelationship. Even more than Joseph's fatherly affection, Mary's attachment to Jesus and his reciprocation establish the complacency of the parents' attitude toward their child. When Jesus absents himself willfully, Mary quickly becomes distraught despite Joseph's efforts to calm her down (W 829-56, 1013-26). When they find Jesus, and Mary, rather than Joseph, who should go as head of the family, must go to retrieve him, the proper hierarchy of the family is further upset. The point of maximum upheaval, however, is reached when Jesus rejects the vailidity of Mary's maternal instincts:

Modur, why did you seek me soo?
Hyt hathe byn oft seyde vnto you,
My Fathurs wyll I mvst fulfyll.

(W 1065-67)

Mary's response begins the return to the pre-existing order, a return which she effects by ignoring the issue that
Christ has raised:

Sun, these talis thatt you me tell
As ye I canot vnDurstand;
But my hart, this kno I well,
Ys were glade I haue the fonde.
(W 1069-72)

Jesus capitulates without protest: "For with my modur now
must I nede/ For to reycomford hyr agayne" (W 1082-83),
accepting again the position he occupied at the outset.
Mary's final statement to Joseph, "But at youre wyll let
vs be gooynge" (1031-32) is significant also because it
signals Mary's willingness to reassert her position, at
least nominally as submissive wife. The hierarchy is re-
stored.

Joseph's concluding remarks to the audience that they
should please their wives to "avoide moche dysees" (W
1144) seem puzzling only until the significance of Mary's
position is realized. Her happiness indicates that the
proper arrangement of age and youth now exists in the
family, and Joseph's comments emphasize the important con-
servative role she plays. From the point of view of the
family, then, this play portrays the triumph of age over
youth.

The Doctors, as representatives of the social insti-
tution, the Church, are also victorious over the threat to
their authority offered by Jesus. The groundwork of this
authority is their knowledge of the laws:

[III Doctor] How ye schuld lyve, here ma you lere
Acordyng vnto your aleygence;
For yt ys well knone vnto thys presence
Thatt doctoris we ar and of hy degre,
And haue the lawis in custode.
(W 873-77)

Yet the basis of the Jesus-Doctors interrelationship is
less the learning of both parties than their relative
ages. The Doctors object that Jesus is too young to have
been able to study the law long enough to know it well:

III Doctor. Nay, serten, sun, thow art to yonge
Be clarge clere to kno owre lawis.
(W 904-05)

When they discover that Jesus does know the law, they
realize that their positions, based on long study, are
jeopardized:
I Doctor. Behold, owre lawis how he dothe expownde,
That neuer larn[yd] on boke to rede!
Then all we, he ys moche more profownde.

(W 1001-03)

[II Doctor] For yff this abrode were knone perfetty,
The peple wolde geve him more prese
Than we docturs for all owre clarge.

(W 1006-08)

Though there is an element of superiority in Jesus' learning as learning, the dominant reaction here is to the Child's possession of that knowledge outside the usual channels which the Doctors oversee. The miraculous nature of the Child's knowledge leads them to conclude, after Jesus leaves,

[I Doctor] Thatt of God he ys eylecte!

II Doctor. Now surely yt can no nothur be,
For he ys nott levyng that eyuer see
Soch hy knoleyge of excellence
In soo tendur wtthe.

(W 1152-56)

The response of the Doctors to the problem Jesus' knowledge poses is confused in the play as we have it. At first they all agree that Jesus should be sent away; in the words of III Doctor: "But asse he cum soo let hym goo,/ For with vs he schall medyll no more" (W 1011-12). When they are talking with Joseph and Mary, however, they seem interested in having Christ remain with them. It is possible to perceive a sinister element in I Doctor's suggestion that "But yff thow wolt tarre, thow schalt not nede/ Any more to put thy fryndis to cost" (W 1087-88), or in II Doctor's reassurance that "If thow to age lyve may,/ Thy fryndis ma be full glade" (W 1113-14). Suggesting that the Doctors are attempting to deceive is, however, too speculative to be useful. While it is possible that this inconsistency is merely a mistake (e.g., Robert Croo, the transcriber, was fitting two plays together and did not notice the inconsistency; this is especially possible if the play was never performed in this version), the best course is to accept the inconsistency as an indication that the exact nature of the Doctors' actions (i.e., the plot) is less important than the general nature of their attitude toward the Child (i.e., character). The alternatives have in common the defense of the Doctors' learning: in letting him go, they are attempting to hide him away, and in keeping him there, they will absorb him into the system. After Christ has left, they marvel at him for
a time, but the usual order of things ultimately reasserts itself. I Doctor suggests:

These myghtte matters you sett on syde,
And in avoidyng of more perell
Thatt here-apon myght betyde;
Therefore lett vs no lengur abyde
In these cawsis for to contende.
For this dey ys almost at an yende.
(W 1170-75)

The problems created by Jesus are absorbed into the context established by the Doctors at the outset, a public disputation, and those problems are set aside with the disputation. Moreover, III Doctor's statement of their decisions that

All owre matters reyjurnyd be,
Tyll thatt a dey of argument
Ma be apwyntyd indyfferentle
(W 1181-83)

is an indication that they intend to continue as they have in the past, displaying the law for the uneducated. The Doctors, in speaking last, make it clear that the proper order of the Church survives Jesus' assertion of his divine nature, just as the family survives. The anti-climactic ending effectively leaves the impression that something important has been missed by those left occupying the stage.

Though age in both the family and the Church as expressed in Joseph(+Mary)-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus survives the threat which Jesus' action offers, the survival is based on merely the resolution of the plot, not on the genuineness of the restoration of the initial interrelationships at the conclusion of the half-pageant. Before I Doctor successfully stops the discussion, III Doctor gives an accurate appraisal of the state of the interrelationship between Jesus and the Doctors; he comments on what a wondrous case it is:

Thatt we wyche nobull docturs be,
And gradulis gret of old antequete,
And now on this place with yonge infance
Ageyne ar sett to larnynge.
(W 1165-68)

This is the first example in this study of a conflict between the relationships in an interrelationship as an explicit factor in a play: from the Doctors' point of view
their relationship to Jesus is teachers-student; Jesus sees the relationship as students-teacher. Though the reversal is not as neat in the family, the basic issue is the difference between the conception Joseph and Mary have of their relationship to Jesus and the conception Jesus has of his relationship to them.

While the two interrelationships in the Type I comparison Joseph(+Mary)-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus are similar when viewed from the aspect of youth vs. age, from the point of view of the sub-theme of ignorance vs. learning they are different. Joseph's comparisons between himself and Jesus, noted previously, are indications that Jesus has knowledge beyond Joseph's grasp, but the clearest exposition of Joseph's ignorance is his reluctance to address the Doctors. Mary points out the common ground, "The haue reygardid you alway/ Because of age" (W 1043-44), but Joseph will not be persuaded:

To them, wyff, what schulde I sey?
In feythe, I do nott knoo full wele.
Surely, I schall be schamyde to-dey;
For I cane nothur croke nor knele.

(W 1045-48)

He uses both his ignorance and his inability to observe the proper ceremonial as excuses (see also 1039-40). Mary too displays ignorance when she does not understand Jesus' reference to his Father (W 1069-70), and the ignorance of both parents resonates with the action of the play in which they do not know where their child is.

The Doctors, on the other hand, are obviously learned; even their diction reinforces their learning (see, e.g., W 1153-60). There is no need to assert that their knowledge is different qualitatively from Jesus', that they have "false learning" and Jesus has "true learning," primarily because they are able to perceive and understand Jesus' learning as superior to theirs. But by common consent they simply ignore Jesus' threat to their learning; perhaps the playwright's use of this kind of resolution to the play supports the contention that youth vs. age dominates the learning theme. There are, however, other factors involved since Jesus' approach to learning threatens the Doctors not only because he did not need to study, but because the analysis of the law he gives initially dispenses with the need for the great body of law which the Doctors hoard:

Ye nede noo nodur bokis to bryng;
But these to pwyntis for to insev,
In whome the whole afecet doth hynge
Of all owre lawis bothe olde and nev.
(W 971-74)

Jesus not only weakens their position of authority by his learning though only a youth, but the content of his interpretations makes them obsolete. The Doctors, however, do not know this, and their apparent learning becomes a kind of ignorance.

The Doctors' implicit rejection of Jesus is clarified in the context of the Type III comparison with Simeon-Jesus. Simeon, as was shown above, realizes that Jesus signals the end of his priesthood and willingly accepts it. Simeon's learning, however, is prophecy, which by its nature ceases to be when it is fulfilled. The Doctors, on the other hand, are learned in the law, which by its nature resists change and is protected by the punishment attendant on violations. The Weavers' playwright skillfully places these learned figures in social positions consistent with their responses to Christ.

On the surface, the triumph of the status quo seems to agree with Stephanie Dien's conclusion that

The Church, for the most part, has always taken very good care that "the revolutionary seeds that lie hidden in the heart of religion" should turn out to be those of the sleeping poppy. The cycle plays are no exception, and their stance on social issues is, if anything, more conservative than that of the preachers.

However, the ultimate resolution of the second half of the Weavers' Pageant, which allows both Joseph and Mary and the Doctors to remain secure in their positions of authority, is undercut by what the audience, any audience, knows will be the outcome of Jesus' life. The playwright of the Weavers' Pageant seems to have deployed the social context so that the authority of these older characters is undercut by the young Jesus. In this play the revolutionary element is not only exploited for dramatic effect, but supplies the basis of the development of the characters.

The interrelationship comparisons in the Weavers' Pageant produce, as do those of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, focussed dramatic societies within the half-pageants. The central Type I comparison of the first half-pageant, Simeon-Jesus vs. Joseph-Jesus, manifests the dominant theme of learning vs. ignorance; each of the
other two Type I comparisons develops the central opposition further by elaborating the differing character, and hence the differing pole, in the interrelationships:

Simeon-Anna vs. Simeon-Clerk defines Simeon's learning of prophecy and ceremony, and Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary defines Joseph's ignorance of the true nature of the Child and the ceremonial respect due him. In Joseph(+Mary)-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus, the only Type I comparison of the second half-pageant, similarity in the characters interrelated with Jesus dominates contrast and results in an emphasis on age vs. youth. As a result of the emphasis in the Type I comparison of the second half, there is extensive dramatic contact between Joseph and Mary and the Doctors. At the same time, the main social theme of one pageant is present as an undercurrent in the other, thus forming a chiasmic bond between them. Because the dramatic societies are so clearly related, the Type III comparison in this pageant is more enlightening, pointing up a contrast between acceptance and rejection of the new dispensation in the two half-pageants.

But the social context of the characters in the Weavers' Pageant is most significant in this study for what it adds to our knowledge of how characterization can make separate actions coherent. The interlocking structure of the Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant connects two actions through themes of contrast in which one element is repeated: noble vs. common and noble vs. anti-noble. Because two of the elements are different and unconnected, very different themes can be yoked together in this form; only one element of the theme of the previous or following play need be considered. The chiasmic structure, however, is a more closed system; in fact, as it has been presented, only two themes are possible. A pageant with a major theme of learned vs. ignorant and a minor theme of aged vs. young can only be joined in a chiasmic structure to a pageant with a dramatic society of aged vs. young as the major theme and learned vs. ignorant as the minor. Such a system is too limited to be practical as either a technique for giving coherence to a cycle or for explaining cycles as we have them.

But it must not be forgotten that the chiasmic structure is a suggestion based on internal resonance; this structure was formulated from an analysis of the Weavers' Pageant as a discrete dramatic unit. When the perspective of its relationship to the Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant is adopted, a variation in the basic chiasmic structure can be noticed, and this variation extends the possibilities of the chiasmic structure as a way of joining actions.
The first device the Weavers' playwright uses to join the characterization of his pageant to the previous one is the prologue of the two prophets, which attempts to inject the element of learning into the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant. As it stands, the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant is conspicuously void of anything to do with learning; it is the only play on the subject of the Slaughter of the Innocents that has no counselor figures who consult the prophecies. This absence offers an indication, obscure though it might be, that the playwright of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant was somehow aware that learning was going to be significant in the next pageant. Besides this, nothing is said in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant about the Kings as learned men, a part of the tradition certainly available to the playwright. Even the exchange between the First and Second Prophet in the middle of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, which Craig characterizes as a "learned dialogue," depends much less on learned material than on the testimony of the Shepherds and logic. Though the Second Prophet is cured of his doubt by looking upon a book which the First Prophet shows him, the audience has no idea of what he reads so that, while ostensibly the argument may have been settled by a learned device (the book), the conversion of the Second Prophet seems in the context of the play to be almost miraculous. The Weavers' prologue, however, is self-consciously learned from the beginning: "Ye grett astronomers now awake,/ With youre famus fatheres of felosefy" (W 1-2). The first ninety-two lines of the 176-line prologue deal primarily with biblical proof of the coming of the Messiah and contain four prophecies in Latin (W 25, 30, 42, 45) as well as three in English (W 5-7, 63-67, 68-74). The concentration of learning reinterprets the sense of anticipation which was so significant in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant. Beyond this, the Weavers' prologue also narrates the prehistory of the Kings, with special reference to the star, associating them with "twelve masturs of asetronemy" who watched for the star for nine years. This prologue, then, serves a structural purpose similar to the medial prologue in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant by reiterating previous events in a new light to prepare them to serve as a background for the new action. The Weavers' prologue, however, bears responsibility for impressing upon an audience the participation of learning in the previous action.

The second device the Weavers' playwright uses to establish a connection between his pageant and the previous one is the use of nobility as an additional subcurrent in the first half of his pageant. As was pointed out, the first Type I comparison (Gabriel-Mary vs.
Joseph-Mary) has the same configuration as a comparison in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant and uses the elements of nobility and commonality in a similar way. In the Weavers' Pageant, however, Joseph is even more hostile to Mary, mocking her nobility after seeming to be of noble disposition in his proferring of service. While Joseph is indeed a common character, his offer of service and consequent failure to perform it nobly are a parody of Herod's treatment of the Kings. Too much must not be made of the particular structural similarities; it is sufficient that underlying the ignorant Joseph is the common grumbling Joseph caught between the same two characters who circumscribed Joseph caught between the same two characters who circumscribed him in the previous pageant.

Throughout the first half-pageant of the Weavers', Simeon refers to the Child he hopes to see as lord and king; yet there is always the danger that such forms of address will cloy into metaphor without dramatic action to reinforce their "reality." Though in the earlier discussion of the preparation for the reception of Jesus, the focus was upon the ceremony as a development of Simeon's episcopal position, the formal reception itself (W 661-697 [the lacuna follows]) seems much like a royal entry. A prominent royal entry motif in Simeon's reception of Christ would supply a subtle but noticeable reminder of Christ's kingship. Such a device is well suited to the task, since, while it does not require the royal figure to respond, the royal entry does develop the royal "character." The entry would have been a form of drama familiar to all levels of society and would, therefore, be a source of universal allusion. A striking element in the genre, which makes it particularly amenable to the task of asserting Jesus' kingship in an essentially religious context is the use of religious imagery in praise of temporal monarchs. Coventry itself supplies an example from the reception of Queen Margaret in 1456; at the gate at Babloke a Jesse tree was erected, and Jeremy (Jeremiah) delivered this address:

Emprecce, quene, princes excellent, in on person all iiij,
I, Jeremy the prophete trew, theis wordes
of you wyll say;
This reme shal joye the blessyd tyme of your nativyte;
The mellyflue mekeness of your person shall
put al wo away.
Unto the rote of Jesse likken you well I may;
The fragrante floure sprongen of you shal so
encrece and spredde,
That all the world yn ich party shal cherisshe
hym, love and drede.
(Appendix III, p. 110, 24-31)
This passage is characterized by a consistent and pervasive use of images usually referring to Mary and Jesus.

Even patently religious statements, therefore, may have a political dimension by reference to the tradition of the entry. The rehearsal of the reception, discussed above, adds emphasis to the dramatic quality of that reception, even though the crucial words themselves (the stanzas which all begin, "Now welcum" W 661-86) are not recited beforehand. The direct applicability of the royal entry in this half-pageant becomes even clearer when the Patriarch's address to Prince Edward during the Prince's reception at Coventry in 1474 is considered:

O God most glorious! Grounder and Gyver of all grace!
To us iiij patriarkes thou promysed, as scriptur
maketh rehersall,
That of our stok lynially schuld procede and passe
A prynce of most nobull blode and kyngs sonne imperiall;
The wich was full-fylled in God. And nowe referre
itt we schall
Unto this nobull prynce that is here present,
Wich entreth to this his chaumber, as prynce
full reverent.
(Appendix III, p. 115, 15-24)

Here the prophecies of Christ are applied to the prince so that at this point in the royal progress the situation is almost identical to that of the entrance in the Weavers' Pageant. There is even some verbal parallel in Simeon's "Welcum, the Grounder of owre grace" (W 664). Christ is welcomed in a manner befitting a king, and as a result, his royal nature, a central issue in the previous half-pageant, continues to occupy a place as a second sub-current in the first half-pageant of the Weavers' play.

Thus the Weavers' Pageant is firmly attached to the preceding Shearman and Taylors' Pageant, less by plot than by the social contexts of their interrelationships. Though both the interlocking and chiasmic structures are capable of creating unions between pageants, the former has been illustrated only within a pageant, while the latter has been shown to connect two separately controlled pageants. The use of two half-pageants within a single pageant is a frequent occurrence in all Corpus Christi cycles, but the methods used in the Coventry plays to connect half-pageants serve as a paradigm of how separate pageants, each with a single action, can be connected. A notable quality of both these techniques is that they allow for both the discrete dramatic unit of the pageant and the participation of the pageant in the dramatic units
surrounding it.

The undercurrent of concern with nobility in the first half of the Weavers' Pageant has been considered so far exclusively as a device to join the Weavers' Pageant to the Shearmen and Taylors'. There is another dimension to the use of nobility which performs an important task within the Weavers' Pageant itself: the presence of nobility in the social context of the first half-pageant and its absence from the second allows for a significant change in Mary's character.

An indication of the kind of character change possible within a cycle has already been noted in the treatment of Joseph; his sententiousness in the first half of the Weavers' Pageant is a unique attribute of that half-pageant's social context, since neither before nor after (the second half of the Weavers' gives him only two saws: 748, 804-05) is homely wisdom a significant part of his role. But sententiousness is consistent with the development of Joseph's character in all the interrelationships he participates in. Mary, on the other hand, appears in the first half of the Weavers' Pageant, as she does in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, possessing a noble nature, indicated by her interaction with Gabriel. She acts as a channel through which the lord's will is made known, insisting that Joseph participate in the presentation of the Child, and, because the harmony of her will with her lord's is sharply contrasted with Joseph's balking ignorance in the Type I comparison of Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary, she is ennobled. On a more obviously dramatic level, the exchange with Gabriel is an occasion for Mary to be treated with the respect her position warrants.

In the second half of the Weavers' Pageant, however, no mention is made of Christ's kingship. The only reference to God as lord occurs in oaths and exclamations (e.g., Joseph: "Lord God, benedicete!" [W 795]), and nobility as a factor in character interaction occurs only in Joseph and Mary's relationship with the Doctors (e.g., Mary: "Now farewell, lordis of hy degre!" [W 1115]) and even there, the Doctors' social position is based on their learning. The trip to Jerusalem for the festival is not prompted by an angel's message, and when Mary is separated from Jesus, she is fretful and turns to Joseph for support and advice. Her response to Jesus' actions is maternal and blocks her ability to perceive clearly the lord's will, since in this play the will of the lord comes to her through Jesus: "My Fathurs wyl I mvst fullfyll" (W 1067). The context has changed from a socio-political one in which Mary is the handmaiden of the lord to a familiar
one in which she is a wife and mother. Mary's change of character is solidified by her final lines: she says to Joseph, "But at youre wyll lett vs be gooyng" (W 1132), thereby reasserting the proper order of the family, as was noted earlier. Her blessing of the audience, "Vnto thatt Lorde most myghty/ Now I betake you eyuere mon" (W 1136-37) is a clear dissociation of the lord, who is Jesus, and the child standing beside her. This radical change in her character is possible because the primary focus of all the characters is the thematically significant social context which they create through the contrast of their interrelationships. The shift in the social context in which Mary is developed makes the changes in the kind of character she is at least logical, if not somehow inevitable.

The thematically unified dramatic societies, in which character interrelationships are compared, can create cohesion between cycle pageants. The method for joining the two half-pageants of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, the "interlocking structure," is only one possible configuration of social elements. The method for joining the two half-pageants of the Weavers' Pageant, the chiasmic structure, is a pattern of major and minor social themes in which the major theme of one half-pageant is the minor of the other, called therefore, the chiasmic structure. An amplification of the chiasmic structure produces coherence between the Weavers' Pageant and the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant and allows for character change within the Weavers' Pageant. The two methods are distinct and in some ways antithetical.

On the basis of this analysis it is possible to speculate that the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant was composed prior to the Weavers' Pageant and probably by a different author. The playwright of the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant seems to have assumed that the author of the next play would use the same interlocking method that he used, for he eliminated any element in his second half-pageant which might be construed as a use of learning in the half-pageant's dramatic society. This would leave that component (learning) available for the author of the Weavers' Pageant, in which learning would play a prominent part, to be introduced in contrast to nobility or anti-nobility without any confusing resonance from the use of learning in the previous play. The Weavers' playwright, however, employed the chiasmic method which depends on sub-currents; so knowing that nobility was important in the preceding Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, he used it as a sub-current in the first half-pageant and made this manipulation of social themes do double service as a vehicle for character change, eliminating Mary's nobility in the second
half-pageant. Either at the same time, or subsequently, he discovered that there was no mention of learning in the previous pageant. He therefore apparently reinterpreted the preceding action in a prologue, injecting an element of learning to make certain the dramatic society of his play was connected to the previous one. This process is pure conjecture, but it is clear that, despite their differences, the basic structures of characterization in both pageants are firmly based on a consistent manipulation of the dramatic societies of the plays, so consistent that the societies must have been consciously manipulated. But the conclusions reached here refer exclusively to contiguous pageants; in order to see how the elements of characterization function in the larger structure of a whole cycle, we must look beyond pairs of pageants.
NOTES

1 See the extracts from the Weavers' Book, Two Coventry, p. 107: "1541, payd for a amys for Symyon ijd; 1542, payd for makyng of Symonys mytor viijd."

2 Leah Sinanoglow has explored the tradition of the identification of the Christ child with the Eucharistic host and suggests that this tradition operates in Purification plays, especially N-Town's and York's ("The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays," Speculum, 48, 1973, 501-02.) Some element of that tradition is operating in the Weavers' Pageant. All those qualities of the Purification episode which make it amenable to the child-host tradition are certainly present in this play: I Angel tells Simeon: "Hys blessid bode vnto thi kepyng/ Within schort time schal be broght" (W 297-98), and II Angel tells him that the lord "At thy tempull offurde shal be/ Vnto thy honde this same day" (W 309-10). While Sinanoglow attaches great importance to the placement of the Child on the altar in the N-Town Purification, she also acknowledges the parallel between the elevation of the host in the Mass and what is probably an elevation of the Child in both N-Town and York. We cannot tell whether this is also the case in the Weavers' Pageant because a leaf of the MS is missing at a crucial point. But Simeon does say as he prepares the altar, "here schal be the solamyst sacrefyce/ Thatt eyuer wasse seyne in Juda" (W 613-14), and just before the lacuna, a stage direction reads "Here Semeon goth to the awtere with the chyld in hys armis and seyth." The three lines that follow the direction (W 695-97) are a proclamation by Simeon of his own unworthiness, a fitting beginning of some analogue of the Mass. Though Sinanoglow argues that the elements of the Mass present in the Purification episodes in general served primarily as "visual 'proof' of the doctrine of the Real Presence" (501), in the Weavers' Pageant they perform the more immediately dramatic function of developing the role of Simeon as priest/bishop.

3 See W 456-58, 466-69, 475-76, 485-86, 502-05, 551, 555-56.
4 See also W 832-34. Another bit of irony is Joseph's suggestion that Jesus is surely among other children: W 845, 1025-26.

5 See also W 891-99, 930-44, 951-52, 1155-56 for similar sentiments.

6 Dien, p. 11.
Chapter IV
CHARACTERIZATION AND THE CYCLE: CHESTER

Having considered the characterization of individual cycle pageants and the connections between contiguous pageants, this study now moves to a discussion of characterization within an entire cycle. This chapter will show that one cycle, Chester, uses interrelationships, comparisons, and dramatic societies in the whole cycle. By indicating that a method of analysis based on the interrelationships of characters can generate a convincing enough rationale for the development of characterization in one cycle, I hope that the potential validity of this method of character analysis for the cycles in general will be made apparent.

My reasons for choosing the Chester cycle as an example should be fairly obvious. Chester is superior to the Towneley cycle for the purpose of this study since the latter is incomplete. It has also been argued that Towneley is not really a cycle. While the N-Town cycle is an interesting area for study, it is a curious composition, which seems to be an only partly integrated synthesis of smaller cycles, and thus presents its own set of problems. The York cycle is both complete and fairly well integrated; however, the theatrical background of the play is sketchy and, to a certain extent, contradictory. Chester, on the other hand, is frequently considered the most homogeneous of the cycles, and, thanks to the work of F. M. Salter, has the most extensively explored local dramatic tradition. If any cycle offers an opportunity to display coherent characterization, it is Chester.

What is the source of Chester’s homogeneity? At one extreme the explanation might be that one man wrote the whole thing, but even if that were the case, the constant revision the cycle must have undergone through 200 years could easily have obscured the original continuity. A number of critics have argued for a single reviser for the cycle. The arguments which require that one man be responsible for either composition or revision frequently
rely on versification (stanza form), assuming, I suppose, that two playwrights cannot use the same stanza form.³

More significantly, however, there is frequently a form of question begging underlying the assertion of single authorship or uniform revision by a single person; Clopper's assertion is typical:

There is evidence in Plays II-V of thematic unity and a progression toward the central matter of the cycle, the Incarnation and Redemption of mankind, which argues for single authorship or, more probably, a single reviser who put most of the Old Testament plays in the form that we now have them.⁹

The assumption is that thematic continuity must be a product of single authorship. Grace Frank interprets a citation from Rupert Morris' Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns, that the Smiths' records show an expenditure "to heare 2 playes before the Aldermen" in 1575, to mean that the aldermen chose one, thus proving that while the aldermen decided on the acceptability of plays, the initiative rested with the guilds.¹⁰ Such a system would seem to fit the structure of the cycle, explaining both its basic unity and its frequent discontinuity of detail. But Morris' information, not always reliable,¹¹ is by no means crystal clear (The Black smiths were responsible for the Purification/Christ and the Doctors Play, which perhaps they viewed as two plays), and the 1575 date is significantly late. The question of the source of Chester's homogeneity (if it is not a product of more than one factor) probably cannot be settled, but this study of characterization does not require that the source of the homogeneity be identified; this requires only that some efforts to coordinate the Chester cycle were made, and the plays themselves evidence that condition.

There is one other aspect of the unity of the Chester cycle which is essentially the starting point for this discussion of characterization. Though it is one cycle, it was designed to be played over a three day period. The three day division is supported by an analysis of the guild records which show that guilds shared pageant wagons,¹² but most significantly by the Rogers Breviarye, which lists the plays performed each day. The Breviarye has been the center of some controversy; yet despite Salter's original devastating attack, the tendency in recent scholarship has been to reassert the value of the Breviarye for understanding the Chester cycle.¹³ Ruth Brant Davis' study of the cycle indicates that the station-to-station performance described by Rogers would
work and thereby removes perhaps the most significant argument against the Breviarye. As a result of Davis' study, it is also clear that the plays within each day were continuous, so that the breaks at the end of each day were all the more definite dividers in the cycle.

In analyzing the Chester cycle, critics have paid little attention to the three part division, assuming perhaps that the divisions are based purely upon expediency. When the characterization of the cycle is considered, however, it can be shown that the tripartite division is significant, perhaps as significant as the pageant divisions and surely more important than the division into the theologically and historically sanctioned Nativity and Easter sequences. The first day begins with Play I, "The Fall of Lucifer," and ends with Play IX, "The Offerings of the Three Kings." The second day runs from Play X, "The Slaughter of the Innocents," to Play XVII, "The Harrowing of Hell." The third day begins with Play XVIII, "The Resurrection," and finishes with Play XXIV, "The Last Judgment." The two points at which the cycle is divided both seem related to short gaps in time in the action; the first day ends with the Kings' avoiding Herod and the second day begins with Herod's excoriation upon the Kings for not coming back the next day (10.17-18); the second ends with the Harrowing of Hell, covering some of the time between Jesus' dying and rising, and day three starts with the decision to set the guard at the tomb the day after the crucifixion (see 18.41). The time gaps, therefore, parallel stage time with real time, one clear indication that the divisions are carefully handled to enhance dramatic effect.

At the same time, however, events which are dependent on each other are separated; the most obvious is the separation of the Slaughter of the Innocents from the Nativity. But in terms of the concerns of the dramatic societies of the plays, the day divisions are quite fortunate. Each of the three days ends with a pageant in which the focus of the interrelationships is a public, magnificent, and ritualistic expression of Jesus' kingship, a vindication of that kingship after a period of its repression. The Harrowing of Hell, after the crushing defeat of the crucifixion, in which the souls and demons in hell gradually come to see their relationship to Jesus and the extent of his power, and the Last Judgment, when, after the defeat of Antichrist (in which Jesus has no direct role), Jesus exercises his "soveraygne might" (24.7), are both indications of Jesus' kingship in cosmic proportions.
While Play IX is more muted in its proclamation, it is the clearest indication that the assertion of the kingship of Jesus was intended as the finish of each day. "Pagina Nona: De Oblatione Trium Regium" is a brief play (264 lines) without much action. The central interest of the play is the presentation of the gifts. Nearly a hundred lines, or well over a third of the play, is occupied with the Kings' discussion of the appropriateness and significance of their gifts. The First King begins the discussion:

'Kinge of Jewes' wee shall him call; therfore of mee have hee shall— that am his subjecte and his thrall-- gould, or I passe.

For in our land is the manere to approache noe kinge neare but dayntyte giftes rich and deare after his dignitie.
And for a kinge gould cleane and cleare is moste commendable.

(9.37-46)

The basis of the reasoning in this passage is the courtesy and proper protocol accorded a king in the speaker's own country. The other gifts, the incense and myrrh, do not result in an explicit argument based on Jesus' kingship; indeed many of the arguments for the appropriateness of the gifts (they cover the same territory many times) are essentially theological. The care with which the Kings choose the gifts may offer less explicit instruction about the nature of Christ than an implicit sense of how greatly the Kings respect and honor Jesus. The variety of interpretation (the gold will help Mary [9.48-51]; it symbolizes great affection [96-98]; because it is precious, it signifies Godhead [104-07]) emphasizes more the act of interpreting than the interpretations themselves. The Kings know how important Christ is. While the ceremonial context is a strong argument for the preeminent importance of Jesus as king, this kingship is also able to include the chief symbolic significances of both the incense (deity) and the myrrh (humanity): Jesus as king is both God and man. This interpretation gains some external resonance from Play VI earlier in the cycle where Octavian serves as an example of the separation of divinity and kingship and humanity.

There is an additional factor in the structure of Play IX which further enhances the central focus on the celebration of Jesus' kingship. In this final pageant of
the first day Jesus' kingship is developed in a universal way rather than in contrast with the tyranny of Herod. As in the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, Jesus' royalty and nobility can be developed within a dramatic society in which Herod plays a prominent part. And in all the other cycles, even the fragmented York cycle, Herod does appear prominently in the same play which contains the Kings' adoration of Jesus. Though it may be argued that this play was once part of the previous play, in the form we have it Play IX seems like an effort to transform Jesus' regality in as universal a sense as possible, not merely in contrast to Herod.

Herod is, of course, mentioned, since the Angel warns the Kings of the danger of returning to Herod. Unlike the other cycles (except York where the Angel's entrance is prompted by the mention of returning to Herod), this announcement is not made in a dream and occupies, including a response by each King, only sixteen lines (9.224-39). It is always possible that a stage direction is missing, but there is none of the other usual dialogue expressing tiredness, and so on. The scene is brief and its lesson seems to be expressed by the First King: "A, high lord that wee honour here, that warning us in this manner" (9.232-33); they have given tribute to their lord who in turn protects them. The threat of Herod also supplies a rationale for the parting and a hint of what will happen the next day. Ultimately, however, what is most notable is how little explicit use is made of the Herod-related action in Play IX since, as has been pointed out, a clear vindication of Christ's kingship is the central issue.

But the last plays of each day are not only similar to each other, each is also related to the first play of the day. Here the argument becomes much larger and more complex because the fixing of Christ's position in the dramatic society as its king grows each time out of a different complex of problems begun in the first play of each day, developed by the dramatic societies of the intervening plays, and resolved in the ultimate assertion of the kingship of Christ. The rest of this chapter will be spent proving that this indeed happens and explaining how this pattern is an outgrowth of the handling of the character interrelationships.

The vindication of Christ's kingship by the Kings takes place in the context created by the original rebellion of Lucifer and Lightborne against Deus. Chester is unique among the cycles in having Deus make Lucifer governor of heaven to be sure everyone keeps in place in his absence (1.112-13). Furthermore, he warns Lucifer that,
though seated near his chair, Lucifer is not to touch it (1.86-93). It is no great problem that when Deus is present, Lucifer pledges obedience, but as soon as Deus leaves he begins to consider taking the throne. The two actions grow out of two different contexts, indicated by the key Type I comparison in the play Deus-Lucifer vs. Lucifer-Nine Orders. In the first interrelationship Lucifer is a noble of high stature under Deus, a king. Deus' ostensible reason for leaving is to survey his kingdom (1.110-11). In the second interrelationship, however, Lucifer is exercising the dominance inherent even in his initial proffer of praise ("and I the principall, lorde, here in thy sighte" 1.63) and fed by Deus' placing him in a position of rule. Lucifer does not, therefore, simply seize power; he exceeds the power allotted to him as creature/regent.

The play is actually divided into two half-pageants, though the second half does not carry the same dramatic weight as the first. The first action is completed at 1.229, when the attempt to unseat Deus ends in the fall of Lucifer and Lighteborne. The new action, begun at line 230, is the decision to seek revenge on Deus through man. The half-pageant structure means that Lucifer-Lighteborne vs. First-Second Demon is a Type III comparison; this comparison illustrates the shift in status of the two characters from an interrelationship in which Lucifer can say:

I ame your com forte, bouth lorde and head, 
the meirth and might of the majesty.

and Lighteborne can chime in: "And I ame next of the same degree" (1.192-94) to an interrelationship where Lighteborne (now Second Demon) can respond to Lucifer's (First Demon's) bemoaning his fate by blaming him: "the devill maye speede thy stingkinge face" (1.237). These characters have been reduced from nobles to squabbling vulgar characters. Their attempt at usurpation has meant a re-definition of their place in Deus' kingdom. God's rule has been questioned and vindicated, though the play comes to rest on the negative result and Deus' intention to create man.

What is most significant for the larger discussion of the first day is that the divine kingship is essentially uncomplicated: Deus is clearly the king and his rule is perceived directly. The Nine Orders do not fall because they acknowledge Deus as lord and obey his command; as the Cherubim puts it:
Our lorde commaunded all that bene here
to keepe there seates, bouth more and lesse.
(1.138-39)

This straightforward interpretation of the divine kingship characterizes the first day. God's kingdom and the world of the play are equated, and status within the dramatic society depends upon the relationship of a character to the divine commands.

This general principle can be seen operating clearly in the next pageant. Adam and Eve begin further down on the social scale. They are something like landed gentry; Deus says (while minstrels play):

Here, Adam, I give thee this place,
thee to conforte and solace,
to keepe it well while thou hit hasse,
and donne as I thee bydd.
(2.113-16)

When Deus-Adam is contrasted with Demon/Serpent-Eve the downward social mobility of man is apparent. Demon resolves to "teach his wiffе a playe" (2.179) and the basic assumptions of his approach are:

That woman is forbydden to doe
for anythinge the will therto.

for wemen they be full licourouse,
that will shee not forsake.
(2.185-86, 199-200)

The tone is based on a more vulgar interrelationship rooted in the literary tradition which debases woman. Of course, later in the cycle this same tradition is invoked by Joseph in an attempt to debase Mary, but unlike Eve, Mary rises above it. Mary's position is reinforced by the courteous treatment she receives from Gabriel, but Eve speaks only in response to the Serpent, except for her brief response to Deus after the Fall, and, of course, succumbs to the Serpent's advances.

When Deus metes out punishment after the sin has been discovered, he assigns the pain of childbirth and subjection to man to Eve and "with greate travell ... / one earth to gett thy livinge" (1.327-28) to Adam. In addition, Deus clothes them in animal skins, saying that now that they are doomed to die, "such clothes are best for your degree" (2.367), and sets a guard of four angels with swords (probably with knightly or at least splendid
costumes) to keep Adam and Eve out of the garden. The visual effect of this scene would serve as striking reinforcement of their fallen state in Deus' kingdom.

But there is also a second half to this play, beginning at 2.425, around thirty years after their expulsion from Paradise, which focusses on the story of Cain and Abel. The inclusion of both the Fall and the first murder in one play does make explicit, as Rosemary Woolf has pointed out, the connection between the two events: the murder is the completion of the action begun in the Fall. But the murder is also a separate action which takes place in a new social context. Adam is now a kind of wise peasant recounting his dream to his sons and assigning them their places within the dramatic society: "Cayne, husbandes crafts thou must goe to;/ and Abell, a shepherde bee" (2.475-76). Adam, in these statements and in his order to them to offer sacrifice, is speaking for Deus and is thus an authority figure within the society. The proper order of things would be for them to obey.

The point of the play is, of course, that the proper order is not carried out, that, like Lucifer and Adam before him, Cain does not act according to his status within the society of the play, and this play is particularly structured to develop this aspect of the murder. The central comparison is Deus-Cain vs. Cain-Abel; Deus and Abel never interact in the play so that the crucial central character in this half of the play is Cain. Cain is both subject of Deus and elder brother of Abel, and there is a curious irony in Cain's position in the society of the play. On the one hand, he is disdainful of Deus' position, offering only the earless corn (2.529-36) and addressing Deus, his lord, as "God" in such statements as "God, thou gettest noe other of mee" and "Loe, God, here may thou see" (2.535, 545). Abel sacrifices the best and consistently uses "my lord" in reference to Deus, thus making concrete by reference to human social structure his obedience and submission. Abel uses "God" once in "Ah, high God and kinge of blisse" (2.561), a context respectful enough to maintain Cain's bald "God" as markedly disrespectful. Yet, on the other hand, the murder grows out of Cain's fear, despite assurances from Deus (2.589-90) and Abel, that Cain's position as first-born and therefore master of his brother is jeopardized by the favor the younger brother finds in the eyes of the lord (2.601-04). In order to preserve his position in Deus' kingdom, he exceeds the right of his control over his brother by killing him. Abel's response to Cain's order that he accompany him into the field makes the abuse of power explicit:
Brother, to the I am ready
to goe with thee full meekly.
For thou arte elder then am I,
Thy will I will doe aye.

(2.597-600)

The result of Cain's disruption of the fabric of society
to preserve his place in it is that Cain becomes an out-
cast, the lowest of men—a vagabond who must go "from
place to place/ and looke where is the best" (2.667-68).

From Lucifer, the noble, and Adam, the gentlemen and
the peasant, the downward movement comes to rest on Cain
the vagabond, cut off from the kingdom of Deus and his own
family. Cain's parting wish for the audience, "I grant
you all the same gifte" (2.704), gives a note of finality
to man's fall from his initial position in the kingdom of
God.

But the cycle goes on, and in each of the subsequent
plays, the central concern of the dramatic society is the
dominance of the divine command, often, as in the second
half of Play II, as delegated to another character. In
the next two plays, for example, only Noah and Abraham
interact with Deus and serve as the channel of his will.
Despite the inconsistencies in Noah's wife (she is obe-
dient when they are setting up props, but balks when they
start building and are about to enter), Play III turns on
the Noah-Wife vs. Wife-Good Gossips comparison. The con-
flict between the Wife's domestic obligation of obedience
to her husband and her participation in the larger society
(which Deus, having condemned it, intends to destroy) is
set in the context of man's fallen social state. Noah
and his family, especially his wife, are treated like the
ridiculous common people of the fabliaux tradition. Even
when obedient, the Wife is hardly a serious character; she
enters saying:

And wee shall bringe tymber to,
for wee mon nothinge ells do--
women bynne weake to underfoe
any great travell.

(3.65-69)

This would be even funnier if she enters hefting a big
piece of timber. Ultimately, however, she is made to obey
and order is restored in the kingdom, albeit at a very low
level.
Just as in Play II there is first a disobedient wife and then a murder within the family, so the subjugated wife of Play III is followed by a two part play celebrating the deliverance of his brother by Abraham and the non-killing of Abraham's son. Chester is again unique in including the story of Abraham and Melchisedech. The presence of this episode in the same play with the Abraham and Isaac story has so great an effect on the implications of the latter that, despite some similarities with the Brome play, its ultimate point is quite different (Isaac does not speak after the sacrifice is stopped, so that Sarah does not become the same kind of symbol as she does in Brome).

By beginning the play with the conquest of the four kings and the deliverance of Salem, the playwright places the later domestic incident in a larger social context. There is little question that the scene between Abraham and Melchisedech would look and sound like a medieval knight paying homage to God for a victory through a gift to the Church represented by a bishop. It is troubling, perhaps, that this dramatic effect is not absolutely consistent with the literal story, but the playwright obviously intends the effect: Abraham acknowledges Deus' participation in the victory. As a result of Abraham's conduct Deus grants him a son, and as a result of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice that son Deus grants him further rule: "Of enimyes thou shalte have power" (4.452). Throughout the play the kingship of Deus is seen as one actively involved in the affairs of the world of the play, commanding, demanding obedience, and rewarding faithful service. There are other elements, of course, which do no enhance this idea: perhaps the most difficult is that even though Abraham may have been dressed as a knight (and though probably not dressed as a knight in the second half, he carries a sword), the dialogue accords him very little of the trappings (terms of address) of nobility. Though he comes as a conqueror to Melchisedech, his most striking role is in the Deus-Abraham vs. Abraham-Isaac comparison and neither requires him to be noble. Without doubt, however, Abraham, who conquers a more serious domestic problem (the distraction of the love for his son) in the service of the Lord, is shown as a man much higher up on the social scale than Noah.

The next play, "Moses and the Law; Balaak and Balaam," will only be mentioned briefly. L. M. Clopper has discussed this play extensively in his Ohio State University dissertation, and I feel that I can accept one of his conclusions. He locates three major themes, of which two are "that God is 'pearles of postye' and that obedience to
Him will bring rewards in this world and in the next.\textsuperscript{21} Though formulated in different terms, these themes are clearly consistent with the depiction of Deus' kingship in the previous plays. In the first half of this play, Moses is told the law by Deus, who in turn tells the Israelites (the audience) what laws they must live by to keep the protection of Deus (5.89-95). Balaack's whole traffic with Balaam is an effort to have him curse the Israelites, since Balaam's blessings and curses are effected by God. Balaack's basic problem, however, grows out of the invincibility of his enemy's army under God's leadership:

For there God helpes them so stowtly of other landes to have mastery\ that yt is boteles wyttely agynst them for to fight.\textsuperscript{(5.100-03)}

God is a force in the society of this play in direct competition with a monarch like King Balaack.

While this is the last of the Old Testament plays, the biblical distinction between New and Old Testaments is less significant than might be expected. Because Jesus in plays VI to IX is an infant who does not speak and acts only through agents, despite his humanity, he maintains a position of dominance like that of Deus in plays I to V. However, a distinction between the divine and earthly roles of Jesus in the second day is anticipated in the distinction between Octavian's earthly kingship and Jesus' divine kingship. Jesus nevertheless remains in direct competition with the earthly rulers of the first day, and Octavian, for example, does ultimately subject himself to the Child by offering incense.

The first of the New Testament plays is Play VI, a complex intertwining of events, divided into half-pageants: 6.1-175 including the Annunciation and Joseph's troubles and 6.176-720 including Octavian, the Nativity, and the Midwives. The latter breaks down into four connected scenes based on the groupings of characters involved: Octavian's refusal of deification with the Sibyl's prophecy, the announcement of Joseph and the trip to Bethlehem, the Midwives and the Nativity, the Expositor and Octavian. The first half-pageant is handled in a manner similar to the comparable scene in the Coventry plays: Gabriel and Joseph relate to Mary in their characteristic modes, noble and common. However, Elizabeth is added, thereby giving Mary's nobility more resonance in the world of the play; in her greeting Elizabeth says:
Wonderlye now mervayles mee
that Marye, Godes mother free,
greetes mee thus of simple degree.

(6.53-55)

The Magnificat, with its emphasis on the deposition of the mighty and the raising up of the lowly, receives full play (6.65-112). Mary's nobility, conferred on her through her pledge of obedience, is a clear indication of her position in the kingdom of the divine ruler.

In the second half-pageant two essentially separate actions, one dealing with Octavian and the second with the birth of Jesus, are joined by the brief contact between two characters from each group, Preco and Joseph, and the similar dramatic society in which they take place. Mary is ennobled in the play, but Joseph retains his common position. His relationship to Preco, Octavian's messenger, illustrates both his position in the society and the effect of his relationship to Jesus on that position:

Castle, towre, ney riche manere
had I never in my power;
but as a symple carpenter
with those [tools] what I might gett.
If I have store,anye thinge,
that must I paye unto the kinge.
But yet I have a likinge,
the angell to mee toowle:
hhee that should man owt of bale bringe
my wife had in her keapinge.
That seemes all good to my likinges,
and makes mee more bould.

(6.401-12)

Joseph proceeds to give the messenger a brief argument, immediately backing down at Preco's response. Joseph does not expect his status in society to change, only the quality of that position. While the nature of God's kingdom has not changed, Joseph sees Jesus as a political, earthly savior, someone who will change his relationship to rulers like Octavian.

Perhaps the clearest indication that the "one kingdom" idea is still in operation is the handling of the Octavian elements of the play. The action of the half-pageant begins, after Octavian's long boast, with a demand of tribute "to preewe my might and my postee" (6.242). Octavian's kingdom is taken to be the whole world:
All the world shall written bee,  
great and smale in eych degree  
that dwell in shire or in citye—  
king, clarke, knight, and knave.  
(6.245-49)

When in the end, after the Sibyl informs him that the king  
greater than he has been born, Octavian sees the star and  
offers incense; though he began by demanding tribute, he  
ends by offering it:

Sycker yt may non other bee  
but this childe is prince of postye  
and I his subject, as I see.  
Hee is moste worthye.  
(6.671-74)

An important action within Octavian's part of the  
half-pageant, the Senators' expression of the people's  
wish to honor Octavian as a god, forces a comparison be-  
tween the emperor and the Child. The mere offer means  
that in the world of this particular play, divinity and  
kingship become significantly related. The offer of the  
title of "God" and Octavian's refusal make prominent a  
limitation to his rule that might not have been noticed  
quite so readily. Divinity is a quality of the greatest  
king in the world of this play. Jesus has it; Octavian  
does not.

Though Octavian is not divine, the issue of divinity  
is discussed in the context of his nobility. In this  
play, for the first time in the cycle, nobility and com-  
monness coexist. In the first two pageants commonality  
supplanted nobility and in the subsequent plays one or  
the other dominated. In Play VI, however, Joseph,  
Elizabeth, and the Midwives are all common characters in  
the same play with Mary, Jesus, and Octavian. Just as in  
the Coventry plays, nobility in this play tends to be as-  
sociated with Jesus' divinity and commonness with his  
humanity. Octavian helps to make clear the extent of  
Jesus' rule, but the Midwives are involved in the condi-  
tions of his human birth. In the end, Salome, whose hand  
is withered and cured, also acknowledges the position of  
Jesus in the world of the plays, that he is a divine king.

Nowe leeve I well and sickerlye  
that God is commen, man to forbye.  
And thou, lord, thou art hee.  
(6.561-63)
The narrated story of the destruction of the Temple of Peace which follows the Midwives' acceptance of the virgin-birth, gives that mystery larger political effect (beyond the cure of one withered hand) as a preparation for Octavian's subjugating himself. At the end of this play, then, all levels of the society have acknowledged the kingship of Jesus as a vital element in the governing of their world, and even Octavian has subjected himself.

The next play, VII, concerning the Shepherds, is based on a half-pageant structure similar to that of the Towneley Shepherds' Play. The adoration of the shepherds and their subsequent decisions to be a preacher (7.654), a missionary (657-59), and anchorite (667-68), and a hermit (669) are clear indications that they have restructured their lives to accord with the kingdom of Christ, choosing alternatives that grow out of the medieval ways of manifesting total conversion. The relation between their former lives and their new lives is not at all clear. Kolve has argued for a continuity: they were healers of sheep, and they become, like Christ the Good Shepherd, healers of men; Trowle, the youth overthrows his old master in a wrestling match, thus signifying the overthrow of the old law by the Child Christ. But I think it is more likely that the play should be viewed as an example of discontinuity rather than continuity. While Kolve invokes the general tradition of Christ as the healer-shepherd an audience who has just seen the Midwives, other common characters with healing skills, might be expected to associate the medical profession with the physical and a blindness to the divine order. Salome's sceptical examination of Mary resulted in the shriveling of her hand which was cured by prayer, not by medical skill. Moreover, the shepherds and Trowle renounce their previous profession (7.660, 666) so that their new occupations in society displace the old. This is the only shepherds' play in the cycles in which this happens. Both groups of commoners in effect renounce their physically oriented social positions for a new metaphysical state.

Kolve's point about the wrestling match is based on the theme of the humble overthrowing the mighty and the young the old. Even Kolve admits "Trowle is humble in station, not in spirit" and to invoke "the requirements of the comic design" in this case seems specious. Nor is Trowle young; though he is called "boy" on occasion, he is married (he gives a pair of his wife's old socks [7.591]) and his position as youngest is undercut by the three "Boyes" who appear in the final scene. The youth vs. age theme actually comes up in connection with Joseph, and there age triumphs. Hankyn is the oldest of the shepherds
(7.550), and he has a black beard (302). When the shepherds arrive at the stable, Hankyn comments on Joseph's beard, and they all marvel at this advanced age, but Tull ends on a respectful note, "Worthy wight.../ worthy in weedes" (7.506-07). In fact, Joseph gives them the command which foreshadows the happy resolution:

Therfore goes forth and preach this thinge, 
all together and not in twynne; 
that you have seene your heavonly kinge 
common all mankynde to mynne,

and, as if in direct refutation of Kolve's argument, the gift giving begins with the following exchange:

Primus Pastor
Whoe shall goe first? The page?

Secundus Pastor
Naye, yee be fa th e r in a g e. 
Therfore ye must first offer.

The reconciliation begins with the assertion of the primacy of age. The world of the play is, in the end, well ordered, not because the new has overthrown the old, but because servants are obedient to their master and youth respects age. Again Jesus' kingship is asserted and the whole world of this play is at peace.

The next play, Play VIII, "The Three Kings," does not end with the world at peace. As is typical of the Herod of the Nativity, this king lays claim not only to the earth, but to powers usually reserved to God:

The sonne yt dare not shine on me 
and I byd him goe downe.

It hardly needs extensive proof to maintain that Herod and Jesus are rival monarchs for the same kingdom, one that is both spiritual and physical. It is notable that the stable scene is not recalled in this play, since this would call to mind a contrast between Herod and Jesus that is not called for within the play. Herod's court is presented, verbally at least, with the grandeur appropriate to a king's court; the Kings even begin their audience with Herod in French (8.153-60). The Three Kings are seeking their lord, and Herod is protecting his throne. A series of six prophecies is read, but from the point of
view of the security of Herod's throne, the first is the most threatening:

And now fulfilled is Jacobs prophecye;
for kinge Herode that is nowe rayninge
is noe Jewe borne nor of that progenye,
but a stranger by the Romans made there kinge;
and the Jewes knowe non of ther blood descendinge
by succession to claime the scepter and regaltye;
wherfore Christe is nowe borne out kinge and messye. (8.276-82)

The child poses a direct threat to Herod the king, but this play ends with Herod yelling "Have done and fill the wyne in hye;/ I dye but I have drinke!" (8. 416-17) as he leaves to await the Kings* return. Despite the audience's knowlege that Herod will be defeated, he leaves the stage with his power unimpaired.

The day ends with Play IX, "The Offering of the Three Kings." The technique used to isolate this play from the Herod plot has already been discussed. The context of the assertion of Jesus' kingship in this pageant should now, however, be clearer. There is only one world which includes both the divine and the human. In the dramatic societies created within these plays, those characters considered "good" are the ones who explicitly acknowledge the kingship and power of Deus/Jesus. This is a fairly straightforward conclusion, though it is not as immediately clear that the character interrelationships are structured to give this point maximum effect. The central problem in each of the plays is power: who shall rule the world circumscribed by each play. Each play, except Play VIII, the low point before the final assertion of Jesus' kingship, is resolved in terms of a restoration or institution of the proper order.

The conclusions which can be drawn from an analysis of the first day emerge all the more clearly when compared with the issues out of which grow the second day's celebration of Christ's kingship--Play XVII "The Harrowing of Hell," Jesus' victory on this day, however, takes place in the context of hell--the other world. That Jesus exercises his kingship is apparent from even a superficial reading. While all the souls in hell make a statement about their deliverance consistent with their histories (e.g., Seth talks of the oil of mercy), David Rex is the spokesman for Jesus' kingship. Jesus' second command to open the gates, for example, "and lett the kinge of blys this waye" (17.195) draws the following question and response:
Sathanas
Staye! What, what ys hee, that kynge of blys?

David Rex
That lord the which almighty ys
in warre no power like to his,
of all blys ys gretest kynge.

While the play is a war fought on the battlefield of
hell, the crucial realization by Secundus Daemon that
Jesus is the one that raised Lazarus from the dead pre-
cipitates Satan's defeat:

Yea, sekerly, and he come here,
passed ys cleane our power,
for all this fellowshippe in fere
have home awaye he would;
for at his commandement
Lazour, that with us was lent,
maugre our teythe awaye hee hent,
and him might we not hould.

Though in hell this foreshadowed a battle, on earth in the
context of Christ's ministry, it was not perceived so, and
this distinction between the exercise of Christ's kingship
on earth and its exercise in hell (or heaven) is the dis-
tinctive difference between the dramatic societies of the
first and second days. During the first day Jesus' divine
and human natures are treated as operating in the same so-
cial mode; the power that Deus/Jesus' "adversaries" seek
frequently involves divinity--Lucifer, Adam, Octavian,
Herod. When divinity is not the issue, Deus is treated as
a powerful earthly monarch--Cain, Abraham (against the
four kings), Balaack. In the plays of the second day
Jesus' position in the dramatic societies differs depend-
ing on whether he exercises his theandric nature on earth
or in heaven: he is no longer an earthly king.

The shift is evident from the first play of the
second day, Play X, "The Slaughter of the Innocents."
First, Herod's initial boasting in this play does not
claim control over natural or supernatural forces, and his
realm has become focussed on the audience: "My subjectes
all that here bine sett" (10.9). The irony of the death
of Herod's own son in the slaughter turns in part on the
failure of Herod and his soldiers to recognize a distinc-
tion between the kind of king Herod is and the kind Jesus
is. Herod asks the Second Woman why she did not say the
child was his (her crude and unfeeling responses to the
soldiers are reasonable when her true relationship to the child is made known) and she responds:

Yes, lord, they see well right
they sonne was like to be a knight.
For in gould harnasse hee was dight,
paynted wonders gaye.

(10.401-04)

Herod reiterates this point making the irony explicit: "They might well knowe by this daye/ he was a kinges sonne" (10.411-12). Since the purpose of the slaughter is to eliminate an infant king, the child in gold and silk would seem a much better candidate than one in a stable.

Jesus escapes Herod in this play; he does not conquer Herod. The angels accompany the family in their flight, but Joseph refers to placing Mary on his donkey both going to and coming back from Egypt, so that the contrast between the royal trappings of Herod and the earthly poverty of Christ has the potential of development. Since the rich clothing of Herod's child is emphasized in the dialogue, the strength of the contrast would depend on the costuming of the Holy Family. Jesus' supernatural power is portrayed by the falling of the images of the Egyptian gods, "si fueri poterit" (s.d. 10.288) and his lack of earthly political power is exemplified in the death of the Innocents. Herod does indeed die at the end of the play and after clothing him in "crocked crambocke," the Demon carries Herod off to "Lucifer, that lord" (10.438, 442). The cause of Herod's death, however, is not an external vengeance, but the realization of his own evil after the death of his son:

Alas, what the divell is this to meane?
Alas,my dayes binne now donne!
I wott I must dye soone.
Booteles is me to make mone,
for damphed I must bee.
My legges roten and my armes;
that nowe I see of feindes swarmes--
I have donne so many harms--
from hell comminge after mee.

(10.417-25)

Demon's final statement to the audience, "I will you bringe thus to woe . . . " (10.454ff.) makes it clear that Herod's damnation is not extraordinary, not a specific action of the God-king against an enemy, but the usual course of damnation for one who does evil. While Satan in the Harrowing is also hoisted by his own petard, 
claiming credit for Jesus' death only to find that his victory is his downfall, the defeat takes place in the other world, where on the second day Jesus' kingship is operant, so that it can be described as a war. On earth Herod dies as part of the natural course of things because his power is limited.

The dramatic societies of the plays between X and XVII make use of the distinction between Jesus' earthly and heavenly power. His disciples call him "lord" and frequently "Master," probably in the sense of teacher, but on the second day the "epiphany" of any character's relationship to Christ is formulated usually in the acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God. The kingship of Jesus and its attendant attributes do play a part in the events of the second day, but before the Harrowing of Hell, these attributes are extensively mentioned only by Jesus' enemies and then only in terms of an earthly kingdom. The Scribes, the Pharisees, Annas and Caiphas, Pilate, and the Torturers all confront Jesus in the same way Herod of Play X does—as if he were an earthly king, or at least an earthly threat. In effect, the dramatic societies of the second day are rooted in the interrelationship comparison, Jesus-followers vs. Jesus-enemies. This is a more generalized application of the concept of the comparison, since this comparison is a governing principle for the whole day rather than for a single play; while an individual play may not contain all four elements of the comparison, the interrelationships within a pageant on the second day (which takes place on earth) are consistent with the qualities of the Jesus-followers vs. Jesus-enemies comparison. The comparison follows a general practice of the Type I comparison: little or no contact between the differing characters, in this case Jesus' followers and his enemies. The exceptions to this practice are Judas (Play XIV) and Joseph and Nicodemus (Play XVIA). Judas merely has a brief exchange with Simon about the ointment Mary Magdalene uses (14.57-72); Judas does not appear in the play concerning the Last Supper with the other disciples, so that he is actually part of the group of "enemies." A more detailed examination of, first, the general qualities of the interrelationships between Jesus and his followers and, second, between Jesus and his enemies will clarify the implications of the governing comparison for the dramatic societies of the second day.

A significant factor in Jesus-followers is the perception of Jesus as the Son of God. There are numerous explicit statements of this idea; the clearest are in the first half-pageant of Play XIII "The Blind Chelidonian; the Raising of Lazarus." The play begins with the
following Latin text: "Ego sum lux mundi. Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris sed habebit lumen vitae"; the first line of Jesus' gloss, however, is "Brethren, I am Filius Dei, the light of this world" (13.1). The "Filius Dei" has no counterpart in the Latin so that Jesus' position as son is significant enough to interpolate mention of it into the first line. In the ninety lines which Jesus speaks in the first half-pageant, he mentions his father no fewer than eleven times (13.1, 8, 17, 23, 60, 229, 241, 252, 274, 282).

The choice of Jesus' sonship for emphasis is significant in the interrelationships in the play, for his father

hath me sent from the throne sempiternall
to preach and declare his will unto man.

(13.9-10)

The role of "Son of God" means that on earth Jesus relates to other men as one who relays the words of the Father—teacher, prophet, and preacher. This is reflected in the structure of the first half-pageant (13.1-300) which is organized like a sermon in a manner similar to the N-Town "Woman Taken in Adultery" as analyzed by Peter Meredith.27 The initial Latin, "Ego sum lux mundi . . . " is the text of the sermon and is subsequently illustrated in the exemplum of the man blind from birth, who is released from the shadows into the light. The sermon structure of this half-pageant reinforces the preaching aspect of Jesus' participation in the dramatic societies of the ministry plays. Throughout Plays XII to XV Jesus teaches, performs miracles to support his statements and to supply materials for lessons, and he produces, thereby, the consciousness in his followers that he is the Son of God. Jesus asks Caecus after his return from the Pharisees, "Beleeves thou in God Sonne trulye?" (13.229). After the raising of Lazarus in the second half of this play, Mary says before pledging to serve him always:

By very signe now men maye see
that thou arte Godes Sonne.

(13.476-77)

Those who pledge themselves to Jesus almost always choose to call him the "Son of God" rather than any of the other options (Savior, Messiah, and especially King). In the ministry plays the characterization is never developed in a way that Jesus-Disciples can be described as King-subjects. The point of the plays is Jesus' followers' realization of the validity of his message from the Father,
not his kingly power. The pattern is so consistent that it must be part of a plan, as is the emphasis on Jesus as teacher.

The Purification part of Play XI, for example, which contains many of Jesus' possible titles in the ecstatic words of welcome by Simeon and Anna (11.151-206) contains no mention of "King" and dwells on Jesus' supernatural power. The main action of this half of the play is Simeon's erasing of "a virgin" from Isaiah's prophecy and the angel's rewriting it; the result of this action is an emphasis on Jesus' divine parentage, reinforced by Joseph's assertion of Mary's virginity (11.143-50). The second half of Chester Play XI, Christ and the Doctors, supports not only the importance of Jesus as Son of God, but also the importance of teaching, since "my Fathers workes" (11.320) in this case involves teaching the Doctors.

There is, however, one exception to the silence regarding Jesus' kingship by his followers. In Play XIV after Jesus forgives and defends Mary Magdalen, she exclaims "My Christ, my comfort and my kinge" (14.129). There is a consistency to her use of this expression at this point, though it is based on the kind of subtlety that does not transfer to performance very well. She explains her previous state:

Seaven devills nowe, as I well see,
thou hast dryven nowe owt of mee.
(14.133-34)

She is referring to an explicit conquest of the devil, which might be an appropriate realm for the exercise of Christ's kingship. But just as this is not a dramatically forceful explanation, the single mention of Jesus' kingship in such a non-regal setting (Jesus is not even accorded basic ceremonial courtesy by Simon) does not create a problem of large proportions. Patterns of the kind that this study traces, the dramatic societies, are based on dramatized interrelationships and comparisons which should not be missed by an alert audience viewing a performance of the plays. Isolated facts or statements, like Mary Magdalen's can be lost in production, and therefore supply an insecure basis for extended argument.

Jesus' adversaries, however, consistently superimpose political significances upon Jesus' preaching, the manifestation in the dramatic society of his divine sonship. In Play XIV Caiphas points out that the effectiveness of Jesus' preaching constitutes a threat to the position of
the Jewish religious authorities:

Cayphas
Lordinges, lookers of the lawe,  
herkyns hether to my sawe.  
To Jesu all men can drawe  
and likenge in him hase.  
If we letten him longe gonne,  
all men will leeve him upon;  
so shall the Romanes come anon  
and pryve us of our place.  

(14.305-12)

Jesus' claim to be Son of God in Play XVI is viewed by Annas, Caiphas, and the Jews primarily in terms of a threat to their law. For example, Caiphas begins the following exchange:

Yett, Jesu, here I conjure thee;  
if thou be Goddes Sonne, before mee  
answere to that the meven.

Jesus  
As thou sayes, right soo saye I.  
I am Goddes Sonne almightye,  
and here I tell thee truelye  
that me yet shall thou see  
sytt on Goddes right hand him bye,  
mankynd in lowdys to justefye.

Cayphas  
"Justifie!" Marye, fye, fye on thee, fye!  
Wytnes of all this compenye  
that falsely lyes hee!

Ye hearen all what he says here.  
Of wytnes now what neede were,  
for before all these folke in fere  
lowdlye thou lyes?  
What saye you men that nowe binne here?

Primus Judeus  
Buffetes him that makes this bere,  
for to God may he not bee dere  
that owr lawe so destroyes.  

(16.42-61)

In a universal, theological sense, Jesus' claim to be Son of God is clearly the most inflammatory statement he makes in the passage cited above. But in terms of the dramatic society, the way the characters on the stage are
interrelated, the claim to be judge is more significant. Notice that what draws Caiphias' violent reaction is not the claim to divinity, but Jesus' assertion that he will judge. This is also the element in Jesus' statement which Primus Judeus, prompted by Caiphias, responds to

for to God may he not bee dere
that owr lawe so destroys.
(16.60-61)

Clopper points out the importance of the opposition between the old law and the new in the Chester cycle, and the old law is identified, by the bishops (as they are called) and other characters in power during the second day, with the social organization they are part of. Jesus claims to be a heavenly judge and this constitutes a threat to their earthly laws. The "double vision" of the interrelationships finds ironic resonance in Jesus the heavenly judge as the one being judged on earth.

The connection between Jesus as Son of God, preacher, and a threat to the law in Play XVI culminates in the summary of charges which Caiphias and Annas present to Pilate just before he orders the scourging:

Cayphas
Pilate, he hath donne mych amysse.
Let him never passe.
By Moyses lawe liven wee
and after that lawe dead shall hee bee,
for a pertly preached hase hee
Goddes Sonne that he was.
(16.293-98)

Equally significant in the Jesus-enemies interrelationship of this play is the discussion of Jesus as king. From the beginning of Play XVI the issue of Christ's kingship, dormant since Play X, "The Slaughter of the Innocents," is raised again. The first accusation is Tertius Judeus' "This babelavaunt would our kinge bee" (16.22), and the last directly follows Caiphias' accusation above:

Yea, Pilate, he that makes him appere
other to kinge or kinges feere
withsayth Caesar of his power,
and so we have donne with him.
And whoso calles himselfe a kinge here
reves Caesar of his power.
(16.299-304)
In the examination of Jesus before the bishops, the emphasis is on the Mosaic law, but in the trial before Pilate the emphasis changes to Jesus' kingship, perhaps a result of the distinction between Jewish and Roman authority. When questioned by Pilate, Jesus does not deny his kingship; he qualifies it in just the terms we have been describing. "My realme in this world, as say I, ysr [not] [sic]," Jesus says to Pilate,

And if my realme in this world were, 
stryve I would with you nowe here 
and lead with me such powere 
should pryve you of your praye. 
But my might in this manere 
will I not prove, ne nowe appere 
as worldly kinge; my cause uncleare 
were then, in good faye. 
(16.264-65, 267-74)

Jesus makes explicit the nature of his realm, and Pilate seems satisfied, saying that he still finds no cause to condemn him (16.291-92). However, after the two summaries of charges, and, therefore, directly after the mention of Caesar in Annas' statement at the beginning of this paragraph, Pilate responds:

Anone goe scourge this losingere 
and beat him lymme and lythe. 
(16.305-06)

It is not unreasonable to interpret Pilate's ultimate condemnation as growing out of the political threat which Jesus represents to Pilate's position.

The Chester playwright does not depend purely on verbal statement to raise and define Jesus' kingship. The conflict between Jesus' relationship to the other characters as an other-worldly king and those characters' view of him as claiming an earthly kingdom is also illustrated in the dramatic action. The bishops, Pilate and Herod all show much respect for each others' provinces of authority so that the issue of jurisdiction and authority is often before the audience's mind. Jesus also questions Pilate's authority to judge him (having made the equation between himself and truth) (16.287-90).

An even more graphic reminder of Jesus' kingship, however, is the motif of Jesus as the mock-king. Jesus the judge is judged in this play; so too Jesus the king is ridiculed. When Jesus is sent to Herod, that king, like Diabolus in Play XII, assumes that "If thou from God in
majestie/ be commen" (16.173-74), Jesus will perform some
wonder. When Jesus does not, he orders him dressed in
white to signify that he is "wood" or "madd" (16.195-202).
Primus Judeus says, as he places the garment on him:

Have this, Jesu, upon thee--
a worshipfull weede, as thinkes mee,
of the kinges liverye
that nowe is on thee light!
(16.203-06)

The fool's clothing and the garment of the king become one
and the same. The most forceful reminder of Jesus' king-
ship is the scourging at the end of the play during which
the four Judei clothe him in king's robes, crown him with
thorns, give him a reed scepter, and "ancint" him. As a
climax to the dramatic irony, Pilate stands him before the
audience and says:

Lordinges, here you may se
your kinge all in his royaltie.
(16.355-56)

This is theatrically ironic because Jesus is indeed a king,
much more than an earthly king. There is also the more
subtle irony that his bloodied and tortured condition is
the earthly manifestation of his divine kingship, for it
is only through his death that the exercise of Jesus' king-
ly power in the victorious Harrowing of Hell can happen.

The use of Jesus as mock-king for his enemies and
teacher/Son of God to those who believe in him follows
through Play XVIA, "The Passion," which begins with
Caiphas' scorning of Jesus as he carries the cross:

Thou, Jesu, would be our kinge?
Goe forth! Evill joye thee wringe.
(16A.5-6)

Admittedly, the scorn of the four Judei in this play is
not focussed as it was in the last play, but their cold,
inhuman treatment certainly makes Jesus' humiliation
clear. There is also the episode of the sign, "Jesu of
Nazareth" . . . 'Kynge of Jewes'" (16A.221-22), which
Pilate places on the cross over the protests of two of
the Judei (16A.225-40); the episode itself is relatively
brief but the sign would remain in place for at least half
of the play. The Second Thief also asks Jesus to remember
him "when thou art in thy majestie" (16A.318) and the play
ends with Nicodemus' hope that Jesus will have mercy on
him "in heaven where hee ys kinge" (16A.479).
The two last examples are in a way departures from the mention of kingship only by enemies; in both cases, however, the characters are careful to place his kingdom beyond an earthly one. Besides this separation of Jesus' heavenly kingship and earthly powerlessness in the development of these interrelationships, there is a clear continuation of the Son of God theme; both Caiphas and the First Thief invoke Jesus' sonship in taunting him to exercise his power to save himself from crucifixion (16A. 301–08), the Centurion's act of faith is "this was Godes Sonne almightie" (16A. 361), and both Joseph and Nicodemus echo the Centurion's line (16A. 412, 417).30

Throughout the second day, then, there is a clear distinction drawn between Jesus' role on earth and in heaven and between the interrelationships created between him and his followers, and between him and his enemies. The ultimate effect is to prepare the way for the vindication of the kingship of Christ in the other world of hell where his conquest as king is an outgrowth of his earthly ministry as preacher and mock-king.

On the first day the dramatic societies grew out of a concept of a single world of which Deus/Christ is king, culminating in the adoration of the Magi. During the second day the societies were based on a contrast between Jesus as Son of God/teacher and as king, a distinction which various characters understood or did not understand. The dramatic societies of the third day combine elements of both the previous days; the third day is as much a vindication of the kingdom of Jesus as a vindication of his kingship.

The reintegration of earth and heaven—the joining of the societies of the first two days—is evident in the last play of the third day and of the cycle, Play XXIV, "The Last Judgment." In this play, Jesus acts as both king and judge, recalling the ironic reversal of these roles on the second day. He explicitly and extensively invokes his passion when addressing those being judged (24. 381–436); these words are reinforced by his being lowered from heaven to earth,31 by the display of the cross and its appurtenances (24. 17–24), and by the actor's bleeding (24. 425–26). Though he is king of heaven, Jesus' kingdom and kingship include the actions of his earthly ministry.

The central point of this play does not seem to be a moral, ethical one or a warning about the fall of the mighty. The popes, emperors, kings, and queens are seen only as judged, and since both Imperator Salvatus and Imperator Damnatus, for example, are presented, the
emphasis is not on the nature of the social order before the Last Judgment, but on the nature of the kingdom of God, which cuts across earthly social structure and is based on charity. The formulation of the judgment, drawn from scriptures, "In great thyrst you gave me dryne" and so on (24.461-68, 621-28) is greeted with surprise by the saved and the damned alike (24.469-76, 629-36); neither group understands when they did or did not render these services to Jesus. While the performance of charitable works distinguishes the saved from the damned, these works are, of course, part of the antecedent action of the play. The central action of the play is the revelation to these characters of the identity of Jesus, the king of heaven, who judges them, with the poor and unfortunate of the earth. On the first day, especially in the first two plays, commonality, or lowness of degree, indicated isolation from the divine kingdom, which drew no distinction between heaven and earth, but after the debasement of Jesus during the second day, the third day emphasizes the inclusiveness of Jesus' kingship. Those who are saved acted in a way consistent with the heaven-and-earth (as opposed to the heaven vs. earth of the second day) nature of Jesus' kingdom on the third day, though they did not understand their actions that way. Their coming to this understanding is the final vindication of Jesus' kingship.

The most significant element in the dramatic society of the play, however, grows out of the legal framework—the judgment. The issue of the law, so prominent in the passion (especially Play XVI, The Trial of Jesus), is virtually set aside in favor of charity. This is accomplished by the handling of the key interrelationship comparisons which produce the society:

Type I  Jesus-Salvati vs. Jesus-Damnati
Type II  Jesus-Salvati vs. Demons-Damnati

There is little dramatic interaction in this play, which is composed primarily of speeches. Nevertheless, the Jesus-Salvati interrelationship is characterized by both mercy and charity. After the Salvati have been led off to salvation, the nature of the interrelationships changes. The Demons enter, and the trial motif is given more specific emphasis: Demon Primus begins, "A, righteous judge" (24.509), the first time the word "judge" is used in the play to describe Jesus. Demon Primus seeks "to proove these men [the Damnati] for myne" (24.516), and reiterates the fact that they violated God's commandments and followed his (24.523-24, 529-30). The Demons quote from Scripture to prove that if Jesus is just, he will hand over the Damnati for eternal punishment, and when
Jesus addresses the Damnati he takes the Demons’ accusations into account:

Loe, you men that wycked have benne,  
what Sathan sayth you heren and seenne.  
(24.605-06)

Jesus-Damnati, developed also by Demons-Damnati, is clearly based on both law and justice (as opposed to charity and mercy in Jesus-Salvati).

In this play the law is a vehicle of damnation, used by those already condemned against those who are to be condemned. Because the Demons urge the application of law and righteousness, the negative connotations of the use of legal machinery, which were operating in the second day, continue to the end of the third day. Jesus, the victim of the law, need not be its defender. Beyond this, judgment according to law based on self interest is used by evil characters against evil characters, so that there is a self-destructive quality to this final exercise of a legal system.

The Last Judgment, then, depends on a dramatic society based on the link between humble men and the magnificent king and on the contrast between charity and law; these two elements, in addition to the explicit mention by Jesus of his passion, indicate that the playwright of Play XXIV is using significant social elements from the dramatic societies of the second day in the dramatic society of his play. The play, and hence the cycle, finishes with brief statements to the audience by each of the four Evangelists; all are similar in subject and tone to Matthew’s, the first one:

I, Mattewe, of this beare wytnes,  
for in my gospell I wrotte expresse  
this that my lord of his goodnesse  
hath rehearsed here.  
And by mee all were warned before  
to save their soules evermore  
that now through lykinge the benne lore  
and damned to fyre in feare.  
(24.677-84)

This speech, and the others like it, brings the play to rest ultimately on the preaching mission of Jesus and his disciples, another major element of the dramatic societies of the previous day, by directly relating the judgment which has taken place to that preaching. At the same time, while Play XXIV does include in its King/Judge the
mock-king/judged Jesus of earth from the second day, as well as a mention of preaching, little effort seems to be spent developing Jesus' sonship, the "epiphany" of the second day. Perhaps this description of Christ within the society is precluded by the emphasis on kingship, as if the terms are somehow mutually exclusive.  

The same treatment of elements from the second day, the integration of heavenly kingdom and earthly mission, is present in the dramatic society of the first play of the third day, XVIII, "The Resurrection." In this play, Jesus manifests earthly power. The discussion at the beginning of the play among Caiphas, Annas, and Pilate results in placing a guard at Jesus' tomb to prevent any of his disciples, who might have learned his witchcraft, from coming and raising him from the dead as Jesus had done to others (18.58-65). Caiphas' suggestion that they

ordayne manye a hard knight,
will armed, to stand and feight
with power and with force,
that noe shame to us befall

(18, 67-70)

is adopted, and the three Soldiers appear. Like the knights Herod employs, these three Soldiers boast of their skills. The boasting is not, however, directed against the disciples, but Christ himself; the Third Soldier, for example, says:

Yea, lett him quicken! Hardlye,
whiles my fellowes here and I
may awake and stand him by,
he scapeth not uncaught.
For and he ones heave up his head,
but that he be soone dead,
shall I never eate more bread
ne never more be sought.

(18.114-21)

This statement is ironic on two levels, first because of the boast to kill someone capable of rising from the dead and, second, because when Jesus rises, the Third Soldier is unable to stand (18.206, 262-65). Jesus exercises his power in the context of a battle with armed knights. This Jesus is very different from the one who was meekly crucified. While he has been portrayed as a conqueror only in terms of heaven and hell during the second day, this is the first time he has exercised this kind of power on earth.
Even in the midst of this exercise of Jesus' regal might, however, his preaching mission is recalled: Jesus rises from the dead preaching directly to the audience. In two subsequent plays Jesus tells how it was prophesied that he must die, rise, and preach the remission of sins (19.208-11;20.45-50). The subject of the sermon directly following the Resurrection is the Eucharist. After referring to himself as "prync of peace" and "kinge of free mercye," he says that when people call to him for mercy:

I grant them peace trulye
and therto a full rych messe
in bread, my owne bodye.

(18.167-69)

The Resurrection is thus structured so that Jesus does preach the remission of sins through the Eucharist immediately after rising, while the Soldiers are immobilized. The use of the earthly preaching ministry in the dramatic societies of the third day, and hence the use of the preacher-congregation interrelationship, is important enough for the coordinator of the cycle to associate it with the Resurrection.

The choice of the Eucharist as the subject of the sermon introduces another device used by the playwright to manifest the integration of heaven and earth in the kingdom of the third day. First, the Eucharist puts emphasis on the physical body of Jesus and points to his continued physical presence among his disciples. What also gives the Eucharist additional resonance in the direction of insisting on Jesus' physical nature is that, while the Eucharist is the eating of Jesus' body, Jesus uses eating as proof of the resurrection of his real body (19.190-99; 20.37-44). The insistence on Jesus as man rather than ghost affects the interrelationships he is involved in by keeping them in part earthly and "real," not purely transcendent, mystical experiences. The humanness of Jesus is also reinforced by the mistaken identity in the Emmaus half of Play XIX, which also includes reference to eating, and allows for a brief interval during which Lucas and Cleophas treat Jesus as a purely human pilgrim; this earthly element is offset, of course, by the disappearance of Jesus (s.d. 19.124). Jesus' physical body and his ability to eat, discussed here in the context of the dramatic societies, serves an important function as background for the action of "The Antichrist Play," XXIII, in which the two Mortui raised by Antichrist are shown to be not truly alive because they cannot eat.
Preaching figures most prominently in those plays of the third day which place the least emphasis on Jesus' kingship, and the most emphasis on the disciples' reactions to the transformed Jesus, Plays XIX to XXI. The Pentecost play (XXI), for example, contains little action, and that action, the coming of the Holy Ghost, operates in the whole play primarily through the effect it has on the Apostles. The key Type I comparison underlying the dramatic society of this play might be expressed Apostle-Apostle A vs. Apostle-Apostle B; while the Type I comparison form here is not as effective as in most other cases, it nevertheless illustrates that the interrelationships among the characters change. In his monologue before sending the Holy Ghost, Deus (the Father) explicitly state the change:

Throughout the world they shall gonne,
my deedes to preach manye one.
Yett steadfastnes in them ys nonne
to suffer for me anoye.
Fletchinge yet they binne ichone.
But when my Ghoost ys them upon,
then shall they after be styffe as stonne
my deedes to certyfie.

(21.207-14)

The change is signified by the Apostles' readiness to imitate Jesus' earthly mission of preaching. Before the coming of the Holy Ghost they are a "folloshippe in fere" (21.14) entirely concerned with internal affairs: choosing Mathias to fill Judas' place, waiting and praying for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Peter is the leader, the one who initiates new subjects which the others respond to in series, but there is no conflict so that Peter seems more a spokesman for the whole group than set apart from them as their leader. The casting of lots is treated as a reminder of their divine leadership. The primary concern of the whole group is their status in the dramatic society; they reassure one another. After the angels hold the flames above their heads (21.239-54), however, the concerns of the characters change, first, to rejoicing in their new-found powers, and, then, to producing the creed. In beginning the creed, Peter invokes his position as Christ's vicar for the first time and states the instructional nature of the creed:

and I will first beginne here,
synce Christ betooke me his power,
the lewd hereafter that we maye lere,
to further them yn the faye.

(21.307-10)
The "composition" of the creed is, for the audience, a sermon already. At its conclusion, the Apostles go their separate ways "and preach to shire and to cyttee" (Peter, 21.361). The internally directed brotherhood of the beginning of the play is dissolved in the end to fulfill the preaching ministry which is the brotherhood's purpose. The disciples of Jesus serve him during the third day as obedient subjects by imitating his earthly ministry of teaching and suffering.

In the three plays from the third day discussed so far, there is a clear effort to use dramatic societies that are consistent with a kingdom of God which includes heaven and earth. Earth, on the third day, is both the object of Jesus' rule and the arena for the continuation of his preaching and suffering ministry. The Resurrection presents Jesus as conquering soldiers similar in kind to the ones from whom he fled in the Slaughter of the Innocents (Play X) and preaching about mercy through his physical presence in the Eucharist. Jesus in the Last Judgment is a king whose rule required his suffering and death and a merciful judge in the face of the legalistic Demons who claim the uncharitable souls. Finally, there is the preaching brotherhood of the Pentecost play, a brotherhood produced by the intervention of the regal Deus.

The contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Antichrist as exemplified in the conflict of Play XXIII is based on a concept of the kingdom of God like the one we have been pointing out as characteristic of the whole third day. The first 252 lines of this play are devoted to setting forth the kingdom of Antichrist, who attempts to establish a kingdom like that of Deus/Jesus on the first day, but his emphasis is on an earthly kingdom; he will restore the Jews to their land (23.33-36), he will be loved by all women (41-44), and when he has won his realm Daniel has prophesied:

That I should grant men postee,
ryved ryches, land and fee--
hitt shalbe donne, that you shall see,
when I am hither commen.

(23.53-56)

This claim to an exclusively earthly kingdom is a radical departure from Jesus' approach to his earthly mission. Antichrist goes on to support his right to rule by raising two dead men and then dying and rising himself. Thereafter the audience does see him reward the four Kings with kingdoms (23.241-44).
At line 23.252 an equilibrium is reached which the entrance of Enoch and Elias disturbs. The most important interrelationship comparisons, the Type I, established in the course of the play, produce the dramatic society which necessitates Antichrist's expulsion at the end.

Type I Antichrist-Kings vs. Elias+Enoch-Kings
Elias+Enoch-Antichrist vs. Michael-Antichrist

Antichrist-Kings has already been discussed, an interrelationship based on the old law and earthly reward. Elias and Enoch, however, interrelate with the Kings in such a way that the only power the prophets have is that of persuasion; they are essentially preachers involved in a disputation with Antichrist. The First King tells the two prophets before they argue with Antichrist:

Yf that wee here wytt mon
by prooffes of disputacon
that you have skyll and reason,
with you wee wyll abyde.
(23.317-20)

The subsequent debate is played out before the listening Kings, and their decision is the point of the debate.

The end of the debate proper comes when Elias and Enoch prove that the two Mortui were raised through the agency of the devil and are not, therefore, truly alive again. This final "proof" is not a logical one, growing out of the previous points argued, but disputation in the cycles do not, as a rule, depend on fine logical arguments for their resolution. Even the ostensible "learned" debate separating the half-pageants of the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant is concluded with the second Prophet's being shown a book, whose contents are not revealed to the audience. In the Antichrist play Elias proves the evil nature of the Mortui by offering them bread, blessed in the name of the Trinity (not consecrated), which they cannot eat (23.565-84). Though the blessing may be crucial in exposing the diabolical nature of their resurrection, the discussion which precedes the offering of the bread emphasizes the ability of the Mortui to eat as proof that they are truly alive, which, in turn, is the ultimate proof of Antichrist's divinity. The inability of the Mortui to eat is in clear contrast to Jesus' own ability to do so. Paradoxically, the fulness of Jesus' divinity is proved by the fulness of his resurrected humanity; he is able to unite heavenly power and the earthly humanity of the second day. In comparing Antichrist and Satan of the Temptation play, Clopper has
remarked that Antichrist "cannot comprehend the divinity of Christ and . . . thus treats him as if he were only a man . . . . Heaven is incomprehensible to Antichrist." While this is true as far as it goes, Antichrist loses the debate because he cannot fully "comprehend" earth.

The first Type I comparison, Antichrist-Kings vs. Enoch+Elias-Kings, opposes the political power of Antichrist to the preaching of the two prophets, in a kind of imitation of the Enemies-Jesus vs. Disciples-Jesus comparison of the second day. This Type I comparison also involves contact between the two differing characters. The predictable result is some similarity in their development, as when Elias indulges in Antichristian rhetoric like:

\[ \text{Fye one thee, fayture, fye on thee,} \\
\text{the devylls owne nurrye!} \] (23.353-54)

The two prophets do, however, represent Jesus; they were sent by him (23.329-30). The problems involved in presenting a direct conflict between Antichrist and Christ are avoided by the use of these characters, so that, in a sense, Antichrist does not have dramatic contact with his real adversary--Jesus. The identification of the prophets with Jesus is reinforced by the similar configuration of the forces, political power vs. preaching, at work in both this comparison and the overriding comparison of the second day.

The conversion of the Kings by Enoch and Elias precipitates Antichrist's murder of all six "cum gladio" (s.d. 23.624). As with Jesus, the earthly mission of preaching ends in death. However, the contrast created in the second Type I comparison, Antichrist-Elias+Enoch vs. Michael-Antichrist involves the expansion of the dramatic society beyond the limitations of the second day. The Antichrist-Elias+Enoch interrelationship has been fairly well explored by implication in the first Type I: political power vs. the powerlessness of those who have only their words. As with Christ the powerlessness is only apparent, and the play uses another representative of Jesus as a symbol of divine power operating in the world of the play. Michael Archangelus appears "cum gladio in dextra sua" and with the preface "My lord will dead that thou bee" (23.630) as well as

\[ \text{Nowe thou shalt knowe and wytt in hie} \\
\text{that more ys Goddes majestie} \]
than eke the dyvell and thyne therebye,
for nowe thou shalt be deade.

(23.637-40)

He kills Antichrist, who is then dragged off to hell by
two demons. Ultimately Antichrist is defeated by the ex-
ercise of divine power. The second Type I comparison in-
cludes within it both the earthly and the heavenly as
attributes of the play's dramatic society.

The analysis of the plays of the third day, as well
as of the first two days, shows how the cycles obtain their
consistency of characterization. Each of the plays within
a day has its own dramatic society which is a product of
the dominant Type I interrelationships contained in the
play. These individual dramatic societies are coordinated,
not unified into one society, according to consistent the-
matic considerations. Thus, in the third day, for example,
the Pentecost play does little with Jesus' kingship, but
handles the element of preaching in a manner consistent
with its use and importance throughout the day. On the
other hand a play like the Antichrist play may be based
on a society which embodies all the significant issues of
the day. The dramatic societies of the plays within each
day are not the same, but they are thematically similar.

This chapter has been an effort to show how the
Chester cycle makes use of dramatic societies in creating
characterization. Using the three part division found in
Rogers' Breviary, buttressed by Ruth Davies' theories
about staging, as a starting point, I have sought to show
how each of the three days was based on a different con-
ception of Jesus' kingship which was crucial in the devel-
opment of the dramatic societies of each play. Each con-
ception of Jesus' kingship is a determining factor in the
way the action is dramatized. The dramatic societies are,
therefore, more than merely a product of explicit state-
ment, but grow out of the dramatic reality; the distinc-
tion between Jesus' earthly mission and his heavenly
kingship, for example, is manifested in the way characters
are interrelated. From the point of view of characteriza-
tion, this cycle is really drama, not simply a visual aid
for an overriding message.

Though this chapter has been concerned exclusively
with the Chester cycle, the cycle which admittedly lends
itself best to this kind of analysis, this discussion does
suggest that a similar technique applied to the three
other cycles might yield different but nonetheless sig-
ificant results—different uses of the concept of the
dramatic society. The validity of the method is further
supported by its applicability to the Brome, Northampton, and Coventry plays. Such a method offers an opportunity to compare not only specific plays, but also a way to understand the development of characterization in specific plays in the context of the cycle. Clearly the dramatic societies of the individual pageants are capable of participation in the larger whole of the cycle, not because their characters are consistent but because their central concerns are coherent. And since these societies are the products of comparisons, which are products of interrelationships, based on the individual and distinctive handling of characters within the cycles, a clear connection is established between the dramatic reality of the individual cycle pageant and the structure of the whole cycle.
Notes

1 See Chambers, vol. 2, pp. 413-14 for a short summary of the gaps in the MS.

2 Williams, Characterization of Pilate, p. 72.


5 Woolf, English Mystery Plays, pp. 305-06.

6 The choice of a text is also a simple decision. The Chester Mystery Cycle, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS, SS 3 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974) is clearly superior to any text before it. This edition is based on the Huntington 2 MS (Hm), which shares major characteristics with three of the remaining four complete MSS, so that Hm and the other three are commonly called "the Group." The remaining MS, Harley 2124 (H), the basis for The Chester Plays, Part I, ed. Hermann Deimling, EETS ES 62 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1892) and Part II, ed. J. B. Mathews, EETS ES 115 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1916), has individual characteristics which produce a slightly different final effect. Each pair of editors advances reasons for their respective choices (Deimling, pp. x-xxviii; Lumiansky and Mills, pp. xxix-xxxiii), and while I am more sympathetic to the later edition which bases its choice on inclusiveness of dramatic detail as opposed to the earlier edition which opts for metrical regularity, for a critical study of this kind the quality of the edition is more important than the quality of the MS. It can be assumed that annually performed civic drama was in a constant state of flux so that a text merely indicates a particular view of things at a particular time, and then only on paper. The Hm version of the Chester cycle (with the addition of the first play from Harley 2013, another Group MS) can, therefore, be accepted as the trial ground for this study's theories about characterization without the need for the defense of that version over
others in terms of the Chester dramatic tradition.

Throughout this chapter references in the text will be to the Lumiansky and Mills edition; citations to the cycle will be shown "pageant.lines." In accordance with the terminology of this edition, the term "play" will be used instead of "pageant" in the discussion of the Chester cycle.


11 See, for example, Salter, Medieval Drama in Chester, pp. 34, 36.

12 Ibid., pp. 58-59.


14 R. B. Davis, pp. 64-65.

15 Play V, "Moses and the Law; Balaak and Balaam," ends with a statement indicating that it was the end of a day's performance (5.450-51). The last recorded performance of the cycle was in 1575, almost twenty years prior to the earliest MS of the full cycle (Hm, 1591). This last performance was exceptional (for one thing, it was a stationary performance) and was divided into four
rather than three parts (see R. B. Davis, pp. 60 and 66, n. 25). The passage at the end of Play V may be a result of this performance; we do not know which plays were performed on each day.

16 R. B. Davis, pp. 56-58.


19 Actually the reading in MS Hm for the second passage cited is "lord," but in the other four MSS the word is "God"; I am assuming a careless piece of copying.

20 See J. Burke Severs, "The Brome and Chester Abraham and Isaac, MP, 42 (1945), 137-51.


22 Kolve, pp. 152-59.

23 The image plays a part in a sermon Jesus preaches at the beginning of Play XIII, but the shepherd aspect is not reinforced by the ensuing play and remains purely verbal statement. Besides the use of the shepherd/healer image to describe Jesus occurs far away from Play VII and after the fact.


25 This play is, after all, sponsored by the Vintners. The "Harrowing of Hell," Play XVII and the last play of the second day, was sponsored by the Cooks (and in MS H by the Innkeepers as well), and it ends with the episode of the tapster. It surely could not have hurt the business of these guilds to have reminded the audience toward the end of the day that they were thirsty, even if this was done with negatively charged characters.

26 Clopper discusses the monarchs of the cycle, drawing some distinctions between the earthly kings and Jesus and especially between Jesus and Antichrist ("Structure," pp. 223-33). His approach seems to me too general and detaches the figures involved from the contexts of their plays (i.e., the dramatic societies).

Though the midwives of Play VI also affirm the virginity of Mary, the emphasis in the play is on the healing and conversion. Simeon is not converted so that affirmation of Jesus' divine sonship receives more emphasis. The presence of Octavian in the same play with the midwives also places the affirmation of divine paren- tage in a different context.

"Structure," pp. 128-31, 156.

I have omitted consideration of the element of motherhood as an intensifier of the cruelty of the Passion. The motif begins with the two Marias (16A.49-64) and continues in the dirge of the Marys at the cross and the John-Mary the First interrelationship.


I cannot agree with Leigh's assertion that 24.1-24 are spoken by God as an old man, i.e., the Father (pp. 261-62, 264). Though those lines are assigned to "Deus" and the Judgment proper beginning at 24.357 is designated "Jesus," the attributes claimed in 1-24 are more appropriate to Jesus than to the Father, suggesting a change in line designation reflected in all MSS. The most convincing piece of evidence is that "Deus" directs the angels to wake everyone so "that I blood forth can bleede" (24.16), and Jesus subsequently directs those being judged to

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  Look on mee  
  and see my blood freshe owt flee  
  that I bleede on roode-tree.  
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(24.425-27)

It seems more reasonable to assume that only Jesus appears, despite the fact that the Father's appearing would emphasize Jesus' sonship and bolster my argument.
CONCLUSION: CHARACTERS AS CORPUS CHRISTI

This study began with the problem that in English Corpus Christi plays, the same character may be played by more than one actor in the course of the cycle; the station-to-station performance at Chester with perhaps up to seven stations makes it a virtual certainty that the Jesus of one pageant would not be played by the same actor in the following pageant. Part of the answer to why an audience might accept this lies in the interrelationship as the center of attention. There are some current analogues which suggest that such a mode of perception is workable on a fairly popular level.

The Army, in its Race Relations classes, uses a film which is a series of brief incidents turning on some conflict involving blacks and whites. After each incident there is some discussion of what should be done to "solve" the problem. In each incident the emphasis is placed on the particular interrelationships operating, so that no effort is made to develop characters as individuals. It takes very little time to become conditioned to view each detail of characterization in terms of the particular racial conflict being developed. Because the plot is not resolved, the interest of each incident lies almost entirely in the interrelationships; what makes the movie seem like one movie is the consistent concern for black vs. white. Another indication that attention to interrelationships rather than to individual characters is not far-fetched is the current interest in transactional analysis. Books like Harris' I'm OK-You're OK discuss transactions in terms of character combinations like Parent-Child. I adduce these two examples to show the workability of the concept, not the nature of the medieval audience. The generally well-founded and long standing assumption, that "good" characterization requires the development of individuals, should not be allowed to obscure the possibility of a drama based on the bonds among characters.

But the cycles go beyond the bonds between characters, and employ comparisons which coalesce into what have been called dramatic societies. Underlying the ability of the
cycles to employ societies in the structural position that Post-Renaissance drama criticism usually assigns to individual characters is the medieval conception of the corporate body, the society as person. This conception is exemplified by a passage from John of Salisbury's Letter to Trajan, purported to have been written by Plutarch, but almost surely a product of John's mind, in the Polycraticus:

The place of the head in the body of the commonwealth is filled by the prince, who is subject only to God and to those who exercise His office and represent Him on earth, even as in the human body the head is quickened and governed by the soul. The place of the heart is filled by the Senate, from which proceeds the initiation of good works and ill. The duties of eyes, ears and tongue are claimed by the judges and the governors of provinces. Officials and soldiers correspond to the hands. Those who always attend upon the prince are likened to the sides. Financial officers and keepers (I speak now not of those who are in charge of the prisons, but of those who are keepers of the privy chest) may be compared with the stomach and intestines, which, if they become congested through excessive avidity, and retain too tenaciously their accumulations, generate innumerable diseases, so that through their ailment the whole body is threatened with destruction. The husbandmen correspond to the feet, which always cleave to the soil, and need the more especially the care and foresight of the head, since while they walk upon the earth doing service with their bodies, they meet the more often with stones of stumbling, and therefore deserve aid and protection all the more justly since it is they who raise, sustain, and move forward the weight of the entire body.2

John uses the concept of many members making one body as a metaphor for the state, but this comparison is so forcefully asserted in the relationship between Christ's Body and the Church that in medieval theological thought it becomes a reality rather than merely a metaphor. The term "Mystical Body of Christ" during the period from about 1150 to the late fifteenth century went through a change in meaning. From the ninth century until c. 1150 Corpus mysticum refers to Christ's Eucharistic Body, while the Church is called Christ's verum Corpus. From 1150 on these terms reverse their meanings under the pressures of
Eucharistic controversies so that up until just before the Reformation the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ has Eucharistic undertones. Thus the unification of the members of the Church into the Body of Christ has some of the same physical reality as the Eucharistic bread has as the Body of Christ. The first part of the fourteenth century is a crucial time in the development of the mystical-true transformation since Boniface VIII's bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) is the first official document to use *Corpus mysticum* to describe the Church, and it is in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that ecclesiology becomes a separate field of study. All of these issues and intellectual trends were bound to have some effect on the feast of Corpus Christi, promulgated in 1311, and the plays which, in the late fourteenth century, grew up around that feast in England.

Jerome Taylor has, in fact, examined the texts of the Feast of Corpus Christi and has found that while they stress the wonders of the Eucharist, "they stress also the kingship, the royal rule, of God and his Christ and the unification of mankind into one society under the divine rule." When he goes on to apply these findings to the cycles, however, he does so in terms of the action:

the object imitated by the Corpus Christi cycles in the totality of their pageants

... is the history of God's wonders, that is, of his responses, specifically, to man's consequent social, familial, and personal disintegrity. This history presents a unified development, through complication and crisis, to a clearly defined end, so that the total dramatic projection of this history has a unity borrowed from the object it imitates.

This approach to the cycles shares with the arguments discussed in the introduction to this study the tendency to impose structure on the cycles from the top down (Taylor speaks of the "cycles in the totality of their pageants" and "the total dramatic projection of this history") and ride roughshod over the episodic manner in which the action is realized. As this study has shown in the Chester cycle, the action of the final assertion of the kingdom of God is accomplished through intermediate actions in individual pageants and in each day.

But Taylor is presenting the social element, the operation of a "Kingdom of God," as an attribute of the action without reference to its function in the development of characterization. Implied in his analysis is the
assumption that the single action of the cycle also moves through a single society. In other words, because the object "imitated" by the cycles is a single society unified by the kingship of God, the dramatic imitation will necessarily have the same structure.

The plays analyzed in this study make it clear that there are many societies within the cycle, many members of the one body, each developed according to a specific thematic focus. While these societies are related to one another, each maintains its integrity. In the Chester cycle, even though there is some integrating of the individual dramatic societies of each play into a more general social context, this integration is only possible within the thematic concerns of the three groupings developed for each of the three days. The vindication of the divine kingship is a prominent feature of the Chester cycle, but the individual dramatic societies and the three separate thematic focusses of each day place that vindication in a different social context and hence give it a different meaning each time it occurs. The kingdom of God, almost in the manner of a character, grows in complexity, from the simple, all powerful kingship of the first day through the paradox of the second day when Jesus is both king of heaven and powerless preacher/mock-king, and finally to the Last Judgment which includes the teaching and suffering of the second day as necessary elements in the kingship of Jesus over both heaven and earth so that Jesus' exaltation is a direct result of his humiliation. There is progressive development in these thematically controlled social concerns, and though the third day synthesizes elements from the first two days, the societies of each day remain distinct. The analogy of the society as person with the king as head and the theology of Christ's Mystical Body are merely cultural background, a key to the general notion of society the playwrights employed when they created their dramatic societies. When this cultural concept appears in the cycles it has become essentially dramatic, realized in terms of interrelationships, comparisons, and individual dramatic societies.

The concept of the communal person does not explain the way the elements of characterization in the cycles are organized, for cycle characterization represents a solution to what seem to be dramatic rather than theological problems: How do you dramatize mankind? How do you keep characters from deteriorating into generalized types without making their actions too idiosyncratic? How do you make divinity function dramatically? How do you make individually acted and financed plays form a complete larger play?
The starting point in locating a way to articulate the solutions which the cycle playwrights formulated for these problems is, as has been shown, the interrelationship. The focus of attention in constructing and analyzing characters is the bond between them. The details used to create Abraham in the Northampton play make complete sense when they are seen as contributing to a whole of which Isaac is the other half. Not until a critic is thinking in terms of Abraham-Isaac can he understand how distinctly different the Brome and Northampton plays, for example, are. Discovering the importance of interrelationships does not mean, however, that we have necessarily discovered the pattern of characterization in the cycles. The specific interrelationship is the basic unit of characterization and must itself be integrated into a larger structure. The cycles employ the interrelationship as an element in comparisons which, to varying degrees, give concrete shape to the basic action of the cycle pageant. The comparisons, on the basis of the plays analyzed in this study, fall into three types. Type I is a comparison involving three characters, one present in both interrelationships, drawn from a single half-pageant or single-action pageant. Joseph-Mary vs. Gabriel-Mary in the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant of Coventry, for example, contrasts the angel's almost courtly treatment of Mary with Joseph's common and homely treatment of her. The second, or Type II, comparison involves four different characters in two interrelationships drawn from the same half-pageant or pageant. Kings-Child vs. Messengers-Soldiers-Herod is a Type II comparing the interrelationships between two lords and their retainers. Of these two, the Type I is more important. In the Type II dramatic contact is significant only within the interrelationships. Though Herod, for example, interacts with the Kings, this information is not relevant to the analysis of the comparison. The primary concern of a Type II is the parallel nature of the interrelationships; both the interrelationships in the Type II example are lord-retainer, though they contrast sharply in kind.

In the Type I comparison the interrelationships are not merely parallel; the central character acts as an intermediary, the focus of the contrast. The effect of Gabriel-Mary vs. Joseph-Mary depends on the control of the contact of the differing characters. If Gabriel and Joseph were to have contact with each other not only would Mary's intermediary position be weakened, but also the polarity which Gabriel and Joseph represent would be blurred since they would become individualized as a result of their interaction on stage. Joseph-Mary-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus from the Coventry Weavers' Pageant is an example of the
use of extensive contact between the differing characters in the comparison; the result is to weaken the central contrast and move the emphasis to the contrast within the interrelationships. Joseph and Mary are similar to the Doctors in their sympathy with age, and both groups contrast with the young Jesus. Because Type I comparisons are based on more control of dramatic contact than the Type II's, they are more vitally involved in the dramatization.

In addition, the focal character of the Type I is not detachable; whether the comparison is paradoxical, as with Mary who is both noble (Gabriel) and common (Joseph), or based on a choice the central character or characters must make, as with Abraham who must choose between his lord (Deus) and his fatherhood (Isaac), the emphasis is on the complexity of the connections between characters rather than on the complexity of any one character. Just as the development of an individual character is fully understood only in terms of an interrelationship, the interrelationships are fully understood in terms of the Type I comparison which dominates the action of the play they are in. Even the Type II comparisons, which were posited only in the second half-pageant of the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant, were used primarily to bolster and develop the concerns of the Type I comparisons. The Type I comparisons which dominate an action are crucial in organizing and focussing the social elements in a half-pageant or pageant into a thematically unified dramatic society.

The importance of the dramatic societies and the resultant limitation placed on the function of interrelationships outside of societies is illustrated by the varying usefulness of the Type III comparison. Type III applies only to plays clearly divisible into half-pageants, each containing a separate action, and is a comparison involving three characters, one of which is present in both interrelationships and both half-pageants. The thematic social considerations, usually related in this study to some aspect of kingship (nobility, power) or learning (law, prophecy, preaching) and their opposites, guide the selection and development of the interrelationships and comparisons which in turn produce the dramatic society. When a single interrelationship, Shepherds-Child in Coventry, for example, is removed from its context and compared to an interrelationship drawn from another context, Kings-Child, that comparison, Shepherds-Child vs. Kings-Child, must ignore restrictions placed on those interrelationships by their social contexts, thus risking false generalization. In the Weavers' Pageant, on
the other hand, the societies of the half-pageant societies are so similar that the Type III comparison Simeon-Jesus vs. Doctors-Jesus is a more enlightening way of approaching the play.

Just as the interrelationship is the basic unit of characterization and the comparison the basic unit of the interrelationships within the pageant, the dramatic society is the basic unit for understanding the connection between pageants and the participation of the pageant in the whole cycle. The analysis of the Shearmen and Taylors' and Weavers' Pageants shows two basic ways of joining contiguous dramatic societies; the interlocking structure with one similar and one dissimilar social pole in each of the societies being joined and the chiasmic with a pattern of major and minor polarities reversed in the contiguous pageants. Thus the Shearmen and Taylors' half-pageants contain dramatic societies characterized by the contrast between nobility vs. commonality and nobility vs. anti-nobility, the common factor of nobility supplying the link for the interlocking structure. The Weavers' Pageant, however, is joined by chiasmic linking, the second half-pageant united to the first by reversing the dominance of learned vs. ignorant and old vs. young. In addition the two pageants are united by a version of the chiasmic structure in which the prologue of the Weavers' Pageant re-interprets the action of the previous pageant and includes a second undertone of noble vs. common in the first half-pageant.

In the Chester cycle, the dramatic societies were each developed in accordance with a particular conception of Deus/Jesus' kingship, which was consistent within each of the three days during which the plays were performed: Deus/Jesus as king over one world with specific reference to his dominace over worldly monarchs, Jesus as king of heaven and preacher/mock-king on earth, and on the third day, Jesus as king of the world again, but now transformed into paradoxical king whose preaching and suffering are necessary components of his divine kingship. The nature of Jesus' kingship has a profound effect on the dramatic societies and the societies supply a context for the vindication of Jesus' kingship at the end of each day's performance. The characterization, in the form of dramatic societies, gives the basic event its shape.

This method of approaching characterization answers many of the problems that are raised by an analysis of cycle characters. Though explicable in terms of the social and theological background of the cycles, the form characterization takes in the cycles according to the
system of interrelationships, comparisons, and dramatic societies, proposed in this dissertation, is essentially dramatic. It is also worth serious study, both within individual pageants and within the whole cycle.
Notes


4 See Kahrl, *Traditions*, pp. 22-23, for a discussion of the dating of the Corpus Christi cycle genre.

5 Taylor, p. 151. Taylor also alludes to the Mystical Body of Christ in this connection; see p. 256.

6 Ibid., pp. 153-54.

133
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