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**'Another Country, Another World'<sup>1</sup>:**  
**English Drama, 1371-1558 and the Development of the English**  
**Reformation**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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<sup>1</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, (London: Yale University Press, 1992), page 593.

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## **Contents**

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>1. <u>Introduction</u></b>  | <b>Page 4</b>  |
| <b>2. <u>Chapter One</u></b>   | <b>Page 7</b>  |
| • 1.1 – John Wycliffe and Pre-Reformation<br>Calls for Reform in England       | <b>Page 9</b>  |
| • 1.2 – 1509-1547: Henry VIII and the<br>Beginning of the European Reformation | <b>Page 13</b> |
| • 1.3 – 1547-1553: Edward VI and the<br>Ideological Reformation                | <b>Page 20</b> |
| • 1.4 – Queen Mary and the English<br>Counter Reformation                      | <b>Page 22</b> |
| <b>3. <u>Chapter Two</u></b>   | <b>Page 26</b> |
| • 2.1 – Disguise   | <b>Page 28</b> |
| • 2.2 – Individual Responsibility for a<br>Personal Relationship with God      | <b>Page 34</b> |
| • 2.3 – Sola Scriptura   | <b>Page 41</b> |
| <b>4. <u>Chapter Three</u></b>   | <b>Page 48</b> |
| <b>5. <u>Conclusion</u></b>  | <b>Page 59</b> |
| <b>6. <u>Bibliography</u></b>  | <b>Page 60</b> |
| <b>7. <u>Iconography</u></b>   | <b>Page 62</b> |

## Introduction

The difference between the heavily allegorical drama of the late medieval period, such as the civic Cycle plays or the so-called “morality” plays like *The Castle of Perseverance*, and those of the Elizabethan period and beyond by playwrights like Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare is both undeniable and striking. In the later plays gone is the didactic religious allegory rife with dramatic representatives of abstract concepts like avarice and mercy as well as the retelling of Biblical stories. These tropes were to be replaced by a largely “realist”, by which I mean less allegorical, representation of the world as influenced by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as it is by Bible.

With these differences in mind, the purpose of this dissertation is twofold. First I will show the sources of some of the dramatic changes throughout the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century and track them through this period of religious and civic turmoil as England goes from Catholic to Protestant and back again in the space of a generation. Second, I shall demonstrate the value of directly comparing medieval texts with Tudor interludes and even later plays, placing each of them in a broader dramatic tradition relative to one another. In short, by examining texts from roughly the period of the English Reformation from its Lollard beginnings to full-fledged Protestantism under Elizabeth, I will make some suggestions as to how and why both changes and continuities in drama throughout these two centuries came about.

The scope of this dissertation is necessarily constrained both by its length and by the aim to ensure that it is not overwhelmed by material. For these reasons, the material under discussion is tightly selected by both geography and date. With regards to geography, all of the plays I examine will have been written and performed in England. I will not reference plays either from Europe as a whole or Scotland. While Scotland, of course, has a dramatic tradition of its own around the Reformation with the most obvious example being David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, the Scottish Reformation is not concurrent with that of England and nor does it develop in the same way. Since the Reformation is one of the major drivers of theatrical change which I will be examining, I have opted only to examine English drama so that these religious changes remain as constant as possible for all of the pieces highlighted.

The second constraint in the scope of this dissertation is time. The period which I will be exploring is between the year 1371, in which the early proponent of English church reform, John Wycliffe was appointed to the court of Edward III 'to develop arguments to enable Edward III's government to direct clerical wealth from papal coffers to his [the King's] own', and 1558, when Elizabeth I took the throne of

England.<sup>3</sup> While it may be surprising that I am stopping short of the most famous period in English dramatic history, this period has been well served by numerous scholars due to the popularity of Shakespeare and thus much of what I would argue would be reductive by its nature. For this reason my plays will range from *The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1400) to *Respublica* (1553), written during the reign of Mary I, although I will make occasional brief references to later plays. I will also include analysis of non-fiction sources such as *The Tretis of Miraclis Pleyinge* in Chapter Two.

The dissertation is made up of three chapters. Chapter One performs two functions. The first is to provide a necessary historical background to the period covered by the dissertation, beginning with an examination of the earliest beginnings of dissent against traditional religion in England and going on to give an outline of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary I. The second function of this chapter is to act as an very brief introduction to each of the plays I will be examining throughout the dissertation. I will use these introductions both to keep arguments as to provenance and date in one place and also to point forward to the aspects of the plays I will focus on in later chapters.

In Chapter Two I will offer an extended argument as to the importance of the Reformation in accounting for the changes in drama throughout the time period examined. The chapter will be made up of three parts. In the first I will show how the use of the trope of disguise develops through the period of the Reformation and will argue that the increase in the use of this trope is directly related to the idea of how proponents of Protestantism and, later, revived Catholicism attempted to discredit one another through drama by each group depicting the other as duplicitous disguised vices. In the second part I will show how the development of the idea of a personal and direct relationship with God, which emerged in early Protestantism through the writings of Huldrych Zwingli and others, led to a decrease in allegorical drama throughout the period as, just as the laity developed a more personal relationship with the deity, so too did drama develop a more direct and realist relationship with the world. In short, the development of individual dramatic characters as well as representations of real events can be attributed in part to a reflection on Protestantism's focus on the relationship of individuals with God without clerical mediation. Finally, I will close the chapter with the argument that the new emphasis on *sola scriptura*, the infallibility of the gospels, that developed in early Protestant Europe led to a backlash against, and the eventual banning of, the long-running medieval Biblical Cycle plays. Throughout this chapter I will both show that the development of Protestantism was a key influence on the changes in late fifteenth and early sixteenth century drama and show that these changes are better understood when dramas across the period are considered together in

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<sup>3</sup> Henrietta Leyser, 'Piety, Religion, and the Church' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, ed. by Nigel Saul, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 174-206, page 197.

order to show the gradual change in dramatic tropes.

While I will use the second chapter to show the effect of religious developments on drama, in Chapter Three I will move more towards the secular civic sphere as I examine the change in the depiction of kingship and the monarchy in drama throughout the two centuries. I will show that kings in medieval plays, such as Herod in the Cycle plays, are almost always depicted as raving violent despots and will show how this depiction changes to one more complimentary as time goes on. I will argue that the change in the depiction of monarchs from broadly negative to positive across the time period examined is due both to the development of the court as a major commissioner of drama and all the pressures to please the monarch that this brings, and to the Act of Supremacy which recast English monarch as no longer only secular leaders but also spiritual leaders as well.

Through these three chapters I aim to show that the changes apparent in drama between *The Castle of Perseverance* at the beginning of the fifteenth century and “the golden age” of English drama of the Elizabethan era can be best understood through a survey such as this dissertation which takes account both of religious and social changes and plots their influence on multiple dramatic texts across the period. At the end of this dissertation it will be apparent that English drama should not be viewed, as it so often is, as a series of distinctly separate literary periods but rather as an organically developing whole.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will perform two functions. The first will be to provide a brief historical background to the events of the Reformation in England. I will judge this period as ranging from the 1370s, and the beginnings of dissent against traditional religion, through the turbulence of the 1530s and finally to 1558 and Queen Elizabeth I becoming the English monarch. This background information is vital to a full understanding of the dramatic developments in this period and therefore the second function of this chapter is to provide an introduction to each of the plays and Cycles I will be examining and to place them in time in order to better explore how they resonate with contemporary historical events.

I will begin by arguing that dissent against the traditional church did not begin with the Reformation and that we must look further back towards the fourteenth century to fully understand the religious changes that would come later. Using John Wycliffe and the Lollards as an example I will demonstrate that early dissenters had some similar ideas to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers such as the importance of lay access to scripture, rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation and a pre-Calvinist idea that 'the true church was made up solely of those who were saved, not just in the next world but here and now'.<sup>4</sup> However, I will argue that the limited success of such movements is reflected in dramatic texts such as *The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1400) and the civic Cycle plays, both of which reflect a church largely unconcerned with issues of radical reform.

Of course the Reformation proper began in 1517 with Martin Luther and his contemporaries. However, these events will not be the focus of this chapter as my interest lies specifically with the English Reformation rather than the more general European events. Instead I will examine the reigns of Henry VIII and his three children, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I (fig 1.), a family divided to some extent by intertwined religious and political strife.

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<sup>4</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2009), page 568.

(Figure One: *The Family of King Henry VIII* by an unknown artist, c. 1545, oil on canvas. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016)



With this in mind, in the second section I will move from Wycliffe to the reign of Henry VIII and will explore his inconsistent approach to reform. I will argue that, while he was not as committed to reform as his son's protectorate would be in the future, his interest in the church reform movement was not limited to his own political ambition. Henry was committed to some non-radical reform of the church. I will go on to explore the effect of these events on the drama of the period, beginning with *Magnyfycence* (c.1518) which was printed in 1530. I will argue in particular that the late printing of this play is significant as it was printed with certain contemporary events in mind. I will go on to discuss how this play uses a development of the morality play trope to explore the idea that Henry's court was full of corrupt courtiers both in 1518 and in 1530 at the dawn of the English Reformation. I will then go on to examine *The Play of the Weather* (1533) which I will suggest uses the conceit of Jupiter judging which suitor is most deserving of having the weather suited to their needs to reflect the difficulty for Henry of balancing the desires of various religious figures during his own reign. Finally I will conclude with a brief examination of John Bale's *The Three Laws* (c. 1538) which I will argue is a deliberately produced piece of pro-Protestant propaganda.

In the third section of this chapter I will show that the reign of Edward VI was in fact the reign of his Protestant power hungry protectorates. Henry VIII had gone to considerable lengths to ensure both that Edward's legitimacy as an heir to the throne was uncontested as well as to ensure that his youth was not seen as a handicap as he took the throne. He did so by using such means as the portrait of his family (fig. 1) in which Kevin Sharpe notes 'Edward's succession is asserted and proclaimed' by the fact that Edward is placed in the centre of the portrait with Henry himself who has his arm around the boy suggesting their

closeness and reasserting Edward's claim to the throne.<sup>5</sup> I will further argue that his protectorate projected this manufactured perception of him to use him as a puppet-king to further their own political and theological ends. I will end this section by suggesting that plays like *Lusty Juventus* reflected this impulse by idealising the young as the best radical religious leaders, more able to lead the old than the old to lead them.

In the final section I will examine the brief reign of Mary I, a reign rather different to the two that preceded it due to her disagreement with her brother and father on religion, a difference clearly marked in figure one where Mary stands to the left, far away from her father and brother, separated from them by a column. Mary's reign saw the fascinating return of 'the entire kingdom to Roman obedience and the possibility of innovations in Catholic reform' and I will argue first that this was not a full return to Catholicism and second that this movement back towards Catholicism was not as marked by violence as is often implied by the dominant Protestant historians.<sup>6</sup> I will then discuss a play of this period in light of this return to Catholicism. The play I will examine is *Respublica* (1553), an easily identifiable Catholic play which reflects earlier morality drama while also demonstrating a new Catholic ideology which has learned the danger of outer, as well as inner, vices and forces.

As I noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, I will not be examining in any detail plays from the Elizabethan era. This is primarily because Elizabethan dramatic history is simply so well examined elsewhere due to the popularity of playwrights like William Shakespeare that any attempt I made on such a task would be necessarily trite and derivative.<sup>7</sup>

Through this examination of the historical context of the drama I will show the importance of placing a text within its own time-frame, I will also show that all of the texts I will examine in this dissertation are pieces of a larger narrative which only emerges when the English theatre is studied over a period of time as an organically developing whole.

### **1.1 John Wycliffe and Pre-Reformation Calls for Reform in England**

It is easy to see the Reformation in England as beginning in the 1530's due to influences from church

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<sup>5</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), page 138.

<sup>6</sup> MacCulloch, page 632.

<sup>7</sup> Such studies are too numerous to mention but a good starting point for study of the effect of the Reformation on the drama of the Elizabethan period is Chapter 17 of *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* Eamon Duffy, (London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 565-593.

reform movements on the European continent. However, while Henry VIII's reign and influences from thinkers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin are vital to the English Reformation, as I will discuss in 1.2, it is important to note that movements against the established church had been occurring long before they finally reached their head in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In this section I will focus on one particular early English reformer, John Wycliffe who is, I will argue, a particularly clear example of the fact that the Reformation did not appear out of a vacuum but rather was backed by a tradition of calls for reform due to perceived abuses in the Church.

John Wycliffe was a scholar from the University of Oxford who, in c. 1371 was appointed to the court of Edward III 'to develop arguments to enable Edward III's government to direct clerical wealth from papal coffers to his [the King's] own' and this position of finding ways to justify taking money from the often corrupt church gave him a platform to develop his theological arguments against it.<sup>8</sup> One of his initial major arguments was that true piety could only be achieved by those who had the grace of God and he further noted that, since Kings by divine right were directly chosen by Him, it was more likely that they 'were in this happy condition than the Pope' especially since the Pope and the clergy were, in Wycliffe's view, so corrupt.<sup>9</sup>

This initial theological theory was, as MacCulloch puts it, 'decidedly convenient for the English prince and noblemen who acted as his patrons and protectors' and so his apparent heresies were excused but Wycliffe did not stop there.<sup>10</sup> He began to espouse several theological theories that would be echoed in the writings of later reformers such as *sola scriptura*, the belief in the infallibility of scripture, and a distaste for the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>11</sup>

Wycliffe's writings gained him a large group of followers known as the Lollards. The Lollards as a group both assisted Wycliffe in his crusade to change the operations of the Church and took his ideas further. For example, they took his assertions about the importance of the grace of God for churchmen as a basis on which to build the claim that 'priests "in deadly sin" had no sacramental power and, conversely, that all truly good Christians, men and women, were in fact priests'.<sup>12</sup> How radical this statement was at the time cannot be exaggerated; Lollards were intent on overturning the very basis of the Church hierarchy.

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<sup>8</sup> Leyser, page 197.

<sup>9</sup> MacCulloch, page 568.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, page 568.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Leyser, page 198.

Perhaps the most significant act committed by Wycliffe and the Lollards before he died in c.1384 was the production of the first Bible translated into English. This was conceived due to Wycliffe's strong belief in *sola scriptura*, the belief that scripture was infallible, which led to the idea that it should be read by everybody and not just by the educated few who could read Latin. This translation was an incredibly significant act and opened the door for others in England to fight for the right of the laity to have access to the scriptures.

English translations of the Bible were 'officially banned by the English Church hierarchy [...until] the 1530's' in 1407 and the Lollardy movement was suppressed.<sup>13</sup> However, both the Bibles and the movement persisted despite political opposition. Copies of the Bible were hidden away and, as MacCulloch notes, 'English Lollardy survived through personal networks' and never really disappeared entirely.<sup>14</sup> It is clear, then, that radical movements against the Church hierarchy persisted in England from Wycliffe's day and beyond and that, by the time of the Reformation proper, England in particular already had a taste for reform.<sup>15</sup>

Drama of this early period is particularly important to examine as, while usually religious in nature and therefore related to the Church, it was often funded by civic rather than religious groups. Because of this, medieval drama does not merely espouse religious doctrine verbatim however, despite this it is undeniable that the Catholic faith had a significant influence on the plays. With this in mind, I will examine first *The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1400) due to its temporal proximity to Wycliffe, and second the Biblical Cycle plays, particularly those from York, as they exist in a medieval manuscript, and Chester, which exists in relatively late manuscripts that reveal the concessions that such drama had to make in a new, Protestant world.

A significant aspect of *The Castle of Perseverance* to note is that the play in no way has Lollard sympathies. Indeed, despite the fact that it seems to have been written only twenty or thirty years after the Lollard heyday there is no sense that the play was written in the context of a religion under attack. The plot of an initially fairly virtuous stand in for humanity as a whole (Humanum Genus in *The Castle*) who is besieged by vices and falls into sin only to be redeemed by personified representations of virtues was a common one, present in two other extant plays of the fifteenth century (*Mankind* and *Wisdom*) and

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<sup>13</sup> MacCulloch, page 569.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, page 570.

<sup>15</sup> Henrietta Leyser's essay in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* has a good, brief, summary of the intervening period from 1407 to the eve of the Reformation from page 199-206.

mimicked frequently in the sixteenth century in some of the plays I will discuss later such as *Respublica* (1553) and *Magnyfycence* (c. 1519?, printed 1530). The significance of this “morality play” plot is that the spiritual danger to the protagonist does not in fact come from literal forces in the world around him like Courtly Abusyon in *Magnyfycence* or Oppression/Reformation in *Respublica* but from his own inner vices writ large.

The fact that, from existing evidence, this type of play seems to have become popular in civic centres in the years following Wycliffe gives the impression of a religious hierarchy (even if the plays are civic in nature that does not exclude the probability of clerical influence on their composition) relatively unconcerned with the possibility of the corruption of lay people by religious reformers. The vices of *The Castle* such Avaricia (avarice), Caro (flesh) or Superbia (pride) are pedestrian. Even Mudus (world) who would seem to be the most likely persona to refer to corrupting reformers makes barely any reference to religion at all; he is more focussed on the promises of worldly delights such as 'rycchest robys'<sup>16</sup>, 'parkys, placys, lawnde and londe' (l. 763) and 'penys and pown dys for to pleye' (l. 768). *The Castle*, then, is a play unconcerned with specifically worldly threats to the Catholic faith, seeing the real danger to a man's spirit as solely internal. This is significant as such plays seem to have been a source of religious instruction for a laity who could not speak Latin and thus had no access to scripture. This is a play full of warnings for these lay people and yet no warning is given regarding religious radicalism suggesting that the playwright saw no immediate danger from such ideologies.

Similarly divorced from the religious turmoil of the Lollard movement are the Cycle plays for the fifteenth century onwards. These short plays, arranged and performed by the civic guilds of various towns, depicted key biblical scenes on moving pageant wagons that passed through the centre of the towns on feast days. While there are various examples of these plays, in this dissertation I will focus on those from York, for which we have the earliest records, and Chester, for which there is clear evidence of continual performance and revision up to the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign.

These plays at first glance may seem to be completely concerned with the instruction of the laity in Biblical lore but this appearance is deceptive. The plays were first and foremost expressions of civic pride and power; they were always funded by city guilds rather than the Church. Because of this, we cannot extrapolate the subject matter of the plays in order to try and understand the feelings of the Church hierarchy to contemporary events in the way that is arguably possible with plays more obviously influenced

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<sup>16</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance in The Macro Plays*, ed. By Mark Eccles, (Oxford: Oxford University Press (EETS), 1969), pp. 1-112, l. 477. Further references follow quotations in the text.

by traditional religious thought like *The Castle*. The interesting aspect of these plays, then, comes not from their engagement (or lack thereof) with religious issues of the period but rather from their very oblique references to other contemporary issues that were important to the laity of the period. Key among these is the fact that, as James Simpson puts it, 'the Cycle plays are populated by tyrants'.<sup>17</sup> The depiction of kings or those in power in the form of the ranting Pharaoh of the Moses stories who opens the York play of Moses by imperiously silencing the crowd so that he may be heard better when he says 'O pees, I bidde that noman passe/ But kepe the cours that I commaunde' or Herod of the passion plays is, as I shall discuss in Chapter Three, almost entirely negative.<sup>18</sup> Simpson's argument that the Cycle plays 'offered resistance to royal and ecclesiastical power' through equating such power with theatrical farce holds weight and is one which I will pick up in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

Of course this concern with earthly rulers cannot fully detract from the fact that the plays are religious in subject matter and this too must be examined. Like *The Castle*, they show no particular concern for the future of the Church but it is evident that, as time goes on and the Reformation begins, they are suddenly viewed as suspect and forced to defend themselves in a way that they were not in the fifteenth century. The clearest evidence for this is in the post-Reformation banns of Chester which state 'we most humbly pray/ Not to compare this matter or storie/ With the age or tyme wherein we presentlye stayer/ But in the tyme of ignorarnce wherein we did straye'.<sup>19</sup> There is a concern here, which I will pick up in 2.3, that the plays may be seen after the Reformation as offering support to the Catholic establishment rather than the new, Protestant, hierarchy. These plays, then, were seen differently at different times and given new political resonances as time went on and seek to establish themselves as still relevant in the Protestant ideologies of the late 1500's. Indeed, the Banns seek to suggest that the plays were in fact deliberately seeking to elaborate on 'The stories of the testamente [which] at this tyme, you knowe,/ In a common Englishe tongue never read nor harde' (ll. 22-3).

## 1.2 1509-1547: Henry VIII and the Beginning of the European Reformations

As I have shown, by the time Henry VIII took the English throne in 1509, movements against the perceived excesses and corruptions of the Church had already begun to occur in England but it was in the ensuing years of Henry's reign that these movements were to gain true momentum in the country. This impulse for reform in England cannot be understood without first examining the reform movements in

<sup>17</sup> James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2, 1350-1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), page 514.

<sup>18</sup> *The York Play of Moses in English Mystery Plays*, ed. By Peter Happe, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), pp. 172 – 187, ll. 1-2. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>19</sup> *Chester, The Post Reformation Banns in Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. By Gregg Walker, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000), pp. 201-5, ll. 37-40. Further references follow quotations in the text.

mainland Europe which gave English critics of the church the precedents necessary to argue for the overhaul of Catholic worship.

The details of the events of the early Reformation in Europe are well known and discussed at length elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> The most important things to note are that in 1517 a monk named Martin Luther began a systematic campaign of protest against perceived abuses in the church through print tracts, preaching and appeals to the Catholic hierarchy. These writings and others caused Luther to be excommunicated from the church and sparked reformers across the continent, such as Huldrych Zwingli in Switzerland and John Calvin in Geneva, to develop their own theological arguments.

These various reformers differed in several pieces of doctrine, particularly that of the Eucharist and the validity of transubstantiation, but shared the broad aim of Church reform and ideal that Christian worship should be dictated only by what can be interpreted in scripture rather than what was traditional. It was no longer enough to insist that long standing tradition alone was enough to justify its own continuance. The various disputations, and debates between reformers and the church both in print and person show an insistence that all arguments be backed up by appropriate scriptural precedent. Kenneth Appold sums this up neatly when he remarks that 'religion acquired a verbal and intellectual character, often at the expense of the ritual'.<sup>21</sup>

In the aftermath of these events in England, attacks on traditional religion were not well received by the monarchy. Eamon Duffy notes that 'Henry long retained an aggressive dislike on the views of proponents of the "new learning"' of the reformers.<sup>22</sup> This was to change somewhat with Henry's affair with Anne Boleyn and subsequent request for special papal dispensation to divorce his first wife Catherine. The refusal of this request inspired Henry to ignore the Pope's wishes and enact a bigamous marriage to Anne before divorcing Catherine and, ultimately, to make a statement in 1534 which was to open the Pandora's box of reform in England. The Act of Supremacy.

The Act of Supremacy was an unequivocal statement that King Henry VIII was head of both the state and the church in England, stating as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> An excellent study to consult on this is Kenneth G. Appold, *The Reformation: A Brief History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and a more comprehensive and lengthy work also worth note is MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*.

<sup>21</sup> Appold, page 187.

<sup>22</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, (London: Yale University Press, 1992), page 379. Further references follow quotations in the text.

'Be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament  
that the King our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors  
kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed  
the only supreme head in earth of the Church of  
England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*.'<sup>23</sup>

This Act of Parliament, then, completely dismisses the authority of the papacy in England and, unlike the grass-roots work of Luther and the other European reformers, paved the way for England to institute a top-down Reformation as the Act confirmed both Henry VIII's right to make decisions on behalf of the Church in England and gave him the power to 'repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities' as he might find within it.<sup>24</sup>

Those close to Henry, especially his Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and his Chief Minister, Thomas Cromwell, took advantage of this newly established royal supremacy in order to advance the evangelical cause of the Reformation. In particular, the royal injunctions of 1538, which reaffirmed earlier injunctions arguing for the religious instruction of the laity in vernacular scripture and argued for other measures such as the condemnation of idolatrous images and forbidding pilgrimage, paved the way for a reformed English church. These injunctions did not go as far as the 1547 injunctions of Edward VI's reign but they still constituted a considerable change from the traditional religion prevalent at the time (Duffy, page 410). While Henry does seem to have initially supported these measures and certainly approved significant and violent iconoclasm throughout the 1530's, he did express concern at the amount of radical pamphlets that began to circulate in the wake of the 1538 injunctions (Duffy, page 410) which perhaps inspired the release of *The Act of the Six Articles* in 1539 which reaffirmed traditional teachings of transubstantiation, clerical marriage and chastity, and the importance of reconciliation as a sacrament.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this apparent backtrack, it is hard to accept Diarmaid MacCulloch's blunt assertion that Henry VIII only tolerated religious radicals as he 'found an alliance with Reformers useful during his eccentric marital adventures'.<sup>26</sup> While he was certainly uncomfortable with some of the reforms suggested by the radicals, as evidenced in *The Act of the Six Articles* and in the fact that, for example, letters from Cranmer to Henry indicate Cranmer's annoyance at the King's continual observance of Catholic holy days like St

<sup>23</sup> *The Act of Supremacy*, in *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, Carter Lindberg (ed.), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000) page 223.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *The Act of the Six Articles*, *ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

<sup>26</sup> MacCulloch, page 625.

Laurence's day (Duffy, page 396), there is no doubt his desire for reform went beyond something so crude as the wish to divorce in the fact that he did support a certain amount of reform measures such as the banning of images in churches. As well as this, the provision to allow the King to specifically 'redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors' as he might have seen in the church is explicitly included in the 1534 Act of Supremacy.<sup>27</sup>

So, while Henry retained a fondness for many aspects of the traditional Catholic religion (Duffy, page 448) his reign was not without radical change from the traditional Church. It should also be noted that the Act of Supremacy itself was an enormously significant act; MacCulloch notes that he 'conceived the idea of repudiating Papal jurisdiction [...and] was the first king in Europe to do so'.<sup>28</sup> I would suggest that Henry would not have implemented such a radical act if he did not have *some* sympathy for the reformer radicals beyond their use for facilitating his 'marital adventures'.<sup>29</sup>

As these events began to shape the religious terrain of England, in the background drama continued to both reflect and inform the political context of the time. Three plays in particular, *Magnyfycence* by John Skelton, *The Play of the Weather* by John Heywood, and John Bale's *The Three Laws* are worth note in this respect.

*Magnyfycence* by Henry VIII's erstwhile tutor John Skelton appears at first glance to be simply another late variation on the morality play form. The protagonist, the eponymous Prince Magnyfycence, is first encountered in a state of grace, extolling the virtues of Measure in all things, but is tempted into sin by personified abstractions of evil, in this case Fandy, Courtly Abusyon and others, and saved by the advice and council of abstractions of virtues. However, John Scattergood notes that 'the hero of Skelton's play is not the typical "everyman" figure of morality drama, but a "noble prynce"' and this means that the play has a political significance that early examples of similar genre do not.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the protagonist is royal rather than general means that the play can be mapped on to political events at the time of its production.

However, when the first of these productions occurred is difficult to say. As with many early plays, *Magnyfycence* is rather difficult to date. In fact, two significant dates apply to this play. I find the arguments of John Scattergood and others that the play relates to 'the expulsion of the minions – the King's

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<sup>27</sup> *The Act of Supremacy, The European Reformations Sourcebook*, page 223.

<sup>28</sup> MacCulloch, page 626.

<sup>29</sup> MacCulloch, page 625.

<sup>30</sup> John Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Tudor Royal Household 'in *Medieval English Theatre* Volume 15 (1993), pp.21-48, page 23.

particular young favourites – from the household in [1519]’ convincing and therefore it is reasonable to date the play’s composition to around that time.<sup>31</sup> However, composition is not the only significant date relating to this play. The ‘earliest surviving edition was printed by William Rastell in 1530’ and this is interesting as 1530 is right in the midst of Henry’s hitherto unsuccessful divorce from Catherine of Aragon.<sup>32</sup> Jane Griffiths has stated that ‘a play written at one date might have gained an entirely new significance by the time that it was printed’ and *Magnyfycence* with its moral message of the importance of measure to a king as well as warning as to what people the monarch surrounds himself with certainly falls into this category.<sup>33</sup>

A particularly significant aspect of this play in relation to the period in which it was printed is its emphasis on the idea that, while a king must have his own will (personified as Lyberte in the play) this Lyberte must be tempered by the application of Measure. The play is explicit on this point when personified Measure states that ‘with every condycyon Measure must be soght/ Welthe without Measure wolde bere hymselfe to bolde;/ Lyberte without measure prove a thyng of nought/ [...] Where measure lackyth, all thyng dysorderyd is’<sup>34</sup> and when *Magnyfycence* himself muses that ‘it is a wanton thyng, this Lyberte’ (l. 240). While in 1518, the play would have been taken to be advising Henry that his desire to keep his favourites in the court must be tempered with a measured view of what was better for the country, in 1530 this aspect of the play gains a new significance as Henry’s continuous courtship of Anne Boleyn began to have an impact on the people of the country as tensions between Henry and Pope Clement VII increased.

Similarly relatable to Henry’s courtship of Anne Boleyn is a short speech by Courtly Abusyon in which he encourages *Magnyfycence*, now that Measure has been dismissed from his presence that ‘as ye be a prynce of great myght/ it is semyng your pleasure ye delyte/ And to aqueynte you with Carnall delectacyon/ [...] to faasrwn youe fansy upon a fayre maystresse’ (ll. 1543-48), a suggestion that *Magnyfycence* greets enthusiastically, saying that he would spend ‘a thousande ponde’ (l. 1568) to acquire such a woman. In 1518, this was probably intended as an example of the common morality play trope that lechery accompanies a fall from grace but by the time of the 1530 printing it could be read that the king’s search for new sexual partners, such as Anne Boleyn, was a ‘Courtly Abusyon’. Indeed, the king’s

<sup>31</sup> John Scattergood, “‘Familiar and Homely’”: The Intrusion and Articulation of Vice in Skelton’s *Magnyfycence*’ in *Medieval English Theatre*, Volume 27 (2005) pp. 34-52, page 34. See also Scattergood, ‘Skelton’s *Magnyfycence* and the Tudor Royal Household’ for a comprehensive account of this theory.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, Introduction to *Magnyfycence*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 349-51, page 349.

<sup>33</sup> Jane Griffiths, ‘Lusty Juventus’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. By Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 262-75, page 263.

<sup>34</sup> John Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* pp. 351-407, ll. 115-122. Further references follow quotations in the text.

suggestion of paying ‘a thousande ponde’ (l. 1568) gives the whole situation a sense of prostitution. Of course, the composition date of this play means that the above is a possible reading, but hardly the playwright's intention.

John Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* also seems to refer directly to Henry's courtship of Anne. Printed by the same man, William Rastell, some three years after *Magnyfycynce* in 1533, the play has a simple enough plot. Jupiter, as the king of the gods clearly a representative of with the monarch, is given parliamentary powers to decide what should be the best weather for the world. He appoints Merry Report as an impartial party to listen to the suits of various classes of society but in the end finds that the opinions are too myriad to be reasonably reconciled and so decides that the weather should be a mixture of all possibilities (Merry Report notes that ‘now shall ye [the petitioners] have the wether even as it was’) and so nothing has changed from the beginning of the play to the end.<sup>35</sup>

The section that apparently refers to Henry's courtship of Anne is from line 793 onwards when Merry Report is listening to a Gentlewoman's petition for dry, cool and windless weather and she asks to speak with Jupiter. He refuses, stating ‘his lordship is right besy/ Wyth a pece of worke that nedes must be done./ Even now is he makynge of a new moone:/ He sayth your old moones be so farre tasted that all the goodness of them is wasted’ (ll. 793-7). Peter Happe has suggested that this statement revolves ‘around the king's desire to replace a leaky old moon with a bright, young, new one’; to replace an older wife, Catherine, with a new one, Anne.<sup>36</sup> I find this argument convincing, particularly when examined with Mery Reporte's later statement that ‘olde moones be leake, they can holde no water’ (l. 799) and so, just like *Magnyfycence*, the play seems to have significance in relation to contemporary political events although this significance is more deliberate than that of the earlier play due to the fact that *Weather* was probably first performed around the time of its printing.

Because of *Weather's* later composition date, it is also easy to see references to the contemporary debate around traditional and radical Christianity in the play. These are myriad but I think perhaps most significant is the subject matter of the play as a whole; that of decision making. In 1533 with the Act of Supremacy brewing, Henry was to be faced with a whole new set of religious powers and all the responsibility that came with them, particularly in light of the fact that the people of Europe as a whole were split into various diametrically opposed groups with varying degrees of orthodoxy or radicalism. England was no different

<sup>35</sup> John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 457-478, l. 1240. Further reference follow quotations in the text.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, ‘Performance as Research: Staging John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court Palace’, in *Medieval English Theatre*, volume 27 (2005), pp. 86-104, page 89.

and Henry faced the prospect of trying to reconcile the various attitudes of the people and religious leaders into some sort of coherent English church. Of course, as I have demonstrated above with reference to *The Act of the Six Articles* despite support for reform in the form of iconoclasm and royal supremacy, Henry balked at most of the more radical reformed ideas such as clerical marriage, communion in both kinds and the abolition of five of the sacraments.

Similarly, Jupiter has received new powers in the play. The other gods in *Weather* ‘have [...] holly surrendryd/ Into our [Jupiter’s] hands [...] The full of theyr powers for terme everlastynge/ To set suche order as standyth wyth our pleasynge’ (ll. 71-75) and he is equally besieged with various radical propositions. The Gentyelman wants weather that is ‘drye and not mysty, the wynde calme and styll’ (l. 274) and the Boy wants ‘great frost for [...] pytfallys, And plente of snow to make [...] snow ballys’ (ll. 1014-5) and so on. While Henry implements some measures and not all, Jupiter refuses to change anything, stating that ‘we wyll the hole worlde to attende,/ Eche sort, on suche wether as or them doth fall./ Now one, now other, as lyketh us to send’ (ll. 1204-6). This ending is indicative of what Greg Walker calls Heywood’s ‘consistently conservative position of religious doctrine’; as the reformation dawned, Heywood, like Skelton, was offering Henry advice on how to use the religious powers for which he was grappling.<sup>37</sup> The advice, which seems to be to leave religious decisions to those better suited to make them, was not heeded but it is clear that Henry did not go as far from the indecisiveness of Jupiter as he could have.

A final play from the reign of Henry that I will examine is John Bale's *The Three Laws* (c. 1538). This is a rather special case as Bale's drama was developed, at least in part, to ‘popularise the royal supremacy and especially to discredit papal authority and practice in England’.<sup>38</sup> This means that, unlike the previous two plays, the function of *The Three Laws* is, in essence, to act as anti-Catholic propaganda.

A major way that Bale seeks to achieve this is, as I will discuss more fully in 2.1, through the disguises of his vice personae. The play is a fairly straightforward morality structure of fall followed by redemption in which each of the three Biblical laws, of Nature, Moses and Christ respectively, are tempted into sin off-stage to be eventually saved by Vindicta Dei. What is fascinating about the method of the vices to tempt the Laws into sin, however, is that it is largely based on their being cleverly disguised as apparently virtuous personae. More importantly, these disguises are specifically Catholic in nature. For example, when Infidelitas is sending Idolatria and Sodomismus to attack Naturae Lex, he has them disguise themselves as

<sup>37</sup> Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), page 100.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), page 13.

religious figures. He tells Idolatiria to 'take thys [...] staffe and scryppe,/ With a God here of a chyppe (a statue of Christ made of wood)<sup>39</sup> and to Sodomismus, 'Set thu fourth sacramentals,/ Saye dyrge and synge for trentals' (ll. 671-2). It is clear, then, that these two vices are being disguised as a bishop and a priest respectively. This is important to note as it marks a change in drama that is very deliberately driven by proponents of the Reformation. Where before vices may have disguised themselves as, for example, merchants, now their disguises are directly related to Catholicism and so equate Catholicism with sinfulness.

This deliberate link between sinfulness and Catholicism was to remain important as Henry died and was replaced on the throne by his young son. As I shall argue in 1.3, drama continued to be used in a deliberately propagandist manner as the Reformation developed.

### 1.3 1547-1553: Edward VI and the Ideological Reformation

When Henry VIII died in 1546/7, Catholicism was still entrenched in English life. Eamon Duffy remarks that, at the time of Edward VI's succession at the age of nine, 'the people still for the most part prayed upon beads and the hallowing of bread, water and candles, as well as the Holy Week ceremonies of the blessing of palms and of the paschal fire' continued (Duffy, 449). This was to change as Edward, too young to be king in anything but name, was advised by a protectorate at first led by Edward Seymour, his uncle, and subsequently by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick.

The ascension of Edward and the Protectorate led to what Diarmaid MacCulloch aptly calls 'a more coherently ideological Reformation for England' which was soon realised with the introduction of the 1547 Injunctions.<sup>40</sup> Far from being simply a reissue of Henry's 1538 Injunctions, the Protectorate's injunctions took a harder stance against the Catholic traditions of which Henry, despite his 'cynicism and hatred of the papacy, remained attached to' (Duffy, 448). For example, they banned Sunday processions and insisted that clergy destroy any images in their church and tell parishioners to do the same (Duffy, 450). The Protectorate, then, seemed determined to follow through with reforms that had for the most part been unenforced in Henry's reign and Edward, largely without agency and influenced by a strong Protestant education, was the figurehead through which they could achieve this.

In order to ensure that Edward's position on the throne, and the power of the protectorate, remained

<sup>39</sup> John Bale, *The Three Laws in Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 493-533, ll. 667-8. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>40</sup> MacCulloch, page 628.

secure despite Catholic claims that Edward was not the legitimate heir due to the fact that Henry unlawfully divorced Catherine of Aragon, the protectorate employed two main tactics. The first was to present Edward as far older than his years. Portraits of Edward are a good indication of how this was carried out. If we take an image of Edward painted around the time of his father's death in 1546/7 (fig. 2) from The Royal Collection, it is clear that Edward is being depicted as much older than his mere nine years. In this image he looks like a young man rather than the child that he in fact was. Keith Sharpe describes him as a 'confident, adult figure, clad in the ermine of regality he is to assume' and there is no doubt that the depiction of him as an 'adult' is entirely deliberate.<sup>41</sup> Portraits like this, as Sharpe notes, mask 'his childhood, [and suggest] his readiness to assume his father's throne.'<sup>42</sup>



(Figure Two: Edward VI, c. 1546, oil on panel. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016)

As well as 'masking' Edward's youth, there also developed a cult of religious idealism around the young, suggesting that they, with the benefit of a Protestant education that their elders did not receive, were uniquely placed to espouse Protestant rhetoric. This idea is clearly referenced in the play *Lusty Juventus* in which the young protagonist, 'yet under a score'<sup>43</sup>, is introduced by the personae of Good Council and Knowledge to Reformation ideology such as justification by faith alone when Knowledge states that 'faith in Christ's merits doth only justify/ and make us righteous in God's sight' (ll. 221-2) and the reading of the Bible in the vernacular. While Jane Griffiths acknowledges that 'disagreement remains as to whether it was

<sup>41</sup> Sharpe, page 191.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., page 193.

<sup>43</sup> R.R. Wever, *An Enterlude Called Lusty Juventus*, in *Four Tudor Interludes*, J.B. Somerset (ed.), (London: Anthlone Press, 1974), pp. 97-127, l. 563. Further references follow quotations in the text.

[composed during Edward's reign] or whether in fact it should be dated some years earlier'<sup>44</sup>, I find Pamela M. King's assumption that the youthful protagonist refers directly to Edward VI<sup>45</sup> more convincing than H.S. Thomas's suggestion that the play's adherence to the theological position of *The King's Book* of 1543 suggests an earlier composition date.<sup>46</sup>

If the play was indeed composed in the years after Edward's rise to the throne, it gives an interesting window into what King describes as his 'poignant isolation' as a figurehead for the unstable reformed church and for the government in England.<sup>47</sup> Juventus, much like Jupiter in *The Play of the Weather*, is stuck between suitors with mutually exclusive ideological viewpoints. While Good Council asserts that 'vain is the conversations/ Which ye receive by your elders' traditions' (ll. 236-7), Hypocrisy laments that 'the world was never merry/ Since children were so bold:/ Now every boy will be a teacher, / The father a fool and the child a preacher' (ll. 651-4) and while Good Council argues that 'Christ's testament' (l. 276) is the only source of spiritual knowledge, the Devil asserts the importance of 'old traditions [...] made by men' (l. 343).

However, unlike Jupiter, the correct choice for Juventus is made clear. Griffiths remarks that, in allegory like *Lusty Juventus*, 'names have innate power, equivalent to that of the characteristic they identify [...] thus, simply for Juventus to learn Good Council's name is equivalent to internalizing his argument' and I would point out that, on an even more simplistic level, Good Council's name also serves as an indicator for the young protagonist that this abstraction's advice is particularly worthy.<sup>48</sup> So while Jupiter is faced with a choice between which suitor it is more correct to please, Juventus' choice is made for him by the very names of the characters in the same way that Edward's position as a reformer is a decision made for him by his Protectorate.

#### 1.4 1553-1558: Queen Mary and the English Counter Reformation

Queen Mary was, of course, not the initial successor to Edward. Having been nominated by the young King as a Protestant successor as he approached death, Edward's unfortunate cousin Jane Grey was *de facto* ruler of England for all of nine days before she was ousted as a usurper and Edward's older half sister

<sup>44</sup> Griffiths, 'Lusty Juventus', pp. 262-75, page 263.

<sup>45</sup> Pamela M. King, 'Minority Plays: Two Interludes for Edward VI', in *Medieval English Theatre*, Volume 15 (1993), pp. 87-102, throughout.

<sup>46</sup> H.S. Thomas (ed.), *An Enterlude Called Lusty Juventus* (New York: Garland, 1982), Introduction (pp.) pp.xiii-xviii.

<sup>47</sup> King, page 92.

<sup>48</sup> Griffiths, 'Lusty Juventus', page 268.

Mary took the throne. Mary imprisoned Jane Grey, had her father executed and, in 1554, also imprisoned her younger sister Princess Elizabeth thereby removing any immediate danger of Protestant claims to her throne.

What was significant about Mary taking the throne rather than Jane Grey is, of course, that Mary was Catholic rather than Protestant. For the first time since the early days of Henry's reign, a sure and absolute follower of traditional Christianity was on the throne of England. Mary did not waste time; almost immediately, as MacCulloch neatly puts it, 'she embarked on as great an experiment as that of Edward, but in mirror-image. She returned an entire kingdom to Roman obedience'.<sup>49</sup> Mary set about doing so by consolidating her position as a Catholic queen by marrying King Philip I of Spain in 1554 and by removing many of the reform measures instituted by her father and, particularly, by her brother's protectorate.

Arguably the most significant step in bringing the country back towards institutional Catholicism were The Marian Injunctions of 1554. Just as the Edwardian injunctions of 1547 responded directly to Henry VIII's injunctions of 1538, so too did Mary's injunctions respond to Edward's. However, rather than reaffirming and clarifying the 1547 injunctions as Edward's did those of 1538, Mary's injunctions directly refuted those that came before. The injunctions state that 'every bishop, and all other persons aforesaid, do foresee that they suffer not any religious man, having solemnly professed chastity, to continue with his woman or wife'<sup>50</sup>, that 'all manner of processions of the church be used, frequented, and continued after the old order of the Church in the Latin tongue'.<sup>51</sup> These assertions and others clearly indicate a move back to traditional Catholic Christianity with the abolition of clerical marriage and preaching in the vernacular.

Famously, Mary did not just enforce her religious changes by injunctions and laws. Referred to as 'Bloody Mary' in the centuries after her death, Mary 'burned at the stake some of the leading English Protestant reformers, Thomas Cranmer included'.<sup>52</sup> It is estimated that about three-hundred people were executed during Mary's reign (Duffy, 559) and this has caused some historians to see Mary as a rather violent and dangerous ruler. Caution is advisable with this interpretation of Mary's reign and Eamon Duffy, despite being something of a Roman Catholic apologist, makes a good point when he argues that her reign has 'been discussed in value laden terms [...] of a Protestant historiography' (Duffy, page 524). However, there is no doubt that Mary's reign *was* marked by ideologically motivated executions and imprisonment in order to maintain and consolidate her position as a Catholic monarch in a newly Protestant country and the

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<sup>49</sup> MacCulloch, page 632.

<sup>50</sup> *The Marian Injunctions, The European Reformations Sourcebook*, page 229.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> MacCulloch, page 632.

disagreement between historians as to how violent her reign was serves only to show how pervasive the divide between Catholic and Protestant commentators is to this day.

However violent Mary's reign was, it was also short. In 1558, a mere six years after her accession, Mary died and was succeeded by her younger half-sister Elizabeth. Once again, the state religion of England was to change, this time back to Protestantism. In the space of thirty years England had moved from Catholicism to varying degrees of Protestantism, back to Catholicism and now Elizabeth was to continue the work of her brother and her father in successfully converting and unifying the country.

A useful tool in the understanding of the religious changes and reversions brought about by the rule of Mary is the quintessentially Catholic play *Respublica* (1553).<sup>53</sup> The play equates the crowning of Queen Mary with a return of the old order, stating that God 'hath sent Marye our soveraigne and Qune/ To reforme thabuses [sic] wich hithertoo hath been' and in terms of plot the play dramatises an imagined downfall of *Respublica* due to the attentions of several vice characters.<sup>54</sup> This play, then, can be placed loosely in the tradition of morality dramas such as *The Castle of Perseverance* but with a key difference. Unlike *The Castle* which, as I have argued above, is evidence of an English church hierarchy unconcerned with threats outside the self, the spiritual threats of *Respublica* are depicted as being forces outside of the persona of *Respublica* herself. Avarice, for example, is much more related to Courtly Abusyon of *Magnyfycence* than to the personified abstraction of Avaricia in *The Castle*.

In *Respublica*, as in *The Three Laws*, the disguises that the vices assume are as important as the identity of the vices themselves. The disguises themselves further emphasise the idea that *Respublica* is assailed by external forces rather than her own internal vices as the decision to proceed under disguise is taken by Avarice with an apparently political purpose when he says, 'I wyl nowe countrefaichte my name/ I spede all my purposes/ and yet escape blame' (ll. 373-4). It is implied, then, that the primary use of the disguise is to allow the vices to become closer to their ruler *Respublica* and the fact that all of the disguises in some way relate to the movement of the Reformation within the English court, Oppression is tellingly disguised as Reformation for example, suggesting that the playwright equates the vices with members of the court who,

<sup>53</sup> Another play from Mary's reign that is worth note is the anonymous *Jacob and Esau* (1558). While beyond the scope of this dissertation due to the fact that it is unclear whether it espouses a more Catholic or a more Protestant world-view, it still has value as a study of the nature of rule as perceived during Mary's reign. Helen Thomas essay, 'Jacob and Esau – "Rigidly Calvinistic"?' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1969), pp. 299-213 and Michelle Karen Ephraim's 'Jewish Matriarchs and the staging of Elizabeth I in *The History of Jacob and Esau*' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 43, no. 2, (2003), pp. 301-21 are good places to start in the study of this text and its relationship to plays like *Respublica*.

<sup>54</sup> Anonymous, *Respublica: An Interlude for Christmas 1553*, ed. By W.W. Greg, (London: Oxford University Press (EETS), 1969), ll. 49-50. Further references follow quotations in the text.

to his mind, used the Reformation as a smokescreen to gain power and bring abuses into the court.

As well as concern about vices gaining access to the inner circles of the court, the Reformation is also maligned from a religious perspective. Oppression states of the people that 'we enfourmed them/ *and* we defourmed theym,/ We confourmed them, *and* we refourmed them' (ll. 805-6). The use of internal rhyme here echoes an earlier section of the play when the abstraction Adulation mistakes Oppression in disguise first for 'Dyffamacion' (l. 405) and then for 'Deformation' (l. 407). The very word 'Reformation' is continually distorted in the play reflecting the perceived distortion of traditional religion for which it is responsible. Further to this, as the virtues restore Respublica to her former glory by banishing the vices, Nemesis remarks that 'Oppression hath wronged men so sore/ That he spoiled innocences of all thei had and more' (ll. 1914-15). If we read Reformation for Oppression here then it is clear that the Reformation is being depicted as dangerous and destructive. It is also interesting that the playwright specifically notes that 'he spoiled innocences of all thei had' (l. 1915) as this could be a negative reference to the Reformation focus on religious education and lay access to the Bible. The play's references to the Reformation, then, are unremittingly negative in tone in a way that leaves no doubt as to the playwright's position as a supporter of Mary I and a proponent of traditional religion.

### Conclusion

The death of Mary I allowed the Protestant Elizabeth I to take the throne and, largely due to the fact that the length of her reign allowed her to consolidate her position in ways that Mary and Edward had not been able to, her reign brought the beginning of the end of decades of religious strife in England.

This strife did not, however, disappear without trace. The movements towards religious reform had left a mark on the culture of England and it had also brought about many changes in literature, and particularly in drama. In the next chapter I will go on to show the effect of these changes on the drama of the period. I will first argue that the use of disguise on the stage increased during the development of the Reformation as opposing religious groups used the trope to undermine each other. I will go on to argue that the development of a more individual relationship with God in Reformation theology formed a backdrop to drama becoming less allegorical and more focussed on real life events. Finally, I will show that the Reformation was key in ending the life of the Biblical Cycle plays on the English stage.

## Chapter Two

### Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the changes brought about in drama specifically through the development of Protestantism through the sixteenth century. For the most part, I will explore the developments in dramatic texts through plotting their development from medieval drama through to drama of Henry and Edward's reign and then further examining their inclusion into even the Catholic counter-reformation drama of the reign of Mary I. This chapter consists of three sections; the first on the use of disguise in drama, the second on the development of the idea of a personal relationship with God and how this is reflected in the drama, and the third on the effect of the Reformation on the English Cycle plays of the middle ages.

In the first section of this chapter I will argue that the use of the trope of dramatic personae in disguise increased as it became a political tool during the Reformation. Of course disguises are used in medieval drama, not to mention the fact that the very act of playing a character upon the stage is one of disguise, but I will argue that the use of disguise on stage begins to have a wider significance in the sixteenth century. I will begin by showing that, while disguises are used in medieval drama, they are often quite obvious both to the audience and to the other personae in the play. For example, the Satan's disguise as the serpent in *The Fall of Man* is communicated to the audience directly and should be obvious to Adam and Eve as no other creature would argue that they go against God's will. I will follow this by examining Protestant plays such as *The Three Laws* and *Lusty Juventus* in which disguise is used as a trope to show traditionally Catholic figures as duplicitous and untrustworthy. Finally, I will show that newly defensive Catholic drama in the reign of Mary I like *Respublica* makes use of disguise in a similar way to discredit Protestant and Reformation figures.

In the second part of this chapter I will show how the development of the idea of an individual relationship with God led to the decrease in allegory in drama. What I mean by the phrase individual relationship with God is the particularly Protestant ideal that individuals no longer needed a spiritual intermediary to speak to God for them. In the Catholic middle ages, the relationship of the laity to God is mediated through the priesthood but as Protestantism developed in Europe there was a movement against this idea. A good example of this is in 'A Report Concerning the Zwickau Prophets' (1521) by Nicholas Hausmann in which he states of priests as follows:

'Like magicians they dress up in silk and velvet of all colors

[...] If he [the layman] does not give them his purse,  
 heaven is closed to him. You can receive the forgiveness  
 of sins without all this nonsense, in your own  
 quiet home, or wherever you are [...] the external, audible  
 word of the priests is not the word of God but their own'.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, in Zwingli's *The Sixty-Seven Articles* (1523), the nineteenth simply states 'Christ is the only Mediator between God and us'.<sup>56</sup> If each person has a direct relationship with Christ then each person is responsible for their own relationship with Him. In this second section I will argue that this attitude led to the abandonment of the allegorical and general form of drama present. I will show this through comparing the so-called "morality plays" of the middle ages like *The Castle of Perseverance* to later drama like *Magnyfycence* and *Lusty Juventus* which is more directly concerned with contemporary events and the world outside of the dramatic conceit.

I will end this chapter with what is perhaps the most significant of the Reformation-driven theatrical changes I examine; that of the demise of the civic Cycle plays of medieval England. In this third section I will argue that their demise is directly due to the development of the Reformation and, in particular, due to their lack of compliance to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. This was the Protestant belief that the Bible was innately perfect and therefore should not be unduly interpreted or embellished upon and that all religious edicts must by their nature be based upon Biblical evidence. The first of Zwingli's articles reinforces this, stating that 'all who say that the gospel is nothing without the confirmation of the church make a mistake and blaspheme God'.<sup>57</sup> I will argue that it was in large part the deviation of the Cycle plays from their Biblical sources, for example the embellishment in plays such as *The Fall of Man* or the inclusion of apocryphal events like the *Harrowing of Hell*, that made them the target of reformers and ultimately led to their being banned entirely. I will back up these claims with analysis of the texts and examination of primary sources criticising the tradition as well as defences launched by the playwrights in the form of the *Chester Post-Reformation Banns*.

Throughout this chapter I hope to show not only that the Reformation drove a great deal of theatrical change but also that these changes are better understood when medieval drama is considered alongside sixteenth century Tudor drama.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Hausmann, 'A Report Concerning the Zwickau Prophets' in *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, pp. 59-60, page 60.

<sup>56</sup> Huldrych Zwingli, *The Sixty-Seven Articles*, *ibid.*, pp. 113-14, page 113.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.1: Disguise

The first aspect of Reformation-driven theatrical change that I will examine is the use of disguise in drama and how this trope develops throughout the Reformation period. This section will be divided into three parts. First I will show that the trope of evildoers disguising themselves is limited and does not have the same political resonances in medieval drama as it would do later, secondly I will argue that this trope gains momentum through the Reformation period perhaps due to perceptions of the duplicity of Catholic figures and third I will show that this new trend continues even during the Catholic counter-Reformation in Mary's reign, demonstrating that it had become an entrenched part of the English stage by this point. Through this section I hope to show that, by looking at this change through the lens of the Reformation, we can better understand the reasons for its development.

In pre-Reformation drama in England the use of a disguise for evildoers is infrequent. Indeed, the nature of 'vice' characters is generally clearly apparent in the plays. A good example of this is in the earliest individual play of this study, *The Castle of Perseverance*. In the play, the nature of vice personae is always evident either by their relative positions to the various scaffolds around the playing space or through their own statements. They make no attempt to hide their names from Humanum Genus. For example, Malus Angelus makes no secret of who he is taking Humanum Genus to meet when he states, 'Cum on, man, what hast thou care?/ Go we to þe werld' (*Castle*, ll. 384-5) and, similarly, Mundus himself clearly states that his treasurer is 'syr Couetouse' (l. 764). In an allegorical world where, as Jane Griffiths notes 'names have innate power, equivalent to that of the characteristic they identify', the fact that the vice personae clearly identify themselves, and others, by name is tantamount to warning Humanum Genus about their spiritual danger; arguably the furthest thing from disguise.<sup>58</sup>

Significantly, the danger of the vices is not only indicated by the vice personae themselves. Humanum Genus is clearly and repeatedly warned by virtuous personae about the potential danger of the vices. For example, when Humanum Genus is being taken to meet Mundus, Bonus Angelus warns, 'man, þynke on þyn endynge day' (*Castle*, l. 407) and even the vices clearly warn Humanum Genus about the cost of following their advice. Mundus states that 'Goddys seruyse þou must forsake/ And holy to þe world þe take' (*Castle*, 593-4) thereby making clear to Humanum Genus that to follow him is not to take the virtuous path. This idea that various personae specifically warn the mankind character reflects other dramas of the period which make use of the morality trope such as *Mankind* in which Mercy says of the three vice personae,

<sup>58</sup> Griffiths, 'Lusty Juventus', page 268.

'they wyll be here right son [.../]Thynke on my doctryne; yt xall be yowr defence'.<sup>59</sup> It is clear then that in *The Castle* and the other so called morality dramas, the evildoers are not in disguise. Rather they are clearly evident and both the audience and the representative of Mankind are warned as to the danger of their approach. They achieve corruption through temptation rather than overt duplicity.

A similar tendency becomes apparent even when we look away from stand-alone drama to the great civic Cycles of the late medieval period. The Cycles are of course adapted Biblical stories at their heart and while disguise does not feature very greatly in these plays, they do depict the archetype of disguise stories on stage; the story of the temptation of Eve and the fall of man. However, using the York Cycle's *The Fall of Man* as my example, I would argue that the danger in this play does not come from the fact that Satan has disguised himself. The disguise is a red herring to mask the real moral issue; Eve's disobedience.

As in many plays that use the trope of disguise, the audience is left in no doubt as to the true identity of the character. Satan states 'In a worme liknes wille Y wende,/ And founde to feyne a lowde lesynge', letting the audience know his intention before he calls for Eve.<sup>60</sup> So far, the general trend of the disguise trope has been adhered to but it is when Satan begins to speak to Eve that it turns out he does not mislead her through his disguise. When he asks Eve about which fruit she and Adam may not eat she identifies it and states 'oure lord God forbeedis us itt,/ The fruit þerof, Adam nor I/ To neghe it nere;/ And yf we dide we both shuld dye' (*Fall*, ll. 36-9). Satan then persuades her to eat the fruit by telling her that 'Who etis the frutte of good and ille/ Shalle have knowyng as wele as Hee' (*Fall*, ll. 50-1). Satan does not make her eat the fruit through his disguise but rather through persuading her to ignore God's commandments. Of course, had he not been in disguise she would perhaps have been less likely to listen but I would argue that Satan's mere suggestion that the word of God should be ignored should have marked him out as untrustworthy. In this play, Eve, like *Humanum Genus* in *The Castle*, sins through her own willingness to ignore the advice of virtuous personae rather than through being tricked by a character in disguise.

So in pre-Reformation drama, then, the trope of vice personae using disguise to trick the representative of Mankind into sin was not much used at all. Sin seems to come in these plays when the Mankind character ignores all of the warnings he or she has been given about the consequences of deviant behaviour and the danger of certain vice personae. Even the vices themselves usually make little effort to hide their own nature and instead tempt Mankind through offers of knowledge as in *The Fall of Man* or riches as in *The*

<sup>59</sup> *Mankind*, in *The Macro Plays*, pp.152-184, ll. 257-8. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>60</sup> *The Fall of Man* (York), in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 21-24, ll. 23-4. Further references follow quotations in the text.

*Castle of Perseverance*. I will now go on to demonstrate that later drama being written and performed during the Reformation is full of vice personae achieving their ends by adopting convincing disguises to hide their true nature. I will begin by examining John Bale's *The Three Laws* and move on to use *Lusty Juventus* as a later example of the dangers of evildoers in disguise as virtuous teachers.

The plays of John Bale are at their most basic level pieces of unequivocally Protestant drama and so make excellent case studies for Protestant dramatic tropes. Unlike the earlier plays I have examined above, Bale's plays make frequent use of the disguise trope in their plots. Most significantly, the specific disguises used often relate to Catholic religious figures and characters; as Paul Whitfield White so neatly puts it, Bale presents 'Popish priests as villains'.<sup>61</sup> While I would not go as far as James Simpson did in 2012 when he stated bluntly that 'Bale takes up drama to attack drama', it is undeniable that *one* of the uses of Bales drama is to critique earlier plays by presenting the virtuous characters that appear in them as far more sinister than they seem.<sup>62</sup> Bale achieves this critique through the disguises of his vice personae.

This is particularly true of *The Three Laws* (c. 1538). In the play, vice personae disguise themselves as Catholic figures who in earlier plays would not have been vice personae at all. When Infidelitas, who himself spends much of the play dressed as a friar, is instructing Sodomismus and Idolatria in how to corrupt Naturae Lex, he tells Sodomismus, 'set thu forth sacramentals/ Say dyrge and synge for trentals Stodye the Popes decretals/ and mix them with buggerage'.<sup>63</sup> While the actual corruption of Naturae Lex takes place off-stage, it is clear from the fact that Infidelitas tells Sodomismus to 'synge for trentals' (say thirty requiem Masses) that he intends for Sodomismus to disguise himself as a priest in order to trick Naturae Lex to sin. This is further confirmed by Infidelitas' soliloquy in the following lines in which he states that 'Within the bowndes of Sodomye/ Doth dwell the spirytuall clergye,/ Pope, cardinall, and pryst' (*Laws*, ll. 728-30) and by the fact that when Naturae Lex comes onto the stage 'throwne in a leprye' (l. 758), he warns the audience to 'regard not the Pope, nor yet hys whorysh kyngedom,/ For he is the master of Gomor and *Sodome*' (ll. 778-9, italics mine). It is clear from Naturae Lex's lines, then, that Sodomismus' disguise as a priest or Pope was instrumental in leading him into sin and Infidelitas' comment linking Sodomy to all of the ranks of the clergy suggests that Bale is using Sodomismus' disguise to indicate a more general danger than just from that one disguised character.

A second example of disguise in the text is Ambitio who, it is implied, is disguised as the Pope himself.

<sup>61</sup> White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England*, page 34.

<sup>62</sup> James Simpson, 'John Bale, *Three Laws*' in *The Oxford handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. By Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), page 109.

<sup>63</sup> John Bale, *The Three Laws* in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 493-533, ll. 671-4.

In this role he promises to 'alwayes condempne/ The Byble readers least they our actes contempne' (ll. 1209-10), highlighting the fact that Reformers were directing criticisms against practitioners of traditional religion because that Catholics did not allow vernacular translation of the Bible in order to avoid competing interpretations being espoused by the laity. The fact that Ambitio is disguised as the Pope is also highlighted by the fact that he refers to his 'mytar' (l. 1213) which Infidelitas describes as 'the mouth of a wolfe' (l. 1214). Once again, the audience is left in no doubt as to the fact that the disguises were instrumental in Moseh Lex's fall to sin. He states that he was tricked by vices who 'played the most wycked partes' (l. 1300), thereby suggesting that both the vice personae and the real life individuals they emulated were simply actors playing a part in order to seed doubt and sin.

Whitfield White notes that that 'Bale's stage typology (Popish priests as villains[...]) is a constant feature of Reformation plays through [to] the 1570s' and this is certainly true.<sup>64</sup> Even some ten years later towards the end of the reign of Edward VI, plays are still making use of the disguise trope in their critiques of traditional religion. A good example of this occurs in the play *Lusty Juventus* in which the devil attempts to tempt the eponymous Juventus away from reformed religion and towards the 'old traditions [...] made by men' (*Juventus*, l. 343) of the Catholic faith. To do this he enlists the help of the vice Hypocrisy to whom he says 'thou shall call thy name friendship' (l. 484); Hypocrisy like the vices in *The Three Laws* is to appear in disguise in order to attempt to bring the protagonist of the play into sin.

While Hypocrisy's disguise may not seem as obviously religious as that of the vices in *The Three Laws*, his actions and words betray the religious nature of his disguise. Under the guise of friendly advice, Hypocrisy specifically disparages Protestantism by suggesting that it arises merely from a lack of respect for elders and from youthful misguidedness. He states that 'the world was never merry/ since children were so bold;/ Now every boy will be a teacher,/ the father a fool, and the child a preacher' (ll. 651-4) and describes reformed religion as a 'foul presumption of Youth' (l. 656). These statements echo the Devil's earlier remark that 'the old people would still believe my laws/ But the younger sort lead them a contrary way' (ll. 341-2), indicating to the audience that Hypocrisy as Friendship is merely repeating the Devil's sentiments while using a palatable disguise to engage with Juventus who has been warned by Good Council and Knowledge against such false doctrine.

Disguise in *Lusty Juventus*, then, is used as a dramatic device in much the same way as it is in *The Three Laws*. Just as Ambitio and Sodomismus disguise themselves as religious figures and use Catholic rhetoric

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<sup>64</sup>

White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England*, page 34.

in order to turn the laws of God to sin, so too does Hypocrisy use his disguise to allow him to espouse the Devil's doctrine of 'old traditions [...] made by men' (*Juventus*, l. 343). However, it is not only plays with a Protestant agenda that begin to make full use of the disguise trope on the stage in the sixteenth century. In *Respublica*, the Catholic revival play from the reign of Mary I, vices also make use of disguise in order to lead the representation of mankind, or in this case the representation of the state, to sin. The difference is that in this case, the disguises of the vices relate specifically to Protestant notions as the playwright attempts to depict the recent move towards reformed religion as merely a result of evildoers presenting themselves as revolutionaries.

As with earlier plays, the nature of the disguises that the vices will use is clearly indicated to the audience through dialogue. Avaryce states that he will 'call [...] his] name polycie in stede of covetise' (*Respublica*, l. 80), instructs Insolence to call himself, 'mounsyre Authoritie' (l. 378), tells Auldacion, 'thy name shalbe Honestie' (l. 389) and, most significantly, tells Oppression 'ye shalbe called Reformacyon' (l. 380). Once again, the disguises relate directly to religion. Oppression as Reformacyon is the most obvious but it is also significant that Avaryce models himself as Polycie, suggesting that lawmakers were espousing reformed religion in the pursuit of power for themselves, and that Insolence is Authoritie, which indicates the Catholic position that appealing to the authority of the Bible over religious leaders is as much about insolence towards Church elders as it is about religion.

The religious significance of the vices' disguises is also indicated in their own remarks to *Respublica* herself when they are attempting to trick her into following their path. It is clear when they are speaking to *Respublica* that they are espousing a reformed doctrine which is deliberately undermined through the fact that it is a vice persona that is speaking. A good example is when Oppression as Reformacyon argues to *Respublica* that priests and bishops 'ought not by scripture to be calde lordes' (l. 1071) and states that 'they were prowde and covetous' (l. 1073). The denigration of priests and the established church hierarchy was common in the rhetoric of Reformers and the fact that it is the persona of Oppression who speaks these lines suggests the playwright's opinion that such depictions of clergy were in fact a way to oppress the people rather than liberate them with reformed religion.

There is also a clear indication in the play that the disguises of the vices are instrumental in assisting them in the corruption of *Respublica*. Avaryce states, 'to worke my feate I willmy name disguise' (l. 79) and tells the other vices that by 'Chaungeyng your yll name fewer shall reprove youe' (l. 400). This sentiment is echoed later in the play by Veritee who tells *Respublica*, 'Thow haste been abused/ Whom thowe cholest are vices to be refused' (ll. 1369-70). It is clear from these remarks that, like in the earlier Protestant plays,

the danger of the vices is increased by the fact that they are not what they appear. Thus, in *Respublica*, a Catholic sympathiser has taken the trope of vices disguising themselves as apparently innocuous Catholic figures in order to undermine the Reformation and flipped it so as to suggest that it was in fact the Reformers who were vices in disguise.

I have demonstrated in this section that the use of disguise in drama increases as it becomes used as a political tool in the Reformation period. I would argue further that this theatrical development happens not only concurrently with the Reformation in England but as a direct result of it. The evidence for this lies in the fact that the technique seems to be used so extensively in Protestant drama and that in that drama the trope serves a vital function. Bale's plays were, as Whitfield White summarises, 'designed to popularise the royal supremacy and especially to discredit papal authority' to the laity in the towns in which they were performed and the best way to do this was to present papal and clerical authority as fundamentally flawed and duplicitous.<sup>65</sup> Bale achieves this by presenting his purveyors of traditional religion as vices in disguise. Similarly the fact that, in *Lusty Juventus*, Hypocrisy disguises himself as friendship suggests that the proponents of traditional religion were actually always false friends to the laity. The function of the disguise is always to reject the old views while remaining sympathetic to any taken in by them.

In the brief counter-Reformation in England under Mary's reign Catholic apologists make use of the disguise trope in drama in almost the exact same way. Vice personae are disguised as religious reformers in order to both undermine their messages and to some extent excuse those taken in by them. Earlier Catholic drama had no real need of such tropes as the establishment in England by and large supported the Catholic church and so any dissidents such as John Wycliffe were generally seen as just that. However, by the time of Mary's reign, Catholic apologists are put on the defensive and are forced to justify their own position by repudiating that of the reformers. In doing this the playwrights seem to have come to the same decision as earlier writers; that the best way to reject the recent past was to depict their theological rivals as far more sinister than they might initially seem on the surface.

The increase of the use of disguise as a theatrical trope, then, develops as a direct result of the Reformation as both reformers and Catholic apologists strive to depict one another as duplicitous and untrustworthy to the laity who viewed the plays. Indeed, the Protestants were particularly successful in this as the idea that Catholics were in some way sinister and not what they seemed became a commonplace in later drama. As Cloked Colusyon, disguised as a priest, remarks in John Skelton's *Magnyfycence*, 'two faces

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<sup>65</sup> White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England*, page 13.

in a hode covertly I bere' (*Magnyfycence*, l. 710). This idea of two-faced Catholics never really died out.

## 2.2: Individual Responsibility for a Personal Relationship with God<sup>66</sup>

A second change in drama during the period of study that is directly related to the religious changes of the period is the development of the idea of an individual's responsibility for his own relationship with God. As I discussed in 1.2, the Reformation brought with it a sense that every individual had a personal relationship with God and this meant that the role of a preacher was no longer as intercessor between the individual and the deity. Throughout the centuries covered by this dissertation, drama gradually begins to reflect this in the move away from extremely allegorical medieval drama to a form of theatre that, while still allegorical, was arguably much more rooted in real life events. Thus, in the same way that worship was no longer strictly concerned with the general in the Protestant period, drama also moved away from the depiction of general, allegorical spiritual events to conceits that mirrored real life.

This section is made up of three parts. In the first I will show that medieval drama such as *The Castle of Perseverance* is not particularly concerned with the individual's relationship with God, but rather with that of the collective whole of humanity. I will also demonstrate that, while the Cycle plays may seem to have imbued some characters with individually recognisable traits, which could be used to argue that they were concerned with the individual rather than the general, these personae are merely representative types. In the second section I will show that, with the development of Protestantism, drama began to more closely reflect the real world; just as Protestantism was concerned with the relationship of the individual with God rather than the relationship of the collective whole of humanity, so too was drama leaving behind allegory which made general points in order to focus on a more realist, and therefore individual, relationship with the world. I will look particularly at the presence of references to contemporary events in *Magnyfycence*, and in *Lusty Juventus*. Finally I will show that, in an effort to align himself more with traditional drama and traditional religion, the playwright of *Respublica* returns to a dramatic world in which the spiritual struggles of the individual as mainly used as a type through which to understand humanity's more general endeavours.

The Catholic focus on unity in prayer and on the importance on the body and hierarchy of the Church as an institution above that of the individual is clearly reflected in medieval drama. In the so-called "morality plays" like *The Castle of Perseverance* or *Mankind* the emphasis on the idea that the persona upon the stage is merely a representative of humanity rather than a representation of an individual is inescapably

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<sup>66</sup> See the introduction to this chapter for a detailed explanation of what I mean by the phrase 'Individual responsibility for a Personal Relationship with God'.

present. The idea of the main persona as representative of the whole is most clearly shown by the names of these personae. In *The Castle of Perseverance* he is known as Humanum Genus (the human race) and, of course, in *Mankind* he is simply named Mankind. While these personae may appear as individuals when they are portrayed by an actor on the stage, they are also undeniably intended to be portrayals of Mankind as a whole.

If we take *The Castle of Perseverance* as an example this intention is clear beyond the obvious naming of the character. In particular, statements by virtuous personae ostensibly addressed to Humanum Genus could be read as addressed to the audience and, by implication, to mankind at large. For example, when Confescio absolves Humanum Genus of his sins about halfway through *The Castle* he states 'Shryffte may no man forsake./ Whanne Mankynde cryeth I am redy' (ll. 1429-30). The phrase 'no man' immediately gives his speech a wider significance beyond that of the play. Similarly at the end of the play, Deus Pater's speech to Humanum Genus is undoubtedly intended to be directed at Mankind as a whole, a fact which is underlined by the persona himself when he states 'all men example here-at may take/ To mayntein þe goode, and mendyn here mys' (ll. 3643-4). This is significantly different to, for example, *Lusty Juventus*, in which, while the main persona may be named generally, there is a clear relationship between that persona and a real individual, in this case Edward VI.

Medieval plays like *The Castle*, then, have even less to do with individuals than they do with contemporary events and, like a recited Catholic prayer, their power lies in the ability to represent the laity as a whole rather than to show an example through the representation of the individual. This ability was ably summarised by Natalie Crohn Schmitt as long ago as the 1970s when she explained that 'while we, in our scientific rationalism, distinguish abruptly between "mankind in general" and "a man", this distinction was not central in medieval times when the person as a perceiver was understood to interpenetrate with that which was perceived'; so in watching such a play the audience actually becomes a part of it in the same way that in participating in the mass, the individual becomes part of the Church as a whole.<sup>67</sup> In this way the play acts an intermediary between the religious experience and the audience in a way that later plays do not.

Produced throughout the same period as plays like *The Castle*, however, were the Biblical Cycle plays and these plays may seem to present more original and individual characters and thus belie the idea that Medieval playwrights were aiming to reflect with mass with the generality of their dramatic creations.

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<sup>67</sup> Natalie Chrohn Schmitt, 'The Idea of a Person in Medieval Morality Plays' in *Comparative Drama* Vol. 12, No. 1 (1978), pp. 23-34, pp. 30-1.

However, I would argue that the 'characters' within these plays are no more representative of an individual than *Humanum Genus* or Mankind. Possibly the most famous, and certainly one of the most striking, is the depiction of Noah's shrewish wife in the plays of York and Chester. In scenes that do not exist in the Biblical account on which the plays are based, Noah's wife refuses to enter the boat at all, claiming that her husband is 'near wood' (close to madness) and her arguments with him form the basis of a humorous segment in an otherwise serious part of the Cycle plays.

In the Chester Cycle, Noah's wife refuses to board, stating 'rowe forth, Noe, whether thou list/ And get thee a new wife'<sup>68</sup> and when she further emphasises, 'I will not come therein to-daye' (Chester, ll. 217-18) her sons are forced to comically carry her onto the boat 'whether [she] will or not' (Chester, l. 244). In the York play she is even more difficult, famously physically attacking Noah when she states, 'by my trouth, thou gets a clout'.<sup>69</sup> This behaviour is far from the Biblical account and from the semi-passive and ripe for projection 'Mankind' personae in the morality drama, however it is in its own way just as general.

The key to understanding the character of Noah's wife is hinted at in King and Beadle's brief introduction to the play in their Oxford edition when they state that 'The tradition of her disobedience was rooted in Eastern legend which told that [... it] was due to the temptations of Satan'<sup>70</sup> and they go on to note that 'the entire episode [...can be] figuratively interpreted as the reluctance of the hardened sinner to enter the Church until the moment of death'<sup>71</sup>. If we subscribe to King and Beadle's view, as I think we must, then despite how individually interesting the character of Noah's wife may appear, her comic and apparently single minded animosity towards her husband and his endeavours is reduced to a general representation of a person resistant to the call of God and the Church. With her apparent individuality stripped away she is in fact exactly like *Humanum Genus*; after all, *The Castle's* story too is the depiction of 'the reluctance of the hardened sinner to enter the church until the moment of death'.<sup>72</sup> Other apparently individual characters in the Cycle plays can also be reduced to such types. For example, Jesus himself in the passion plays who exhibits a striking calm stoicism can be seen as simply the archetype of the Christian martyr and therefore once again simply intended as a broad example to the audience rather than an actual representation of an individual.

<sup>68</sup> *Noah (Chester)* in *English Mystery Plays*, ed. By Peter Happe, pp. 118-132, ll 207-8. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>69</sup> *The Flood (York)* in *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling*, ed. By Richard Beadle and Pamela King (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics: 2009), pp. 21-32 (ll. 120).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, page 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*.

Medieval drama, then, followed the example of traditional Catholicism in eliminating the individual from religious concerns, rather viewing the audience as a sinful whole. Also, medieval drama reflects a society in which the supremacy of God and the Church over the spiritual concerns of the laity was paramount. It does this through that fact that, in morality plays, Mankind is always forgiven regardless of his actions, and through the fact that, in the Cycle plays, as Biblical stories, the events and the fate of the characters represented are inevitable and outside the control of the individual.

As Protestantism took hold in England, it brought with it the idea that each individual is responsible for his own relationship with God. There was no longer any need for sacraments such as Reconciliation as reformers argued that mankind no longer required an intermediary for their interactions with God. This idea of the responsibility for the individual is enshrined in the popular drama of 1530s. Of course, the popular drama need not have been written at the time; as I argued in 1.2, plays like Skelton's *Magnyfycence* could take on a new significance with the backdrop of a new political and theological era. I would argue that one of these new significances acquired by *Magnyfycence* is that of the importance of personal responsibility for one's relationship with God and that, while it may have initially been, as Peter Happe has suggested, 'a secularisation of some aspects of the morality play genre', by the time of its publication in 1530 it could be seen as related to theological concerns as any medieval play.<sup>73</sup>

The first way in which *Magnyfycence* could be seen as supporting the Protestant idea of spiritual responsibility is in the identity of the protagonist himself. *Magnyfycence* is not a generalised 'everyman' but rather a 'prynce' (*Magnyfycence*, l. 159), the very definition of personal agency. As such, there is much less of a sense of the idea of God's unconditional forgiveness for sinful transgressions. Indeed, the personae in the play speak in terms of *Magnyfycence*'s responsibilities rather than giving him advice. For example, Lyberte says 'there is no prynce but he hath nede of us thre:/ Welthe, with measure, and pleasaunt Lyberte' (l. 159-60), suggesting that rather than these things being qualities that it is merely advisable for *Magnyfycence* to have, they are qualities that a prince 'hath *nede* of' (l. 159) and cannot do without. This is a statement of fact rather than advice which suggests that *Magnyfycence* does not require spiritual advice from other personae in the same way as previous protagonists; he does not require a mediator for God's advice.

*Magnyfycence*'s agency is also suggested by the fact that the personae in the play are not clearly divided along the virtue and vice line. Indeed, there are some personae, such as Folly, which are undoubtedly vices

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<sup>73</sup> Peter Happe, 'Madness and the Fall of Skelton's *Magnyfycence*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, pp. 482-98, page 484.

but with others there is the idea that their being virtuous or sinful depends upon how carefully they are controlled. Lyberte is a good example of this. Early in the play, Magnyfycence expresses concern that his 'magnyfycence/ Without Measure lyghtly may fade,/ Of to moche lyberte under the offence' (ll. 227-9) and describes Lyberte as 'a wanton thyng'(l. 240) and yet Lyberte is still seen as a necessary quality for a prince. Indeed, near the end of the play as Magnyfycence is brought to poverty, Lyberte observes that 'yf Measure had ruled Lyberte as he began,/ This lurdyn that here lyeth had ben a noble man' (ll. 2109-10). The sense is here that Lyberte can be a virtue and a vice depending upon the choices made by the person exhibiting it. The key word here is *choice* as, unlike with the vices of earlier plays, Lyberte was not necessarily corrupting unless misused. *Magnyfycence*, then, can be seen, inadvertently on the Catholic Skelton's part, as a proponent of a Protestant doctrine that suggested one must take responsibility for one's own spiritual well being as, like Lyberte, sin and virtue are not so easily separated by external agencies.

The idea of personal responsibility is also present in the relationship of drama to contemporary events and figures. With plays like *Magnyfycence*, which several commentators have argued was 'provoked by the expulsion of the [...] king's particular young favourites – from the [royal] household', the reference to and close relationship with real life events, and the association of *Magnyfycence* with King Henry dispenses with the generality of earlier plays and by extension the generality of Catholic theology.<sup>74</sup> The closeness of the relationship between the fiction of the plays and the real life figures who are represented within them mirrors the new closeness that the individual had with God in Protestant doctrine; neither priest nor a mankind figure was required as a mediator for the laity any more.

This relationship with real events and people becomes more apparent as time goes on with plays like John Bale's *King Johan* blatantly referencing real, albeit historical events, and an example of a play full of significance in relation to real events and figures is *Lusty Juventus*, written during King Edward's reign. The most obvious point to make is that while I agree with Jane Griffiths in her assertion that *Juventus* is 'specifically a figure of youth in the partially reformed England of the mid-sixteenth century', it is undeniable that the persona is also a stand-in for Edward VI.<sup>75</sup> For example, the constant references to the danger of young people being in charge of their elders is repeatedly alluded to in the text such as when Hypocrisy states that 'the world was never merry/ since children were so bold:/ Now every boy will be a teacher' (*Juventus* ll. 51-3) or when the Devil says that 'the old people would still believe in my laws/ But the younger sort lead them a contrary way' (ll. 341-2). This could be seen as a reference to the fact that the

<sup>74</sup> Scattergood, 'Familiar and Homely': The Intrusion and articulation of Vice in Skelton's *Magnyfycence*', page

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<sup>75</sup> Griffiths, 'Lusty Juventus', page 265.

most stringent adherents to the new faith were the young but I think we must also see it as remarking upon the reign of Edward who was only nine when he took the throne following his father's death.

The play also references the fact that Edward's rule of England was not all that it appeared to be. As I discussed in 1.3, Edward was in fact largely a puppet ruler for a politically savvy protectorate. This is reflected in the play in that, despite Hypocrisy and the Devil's remarks about children being in control of their elders, Juventus actually does very little of his own accord. Instead he mostly acts on the advice of elder priest-like personae such as Good Council who appears both at the beginning of the play to encourage Juventus to take up a life of virtue when he says 'as God hath created you of nothing,[.../] it is unmeet that ye should lead your living/ Contrary to his godly determination' (ll. 92-5) and at the end to save him from sin (ll. 1026 ff). In the same way as Edward was more of a puppet than a leader, then, so too is Juventus merely espousing the theology taught to him by his elders. The theological implication of a play like this that so closely imitates life is a sense of the loss of anonymity in religion. Just as with Protestantism, the individual was felt to have a closer relationship with God, so too do personae in Protestant drama have a closer relationship with real life.

As I noted in 1.4, the beginning of the reign of Queen Mary in 1553 brought with it a move back towards traditional religion. In 2.1 I argued that *Respublica*, a particularly Catholic play of this era took the idea of disguise from Protestant drama and presented it in a Catholic context, thus becoming something of a halfway house between medieval drama and early sixteenth century plays. Similarly I would argue that *Respublica* takes some aspects of the Protestant move towards individual spiritual responsibility such as the play's proximity to real events, but is closer to medieval drama like *The Castle* in the fact of the generality of the main persona and the fact that *Respublica* is not particularly responsible for her own decisions but rather is led by a variety of personae.

The main aspect of *Respublica* that appears to have been influenced by the idea of the personal relationship with God that I have discussed above is the fact that it appears to have some proximity to real life. Indeed, it is inarguable that *Respublica* apes the events of the preceding two decades of religious life in England, presenting the real life events as a Catholic morality play writ large. This is particularly evident in the fact that the traditional vice personae of the play present themselves as aspects of reformed religion. Avarice presents himself as Policy, Oppression as Reformation and Adulation as Honesty. The vices disguise themselves as progress in order to 'escape blame' (*Respublica*, l. 374) and tempt *Respublica*, the queen, into changing her country's religion to the great detriment of the people can undoubtedly be read as a Catholic interpretation of the real events of the preceding years. *Respublica*, then, is similar to

*Magnyfycence* and *Lusty Juventus* in the sense that, unlike the medieval plays, it depicts real events fairly closely rather than relying entirely on metaphor.

However, despite this similarity in the depiction of real events, I would argue that *Respublica* is largely a reaction against the Protestant doctrine that is reflected in the plays I discussed above. This is indicated through tropes from medieval drama that are present in the play. The most significant of these is the fact that, like *Humanum Genus* in *The Castle*, it is not *Respublica*'s actions that return her from a fallen state but rather those enacted through virtuous personae on her behalf. For example, near the end of the play, *Respublica* still cannot see the fact that *Policie* is *Avarice* in disguise, stating that 'I ner suspecte hym nor hadde hym in zelosie' (l. 1771) and it takes *Veritee* to reveal their true identity:

*Veritee*: Een suche like counterfaictes shall all the rest appere.  
Sirs doe of your vtmost robes eche one even heare.  
Now what these are yee see plaine demonstration.

*Respublica*: Insolence. Oppression. Adulaton.  
O lorde howe have I bee vsed these five yeres past?' (ll. 1772-6).

This is an important passage as it very clearly highlights the fact that *Respublica* is not able to see through the disguises of the vices on her own and that she is in need of an interpreter in the form of *Verity* to help her do so. This is far from the importance of individual responsibility that is espoused in, for example, *Magnyfycence* where the prince is not only meant to be able to tell the difference between virtuous personae and vices but he is also required to appropriately use personae which can be either good or bad. Even in *Lusty Juventus*, in which, as I have discussed, *Juventus*' control is limited, he is able to reject sin largely on his own.

So while *Respublica* has to be helped with her identification of the vices and is even denied the opportunity to excise the vices from her court herself as *Verity* says that 'the punishment of this/ Muste bee referred to the goddesse Nemesis' (ll. 1780-1), *Magnyfycence* is given far more freedom. This is because, according to the Protestant ideal of a personal relationship with God, there is no need for an intermediary. *Verity* revealing the vices to *Respublica* shows that the playwright is concerned with arguing for the Catholic tradition of the need for a priest to act as an intermediary between the laity and God. Thus, while the play does have an element of realism that developed during the Protestant period, it actively rejects Protestant doctrine.

The presentation of the Protestant idea of a personal relationship with God, then, is a clear example of Reformation driven theatrical change. Before the Reformation, in the Cycle plays and in plays like *The Castle*, the very general nature of both Biblical types and personae simply named 'Mankind' or 'the human race' coupled with the fact that all religious change is always enacted through another meant that these plays reflected the dominant Catholic perspective of the time. Throughout the ensuing years plays moved away from non-specific events happening to personae in a world somewhere in between heaven and our own to a sense of realism caused by the fact that they so often referenced contemporary events. This realism coupled with a sense of responsibility and choice held by the leading characters of the play was related to the Protestant arguments that there was no need for intermediaries between a soul and God and that every individual had a specific and direct relationship with the deity. Finally, in the reign of Mary, drama once again kept tropes that had developed through the beginnings of Protestantism such as the references to contemporary events but actively rejected the idea that there was no need for a priest-like interpreter of the relationship between the individual and God. The development of the Reformation, then, enacted a direct change upon the dramatic texts that surrounded it resulting in a more individualist theatre rooted in real events, paving the way for plays like the history plays of the late sixteenth century.

### 2.3 – *Sola Scriptura*

A third and final example of Reformation driven dramatic change is the development of the idea of *sola scriptura* throughout the Protestant period. *Sola scriptura* is in essence the idea that all theological laws must be based on scripture with as little interpretation as possible. As the Swiss reformer Zwingli notes 'It is not for us to sit in judgement on Scripture and divine truth, but to let God do his work in and through it [...] Of course, we have to give an account of our understanding of Scripture, but not in such a way that it is forced or wrested according to our own will'.<sup>76</sup> This idea was part of a more general movement which questioned any theological precepts for which no parallel could be found in the Bible, for example, the idea that mass should only be performed in Latin.

In this section, I will look at the effect of the development of *sola scriptura* on drama. In particular I will argue that the decrease in popularity, and eventual outlawing of, the medieval Cycle

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<sup>76</sup> Huldrych Zwingli, *Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God, The European Reformations Sourcebook*, pp. 112-113, page 113.

plays is in large part because of this idea. First I will expand on my argument from 1.1 that the Cycle plays often embellish the Biblical accounts of the events that they depict, and, second, I will show, through examination of the defences and criticisms of the Cycles throughout the Protestant period, that this theatrical change was specifically driven by the theological change in the focus on *sola scriptura*.

As I mentioned above, the Cycle plays are easily seen as simply straight adaptations of Biblical events but to see them as such is to dismiss their subtlety and their inventiveness. Most analysis of these plays focusses either on the specific choice of and staging of the Biblical stories<sup>77</sup> or on the idea of *figura*; the Old Testament plays as prefiguring New Testament events<sup>78</sup> but it is more unusual for commentators to focus on the ways in which the Cycle plays deviate from the Biblical sources. However, the ways in which these plays deviate from their sources is actually key to understanding how 'it was inevitable that Elizabethan reform would attack the Corpus Christi Cycles' (Duffy, page 579) despite the 'amount of civic pride and community effort which went into [their] production' (Duffy, page 579). The inevitability of their suppression is not only due to their espousal of Catholic ideals but also due to their embellishment of Biblical truth, something far more sacrosanct in the Protestant period.

A good example of a Cycle play that initially appears to be simply based upon the Biblical account but in fact embellishes it is the York *The Fall of Man*. The play is of course based on Genesis Chapter 3 in which Eve is tempted to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge by the serpent. However, it expands upon this story in two ways. The first is in the reaction of Eve to the serpent's questioning. In the Biblical account, Eve is easy to convince, in-keeping with the standard rhetoric of women as easily led astray. She merely remarks when asked that 'of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat' (Gen, 3:3) and offers no further argument when the serpent asserts that the fruit is, in fact, safe to eat.<sup>79</sup>

In the York play, by contrast, she argues with the serpent for a full twenty-seven lines, embellishing on her Biblical character by arguing against the serpent's promise that 'ho etis the frute of goode and ille/ Shalle have knowyng as wele as Hee' (*Fall of Man*, ll.50-1) by pointing out that

<sup>77</sup> See John Westley Harris' remarks upon the 'radical selection of old testament episodes' (page 105), *Medieval Theatre in Context*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), page 104 ff.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, page 94 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims Version, (Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2009). All Biblical quotations are taken from this version.

'To ete þerof us nedith it nought,/ We have lordshippe to make maistre/ Of alle þynge þat in erthe is wrought' (*Fall*, ll. 57-9). Of course, Eve is still tempted in the end as she must be but the York play has her make more of an attempt at a theological argument with Satan as than she did in the Biblical account. This may seem like an innocuous change but it is actually quite significant as it had the effect of presenting Eve as possessing more agency and more intelligence than the Biblical account would suggest. Thus, it actually contradicts the implied essence of the Biblical story in a way that was unacceptable to people who favoured the *sola scriptura* attitude towards Biblical sources.

A second way in which the play deviates from its source is remarked upon as long ago as 1972 by Rosemary Woolf when she noted that 'In the York play [...] Adam replies to God's question, 'where art thou?' not with a paraphrase of Genesis [...] but with a statement far more movingly evocative of his changed condition'.<sup>80</sup> Of course, in the Genesis account, Adam's reply is, 'I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself' (Gen 3:10) but in the York play he answers, 'I here þe[e] Lorde and seys The[e] nozt' (*Fall*, l. 139). This is a fascinating line as, far from the simple statements of fact in the Biblical version, the answer of Adam in the play is one that is not only, as Woolf puts it, 'evocative of his changed condition' but also rings with loss.<sup>81</sup> Not only is God unable to see Adam as he is hiding but Adam is now so far removed from God by his actions that he in turn cannot see Him. Adam's answer to God epitomises the play as the story of *The Fall of Man*; by the end of the play Adam has fallen so far from God's grace that he can no longer see Him at all. Again, deviations like this may seem to be rather innocuous but any change made from the Biblical source carries with it the heretical implication that the Bible was in some way lacking or in need of development.

Of course, deviation from scripture was not only present in changes made to stories in plays that otherwise followed the Biblical source fairly carefully. Some of the events depicted in the Cycle plays were in fact almost entirely apocryphal. One such example is the opening play of the York Cycle, *The Fall of the Angels* which, as Beadle and King note 'is an ancient apocryphal episode based on patristic expositions of several scattered Biblical passages'.<sup>82</sup> While the play's status merely an 'exposition' immediately marks it out as deviating from the sacred sources, it is still significant in the scheme of the York plays, not least in the fact that it is a significant parallel for *The Fall of Man*. It provides a fascinating contrast between God's legitimate claim to divinity when

<sup>80</sup> Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), page 119.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Introduction to *The Fall of the Angels*, pp. 1-2, page 1.

He opens the play by describing Himself as '*Alpha et O*' (Alpha and Omega)<sup>83</sup> and 'maker unmade' (*Angels*, l. 4) and Lucifer's counter claim when he states that 'All the myrthe þat is made is markide in me' (*Angels*, l. 51) and 'I am worthely wroghte with wyrship' (*Angels*, l. 83). The fact that Lucifer's lines are slightly shorter in length as well as devoid of the Latin that opens God's speech make his statements easier for the audience to take in, emphasising how tempting it can be to listen to Lucifer above God.

Significantly, unlike *The Fall of Man*, the play contains a fascinating criticism of the deity when Lucifer complains 'I sayde but a thoghte' (l. 116). God is here depicted as a tyrant punishing what Greg Walker describes as 'literally a thought crime' and the fact that He is shown as such suggests that the play to some extent, prefiguring John Milton's *Paradise Lost* by some two hundred years, is suggesting that Lucifer is at least partly a victim.<sup>84</sup> Certainly he is arrogant and proud but these crimes are punished swiftly and irrevocably; as Walker notes, 'no sooner do they [the bad angels] voice their pride than they fall into Hell to be transformed into devils' and a question could be raised as to what extent Lucifer is the villain of the piece.<sup>85</sup> Enigmatic episodes like this in Cycles purportedly depicting the development of the universe according to the Bible would have been deeply problematic for Protestant reformers.

With such problematic apocryphal episodes like *The Fall of the Angels* and the frequent embellishment of Biblical sources as in *The Fall of Man*, the movement towards the suppression of the Cycle plays based on the idea of the immutability of the scripture that the Cycles, along with the Catholic Church as a whole, so frequently deviated from was inevitable. The backlash against the Cycle plays is easy to see in primary sources and is, among other reasons, a result of the fact that they deviate so much from scripture.

*The Tretise of Miraclis Pleying* is a lengthy attack on Cycle plays written at some point in the fifteenth century. It is significant to our purposes in the fact that part of the reason of the Lollard dislike of the plays seems to be based on their relationship to scripture. This is clearly evident towards the end of the treatise when the author states that Cycle plays are actually more morally dangerous than normal plays with no religious aspect because they have 'a double shrewidnesse, [...] For now þe puple zyveþ credence to many mengid leesyngis for opere mengid trefpis and maken

<sup>83</sup> York *The Fall of the Angels* in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 12-15, l. 1. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>84</sup> Introduction to *The Fall of Angels*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, page 12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

wenen to be gode þat is ful yvel'.<sup>86</sup> This is an interesting passage as it acknowledges the fact that the Cycle plays are made up of a mix of Biblical truth and embellished apocryphal material, 'mengid leesyngis [...and] treþis', and argues that this mix is inherently dangerous to present to the laity as it causes them to not know the difference between the scriptural truth and the falsehoods presented to them upon the pageant wagons.<sup>87</sup> While this treatise predates the Reformation by several decades, it is interesting to see that the idea of what is essentially *sola scriptura* was being raised to point out theological issues with the Cycle plays as far back as the fifteenth century.

As I noted at the beginning of this section, the censorship of the Cycle plays really gained traction during the early Elizabethan period and another primary source provides an interesting glance into possible reasons behind such suppression. In 1567, Matthew Hutton, the dean of York who would become the archbishop in 1595, replied in a letter to the mayor of York regarding the matter of whether York should continue with the performance of the Cycle plays under the Protestant regime. In the letter he states, 'I find manie thinges that I muche like because of th'antiquite, so I see manie thinges that I can not allow, because they be Disagreinge from the senceritie of the Gospell'.<sup>88</sup> Here Hutton is clear; the issue with the York plays is that they deviate too much from the truth of the scripture. Of course, this is not the only reason that Hutton and the Lollards take issue with the plays but there is no doubt that the irreverence for Gospel truth plays a big role in the developing distaste for the plays during the development of Protestantism.

Of course, the playwrights themselves are well aware of this. In the Post-Reformation Banns of the Chester Cycle, the playwright shows a clear knowledge of the criticisms that are being levelled against the plays and attempts to launch a defence of them. The defence in the Banns is in essence that the plays were written in 'the tyme of ignorance wherein we did straye' and one of the biggest anxieties the playwright has about the Cycles is the fact that so many of the events depicted do not technically exist in scripture.<sup>89</sup> There are three pageants in particular that the playwright seems nervous of. The first is *The Fall of Lucifer*, Chester's equivalent of York's *The Fall of the Angels*, which the playwright says 'of custome olde/ The Fall of Lucifer did set out' (Banns, ll. 64-65). The defence here that the story is known 'of custome olde' (l. 64) is interesting as it seems to beg for the inclusion of the play on the basis of cultural tradition while acknowledging that it doesn't have a

<sup>86</sup> *The Tretis of Miraclis Pleyinge*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 196-200, page 200.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Hutton, Letter to the Mayor and Council of York, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, page 206.

<sup>89</sup> Chester, *The Post-Reformation Banns*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp. 201-205, l. 40. Further references follow quotations in the text.

scriptural basis. Similarly, when referring to the pageant of *The Harrowing of Hell*, the playwright states that 'our beleeffe is that Christe after His passion/ Descended into Hell but what He [did] in that place,/ Though our authour set fourth after his opinion,/ Yet creditt you the best learned' (ll. 147-50). Here, the pageant is presented as the author's 'opinion' (l. 149) and through this the playwright stresses the idea that, while the events are not scriptural<sup>90</sup>, he is not suggesting that they should be taken as such, suggesting that they are forgiveable if never intended to deceive.

As well as acknowledging that these two events are not in the Bible at all, the playwright also points out that the *Shepherds' Play* is based on only small amounts of scriptural evidence, stating that 'all that the a[u]thor had to stande upon/ Was "Glorye to God above, and peace of Earth to Man"' (ll. 102-3). While this story is technically based on scriptural evidence, the playwright seems to still feel the need to acknowledge that it is based on very little evidence as significantly expanded. This shows that the concern about the importance of *sola scriptura* is not just directed at pageants which depict events not in the Bible at all, but also at embellished stories like that of the York *Fall of Man* which I discussed above.

Of course the efforts of the author of *The Post-Reformation Banns* were fruitless as the tide of public opinion against the Cycle plays as Protestantism took hold in England was simply too great. By the end of the sixteenth century, as Duffy so succinctly puts it, 'two centuries of religious drama, and a whole chapter in lay appropriation of traditional religious teaching and devotion were at an end' (Duffy, page 582).

This is perhaps the most significant theologically driven theatrical change that I have discussed in this chapter. While the changes in the idea of disguises and the development of the idea of an individual relationship with God causes changes in the way that stories are presented upon the stage throughout the sixteenth century, it is only this move towards the importance of *sola scriptura* that pays such a big part not only the change of a genre but its destruction. It would seem that, by the end of the sixteenth century, the risk of portraying Biblical events upon the stage or pageant wagon was simply too great and the public and the authorities would no longer accept the excuses given in the Chester *Post-Reformation Banns* as reasons for changes of the Scripture.

### Conclusion

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<sup>90</sup> The events are described in the Gospel of Nicodemus which had been dismissed as apocryphal by this point.

The drama of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, as I have demonstrated, adapted and changed to suit the theological changes that were occurring across England as a whole. Disguised characters in drama were used by both Protestant and Catholic apologists and, by looking at this development through a theological lens, we can see that it arose, at least in part, for theological reasons as both sides of the debate used it to depict the other as duplicitous and untrustworthy on the stage. Similarly, the development of the idea of an individual relationship with God is depicted in drama by the move away from allegory and closer relationship with the real world that develops in the sixteenth century. Finally, the Protestant idea of *sola scriptura*, the infallibility of scripture, spelled the end of the long-running Cycle plays of the fifteenth century as they became untenable due to their rather loose relationship with their scriptural sources.

What I have demonstrated in this chapter is that the Reformation had massive effects on England's civic and ecclesiastical structures, and these effects were in turn reflected on the stage. . The drama of England consistently reflects on the stage the theological changes that are being enacted in the country. What I have also shown is that, for the effect of these changes to be fully understood, both medieval and Tudor drama must be studied together. All too often medieval drama and that of the sixteenth century are seen as two distinct groups but, as I have shown in this chapter, to understand the development in the later drama, we must look at in comparison to its earlier counterpart. One cannot be understood without the other.

In the third and final chapter of this dissertation, I will show that it is not only theological ideas that can be understood by looking at developments in drama, but also civic ones. I will show how the development of a sixteenth century idea of kingship is reflected in the changes in dramatic practice throughout the period stretching from the birth of the Lollard movement to the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

### Chapter Three

In *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City*, Pamela King states that 'the true area of conflict [addressed by the Cycle plays] lay not there [between the city and the church] but between the city in its entirety and the Crown' and it is the effect of relationships with the monarchy and changes in the nature of kingship which I will concern myself with in this chapter.<sup>91</sup> In medieval England, the monarchy are seen as supporters of, but ultimately inferior to, the papacy. However, the major change that developed with the English reformation is that the King was now 'the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England'.<sup>92</sup> The king in effect had taken the place of the Pope in the English religious consciousness and this was reflected in the changes in depictions of the monarchy in English drama through the development of Protestantism in England.

I will begin this chapter by arguing that, in the drama of the middle ages, kings are generally seen as anti-religious despots. I will show this through examination of examples such as King Herod and Satan in the Cycle plays and Mundus in *The Castle of Perseverance*. I will then argue that the Kings depicted in the plays of the reign of Henry VIII become defenders of the faith in quite a literal way and will show this through analysis of *The Play of the Weather* and *Lusty Juventus*. Finally, I will finish the chapter by looking at the effect of these changes on *Respublica*, written in the reign of Mary I. In particular I will examine the persona of Res Publica in the eponymous play. Throughout I will show that the changes in the relationship of the monarchy to the religion of the country are consistently reflected in the dramatic changes of the same period and, furthermore, that these changes are best understood when examining the drama as a continuous whole rather than as separate units.

The notion of kingship in the Cycle plays is general not a complimentary one. James Simpson stated in 2002 that 'the Cycle plays are populated by tyrants' and this is evident in an examination of many of the plays such as *Moses and the Pharaoh* in which the Pharaoh is depicted as an insane despot.<sup>93</sup> As I noted in 2.3 of this dissertation, it is arguable that even that God himself in *The Fall of Man* could be viewed as a totalitarian figure, unfairly punishing Lucifer. However the archetype of the despot as portrayed in the Cycle plays is undoubtedly Herod. Herod Antipater, tetrarch of Galilee from 4BC to 39 AD, is of course depicted as maniacal and murderous in the Bible but in the

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<sup>91</sup> Pamela M. King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), page 194.

<sup>92</sup> *The Act of Supremacy*, in *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, page 223.

<sup>93</sup> James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 2*, page 514.

Cycle plays he becomes the very epitome of bad kingship. I will show this through an examination of the York plays of *Herod and the Magi* and *Christ Before Herod* paying particular attention to Herod's opening speeches.

In his opening speech of *Herod and the Magi*, Herod highlights an issue that was a key conflict between the Church and the secular monarchs. Namely that one could not pledge absolute fealty both to a King and to God without the King being somehow equated with the deity. Indeed, this is exactly what Herod does in the opening of this play. His statement that 'Thunders full throly by thousands I throw/ When me likes'<sup>94</sup> coupled with his invocations of the Roman gods 'Raiking over [...his] royalty' (l. 3) depict him as a godlike figure to whom even Jupiter, the King of the Gods, is subject. While this speech is cast deliberately in a pagan light, it has undeniable parallels with God's speech in *The Fall of the Angels*. Like God in that speech, Herod opens the play proclaiming his ascendancy and thus he becomes a rather grotesque and violent, with the threats of throwing thunderbolts, parody of God.

While Herod's opening speech in *Christ Before Herod* does not make any claims as to his divinity in the same way, it is in a similar tyrannical vein. Herod threatens the assembled audience, telling them to be quiet and warning them that if they don't, 'þis brande þat is bright shall breste in youre brayne'<sup>95</sup> and threatening them later that 'þe bloode þat Mahounde bledde, with þis blad schal ye blede'(l. 9) suggesting that he is brandishing a sword at them at this point. While Herod does not compare himself to God here, the sense of a threatening and angry despot is still present. In both of the depictions of Herod, then, as well as in depictions of other characters such as the Pharaoh, to be a king is to be a despot, threatening violence to the audience who stand in the stead of subjects.<sup>96</sup>

This idea of a mad king is not limited to the Cycle plays. Mundus, Belyal and Caro, who open *The Castle of Perseverance* with three successive speeches are undoubtedly depicted as monarchs. Mundus, for example has a treasurer whom he has apparently knighted (*Castle*, l. 181), and Caro describes them as such outright when he states 'Behold þe werld, þe deuyll, and me!/[...] we kyngys thre' (ll. 266-7). Of course these three personae are merely abstractions given a voice but as they are

<sup>94</sup> The York *Herod and the Magi*, in *York Mystery Plays*, pp. 65-78, ll. 8-9. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>95</sup> The York *Christ Before Herod*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, pp.. 112-122, l. 4. Further references follow quotations in the text.

<sup>96</sup> While there is not space in this dissertation to also examine the depiction of the Pharaoh in detail in this dissertation, an excellent work to consult on the subject is Rosemary Woolf's still relevant *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), page 154 ff. which makes many of the same points about the depiction of the Pharaoh in the Cycle plays.

depicted as kings, their opening speeches merit some examination alongside that of Herod in the Cycle plays.

Indeed, the speeches do share some similarities with Herod's rants in *Herod and the Magi*, and *Christ Before Herod*. For example, while they do not threaten exactly threaten the audience, Caro states that their goal is 'to distroy Mankende' (l. 269) and Belyal echoes this when he speaks of his hope that 'Mankynde be stroyed' (l. 207). Their general animosity towards mankind is comparable to that of Herod except that where he threatens physical injury, the three kings of this play instead threaten spiritual corruption; at the end of his speech, Belyal proclaims that 'Al þis werld schal[.../] to my byddyng bende' (ll. 229-30) and Caro echoes this when he states 'euerybody is þe betyr þat to myn byddyng is bent' (l. 236). The fact that they promise spiritual corruption rather than physical violence is perhaps related to the fact that *The Castle* is not a civic play like the Cycles and is therefore perhaps more concerned with a spiritual dimension and the sense of these statements is that it is the intention of the two kings to bend mankind to their sinful will. Another parallel lies in the fact that, like Herod, Mundus compares himself to a God when he states that, 'Myn hest is holdyn and herd/ Into hyz heuene' (ll. 194-5). Mundus here claims to have a direct relationship with God and the heavens in much the same way as Herod does in *Herod and the Magi* and, as he is by name and nature a mere worldly king, the statement is just as blasphemous.

It is clear, then, that both literal and allegorical monarchs in the medieval drama I have discussed are presented in a particularly negative light. Kingship in medieval plays is unequivocally equated to dictatorship and violence. The reasons for this trend are complex but I would suggest that they are essentially reflections of conflict between the clergy, the civic guilds, and the secular rulers of state. Of course, the monarchy and the church were often at odds in England; the famous example is of the conflict between King John and Pope Innocent III in 1209 which resulted in the John's excommunication and would later be dramatised by John Bale and Shakespeare. The laity's fealty to the church and to their monarch could on occasion be mutually exclusive and I would argue that it is this tension of loyalties that is represented in the Cycle plays and *The Castle*. James Simpson goes so far as to say that the Cycle plays 'offered resistance to royal [...] power' and the speeches that I have examined so far could be examples of such resistance.<sup>97</sup> By depicting royal power as inherently violent and as in conflict with traditional religion, because the monarch sees himself as equal to God, the plays resist that power by undermining it and depicting it as morally corrupt. This

<sup>97</sup> Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2*, page 504.

idea of morally corrupt kingship is also highlighted in *The Castle* where the kings are actual embodiments of sin in the form of Belyal, worldly pleasures and the body (the greatest enemy of the soul).

The very depictions of the kings on the stage could also be used as to criticise the power of the monarchy. Simpson notes that monarchy is in and of itself 'a theatrical illusion' in which the king is an actor whose legitimacy is enforced by violence and it is clear that depictions of Herod and of the kings in *The Castle* ape this performance.<sup>98</sup> By openly presenting poor kingship on the stage as a performance, the author of the Cycle plays could be attempting to draw attention to the fact that, just as the actor upon the stage is merely playing a part, so too are the secular kings playing the part of ruler when the true ruler is God and through Him, the Pope and the church.

In fifteenth century drama, then, it would seem that kingship is always depicted in a negative light as a reflection of conflict between the religious and civic spheres. The drama of the 1530s and onwards, though, depicts kingship in a much more complimentary light. I will argue that this fundamental theatrical change from kings being depicted as power-mad despots occurs for two reasons. The first is the increase in extant plays produced specifically for the court and for court audiences such as *The Play of the Weather* (1533) by John Heywood and the second reason is that something significant occurred in 1534; the Act of Supremacy. With the foundation of a new English Protestant church of which Henry VIII was 'the only supreme head' the religious and political spheres in England were no entirely merged and so, even in religious drama, kingship began to be depicted in a much more positive light.<sup>99</sup> For these two reasons, by the time Mary took the throne, gone were the thundering, abusive despots of old, to be replaced by wise rulers with their country's spiritual health as their primary focus.

In John Heywood's comedy, *The Play of the Weather*, there is no doubt as to the fundamental change in the depiction of kingship from the Herod plays in the Cycles and from the depiction of the sinful kings in *The Castle*. The king, Jupiter, does open the play with a speech but it is far from the rants of the Cycle plays. Rather than threatening his subjects, he states that any 'people wyche have ben offendyd/ By any wether [...] We shall shape remedy for theyre relefe' (*Weather*, ll. 88-91) and states that his intention 'is onely to satysfye and content' (l. 87). These gentle promises to give his subjects a better life contrast sharply with Herod's threat that, 'with þis blad schal ye blede'

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, page 503.

<sup>99</sup> *The Act of Supremacy*, in *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, page 223.

(*Christ Before Herod*, l. 9). Jupiter is even considerate as to the fact that he may intimidate those who come to air their views and states that 'we woll wythdraw our godly presens/ To enbold all such more playnely to dysclose' their issues (ll. 181-2). There is no doubt that a very different picture of kingship is being presented in Heywood's play when compared to that of the Cycle plays. Indeed, it seems that Jupiter is here being depicted as in fact a model of good kingship; Pamela King notes that 'Jupiter's [...] determination to be temperate [...] reflects the best political philosophy of the time' and, this being true, it therefore seems that Heywood is going to great lengths to depict the monarchy in the most positive possible light in this play.<sup>100</sup>

In this play, then, Jupiter is being depicted not only as an amiable king but as a model of positive kingship. The reason for this change from the depiction of kings in the medieval plays I have examined lies in the fact that, while the medieval plays were almost always written for a civic audience far from the monarch's court, John Heywood wrote this specifically for a court audience. He was 'manager of plays and other entertainments' for the crown through to the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign and the fact that he held this position for so long through so many of the significant theatrical changes that I have discussed in this dissertation suggests that he must have had a rather remarkable ability to avoid as much offence as possible in his writings.<sup>101</sup> The fact that *The Play of the Weather* was written for the court, although it must be conceded that, as King notes, there is 'no conclusive evidence that the play was intended to be played before Henry', offers a possible explanation for this new complimentary look at kingship.<sup>102</sup> Unlike the Cycle plays and *The Castle*, which were all most probably performed by local performers as part of provincial civic and religious festivals, *The Play of the Weather* was probably performed before the people of the monarch's court and so it was vital that the playwright depict the most powerful person at that court in the most complimentary way possible.

The importance of depicting the monarch in a favourable light in court drama is especially true in the case of *The Play of the Weather* because it arguably depicts a representation of Henry VIII himself. When Mery Reporte states to the Gentywoman that 'olde moones be leake, they can holde no water./ But for this new mone I durst lay my gowne' (ll. 799-800) and later swears an oath 'by saynt Anne' (l. 812), these are generally seen by Betteridge and Walker and others to be references

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<sup>100</sup> Pamela M. King, 'John Heywood, "The Play of the Weather"', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, pp. 207-223, page 218.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, page 215.

<sup>102</sup> Pamela M. King, 'John Heywood and "The Play of the Weather"', in *the Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, pp. 207-223, page 209.

to 'the king's desire to replace a leaky old moon with a bright, young, new one', that is to divorce his wife Katherine of Aragon for the younger Anne Boleyn whom he hoped would be less 'leake' (l. 799) and be able to bear him a son.<sup>103</sup> These references, if picked up by the spectators, would equate the play's depiction of Jupiter closely with the real life Henry VIII and therefore it would be even more important that before for Heywood's depiction of the king of the gods to be of a kind and just king. In essence, the performance at court led to the necessity of flattering the king, whether he was present at the performance or not. Gone was the relative freedom of the Cycle plays put on by wealthy guilds far from the reach of the court to be replaced by individual court playwrights who were in a rather more precarious position.

Of course, the fact that the plays of the 1530s and 1540s which I examine in this chapter were often performed at court is not the only reason that the depiction of kingship changed to present monarchs in a more favourable light. The 1534 Act of Supremacy cemented the position of the King of England as head of an English Protestant church and so, from that year, the king had a new role as religious leader and I would argue that some complimentary depictions of the monarchy have their basis in this new role. I will show this by examining *Lusty Juventus*, a religious interlude from the reign of Edward VI.

Of course, it should be noted that the young protagonist of *Juventus* does not explicitly depict King Edward VI however I have made a full argument that the protagonist 'yet under a score' (l. 563) is intended to be a representation of the king in part 1.3 of this dissertation and for the purposes of this chapter will follow Pamela King in the assumption that *Juventus* is indeed intended to represent the king.<sup>104</sup> If *Juventus* does indeed represent Edward VI then the depiction of kingship in this play is a very different one to that depicted in the Cycle plays and even to that of Jupiter in *The Play of the Weather*. *Juventus* here is depicted as a ruler who is young and inexperienced but, and this is key, cast ultimately as the arbitrator of religious morals.

*Juventus* deals frequently with the fact that, with the Act of Supremacy, England was not only under the nominal rule of a child politically but also spiritually. Characters in the play frequently refer to this issue; Hypocrisy laments that 'the world was never merry/ Since children were so bold:/ Now every boy will be a teacher,/ The father a fool, and the child a preacher' (*Juventus*, ll. 651-4)

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, 'Performance as Research: Staging John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court Palace', page 89.

<sup>104</sup> See King, 'Minority Plays: Two Interludes for Edward VI', throughout.

and the devil states that 'the old people would still believe in my laws,/ But the younger sort lead them a contrary way' (ll. 341-2). In both of these statements, young people like Juventus, and by extension Edward VI, are seen as the spiritual enemies of sin, leading the older generation from the old ways into grace. The play acknowledges Edward's youth but recasts it as a virtue as he is uncorrupted by the spectre of traditional religion.. Through this sense in the play, Edward is depicted in a favourable light. He is depicted as both inherently spiritually superior due to his youth and as a direct enemy of Hypocrisy and the devil. This is different of the depiction of Jupiter who is seen only as a fair and just king. Edward's new role as head of the church is reflected in Juventus' spiritual development and he is depicted as young and inexperienced but rapidly more spiritually mature as the lay goes on.

The depiction of kingship in *Lusty Juventus* is not limited to its view on Juventus himself.. The play reflects a fact that much of the audience would have probably known; that Edward was only nominally a ruler. Being so young, he was under the charge of a protectorate of politicians. This play also is sure to depict the protectorates in a positive light as well. The *de facto* rulers of England are depicted not as power hungry or as misleading the young Juventus but rather as simply guiding him through his own development as a leader. Good Council warns Juventus that 'vain is the conversations/ Which ye receive by you elders' traditions' (ll. 236-7) and the sense is that Good Council is guiding Juventus to making his own decisions. This coupled with Juventus' prayer at the end of the play 'for all the nobility in this [realm]/ And namely for those whom his race hath au[thorized]/ To maintain the public wealth over us and them' (ll. 1159-61) show that the playwright is very deliberately attempting to depict the *de facto* kings of the realm in as positive a light as possible.

In these two plays, then, both Edward and Henry, as well as Edward's protectorate, are depicted in a very different light when compared to that of Herod and the sinful kings of *The Castle*. Kingship in these Tudor plays is a much gentler and more positive affair. Jupiter is a wise king concerned with the needs of his people, Juventus, when read as a type for Edward, is seen as young and inexperienced, but developing into a competent spiritual leader to reflect the new role of the monarch as head of the English church, and Edward's protectorate seen as virtuous personae who guide but do not lead the young king. This change in the depiction of kingship from the more negative approach of earlier plays can be explained in two ways. First, it was in part because of the rise of court drama which depended upon the crown for support and also had the obvious risks if any overt criticisms were attempted. Second, the fact that the king was now the head of the church

meant that he filled the position of the Pope to the people of the new English Protestant faith and so was necessarily depicted as a spiritually virtuous as Juventus is by the end of *Lusty Juventus*. Due to these changes, kings began to be depicted largely as virtuous rulers and defenders of the faith rather than as the heretical despots of the fifteenth century.

To end this chapter I will argue that this trend of depicting kingship in a more positive light persisted into the reign of Mary I and I will show this through examination of the play *Respublica* and. In particular, I will examine the personae of Res Publica herself and Nemesis. The first thing to note is that Res Publica as a ruler is certainly not a return to the despots of the fifteenth century. Every action she takes in the play is taken out of concern for the well-being of the people of her country. For example, when the people complain about the treatment they receive at the hands of the vices of the play, Res Publica states 'people cryeth owte and I am mucche agrieved' (*Respublica*, l. 1063) and earlier she promise the people who come to appeal to her that 'my love towards youe my people cannot be hydde' (l. 657). There are no threats of violence here, and she promises to listen to their concerns.

Of course, Res Publica does harm her people but I believe that this is not presented in the play as necessarily a failing in and of itself. I argued in 2.1 that Res Publica is actually misled rather than actually corrupted as, unlike the vices of some fifteenth century plays, the vices of *Res Publica* are not open about their own identity and change their names before meeting Res Publica, with Avarice remarking that 'I wyll nowe countrefaict my name/[to...] spede all my purposes and yet escape blame' (ll. 373-4). The fact that the vices very deliberately disguise themselves as more palatable personae such as Policie and Reformation suggests that the playwright is depicting *Res Publica*, here as possible representative of Edward and Henry, as not malicious but merely duped by unscrupulous individuals. This fits with a Marian Catholic view of the Reformation as a time in which mistakes were made through the poor influence of bad advisers. Importantly, Res Publica is redeemed at the end of the play and rejects the disguised vices, bringing order back to the realm. Monarchy in the play, then, is depicted as essentially fallible but also easily redeemable. The development of the reformation has showed that, from a Catholic viewpoint, kings are fallible but the development in drama I have discussed above means that monarchs are no longer routinely depicted as raving and dangerous individuals.

It is also worth noting the fact that Mary is referenced directly at both the beginning and at the end of the play and thus we have an opportunity to examine the depiction of monarchs when the

monarch is not only obliquely referenced, but in fact mentioned by name and spoken about within the dramatic conceit. The prologue to the play identifies the persona that is meant to represent Mary. The prologue states, 'thanke god and reioyce/ That he hath sent Marye our soveraigne and quene/ to reforme thabuses which hithertoo hath been/ [...] She is oure most wise/ and most worthie Nemesis' (ll. 48-53). This play is unique to those examined in this chapter in that it explicitly identifies for the audience, which persona is directly intended to represent the monarch. So, while Res Publica is definitely intended to be a monarch figure, she is more representative of the kings who came before Mary who were duped by the processes of Reformation. Mary, by contrast, is figured as Nemesis, the persona that arrives in the play towards the end who is identified as 'the mooste highe goddesse of correccion' (l. 1782).

Queen Mary being represented as Nemesis is a particularly important depiction of the monarchy in drama because of the role Nemesis fulfils in the play. She is depicted as the protector of Res Publica and is in fact the persona who ultimately casts out the vices from the play and decides upon their punishments. For example, she tells Avarice 'to spare thee wilbe no boote,/ thow muste be plucked vpp een bye the veraie roote' (ll. 1894-5) and goes on to say that he should be given to the 'hedd Officer/ which hathe autoritee Ustice to mynister' (ll. 1908-9). What is clear is that Nemesis is responsible for dismissing the pleas of the offenders and is also concerned with fairness and justice, remanding them into the custody of others who will presumably mete out fair punishment.

The depiction, then, is one of a persona who arrives on the scene to fix the problems caused by the previous administration of Res Publica in the same way that Mary was perceived by Catholic apologists like the playwright to have, upon her taking the throne, undone the problems caused by the previous rulers in their acceptance of Protestantism. This means that, despite the fact that the Catholic apologists of Mary's reign rejected monarchical supremacy, the idea of depicting the monarch as someone who defends the faith of the country had been retained. This is perhaps because, after the development of Protestantism, Catholicism required defending in a way that it had not before when it was secure in much of Western Europe as the largely unquestioned state religion. Catholic monarchs were perhaps seen as ideal proponents of the traditional faith and Mary, who returned England to Catholicism after almost two decades as a Protestant kingdom, was seen as an archetype of this by the playwright of *Respublica*.

Monarchy in *Respublica*, then, is depicted in two ways. The first is in a fallible but not pejorative light as Res Publica herself who is misled by false advisers and the second is as Nemesis, the firm

vengeance who directs herself at these false advisers. While the depiction of Res Publica is not as complimentary as that of Juventus or, particularly, Jupiter, she is not depicted as a dangerous despot like Herod. Rather she is seen as doing her best for the country and simply making mistakes. Nemesis, the play's representation of Queen Mary, by contrast is seen as a sure ruler who is concerned with repairing the damage done by the previous administrations. In this way she is seen as a defender of the faith despite her Catholicism in much the same way as the young Juventus is in *Lusty Juventus*.

### Conclusion

The depiction of kingship and of the monarchy more generally in drama changed throughout the period of study both for social and for religious reasons. In medieval drama such as the Cycle plays, Biblical kings like Herod are depicted as raving, violent despots who rant at the audience and seek bloodshed for any ills done to them. In moral plays like *The Castle*, princes are depicted in an equally damaging light as directly related to, indeed as real life examples of, vice personae like Mundus, Belyal and Caro. However, the fact that these plays were often either run by civil guilds, in the case of the Cycle plays, or performed by touring troops far from London's royal court, in the case of *The Castle*, means that they would see no repercussions for their depiction of royals. This was to change with the increase in extant court drama in the sixteenth century.

The rise of court drama meant that playwrights like John Heywood in the 1530s were well advised to depict any example of a monarch in as positive a light as possible lest it anger the monarch who was quite possibly in attendance of the performance. For this reason Heywood's Jupiter in *The Play of the Weather* is far from the depiction of royalty in the plays of the fifteenth century. Rather, he is measured and concerned with the needs of his citizens. A second change of the sixteenth century was brought about by the Act of Supremacy which made the ruler of England the head of the English church. This new role of the king as spiritual leader was reflected in plays like *Lusty Juventus* which featured a young representative of Edward VI as a developing religious leader.

Finally, these two changes in the representations of kingship are retained in the Catholic revival play *Respublica* in which the persona of Res Publica is depicted as a type for the kings of England during the Protestant movement. While she is depicted as having been mistaken, she is not depicted in an uncomplimentary light, reflecting the fact that court drama had to be careful when

representing monarchs even when said monarchs were both dead and partly responsible for the development of Protestantism as the state religion. Similarly, the idea of a monarch as a defender of the faith is retained even in this Catholic play with Mary re-figured as the persona Nemesis who casts out the vices from the world of the plays.

The depiction of kingship in drama, then, changed significantly throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and, as I have shown in this chapter, these changes can only truly be understood with a broad study of the drama of the period, tracking trends through the years. Much like the dramatic developments brought on solely by religious changes that I discussed in Chapter Two, the changes both in the religious status of kings and in the change from civic drama to court drama brought about lasting changes to the depiction of kings in fifteenth and sixteenth century plays.

## **Conclusion**

Eamon Duffy closes his book *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 - 1580*, which covers almost the same period as this dissertation, with a striking statement. He remarks that 'by the end of the 1570s [...] a generation was growing up which had known nothing else, which believed the Pope to be Antichrist, the Mass a mummery, which did not look back to the Catholic past as their own, but another country, another world' (Duffy, page 593). Duffy's book pertains only to the development of Protestantism in England but regardless, I believe that his statement can be considered in relation to the topic of this dissertation.

Just as the dramatic changes in religious practice in England inevitably resulted in a generation for whom the Catholic past of the country was something never experienced and rarely spoken of, so too did the changes brought about in drama across the same period of time result in hundreds of years of dramatic tradition dying out in favour of a new, realist model of drama in the Elizabethan era. Throughout this dissertation I have shown that the very remarkable changes in dramatic practice from 1400 to the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign are best understood when drama across the time period is considered and compared together in order to track changes and continuities as they develop. In showing this I hope I have demonstrated the value of resisting the impulse to consider dramatic texts only in relation to texts of the same, contrived, "period" and shown that by considering plays across several such periods, we can better understand how the dramatic tropes of England developed.

In short, just because the people of the 1570s may have considered England's Catholic past and everything that came with it not a part of the development of their own culture but rather as 'another country, another world' (Duffy, page 593) does not mean that we, as modern readers and audiences, should do the same.

**Word Count – 27,100 words**

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## Iconography

**Figure One**



*The Family of King Henry VIII by an unknown artist, c. 1545, oil on canvas. Royal Collection Trust*

*/ © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016*  
<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#5/collection/405796/the-family-of-henry-viii>  
Accessed 28/9/2016.

**Figure Two**



*Edward VI, c. 1546 by an unknown artist oil on panel. Royal Collection Trust*  
*/ © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016*  
<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#6/collection/404441/edward-vi-1537-53>  
Accessed 28/9/2016.