

**UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW**  
**Faculty of Letters**

**Ph.D. THESIS**

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**The Return of the Morality Play in Anglophone  
Drama of the First Half of the Twentieth Century**

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Wrocław 2020



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Ewa Kęłowska-Ławniczak, for her mentorship, guidance and constant support throughout the writing process. I am grateful for her patience, encouragement and the time she devoted to helping me develop this project. I would also like to thank her for being an extraordinary academic teacher, for it was the intellectual challenge of her English Literature classes which I attended as a first-year undergraduate student that inspired me to undertake further studies in this direction.

I wish to extend my gratitude to my co-supervisor, Doctor Marcin Tereszewski, for the attention he gave to this thesis and for his invaluable suggestions.

I am also grateful to the entire Institute of English Studies at the University of Wrocław for providing me with a stable and stimulating academic environment during all the years I spent there as an undergraduate and postgraduate student. I wish to thank all my teachers and lecturers for instilling in me curiosity and equipping me with skills which proved indispensable in working on this thesis.



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## **Introduction:**

### **Within and Beyond the Middle Ages**

In the collective consciousness, if acknowledged at all, the morality play is associated with medieval, not contemporary drama. In *Mediaeval Drama*, Alexander Manson Kinghorn writes that

The separation of the modern from the mediaeval world has made the early English drama remote, and not even 'a willing suspension of disbelief' can change this, for what is lacking is not an act of imagination but a fact of faith in the kind of truth which ... moralities sought to present. (128)

This argument follows a discussion in which Kinghorn describes *Everyman*, which he calls “the greatest of the English moralities” (120), as a play entirely unsuited for modern audience. Morality plays became obsolete, argues Kinghorn, because as time went on “they no longer answered the questions which were being asked by educated people” (125).

As other forms of medieval English drama, for example the mystery and the miracle play, moralities indeed display many characteristics likely to discourage contemporary viewers. One of them is the utter simplicity of their characters, which are always purely black or white personified abstractions who lack psychological depth, who never evolve throughout the play, and who thus function mostly as wooden “allegorical equations” (Donaldson 367). Other critics indicate the predictability of the plot as the key factor responsible for the obsolescence of morality play, that is, the absence of any plot twists or any unexpected turn of events which would be of interest for contemporary audience. Finally, the overt and unrelenting didacticism of the morality play, often described as “a sermon cast in dramatic form” (Kinghorn 112), contributes to the popular conception of this genre as outdated and unappealing to the modern theatrical taste. Indeed, the original goal of moralities was to teach the mostly illiterate audience about the proper conduct of Christian life in an approachable manner, and as Marion Jones explains in “Early Moral Plays and the Earliest Secular Drama,” allegory in these plays “is used by people who know all the answers, to enlighten those who might otherwise neglect to ask all the questions” (247). The problem is that the perception of theatre as a didactic tool was questioned in the twentieth century, and as a result, a significant number of modern viewers would subscribe to the view espoused by Eugene Ionesco, who perceived “all forms of didactic message in the theatre as a vulgarity” (Ekberg 19).

My dissertation has been designed as a response and a challenge to what seems a common academic discard of the morality play as a genre potentially relevant to the modern stage. By examining the largely unexplored phenomenon of the Morality Play Revival, which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, I will demonstrate that moralities not only survived in anglophone drama but also proved an adaptable and desired form. In my study, I will both discuss contributions of minor or amateur playwrights (such as Arthur Simmons or George V. Hobart), who often authored only one play or who wrote for performance at schools or parishes, and allude to several writers known from the western literary canon (such as T.S. Eliot or Arthur Conan Doyle), who admitted their indebtedness to the morality play tradition. The works of the latter group will not be analysed in detail, however, since adaptations and appropriations of the morality play are of more interest to this dissertation than such plays as Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* or Doyle's *The Fires of Fate*, which were merely inspired by moralities. Thus, starting with Richard Ganthony's 1899 play *A Message from Mars*, this study sets out to trace the re-introduction of morality play elements in both British and American drama of the first half of the twentieth century.

The investigation of this process will incorporate several contexts, methodologies, and perspectives. These include the reception of the Middle Ages in later centuries; the emergence of medievalism as an academic discipline and the historical context of the Morality Play Revival; the theatrical context and the evaluation of the condition of drama in the UK in the first decades of the twentieth century; the reception of Modern Moralities by contemporary audiences and critics; intertextuality and its influence on Modern Moralities and, finally, the various directions of adaptation of the morality play, especially the adaptation through modernisation. These approaches will be examined under an overarching concept of the Ethical Turn in drama: a phenomenon responsible for shifting the focus of Modern Moralities away from Christian didacticism and towards secular ethics.

As far as contexts are concerned, it must be stressed that Modern Moralities took different forms and were written for various reasons. In the general introduction to the dissertation I outline the emergence of medievalism, which may have sparked the growing dramatic interest in the morality play form. Subsequently, in Part One: "The Return of the Morality Play Tradition to Contemporary British, European and American Drama," I provide an overview of political, social and cultural circumstances which shaped the mindset of early post-Victorians and which could have influenced their expectations and literary preferences in a way that made them embrace the morality play. I also present the trends which dominated the British theatre

at that time, discussing both high-brow and low-brow dramatic forms available to British viewers, in order to demonstrate what dramatic constellation moralities entered when they resurged in Edwardian England. Lastly, since the twentieth-century renaissance of the morality play made its way to the USA as well, the introduction depicts the condition of the American theatre of that era and points out significant changes which could have contributed to welcoming morality plays by American audiences.

As far as methodologies are concerned, my dissertation is intended as a scholarly contribution to the history of drama in English and as such takes a historical approach to the analyses of dramatic phenomena. Its objective is to put in order the facts about dramatic material which has so far remained in significant part disregarded by historians, and to explain how and why this material came into existence. It is, in other words, a work concerned with examining a specific dramatic occurrence: the sudden re-emergence of an antiquated medieval form in the contemporary drama, and with establishing the origins of this phenomenon. Therefore, in Chapters One and Two, I present notable events, such as the establishments of dramatic societies or the premieres of popular Modern Morality Plays and their publications, and I point out the milestones in morality play's trajectory of return to anglophone drama. In order to do that, in Chapter Two, I introduce several British playwrights who played an important role in the Morality Play Revival. I trace their medievalist activities, I investigate the reviews of their Modern Moralities (or works inspired by the morality play form) in British periodicals, and I examine the public response to these plays. The authors whose texts and ideas I comment upon in this section include Richard Ganthony, William Poel, Walter Nugent Monck, Arthur Conan-Doyle, Sutton Vane and T.S. Eliot. In Chapter Two, I repeat the same historical overview but with regard to American and European drama, especially to the works of George V. Hobart and the Austrian playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The purpose of these sections is to outline the range of the Morality Play Revival and demonstrate that its influence reached also beyond Britain.

Part I closes with conclusions which aim to situate the Morality Play Revival in its historical and dramatic context. In this section, I outline the factors which may have precipitated the return of the morality play and, in some cases, morality play elements, to the contemporary stage at the beginning of the twentieth century. I argue that among these one finds the development of medievalism and the popular interest in the medieval, the social need for a "theatre of consolation" in the turbulent pre-war times of political instability, individual interests of playwrights bent on returning to the roots of English drama, and the public's desire

to experience non-realist plays. I also postulate the division of Modern Moralities into two groups: antiquarian experiments designed to revive old English dramatic forms, and plays which assume the morality play framework, update it, and use it to discuss contemporary problems.

Finally, when it comes to different theatrical perspectives which this dissertation examines, in Part II “Modern Moralities: A Close Reading,” I offer analyses of five Modern Moralities which belong to the latter group described above. These commentaries set out to show that contrary to common belief, the morality play is not a stiff medieval form which fell out of use hundreds of years ago, but a form whose potential was appreciated by contemporary playwrights. The selected plays have been divided into four categories: religious Modern Morality Plays, secularised Modern Morality Plays, Christmas Morality Plays, and modern rewritings of *Everyman*. Each of the dramas examined, that is Arthur Simmons' *Conflict* (1946), H. F. Rubinstein's *Insomnia: A Modern Morality Play* (1927), Edith Lyttelton's *A Christmas Morality* (1908), Grace Latimer Jones's *What Makes Christmas Christmas: A Morality Play in One Act* (1916) and W.F. Almond's *Everychild* (1938), employs features of a prototypical morality to a different end and reworks them in a different way. As the chapter explains, while Simmons' morality play remains allegorical, Christian-centric and didactic, it refers to such contemporary issues as World War II or excessive consumerism. Rubinstein's *Insomnia* “psychologises” morality play by transforming it into an almost absurdist drama set in the protagonist's mind, where personified attributes of his psyche try to uncover the cause of his sleeplessness. Lyttelton and Jones take a morality play genre and combine it with the nativity play making a light-hearted addition to the realm of Christmas literature. Finally, Almond's play *Everychild* is discussed as a modern adaptation of *Everyman* to demonstrate the hybridity which characterised the composition of many Modern Moralities.

As far as the analytical method is concerned, in his 2001 article “Narrative Voice and Agency in Drama,” Manfred Jahn explores three theories of drama reception, which he defines as Poetic Drama, Theatre Studies and Reading Drama. All three schools acknowledge the fact that there are two ways of understanding theatrical plays: as texts and as performances. The first approach is represented by a theory called Poetic Drama, which values reading over performance and which applies a close-reading technique to interpret a play. In Theatre Studies, performance is prioritized. The play as a literary text is considered something intended for acting out on the stage and something that only “comes to life” when acted out (660-661); a play is thus a “product of theatrical conditions” (661). The third theory, Reading Drama, takes as its main

interpretative strategy a “performance-oriented textual analysis” (661). Therefore, its representatives gain insights by theatre-going and reading alike; they interpret plays by using their knowledge of both the performance and the text. Although the Reading Drama approach seems the most encompassing, for practical reasons the examinations presented below will follow the textual analysis proposed by Poetic Drama. No recordings of the early-twentieth-century performances of Modern Moralities have been preserved, which means that no reliable performance-oriented analyses can be conducted.

It must be stressed that the Morality Play Revival was an extensive phenomenon, one which encompassed dozens of plays, of which the above-mentioned moralities constitute only a modest sample. This is attested by the list supplied in the Appendix. These plays have been selected for close reading because of their diversity, which helped me to aptly illustrate the flexibility of the morality play form, as well as its capacity to serve different dramatic functions. They allowed me to exemplify at least a few of the directions which modern playwrights followed in appropriating the morality play, as well as demonstrate the varying degree of changes moralities underwent in this process.

Most analyses are preceded by a brief critical or historical prelude pertinent to the issues they discuss, aiming to expand on the notions of Freudian psychoanalysis, Christmas literature and adaptation respectively. What is more, Part II opens with a critical introduction explaining what is understood by the term of a morality play. In “The Doomsday Mystery Play: An Eschatological Morality,” David J. Leigh writes about “two major problems concerning English moralities, their very definition and their dramatic sources” (220). The section, therefore, considers Leigh's statement that “the definition problem is not settled yet” (220) and combines old (for example Robert Potter's) and new (for example Claire Sponsler's) academic outlooks on this issue to offer a new workable definition. It also sets out to answer the question whether moralities constitute a genre in its own right, or rather a literary form.

In the concluding part of the dissertation entitled “Coda,” I briefly discuss three plays from the 1990s and 2000s, which either can be considered Modern Morality Plays or show a strong affiliation with the morality play genre. These are Wendy MacLeod's 1994 play *Sin*, Margaret Edson's 1995 play *Wit*, and the 2015 adaptation of *Everyman* by Carol Ann Duffy. The analyses of these plays indicate that elements of the morality play continue to resurge even in the most contemporary drama, that the impact of this genre is stronger than universally acknowledged and that much research space can be still found in the realm of morality plays.

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In *Rethinking History*, Keith Jenkins states that “history is a discourse about, but categorically different from, the past” (7). The same applies to the history of theatre, the study of which must necessarily entail speculation, and depends on the interpretation of facts rather than their collection and arrangement. New forms and genres emerge to develop, evolve and, at some point, become obsolete. The pace and trajectories of these processes differ and are often challenging to explain. The introduction offered below will provide a context for what is going to be discussed in the chapters which follow, that is the unexpected return of morality play tradition to the twentieth-century drama. It will elaborate on what is understood by the term of the Middle Ages, when this period began and ended and how it was judged by the following centuries. Subsequently, one of the potential factors which provoked the revival of Modern Morality Plays at the beginning of the twentieth century will be discussed, that is the advent and growth of medievalism as an academic discipline.

### **Modern reception and assessment of the Middle Ages**

“It was the general character of this epoch, that it . . . prepared the soil which the following ages were to cover with so rich and so abundant an harvest” (144), states French philosopher Nicolas Caritat with regard to the Middle Ages in his posthumously published work *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795) (Caritat). The unremitting scholarly and general interest in medieval achievements, with its twentieth-century outburst that has eventually created a new academic interdisciplinary field called medievalism, proves his declaration prophetic. Even the rejection of medieval thought proposed by the Enlightenment, motivated purportedly by stiffness and backwardness of the Middle Ages, was only apparent. In fact, the output of the medieval culture has never ceased to influence modernity and a plethora of modern texts have been based on the ideas of old authorities (Forycki and Harc 21). As it will be demonstrated, the recycling of the intellectual products of the “Dark Ages” is an ongoing process and “our modern view of the Middle Ages is itself the product of many centuries of development and debate” (Bartlett 9).

According to Maciej Forycki and Lucyna Harc, two interlinked issues seem particularly significant in the context of the modern reception of the medieval world: the multifaceted

problem of providing the Middle Ages with appropriate caesuras, and the question of how this period should be assessed (21). As acknowledged by Robert Bartlett, the notions of both “the Middle Ages” and “the Renaissance” used in the beginning by the humanists had a meaning limited to either bearing or not bearing the traces of antique heritage. For Italian scholars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Middle Ages were simply a period which separated the ancient world that they aimed to emulate from their own. Thus, a notion designed to promote one cultural style and downgrade another functioned as a tool of a “conscious ideological campaign” and as such cannot be “a neutral term of historical analysis” (9). Bartlett groups the term “Middle Ages” with such terms as “Dark Ages,” “Reformation” or “Enlightenment” whose aim was to assess rather than describe the times they designated. The reason behind its endurance is the fact that humanism, which created it, had a lasting influence on European higher education institutions, and made their curriculum the base of highbrow culture until the twentieth century (9). Thus, by identifying themselves with ancient Greeks and Romans, the Renaissance men put “the Other” at the centre of the concept of the Middle Ages (10).

At this point, the connection between the Middle Ages and “the Other” in modern literary studies merits a brief digression. In “The Middle Ages, the Other,” Alexandre Leupin stresses the contribution of Paul Zumthor and Hans Robert Jauss to the exploration of this relationship. As he explains, Zumthor’s method of reading medieval texts rests on the employment of contemporary techniques taken from structural linguistics, which ultimately means “reintroducing the “modern” subject in the deciphering of the “ancient” object.” Two of his works extensively debate the problem of “Otherness” of the Middle Ages: an article “*Médiéviste ou pas*” (1977) and a book *Parler du moyen âge* (1980). “The Otherness” is finally understood to result from the “temporal difference” that is expressed in the differences between the reader and the subject, as well as the text and the object. According to Jauss, the author of *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, it is inscribed in the opposition of alterity to identity, realized also in the modernity/antiquity antithesis (Leupin 28). To some extent, this study reverses Zumthor’s method by reading contemporary texts through the prism of a medieval dramatic framework.

In his work, Cellarius declares the Middle Ages to have lasted from the enthronement of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (306) to the conquering of Constantinople by the Turks (1453). Although the division system suggested by Cellarius has remained one of the most widely accepted, it is also controversial, and over time it gained numerous opponents (6). As noticed by Manteuffel, the traditionalist understanding of periodization, which seeks to connect

openings and endings of epochs with particular years or even days has been challenged by another idea, according to which only a certain liminal period of time that displays transitional character can function as a borderline between epochs (Manteuffel 6). Manteuffel further explains that Cellarius's choice of opening and closing dates has been widely debated and different events were proposed. These alternative points of transition between the antiquity and the Middle Ages include *inter alia* the Battle of Adrianople (378), the death of Theodosius the Great (395) and, mainly in Polish and German historiography, the deposition of the last ruler of the West Roman Empire, Romulus Augustulus, by Odoacer (476). There are also other systems of periodization, for example the Marxist approach, which divides history into periods based on the advancement of societal formations (such as primeval commune, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism) (Manteuffel 6-7). Each period was characterized, as Bartlett describes, by "an opposition between an exploiting and an exploited class . . . : slaves and masters, peasants and lords, proletarians and bourgeois capitalists" (24).

Taking into account the overview of different methods of periodization, it has been decided that for the purpose of this dissertation, the Middle Ages will be understood as a period that stretches from around 500 to 1500 AD. Such time frame was propounded by both Andrzej Dąbrówka, in the introduction to *Oblicza Mediewalizmu*, and Caspar Hirschi, the author of the "Mittelalterrezeption" entry in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*. It is a scope seconded by its interdisciplinarity and universality, which nevertheless must be perceived as stemming from the modern understanding of the Middle Ages in European history (Forycki and Harc 22).

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A problem closely linked to medievalism are the judgements passed on the Middle Ages by subsequent centuries, which, as noticed by Forycki and Harc, have always been extremely differentiated. A brief survey of these judgements justifies Bartlett's declaration that "every century creates its own Middle Ages" (9). The vision of medieval men as "enmired in crude Latin and logic-chopping" (10) supported by Renaissance thinkers was upheld by the Protestant reformers for whom the golden age were the early primitive beginnings of Christianity and who decried the medieval beliefs in saints, Purgatory and the acceptance of papist dictatorship. In fact, the Reformation influenced the reception of the Middle Ages in numerous ways. The travellers from Protestant to Catholic countries which were still clinging in their practices to

their medieval heritage, found the Middle Ages superstitious and infantile (Bartlett 10). The most telling intimation of it, Bartlett asserts, is contained in Tudor theatrical plays that focus on the persona of King John of England, in which he is presented first and foremost as an antagonist of the pope, rather than a defeated tyrant made to sign the Magna Carta (10).

As Bartlett explains, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the assessment of the Middle Ages, although mainly negative, was mostly defined by the region and lacked unity. While the Portuguese focused mostly on the fifteenth century that gave them supremacy over the seas, the Aragonese and Catalans missed their lost freedom. The people of Italy, where the “Dark Ages” term had spread, generally depreciated the period that preceded the Renaissance fascination with antiquity. In German historiography, on the other hand, the Middle Ages appear as an idealized time when the nation and the empire were born (11). Bartlett enumerates also other exceptions to the largely contemptuous approach which include, for example, François Hotman (1524-1590), the Scot Thomas Craig (1538-1608) and the Englishman Henry Spelman: the first scholars who investigated feudalism, which they claimed had its advantages. The outcome of their research was the idea spread in the Enlightenment, according to which feudalism was “a natural growth, a form of a society adapted to its time, with the advantage that property and liberty were widely diffused” (11). Eighteenth-century French philosophers like Montesquieu perceived the Middle Ages as a time during which local nobles resisted monarchical strive towards absolutism. In that sense, he claimed, it was a time of selective freedom (Bartlett 11).

Finally, it is interesting to observe that it was the end of the eighteenth century that brought a relatively unified assessment. Despite the aforementioned displays of appreciation and sympathy towards the Middle Ages, the judgement was almost entirely contemptuous (Forycki and Harc 29-31). Thinkers of the Enlightenment, like the Renaissance men before them, saw the Middle Ages as barbarous and church-dominated times of ignorance that needed to be reformed. One of the fiercest critics of the Middle Ages was Voltaire who in his *Essay on the Customs and Spirit of Nations* (1756) describes it as an era of anarchy, disorientation and foolishness supported by the Catholic Church and who considered feudalism an utterly misguided and dangerous system (Bartlett 12). A similar attitude was represented by the French philosopher Pierre Bayle. According to Edmond Estève, “Bayle . . . scarcely knew the Middle Ages and did not like them. His disciples and successors knew this period no better and detested it even more” (qtd. in Logan 81). “A uniformly negative attitude toward the medieval period,” however, “provides a most useful contrast to the sympathetic approach of many nineteenth

century historians,” argues John Frederick Logan. Still, it must be stressed that the philosophers of the Enlightenment not so much dismissed the Middle Ages as approached them with “the eagerness of someone who has found a most forceful vehicle for the diffusion of his ideas” (Logan 93).

Numerous eighteenth-century writers, Voltaire included, were inspired by the medieval period and chose it as a setting for their plays and novels. Actually, as noticed by David Matthews, “The second half of the eighteenth century . . . saw a Europe-wide turn to the primitive in all its forms,” which resulted from the general longing for the lost simplicity (6). Among the authors who in different ways cultivated this new trend Matthews puts Scott James MacPherson with his Ossian poems, the Swiss Paul Henri Mallet, who wrote a paean to the Norsemen in his book on the history of Denmark, Thomas Percy and *Reliques of English Poetry*, and in regards to the French context Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (*Voyage autour du monde*) (6). Thus, evidently, despite its contemptuous attitude, the Enlightenment witnessed what Logan calls a “medievalizing movement” (94). Indeed, according to Matthews, one cannot properly comprehend the nature of either the Romantic period or the Gothic novel without “a knowledge of the rediscovery of the Middle Ages that began in the 1760s (7). Thus, the medieval revival of the final decades of the eighteenth century, which continued into the nineteenth, provided a foundation for modern medievalism (6). To some extent, the return of the morality at the beginning of the twentieth century can be seen as an extension of this process.

A breakthrough in the assessment of the Middle Ages, to which, as Bartlett claims, “we are the heirs” (13), came with the advent of Romanticism. He explains that while the Renaissance invented the name, it was the nineteenth century that produced the image of the medieval world which functions in the common consciousness today. What is more, the Romantic interest in the Middle Ages went beyond scholarly fascination and entailed attempts at reworking medieval themes and forms. The oeuvre of such artists as the representatives of the German Nazarene movement, painters like Irish Daniel Maclise, English Pre-Raphaelites or the authors of historical novels like Sir Walter Scott or Victor Hugo, contributed to what must be seen as a medieval revival (Bartlett 15).

Finally, the relation of the nineteenth-century medievalism to nationalism must be stressed, as a factor pertinent to the discussion on why medieval drama was reborn in England. While it encompassed all Europe, Romanticism was, as Bartlett says, “intensely nationalist” (17). The writers’ inspiration and agenda were inextricably entwined with what important national events, among which one must enlist the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, urbanisation,

the growth of the empire and industrialisation (McGann 5). Although “the original romantic vision embraced the universe in enormous exultation and tension,” its national dimension proved more achievable and practical while still allowing for “belonging, loyalty, devotion, even heroic devotion, and organic integration” (Riasanovsky 97).

This general focus on the national triggered an appreciation for medieval vernacular literature, which resulted in publication of national epic such as *The Song of Roland* in France (1837), *Beowulf* in England (1815) and *Nibelungenlied* in Germany (Bartlett 18). As Bartlett recounts, the phenomenon of “nationalist medievalism” is best exemplified by Gaston Paris’s lecture on *The Song of Roland* and French nationalism, given to the students of the Collège de France in 1870, when Paris had been under the siege by the Germans for three months. Paris criticized combining patriotism and scholarship (even though John F. Benton calls him a “patriotic medievalist” (237)) but at the same time pointed to literature as the source of national experience and *The Song of Roland* as a heroic epic poem created at a time when France developed its self-awareness (Bartlett 18). “Here,” as Bartlett asserts, “the nationalist use of the Middle Ages is fully expressed” (19). The Morality Play Revival, which celebrates the heritage of English dramatic culture, seems to result from this nineteenth-century appreciation of what is national. The connection between the national and the medieval is especially significant for this study when one takes into account William Poel’s motivation for staging the first twentieth-century production of *Everyman*, which was showing the audience the beginnings of English drama.

As far as the twentieth century is concerned, according to Bartlett, two phenomena which greatly influenced the understanding of the medieval output were the establishment of history, literature and art history as academic disciplines at universities, and the growing popularity of cinema. The professional scholarship on the Middle Ages grew along with the organisation of new departments and publication of academic journals. The changes in the perception of different aspects of medieval life accompanied the changes of focus in teaching and studying history, as the constitutional history was replaced first with social and then cultural history. As for the importance of the film industry for the shaping of medievalism, films set in the Middle Ages started to be made right after the cinema began, for example *Jeanne D’Arc* from 1900 (Bartlett 26). A more detailed account of how the Middle Ages were perceived in the twentieth century will be provided in the following subsection.

In conclusion, Anthony Kemp’s assertion that “The past cannot exist as an object apart from the consciousness of it” and that “changes in the consciousness of historical time are the work

of literary inventions and critical interpretations of the preexistent tradition” (qtd. in Fay 1), seems to be confirmed by the look at how subsequent centuries decided to re-invent the Middle Ages. As remarked by Bishop,

A modern school of historians contends that the so-called Dark Ages were a period of ascent rather than of decline, that with the withering of the pagan classic civilization came the first budding of a new culture that was to develop into our modern civilization. (8)

Though stereotypes of the Middle Ages still function, the perception of this period is no longer dominated by the alleged superiority of antiquity and it has managed to defend its own significance (Matthews 5). The thriving discipline of medievalism, which seeks to transfer the achievements of medieval culture into modern contexts, must be perceived as one that contributed considerably to the refutation of the pejorative and injudicious understanding of the Middle Ages. The beginning of a new century is a strong stimulus for a scholar to reflect on both the future and the past, states Stefan Kwiatkowski in *Mediewistyka Polska* (7). It appears that a brief general study of medievalism proposed by the following subsection can serve well as a part of this backward reflection, and it is going to uncover what Middle Ages, in Bartlett’s expression, were created by the twentieth century.

### **The notion of medievalism**

As declared by David Matthews, “The ghosts of the Middle Ages are unquiet” (1). The engagement with the reception of medieval culture is inescapable in the twenty-first-century reality with its infinite output of the film industry that relies on fascination with the Middle Ages. *Robin Hood*, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, BBC’s *The White Queen* or *Game of Thrones* are only a few examples Matthews cites to outline the range of medieval imprint that is continuously being left on the modern culture (1). The medievalism of the first half of the twentieth century assumed diverse forms but, before turning the discussion toward them, a brief introduction into the notion itself is merited.

In “Coming to Terms with Medievalism,” Richard Utz traces the history of the term “medievalism” whose creation, he claims, was a linguistic response to the pressures from within and outside of academia, as well as a response to the emergent competing historical terms and methods of studying history. Presenting a brief summary of the evolution of medievalism, Utz states that

rejected as the dilettante ‘Other’ of academic medieval studies in the late nineteenth century, the English

term survived probably due to the unique continuity postmedieval British subjects have felt with their medieval past. 'Medievalism' has since transmuted into a scholarly practice ('medievalism studies'), spawned a subfield ('Neomedievalism'), competed with coeval movements ('New medievalism'), and become, most recently, the linguistic and epistemological weapon of scholars who would like to bridge the rigid alterity toward medieval culture with the assistance of presentist empathy, memory, subjectivity, resonance, affection, desire, passion, speculation, fiction, imagination, and positionality. (1)

As it will be demonstrated, the path towards the current understanding and appreciation of medievalism as an academic discipline was complicated and it still sometimes seems to be a work in progress.

Although for Erin Felicia Labbie "a medievalist is any scholar who pays attention to texts and cultural objects as well as ideas that were produced during what is known as the Middle Ages" (2), a more useful definition of medievalism for this study is offered by John Simons, who sees it as "a process by which the Middle Ages is experienced as an historical entity capable of offering meaningful and even satisfying intellectual, aesthetic, political and religious images to subsequent societies" (5). The difference between the two definitions is reflected in the difference between the notions of "medieval" and "medievalist" studies. While medieval studies involve research on the ideas, practices, culture and history of the Middle Ages, medievalist studies are, according to T. A. Shippey's explanation, "the study of responses to the Middle Ages at all periods since a sense of the mediaeval began to develop" (qtd. in Matthews 1). Another definition, offered by Leslie J. Workman, who may be considered the founder of the discipline, sees medievalism as "the study not of the Middle Ages themselves but of the scholars, artists and writers who . . . constructed the idea of the Middle Ages that we inherited" (qtd. in Matthews 7). The trajectories of both fields intertwine, since, as Matthews claims, the growth of medievalist studies coincided with the deterioration of the medieval studies in the last third of the twentieth century (6). It is quite early, at the end of the nineteenth century, when a tentative demarcation line is drawn between the two disciplines (the line whose nature is going to be entirely re-defined in the late twentieth century as medievalism receives its rightful scholarly appreciation) and "strict boundaries emerge between academic *pastist research* of the 'real' Middle Ages and the various non-academic *presentist rerepresentations* of the medieval past" (Utz 104).

Medievalism has been growing steadily over the last fifty years. As noted by Dąbrówka and Michalski, the gradual acknowledgment of medievalist studies as an academic discipline was triggered by the session which took place during a medieval congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1971 (9). The session was organized by Leslie J. Workman, the initiator of the *Studies in*

*Medievalism* journal (which has been published since 1979 till today) and the annual medievalist conference with its post-conference volumes *The Year's Work in Medievalism* (9-10). Other breakthroughs for the development of medievalism were a conference held in East Germany that concentrated on the reception of medieval poetry (and resulted in the production of *Rezeption deutscher Dichtung des Mittelalters*) and another one organized in Salzburg (both in 1971), after which the volume entitled *Mittelalter-Rezeption* was published (Matthews 6). It should be stressed, however, that this upsurge of interest in the medieval was not as unexpected as it may seem. The revival which originated in the final decades of the eighteenth century had already received scholarly attention before the late 1970s (7) (even if, as Dąbrowska and Michalski notice, most of the research on medievalism at that time was still marginal and appeared as supplements or epilogues to books on the Middle Ages (10)). Among the scholars interested in this topic Matthews puts Arthur Johnston (*Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century*, 1964), Janine Dakyns (*The Middle Ages in French Literature 1851-1900*, 1973), and Alice Chandler (*A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, 1971) (7). Thus, the medievalist conferences of 1979 in the USA and in Germany initiated the effort to combine the research on the post-medieval applications of medieval ideas, themes, architecture and art under one discipline (8). As Matthews asserts, throughout the 1980s the budding field, perceived as a derivative of medieval studies, was treated with suspicion by its parent discipline (9): "For many traditional medievalists . . . medievalism studies was a secondary or meta-discipline which came with too strong a whiff of postmodernism about it" (8). Indeed, the development of medievalist studies into an independent academic discipline was a long process. The Victorian interest in medieval practices acquired a new quality when medieval studies entered modern universities at the beginning of the century as "the interdisciplinary amalgamation of nineteenth-century European medieval philology and history, supported by archaeology, codicology, diplomatics, and palaeography as auxiliary practices" (Gentry, Kleinhenz and Utz qtd. in Utz 106). As Utz explains, while throughout the first half of the twentieth century medieval studies mostly rejected discussions on the modern receptions of medieval culture as non-scientific, towards the end of the 1960s they began to view the popular interest as a rival. It is in this atmosphere of distrust that Workman commenced his mission of rendering medievalism a legitimate academic field of study. His efforts were met mostly with suspicion, partly because he was an independent scholar and partly because of "the dilettante nature of his subject matter." In fact, only in the 1990s (Workman passed away in 2001) was medievalism fully acclaimed thanks to

the advent of feminism and postmodernism. It must be stressed, however, that the New Medievalism movement founded at that time treated Workman's *Studies in Medievalism* condescendingly, concentrated on the purely academic research in the reception of medieval heritage and ignored other forms of medievalism (Utz 107).

According to Matthews, today medievalism has finally been acknowledged. It has found its place among university courses in the UK, the USA and Australia. Regular medievalist sessions are organised in Kalamazoo, Leeds, and at the meetings of the Medieval Academy of America and the New Chaucer Society. What is more, the field has now its own offspring, namely Neomedievalism. Although the interdisciplinarity of medievalism studies poses problems related to the definition of the field (Matthews 108), it still triumphs since

hundreds of scholars have now embraced medievalism as the term that provides them with the creative space in which scholarly rigor and enjoyment, educational experience and emotion, may bridge the rigid alterity between the two noncontiguous historical moments. (Utz 108)

In the preface to his book, Alexander writes that when early medievalism developed in the 1760s, with revivals realized in literature and architecture, it was "experimental and uncertain" (xii). While in many areas of artistic activity it is no longer so, which is evidenced by many examples of medieval themes in films, novels, games or comic books, the workings of medievalism in the contemporary drama has remained largely unexplored. The purpose of this dissertation is to fill this void by examining the morality play as a platform through which medieval ideas and forms were transported into the twentieth century. In this sense, the proposed study of the Morality Play Revival is intended as a part of the long-term project of current scholarship to strengthen the position of medievalism as a legitimate discipline.



# **Part I: The Return of the Morality Play Tradition to Contemporary British, European and American Drama and Its Reception**

The aim of Part I is to present several ideas about why a medieval dramatic form that had been obscured from popular appreciation for hundreds of years made a sudden re-appearance at the beginning of the twentieth century. By considering the political, social, and cultural conditions of the pre-war Britain, and by investigating the condition of the British and American theatre at that time, this section will examine several potential reasons behind the success of Modern Moralities in the UK, as well as in Europe and in the USA where this popularity was transferred. A closer look at the socio-political situation of the Edwardians will help to establish why their mindset might have been predisposed to accept and applaud the simplicity and didacticism of the Modern Morality Play. An analysis of their theatrical taste, based on the overview of other popular forms and genres, will demonstrate how Modern Moralities fitted the expectations of contemporary audiences. The re-emergence of the morality play in the British and American drama was a long-term process. Chapter One summarises it by focusing on the examples which show how Modern Morality Plays entered the English and the American stage.

## **Chapter One: Edwardians, Their World and Drama, and the American Theatre of the Early Twentieth Century: A Historical Introduction**

### **Edwardian England**

As Frans Coetzee writes, the death of Queen Victoria, just a few weeks after the beginning of a new century, provided a symbolic closure to a very long and uneven chapter in English history. Although the year 1902 saw the ending of Boer Wars, small victories could not neutralize the common feeling of uncertainty about the future of Britain as an international superpower. The “nationalist agitation” escalated, with the country’s military and economic condition becoming the chief concerns. Thus, the view of England as an old, backward, “insufficient” country struggling after younger and more dynamically-developing nations such as Germany settled in the common consciousness, and many British citizens believed that

“traditions and cherished, time-honoured practices were in large part responsible for England's current arthritic condition” (38).

The catalogue of public concerns in Edwardian England is extensive and includes, as Louise DeSalvo enumerates in her introduction to Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*,

the trade union movement, labor unrest, the suffrage movement, . . . the conflict between humanism and empire building, changes in religion, the Irish nationalist movement, protectionism, class, the education of women, the excitement over airplanes, the prospect of war with Germany. (xiv)

Only concise elaborations on some of these problems and phenomena will be offered, in order to provide a general idea about the England to which the morality play suddenly made a revisit in the first decades of the twentieth century. These considerations should enhance the understanding of the reasons for the return to medieval theatrical forms in British Theatre.

According to Richard Hyman, Britain has always been a country displaying exceptional degree of class-consciousness, which by the beginning of the twentieth century inspired “socialist perspectives” among numerous union leaders and followers, and which at the time of structural solidification during the Great War made many unions express “an explicit commitment in their rules to the socialist transformation of economy and society” (68). The antagonistic industrial relation between the ruling and the working class helped to develop in representatives of the labour movement the sense of independence and resistance, Hyman explains. What has so far seemed a natural and unchangeable social order, with the beginning of the century started to be seen as an order that needs to be questioned (68). The danger of class conflict was lurking when many publications appeared to call the general attention to the unacceptable inequality in the division of national wealth. As Eric Hopkins states, however, the first years of the twentieth century were hardly the most opportune time for a reform. The war in South Africa divided the Liberal opposition, and the Conservative government organised elections in 1900 hoping to gain on it. They did, but the victory contributed to their majority only three new seats. For two years the Boer Wars and the related issue of imperialism replaced the social change as the prime public concern. Much social apprehension was aroused when the range of national deterioration became known to the public through the official declaration that 34% of recruits for the South African campaign were unfit to fight (Hopkins 127-132).

It is justified at this point to consider the Morality Play Revival in the context of the politics of form: a discourse which politicises formal analysis of narratives. In *Agnostics: Thinking the World Politically*, Chantal Mouffe states that every aesthetic form is always political. “Artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in its

challenging,” she explains, “and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension” (qtd. in Olson and Copland 207). Greta Olson and Sarah Copland add that

narrative and other aesthetic forms develop out of what is inherited and thus constitute expressions of the dominant and the residual, yet they may also express aspects of subordinate or emergent cultural formations. Specific narrative and formal structures may function as historically situated bearers of dominant cultural values or as markers of critique that are aimed at uncovering structures that enforce domination and subordination. (210)

A question ensues, therefore, about the politics behind the Modern Morality Play, and about the ways in which the Morality Play Revival expressed the “emergent cultural formation” in the first decades of the twentieth century.

As it has been discussed, the first years of the post-Victorian era were marked by an escalating class conflict, as the working class became restless. New Liberalism and trade unionism were on the rise, and socialist associations set on spreading socialist thought. The labour movement grew in strength, which culminated in the 1906 success in the general election, after which the Labour Representation Committee was re-named as “the Labour Party” and had twenty-nine MPs. Since one of the ideological goals of socialism was social and economic equality, the Morality Play Revival perfectly inscribes itself into its theoretical framework. This is because Everyman, just as Mankind, Jedermann and all other protagonists of morality plays, embodies the concept of egalitarianism. In medieval plays, this concept is realised through the motif of *danse macabre*, which presents death as the final equaliser. In Modern Moralities, in which the threat of death is usually eliminated, it is realised through the postulate that everybody has the same chance at happiness as long as they make appropriate ethical choices.

Modern Moralities relate to the idea of equality not only in their content, but also through the fact that the twentieth century welcomed them as plays addressed to all of the society, and not any particular group. This can be concluded from the fact that they performed many different functions and they were written by authors from different literary and amateur circles. Next to historical revivals (like Poel's), and serious plays written by well-established poets (like W.B. Yeats's *The Hour Glass*), one finds numerous moralities written by amateurs to be staged at schools (*Work And Wealth: A Modern Morality Play In One Act, As Presented By Students At The Southern Summer School For Women Workers In Industry*) or churches (W.F. Almond's *Everychild*) on specific occasions. Unlike modernist literature, addressed to the intellectual elite, these genuinely were plays for everyone. It can be assumed, therefore, that in some ways Modern Moralities were an attempt to challenge the class-consciousness of the British society.

Next to unionism and class-fight, the suffragette movement must be mentioned as a factor which shaped Edwardian England, and as another cultural (and political) formation which Modern Moralities sought to dramatise. Despite Britain's engagement in the South African War, the suffragettes' activities did not stop; as Laura E. Nym Mayhall recounts, during the conference organized by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, which was held in 1900, a unanimous decision was taken by the delegates to "keep women's suffrage before the legislature during the war" (25). According to Mayhall, although 1899 saw the end of both the Women's Emancipation Union and the Women's Franchise League, many of their members were still politically active during the first decade of the twentieth century, not only in relation to women's suffrage, but also social reform and anti-war agitation. The Boer War inspired a number of women belonging to the Independent Labour Party, Women's Liberal Federation and Social Democratic Federation to consider the possibility of joining their struggle for political rights with their pro-Boer sympathies (25-26). Thus, the South African war "marked a significant turning point in the struggle for women's parliamentary enfranchisement in Britain" by providing an example of a predicament in which the authority needs to be resisted (26). It also provoked doubts that returned later during the Great War: questions regarding the connection between the citizenship and obligations towards the state which refuses to fully acknowledge some of its citizens by denying them voting rights but at the same time expects their service (35).

It is interesting to note that some Modern Moralities were inspired by the popular interest in the continuing efforts of the suffragette movement. One of such plays is Walter Browne's 1908 *Everywoman*. Its summary is provided by a critic from *The Athenaeum* who in 1912 wrote:

Everywoman, disdaining the warnings of the old crone Truth and of Nobody, supposed to be at once a rejected lover of the heroine and chorus of the drama, sets out on a pilgrimage in search of Love, taking with her as girl-companions Beauty, Youth, and Modesty ... One by one she loses her comrades as her freshness is tarnished by contact with the world and with vice. First Modesty disappears; then Beauty dies amid scenes of dissipation; finally Youth succumbs to the arrest of Time. And so we see Everywoman spurned by her former suitor – Wealth – and starving in the streets till she meets once more and appeals to Truth, who leads her home and shows her Love in the shape of a loyal young peasant. ("Everywoman" 283)

Browne's decision to substitute the traditionally male "everyman protagonist" with a female character, and what is more, with a character who is to represent the whole (man)kind, can be seen as a feminist manifest when considered through the politics of form. William Poel's choice to cast a female actress to play Everyman in his 1901 revival has a similar overtone. Another

drama important in this context is Mary Katherine Reely's 1913 feminist play *Anyman: A Modern Morality Play in One Act* on the topic of women's suffrage, in which one of the characters, Mrs. Mater, declares that "the old truths can't be repeated too often" and that it is her task "to hammer away at the old truths" (Reely 1). Thus, it seems that Modern Moralities provide a valuable material for seeing literary texts as Frederic Jameson advises, that is "as the rewriting or restructuration of a prior historical or ideological subtext" (qtd. in Olson and Copland 207). It should be stressed that such "rewritings and restructuration" of morality plays were far from unprecedented; John Bunyan's seventeenth-century allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a classic example of this process.

As far as religion in the Edwardian England is concerned, as Keith Robbins states, "Historians rarely write or speak about Edwardian piety. It is assumed that whatever England was, it was not pious" (112). King Edward did not set the best example for his subjects by conducting himself in an impious enough way to make a minister from Liverpool publicly accuse him of promiscuity (112). The statistics show that in the years 1902-1903, only two in eleven Londoners attended a church or a chapel (Mudie-Smith qtd. in Robbins 114). Robbins adds that the crisis in church attendance which encompassed all social classes was not absolute, but a leniency towards church duty was widespread. It was difficult to make assumptions about the practices of both neighbours and public figures, for whom an enormous gap often existed between private approach and public declarations (for example, an atheist Lloyd George became President of the Baptist Union of Wales). All the churches in England, of which the Anglican church experienced the biggest decrease in attendance, saw the contemporary society and lifestyle as plagued with decadence and materialism (114-116). What is more, the political realities of the time worried the churchmen and were considered by them a potential threat to the society's conscience.

The distinctive feature of the present age is the new prominence that is given to social questions, and the more thorough-going way, both intensive and extensive, in which they are handled. It is true that the social prospect is now and again blotted out from view by sudden storms of international suspicion and warlike passions, or swept by the tidal wave of anti-social reaction. These adverse influences, however, are short-lived. Such paroxysms are violent, but for that very reason they are passing. What, by God's blessing, will prove permanent is our sense of shame for existing social evils, and the growing vision of the possibilities of social redemption that are within our reach (Lidgett 168-169)

announced J. Scott Lidgett in his presidential address to the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service at Oxford on April 13, 1909.

Robbins asserts that the doubts of the clergy with regard to the condition of English society had

a common core but were diverse. While R. J. Campbell, a popular Anglican preacher, called for a return to Puritanism, T. Edmund Harvey (a social reformer also known for writings on Christianity), advocated against attributing too much importance to prohibitions and seeing shared joy as the key characteristic of Christian faith. The “blending of the sacred and the secular” occurred on a big scale when some Nonconformist congregations combined ritual practices with such activities as Bible classes, prayer and choir meetings or book and cycling clubs.

The character of many Modern Moralities mirrors these changes within the Church. First of all, as the English society so the morality play became largely secularised. A genre traditionally associated with illustrating and simplifying the teachings of the Christian faith shifted its focus from instructing its audience how to die well to instructing them how to live ethically. Secondly, many Modern Moralities used the medieval form as a platform to comment on specific social concerns that were entirely unrelated to the Church (as was the case with Reely’s feminist play). As a result of these changes, the Modern Morality Play became in itself “a blending of the sacred and the secular:” a vessel originally designed to store sacred ideas which through the process of appropriation turned into a catalyst of secular arguments.

Finally, the arms-race must be accounted for as an issue that influenced the worldview of the general public at that time. German industrial and commercial competition had been growing from the late-Victorian period and was now joined by the competition in the navy. It seems that the key question to be asked is whether the Edwardians expected the coming of World War I. As Read argues, there is no universal answer, as the memoirs differ greatly in their accounts. To some, the idea of war with Germany seemed absurd, while others describe the sense of inevitably approaching disaster. There was another group inclusive of, for example, Anthony Eden (the British Prime Minister in the years 1955-57) who confirmed that the prospect of war constantly lingered but was never seriously considered (29-30). One thing appears certain to historians: nobody in Britain wanted war (Grenville 163). This resistance and the feeling of disappointment with the humanity brought by both the World Wars become an important theme in many Modern Moralities. For example, in Arthur Simmons’s *Conflict* personified vices try to evoke fear in the protagonist by referring to war atrocities.

Political instability, the loss of international power and the looming possibility of conflict meant that the popular ideal of chivalric England started to be challenged. At the same time, however, the interest in the Middle Ages and their reception was on the rise. As it has been argued, the return to medieval literary and dramatic forms did not come out of nowhere but appeared as a

natural result of artistic preoccupation with the Middle Ages initiated by Romanticism. Among the many Romantic writers who in their work drew on medieval themes one must include Robert Browning, Charlotte Yonge, Matthew Arnold, Adelaide Procter, William Morris, Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson, Henry Kendall and Sir Walter Scott. It is true that Poel's production of *Everyman* sprang from his individual inclination towards old English drama, and that it reminded other British and American dramatists about the existence of moralities. It should also be acknowledged, however, that both Poel's medieval predilections and Modern Morality Play authors' interest in this form, resulted from the fact that they were artistically shaped in the era fascinated with the Middle Ages.

Although the general feeling among the English at the turn of the century was “unease at the way the world was going” (Read 20), it is important to resist picturing the Edwardian era as an entirely gloomy and depressing time. As Read notices, the crises which arose in different spheres of public life in the pre-war England were independent of each other. The overlapping of the trade union strikes, the suffragettes' campaign and the escalation of the conflict with Ireland was coincidental. Moreover, current research suggests that the interwar retrospective historians of the Edwardian era often went too far in their pessimistic assessments (Read 23). On the other side of the spectrum, created by the horror of the Great War and its aftereffects lies a new, sentimental vision of the Edwardian era as the paradise lost: a golden age of “quiet country life, peaceful downland, gentle horses, affectionate families, and deferential servants, all bathed in golden memory” (Read 27-28). In fact, it might have been this conflicted nature of Edwardian society, which made it receptive to Modern Morality Plays. Even though the Moralities often explored difficult social and political issues such as egalitarianism or war, they guaranteed an optimistic ending. Vices would always be defeated by virtues and the protagonist inevitably saw the error of his ways. This combination of seriousness and positivity made Modern Moralities a convenient theatrical choice for Edwardian viewers.

Finally, the condition of English cultural life at the turn of the century and during the Edwardian era should be discussed. This condition, as Ann L. Ardis states, relates to “aesthetics through which the London-based Anglo-American avant-garde began catapulting itself – and, not quite coincidentally, the discipline of English studies – to cultural prominence during the pre-war years” (2). Jeremy Tambling explains that an important occurrence for the development of English as a separate subject was the appointment in 1912 of Sir Arthur Quiller-Coch as Professor at Cambridge. His task was to replace late Arthur Verrall in teaching courses on English literature, honouring the provision given to his predecessor that the subject should be

treated critically rather than philologically. When Quiller accepted the post, English was not a course in its own right but a part of the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos. Due to the efforts of Quiller and other professors, as well as thanks to the patriotic mood created by the war, English Tripos was inaugurated in 1917 (Tambling 23-24). Despite his indubitable contribution to the establishment of English as an academic discipline, the amateurism of Quiller's activities and his general resistance to the professionalization of literature must be taken into account. It is best illustrated by his statement that "Literature cannot be divorced from life, that Literature cannot be understood apart from the men who have made it, that Literature is a living art, to be practised as well as admired" (qtd. in Tambling 24).

Professor George Stuart Gordon's inaugural lecture for his Merton Professorship at Oxford University best reflects the newly found recognition for the discipline of English Literature:

England is sick, and . . . English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State (qtd. in Eagleton 23).

Thus, as Eagleton concludes, literature studies replaced religion as an ideology which binds the society together and has a pacifying influence on the masses. One of its chief objectives, as Matthew Arnold perceives it, was to give to the rising middle class a cultural underpinning that would match their growing economic power. This ideological project had also much more practical and less disinterested applications (Eagleton 21). Dealing with universal questions rather than "such historical trivia as civil wars, the oppression of women or the dispossession of the English peasantry, it could serve to place in cosmic perspective the petty demands of working people for decent living conditions or greater control over their own lives" (25).

It seems that Modern Moralities only partly reflected this understanding of the social role of English literature. On the one hand, as their medieval prototypes, they employed allegorical characters to universalise the scope of their commentary and answer ultimate questions about the human condition. To this purpose, they explored the complexities of everyday life seen from the perspective of a specific "everyman," for example a young clerk (*Insomnia*), a workaholic (*Life's Measure*), an atheist teacher (*The Hour-Glass*), or a child (*Everychild*). In face of church crisis, secularised moralities provided a source of secular instruction acceptable to all middle-class audience members, also in settings located outside the theatre (for example at schools). On the other hand, Modern Moralities often engaged themselves with current topics of social controversy. Thus, their intent was never to direct their viewers' attention away from local and towards global issues in the way Eagleton claims literature often did.

## The early-twentieth-century British theatre

According to Allardyce Nicoll, one of the major developments in the early-twentieth century British theatre were societies such as Stage Society, Repertory Players, the Stockport Garrick Society, Altrincham Garrick Society, the Mermaid Society or Stock Exchange Operatic and Dramatic Society. Some of them were professional, some sprung from amateur efforts and some were results of individual interests. Although individually these groups do not contribute much to the dramatic output of the first half of the century, they must be acknowledged as a significant phenomenon which, as Nicoll puts it, “testified to the manner in which the “idea” of the theatre had seized upon the imagination of the age” (80). It was often the policy of an association to promote new drama, as plays by both English and foreign dramatists were staged. While some societies had no specific agenda, others worked to promote a specific kind of drama (for example the Poetic Drama Society or the French Play Society) (80).

An association of special importance to this study is the Morality Play Society inspired by the efforts of Mrs Edith Lyttelton (the author of *The Christmas Morality Play*, 1908) and Mrs Percy Dearmer. Its aim was “to produce original Moralities, Mysteries, and Miracle plays, and other modern plays of an ideal nature” (qtd. in Nicoll 86). The committee included such members as Princess Mary Louise, Earls Beauchamp, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Lytton, together with famous theatrical personalities such as Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Sir John Martin-Harvey or William Poel, whose 1901 staging of *Everyman* initiated the Morality Play Revival. What must also be mentioned is the Catholic Stage Society, which came into being in 1917 but became active in the 1920s. Finally, the Religious Drama Society encompassed efforts of not only the Catholic Stage Society, but also the British Jewish Literary Society and a Players Guild of the Theosophical Society (Nicoll 80-92). The emergence of the societies specifically dedicated to staging religious plays illustrates an important trend in British drama which corresponds with the public’s interest in such a dramatic form as the Modern Morality Play, which was sometimes religious but always didactic.

As far as the forms, trends and influences which dominated the theatre of the early twentieth century are concerned, Nicoll stresses the importance of internationalism, which had always been present in British Drama. Although there was no increase in foreign influences at that time, major developments appeared in how English theatre interacted with theatres from abroad. One of them was the fact that the number of countries which influenced England rose. In the nineteenth century it was limited to France, Germany, the USA, and of course Norway.

Meanwhile, the *Modern Plays* collection published in England at the turn of the century includes, apart from the plays from Germany and Norway, also Swedish, Russian and Belgian plays. From 1900 many foreign companies started to present their work in the West End. The travelling methods improved, and the English audience was responsive to the novelties. There were plays produced in different languages as “the spirit of theatrical and dramatic internationalism was enveloping the theatres” (113). Among the most prominent influences Nicoll quotes Austrian Arthur Schnitzer, Germans Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser, Italians Gregorio Martínez Sierra, Gabriele D'Annunzio and Luigi Pirandello, Russians Maxim Gorki, Anton Chekhov, Leonid Andreyev and Nikolai Evreinov, and, in more general sense, the impact which on the English Stage made the new appreciation for *commedia dell'arte* (111-117). Modern Moralities also occasionally made use of these influences; for example, in *Insomnia* H.F. Rubinstein introduces some elements of *commedia dell'arte*. The fact that some Moralities borrowed from foreign drama confirms their status as legitimate, flexible and updated elements of British theatrical panorama. Of paramount importance to the Morality Play Revival was also the exchange with America, which was livelier than ever. Thanks to the dynamic transfer of trends and performances Poel's *Everyman* went on tour to the USA, secured success there and inspired other plays that sometimes (as was the case with George V. Hobart's *Experience*) became box-office hits.

Another dramatic trend which Modern Moralities followed were one-act plays. As Nicoll explains, they appeared already in the nineteenth century but in no such proliferation or diversity as in the twentieth. This increase in popularity resulted from the music hall practice of including short sketches among their acrobatic turns. The demand for playlets came not only from commercial theatres but also theatrical societies and repertories. They were less demanding to produce than full-length plays, they were characterised by great diversity of theme and style, and, if successful, they could ensure significant profits. Although in the late 1920s one-act plays have lost their professional touch and mostly disappeared from the West End, it was during this time that the short play truly established itself and made its way into anthologies of its own. The overall influence of the short plays on traditional dramas was, however, detrimental. Not only aspiring playwrights who started their careers with writing playlets often never matured to master the tricky art of acts composition, but also the resignation from traditional five-act structure was thus encouraged. Plays often evolved into four- or even three-act compositions with confusing nomenclature that included interchangeably used terms of “acts,” “scenes” or “epilogues” understood not as an address to

the audience but simply as a concluding scene (122-128). That Modern Moralities took inspiration from one-acts, and in this way fulfilled another expectation of the audience, is evident from their titles, such as *Devil's Lane: A Modern Morality Play in One Act* (Louise Sublette Perry, 1928), *Everystudent, His Encounters in Pursuit of Knowledge: A Modern Morality Play in One Act* (Edith Everett, 1912), *Work And Wealth: A Modern Morality Play In One Act* (1929) or the aforementioned *Anyman. A Modern Morality Play in One Act* (Mary Katharine Reely, 1913).

Another form which made a significant impact on traditional plays was film, Nicoll indicates. Challenging previous separation of prose and drama, numerous contemporary novelists wrote theatre plays or dramatized their prose pieces (Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy among them). At the same time, especially after 1919, plays started to borrow structural solutions offered by films. Examples included combining direct action with a narrative in a way that imitated the interchange of pictures and subtitles in silent films, the use of flashbacks or opening the play with a dialogue-deprived scene that only establishes the setting (as Somerset Maugham's *East of Suez*) (128-132). It is worth noting that many Modern Moralities were also adapted for films, which attests to their popularity and flexibility. Thus, Richard Ganthony's *A Message from Mars* was filmed twice and became the first British science-fiction film, and *Everyman* received two adaptations (in 1913 and 1914), as did Conan Doyle's *Fires of Fate* (1923 and 1932) and Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound* (1930 and 1944 as *Between Two Worlds*). Finally, George V. Hobart's hit *Experience: A Morality Play of Today* was turned into a film directed by George Fitzmaurice in 1921.

Nicoll states that other theatrical forms which retained or gained approval of English audiences at the turn of the century were farce and light comedy, which thrived, usually concentrating on characters who belonged to aristocracy or the upper-middle-class, as did romantic dramas with a lot of melodramatic situations. A new development was the "realistic society play," sometimes with a heroine and sometimes with a hero as their protagonists, sometimes serious and sometimes sentimental, but almost always with love and the related perturbances as the chief problem of the play (363). Although a lot of theatrical output at that time was based on the recognition of popular tastes and many plays were written according to similar, unoriginal models (363), already by the end of the nineteenth century appeared the kind of drama which concentrated less on the character and plot and more on the idea: the so called "drama of ideas," which kept evolving in the Edwardian era (391). In his article from 1941, Arthur H. Nethercot defines it as "a play written specifically to provoke thought on the part of the audience" or "any

play which provokes thought” and “not simply ‘feeling’ or ‘emotion’” (372). Taking into account that moralities were often accused of lack of emotional appeal and that their characters are embodiments of ideas, one may subscribe to Potter’s view of the moral play as “a drama of ideas” (225).

### **Categories of drama: “the general drama,” “the popular drama” and “the progressive drama”**

The consideration of some output of the early-twentieth-century theatre (which Modern Moralities constituted) merits a reflection on the genres of drama that this period offered. These genres, Nicoll argues, can be divided into three different categories: “the general,” “the progressive” and “the popular.”

The general drama was the most extensive and the most significant drama associated with the West End and managed by remarkable actors, impresarios, and producers. Although it meant to appeal to wide audiences and often included also uninspired pieces, in general terms it was “the most intrinsically interesting” drama (150), dominated by ‘established’ authors of high reputation. The skill and imprint of these authors on the English stage varied, but none can be neglected in a comprehensive overview. Some of them, like H.V. Esmond or Harriet Jay, had already been approaching the end of their careers at the beginning of the twentieth century and contributed only singular memorable works during the Edwardian period. Others retained the vigorousness attained during Victorian years and carried it into the new century in the form of appealing pieces, for example Sir Seymour Hicks, R.C. Carton or Jerome K. Jerome whose only genuine success was *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* from 1908 (324-331). It is worth noting that in 1908 Jerome wrote *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, a play with Christian overtones often described as an Edwardian morality play.

As far as the popular drama is concerned, Nicoll states that three of its main forms in the first decades of the twentieth century were musicals, revues and melodramas. Many historians would divide the theatre of that time into the theatre of drama and the theatre of music, and subsequently dismiss the latter as intended purely for light amusement and thus unworthy of serious study. Still, it should be remembered that the period went down in history as “The Singing Years” and that many of those pieces retained their appeal even today, becoming a part of the legacy (150-153).

According to Nicoll, the third category of drama, “the minority” or “progressive” drama, stands in direct opposition to musicals, revues and melodramas, whose sole purpose was to provide amusement. The difference between the minority and the general drama is not clear-cut. While the former is generally associated with those playwrights who stayed away from the West End’s commercial theatres and set their activities within repertories and societies, there were many among them (e.g. Ronald Jeans or R.C. Sheriff) who from the beginning aspired to one day continue their careers in commercial playhouses. What differentiates the progressive drama from both the popular and the general drama is that its output was aimed at appealing to small intellectual audiences (214-216).

While considering the miscellaneous movements that characterised the minority drama, special attention should be paid to propagandist drama, children drama, regional drama and poetic drama. Nicoll remarks that although propagandist drama went practically extinct in Victorian times, and thus appeared to the Edwardians as an entirely new development, it was in fact a prolongation of the tradition established centuries before, with the initiation of English Theatre in the Middle Ages. Already mysteries and moralities aimed to not only entertain but also teach the audience. Many of the new playwrights who entered the dramatic world in the early twentieth century were young intellectuals with fixed views on society, politics, religion and philosophy that they believed needed to be heard. The potential of the theatrical stage for propaganda soon presented itself to political organisation which started to set up their own dramatic associations. Most of these performances were either unperformed or performed within the clubs which submitted them (222-227).

The idea of “Children’s Theatre,” Nicoll observes, encompassed two separate phenomena: simple plays meant to be staged by children and more complicated pieces meant to be presented to children audiences. Within the first category, numerous plays were composed in the beginning of the century, mostly by amateurs and by female authors, although there are also instances of children’s drama written by professional playwrights. With time, they became more specifically targeted, and thus evolved from plays described as “for children” into plays “for boys,” “for girls” or “for Scouts.” Originally conceived for amusement, they quickly presented their opportunities to educationalists and propagandists. While the plays for children meant for theatres aspired to offer more quality than the amateur playlets, only the works of Barrie (*Peter Pan*) and Milne (*Make-Believe*, *Toad of Toad Hall*) can be considered genuinely excellent examples of professional children’s drama (241-245). It is worth noting that some Modern Moralities were written for similar purposes, for example Grace Latimer Jones’s *What*

*Makes Christmas Christmas* which was written specifically to be performed by the students of a girls' school, or W.F. Almond's *Everychild* which was a moral play about children's faith.

Finally, the poetic and literary drama must be mentioned. As Nicoll declares, the realist tradition, which the twentieth century took over from its Victorian predecessor, started to be challenged when a new demand appeared for drama that would be less ordinary, less middle-class and less dull. Realism remained preponderant in Edwardian drama, but the emergent craving for something more powerful and exciting inspired such authors as Stephen Philips to try their hands at poetic drama. While from today's perspective his 1900 play *Herod* does not appear to have much dramatic worth, at the time it was presented it created a sensation among critics and audiences alike. The success of *Herod* was repeated two years later with *Paolo and Francesca*, which made one critic absurdly declare Philips's mastery to be equal to Sophocles's and Dante's. Despite his later efforts, Philips quickly fell into oblivion as a dramatist. The fact that plays of such minor quality could cause such a sensation evidently points to an enormous appetite of London audiences for a different kind of plays than were generally available. Other similar efforts of that time include Gilbert Murray's *Andromache*, J.B. Fagan's *The Prayer of the Sword*, Rudolf Besier's *The Virgin Goddess*, J. Comyns Carr's *Tristan and Iseult* or Josephine Peabody's *The Piper*. While most poetic dramas were of minor value, often coming from writers who never wrote another play or who did not expect to see their play staged (as was the case with some Modern Moralities), and although they often repeated nineteenth-century patterns, the popularity of this trend demands acknowledgment (283-292).

Ascribing Modern Morality Plays to a single category of the early-twentieth-century drama is problematic because of their diversity. As it will be demonstrated, many Modern Moralities were simplistic plays with little to no artistic or literary value. At the same time, however, some of them managed to secure not only immense popularity, but also financial success. Although people's need for a non-realist "consolation theatre" with a straightforward didactic message provides some explanation for this phenomenon, the Modern Morality Play must have had also other qualities which responded to expectations of contemporary audience. It appears that the unexpected success of Stephen Philips's poetic-style plays mentioned above presents a relevant analogy. Nicoll writes that Philips "was decidedly not gifted with any great power," that his biggest achievements "may be described only by the damning epithet "competent"" and that he often "descended to the abyss of dull artificiality" (285). About his plays Nicoll states that "it may appear almost incredible that plays so turgidly written could have been acclaimed as masterpieces" (286). Still, despite their dullness and artificiality these dramas were generally

applauded by reviewers who compared Philips's skills to Webster's or Milton's. Nicoll finds explanation for Philips's success “not so much in the dramas themselves, as in the attitude of those who listened to them,” and explains that

The ears of the critics and the playgoers . . . brought to the productions what they wanted to hear. Unconsciously yearning for something beyond the old grey solitary nothingness of the current dramatic prose dialogue, they stretched forwards avidly towards *Herod* and *Paolo and Francesca*, believing that here was what they sought. (286)

This is not to say that morality plays, like poetic drama, were written in verse, or that they in any technical aspect resembled poetic plays. This is to say that the London public was eager to enjoy and praise all drama, even of questionable quality, as long as it supplied what they most desired, which was novelty. Modern Morality Plays satisfied this demand as a form with which the majority of viewers had no previous contact. Allegory, personification and abstract setting must have resonated with the public that was tired of realism.

### **American theatre in the first decades of the twentieth century**

As Theresa Saxon explains, during the first decades of the twentieth century, American theatre experienced a number of significant changes in terms of its output and organisation. Theatre's social role was submitted to a reconsideration that resulted from new developments in technology and in methods of stage production. Both vast legitimate theatres and small illegitimate stages thrived, along with the emergent repertories. Critical transitions occurred that included the departure from melodrama and into the direction of realism and the departure from commercial to experimental drama. It is also in the beginning of the twentieth century when dramatic realism starts to be associated with professional playwriting (it is literary) and sentimental melodrama becomes degraded as a product of theatre and not literature (it is commercial). The symbolic figure of this progression was Eugene O'Neill, America's “first serious playwright” (Saxon 146).

In *American Theatre*, Saxon interestingly locates the melodrama-realism dichotomy within a gender context, in which realism is seen as “the masculine response to the feminisation of American theatre” and “an assertion of playwriting itself as a manly pursuit” (147). According to this vision, it was the female audience's demand for sentimental domestic melodrama which led to the impoverishment of drama and it was the male realism which brought about its renaissance. Despite the efforts of dramatists like O'Neill who stood decisively against the

melodramatic tradition, the definite victory of realism did not happen until the 1940s. Nevertheless, a definite change of focus occurred in theatre and transferred the attention from lavish shows to more intellectually challenging, intense drama and from life-reflecting elaborate settings to suggestive, abstract sets of the little theatre (Saxon 139-147).

In *The American Play*, Marc Robinson states that in the first decades of the twentieth century, American drama was moving towards modernism, pushed by the activities of three pioneers: Eugene O'Neill, Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder. In 1910, an exhibition of stage designs opened in the famous 291 Gallery in New York, becoming the herald of major changes (the key element of the exhibition was “a series of twelve “movements”—abstract, idealized settings for unnamed plays, populated by performers unaffiliated to recognizable characters” (157). As all kinds of art expressed interest in modernist ideals, in which “Human forms were absorbed by machines, diagrams, and texts, dwarfed by urban landscapes, atomized and dispersed in a vortex of social energy, or effaced by the artist’s self-reflexive argument about representation itself” (160). Robinson stresses that also modernist writers expressed their ideas about the progression of theatre and acknowledged its influence on their own art. For example, the persona of Gordon Craig appears in Marianne Moore’s poetry. In 1916, Ezra Pound, an avid opponent of the mimetic theatre of Belasco, published *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* confirming his interest in the subject of drama and declaring it the kind of theatre that would speak to Yeats and Craig. Although wary of the proximity between art and audience that takes place during the spectacle (and which he always denounced), in his poetry Pound often referred to theatre and subjects “the static medium of poetry to the temporal and decentering pressures traditionally associated with performance” (162). His vision of theatrical decorum is best presented in “Notes for Performers” from 1916 (its subject is, in fact, musical performance, but the stipulations can be easily transferred to the theatrical sphere):

With apologies to the language, the audience are spectators, they watch a thing of which they are not part, and that thing must be complete in itself. They may be moved by the contemplation of its beauty; they are not moved—or at least can be moved only in an inferior and irrelevant way—by being merged into the action of the stage. (qtd. in Robinson 163)

A concert, he declares, “is a performance, a presentation, not an appeal to the sympathies of the audience. It is, or should be, as definitely a presentation or exhibition as if the performer were to bring out a painted picture and hang it before the audience” (qtd. in Robinson 163).

## Realism and Eugene O'Neill

As Brenda Murphy asserts, American drama was slow to embrace realism, whose introduction began with failed efforts in the 1890s (e.g. James Herne's *Margaret Fleming*), continued with the commercial style in the first years of the twentieth century and finally took shape only in 1920 with Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*. That was a forty-years delay when compared to the European drama, in which Ibsen, Hauptmann, Strindberg and Chekhov had already introduced realism into their plays. This delay was caused by the lack of experimental theatres which were abundant in the UK. Until World War I American theatre was entirely commercial and profit-oriented, concentrated on meeting the business target and filling the demand for the most popular form of entertainment. Thus, the success of a theatre depended on providing the audience with what they wanted and expected, which was usually what they already knew. The crucial period in establishing realism in the American theatre were thus the years 1890-1915. Welcomed by some and undisputedly rejected by others, during that time the new movement became the chief impulse for a literary revolution in drama (Murphy 86).

Joseph Wood Krutch notices that although tragedy was generally distrusted by the turn-of-the-century and early-twentieth-century playwrights, "the unhappy end," practised vigorously by such realists as Ibsen, was met with common respect. It was seen as a sign of the writer's determination to not seek compromise between his vision of art and the audience's expectations (73-74). While a versatile contributor to the development of American drama, Eugene O'Neill was first and foremost "responsible for the revival of the unhappy ending and the triumphant return of the tragic spirit" (Gagey 39). Krutch argues that the secret of a successful unhappy ending lies in its ability to "serve a purpose beyond that of merely affirming a blind pessimism" (77). The endings of O'Neill's dramas were able to achieve it, although altogether his output appears uneven – great successes often interspersed with complete failures. He was also versatile in his selection of forms and themes. His early plays combined the elements of realism, poesy, mysticism, romanticism and highbrow melodrama. His subjects varied, as did his technical devices and his forms which, were constantly put under experimentation (78-79). Altogether O'Neill wrote more than fifty plays, whose protagonists represented numerous ways of life and professions and rose up to both individual and commonly-encountered challenges (Bloom 248). His first produced play was *Bound East for Cardiff*, in which not only his predilection for "primitive, not wholly articulate" characters becomes evident, but also the conviction that no complex life situation can be interpreted with the use of rationality only (82).

More importantly, however, it is thanks to this play, Steven F. Bloom argues, that the American theatre was forever changed, as it was from the cooperation of O'Neill and the Provincetown Players who produced the play the native drama emerged (248).

As Robinson indicates, many modernist artists and poets mocked O'Neill (Pound, Moore and Charles Demuth included). Their disparagement resulted from O'Neill's predilection for sentiment in the presentation of his characters' struggle for self-knowledge. From today's critical perspective, however, one can assume that in the obstacles to self-knowledge which these characters encounter lies the greatness of O'Neill's creations (164). These obstacles include "the crust of personality, hardened by convention and habit: the wayward or mechanized body, alien-seeming to its possessor; and the reticence of the surrounding environment" (164). If properly presented, these difficulties help to attract the audience's attention to the theatrical strategies of evasion, in which case what is not seen and what is not said becomes more significant than the "lyrical outpouring" (164). That the power of O'Neill's drama lies in his insistence on the significance of the unseen is best exemplified by the sketch he prepared for the setting of *Long Day's Journey into the Night*, Robinson asserts. The drawing is a floor plan of the Tyrone house, modelled on O'Neill's house in New London. It depicts in great detail the rooms that go beyond the boundaries of the actual set and that are entirely irrelevant for the play, whose action does not leave the living room. It also clearly points to O'Neill's disregard for the practicalities of theatrical performance (Robinson 166).

O'Neill's significance for this study lies in his indebtedness to morality play tradition. "The argument that all of O'Neill's plays can be regarded as morality plays or even that it is hard to differentiate between those which are and those which are not," however, "seems at first difficult to resolve," states Louis Broussard (13). He further explains that O'Neill's oeuvre can be divided into two kinds of plays: allegories which discuss a problem, whose plots are subjected to its symbolic representation, and story-plays that dramatize truths presented in the beginning. And it is in the allegory plays, which follow the morality play tradition, Broussard argues, that the most meaning among all O'Neill's plays can be found. Among them he enumerates *The Hairy Ape*, *Dynamo*, *Days Without End* and *The Iceman Cometh*. What renders O'Neill's protagonists different from other expressionist playwrights' heroes is that they never lose humanity to become purely abstract, even when they are type-characters. The dramatist himself commented that it is only through a character that an idea can be conveyed to the audience and that abstractions make it impossible for the audience members to identify themselves with the protagonist. The traces of *Everyman*, however, can be found in both *The*

*Hairy Ape* and *Emperor Jones*, where the protagonists bear the most common American names of Smith and Jones. While signalling the universality which should encompass problems of all Americans, ultimately in both plays O'Neill reaches beyond the American context towards the dilemma relevant for all mankind. Both dramas expose human inability to control men's primitive nature (13-16). In fact, Broussard goes as far as to call *The Hairy Ape* "America's first morality play in the expressionistic genre" (16). Another work which must be mentioned in this context is *Dynamo* (1929), where Puritanism and materialism clash, represented by two families. The idea of God being replaced with science is explored, and a question is posed whether science, identified with materialism, can provide man with comfort he used to look for in religion and love (23-24). O'Neill summarizes his drama as follows:

It is a symbolical and factual biography of what is happening in a large section of the American (and not only American) soul right now. It is really the first play of a trilogy that will dig at the roots of the sickness of today as I feel it – The death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fear of death with (qtd. in Broussard 26)

Here again, O'Neill creates a play in which the presented problem becomes more important than the characters and in which "O'Neill's own soul searching becomes that of Everyman" (26).

Bloom argues that although the beginning of O'Neill's career was dominated by the influences of European drama, the mastery and originality of his final works give him a place among the greatest playwrights of that time such as Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov and Shaw (261). According to Linda Ben-Zvi, his drama, imbued with the sense of futility, heralded the advent of the Theatre of the Absurd and foretold the revolution brought about by Beckett, Pinter, Shepard and Mamet (qtd. in Bloom 261). Most of his plays were realistic, but even those which depicted rough conditions of ordinary life had an air of grandness and poesy about them (Gagey 39). "While working through the psychological and emotional traumas of his own life through his writing for the stage, Eugene O'Neill transformed American drama and brought it into the modern era," declares Bloom (261).

### **Naturalism and expressionism**

In "Naturalism and Expressionism in American Drama," Julia A. Walker argues that the influence of both naturalism and expressionism on American theatre is much less critically

acknowledged than that of realism. Naturalism is often seen as a pessimistic version of realism, incompatible with the American spirit, and expressionism as a passing fad imported from abroad. Both movements are often treated with neglect, with naturalism usually referred to as an immature stage of O'Neill's career. The reason to consider them together is that they both appeared as a reaction to realism and that both present social problems without offering solutions. Thus, when thinking about naturalism in American theatre, one should first and foremost determine the strength and character of its relation to realism. The critical opinion on this matter oscillates between perceiving naturalism as a movement that emerged as an outgrowth of realism, and as a movement which arose in opposition to it (264-266).

Brenda Murphy sees the evidence for the former in regional plays which "treated rural characters with an uncommon seriousness, individuating them and illuminating their personalities through the metaphorical use of setting" (Walker 266-267). As for the latter, numerous aspects of dramatic naturalism stress its break from realism. While realist plays usually treat about middle-class protagonists searching for their place in the world, for their understanding of it and for restoring order, naturalism extends its interest towards the low-born characters who struggle against their circumstances. Realism is based on Enlightenment philosophy, and on the idea of characters making informed decisions driven by logic. Naturalism, on the other hand, with its roots in determinism, takes into account forces beyond human control and presents the characters' actions as often incapacitated by their limited understanding. While realism invites the audience to identify with the characters, naturalism expects from the viewers only compassion and to prevent identification often offers an "antihero" whose decisions aim to make the audience understand the presented social dilemma. In realism, the setting is an indication of where the action takes place. In naturalism the function of the setting is "doubly representational:" besides the material aspect it also suggests abstract forces and ideologies in play. An example of a naturalist American play is Theodore Dreiser's *The Girl in the Coffin* (1916) (Walker 266-270).

As Broussard asserts, the first decades of the twentieth century saw American drama turning towards the ideas of Ibsen, Freud and Bergson, and the expressionistic form of playwrighting which started with Strindberg and which reached the peak of its popularity in Germany after 1910. Strindberg equipped naturalism with a new method of presentation and determinism and in expressionist plays he forsook the order of events for a stream of consciousness where "the surface of life becomes disjointed, scattered, as in a dream, to suggest the inner reality which lies beneath that surface" (5). Broussard further explains that Strindberg's revolution

profoundly influenced developments in the literature of the twentieth century. His impact is distinguishable in works of Hauptmann, Pirandello, Kafka, Werfel, Joyce, Kaiser, Toller and Capek. Symbolist movement in poetry, impressionism in painting and stream-of-consciousness novel are all derivatives of dramatic expressionism. As naturalism, expressionism relies on the double significance of a detailed set by projecting the psychological states of the characters on their surroundings. While naturalism presents influence which the environment has on the struggling characters, in expressionism both external and internal forces are the objects of exploration. It also relinquishes smooth narrative for a more episodically-organised structure. The characters become often nameless social types, rather than individualized personas (5).

Expressionism is a movement especially relevant to this dissertation and its exploration of the connection between the morality play and the early-twentieth-century Anglophone drama. According to Broussard, the clash of new and old ideologies within the theatrical universe which occurred in the beginning of the previous century initiated “the evolution of a type of drama more allegorical than any since the Middle Ages” (3). What is more, “because American drama’s emergence into significance parallels in time the influence of allegorical drama from the European Continent, American playwrights have produced plays which engage their hero in an action appropriately suited to the problems of all men in this period” (3-4). In time, expressionism proposed by Strindberg evolves with the influence of other playwrights who incorporate into their works the subject of contemporary economic and social problems rendering the protagonist “a member of a class, a collective hero engaged in the class struggle” (6). The themes vary, ranging from unsuccessful revolutions (*Man and the Masses*) to destruction brought about by technological progress (*Gas*) but characters often become personified abstractions corresponding to the ideas of rebellion, justice or subjection (6). Thus, irrespective of the play’s subject, “In creating a hero engaged in a struggle representative of a class, the expressionistic playwright became the late descendant of the creator of the morality play of the fifteenth century” (6). In selecting the abstractions to explore in their dramas, expressionists abandon religious references and focus on problems and ideas significant for the contemporary society such as equality, communism or democracy. Materialism replaces Satan, life force replaces God, but the protagonist is still Everyman, “ever engaged in a contest for survival, the terms of which are the fundamental issues of the present age” (6). In this way, an expressionist dramatist turns towards allegory and the motif of pilgrimage which started with *Odyssey* and then was reworked in the medieval morality play (6).

While many American playwrights became inspired by expressionism in the 1920s (O’Neill’s

*The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*), none of them wrote exclusively expressionist plays. Usually, they combined expressionism with other traditions to produce their own versions of *Everyman* in which the contemporary protagonist struggled with the pressures of modern world (like in Robert Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* or Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*).

### **The everyman motif in American drama**

Other plays than O'Neill's were created during the first decades of the twentieth century which explore "The theme of expressionism presented in the format of "Journey" and dealing with the futility of man's struggle in a world dominated by materialism and bureaucracy, with *Everyman* as the hero" (Broussard 40). Broussard argues that almost every playwright from 1920s through to the 1950s created at least one play which revolved around this topic. While O'Neill embedded the *Everyman* story in the genre of tragedy, other writers selected different forms. For Elmer Rice, the author of *The Adding Machine* (1923) it was social drama, for Philip Barry the comedy of manners (56) and for Thornton Wilder an allegorical play.

*The Adding Machine* tells a story of an accountant, Mr. Zero, who learns that he is going to lose his job to a machine who can perform his duties faster and more efficiently than him. As Broussard recounts, in the seven scenes that comprise the play, the stream of consciousness technique is combined with expressionist stage effects to explore the subject of universal importance. The overall message is rather bleak; religion and economy both become sources of men's enslavement. People will always be subjected to fate, often represented by institutions against which there is no point of struggling. The play deftly illustrates the difference between the American and Continental expressionism, which is that in American drama, while still representing ideas, the characters retain their humanity even in a fantastical setting. For Broussard, *The Adding Machine* was America's "first mature drama, possessing a structural sense, a power of characterization, and a handling of dialogue which Eugene O'Neill himself had not yet accomplished" (46). It claimed its place next to *The Hairy Ape* as one of the first American dramatic endeavours to examine the relation between a man and the modern world (43-49).

Philip Barry, although largely disregarded today, was a pioneer of American comedy of manners. As Broussard indicates, with such plays as *Paris Bound* (1927) and *Holiday* (1928)

he established a tradition of new comedies that were sophisticated, written in good style and presented intellectual worth. Although many of his works were light in tone, they preserved a moralizing impulse and the conviction that the boundary between the tragic and the comic is very thin. One of his plays that never gained popularity was *Hotel Universe*, America's first comedy of meaning, in which the didactic element is embedded in a drawing-room setting. It is written as a one-actor play and the entire action takes place on a terrace in a French residence in 1929. All characters gradually admit to being unhappy and in an oneiric state they return to decisive moments in their lives that determined their present predicaments. The host, Stephen Field, initially presented as a half-mad scientist, acts as a guide and an interpreter who helps his guests comprehend their past and draw conclusions for the future which they should have drawn themselves long ago. When he dies, others resume their life pilgrimages equipped with understanding they have not previously had. The fundamental issue of man's place in the universe remains in the centre of the play. The message is that in order for life to be well-lived, a man must avoid frustration and learn lessons from his experiences to be better prepared for future events. Happiness can be found in acceptance of the continuous flow of life, constant learning and using the acquired knowledge to smoothen the transition from one experience to another. The question of man's location in the universe is raised again in *Here Come the Clowns* (1938), where the characters once again wonder about the causes of their unhappiness. The main character's conclusion is that it was the decisions of men, not God, that brought about the tragedies he suffered (56-66).

Thornton Wilder's drama also displays a highly universalising tendency, Broussard asserts. The subjects and attitudes it presents are pertinent to all times, rather than reduceable to any particular era. He speaks about the significance of love between people, deeming it as important as for Eliot was the love for God. Already at Yale, Wilder wrote an allegorical play *The Trumpet Shall Sound*. In 1928, *The Angel That Troubled the Waters* was published, and it consisted of a series of sixteen vignettes focusing on the issues of morality and religion. It was followed by *The Long Christmas Dinner and Other Plays* (1931): six one-acts which heralded the themes he would build on in his full-length allegories, such as the transience of life. One of those allegories was *Our Town*, which premiered in 1938. In this play, with the stagecraft elements limited to the extreme and a selection of stock characters, Wilder offers a story of commonplace inhabitants of a regular small town. The plot consists of snatches from the lives of ordinary townspeople that function as "repeated reminders of man's place in the perpetual sequence of time and universe" (97). Dramatizing in his play the entire cycle of life, Wilder presents "an

allegory of life and death” (98) that ultimately argues for the affirmation of life. Another allegorical play with an Everyman background is *The Skin of Our Teeth*, where the story of civilisation instead of individual story, becomes the focus (92-99).

A few other, post-war, playwrights, deserve attention as dramatists committed to continuing the exploration of the myth of Everyman. Broussard mentions, for example, Robert E. Sherwood, who in 1935 wrote *The Petrified Forest*, a melodrama and an allegory, with the intention to give the public something both enjoyable and profound. The setting is suggestive of the wasteland and death (barren half-desert of eastern Arizona). Western civilisations along with their institutions and cultures are denounced, but hope survives in the figure of Gabby, a young beautiful girl interested in painting and poetry. Alan Squier, a libertine and a would-be writer, sacrifices himself for her by precipitating his own death so that she could obtain the funds from his life policy. The Western world may be in decline, but man lives to re-create it and art (symbolised by Gabby) survives to give him inspiration; a bright future is therefore possible, but only when one disposes of the past (106-110). Thus, the play becomes “a compromise between abject defeat and absolute faith” (110). While seeing the world as an infertile land of useless institutions, Sherwood leaves space for the acknowledgement of human potential for sacrifice, heroism and the creation of beauty.

Finally, Broussard states that a character who represents humanity appears also in Tennessee Williams’s *Camino Real*, an obscure, highly symbolical 1953 play which contemporary critics collectively rejected. The plot concerns a vagabond Kilroy wandering a totalitarian city where he is joined by such type-characters as Don Quixote, the Survivor or the Dreamer. One of the major themes of the play is regeneration. The allegory culminates in the fiesta scene in which symbolism escalates up to the point of confusion when “Casanova is crowned King of Cuckolds, the moon restores the virginity of the Gypsy daughter, and Kilroy, who is about to try climbing the stair again, turns back at the cry of “Champ” and “Hero” and sells his golden gloves for the price of the Gypsy’s daughter” (115).

Another Everyman figure was created by Williams’s most important contemporary, Arthur Miller, in his the most widely-acknowledged play *Death of a Salesman* (1949), where the tragedy of Willy Loman, a “little man,” stands for the tragedy of all mankind, enslaved by capitalism and materialism. Remindful of Rice’s *The Adding Machine*, the play tells the story of a frustrated salesman whose tragic flaw is that he cannot see himself for who he is and that his dreams transcend his capabilities. As *The Petrified Forest*, Miller’s play ends with the protagonist dying, defeated by materialistic ideals of the contemporary world, in order to save

others with the policy money and in this way make up for his lack of success in life. In Miller, however, the blame for the tragedy is divided between the individual and the society. Thus, both Williams and Miller “feel the need to apologize for Everyman in a manner heretofore unknown, except, perhaps, from Elmer Rice” (121). The protagonists of both *Death* and *Camino*, Loman and Kilroy, have the innocence that O’Neill’s characters never possessed. Both fail, despite their inherent goodness. Both plays also are entirely deprived of any religious references, which also differentiates them from O’Neill’s (110-121).

Thus, it is evident that Everyman, the most well-known protagonist from medieval moralities, became an important symbol in the literature of the twentieth century. To find his traces, it is enough to turn to year 1922 with James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Shaw’s *Back to Methuselah* and Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (40). Everyman’s presence is especially vivid, however, in the expressionist allegorical drama, of which, as claims Broussard, it was “the most distinctively unifying theme” (128). The works of Rice, O’Neill, Sherwood, Barry, Miller and Williams testify to this statement. The extent to which the *everyman* motif defined the American drama of the first decades of the twentieth century corresponds with the popularity of a form for which it was a prototype: the Modern Morality Play.



## Chapter Two: Modern Morality Plays in England and Their Reception

### Before William Poel: The success of *A Message from Mars* (1899)

The popularity of morality plays at the beginning of the twentieth century is attested by the cast lists of particular plays. Next to unknown actors whose names have not gone down in the history of theatre, there were numerous artists whose participation must have significantly upgraded the prestige of every performance. One of them was Charles Hawtrey (1858-1923), the lead actor in *A Message from Mars* written by Richard Ganthony (1899): a theatre manager, a producer and a director, whose influence on London theatrical panorama reached further than the memory of his name. Hawtrey worked as a manager for eighteen London theatres, at such first-rates as the Globe and the Comedy and produced around one hundred plays. He was known for his distinctive and extremely natural acting style. Among his employees, pupils and declared followers one can enumerate such prominent figures as Noël Coward, A. E. Matthews, Harley Granville Barker, the founder of the Independent Theatre Company J. T. Grein and Ben Travers, an English master of farce and a screenwriter. It was Hawtrey who in 1899 produced *A Message from Mars* at the Royal Avenue Theatre (and cast himself as the protagonist Horace Parker), a play which boasted “several well-known ‘stars’ in addition to Mr. Hawtrey himself” (“Odd Notes” 574). Those “stars” were sought-after theatre celebrities in the fin-de-siècle London: celebrities famous enough to provoke the reviewer’s remark that Hawtrey “is not afraid of being outshone in his own theatre” (“Odd Notes” 574). Apparently, he was right in his confidence since when in 1912 the play-based novel appeared it was criticised as inferior to the theatre piece mainly due to the absence of the unforgettable Hawtrey.

*A Message from Mars* tells a simple story of man’s transformation from an egoistic pseudo-scientist into a character that in a medieval play would be called Charity. The evolution takes place thanks to a series of supernatural events. At the beginning of the play, the protagonist falls asleep and experiences a dream vision in which a Martian comes to him claiming that he is going to change Mr. Selfish into an altruist. Following the *leitmotif* of Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, the rich man is given opportunities to manifest his good character, rejects them and only sees the error of his ways when he himself becomes deserted, naked and hungry. The dream transforms him into “Mr. Unselfishness” (“Impressions” 146), as after waking up he receives another chance to prove himself and takes it, thus winning freedom from the sin of egoism and the love of his fiancée.

The first scene of Act 1 opens with Minnie Templar's blatant statement that her fiancé, Horace Parker, is the most selfish man she has ever known (it is worth noting that the First Act is also helpfully entitled "A Selfish Man"). Parker is not ready for the dancing soiree he and Minnie were to attend together, and the audience is immediately presented with the image of him as a man too absorbed in scientific, abstract matters to properly attend to more mundane requirements of everyday life and social conduct: "He thinks of nothing but his books and his papers and the stars. He is always reading about the stars and he doesn't think of me at all" (Ganthony 13), complains the girl. What is worse, he accuses Minnie of being selfish and foolish herself because of expecting him to go with her. At the same time, the audience observes Minnie's servile behaviour towards Horace and Aunt Martha's warning that one day Minnie will see him for what he is and leave him.

*A Message from Mars* is not a dramatically successful play in today's standards, and it was not at the time when it premiered. It is simplistic, straightforward and it lacks fantasy which characterises some great drama of the first decades of the twentieth century. Both dialogues and monologues are often artificial and sometimes even redundant. There is a scene, for example, where Horace engages in a soliloquy justifying his selfish actions and then reads to himself aloud, which sounds forced and infantile. Also, Horace's complete misunderstanding of his own character is almost too blatant. "The fact is, I am so kind and generous that people are always coming to me" (Ganthony 21), he states right after he denied help to a bankrupt man. In fact, *A Message from Mars* is as far removed from the complexity of Barrie's and Shaw's plays as a play can possibly be. The characters have no depth, no individuality, and only function as symbols (for instance Horace of selfishness or Minnie of goodness). Thus, they are flat and, except for Horace, do not evolve in any way. Sometimes the protagonist's tragic flaw (his egocentrism and blindness) is crudely narrowed down to almost painfully simplistic symptoms ("you are the most selfish of all men . . . You were too idle and selfish to call a taxi" (23)). Finally, the relationships between the characters lack the trace of either depth or probability.

The ending is predictable, which makes it difficult to imagine that the original audience was sincerely gripped with the plot. The moral message that the play aims to convey is also oversimplified for the viewers: "If you value your life, you will remember to show Selflessness every day and in all you do!" (30). Most comments which the characters make about each other are so one-dimensional that the audience is often left with nothing to interpret: "Arthur is a good man. But Horace is a fool" (34). The Messenger keeps repeating (for the sake of both

Horace and the audience it seems) that the former's chief vice is selfishness (an inference which the viewers would definitely be able to draw on their own). The fact that the words "selfish" or "selfishness" appear in the short play over twenty times speaks for itself. What is more, some lines seem off-the-mark; for example in Act 2, after Horace gives all his money to the wife of a car accident victim, the Messenger states: "That was the best sight I have seen. Selflessness is winning" (38). The audience, however, remembers that Horace did not do the good deed willingly but was forced to by the Messenger's threat that he would make Horace trade places with the hurt man. As the detractors of *A Christmas Carol* once noticed, there is no selflessness in charity which results from fear, and an attentive audience or a reader of the play would be quick to realise it. Three times Horace is given an opportunity to prove his selflessness and three times he refuses to provide help. Only after experiencing poverty himself, he develops compassion for the unfortunate. Thus, judged not only according to today's, but even according to the contemporaneous dramatic standards, the play appears overly didactic and childish.

At the same time, however, *A Message from Mars* uses the morality play patterns in an innovative manner. It also draws on Dickens and as the first play in British Drama it incorporates science-fiction elements by introducing the character of the Messenger who is no ghost but a being from another planet. Like Death in medieval plays, he is sent to "teach the people of this earth a lesson" (Ganthony 22). Some simple truths are exchanged, and despite all their simplicity, they probably spoke to the audience. Although the moral purport of the play seems as dubious as in Dickens's Christmas novel (is the protagonist's change of heart genuinely commendable if it was caused by fear rather than self-reflection?), this problem must have seemed irrelevant to the original audiences, who, nevertheless, flocked to see the performance.

An important expression of the morality play's evolution from its medieval form is the ability it gained to incorporate the characteristics of different genres. While there are numerous examples of morality play elements in, for example, Renaissance tragedies, in the beginning of the twentieth century, it is the morality play itself that starts to borrow from other forms. An anonymous review from 1905 states that *A Message from Mars* "is a compound of a fairy story and a morality play," "a dramatic sermon in three acts, with the simplest of motives, and the most obvious of morals," "a clever satire," and finally, something close to a dream allegory ("Impressions" 144), since it is enclosed within a dream framework.

Although the reviewer calls *A Message from Mars* a mixture of morality play and a fairy tale, a closer look at the plot leaves no illusions that the piece is a morality play above anything else.

The motif of a messenger whose appearance heralds the protagonist's moral transformation, the idea of a pilgrimage whose goal is to reach an ethical understanding, the protagonist's initial resistance and his final change of heart, as well as the blurred border between dream or vision and reality, all constitute elements characteristic of the morality play genre. In support of this argument, one can quote the reviewer's telling comment that "Three hundred years ago the wealthy, snug, complacent, middle-aged bachelor, who is admirably represented by Mr. Charles Hawtrey, would have been labelled Self-indulgence in a morality play, but that would be too obvious for our tastes" ("Impressions" 144).

The review from *The Academy* quoted above may not be overly enthusiastic, but it is positive: "It is a very simple but very pretty play" ("Impressions" 146). First reviews were not as measured, however, and in the February issue of the satirical weekly *Judy: Or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, one finds a description of the play's immense success as well as a passionate recommendation:

Don't take this account of the play as gospel, go and see it yourself. It is as fine a "Message" as the theatre has given us for many a long day. The stalls beat the gallery at applause, and when the curtain falls on Act II, you hear that long loud roll of sustained applause that means author and actors have got their play right home up to the hilt. It is a genuine outburst of enthusiasm, and the curtain is raised five – six – seven times! ("At the Play")

As always, some negative comments appeared as well, but even they were usually paired with positive observations. While calling the plot "primitive, unconvincing and childish" (just to compare, to the critics of *The Academy* it appeared "convincing and coherent" ("Occultists and 'Magic'" 82)) *The Athenaeum* admits it to be also "pleasant and tender" and "admirably acted" ("The Week"). Indeed, the audience must have found in this undemanding theatrical piece something more than easy pleasure, since it kept being revived for over thirty years in Britain, and it upheld its initial popularity. "It must be twelve years since "A Message from Mars" was last played at a West-End theatre," writes a contributor to *The Playgoer and Society Illustrated* in 1912, "and Mr. Chas. Hawtrey is to be congratulated upon his decision to give Londoners another glimpse of this popular play" ("A Message" 1912).

The same review offers a potential explanation of the audience's enchantment with the play. This reason is, surprisingly, what today critics so willingly proclaim the bane of medieval drama: its didactic impulse. However simplistic it may appear today, the message of Ganthony's play struck a responsive chord in the mindsets of Edwardian audience members "The conversion of a man from a besetting sin is always a goodly thing to look upon . . . it

promotes a healthy glow of satisfaction” (“A Message” 1912), declares the reviewer. One of the factors which contributed to the popularity of *Modern Moralities* was the fact that their didacticism resembled the later didacticism of Brecht and Yeats rather than the overt preaching of medieval drama. Edwardian critics and playgoers found this characteristic attractive:

“A Message from Mars” is one of the very few plays with a purpose that have proved successful. Playwrights, as a rule, make the unforgivable error of treating their subjects too seriously, or, even worse than that, of using the stage as a pulpit, with their characters as the preachers. In Richard Ganthony’s play we hear about the sinfulness of selfishness, nothing about the reward that waits hereafter for those who are unselfish, and, thank goodness, no etherealised logic. Instead of this we see, a by no means uncommon man, blind to his own faults, cured by being shown the results of the same sin in other people. The object-lesson speaks for itself” (“A Message” 1912)

Although the author of one of the above-quoted reviews applauds the playwright’s decision not to call the protagonist “Selfishness” (which would be “too obvious”), it seems that the combination of the obvious and the hidden, the superficial and the profound, the given and the withheld, is what attracted Edwardians to *A Message from Mars*.

The play enjoyed a long afterlife. In 1911 it was advertised (by Hawtrey himself) as a Christmas play for children. In 1912 it appeared as a novel. In 1913 it was made into the first British full-length science-fiction film, which thanks to the efforts of the specialists from the British Film Institute National Archive and Welsh Dragon Digital has been restored and from December 2014 is available online. According to the BFI website, it is in *A Message from Mars* that the first images of Martians created by a British film-maker appear, together with other innovative motifs such as telepathy, space travel or mind control (“A Message” BFIPlayer).

It is interesting to note, however, that there was another film adaptation of *The Message*, shot a decade before the British one, which has been lost. In 1903, Walter Franklin Barrett, an English-born cameraman and director working in New Zealand, turned *A Message from Mars* into a science-fiction moving picture. Apparently, Hawtrey’s play was even more enthusiastically received in New Zealand and Australia than it had been in England. From a January issue of *Southland Times* from 1903 one learns that “when his company first staged the piece in Sydney it made an immediate hit, and since then has enjoyed a popularity in Australia and New Zealand second to no other production placed before the public in this quarter of the world” (“A Message” 1903). Like numerous English critics before him, the New Zealand reviewer moves on to assure the reading public that although the play was immensely popular among the religious people and clergymen, and although it is morality-oriented, it is by no means “heavy or sombre” but witty, full of amusing moments and boasting quite

sensational mechanical effects (“A Message” 1903).

### **William Poel, the Elizabethan Stage Society and *Everyman*’s glorious resurrection (1901)**

As Claris Glick notices, throughout his life William Poel always remained outside the mainstream of commercial theatre. “Tall, thin, aquiline zealot with longish grey hair and a scholarly stoop,” as Trewin describes him, Poel “was a wayward idiosyncratic figure in a world of materialism: a Shakespearian who hated the picture frame” (137). Although his theories continue to influence modern productions, Poel worked mainly with amateurs and rarely produced at recognised theatres. His revivals were often criticised, and he would frequently give a performance of a new play only once or a couple of times. By the professional theatre management of his time he was largely ignored and mostly thought of as “a theorist, almost a freak” (Glick 16). His first London production, this of the First Quarto of *Hamlet* on April 16, 1881, sparked negative reviews: “most incompetent performance,” “scarcely went beyond the average of amateur acting,” “Mr. W.L. Poel . . . who played Hamlet, failed to assign any distinct individuality to the role” (Knight 290), “the presentation was inadequate in all respects” (Knight 291). The theatre-going London public of 1880s, along with everybody involved in that performance, would have been very surprised to learn that today Poel’s *Hamlet* is considered “the foundational moment of the Shakespeare revolution” (Shaughnessy 17). Most of his productions were staged by the Elizabethan Stage Society, an amateur theatrical group devoted to reviving drama from Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, which he established in 1895. It must be stressed that while many of his plays were unsuccessful in the commercial sense, they were certainly ground-breaking (Glick 15). In fact, Robert Speaight goes as far as to say that it was with “Poel’s almost fanatic concern with Shakespeare’s original staging, the Elizabethan Revival had begun” (qtd. in Glick 15). Even though Poel’s contribution to the history of Shakespeare’s performance has been acknowledged today, it appears that only one play in his entire career as a manager and a director, brought him money, fame and success while he lived.

The origins of Poel’s inspiration for the staging of *Everyman* are debatable. As Steven G. Kuehler explains, according to some sources, Poel was grieving after the loss of his mother, to whom he was very devoted, when his friend and an English Literature Professor, A.W. Ward, recommended to him reading *Everyman*, which then Poel decided to stage in proper religious setting (5). At least once, however, Poel explained his motives without mentioning his mother’s

death: in 1907 he wrote that Ward advised him to get acquainted with *Everyman* “when [he] told him in course of conversation that [he] wanted to do a morality play to show the beginning of drama” (qtd. in Kuehler 5). His request to stage the play in a church was declined by both Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral, so in the end he settled for the Master’s Court of the Charterhouse which was built as a monastery in the fourteenth century. It was there, in the central courtyard, that the first modern revival of *Everyman* was presented on July 13, 1901 (Kuehler 5).

Obviously when Poel undertook to revive the old English morality play, partly as an antiquarian experiment, partly as a charity event, nobody expected it to become a triumph. The critical response was, however, enthusiastic:

None of the previous experiments has had quite the value and interest of the performance given last Saturday afternoon under the shade of the venerable walls of the Charterhouse . . . [I]t became easy to believe that we were spectators of, and almost participants in, a great historical tragedy . . . This particular piece . . . is capable, when its merits are known, of attracting all London and becoming the “sensation” of a season. Temptations to ridicule presented themselves, and the smile rose occasionally to the lips. It died there, and sank before the absolute sincerity of the whole. Amusement never degenerated into mockery. (“The Week”)

As Kuehler argues, Poel’s obsession with accuracy of theatrical presentation of the recovered dramas finds its vent in *Everyman* in the same way it did in his Shakespearian revivals. Following the methods of medieval pageants, three playing areas were raised in the Charterhouse courtyard: a turret representing Heaven, a chamber where *Everyman* meets Death and his potential companions, and a platform with a trapped door through which he eventually descends into his grave. The play was given two encores at the Charterhouse on two following Saturdays, after which it was presented also at the University College in Oxford, Royal Pavilion in Brighton and at Birmingham and Midland Institute (Kuehler 6).

In 1902, *Everyman* began to appear as a regular, non-charitable performance in St George’s Hall (Potter 222): a concert hall in Langham Place. Robert Shaughnessy writes that two advantages of this venue were the fact that it was cheap to rent and as a space it was often used for charitable “respectably middle class” cultural events. Its target audience since it opened in 1867 were families, otherwise resilient to theatre entertainment which they considered inappropriate. The performances were usually amateur, in accord with the spirit of the New Shakespeare Society and thought of by the middle classes as a self-improvement-oriented alternative to professional entertainment. Thus, the prevailing atmosphere of the theatre was apparently rather serious (Shaughnessy 30). In 1900 its manager advised that the audiences

should “consider as obsolete the old custom which has strongly prevailed in the Building of repressing laughter, as the manifestation thereof greatly encourages the performers” (qtd. in Shaughnessy 30). Marion O’Connor interprets this comment as “a sneer at the efforts of those amateur groups – such as . . . Poel’s own Elizabethan Stage Society” (qtd. in Shaughnessy 30). Shaughnessy concludes that it suggests a pre-existing urgency among the public to hold in laughter which might have resulted from the theatre’s majestic interior:

The hall was a high-ceilinged, cavernous space, with a stage positioned at the end of a galleried room built to seat 1500; the *Era* (28 April 1867) reported that the ‘salon’ was ‘110 feet in length, 50 in breadth and 45 in height’. Intended for use as a concert hall rather than as a theatre space, the hall was lit by means of a row of skylights running either side of the roof, and by lights set into an elliptical ceiling whose arc recalls the engineering of the capital’s new railway stations. (30-31)

After that, the play was invited to be staged at the Imperial Theatre, Westminster (June and July). The person who permitted it was Mrs Lillie Langtry, an actress and a woman of remarkable social fame (an ex-mistress of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, a friend of W.E. Gladstone, a founder of her own theatrical company and a successful racehorse owner). The idea was to give those who missed the performances at St George’s and “who are interested in such revivals of the early association of Church and State” (“Everyman at the Imperial” 9) another chance to see it. The critical attitude towards the play was a mixture of curiosity and reserve: a contributor to *The Financial Times* wrote that

It must be confessed that the taste for such ‘mysteries,’ like that for old blue china, oak panelling, or the tales of Chaucer, is by no means universal, but the jaded playgoer may at least be assured of seeing something quite unlike the productions of modern dramatists. (“Everyman at the Imperial” 9)

It is a curious coincidence that it was also *The Financial Times* which wrote about another revival of *Everyman*, ninety-four years later at The Other Place Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. After its success in England, *Everyman* went on the American tour, launching in New York where it provoked outrage caused by the fact that God was a character in the play. The presence of a deity had already proven a delicate matter when the play appeared in England, where it was still illegal to picture God on a commercial stage.

According to Stephens, the relevant laws had their roots in the seventeenth century, when “a strong body of opinion had been resolutely opposed, not only to the principle of religious drama, but to the theatre itself” (92). Thanks to the “strength of the Puritan element” in Victorian society, Stephens explains, numerous anti-theatre writings from the seventeenth century received their nineteenth-century counterparts, and theatre enemies (especially from the middle classes) grew in number. The anti-theatre movement assumed different forms –

sarcastic comparisons were pointed out between the strictness of censorship which banned expressions like ‘damn’ and the practical leniency towards London theatres where prostitution was often encouraged (93). This, together with a general view of actors as debauchers and the lowness of offered entertainment made a large part of Victorians “turn away in righteous indignation from an institution which by its whole nature seemed inconsistent with the profession of the Christian faith” (93). Thus, as Worrall states, since the Romantic period, censorship was a constant element of writing drama for Westminster and provincial Royal theatres. The office of Lord Chamberlain’s Examiner of Plays was specifically designed to ensure that the plays approved for public viewing adhered to the prescribed moral and religious standards (Worrall 106). Stephens asserts that there were few instances when the rules were loosened. In 1832, George Colman, whose strictness and accuracy in his work as the Examiner of Plays were widely known, asserted that “all Scripture is much too sacred for the stage, except in very solemn scenes indeed” (Colman qtd. in Stephens 93). By 1866, however, Examiner of Plays William Donne presented an even more stringent declaration of the Lord Chamberlain’s position: “both as a matter of morality, and as a matter of taste, I never allow any associations with scripture or theology to be introduced in a play” (qtd. in Stephens 93). Therefore, Stephens concludes, throughout the nineteenth century the religious censorship often resulted in deleting entire passages taken from, or implying a reference to the Scriptures, and sometimes whole plays would be banned. This practice encompassed both comic irreverent allusions and most pious references. The Bible could be neither used nor even mentioned on stage, and the crucifix was not allowed in the theatre (Stephens 100).

As Kuehler recounts, although Charterhouse was not a commercial theatre and thus remained beyond the Lord Chamberlain’s interests, Poel still inquired whether he should have *Everyman* officially approved. He learnt that the play would be considered by the Examiner on a par with Shakespearian plays, which did not need to be legally licensed as they must have already been accepted at some point in the past by a Master of the Revels (Examiner’s of Plays predecessor). This conviction was wrong, since only in the late sixteenth century did the Master of the Revels start to officially approve plays for staging. During the gathering of the Parliamentary Committee on the licensing of plays, George Alexander Redford who held the Examiner’s office at that time explained that he simply had not known that in *Everyman* God appears on stage and speaks when he decided that the play did not need his approval (Kuehler 9-10). During the same gathering he provided a closure to the debate which had been dragging on since the nineteenth century by declaring that he had “no power as Examiner of Plays to make

any exception to the rule that scriptural plays or plays founded on, or adapted from, the Scriptures are ineligible for license in Great Britain” ((qtd. in Stephens 93).

Kuehler states that when *Everyman* was to run in a licensed theatre Poel and Ben Greet (the manager who bought *Everyman* from Poel after the latter lost his interest in it) resubmitted the play for investigation to learn this time that a piece created two hundred years before the licensing obligation appeared cannot be licensed but that they were advised to “omit the actual presentation of the Deity . . . as much as possible, and upon any occasion to treat the subject with reverence and discrimination” (Greet qtd. in Kuehler 10). This, as Greet argued, they had always strived to do (Greet qtd. in Kuehler 10). While in London performances God continued to be present on stage, in America Greet resigned from the actual presentation for the sake of a voice coming from behind the curtain. It is also interesting to observe that from the beginning Poel changed the name of the appearing Deity from God to the Hebrew “Adonai,” possibly to evade official denunciation by making the play appear more as a literary venture than religious lesson (Kuehler 10).

As Robert Potter indicates in *The English Morality Play*, despite initial commercial failure, and after a couple of perplexing notices in the American press, *Everyman* managed to secure the curious audience and started to bring money. It also set off on a tour to other cities and was thus performed in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Indianapolis, Hartford, Pittsburgh, Toledo and St Louis. As time went by, more and more changes were introduced by Greet. Many of the play’s didactic elements were cut out. The production returned to America in 1904 and 1907, and it was revived numerous times in London (Potter 221-225).

Thus, “the quaint old morality play *Everyman*” (Daniel 260) as the journalist of the *Judy* journal called it when announcing the upcoming revival, became popular. The range of its influence can be measured by the fact that it inspired other pieces of art. One example of such work was undoubtedly Walford Davis’s cantata. Already in 1903, “The Musical Gossip” column of *The Athenaeum* announced the upcoming performance of *Everyman* based on the morality play at the Leeds Festival in October next year. Despite the general expectation that the play should “lend itself to musical treatment rather well” (“Musial notes” 78) there were other voices which proclaimed that the simple perusal of the score without seeing it performed made *Everyman* seem deprived of expressive music. The compromise was that “At Leeds it will have the advantage of a perfect performance, a magnificent orchestra, glorious choir, and soloists of the first rank, even such circumstances even an ordinary work would be effective, and doubtless *Everyman* will be pronounced a success” (“Book Review” 132). This presumption was

satisfied. “It must be admitted that Dr. H. Walford Davies, the gifted organist of the Temple Church, has written music that invests the ancient mystery with fresh interest” (“Dr. Walford” 650), commented *The Musical Times*; the performance was a success. What caught the attention of most critics was its grandness and the solemn effect the cantata had on the audience. Some critics even deemed it more successful than the play: “the grotesqueness which at times incites an involuntary smile while witnessing its presentation on the stage, is replaced by solemnity that impresses” (“Dr. Walford” 650). Finally, it is also worth mentioning that *Everyman* made it as far as Hollywood, where it was presented as a charity event at the Hollywood Bowl and directed by Johannes Paulsen, a famous Danish actor and director who came from Copenhagen to work on the piece. Charlie Chaplin himself allowed the use of his studios for rehearsals for this play.

### **Provincial subplots: Walter Nugent Monck and the morality play**

Walter Nugent Monck (1878-1958) was one of Britain’s most accomplished theatre directors, and definitely one of “the most influential of the generation of directors who passed on the legacy of William Poel” (Hildy 81), which is only one argument for why his interest in morality plays is a fact of considerable importance. His career overlaps with the history of the morality play revival in England because of his acquaintance with Poel (to whom he was a faithful disciple) and extends this history by introducing a provincial subplot thanks to his lifelong connection to Norwich.

As Monck recounts in his essay “The Maddermarket Theatre and the Playing of Shakespeare,” he formed in 1911 an amateur group of actors called “the Norwich Players.” With most of its income regularly spent on renting playing spaces, he soon realised that they were in dire need of their own theatre. The first one, in a renovated room attached to an inn, opened with a mystery play in January 1914, but soon after, the troupe scattered and never played together again. In 1920, after coming back to Norwich from the war, he was offered a sixteenth-century house but on condition that he will permanently remain in Norwich; and so he did, immediately starting to revive the Norwich Players by changing the building that used to be a Catholic chapel (and then a factory) into a playhouse. After much of financial hustle which drained also his private pocket, the work was finished, and on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921, at 8 pm the Maddermarket Theatre opened (Monck 71-72). “So the first practical model of a sixteenth-century stage since

Shakespeare's day came into being with this performance of *As You Like It*," summarises Monck (72). Indeed, ten years later Burgoyne Miller from *The Bookman* called Monck's theatre "the only genuine Elizabethan theatre in England" (326). It is worth noting that Poel himself was called by Monck to tour the potential theatre building before it was purchased and advised Monck on how to adapt it (his advice was not followed, however, because the suggested solutions were too costly (Monck 71)).

Since its opening, the theatre produced a new play each month, even during the war. Between 1920 and 1933 Monck directed all of Shakespeare's plays with his company (and he was the only known theatre director who accomplished that at that time), together with many other pieces. The sum of all his productions reached over two hundred plays by 1950. His drive to produce seemed unstoppable; even after having joined the Royal Army Medical Corps while working as an orderly in Egypt, he kept directing. There he established the 15<sup>th</sup> General Hospital's Music and Drama Society and staged Shakespearian and modern dramas with all-male-cast. His work was appreciated both nationally and internationally ("On the Continent of course Nugent Monck's name is known as one of the greatest of English producers" (Miller 326)). He was often invited to direct at other theatres as well, and in 1947 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

As Eric Salmon explains, in his work Monck was always, like Poel, adamantly meticulous about following the Elizabethan standards: the actors' names never appeared on the programme, and they would never take a curtain call at the end of the performance. His focus was always on the play, and to him it was the play that should be applauded, not the actors. Although some theatre historians claim that Monck had neither Poel's imagination nor Granville Barker's bravery, his outstanding theatrical fertility, the regularity with which he produced and directed his plays, his persistence and his unshakeable devotion to the theatre he established in Norwich, render him an important figure in the twentieth-century history of English drama (Salmon). The argument for Monck's brilliance can be found in enthusiastic critical assessments of his theatre: "While fully acknowledging the good work which is done at such places as the Old Vic, and the Stratford Theatre, I am still convinced that the Maddenmarket is the only theatre in England where Shakespeare is perfectly interpreted" (Miller 326). Noteworthy is also his open-mindedness visible in the diversity that characterised his theatre's repertoire. In the first decade of its existence, The Maddenmarket produced, except for the Elizabethan plays, also ancient Greek, Indian, Japanese, medieval, Restoration, Georgian, Victorian and Modern (Spanish, Norwegian, Italian, French and Russian) drama. At the end of his career, Monck was perceived

as “one of the most highly regarded Shakespearian producers in England and his Maddermarket Theatre among the best-known ‘Little Theatres’ in the world” (Hildy 81). Especially relevant to this study, however, is Monck’s contribution to the Morality Play Revival.

Robert Welch states that, like Poel, Monck was an avid propagator of the revival of not only Renaissance, but also medieval English drama. His interest in morality plays started when in 1902, as a twenty-four-year-old, Monck took part in Poel’s production of *Everyman* playing Fellowship. After seeing Monck’s production of his own play, *The Countess Cathleen*, and after that also *The Book of Job* in the Blackfriars Hall, W.B. Yeats invited Monck to take over the directorship of the ‘second company’ at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin for a year, where he was also to establish an acting school. The leading actors of the theatre were absent at that time, touring the USA from September 1911 to March 1912, so Monck was free to experiment. His first play with the ‘Abbey School of Acting’ was a sixteenth-century morality play *The Interlude of Youth*, performed on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1912 and presented along with the medieval mystery play *The Second Shephard’s Play* (Welch 59-60). The Abbey performance was not Monck’s first dramatic encounter with *The Interlude* since he produced it once already, in 1905, for the English Drama Society at the Bloomsbury Hall. Both times the play was successful. It should also be mentioned that in August 1909 Monck staged *The Masque of Anne Boleyn* in the courtyard of Blickling Hall where the Boleyns had lived. The play was divided into a prologue and two parts, into the first of which a morality play “The World and the Child” was interwoven. Moreover, it is known that three morality plays were produced by Monck’s group in Maddermarket between 1921-1931. Monck’s engagement with the morality play genre does not, obviously, reach as far as his engagement with Shakespearian drama. Still, Monck’s appreciation for this form is confirmed by the fact that in 1906 he wrote a short morality play himself entitled *Life’s Measure*, which was performed by the English Drama Society.

The play tells a sad story of Man, who is led away from his Labour by Love but gets rejected by Woman, who is not ready to be led by Love herself. Eventually, he returns to his previous life and work that he knows will never disappoint him. As usually in morality plays, Death arrives much too soon to take him away, and he agrees to go filled with sorrow as his “work is all unready” (Monck 30), and he has not yet managed to secure fame he strove for. In the end, Love appears, leading Woman, but it comes too late since Man already passed away. The message of the play seems to be accordant with the message of most morality plays, both medieval, Renaissance and modern, which usually prescribe measure in life: a proper balance between all aspects of existence. An important role belongs to Motherhood, who warns Man

against the consequences of being too engaged in one's work. "My son, while in the springtime of thy youth, / Yea, even in the manhood of thy years, There's merit in some idle moments" (6), she proclaims. What is more, her son's work is not deprived of selfishness which makes it less worthy: "You labour with your brain and hands/ And leaven not your work with heart and soul" (7). His entrustment to Love's power, however, leaves Man embittered: "See, Love, I gave thee everything I had;/ To thee I sacrificed my life, my work/ Unquestioning I followed in thy steps,/ And now wilt thou deceive me in the end/ To leave me bankrupt with my own desires" (26). A sudden, uncontrollable love is thus advised against, just as indifference and hesitation represented by Woman's attitude. The piece ends with Love's assertion that all they can do in face of Man's death is keep his memory. Thus, what is recommended is moderation in both love and work. Reasonable enthusiasm, selflessness and willingness to commit shall grant the audience a balanced and satisfying life. As it will be shown in later chapters, exactly the same purport can be recognised in morality-inspired plays from the end of the twentieth century, for example Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1995).

### **Unexpected inspirations: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and *The Fires of Fate* (1909)**

One of the unexpected authors of Modern Morality Plays was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, most widely known, to his own disappointment, from his crime fiction, and certainly not known at all for his stage works, of which he wrote fifteen pieces in total. Among them figures *The Fires of Fate*, a dramatization of his novel entitled *The Tragedy of Korosko*. The story is of Colonel Egerton, who learns that he suffers from an incurable spinal disease which must result in a paralysis and death within a year's time. The only known treatment which gives a slight chance of recovery is experiencing a considerable shock. In his hardship he is supported by two brothers: a famous physician, who tells him the diagnosis, and the clergyman who dissuades him from suicide. Instead of ending his life, Egerton sets off with the brothers on a journey to Egypt. There he falls in love and is cured from his condition by a blow to the head received during a fight with Dervishes.

One learns from *The Play Pictorial*, that "the crowded houses testif[ied] to the attractiveness of the drama and that "live on and hope for the best" is the message of the play (Findon 206). The play premiered at the Lyric Theatre on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1909 and in December 1909 at the Illinois Theatre in Chicago. It was filmed twice, in 1923 and 1932. In London the play ran for 125 performances. It definitely did not enjoy the level of popularity that the Modern Morality Play

*Experience* achieved in the USA, but it attracted crowds, probably in part due to Conan Doyle's fame as a crime fiction writer. It was not a proper Modern Morality Play either. The *Practical Teacher* so discusses the morality play aspect of *The Fires*:

The morality of the whole matter is concerned with the effect of danger upon the characters of the chief personages of the drama. Sadie Adams learns more of true womanhood; the colonel plays the man in spite of his sad lack of sword ... , the minister shows that his religious professions are the outcome of a perfect readiness to act the Christian gentleman under trying circumstances; the doctor sees the folly of his materialism (*"Modern Morality"* 244)

Oscar Parker from *The English Illustrated Magazine* mocks Conan Doyle's application of the term "a morality" to his own play: "It is a safe description, for it may serve to cover more than one dramatic sin" (422). Moreover, he calls *The Fires of Fate* a psychological comedy converted into a thrilling drama and reproves its excessive luridness which apparently can only be justified by the fact that "'a Modern Morality Play" may be a law to itself" (422). The review discards the showiness of the piece and its attempt at humour: "if Sir Conan Doyle had developed his story among less lurid lines he might have given us a masterpiece but he chose the more showy path ... and so we have 'The Fires of Fate' as it stands; popular it is sure to be, but as a play, neither fish, flesh nor fowl, only a 'Modern Morality Play'" (424), "[i]t is quite the scheme of a Modern Morality Play that the "comic relief" should save the situation" (422). This judgement, however, seems rather harsh. *The Fires of Fate* certainly lacks the features of a prototypical morality play, such as the employment of abstractions as characters. It is also too realistic, too eventful and not allegorical enough to claim its place among Modern Moralities. What it does have, however, is a clear moral, a pilgrimage-towards-death motif and an indisputable didactic ambition. It is, in other words, "a very intense drama embodying a definite, thoughtful purpose . . . The piece is a powerfully developed lesson against self-murder" (Waller qtd in "Conan Doyle's Play" 3). Conan Doyle himself explained the play's subtitle as follows:

Well, the reason is that the whole action of the play is to illustrate a philosophic theory of life as laid down in the first act. I suppose many plays are morality plays. In a sense, the old British melodrama was one, for its essential point was that virtue should triumph and vice be defeated. But it seemed to me that there was room for something which dealt with modern problems and apply more to life as we know it. What is the philosophy? Well, it is as old as the hills, and yet needs to be restated and revindicated with every generation. It upholds that optimism which I believe to be supreme human wisdom, and that faith which will enable the man to be optimistic upon general principles, however much the particular instance may seem to be an exception to his scheme of philosophy. (Conan Doyle qtd in "A Modern Morality Play" 3)

It would seem that Conan Doyle is too lenient in saying that “many plays are morality plays.” One cannot allow any play that explores some philosophy or has a moral to be categorized as a morality. His explication gives as an idea, however, of what was understood by the term of “morality play” in the beginning of the twentieth century and how significantly the original medieval meaning of this term was extended.

### **Sutton Vane’s *Outward Bound* (1923)**

Good chances are that Mr. Sutton Vane (1888-1963) is a figure entirely unknown to a contemporary theatre-goer. He started as an actor and began to write plays after coming back to England from World War I. He is remembered first and foremost for his 1923 play *Outward Bound*, which he was initially unable to produce and which he eventually staged himself in a small London suburban house called Everyman Theatre. Unexpectedly, the bizarre drama became a sensation, it was transferred to London leading theatre, went on a tour to New York, was adapted as a novel and was twice turned into a film by Warner Bros.

The story begins with several characters finding themselves in the saloon bar of an empty ocean liner which sails from an unidentified harbour in England to an unknown destination. Each character has different intentions, and all represent different social strata and functions. Among others, the group includes a priest, an army man, an elderly Cockney woman, a lady socialite and a young couple. At some point, the passengers discover that they are dead and voyaging towards their Doomsday to be judged by a persona named the Examiner, who eventually punishes the characters for their vices and rewards them for virtues.

The contributor to *The Bookman* does not consider the piece worth of its success but his statement that “So much has been written of “Outward Bound” that for some playgoers there may be a risk of disappointment” (Sutton 235) is itself a proof of the play’s popularity. Another is that the rest of Vane’s writing career became forever outshone by this great dramatic achievement that was, according to *The Bookman* critic, “original in theme and piquant in treatment” (G.S. 69). A harsh judgement on his second book, *Falling Leaves*, published in 1925, which is apparently neither a play nor a story, tells about nothing, is full of dull, unnecessary characters and arouses no sympathy whatsoever (G.S. 69). Similar fate awaited another of Vane’s dramatic efforts, 1925 drama *Overture*. Horace Shipp, writing for *The English Review*, admits to momentarily doubting his own judgement when so disliking a play that came from

the author of *Outward Bound*, which since it premiered “has continued its amazing career to the remotest colonies and across the stages of Europe” (Horace “Feeding” 683). The new play is called “loosely knit,” “unconvincing in plot and characterisation,” and a “piece of obvious “Do-it-again-daddyism” (Horace 683). *Outward Bound*, however, was so lucrative that Vane novelised it in 1929 (the reviews were not very enthusiastic: “I infer Mr. Vane to have the dramatist’s rather than the narrator’s temperament,” declared Graham Sutton from *The Bookman* (“Stage and Shelf” 186)).

Vane’s success was apparently a one-play stand. It is interesting to note that out of his entire oeuvre only the morality play was applauded and preserved in literary records as a noteworthy piece. Although some critics registered faults within it (e.g. the poverty of philosophic thought and language which one only “suspected” and which became evident in other works), it was definitely enjoyed by London public making its way from small to leading theatres. Like with other moralities which unexpectedly managed to achieve considerable successes in England and America, *Outward Bound* must have fulfilled some expectations of which the audience might not have been aware themselves.

It is worth noting that Vane’s play, which eventually became one of the main hits of the West End and Broadway in the 1920s, was revived in 2012 by the Finborough Theatre in London. In his review in *The Guardian*, Michael Billington remarks that despite its imperfect structure, Vane’s play merits revival “partly because it tells us a lot about England after the first world war, and partly because it has an insidious moral power” (Billington). While he warns that the straightforwardness of the play may be difficult to accept for modern viewers, Billington expresses the sentiment which may have accounted for the success of *Outward Bound* when it premiered:

Since the group [of characters] includes an officious businessman, an insufferable snob, a Lambeth char and an East End vicar, you could argue they are too palpably symbolic, or that there is something a bit cosy about the fact that the divine Examiner who awaits them turns out to be jaunty colonial figure clutching a sola topi. Yet Vane is clearly saying something about a 1920s England riddled with social injustice and spiritual ennui, and I warm to any play that advocates charity, humility and kindness over bullying pomposity and social pretence. (Billington)

As it has been discussed in the previous chapter, “Social injustice and spiritual ennui” noticeable in the growing dissatisfaction of the working class and religious crisis were not only the themes of Vane’s play, but also phenomena characterising the England of the early twentieth century. The fact that Modern Moralities such as Vane’s *Outward Bound* or Arthur Simmons’ *Conflict* (1946) addressed these issues, may be considered one explanation for the popularity

of the morality play form at that time.

### **T.S. Eliot, morality play and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935)**

Finally, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* has to be discussed in the context of the Morality Play Revival. Staged first in 1935, and until today remaining one of Eliot's best-remembered plays, it focuses on the story of assassination of Thomas Becket in the Canterbury Cathedral. The action consists of a dialogue between Becket and four tempters, and later the monologues of Becket's murderers who try to defend themselves. The scenes are interspersed with chorus songs performed by the women of Canterbury. The core of the play is Becket's internal conflict instigated by his doubt whether he should seek to dethrone the king or accept martyrdom, which he eventually does thereby strengthening the Church and people's faith in God. Not only did Eliot employ several devices typical of moralities, but he also openly admitted his indebtedness to the morality play tradition in writing *The Murder in the Cathedral*. While striving to avoid any dramatic influences ("I was only aware at this stage that the essential was to avoid any echo of Shakespeare" (Eliot qtd. in Potter 252)), Eliot admitted that he was inspired by *Everyman* when writing *Murder in the Cathedral*, especially when it came to its metrical structure. "What I kept in mind," he states, "was the versification of *Everyman*, hoping that anything unusual in the sound of it would be on the whole advantageous" (qtd. in Potter 252). When it comes to Eliot's dramatic oeuvre, Broussard explains that *Murder in the Cathedral* fits among such experiments as *The Family Reunion* (1939, written in blank verse and combining detective play with Greek drama), *Sweeney Agonistes* (uncompleted verse drama, originally published in two separate scenes in 1926 and 1927) or *The Rock* (a poetic pageant from 1934) (Broussard 69-70). Ashley Dukes stresses, however, that the play was not the first endeavour in the realm of dramatic poetry in England, as is often assumed. This movement had already started earlier, around, 1930 with the activities of the Group Theatre and the work of such writers as Rupert Doone, Auden, Isherwood and MacNeice (Dukes 111). During and before the time when *Murder* was conceived, Dukes states, innovative ideas were making themselves apparent in the new dramatic poetry. The attempt at bringing back tragedy and chorus can be seen, for example, in Sean O'Casey's work. Blank verse and iambic pentameter were, nevertheless, mostly forsaken for more flexible forms which often also included prose (112).

Dukes recounts that *Murder in the Cathedral*, originally entitled *Fear in the Way*, was the result of Archbishop George Bell's invitation for Eliot to write a religious play, which premiered during the Canterbury Festival. The event was, as Dukes reminisces, memorable and much different from what numerous earlier Canterbury festivals had to offer. The performance took place in the Charterhouse of the cathedral, literally a couple of metres away from the spot where Becket was murdered in 1170 (114). The resignation from curtains and the lack of traditional stage lighting was an allusion to the Elizabethan theatre. Eliot himself did not expect the play to be admired, which can be concluded from his statement that "people who go deliberately to a religious play at a religious festival expect to be patiently bored and to satisfy themselves with the feeling that they have done something meritorious (Eliot qtd. in Potter 251)". Dukes, however, who cooperated with Eliot on the project of establishing the poet's permanent stage in London, claims that "an acceptance of the religious theme of the play united the poet, the actors and the Canterbury audiences surely as the Greeks were united in acceptance of any tragic myth" (114).

The play proved up-to-date on several levels when it premiered. References to such contemporary concepts as 'Catherine-wheel' or an award for English Essay are made. The association of the four knights with "four perfect Nazis defending their act on the most orthodox totalitarian grounds" (Dukes 114) was likely to be spotted by the audience. Indeed, as Duke describes, "echoes of one war and forebodings of another resounded through the sultry afternoon" (114-115) when the play was being staged. The cast was also impressive, with Becket played by Robert Speaight, who established himself with this role, and with the chorus of Women of Canterbury performed by actresses trained in Elsy Fogerty's Central School of Speech and Drama in London (Dukes 115).

When writing the play, Eliot was searching for a suitable dramatic form and, as Jerry V. Pickering claims, he "went to the same sources he had used for his verse – the medieval and the Greek" (200). He was aware that this form needed to resonate with contemporary viewers, and he eventually found some of the framework he desired in the morality play. This is how he justified his engagement with the medieval genre:

We have to make use of suggestions from more remote drama [than Shakespeare's], too remote for there to be any danger of imitation, such as "Everyman" and the late mediaeval mystery and morality play, and the great Greek dramatists. (qtd. in Pickering 200).

While Paul Lapworth calls Eliot's drama "a modern morality play reminiscent of *Everyman*, featuring a central protagonist confronted by a sequence of allegorical personages" (62), Potter

is sceptical about this associating the play with moralities so closely. As he explains, although Eliot's drama drew heavily from *Everyman*, it was not a modern morality play (238). *Murder in the Cathedral* does not evoke the sense of the absolute in the way that medieval morality did (240), and it is worth noting that Eliot did not even consider it particularly successful: "I realized that in *Murder in the Cathedral* I had not solved any general problem; that from my point of view the play was a dead end" (qtd. in Potter 251)).

It is worth noting that *Murder* is not Eliot's only play inspired by the medieval genre. As Russell Murphy states, "*The Elder Statesman* in many ways partakes of the oldest stage tradition in English literature, the morality play" (161). As the protagonists of moralities, Lord Claverton, the protagonist of Eliot's drama, "a man whom the world has honoured, facing death must confront all of his mistakes and sins of the past" (Russell Murphy 161). Murphy indicates that these sins are mostly drawbacks typical of all humanity, rather than "great sins of an older tragic literature" (161). At the beginning of the play, Lord Claverton is a well-respected man with spotless reputation who has to step down from his function because of health issues. In the last days of his life is visited by people from his past whom he has wronged but to whom he is not willing to make any amends. They appear to remind Claverton about his imperfection and about the disparity between his private and his public self. Eventually, before he dies, he gains redemption and freedom from his own reputation by confessing to his daughter. When comparing *The Elder Statesman* to the morality play Murphy calls it "a tale of original sin and the power of and capacity for love" (162). "Eliot makes his "morality play" modern," he adds, "by leaving it up to each of us to decide whether or not Lord Claverton was really "guilty," and if he was then what exactly he was guilty of doing" (161). The ultimate message of the play is, therefore, that to err is human, but so is to forgive (Russell Murphy 162).

## Chapter Three: Modern Morality Plays Outside England and Their Reception

### Morality play in America: The curious case of George V. Hobart's *Experience: A Morality Play of Today* (1915)

As it has been mentioned, authors of diverse backgrounds engaged with Modern Morality Plays. Sometimes, as it was the case with W.B. Yeats (*The Hour-Glass*, 1900), Modern Moralities were written by established writers who were searching for a new form which could contain their ideas. Sometimes, new moralities came from dramatists who were amateurs or semi-professionals, or who would publish one play only (for example Grace Latimer Jones, *What Makes Christmas Christmas*, 1916). Finally, there were professional playwrights who were successful in their time but whose fame has not outlived them, and who today are entirely disregarded by the history of theatre. George V. Hobart, the author of *Experience*, belongs to the third group.

As one learns from the September issue of *Boston Daily Globe* from 1915, George Hobart, the author and co-author of over fifty plays, comedies and librettos, was born in Nova Scotia but brought up in Maryland. Throughout his boyhood he always dreamed about a telegraph and eventually learnt telegraphy at the station of Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which later on helped him secure a permanent job as an operator. He began his writing career with funny stories for *The Sun*. At first, they were printed to "oblige the young author" but soon became popular, and Hobart started to receive compensation as a humourist. At some point, he stopped telegraphing and committed himself entirely to writing short stories and comic verse, which ultimately became so profitable that he was able to resign from his connection to the newspaper and set up a syndicate to sell his writing to newspapers directly. He eventually moved to New York (a natural decision for an aspiring writer at that time) and worked for one of the leading newspapers there, writing comic stories which revolved around two characters he invented, John Henry and Dinkelspiel. He also wrote thirty comedies and vaudevilles ("Author of" 57). It is evident that a didactic play like *Experience* does not fit Hobart's previous repertoire. As recounted by the author of the *Boston Daily* article, the story of its creation is extraordinary: the idea appeared when Hobart was commissioned to write a burlesque on a Modern Morality Play. He went to see Walter Browne's *Everywoman* for inspiration and was so daunted that he

immediately dropped the idea of parodying this genre:

When I went to see 'Everywoman,' however, I was profoundly impressed with its dignity, its genuine sincerity, and the effectiveness of such a method of staging and naming the characters. In other words, it was too great a work of art to be burlesqued. (qtd in "Author of" 57)

Hobart pursued the original idea of writing a Modern Morality Play, but he wrote *Everyhusband* seriously, not as a burlesque. It was performed at the Lamb's Club and became an enormous success. Next year, he was asked to write another play for a "gambol" that was to tour also other cities. His explanation for choosing the morality play form challenges the popular view of this form as stiff:

I decided to use the old form of the morality play, because it permits you to score a point without unnecessary explanation, identifies your characters the moment they appear, and permits the introduction of any new character at any time. I selected Youth as the theme of this modern play. (qtd in "Author of" 57)

The original five-act short version of the play was later extended into a regular play and turned out an enormous success. Thanks to his comic predilections Hobart managed to keep balance between the profundity and humour. At the height of popularity *Experience* was bringing him 5000\$ a week. The question of film rights appeared but it was decided that the play will not be turned into a film for as long as it remains on stage in first-rate theatres.

An immediate question arises regarding the reason behind the play's success. Was it its universality which made it "a play for the great masses of the people" ("Author of" 57)? Was it the apt combination of humour and seriousness? Was it the fact that despite being didactic the play remained approachable and engaging? Was it the simplicity that attracted the crowds? The fact that the morality play genre was resurrected in such glory in both Britain and the USA (and to a much lesser degree, as it was the case with *The Message from Mars*, in Australia) suggests that there must have been some universal motivation behind the audience's enthusiasm, which was independent from geographic and historical factors. An obvious inference is that some specific void in the viewers' demand was filled with the advent of the new morality play: a void which existed both in England and overseas. The possible answer to these questions is offered by the reviewer from *Boston Daily Globe*:

This morality is different from most of its predecessors in that it is distinctly modern and human. It has brought the old parable of "Pilgrim's Progress" right up to date. In form it is modelled on Walter Brown's "Everywoman," which had for its inspiration the medieval "Everyman," but "Experience" is a very different sort of a play, notwithstanding its similarity of form . . . In telling his story of the pilgrimage of Youth Mr Hobart has happily combined symbolism and reality. His characters are faithful reflections of

those we meet every day and all with which they are concerned is common in real life (“Morality Play with” 3)

From this brief description emerges the quintessence of most Modern Morality Plays and possibly the key words which account for their immense popularity: “modern,” “human,” “original” and “combination.” In Hobart’s play two major contradictory theatrical trends of that time – symbolism and realism – come together to create a satisfactory, entertaining and unexpected play of the sort that was, as it turned out, very much desired.

In Boston, *Experience* started at the Shubert Theatre but could not stay longer than originally planned because of the Theatre’s previous engagements; “and yet the public would not let it leave Boston” (““Experience” Moves” 4), which is why the decision was taken to perform it in the Opera House. The success was outstanding: all 3300 seats were taken, and many spectators did not manage to get tickets. The Opera experiment was a significant financial and artistic success: “Such an elaborate and scenic and dramatic production as this is in perfect accord with the spacious elegance of the Opera House” (“Experience Moves” 4).

Of course, not all reviews were positive. A *New York Times* reviewer from 1914, for example, admitting that the play is “for all its negligible imperfections . . . genuinely interesting” (“William Elliot” 13), still argued that its constant “emphasis of the obvious” cannot be excused. “The meaning of each episode in “Experience” is so entirely clear,” he declared, “that it can be read as soon as the procession of characters make their appearance and before they speak their lines” (“William Elliot” 13). It is doubtless, however, that the general response to the play was utmost optimism: “it received the popular indorsement of as many people as could crowd into the Shubert Theatre, an unusual unanimity of opinion” (“Morality Play with” 3). A short overview of comments from different reviews demonstrates how spectacular the success of *Experience* was: “Brings “Everyman” Idea Down to Date,” “a remarkable play” (“Stage” n.p.), “elaborate modern allegory” (““Experience” is Welcomed”), “one of the greatest successes of the last decade” (“The Singular” 22).

The Modern Morality Play *Experience* secured George V. Hobart “a new and permanent place in the dramatic literature of America” (“Author of “Experience” an Ex-telegrapher” 57): an unexpected success indeed for a writer who had been mostly known for farces, musical comedies and other pieces that a critic called “frivolous matter” (57). Nobody expected *Experience* to triumph, as it was generally thought that “no one who had originated so much frothy dialogue as Mr Hobart could possibly turn out a serious drama commanding serious attention” (57). Nevertheless, the play won an approval from “eminent clergyman, writers and

people in all walks of life” (57).

In thinking about *Experience* one must understand one thing: as *Everyman* before it, it was more than a success. It was a sensation. In 1917, a reporter from *The New York Times* predicted that *Experience* “probably will take place eventually as one of the half dozen most successful pieces ever produced” (“The Singular” 22). Billy Sunday, the most influential American Presbyterian evangelist of the first two decades of the twentieth century declared: “I haven’t been in a theatre in twenty-eight years, but, if I were going to see any play, I would go to see ‘Experience’” (qtd in “The Singular” 22). The play became a national craze: it played in New York, Boston (where it went for eight weeks and remained five months playing at three different theatres), Chicago, and Philadelphia and produced by other companies it played in practically all other major cities in the country. What is more, it broke record in the cities notorious for weak interest in theatre shows such as Providence, Baltimore and Milwaukee or the small town of Trenton, where it stayed for two weeks (“The Singular” 22), which is remarkable taking into account the town’s population at that time – ca. 2400 people. In 1921 it was turned into a film (today lost) directed by George Fitzmaurice. Finally, *Experience* made George V. Hobart one of the richest playwrights.

These facts alone disavow A.M. Kinghorn's assertion that “the separation of the modern from the mediaeval world has made the early English drama remote, and not even ‘a willing suspension of disbelief’ can change this” (128). Evidently, in the beginning of the previous century the early English drama had much to offer modern audiences. Moreover, it apparently offered exactly what they demanded. What that was and how the success of Modern Morality Plays can be explained merits a separate discussion which shall be provided in the concluding section of this part of the dissertation (“Conclusions to Part I”).

### **Beyond the British context: *Jedermann* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1911)**

The exploration of other European theatre realities in which the new morality play developed lies within the scope of this study only so far as it remains in connection with the British and American context. The prime example of such a convergence is the famous adaptation entitled *Jedermann*, written by the Austrian playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal, directed by Max Reinhardt, and staged for the first time in December 1911 in the Berlin Zirkus Schumann.

By the time *Jedermann* premiered, Reinhardt had already won a national fame as a supremely

fertile stage-manager, a director of Deutsches Theatre and a precursor of *chamber plays* (plays “simple in theme and presentation” performed in small spaces “to encourage more subtle acting, vocal flexibility, continuity in staging and unity in the whole” (Styan 31)). His co-operation with Hofmannsthal, as Stevens asserts, resulted from a shared dissatisfaction with the present condition of theatre and a corresponding vision of how it should progress. They both opposed naturalism, which dominated the drama of their time, and both promoted free interaction between the performers and the audience. Above all, however, they supported the idea that the most expressive form of theatre is festivity (129).

This appreciation for the festive dimension of drama was evidently missing in the English theatre life in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1927, Horace Shipp from *The Sackbut* made a comment on the state of English culture which, he complained, “refuses to take art seriously” (“Home Thoughts” 52). Outside England, in central and eastern Europe, it was the people, and not just art-circles, who not only respected art but also were enthusiastic about it. Such enthusiasm, which could be compared to the one the English had for sports, in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia took the form of festivals and exhibitions. Shipp contrasts the lively cultural life of Germany, supported by municipalities, governments and rich patrons and expressed in the architecture, aesthetics and the diversity of presented music and performances, with the English tradition “of muddling through” (51-52). He wonders if the Salzburg festival, which he visited whether, could ever happen in England.

To compare with it our Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon is absurd, for to the German mind the festival idea assumes the coming together of the finest artists and interpreters in the country as it assumed the building of the exquisite Festspielhaus . . . The financially harassed efforts of our own people at Stratford . . . cannot be set down alongside this Salzburg production. (53)

He writes about the performance with awe and a trace of disregard for English conservatism and lack of invention. “Reinhardt’s is the grand manner” (53), he says, referring to *Jedermann* which, as he recounts, is staged with magnificent cast, impressive splendour and extraordinary perfection. The very fact that the performance takes place outside, on the cathedral square, puts it beyond the English imagination (53).

As Margarethe Lasinger recounts, in 1917, Reinhardt submitted in Vienna “a relevant Memorandum for the Building of a Festival House in Hellbrunn.” He wanted to establish a theatre which would celebrate holiday by artistic activity and thus follow the traditions of ancient and medieval theatres. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1918, Reinhardt wrote to Ferdinand Künzelmann:

The festive, holiday-like, unique features that all art has and that even theatre in the time of the Ancient

Greeks had and also at the time when it was still in the cradle of the Catholic church, that has to be given back to theatre. (qtd. in Lasinger)

Salzburg, with its South-German Baroque architecture, picturesque scenery and its regional history of folk theatre appeared as a perfect location for a revival of festive drama (Stevens 129-130). Moreover, *Jedermann* definitely served (and serves) as a perfect realisation of another postulate that the festival proposed: the celebration of ambivalence and polarity between tradition and modernity. It also corresponded with the vision of the festival as “project against “the crisis, the crisis of meaning, the loss of values, the crisis of identity of the individual human being as well as of entire nations” (Helga Rabl-Stadler qtd. in Lasinger).

Thus, the Salzburg Festival was launched on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1920, with the staging of *Jedermann* on the cathedral square, and with Alexander Moissi in the title role. Four performances were planned and then followed by another two staged exclusively for the people of Salzburg. Since then, the Salzburg Festival has remained one of the most significant festivals for opera and drama in Europe.

As Lasinger suggests, however, the origins of the festival reach much further into the past. Both the royal and archiepiscopal courts had received lavish musical and theatrical presentations, sacred and secular plays were produced and even before Mozart’s time singspiels and dramas were staged at Salzburg University with great success while in the Salzburg Cathedral grand church music was performed. In the nineteenth century an idea appeared to organise regular festivals of Mozart’s music. It was carried on into the twentieth century and taken up by different circles who suggested building a festival house. Among these proponents belonged, inter alia, Friedrich Gehmacher, Heinrich Damisch, Hermann Bahr and, as mentioned before, Max Reinhardt. In 1919, Hofmannsthal published a tentative version of the programme, and in 1920 the festival was established, soon to become an international sensation (Lasinger). As stated by Stefan Zweig:

all at once the Salzburg Festival became a world attraction, as it were the Olympic Games of Art in the modern era, in which all nations competed to present their best achievements [...] Kings and princes, American millionaires and film stars, music enthusiasts, artists, writers and snobs all met in Salzburg. . . (Zweig qtd. in Lasinger).

Lisa Silverman calls the festival performances of *Jedermann* “baroque” (199) and in terms of sumptuousness, stagecraft, scenery and the cast they undoubtedly were. A simple platform was built in front of the cathedral, which the actors mounted approaching the stage from amidst the audience. The ending of the play was scheduled to coincide with the sunset and all the church

bells in Salzburg were to ring only as a musical accompaniment to the performance (Reinhardt had to obtain the Archbishop's official permission to arrange it). Actors were stationed on the tops of Salzburg buildings to call out "Jedermann" at the right time. Shipp describes the set as follows:

Not only was a special stage of steps and platforms built, but the surrounding buildings were pressed into service. One will not readily forget the dramatic effect of the feast scene, when the whole square filled with the echoing voices of Death calling Everyman, and the bells of the Cathedral itself tolled the call. It is this bigness of imagination which stirs the mind. It has as its allied danger the possibility of becoming ostentatious and vulgar, but usually the sweep of the line is so generous that it can carry almost anything Reinhardt does. ("Home Thoughts" 53-54)

Another reviewer from *The Musical Times* so records his impressions of the show:

The stage was placed in front of the west door of the Cathedral, and the audience occupied part of the fine square which acts both as a delightful setting and an effective sounding-box for the actors. The performance was most impressive . . . Everman himself (Alexander Moissi, of Berlin) was admirable. The climax in the scene of the feast was Reinhardt's chief triumph . . . The wild hilarity was suddenly broken by the uneasy rising of Everyman, the hushing of revelry, and the solemn calling of 'Jedermann' by hidden voices, in turn coming from inside the Cathedral, from the top of a house at the side of the square, from the tower of the Franciscan Church behind us, and finally from the heights of the fortress of the Hohesalzburg . . . (Rootham 912)

The idea of the festival and the popularity of the play was not, however, free from criticism. The Salzburgians resisted the growth of cultural tourism brought by the establishment of the world-famous event, and they felt threatened by the influx of foreigners. Xenophobia, especially in the form of antisemitism, escalated under the Nazi influence in the 1930s to the point that made it difficult for Max Reinhardt, who was Jewish, to remain in Salzburg. In 1938, a ban was introduced for Jewish artists to perform in Salzburg, *Jedermann* was removed from the programme and the festival changed into a tool of Nazi political propaganda as well as an insignificant event not meant for international public. After the war finished, however, efforts were immediately undertaken to bring the festival back to its former glory.

For Hofmannsthal, *Jedermann* was neither the first nor the last engagement with the form of a morality play. As stated by Klemens von Klemperer, from early on in his career, Hofmannsthal rejected the aestheticist idea of art for art's sake and recognised the social responsibility involved in his literary career. In 1893, aged nineteen, he wrote a short drama in verse entitled *Der Tor und der Tod*, which tells the story of a selfish nobleman named Claudio who only comprehends the meaning of life in the face of death. Hofmannsthal was a conservative dramatist (63-65). The first decade of the twentieth century saw him turning to the kind of

drama both him and Reinhardt so respected and essayed to emulate with their festive activities. This is when *Elektra* (1903) and *Ödipus und die Sphinx* (1906) were created. Still, as Josef L. Kunz wrote for *The Contemporary Review*, even though Hofmannsthal's themes were inspired by antiquity, he "paints dramas of the modern soul, and nothing could be more unlike Sophocles than his *Oedipus the King* and *Elektra*" (370-371). "In lieu of the great human passions in the Greek dramas his *Elektra* and especially his *Klytaemestra* are pathological and perverse monsters" (371), adds the critic.

Ultimately, as von Klemperer explains, Hofmannsthal was searching for a way to "revive the roots of Western culture" (65) and it was in *Jedermann*, rather than in the Greek adaptations that he found it. He felt that with the medieval morality play he restored something to the German stage, rather than only made a contribution. In 1922 he once again confirmed his appreciation for this form when he completed *The Salzburg Great Theatre of the World*. During the festivals it was performed only two times. The story is similar to *Jedermann*, "exalted and allegorical," but with a more complicated plot and more politically-oriented message. Mankind is here represented by six figures and it is the "active" beggar with aspirations rather than the rich man who becomes the central character (von Klemperer 65-66).

In 1973, Martin Stevens pointed to *Jedermann* as one of only few medieval plays which had caught the interest of the general public. He could not have known that the popularity of the show would continue, and that in the twenty-first century it would still be staged annually during the same festival with remarkable success. The morality play is, apparently, more persistent in its didactic mission than is generally assumed and could have been predicted. One thing is certain: "the Salzburg performance of *Everyman* has done more than any other to keep the morality play alive" (Stevens 117). Even the contemporary adaptation by Carol Ann Duffy which premiered in The National Theatre in 2015 has not gained the status and recognition which *Jedermann* secured throughout a century of almost uninterrupted staging.

It is interesting to note that the adaptation history of *Everyman* has come full circle. What Hofmannsthal had adapted from English drama and made a part of Austrian literary heritage, received later on its own English re-adaptation with Martin Harvey's production of *Via Crucis* at the Garrick Theatre in 1923 (the rights to produce an English version of the play were purchased by Harvey in 1913). Harvey's play was something between an adaptation and a translation (by Dr C.E. Wheeler), and it did not inspire too many positive reviews. Writing for *The English Review*, Shipp accuses the production of being chaotic and the setting of not being well-thought out. He praises the actors but comments that in all other aspects the play was

“pictorial, theatrical in the bad sense of that term, and utterly destructive of the majesty of the old play” (“Martin Harvey” 268). James Agate from *The Saturday Review* compares *Via Crucis* with the traditional staging of *Everyman* which he saw in Manchester Free Trade Hall. “The effect was so great that for a week I mended my ways,” (180) he states humorously referring to *Everyman* and criticises the new morality play for resigning from medieval symbolism and exchanging the abstractions of Fellowship or Kindred for the simplicity of *Everyman’s* Comrade or Fat Cousin. Both reviewers proclaim Harvey’s excellent performance the only *raison d’etre* of the play.

Finally, while considering *Jedermann’s* grandness one should remain fair and give justice to both the most enthusiastic and more moderate reviews. Particularly interesting accounts are those which do not come from professional reviewers. M. Collins, the author of “Extracts from a Holiday Notebook” published in the English periodical *The Sackbut*, gives such an honest appraisal of her participation in the Salzburg Festival:

*Everyman* [sic] had to be given indoors, alas! The stagecraft was in itself interesting, and the death-call to *Everyman*, echoing and re-echoing from every part of the hall, was as impressive as any sound could well be, but the whole effect was perhaps too decorative, too sophisticated, to give the full effect of a morality play . . . At less absorbing moments one became conscious of the wooden seats and narrow gangway, and to one not amply cushioned by nature a performance lasting a couple of hours proved somewhat trying to the hip-bones. (94)



## Conclusions to Part I

Although so far largely disregarded by the history of drama, the Morality Play Revival which took place in the first decades of the twentieth century was a major phenomenon. What attests to this statement is the abundance of Modern Moralities in the years 1900-1950 (Appendix). Another indication comes from the fact that in 1912, Joseph Wayne Barley, Harrison Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, submitted a PhD dissertation entitled *The Morality Motif in Contemporary English Drama*. Such an academic project evidently suggests that the interest in morality plays was widespread not only among enthusiastic audiences of London and American theatres but also among literary scholars. The phenomenon which has been named for the use of this study the Morality Play Revival, Barley refers to as “the Modern Morality.” A hundred years gap between the current times and the era examined in Barley’s dissertation, gives one the advantage of extended outlook at how the Morality Play Revival progressed and what it contributed to the development of contemporary drama. Barley’s work, however, which in 1968 was still given a place in *Dramatic Bibliography*, claims the advantage of temporal proximity: of the author’s ability to personally witness the phenomenon under scrutiny. In his introduction Barley states:

Within the last decade, there has been a noteworthy infusion of the religious element in our drama. This has manifested itself in two ways: in the production of plays based on bible narrative or incident, and in those in which the “Morality” motive of the old religious drama, adapted of course to modern conditions, has been used. (7)

Among probable reasons for the unexpected return of moralities, Barley enumerates the audience's impatience with realism which had lost its appeal, the conscious efforts of particular playwrights to re-introduce religious themes as an element of the British stage, and finally, the “spiritual awakening” (9) which stood in contrast to the utilitarianism of the nineteenth century (8-9). All of these potential causes require a more detailed comment, and, what is more, the list of factors which could have sparked the Morality Play Revival can be significantly extended. First of all, it must be stressed that morality plays returned to the British Drama in two different forms. The first form is what Barley refers to as a conscious effort of individual dramatists to bring back religious drama. A prime example of such an endeavour was, of course, William Poel's *Everyman*. As it has been explained, Poel's idea behind staging *Everyman* was to show English viewers the beginnings of British drama, and the impulse for doing that came from his life-long fascination with early-modern theatre. Thus, Poel's *Everyman* was not so much an

appropriation of a medieval play to contemporary expectations, as an antiquarian experiment: a dramatic curiosity designed to attract London audiences who craved novelty. On the other end of the spectrum one finds such works as Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound*, George V. Hobart's *Experience*, or W.B. Yeats's *The Hour Glass*, as well as numerous other moralities by both well-known and minor dramatists, some of which will be close-read in the following chapter. These plays were genuinely modern in the sense that they were set in modern times and employed morality play features (such as *psychomachia* or allegory) to discuss modern problems. While Barley writes about the "spiritual awakening" which made the public responsive to religious drama, it should be stressed that although some of Modern Moralities retained religious focus, most were secular, and instead of teaching how to be a good Christian, they aimed to teach their viewers how to be a fulfilled person. Furthermore, the secularisation of the British society was reflected in the aforementioned crisis in church attendance. While afraid of progressing commercialization and materialism, many people no longer looked for moral guidance at church, and Modern Morality Play authors responded to this shift. Thus, some Modern Moralities underwent what may be termed an "Ethical Turn:" a didactic movement away from a religious and towards an ethical didacticism.

The general frustration with realism which Barley discusses is reflected in the frustrations expressed by some literary critics. In "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," for example, T.S. Eliot writes deprecatingly about realism and contrasts it with the morality play, which he considers the purest form of drama:

The great vice of English drama from Kyd to Galsworthy has been that its aim of realism was unlimited. In one play, *Everyman*, and perhaps in that one play only, we have a drama within the limitations of art; since Kyd, since Arden of Feversham, since The Yorkshire Tragedy, there has been no form to arrest, so to speak, the flow of spirit at any particular point before it expands and ends its course in the desert of exact likeness to the reality which is perceived by the most commonplace mind. (93)

Similar observations are made by Nicoll, who writing about poetic drama states that even though such plays were rare in commercial theatres, a few of them were greeted with applause, which "openly manifested the need for a stage removed from the drabness and ordinariness of the "true to life" – one is almost tempted to say – "theatre of fact" (284). As asserted by Mark Fearnow, while traditional drama often presented noble protagonists unjustly rejected by and eventually happily restored to the society, realism did not offer any comforting morality, since it destroys conventional truths without propounding new ones and makes way for potential futures without defining them (174-176). Therefore, it is likely that moralities struck a responsive chord with the British audience exactly because they offer "conventional truths"

and strictly define all acceptable “potential futures.” Didactic simplicity may have been appealing to the society struggling to come terms with its loss of international hegemony, the arms race and the looming possibility of war. Perhaps this is why viewers overwhelmed with the real world welcomed a form that instead of ambivalent comments on the reality and intellectually challenging conundrums, offered simple ethically-conclusive answers. As it has been indicated, some moralities referred to the war experience directly, usually pointing out humanity's mistaken priorities which brought about the disaster.

At the same time, while opposing realism, Modern Moralities followed many dramatic tendencies of the era. American theatre was moving in the direction of modernism, which called for a drama that would limit its predilection for sensationalism and follow a more balanced, reflective, impersonal model (Robinson 157). Moralities, although in form dissimilar to modernist plays, shared with them such features as reflexiveness and the focus on individual's inner life. As Robinson proclaims, the regeneration of American theatre came from “reclaiming its lost simplicity” (158), and simplicity characterizes most Modern Moralities.

As far as the British drama is concerned, the Morality Play Revival was a reflection of many changes within it. Modern Moralities were only one embodiment of the return to the drama of the English past which was taking place. Nicoll states that although in major part academic and expressed in academic publications (J.S. Farmer's *Early English Dramatists* and *Tudor Facsimile Texts*, W.W. Greg's *Malone Society Reprints*), the fascination with old forms was shared by actors and dramatists (114-119). As one of the arguments for this Nicoll quotes the fact that Birmingham's Pilgrim Players selected the sixteenth-century morality play *Youth* for performance and that the terms of “interlude” and “morality” were “again being brought into familiar use” (119). Also Renaissance inspirations filled English repertoires, as Lyly's, Jonson's and Fletcher's plays were presented to the audiences of the open-air theatre in Regent's Park between 1903 and 1905. The Phoenix Society appeared as an offspring of the Stage Society in 1919, entirely devoted to the revivals of old plays (119). As Nicoll concludes, “the West End stages showed increasing interest in the national dramatic heritage” (119).

A confirmation of the public's need for uplifting drama can be found in Fred Eastman's article for *Harper's Monthly Magazine* entitled “A Challenge to the American Theatre.” In the beginning, Eastman informs the addressees of his article, that is the managers and dramatists of American theatre, that he is writing not as a critic, but as a member of the audience. He states that young managers have engaged themselves lately in producing obscene plays, and the public is not happy with what they have to offer. “It is not that you are not giving us more than

you gave fifteen years ago,” he explains, “But you are not giving us what we need now” (328-329). He continues by talking about the complacency which characterised Americans of the budding twentieth century: a complacency which through politics, war and faith crisis is now called into question. “And now we are turning to the theatre and questioning theory that this great institution is for entertainment only,” proclaims Eastman (329).

Both in ancient Greece and in England theatre was inspired by religion, he continues, and its original purpose was to educate and lift up people’s spirits. This aim has now been violated. The drama which originated from the Christian Church by the condemnable production of smutty plays has now turned into show business, just as according to theatrical legend the great tragic personalities of Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot from old mystery plays in time changed into comic caricatures of Punch and Judy. “The farther the drama moved from sincerity, from a consciousness of something big and worth while to achieve for the human spirit, the smaller and less consequential it became,” he declares (330). But, as he argues, the response of the public to religious plays from the last couple of years clearly indicates that it is not cheap enjoyment that the audience expects from drama. It is wisdom. War, the ensuing chaos and above all the inefficiency of churches in guiding people, made New Yorkers “religiously adrift” but not “irreligious:” “They are dissatisfied with churches and synagogues that gave them institutionalism for spiritual food . . . but they are not done with the quest for understanding of the mysteries of life” (Eastman 330). In this quest they turn towards theatre. Then Eastman moves on to enumerate religious or ‘spiritual’ plays which New York audiences embraced, among them Charles Rann Kennedy’s *Servant in the House* (1908), the aforementioned Jerome K. Jerome’s *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* (1908), Channing Pollock’s *The Fool* (1922) and the aforementioned *Outward Bound* by Sutton Vane. He admits that while most of those plays leave much to be desired in the artistic sense, they secured success because they responded to the public’s need for the heroic. Thus, what Eastman eventually demands from American managers and dramatists are “great plays” (332), “plays that are big enough and sincere enough to touch our imaginations and exalt our spirits” (332). We want more than entertainment, assures Eastman, “We want the theatre to interpret life to us” (332).

It seems that between the lines of this manifesto lies one of the reasons for the advent of the Morality Play Revival in the USA and in England in the beginning of the twentieth century. These societies, both in the eve of the Great War and after it ended, found themselves in dire need of serious consolation, which could not have sprung from simplistic amusement. Morality Plays, therefore, found a fertile soil, and not only because they aimed to educate, but also

because they did it in the right way. “If there is one type of play that bores us worse than the tired-business-man sort of entertainment . . . it is the type that tries to preach a sermon at us,” states Eastman. Modern Moralities, as opposed to their medieval predecessors, were not designed to force-feed audiences with too direct a teaching. Thus, it seems that although in his appeal Eastman calls for the appreciation of spiritual drama in general, in the case of morality plays his arguments find perfect application. This is not to say that early-twentieth-century audiences disparaged all comedy and demanded only didactic, quasi-religious drama. Nicoll’s profound analysis of the condition of British theatre in the first three decades of the twentieth century shows that the public’s enthusiasm for melodrama and other forms of the “theatre of entertainment” was enormous. The numbers and reviews speak for themselves, however, and the box-office popularity of some moralities presented in this chapter clearly indicates high interest in such form of theatre at that time.

It seems that another reason behind the Morality Play Revival in England was the Edwardian decency of contemporary British society. Its expression is aptly delineated in the 1905 anonymous article from *The Review of Reviews*, in which the author compares two plays he has seen at the Avenue and Gaiety Theatres: the aforementioned *A Message from Mars*, and *The Spring Chicken*. Two theatrical pieces could never be more different, he states, as *A Message from Mars* is everything that *The Spring Chicken* is not. The first play is clever, simple, pretty and didactic. The second the reviewer characteristically nicknames “Gomorrah.” Even the theatre itself (“typical stronghold of the musical comedy” (“Impressions” 146)) contributes to his repulsion: “As I did not want to be prejudiced against the stage by seeing it at its worst from an ethical point of view, I had hitherto given the Gaiety a wide berth” (“Impressions” 146). Although the audience was well-dressed, the atmosphere was pleasant, the costumes splendid and the music and dancing enjoyable, the play itself was a repulsive experience. “When I left the theatre I was appalled to think that such a performance can be applauded nightly by thousands of well-dressed English people without a word of protest from the press,” proclaims the disgruntled contributor. “The play is no doubt adaptation from the French, but not even the lax and indifferent society of Paris would allow such a play to be performed before a theatre half full of young girls” (“Impressions of” 146), he adds. Then ensues a description of the corrupted contents of the play which starts with a song about how love (“At the Gaiety for “love” read “lust”” (146)) becomes unstoppable in men with the advent of spring, which often leads to adultery. “The whole musical comedy is one long presentation of lust, unredeemed by a single spark of sentiment. The whole thing is reduced to the level of

monkeys at the Zoo,” declares the reviewer disdainfully. His biggest concern seems to be with what influence such a theatrical experience, filled with “dirty allusions and adulterous suggestions . . . which pretty young girls make on the Gaiety stage” (146), has on the British audience. He seems particularly irritated with the fact that the audience genuinely enjoyed the bawdy entertainment. He refuses to be thought of as prudent, as he has never refrained from discussing the problems of sex. “But how comes it,” he rages, “that this prudish, proper, virtuous English society has not a word to say in condemnation not of a play of illicit love – for there is not a scintilla of love to irradiate the putrid filth – but of the glorification of libidinousness” (146). Thus, by comparing *The Spring Chicken* to *A Message from Mars*, and by discussing the numerous ways in which the former play is inferior to the latter, the reviewer exposes the expectations of a part of Edwardian viewership who craved a decent and meritorious drama.

In “The Reshaping of *Everyman*,” Stevens writes that “Revivals of medieval plays in the twentieth century have, with one or two exceptions, been of limited interest to the general theatre-going public” (117). A closer look at the obfuscated part of the history of British and American drama, however, proves him wrong. The general theatre-going public was not only interested in but also excited about medieval plays. Morality plays, in the form of both high art and mediocre pieces, found their way into playhouses as well as into good graces of anglophone audiences. What is more, it was the twentieth century that rediscovered moralities and took them into possession by reviving them, by experimenting with them, by readjusting their didactic content to correspond with modern needs, by mixing them with other genres and, finally, by incorporating them into the contemporary dramatic reality. Perhaps what attracted early-twentieth-century playwrights and audiences alike to the idea of a morality play is best expressed by the critic of *The Athenaeum* who after seeing the first performance of Poel’s revival in 1901 wrote: “Tragedy indeed, in its naïve simplicity and uncompromising sincerity, ‘Everyman’ is – that “tragedy to those who feel” which is our general lot, the great unending problem of life, responsibility and death” (“The Week” 1901).

## Part II: Modern Moralities: A Close Reading

While Barley's study divides the returns to medieval drama into moralities and nativity plays, Part II of this dissertation will classify Modern Morality Plays by putting them into four categories, each of which will be discussed in detail through a case study of a representative play. The selection of the plays for close reading has been based on how well they exemplify the dominant thematic and structural developments in Modern Morality Plays in the first half of the twentieth century. It should be stressed, however, that these plays showcase only the prevalent, and not all the directions in which the morality play tradition evolved at that time. The dramas analysed in the following chapter differ significantly in terms of the motifs they employ, the themes they explore, the devices they use to do that and the morality play elements they rework; their diversity serves to illustrate the creativity of Modern Morality Play authors and the adaptability of this form.

The categories to be covered include religious moralities, which retained the medieval goal of teaching the proper conduct of Christian life; secular moralities, which resigned from the religious focus entirely and presented the audience with the ways to secure earthly happiness; 'Christmas moralities', which, in fact, being distinctively Christian, could fall into the first category, but which are discussed separately because of being written for a specific occasion, and finally, modern adaptations of *Everyman*. Moralities selected for a detailed analysis of the respective categories are Arthur Simmons' *Conflict* (1946), H. F. Rubinstein's *Insomnia: A Modern Morality Play* (1927), Edith Lyttelton's *A Christmas Morality* (1908), Grace Latimer Jones's *What Makes Christmas Christmas: A Morality Play in One Act* (1916), and W.F. Almond's *Everychild* (1938). In the commentary to these plays, I will explore the changes the morality play tradition underwent and discuss the features of the genre that were retained. Subsequently, I will comment on how these changes reflect the social, philosophical and literary climate of the times when the plays were written. In *The English Morality Play*, Potter states that moralities were innovative in being adaptable to "new circumstances and social conditions" (9). In the following analyses his words find confirmation.

## Morality Plays: A Critical Introduction

As stated by John T. Sebastian, in fact, “The term “morality play” designates a corpus of five anonymous dramatic texts composed in Middle English between c. 1400 and the early sixteenth century” (1374), which means that the research material is very limited. This complicates identification of generic boundaries. Sebastian postulates that

Despite obvious commonalities . . . it is necessary to exercise caution in speaking of the morality play as a genre; given the limited sample size, it is as easy to point to exceptions as to rules, and what proves definitive for one or some of the plays may not feature in others at all. (1374)

His assertion relates to an important factor in the debate on whether morality plays constitute a genre, namely that there is no “morality play *Poetics*” which would define them; therefore, moralities elude classical prescriptive categorisation. Attempts at filling this theoretical void have, of course, been made. Such critics as Hardin Craig, David Bevington, John D. Cox, W. Roy MacKenzie, Bernard Spivack or Alfred W. Pollard contributed definitions of the morality play which agreed on several elements, such as its didactic nature, personified characters, a universal protagonist, allegorical quality and the motif of *psychomachia*. These definitions, however, differ in focus, and the problem of sparse analytic material remains. Thus, while despite their scarcity it is still possible to successfully compose a “working definition” of moralities, “their absolute cohesion as a group is bound to be questioned in any attempt to define that form in its individual manifestations and theatrical contexts” (King 240). While both Sebastian and Pamela M. King advise caution in referring to moralities as a genre, today's scholarship on genre theory puts his postulate in an interesting perspective. Amy J. Devitt, for instance, asserts that genre can be redefined “as a dynamic concept created through the interaction of writers, readers, past texts, and contexts” (199). Such understanding of the notion of genre allows the critical freedom necessary to acknowledge that “exceptions” and “rules” (mentioned by Sebastian) participate in establishing generic restrictions of the morality play in equal measure. Indeed, as Devitt suggests, “contemporary genre theory must also shift away from traditional genre theory by emphasizing the nature of genre as difference as well as similarity” (700). Thus, it seems that from the perspective of current developments in genre studies, which see genre as a dynamic field of multiple creative and receptive interactions, and which consider difference as significant for examining the boundaries as likeness, moralities, both medieval and modern, do form a genre. Finally, one should note David Fishelov's assertion that

generic rules are still a vital part of the literary communicative situation . . . [and] might be viewed as a challenge, or a horizon, against which the writer and his reader have to define themselves. The writer may stretch the generic rules, he may produce some unpredictable ‘match’ between different existing conventions of existing literary genres . . . but in order to understand the overall significance of his text, we should be aware of the generic system against which he is working. (Fishelov qtd. in Devitt 700)

The statement aptly encapsulates the power dynamics between medieval moralities, if they are taken as a genre, and Modern Moralities, which challenge their old prototypes, but which can do that only because their authors understand the philosophy behind the original morality play. King names the 5 medieval morality plays have survived till today as *The Pride of Life* (14<sup>th</sup> century), *The Castle of Perseverance* (1420-1425), *Wisdom* (1460-1463), *Mankind* (ca. 1470) and *Everyman* (1495) (240). The three most securely datable of them, that is *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and *Wisdom* (or the so-called Macro Plays), can be found in a manuscript of East Anglian provenance which used to belong to an antiquarian named Cox Macro from Suffolk. Today they are kept in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington. To this list, Robert Potter adds three sixteenth-century plays: *Mundus et Infans* (1508), *Hickscorner* (1513), and *Youth* (1520).

In *History of English Literature to 1600*, Martin S. Day reminds the reader that in the late Middle Ages, drama was considered popular literature, and that while it arose from liturgy and religious themes, its aim was in equal measure to teach and to entertain (109). Hence, what must be remembered is that the current understanding of moralities as “dramatised sermons” (and thus as purely didactic plays) comes from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century historicism and belongs to the modern perspective. In medieval times, however, moralities were even criticised for their entertaining purpose. In *Anatomie of Abuses*, an English pamphleteer Philip Stubbes argues against plays, tragedies and interludes describing their corrupting influence on English audiences. According to him, instead of teaching the way of Christian life, those plays endorsed laziness, promiscuity and arrogance. They also discouraged people's interest in sermons and by representing vices in an alluring manner, they advocated sinning:

These prophane & wanton stage playes or interludes: what an occasion they are of adulterie and vncleanenesse, by gesture, by speech, by conueyances, and deuices to attaine to so vngodly desires, the world knoweth with too much hurt by long experience. Vanities they are if we make the best of them ; and the Prophet prayeth to haue his eies turned away by the Lorde from beholding such matter. (Stubbes)

In *Drama and Resistance*, Claire Sponsler argues that Stubbes's attack reflects other, similar expressions of distrust of theatre which circulated at that time, for example those from *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* (1380-1425). The treatise does not dismiss all plays, but those which it puts under the heading of “playing miracles,” which, apparently, by inducing excitement among the audience members, provoked self-indulgence (76). Thus, for both the author of the *Treatise* and for Stubbes, “theatrical activity has at least the potential to act as a spur to misgovernance, reversing discipline and inciting improper behavior” (76). These, and other anti-theatrical writings suggest, as Sponsler concludes, that the late medieval society considered play-going a kind of game. Stage acting, which by nature constitutes a form of impersonation, was seen by its detractors as inextricably entwined with the body, and as an invitation to lechery (76).

The entertaining quality of drama had become inconvenient to the church long before the *Tretise* was written, however; and when the dramatic activity in England was still at its budding stage. As Day asserts, in 1210 Pope Innocent III banned plays from being staged in churches. This pushed performances back to the church porch, with the surrounding churchyard accommodating the audience. The ensuing growth in levity caused plays to be banished from church ground altogether by the end of the thirteenth century. The performing business was soon transferred from churchmen to religious guilds, and later to trade guilds, and the establishment of Corpus Christi feast by Urban IV in 1264 brought a new opportunity for performances out of which the mystery plays emerged. By the fourteenth century, drama in England became vernacular and secular. Its main subject was, however, still Bible-related (Day 109-115).

While all medieval drama was born out of ritual since it started as re-enactments of Christ's resurrection, according to John D. Cox, moralities seem less “indebted to a ritual conception of community” (51) than other contemporary forms. They were not connected with Corpus Christi, they could be performed at any time of the year, and they did not offer the chance of social interaction in the way that the mystery plays did (51). Moralities were, however, “oriented to the sacraments,” and as Cox explains, “their distinction from the mystery plays is an accident of critical history rather than a feature of the plays themselves” (51). In fact, Potter sees the beginnings of morality play in sermons, and claims that the common practice of seeking roots of morality plays in *Psychomachia* (an epic poem from the fourth century by the Roman poet Prudentius) is misled. The connection rests on the assumption that in the epic, like in many moralities, virtues and vices fight for a human soul. Still, as Potter argues, this link is indirect and weak, and the actual origins of these plays can be found in penitential literature,

which focused on preaching about the importance of confession and forgiveness. “The imprecise identification of the morality play with the *Psychomachia* has led some critics to describe the action of the dramas in terms of an epic battle between virtues and vices,” indicates Potter, “but it is the figure of Mankind which stands at the center of these plays, and the center of his life which unfolds to determine the pattern of events” (5). Thus, what makes moralities different from the remaining body of medieval drama, is that unlike mystery and miracle plays, they focus on an individual story. Therefore, it may be argued that what morality plays contributed to drama is the figure of a protagonist as it is understood today; a figure which becomes more than the main character in a story and which in its mature form evolved into Doctor Faustus.

Other qualities of morality plays often submitted to evaluation are their instructive purpose and the employment of personified abstractions as characters. As for didacticism, it naturally results from moralities’ roots in sermon literature. Schell and Shuchter state that the purpose of moralities was always to represent some form of salvation, at first religious, then secular, political or social (vii) (this aim was retained in the Modern Moralities of the twentieth century). Indeed, Potter calls moralities “plays to catch the conscience” (32). Didacticism was often expressed by humour and satirical treatment of human imperfections; a common ground was needed between the protagonist and the audience if they were to identify with him, and if the teaching was to be effective. Humour sometimes accompanied the portrayal of the protagonist's fall and it served as morality play's attack on “pretension that any human being can be strong enough to resist being human” (Potter 36). At some point, Potter replaces didacticism with another term which means the same but bears different connotations, namely “illumination” (8). The chief aim of moralities was, as he declares, “to make visible the invisible truths of time and the universe” (8).

It is worth noting, however, that with the coming of Humanism the morality tradition became a vehicle for promotion of different kind of ideas. Approaching the Renaissance, morality plays had to adjust to the new scheme and started to be written by those involved in spreading humanist ideals. As Kent Cartwright explains in *Theatre and Humanism*, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, “drama served well for countering resistance to humanist education and for shaping students to humanist values” (49). Not only was acting used for teaching oratory skills, language and gesticulation, for example at Eton, but also educational themes permeate many plays of that time, among them such moralities as *Youth* and John Redford's *Wit and Science* (ca. 1530-1547) (49). According to Cartwright, “For humanist reformers, drama

promised to encourage the spectators' emotional embrace of the transformative vision of education through their engagement with the protagonist's self-discovery" (49). This pattern is, in fact, visible even in earlier plays, for example in *Everyman* where self-discovery allows the protagonist's redemption. The idea was, then, to make the didactic process emotionally and dramatically compelling, which meant to disregard the earlier concerns of Stubbes and others, who in enjoyment saw a potential behavioural crisis. Humanists, on the other hand, did not perceive dramatic attractiveness as a threat, but as an educational chance. Thus, as Cartwright explains, in Redford's play, the transformative potential of God's grace is replaced with a transformative potential of academic study. In this way, *Wit and Science* "reveals how pedagogical drama integrates theatrical conventions from morality, romance, and prodigal-son plays to make the pilgrimage of learning emotionally compelling" (Cartwright 50). The connection between drama and academia is later given other dimensions, for example in the plays of University Wits. Finally, as King states, all elements of a moral play were always subjected to an educational purpose, since "as aspects of an argument intended for edification, time, place, plot and character are all morally directed" (242). Since moralities were always set in an unspecified time, in a way outside history (which is "generally exploited by strategically collapsing the eternal with the contemporary" (King 240)) and in an unidentifiable place, plot and characters are the last two aspects which call for a more detailed discussion.

The plot of a morality play usually reflects a journey or a pilgrimage, sometimes from the beginning to the end of life (this motif did not, however, originally appear in English moralities, but in the work of a French writer and a monk, Guillaume de Deguileville, entitled *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine* (King 242)). According to Potter, a morality play dramatises "a descent out of innocence into sin, and an ascent out of sin to a salvation" (qtd. in Kahrl 105). These two events provide structure for the story of man's progressive isolation from God, as well as his prodigal return. Marion Jones, on the other hand, describes the plot by referring to the didactic function of its subsequent parts as precept, example and exhortation (215). Kinghorn takes Elizabethan drama as an illustration of how different the plots of moralities were from the plots of plays which succeeded them. Thus, while "in the hands of Shakespeare, *Everyman's* heroism would have been determined by the manner of his dying; in the morality play, he goes submissively to his grave, without struggle, but with Truth revealed to him" (Kinghorn 120). "No struggle is possible against Death," he adds "and the play's didactic intention is limited to showing sinners how they may repent" (Kinghorn 124). This view is challenged by Stanley Kahrl, however, who considers it an oversimplification and argues that moralities:

are studies in the choices man makes, the recurrent opportunity to fall, in which man is no inert battlefield over which the forces of good and evil march but a being with free will ... whose chances to choose the right road to salvation end with the coming of death" (106).

Hardin Craig brings attention to the universality of a morality plot, which, as he suggests, is "deducible from the vast history of man's fall and redemption" (344). It is worth noting that the purposes behind the plays evolved parallelly to the plays themselves, and that the "pattern of innocence, temptation, fall and redemption was exploited, in the protracted and turbulent years surrounding the Reformation, as an organ of political satire and religious propaganda" (King 263).

As for the characters, they were in moralities always black and white, representing either the forces of good or evil and personifying abstractions of different kinds, such as personality features, supernatural entities, and human categories. Their status as positive or negative characters, although evident, could be easily identified also by the vocabulary and syntax they used, as well as through the stanza structure; thus the "fall into sin is characterised by fragmented lines, blasphemy and nonsense. Virtue, on the other hand, is characterised by high-style, Latinate structures, characters more usually talking in complete stanzas" (King 242). Indeed, according to Alfred W. Pollard: "In the contest between the personified powers of good and evil, the Seven Cardinal Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins, for the possession of man's soul, we have the essence of the Morality play" (xliii). Thus, allegory was not a feature of morality plays, but their defining quality. What is more, as King suggests, "The use of *prosopopoeia*, or personification, in creating dramatic characters involves a fundamental rhetorical separation between the play world and the real world" (241). This separation often collapsed in moralities, especially in the delivery of direct address, which is discussed in detail below.

Pollard writes about personifications dismissively by explaining the emergence of this type of characters in the following way: "the medieval playwright was too simple-minded to anticipate the method of Ben Jonson, by representing men and women living human lives with human relationships, and at the same time embodying a single humour or quality, to the exclusion of all others" (xliii). He also calls them "wholly undramatic" (xliii). His harsh judgement is later questioned by major scholars of medieval theatre in the twentieth century, such as Bernard Spivack or David Bevington (Cox 52), and also by W. Roy MacKenzie who in his 1970 study *The English Moralities from the Point of View of Allegory* reminds the readers that whenever

the play was acted, the characters, instead of being dreary types and abstractions, were at once

individualized and humanized; and the same transformation once took place in the case of every one of the other Moralities which are now so hastily judged on the basis of the printed copy. (264)

Indeed, Potter also claims that moralities were “designed for acting rather than reading” (33).

There are different approaches endorsed by medieval theatre scholars as to attractiveness which the plot of morality play held for its original audience. According to King, moralities differed from the later allegorical fiction (for example *A Pilgrim's Progress* or *Animal Farm*) in that the story they developed was entirely subjected to the message they aimed to illustrate (242). In other words, “The only literal storyline in the medieval morality plays is . . . the actualisation on stage of their moral 'sentence'” (242). On the other hand, T.S. Eliot, who openly admitted his indebtedness to morality play tradition claims that

the religious and the dramatic are not merely combined, but wholly fused. Everyman is on the one hand the human soul in extremity, and on the other any man in any dangerous position from which we wonder how he is going to escape - with as keen interest as that with which we wait for the escape of the film hero, bound and helpless in a hut to which his enemies are about to set fire. (qtd. in van Laan 465)

It has to be stressed, however, that “the dynamic nature of these plays lies not in internally contrived conflicts, but in the manner in which they generate pressure upon their audiences emotionally and physically, as well as intellectually” (King 243).

The automatic dismissal of both the didactic goal of moralities and the means through which it was obtained, is challenged also by the more recent scholarship. While Schell and Shuchter call morality plays “*sermones corporei*, embodied sermons aimed without equivocation or evasion at the moral betterment of their audiences” (vii), Sponsler puts their didactic scope in a much broader perspective, especially in relation to what she calls “unruly bodies,” that is vices. Both instruction and allegory are much more complex notions than they are often taken to be, and both had a different effect on the original audiences of morality plays than they would have on viewers today. Perhaps this is why, despite the general perception of moralities as dull and undramatic, Cartright writes about “the dramatic vitality, panoramic power, and audience-engaging theatrics of the medieval morality tradition” (49).

As stated by Sponsler, anti-theatrical activists' fear that observing misbehaviour on stage provokes, rather than restrains, misbehaviour in life, was much more relevant to morality plays than it may seem (80). Presenting the battle between vices and virtues with an array of personified abstractions, and popularly associated with calling play-goers to confession, “moralities would seem to be unlikely dramas in which to find exuberantly unruly bodies of the sort that might move spectators to the misbehavior feared by Stubbes and the writer of the

*Tretise*” (80). Still, morality plays extensively explore the ways in which bodies and commodities are misused (80).

In the introduction to *The English Morality Play and Moral Interlude*, Schell and Shuchter see personified abstractions from medieval morality play as characters entirely dramatically unsuccessful. As MacKenzie before them (257), they admit that even the very name given to the genre has a discouraging effect on the reader or the viewer, who automatically dislike the notion of being taught about how to behave. This effect is intensified by the fact that “the moral lessons are conveyed by “bloodless abstraction” such as Charity, Freewill and Pity” (vii). Sponsler, however, does not subscribe to this view in relation to the negative characters and criticises the perception of vice as a character automatically doomed to dramatic failure. She declares that such a perception is a considerable and erroneous simplification, as it entirely ignores the appeal of misbehaviour:

Morality plays invest their vice characters with remarkable energy, interest, and vitality, so much so that the vices are, as Stubbes says, very seductive examples indeed. At the dramatic level, the vices are often the most engaging characters in the play. (80)

While the virtues are often dull, static and sermonizing, the vices “are typically given the wittiest speeches, the boldest personalities, and the best opportunities for slapstick and buffoonery” (80). This dramatic inequality in which villains claim the winning position, in fact, has a moral purpose. As Sponsler notices, “the greater the temptations, the stronger the salvation” (80); therefore, the appeal of vices in fact carries a didactic message (80).

What theatre critics tended to ignore in their appraisal of medieval moralities, was the power of imitation. In *Drama and Resistance*, Sponsler writes about conduct books: a genre which appeared in mid- to late Middle Ages, whose purpose was to teach the readers about rules of good social conduct. The idea was that the presented examples of good behaviour should automatically inspire imitation (Sponsler 80-81). What follows, therefore, is that according to medieval thought, observing bad behaviour can also result in imitation, which put authors of moralities in a quandary. A question arose as to how vice should be staged not to inspire a sinful impulse. Thus, as Sponsler concludes, the very idea of representing vice on the stage in such a direct manner carried difficulties which today are often disregarded by the researchers. Sponsler explains that this is why in some morality plays the representations of misbehaviour do not

unproblematically and unilaterally lead to the ratification of virtue over vice by the end of play; instead, these models of misbehavior — especially misbehavior grounded in the symbolic disorder of the body

out of control — provided a way of exploring the relationship between violation of norms of bodily propriety and transgression of social and economic norms. (81)

As King explains, “The dramatic variety this material offered was a direct product of the details of contemporary belief, particularly regarding the degree of control that the individual had in this world over his fate in the next” (240). The two contrasting views explored in the plays, in contemporaneous philosophy, and most probably in the conscience of individual playgoers were St. Augustine's idea of man's inability to secure redemption without God's direct intervention and the thought that man has free will and an absolute freedom in choosing between good and evil (240-241). The belief in man's power to influence their eternal fate resulted in an increased interest in the forms that good and evil can assume; hence, for example, the frequent use of the Seven Deadly Sins motif in morality plays.

According to King, for a medieval believer his confrontation with sin

was the matter of protracted struggle, demanding constant personal vigilance as well as the invocation of grace through the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of penance. In other words, against the variegated temptations to sin, he could invoke the fortification of Christ and the compensatory effects of his own good deeds. This struggle is the matter of the plot of an individual morality play, the whole dynamic of its action. (241)

One should remember, however, that moralities were also predecessors of what is today considered the greatest achievement of English drama: the plays of the Elizabethan period. According to some scholarly opinions they were, in fact, “the only identifiable precursors of the plays of Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights,” and thus the only precursors of “some of the most brilliant and complex dramas known to Western culture” (Rozett 83).

Martha Tuck Rozett's argument illustrates a significant shift which occurred in the twentieth century in the scholarly appraisal of the importance of morality plays for the development of English drama. In 1880, Pollard, an English bibliographer, and an author of one of the most formative handbooks on medieval drama, states that “the later Morality significantly coincides with the dullest and most barren period in the history of English literature” (xliiii). While contemporary criticism challenges this view, perceiving medieval moralities as the sole direct antecedents of the great drama of Shakespeare and Kyd seems a serious simplification. It omits a whole body of texts which were early Tudor tragedies. Those, as Robert N. Watson argues, were tragedies that “strike modern audiences as dull or crude or both” and had “predictable didactic morals and psychologically unbelievable characters” (307). This description fits well the perception of moralities that many scholars had throughout the twentieth century. Whether it is justified or not, it may be safely assumed that Tudor tragedies constituted a step in the

transition between the medieval religious plays and the Elizabethan drama.

In “Political Tragedy in the 1560s: *Cambises* and *Gorboduc*,” Dermot Cavanagh challenges Watson's vision of the Tudor drama as uninteresting and unable to capture the audience. In performance, he states, those plays “are not as drearily predictable” as commonly assumed (Cavanagh n.p.). A similar conclusion but in reference to moralities is reached by W. Roy MacKenzie in *The English Morality Plays from the Point of View of Allegory*:

It is so frequently asserted of the Moralities that they were dull, dreary, and lifeless, that these adjectives have become the stock epithets of the literary historian when he turns aside for a momentary inspection of these unfortunate plays. Undoubtedly, this ill report is due in no small degree to the unhappy taste displayed by the Morality in its selection of a name. It would not be much worse for them if they were termed, instead, “Respectability plays.” (257)

In a chapter entitled “The Moralities Considered in Relation to Their Original Audience,” MacKenzie continues to defend morality plays which today are, as he declares, “so hastily judged on the basis of a printed copy” (264). According to MacKenzie, the main reason of their popularity is their connection to allegory and homily: the two terms abhorred by modern criticism. Allegory can only be enjoyed by a modern reader or viewer when it offers them something more than itself, as is the case with Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* or Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, where one finds exquisite poetry and an engaging plot line. In both works, in fact, the allegorical can be ignored.

One last characteristic of morality plays should be outlined to make this brief summary of the genre more comprehensive, which is their ability to blur the distinction between theatre and reality. That is done by the employment of direct address at the beginning of the play: that is, a prologue in which the speaker clarifies for the audience the main assumptions of the play and directly acknowledges his awareness of the audience's presence. As King argues,

The texts show a variety of ways in which their authors manipulated the boundary between the play world and the real world, often addressing the audience directly and using the varied communication codes of the theatre to draw them into the action of the play. (262)

In this way moralities engaged in the *theatrum mundi* concept. Potter espouses this view explaining that “the moralities are acts of presentation rather than acts of illusion” (32). As such, they value the presence above the historicity of what happens on the stage (32), meaning that the story, as the performance, takes place here and now rather than in some imaginary past. In the opening lines of *The Castle of Perseverance*, for example, the staging area is directly mentioned, and the audience learns that it stands for the world. In this way, what the play presents stops being mimetic, the events on the stage become a temporary present and the viewers are provided with “a

theatrical analogy of the human condition” (33).

While indubitably simplistic from the post-modern perspective, morality plays were a significant step forward in the development of English drama. This becomes evident, for example, in the fact that that they were meant for audiences “sufficiently competent and experienced in the workings of theatre to comply with . . . metatheatrical devices” which “seems to bear witness to the maturity of the form” (King 262). The harsh judgement passed by Pollard, who towards the end of the nineteenth century sees morality plays as belonging to a theatrical period that was “dull” and “barren,” is re-assessed by the twentieth-century scholarship. Sponsler declares that moralities “performed destabilizing and transgressive cultural work” (79) and that some of them, for instance *Mankind* and *Interlude of Youth*, “provided a way of performing and hence negotiating complex relations between individual desire and social control” (81). In *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, Schell and Shuchter state that morality plays are now “buried in the histories of the drama between the mystery plays of the Middle Ages and the “regular” drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries – often with the sense that they deserve no more than a valedictory nod” (vi). The following analyses will demonstrate that in the first half of the twentieth century, morality plays were far from being “buried in history”.

## Chapter Four: Critical Analyses of Modern Moralities

### Religious Modern Morality Plays: A case study of Arthur Simmons' *Conflict: A Morality Play in One Act with Prologue* (1946)

*Conflict: A Morality Play in One Act with Prologue*, written by Arthur Simmons and published in 1946 by the Methodist Youth Department, serves as a classic example of a Modern Morality that combines religious underpinning with ethical advice and an up-to-date topic, which in this case is World War II.

The one act play is divided into two parts entitled “The Prologue” and “The Act.” “The Prologue” opens with Archangel Michael explaining to a guardian angel his duties with regards to little Edward, who has just been baptised. The chief obligation of the guardian is to lead his protégé towards good and protect him from evil. The final decision on which path to follow, however, must be Edward's own, since, as Michael stresses, he must “choose it [the good] . . . of his own free will” (4). Next, the audience becomes acquainted with Edward's parents, who stooping over the cradle discuss the boy's future. While Dora, the mother, wants him to become, above all, a good person, for Edward Senior it is crucial that his son in time advances on the social ladder.

The beginning of “The Act” takes the audience forward in time to mid-1940s, when they find Edward a young man, listening to the radio at home somewhere in London. There, he is visited by five characters representing vices (Fear, Passion and Ambition) and virtues (Truth and Love). The vices try to tempt Edward with visions of carnal pleasure and make him disappointed with the contemporary world by discussing the destructive consequences of scientific progress. The virtues teach him about the common responsibility of all humanity for scientific innovations (also these which can cause harm), the indispensability of faith in achieving greatness and the necessity to value love – embodied by Christ – above anything else. As the summary indicates, in *Conflict* Simmons both repeats and reworks many elements from the medieval plays to create a Modern Morality Play. The analysis below will comment in detail on these elements and on techniques Simmons uses to introduce them.

Prologues serve numerous purposes. As noticed by Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, they often combine the theatrical sphere with public life in the sense that by “opening all sorts of discourses, ceremonies, and cultural or political events, they greet, inform, address, and, to a

certain extent, seek to shape audiences' expectations" (vi). In Elizabethan plays, prologues constituted a "ritualized transition" between the reality of the material theatre and the fictional dimension of the play, and thus served "liminally, as threshold devices" (Bruster and Weimann vii). Placed in this historical perspective, "The Prologue" in *Conflict*, although not performed, as it usually was in Shakespeare's theatre, by a single speaker, still can be understood as a "powerful rite of passage" (vii). The passage in this case, however, happens within the text. "The Prologue" does not dramatise a transition between the imaginary world of the play and the actual world of the playhouse. It does, however, dramatise the interaction between the material world of Edward and his parents, and the unearthly, immaterial world of the angels and the personified abstractions. It is this connection between the two worlds and the temporary opening of a passage between them, as well as its repercussions, which become the driving force of the play. According to Bruster and Weimann, prologues fulfill their purpose by "appealing to potentially common interests and experiences" and by "seek[ing] temporarily to project or control a socially significant space" (vi). *Conflict's* prologue does that by appealing to one of the oldest dualisms; this of body and soul (or the material and immaterial world), and by immediately supplying conclusions about the right way of conduct, thereby setting out to exercise a social control over the audience.

When "The Act" begins, the protagonist is already in his twenties, which means that "The Prologue" serves as a gateway also to another kind of passage. It is related to time and has its own dramatic significance. As Frederick J. Hunter argues in "The Value of Time in Modern Drama," making "time of the plot . . . ably represented by the two-hour performance has been a constant problem for the playwright and has been an important one for its aesthetic consequences" (194). He elaborates that in technical terms, these consequences often limit themselves to organisation of the plot, which takes one of two forms: the plot is either compressed by presenting short episodes or accelerating the time within them; or it is extended by skipping periods of time between episodes (Hunter 194). In *Conflict*, the author extends the plot by omitting an interval of around twenty years. The audience easily accepts it, since the curiosity as to how Edward turned out and which of the choices presented in "The Prologue" he is inclined to, justifies the exclusion of such a long period. Thus, the considerable omission between "The Prologue" and "The Act" has a double significance in the play. On the one hand, it serves an aesthetic function which defines the organisation of the plot. On the other, if one understands a prologue, as Bruster and Weimann do, as a rite of passage, thanks to the time shift, the audience sees the protagonist pass from infancy into adulthood, from inertia to

causality, from innocence to experience.

Finally, as Hunter argues, “In all drama – comedy, fantasy, tragedy, or melodrama – the anticipation of the audience can only be evoked for those events which fall within a probable sequence of antecedents and consequences” (197). Similarly, in Simmons's play, one of the most important roles of “The Prologue” is its anticipatory function. In “Drama Is Arousal,” Marvin Rosenberg states that “asking questions of possibility is a compulsion . . . rooted in the very form of drama” (425). A skillful reader of *Conflict*'s prologue will immediately ask several questions of this kind. Moreover, such a reader would be able to discern the mechanisms that will define the play's didactic scope and that will later be used (as they were in medieval moralities) to convey complex ideas in an approachable manner.

Thus, already at the beginning of the play, one can see two worlds converge: the spiritual world, represented by the angels, and the material world, represented by the baby and his parents. Philosophical concepts that will be discussed in detail in the second part of the play are also referred to; for instance, the problem of free will (which is signalled by the Archangel's comment about Edward's sole responsibility for his choices), or the idea of truth are evoked. “Men prefer the half lights or the shadows, for there they can pretend that evil is good, falsehood truth, and ugliness beauty” (4), declares the guardian angel, and truth will later return as a character in the play, able to speak for herself and willing to offer to the audience ready-made conclusions regarding her function in human life. While Simmons's prime inspiration obviously comes from medieval moralities, in foreshadowing plot events by brief signalling references he returns to Elizabethan drama, where the issues examined by the play needed to be indicated early on and constantly reiterated, for the illiterate part of the audience to be able to follow. Commenting on ancient drama, and specifically on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, Rosenberg states that in later ages “the art would try more subtly to arouse expectation” (425). The anticipatory hints once supplied by the chorus are now interwoven into the text of the play, and the viewer is entrusted with figuring them out on their own. Finally, Bruster and Weimann define a prologue as a dramatic piece written “in aid of cultural mediation” (vii). The prologue of *Conflict* fulfills this role, as it conveys to the audience the cultural, philosophical and sociological problems that “The Act” will later examine. Whatever the literary value of *Conflict*'s prologue, it succeeds in preparing its readers for the upcoming explorations.

Many other devices in “The Prologue” foreshadow the play's later plot line and focus. While the actual personified abstractions only appear in “The Act,” “The Prologue” introduces the figures of Mother and Father, who embody abstract ideas as directly as Knowledge, Good

Deeds or Youth do, and who in a medieval play would be called Faith and Greed. Although Dora's understanding of Christianity is limited by her lack of theological insight (“What was it the parson said to-day in the service? - in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What does that mean, dear?” (5)), her belief immediately places her, next to the angels, in the group of positive, spiritually inclined characters. The contrast between Dora's and Edward's hierarchy of values is as clear-cut as the contrast between concepts they represent. Dora's statement that “Money isn't everything” and the declaration that she would rather her son to be good than rich (Simmons 6) is directly juxtaposed with Edward's stubborn assertions that he wants his son to “get on, make his way” (Simmons 5), by which he means attending proper schools, obtaining relevant qualifications and finding a profitable position in trade. Dora's faith may be simple, but it is honest and sufficient for the angel to indicate her as a potential ally (“ANGEL. I think I shall like the woman” (7)). On the other hand, Edward's understanding of the world of business may be extensive but he lacks insight into matters that go beyond his materialistic worldview. His dismissive approach towards the spiritual is stressed by his comments; for example, he defines bringing up a child in the Christian faith as teaching it to attend the mass and “all that sort of thing,” he blames the baptism ceremony for making him tired (“That Church was stuffy”) and he mockingly questions his wife on whether she wants to make a pastor out of their son. These considerations are throughout “The Prologue” interspersed with Angel's asides which are biblical quotations. When the Father describes Edward Junior's life objective as “making his way” (5), Angel reaches for a line from Luke: “A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth” (12:15). This is repeated after Edward Senior states that money is important, and one cannot do much without it, by referring to Luke (“The Son of Man had not were to lay his head” (9:58)).

An interesting intrusion appears between “The Prologue” and “The Act,” which posits a direct link between Simmons's play, medieval moralities and nineteenth-century poetry (to be recited by Angel):

No when the fight begins within himself,  
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
Satan looks up between his feet – both tug -  
He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes  
And grows. (7)

The fragment comes from Robert Browning's 1885 poem “Bishop Blougram's Apology” and illustrates one of the most characteristic motifs from medieval morality plays, which is

*psychomachia*. Interestingly, in the passage from Browning which Simmons chose to include, the centrality of human role is clearly indicated in the first line, by the statement that the fight between the forces of good and evil (here represented by God and Satan, rather than personified abstractions of vices and virtues) “begins within himself.” Thus, Browning's vision of *psychomachia* agrees with what Potter defines as the key feature of moralities (and what Simmons later endorses): a human soul is not an inert field of rivalry between external forces bigger than itself. It is an independent entity with an immense power, capable of making its own choices. This reading is also confirmed by the closing phrase “He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes/ And grows,” which suggests that participation in the struggle has educational worth and contributed to person's broadly-defined inner growth. The responsibility of an individual for their ethical decisions directly relates to the concept of free will, which “The Act” later explores. Finally, it must be noticed that in the latter part of *Conflict*, with the introduction of Fear, Passion, Ambition, Truth and Love, *psychomachia* receives a traditional representation, linked to the idea from Prudentius's epic.

As mentioned above, “The Act” moves the action forward in time to the 1940s. In this time-shift, once again, Simmons exhibits his understanding of the form he emulates. According to Potter, “A morality play sees life as a sequential process through which every human being passes, by virtue of being human” (9). While the motif of life as pilgrimage underpins all moralities, in the sixteenth-century play *Mundus et Infans* (*The World and the Child*), the plot is structured in such a way as to present a full cycle of human life. During his journey, which starts at innocence, and leads through fall to redemption, the Child grows into Manhood. Throughout the play, he receives several different names which reflect the focus of the subsequent phases of his life (Dalliance, Wanton, Love-Lust-Liking). Other personified abstractions appear on his way as well, to either aid him or lead him astray (Folly, Conscience, World). Of course, the motif of maturation accompanied by moral growth is not as extensively represented in *The Conflict*, for Edward is not shown growing up. If one was to take Jacques' monologue from *As You Like It* as a map of the path of the “life pilgrimage” (as Potter does (9)), the protagonist of *Conflict* probably stops at the third, out of seven stages of life: the lover. The transition from stage one, the infant, in “The Prologue”, to stage three in “The Act” is immediate. Stage two and the remaining four stages are entirely ignored. Still, the idea of life as an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil, and the author's decision to present the protagonist's life in two stages, in which the first one is associated with complete innocence, and the second one with the temptation of gaining experience, indicates another

correspondence between Simmons's play and medieval moralities.

“The Act” opens, like *Everyman*, with an introduction of a messenger figure; a figure who visits the protagonist and sends him on a quest for moral (Christian) knowledge. In *Everyman*, this messenger is Death. In *Conflict*, the role is assumed by the Preacher, whose words are broadcast on the radio. The speech presents science as a double-edged sword: “Science, as has often been said, is neutral. It can be used for good or for bad ends, and the decisive factor is the character of the person who uses the tools which science has provided” (Simmons 8), and again touches upon the problem of free will, or, as he calls it, “the business of choice” (8). The Preacher enumerates also the “enemies of the right choice,” that is fear, passion, pride, and ambition (8). “Like dark spectres they haunt the mind always trying to deceive us. They would persuade us that the fault lies not in us, but in things and in other people. But the truth is, as Cassius told Brutus long ago, 'The fault' . . .,” the Preacher explains (8). At this point, young Edward switches off the radio, so that the audience is prevented from hearing the rest of the quotation (8).

Here, yet again in his play, Simmons reaches for an intertextual context. The unfinished paraphrased line comes from William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and reads: “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underling” (Shakespeare 1.2.23-24). The idea that it is the weakness of human nature, rather than any external forces which make men fall reappears in Shakespeare's other works, for example in *King Lear*, where Edmund criticises Gloucester's belief in the influence of natural phenomenal on man's character:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that,  
when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeit  
of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our  
disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as  
if we were villains by necessity; fools by  
heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and  
teachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards,  
liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of  
planetary influence. (Shakespeare 1.2.125-132)

Therefore, in a way, Preacher echoes Shakespeare's words when he says that “Character is a thing of choices. You form your character and I form mine by the “day-to-day” and “hour-to-hour” choices which we make” (Simmons 8). The problem of whether a character is formed or given, and whether man's fate and character are shaped by his decisions or imposed on him by external forces (so, in other words, the problem of free will) becomes one of the focal points of the play. In this, Simmons returns to topics of universal interest that were of interest to

Elizabethan audiences as well. In his considerations on the moral importance of making independent decisions, The Preacher quotes Shakespeare but implies ideas explored earlier by Saint Augustine in *De Libero Arbitrio*: “When I willed or did not will something, I was wholly certain that it was not someone other than I who willed or did not will it” (qtd. in Dilman 73). Finally, it is worth noting that the inclusion of the sermon motif in *Conflict*, demonstrates that the text enters a dialogue with old moralities, for it is in the sermon literature where one finds the beginnings of this genre (Potter 7).

The Preacher's address is followed by the appearance of the first of personified abstractions which are going to fight for Edward's soul: Fear. His main argument is that science is not a neutral tool but a fatal weapon, and that because of fallible human nature, progress must always necessarily entail destruction. To support his claims Fear overtly refers to events of World War II:

Science sets a work to find quicker ways of killing more people . . . For a few short years men struggle against the slime, make a bit of progress here, and learn a few more of nature's secrets there. Then, just as they begin to think that they have solid ground under their feet, someone gets a hunt that the other fellow has got a new and bigger bomb. That won't do at all, and so he gets busy to invent a bigger. Some squabble develops between the politicians, and the hunt is up. (Simmons 9)

Edward tries to speak positively about other life aspects, skills or inventions which he finds important (the radio, leadership, faith) but Fear dismisses them all as potentially dangerous. In his understanding, the wireless is above all a propagandist tool (“Say it softly, say it naturally, say it in perfect English, or perfect German, or perfect anything else, and before long they'll all believe it” (Simmons 9)), a leader is “the one who shouts the loudest, or says the things men want to hear, or tells the biggest lie in the most plausible fashion” (10) and religion is “done for any time” (10). All his reservations are war-related, and in Fear's mouth the horrors of war become the chief argument against God:

FEAR. How can all it [religion] says of a God of love and such like things be true? Why, look at life! How many millions have died violent deaths since you came into the world? And how many millions are living in the torment of bitterness for what they have seen, and what they have lost? If there was anything in this “God of love” business, would all this have happened? If you were a father and had children who butchered and maimed one another, as men have done, wouldn't you have done something about it? (Simmons 10)

To this Edward answers by referring to the key concept in the play: “But God cannot stop these evils unless he takes away our free will” (10).

Fear's question remains up-to-date in today's scholarship, as Fred Berthold opens his study

*God, Evil and Human Learning: A Critique and Revision of the Free Will Defense in Theodicy*  
by asking the same question:

Is it possible for a person who has a proper regard for his or her rational faculties, and for the evidence afforded by experience, to believe in the God who is the object of worship by Christians? In this world there is so much suspicion, hatred, and cruelty, and so much grievous suffering, that is impossible for anyone with even a modest degree of open-mindedness to avoid questions or doubts about this God. (1)

Problems brought up by Simmons for centuries have retained central importance in disputations of both random believers and theologians, and *Conflict* dramatises the way in which World War II highlighted these doubts. As Berthold, Fear asks if God is indifferent (which contradicts the Christian vision of God's loving nature) or too weak to prevail over evil (while according to Christian doctrine he should be omnipotent) (Berthold 1). Berthold calls the "problem of evil" the chief cognitive barrier in Christianity and refers to the so-called "defense of free will" (1), which Simmons's play clearly supports. According to the traditional defense, God has given people free will and all evil results from its wrong use. While God's greatest aim is to welcome all in his Kingdom, he cannot prevent people from wrongdoing, and free will is necessary for love to be genuine (1). This argument is encapsulated in Edward's aforementioned statement that "God cannot stop these evils unless he takes away our free will" (10). It is worth noting that, in a way, his attitude is also existentialist. As Kierkegaard, both Preacher and Edward emphasize the significance of "the single individual" and his obligation to self-shape his growth through executing free will. Finally, one must not forget that free will was a concept that defined medieval moralities and the way their plots were structured. While the fall from innocence to sin was inevitable, the ascent from sin to salvation was not, and it was the protagonist's individual responsibility for his fate which later allowed religious plays to evolve into Elizabethan drama of great intensity and suspense.

Fear's counterargument, on the other hand, is nothing else than an endorsement of predestination:

Freewill! What a word! What an idea! What a delusion of delusions! Why, you are not free. No one is. You cannot help yourself. You are caught up in a system, you say it's all wrong, but you cannot escape from it. And that system has come into being, not because anyone wanted it to do so, but because it had to be. It was in the nature of things. You didn't ask to be impelled by this desire or that, nor did anyone else, but impelled you all are. Free! I tell you nobody's free, and you might just as well give up fighting against the inevitable. The whole thing is just one gigantic stream bearing men along – on and on, into the darkness. (Simmons 10)

Fear's predestination obviously differs from its Christian counterpart. It is a predestination

viewed from a secular (and atheist) angle, in which the course of earthly life is governed by an undefined “system,” rather than dictated by God's decisions and which, in fact, does not offer even the slightest possibility of salvation, as it carries men irrevocably “into the darkness” (Simmons 10). Thus, the Preachers sermon in which the human character is continuously formed by people's conscious choices, is contrasted with Fear's malicious assurances that not only stripe men of individual responsibility but also deprive them of hope, which in fact makes any struggle against evil futile.

Two more “enemies of the right choice” visit Edward at his London flat: Passion and Ambition. Passion's entry introduces Edward's simple love story; he decides to write a letter to his girlfriend, Elsie. Passion tries to discourage him from it by claiming that he is too young to commit. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy – even when his name's Edward,” she argues, and adds: “You have a bit of fun – there's plenty to be had you know if you look in the right place” (11). Edward, however, is adamant, and unswervingly loyal to Elsie who is, for an unknown reason, “safe two hundred miles away” (11). “Why not have a spree?”, tempts Passion, “you can get quite a good kick out of a night at the new cabaret” (11). She mentions another girl, Jill, and Edward seems almost willing to take her out if only he “wasn't so dashed hard up” (12). Passion immediately finds a solution:

Hard up! Pah! That's nothing. If a man really wants a thing he can get it. What about the old folks? They're having a thin time? Father lost a lot this last few years? Oh, they are not doing too badly, and in any case they've had their innings. Write and ask them for a Fiver . . . The trouble about you is that you are too squeamish . . . You are always trying to dam up a stream which was meant to flow, and then you wonder why you are miserable. Self-expression's the thing! Let it rip a bit! Step on it! And you'll feel as though you were alive. Never mind about the future, that will come of itself without you bothering. Live in the present. The present's the thing – a fig for the past, hang the future, hurrah for the present!  
(Simmons 12)

Passion's statement makes it clear for the audience that everyday hedonism is not a noble path to follow. Horace's idea of *carpe diem* assumes in the speech a twisted meaning which amounts to following one's instincts and disregarding the consequences that could be hurtful to others. As in old moralities, the protagonist takes central importance, which Passion stresses by mentioning the concept of self-expression. Only letting go of one's inhibitions, she claims, makes one feel alive. The curious use of the speculative mode should be noticed, however: “you'll feel as though you were alive” (Simmons 10). It suggests that the feeling of aliveness brought by unlimited self-focus is illusory. True life, the audience will later learn, exists only in God's grace.

Having defeated Passion, Edward laments his financial situation. He is not able to provide for a wife because of his honourable nature: “Poor old Elsie. She's not to know how hard it is to get a promotion at our place. It might be a bit faster if I could bring myself to...” (Simmons 13). At this point, Ambition emerges from the shadows, “*dressed like a smart city man, . . . suspiciously like Edward's father only older and stouter than when we meet him in the prologue*” (13), and a lecture on business ethics ensues:

AMBITION. To do what lots of other chaps do, and not be so confoundedly particular. It's really time you began to drop some of those schoolboy ideas about honour and the rest. Quite excellent things for schoolboys, esprit de corps and all that, but, my dear boy, in the business world... well I ask you! . . . It's war my lad, is business, and the sooner you settle down and admit it, the sooner you will get on.

As indicated in stage directions, Ambition should be immediately associated with Edward's Father, and he even repeats Father's words by referring to “getting on.” Since business is war, war has not ended, and it will never end. Honesty is overrated, Ambition states, and Edward's attachment to it will never let him advance. “But hang it all, one's got to be honest, even if it is war,” the protagonist responds. “Yes, that's what Mamma said, and all very proper too, but it simply can't be done that way,” claims Ambition. Reaching for *argumentum ad populum*, he states that everyone cheats in business now and then. The legacies of Edward's Father and Edward's Mother are contrasted in this short scene, and the audience can easily see that Edward follows his mother's advice, which leaves him poor but at peace with himself. It is also interesting to observe that Edward shares his first name with his father. One interpretation it entails might be that they are, in a way, two versions of the same person. Brought up by his materialistic father, Edward might have grown up to be like him, but thanks to right ethical choices he evolves into somebody morally superior. This scene precedes the appearance of the first of two Virtues; Truth.

Before this happens, the radio switches on again and a fragment from the Messiah (“He was despised”) is played. Edward listens to the wireless and muses that “It looks as though there were something wrong with life somewhere” (15), and Simmons once again reaches for intertextual context, namely for two lines from James Russell Lowell's poem “The Present Crisis” (1844):

EDWARD. Careless seems the great Avenger; . . .

Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the throne – (Simmons 15)

The entire stanza reads:

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record

One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;  
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own. (Lowell 36-40)

The lines convey Edward's dissatisfaction with social justice which seems to always favour the bold wicked over the quiet noble. Truth explains that while it is hard to accept, “One of the first things man has to learn is that the consequences of his actions always affect other people” (15). Evil spreads as fast as good. Men's paramount obligation, it appears, is to retain faith in God's support and basic human decency. This idea is expanded through another allusion to the atrocities of World War II which is made in the following lines:

But it needs a mighty lot of faith to believe that we can build a new world out of the mess in which things are to-day. There are plenty of materials with which to build but there's lots of bitterness and hatred as the result of all that's happened this last few years. (16)

Although Truth indicates faith as the answer (“True, but if you dare to believe, you will succeed”), Edward has doubts:

but there's the difficulty, how to screw oneself up to believe, and how to get others to believe. We're most of us slaves of our desires, creatures of our own environment. We want ease and comfort, we don't want to be heroes . . . There is something decent in us, but it gets worn down, and how are we to get it on its feet again? . . . Sometimes I feel I'd like to run away from it all. But we've got to face it, and somehow the thought of you makes it more possible. (16)

At this point, Love appears from the shadows. Surprisingly, it is not the Agape (if one follows the categorisation presented by C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves* (1958)), but Eros, which is love understood as an erotic bond. “Don't you remember that day you spent on the moors together – the day it all happened?” asks Love. “That's the key to the whole problem. If we can get men to love, then we shall get them to desire, and when they desire they will begin to do” (17), she continues. Edward wants to know how to begin, and Love explains that God has done that already by sending Jesus Christ and that “God loves all things and all people for what they are at the bottom, and for what they may become” (18). “When men awake to that they turn round and begin really to live,” she adds. It is worth noting that the conjunction “as if” used by Passion before (“And you'll feel as though you were alive” (12)) is here replaced by indicative mood, which changes hypothesis has changed into certainty. The all-encompassing Agape is, however, incomprehensible to Edward, who states that loving mankind is “a hard job for folk are not very lovable” (18). A long monologue by Love follows, in which men appear as erring but hopeful lot, who sometimes take unethical shortcuts but never stop on their way towards the

highest goals.

In the last scene, the three Vices – Fear, Passion and Ambition return to have one last word, but after listening to the latter part of the Hallelujah Chorus Edward declares: “Why of course, that's it. I see it all now. Love does win” (19). Angel is joined by Archangel Michael who concludes the play by stating that Angel's task of looking after Edward's moral maturation is completed. Thus, again, the importance of the human factor is stressed, and the premises of Lowell's poem are discarded. Man's fate is not dependent on decisions of an indifferent God who observes the world impassively, but on the decisions of men themselves.

The assessment of the play's literary value from today's perspective could not be favourable. The didactic scheme is overt, and the blatant preaching of personified abstractions would probably prove unbearable to contemporary audiences. The characters' black-and-whiteness makes them indeed, as Talbot Donaldson puts it, “allegorical equations” (367). While Shakespeare's characters often were black and white as well, their depth and psychological elaboration assured them immortality, which is why today *King Lear* is a play still valid and relevant. In *Conflict* the characters are not three-dimensional entities, but didactic tools, who, as in medieval moralities, personify rather than symbolize the truths for which they stand. These truths are also infinitely simplified. Contemporary audience would definitely question the one-sided view on Passion and Ambition that the play endorses and would argue that both can be positive and motivational attributes if channelled in the right direction. It is exactly this absence of any grey area which renders *Conflict* so outdated. The truths are revealed by the playwright, and not uncovered by the viewers, which is probably the chief reason why Modern Moralities in their early-twentieth-century form would never succeed in contemporary theatre. At the same time, all these qualities are elements of the morality play genre, which makes Simmons's play a significant experiment both for this study.

In many ways, *Conflict* is nothing else than a modern version of *Everyman*: modern in the sense that it refers to concepts which were alien to the original audiences of morality plays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is, however, positively medieval in its fundamental assumptions about human nature and in the methods it applies to present them to the viewers. Potter describes a moral play as a form in which

A concept – what it is to be human – is represented on the stage by a central dramatic figure or series of figures. Subsidiary characters, defined by their function, stand at the service of the plot, which is ritualized, dialectical, and inevitable: man exists, therefore he falls, nevertheless he is saved. (7)

The plot of *The Conflict* displays several characteristics mentioned in this description. The

central figure which symbolises the humanity is obviously Edward, who on his way towards illumination is accompanied by secondary characters of purely functional value. Their only task is to bring forward the plot, which they do by following the ritual of *psychomachia*, whose purpose is undoubtedly didactic. By presenting to Edward the dangers of succumbing to Fear, Passion and Ambition, and by demonstrating the superiority of Truth and Love, they manage to convince him to follow the path of God and observe the rules of Christian conduct. At this point, another question regarding the relationship between modern and medieval moralities and the evolution of the genre arises: is the third characteristic of the plot (the inevitability of the fall) present in the play?

Edward's response to temptation exposes an important contrast between *Conflict* and traditional moral plays, since he is able to resist it unaided. "Oh, hang Jill! Leave me alone. I will write to Elsie" (Simmons 12), he decides, after which Passion retreats. Thus, what is missing from *Conflict*, and what Potter identifies as one of the chief characteristics of medieval moralities, is its obligation to represent "a sequence of innocence/fall/redemption" (Potter 8) or "the fall out of innocence into experience" (Potter 9). Despite being tempted, Edward does not have to be saved. In fact, he makes the virtuous decision before the need for a rescue arises. In old moralities, as Potter asserts:

Beginning in innocence man falls by exercise of free will and appetite into a dilemma of his own making. From these depths, however, he is inexorably delivered by divine grace to achieve salvation and eternal life. The end of human life is not 'mere oblivion' but regeneration: never death, always a rebirth. (10)

In Simmons's play, however, the idea of the fall resulting from free will and of being "delivered by divine grace" is reversed. Edward does not fall exactly because of his ability to make the morally acceptable choice. He is guided by Love and Truth and has his guardian angel on his side, but the importance of free will is strongly emphasized at the beginning of the play. And in this fact probably lies the chief difference between the medieval and modern moral plays, even those which retain a religious focus. Human self-sufficiency and the ability of man to "deliver" himself, rather than to let himself "be delivered" by God become the focal point, as human agency rather than God's mercy is celebrated. Therefore, humanism in its purest form, with its belief in man's capabilities governs these modern plays. The play is also, in a broader perspective, an attempt to ascribe meaning to the events of World War II and a defence of idealism. "The world's not a very safe place for idealists" (19), states Fear in the ending scene. Love, however, presents a more positive counterview of human nature: "Think how they cling

to some rag of virtue or honour, to some loyalty, even when they seem doomed to failure” (Simmons 18).

Of course, there are discrepancies between medieval moralities and Simmons's play. What one should take into account when defining religious plays, however, is above all their unified objective, which is to promote the Christian mindset by dramatising the interaction between the material and the immaterial and by exploring the meaning of human life *sub specie aeternitatis*. All these conditions in *The Conflict* are fulfilled through the combination of the familiar domestic setting with supernatural powers, through the juxtaposition of Edward senior's materialistic viewpoint and Dora's spiritual exhortation and finally through moving the timeline from Edward's infancy to his adulthood. It is true that in the end, a happy life is won, and not an eternal life. But, as medieval moralities, Simmons's *Conflict* teaches its audience that it is in God's benevolent presence where all the answers can be found.

What a contemporary reader would find problematic in *Conflict*, is that the play leaves no space for the Iserian appreciation of the reader's role, which in fact relates to all Modern Moralities. In 1967, Roland Barthes announced “the death of the author,” and declared in his celebrated essay that

a text is not a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning . . . but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations, drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (43-44)

The second part of this statement undoubtedly applies to Simmons's play. As it has been demonstrated, the text recurses to intertextuality on several occasions and on many levels, starting with verbatim biblical quotations, through indirect references to Shakespeare, to the chief recourse being, of course, the imitation of the morality play genre. The absence of a “released theological meaning,” however, seems not to apply here. Keeping in mind that Barthes' assertions in “The Death of the Author” pertain to all literature, and not particular genres or forms, it is still rather difficult to read *Conflict* without taking into account its overt didacticism. The “theological meaning” of the play is directly delivered in Love's declaration: “Love can never be defeated, it is the only things that lives on. You can destroy it, or think you have done so, but it will rise again, yet more glorious, and in the end it will triumph for ever and ever” (Simmons 19). Such an explicit preaching defies Wolfgang Iser's understanding of a literary work as both a text supplied by the author, and its “realisation,” supplied by the reader (279). It also puts *Conflict* in a low position when it comes to its literary value:

During the process of reading, there is an active interweaving of anticipation and retrospection, which on

a second reading may turn into a kind of advance retrospection. The impressions that arise as a result of this process will vary from individual to individual, but only within the limits imposed by the written as opposed to the unwritten text . . . The author of the text may, of course, exert plenty of influence on the reader's imagination . . . but no author worth his salt will ever attempt to set the *whole* picture before his reader's eyes. If he does, he will very quickly lose his reader, for it is only by activating the reader's imagination that the author can hope to involve him and so realize the intentions of his text. (Iser 289)

By making his “message” so direct, Simmons indeed does “set the whole picture before his reader's eyes.” It is astonishing that a play as straightforward and, in many ways, simplistic as *Conflict* should appear in 1946, just seven years before the emergence of the revolutionary Theatre of the Absurd. On the other hand, both *Conflict* and the absurdist plays were written *inter alia* in response to the horrors of World War II. Perhaps in some respects they are more alike than they seem to be: at least in the sense that they propose two different ways of dealing with the same experience.

### **Secularised Modern Morality Plays: A case study of H. F. Rubinstein's *Insomnia: A Modern Morality Play* (1925)**

After discussing a religious Modern Morality Play, the study moves towards plays which while retaining the outward characteristics of the genre (such as direct address, personified abstractions or a didactic tone), entirely relinquish the Christian focus of original moralities. This group may be conveniently named ‘Secularised Modern Morality Plays,’ and, as the previous category of ‘Religious Modern Morality Plays,’ it confirms the astonishing adaptability and flexibility of this genre.

H.F. Rubinstein’s *Insomnia* has been selected for close-reading because of its exceptionally well-exposed connection with a theory popular among all circles of potential recipients at the time it was written, namely Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. The psychoanalysis-oriented discussion of the play will not only serve to present the Modern Morality as form which aims to remain up-to-date with contemporaneous cultural and philosophical inventions, however. It will also stipulate a significant turn in how the moral play explores specific paradigms. Thus, just as several other Modern Moralities resign from religious underpinning and turn from Christianity to ethics, *Insomnia* turns from the extremely simplified presentation of non-individualised, universal representative of the entire humanity (embodied by the figure of Everyman) towards psychology. The proposed analysis of Rubinstein’s drama will therefore

explore a telling combination of modern focus on a single protagonist with a universally applicable message. Finally, by putting the play within the theoretical paradigm of Freudian psychoanalysis, the subchapter will consider *Insomnia* as a translation of the morality play from Christian into psychological framework.

Unlike in the case of several other authors of Modern Moralities, the author of *Insomnia* was not a one-play dramatist. To the contrary, Harold Frederick Rubinstein (1891–1975), while today largely forgotten, was a prolific English playwright and an attorney. His involvement in the publishing business, as well as in writing both theatrical pieces and a literature history book, clearly indicate that Rubinstein had abundant and multilevel connections with the London literary world. That morality play form was of interest to him confirms the appeal which this genre had for dramatists with diverse backgrounds and literary inclinations. Together with his brothers, Stanley and Ronald, he worked at Rubinstein, Nash & Co: a famous London law-firm founded by their father, which specialised in publishing cases. In 1928, Rubinstein acted on an unsuccessful defence of Radclyffe Hall's novel entitled *The Well of Loneliness*, which is today considered a ground-breaking work in the field of lesbian literature. After that, he became a legal advisor at several publishing houses. It is worth noting that Rubinstein's son, Michael (1920-2001), followed his father's footsteps and in 1960 defended Penguin Books in the most widely-discussed literary obscenity trial of the twentieth century: the prosecution of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Also Rubinstein's younger son, Hilary, became involved in the literary business by becoming a publisher, a writer and a literary agent. Interestingly, two of his books which came out in 1974 have titles that refer to the topic explored earlier in the play by his father: *Insomniacs of the World*, *Goodnight: A Bedside Book*, and *The Complete Insomnia*. Finally, it is worth noting that Rubinstein's wife's brother-in-law was Victor Gollancz, a British publisher, a humanitarian and a propagator of left-wing ideas who published some of Rubinstein's plays.

As Colin Dolley and Rex Walford notice, Rubinstein's work as a dramatist was prolific, especially when it comes to one-act plays. He addressed a vast range of topics including historical, literary, philosophical and religious themes; this can be inferred from the titles of his works alone. Some of them were *Johnson Was No Gentleman* (1938), *Blake's Comforter* (1950), *Whitehall 1656* (1934), *Bernard Shaw in Heaven* (1954), *Words by Mr Gilbert* (1950), *On the Portsmouth Road* (1931), *Poets and Peasants* (1950), *They Went Forth* (1936), *Exodus: A Dramatic Sequence in Five Episodes* (1923), *Shakespeare: A Play in Five Episodes* (1921), *Churchill: A Chronicle-Comedy in Eight Scenes* (1626), *The House* (1926), *Arms and the*

*Drama* (1923) , *The Deacon and the Jewess* (1935), or *The Dickens of Gray Inn* (1931). One play of a lighter mood was *The Theatre* published in 1923, set in a playhouse and portraying various types of audience members as well as an apprehensive author observing the fate of his play. Except for writing drama, Rubinstein contributed to the field of literary studies by writing a popular account of the development of English Drama (*The English Drama*, 1928) and editing a critical work published by Gollancz in 1966 and entitled *The Drama Bedside Book*. None of his one-act plays, however, remains in print today (126).

As in traditional moralities, the setting of *Insomnia* is abstract; it is described in stage directions as a “Junior Clerk's Mind.” Therefore, the audience does not watch the adventures of Everyman, but find themselves inside Everyman's mind, that is “a region bounded by black curtains which we may presume to be lifted . . . when the subject is asleep, which, fortunately or unfortunately, does not occur in the course of our present excursion” (Rubinstein 5). The personified abstractions found in the play include The Ego (“a pale Pierrot in mask and domino, bound hand and foot to a mattress in the centre of the stage” (5)), Memory (“a venerable Pantaloon”(5)), Curiosity (“in the garb of a small boy” (5)), Conscience (“a Constable, truncheon in hand” (5)), Melody (“an elderly artist, in concert platform attire” (5)), Life Force (“a Troubadour” (5)), Fear (“clothed in the sheets of a particular daily newspaper”(5)) and Hope (“a Lady Barrister”) ((5)). Throughout the play the characters are inefficiently looking for the reason behind the Clerk's insomnia to finally find it in his laziness and dishonesty.

Making the Ego and, indirectly, the Junior Clerk, the protagonists of the play is the first indication of the author's intention to follow the morality play tradition. Potter calls morality “a play about the nature of Man, epitomized in a central Mankind figure” (40). As far as the medieval prototypes are concerned, he argues that as contemporary readers “we may have a tendency to imagine these Mankind characters in modern terms, as abstractions of everyday average man” (40). This would put us, Potter further explains, at risk of simplifying and undervaluing the plays: “If Everyman were the medieval man on the street, merely a simple pawn propelled by forces beyond his ken, then the morality plays would indeed be as lifeless and hopeless as they are often reputed to be” (40). This does not happen, however, because the “everyman” protagonist of old plays is a “medieval duality” (40). This means that he embodies two perspectives on human nature popular in the late Middle Ages: the Scholastic view of man as the centre of the universe, put on the Earth by God to perform His will, and the Gnostic concept of human life as transient, redundant and ultimately leading to futile death (40). A question ensues, therefore, whether perceiving the Junior Clerk as an early-twentieth-century

epitome of “an average man” is not the oversimplification which Potter denounces. Thanks to the introduction of The Ego, however, the dual nature of the protagonist is maintained. Just as old moralities examine both the power-vested and the submissive side of man's nature, *Insomnia* explores the complex and fragile relationship between the conscious and the subconscious part of man's mind. In order to do that, Rubinstein turns to the most widely discussed psychological theory of the 1920s: Sigmund Freud's ego psychology. Thus, thanks to its light tone, by providing a humorous insight into the workings of human psyche, *Insomnia* becomes a playful variation on the subject of psychoanalysis, and naturally lends itself to a psychoanalytical reading.

It has to be noted, however, that including Freudian psychology not only accounts for the play's responsiveness to current trends, but it also marks a defining step on the trajectory of morality play's evolution. In the context of *Insomnia*, this step can be perceived as a translation or an adaptation (and in either case a modernisation of this genre) into such a form where spiritual or religious concepts are replaced with psychological ones. Such shifts occurred in the history of moralities before. The analogy of translation becomes especially relevant in the context of old plays based on theology which in the process of secularisation received a new framework. This is the case, for example, with John Redford's *Wit and Science* where new knowledge, humanist philosophy and scientific enlightenment replace Christian pursuits, or where, in other words, education takes place of salvation. In certain ways, one could presume that authors like Simmons reverse the process that morality plays made in Humanism by restoring them to religious context. So perceived, *Conflict* returns to the medieval, religiously-didactic function of moralities, even though it modernises the way in which truths are passed on to the public. In Rubinstein's play, however, one can see a definite break. Secularisation of moralities in the period of Renaissance Humanism, which valued empiricism and rationalism above anything else, ran its course according to a specific scheme related to current expectations. *Insomnia* repeats this process but in response to different trends: thus, it does not exemplify secularisation, but “psychologization” of the morality play.

In a 1908 article, a contributor to *The British Medical Journal* comments on psychoanalysis in a way which exposes the initial debate around it:

For some time past a particularly interesting and lively controversy has been in progress concerning the teaching of Professor Sigmund Freud of Vienna on the etiology of hysteria, and more particularly as to the value of his method of psycho-analysis. Rejected by Kraepelin, stigmatized by Bumke as “simply a horrible old wives' psychiatry,” his method of psychoanalysis was described more temperately but no less firmly by Aschaffenburg in 1906' as “in most cases” incorrect, in many

hazardous, and in all dispensable.” Nevertheless his theories, though perhaps not in their entirety, have found warm adherents in Janet, Jung Hellpach and many others. Recently Sadger and Muthmann, both followers of Freud's, have entered the lists, and Professor Aschaffenburg has recently subjected the whole question to stringent adverse criticism. (“Professor Freud” 103)

As Anthony Storr recounts, Freud propounded the theory that some neuroses were caused by an unsatisfactory (or deficient) release of sexual impulses linked to such activities as sexual abstinence, the withdrawal method or masturbation. Those “actual neuroses,” he argued, could be cured by following healthy sexual practices. In fact, all Freud's discoveries revolved around several central ideas, the first being that present disorders are caused by past experiences, and the second that those experiences were painful or disturbing, and therefore became repressed. In a 1896 paper Freud explains the inextricable connection between sex-related trauma and hysteria: “at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood but which can be reproduced through the work of psychoanalysis in spite of the intervening decades” (Freud qtd. in Wilcocks 109). Mental health, he asserts, can be obtained in the state of complete tranquillity, which follows from discharging all tensions, and which precludes any powerful emotions.

Thus, although emotions causing neurosis can be of different origins, sexuality becomes Freud's key interest. His views and findings evolved in time and, at some point, led him to a conclusion that “the neurotic symptoms were not related directly to actual events but to wishful phantasies, and that as far as the neurosis was concerned psychical reality was of more importance than material reality” (qtd. in Storr 26). This change of focus redefined psychoanalysis, which from that point onward started to be concerned not with investigation of events that led to neurosis, but with examination of patient's imaginative world (Storr 22-27). In broad terms, therefore, psychoanalysis is composed of three elements, that is “a procedure for investigating unconscious mental processes; a therapeutic method for treating disorders such as neurosis; and a body of psychological data obtained from its investigations and constituting a new science” (Macey 118). It also proposes a theory of mind, in the beginning based on the conscious/unconscious opposition, and after 1920 on the tripartite model of super-ego, ego and id and the concept of normal and pathological development (118). Macey asserts that Freud saw the data he amassed from therapeutic procedures as an integral element of psychoanalysis and as a new science which included also his writings on art and culture and which laid “the foundations for the many varieties of psychoanalytic criticism, often

referred to as ‘applied psychoanalysis’” (118-119). Indeed, the unprecedented interest in criticism and the revolutionary shift in the understanding of interpretative procedures at the beginning of the twentieth century soon made psychoanalysis a part of Anglo-American artistic and literary scholarship. According to Storr, Freud's own understanding of art and artists was ambivalent; he loved literature and appreciated sculpture and painting but found himself unable to derive pleasure from music (92). In “Psychoanalysis and Art, Freud and Leonardo,” however, Harold P. Blum writes about Freud’s enchantment with Italy and the Renaissance art. Apparently, Freud’s visits to Venice and Florence were a formative experience, which eventually stimulated him to purchase works of art and archaeological items that in time amounted to an impressive collection. The plaster casts he brought from Florence (which may have included works by Michelangelo) decorated his consulting room. Eventually, the contact he had in Italy with Renaissance masterpieces made him wonder about psychological motivation of artists and inspired him to write his the most widely-discussed psychoanalysis-based critical papers (Blum 1409). In his consideration of the connection between Freud’s theory and art, Blum goes as far as to say that “Psychoanalysis is a science and an art” (1409), and indeed Freud himself expressed a similar conviction: “I think there is a general enmity between artists and those engaged in the details of scientific work” (Freud qtd. in E. Jones 111). He gave this declaration a practical dimension by writing on both art and literature.

Freud’s writings on art include, among others, an essay on Michelangelo's statue entitled “The Moses of Michelangelo” and a monograph on Leonardo da Vinci *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (Storr 92). The latter work especially demands a brief digression, since it caused a significant controversy when it was first published in 1910. Blum states that although psychoanalysis was not yet well-formed by the time the work on da Vinci appeared, “the paper was a landmark in illuminating the psychological dimensions of art” (1411). It pondered on the nature of viewer’s subjective response, it reconsidered the relationship between the artist and the audience, and it offered an alternative understanding of the link between the unconscious and art (1411). For example, in regard to the oil painting *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* discussed in the monograph, Freud concluded that through the figures of Anne and Mary, da Vinci represented his stepmother and his biological mother (Blum 1409). In broad terms, the essay “presented an entirely new approach to art, the psychology of the artist, the relationship of life and art, the creative process and product, the medium and the message” (Blum 1411). Finally, it was in *Leonardo* that Freud introduced the concept of ‘pathography,’ which was, in great simplification, an interpretation method which relied on the

author's biography. In the strict sense, pathography investigated how pathology, expressed in artist's unconscious repetitions and interests, finds its way into artwork and how it reflects artist's life events, especially those related to traumas and repressed wishes (Emerling 30). In this way, the essay "transformed biography into psychobiography;" from this paper onwards biographies would focus more closely than ever before on the subject's childhood years, the relation between their life and art, and the evolution of the artist's creative processes (Blum 1411).

Therefore, as Blum recounts, Freud was the first critic who applied psychoanalysis to art by "explor[ing] the psychology of art, the artist, and aesthetic appreciation" (1409). He was also extraordinarily proud of his critical works on art, and the essay on Leonardo was among his personal favourites. Still, as Blum stresses, Freud's writing on art is not flawless and sometimes can even be seen as naive and limited by the lack of contemporary theory and methodology (1409). Macey also notices the conventionality of Freud's analyses and judgements, in which "traditional notions of 'genius' are invoked, and the concepts of form, content and expression are quite traditional and unproblematic" (120), and which feature references to the miraculous nature of artistic creativity, so typical for the Romantic discourse (120). In any case, Freud's critical endeavours remain a pioneering work which "prefigures concepts of narcissism, homosexuality, parenting, and sublimation" (Blum 1409).

According to Macey, "Psychoanalysis is a 'talking cure,' with the speech of the patient and the interpretations of the analyst as its sole medium, and so it does privilege the verbal over the visual" (120). Here, therefore, may lie the reason for why Freud's writings on literature are more abundant than those on art, and why he was more willing to, as Graham Frankland puts it, "put literature on the couch" (63). What's important to realise when thinking about Freud as a critic is that his "literary criticism is not some misguided secondary application of a medical technique to an inappropriate object" (Frankland 63), since psychoanalysis was always meant as a "general theory of the mind" and encompassed literature from its very beginning (63). While his first work containing literary criticism appeared in 1907 (an essay on the 1902 novel "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's 'Gradiva'"), working analyses of *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* were drafted in one of 1897 letters (63). Other critical works by Freud include a 1913 essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (where he analysis motifs in *The Merchant of Venice* and in *King Lear*), an essay "The Uncanny" from 1919 and an introduction to a collection of essays on Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* named "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (1928). In his appraisals Freud did more than, as historians often assume, "merely 'treated' works of literature

as if they were symptoms, dreams, or fantasies” (Frankland 80). Although he often prioritizes content over form, in close-reading he displays significant sensitivity towards language, literariness of the work (visible in its lack of pretence to be anything else than a piece of fiction) and “otherness” of literature (its belonging to the realm of fictionality correspondent with, but conspicuously different from, the reality) (81-82). Interestingly, Frankland recounts that art and literary critiques brought Freud much satisfaction and pleasure, which seems surprising when compared to the bouts of “customary depression” (63) after such publications as *The Interpretation of Dreams or Civilization and Its Discontents*. Freud even indicated in a letter to Jung that he considers literary criticism the most enjoyable of all forms of psychoanalysis and a reward for all the effort invested in working on the theory (63).

Freud believed that all works of art, as dreams, come from repressed wishes, or, in other words, that creative drive results always from lack of sexual satisfaction. As Frankland explains, however:

his salient interest is in the complex modes of distortion via which this desire becomes inscribed in a text. In dreams these displacements take place due to censorship, whereas in art, as Freud explicitly points out in ‘The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest’ (1913), they conform to ‘laws of beauty’. (81)

Freud claimed that “artists discharged their infantile sexuality by converting it into non-instinctual forms” (Storr 93). The repression or exaggeration of pregenital sexual instincts would unavoidably lead to, respectively, neurosis and perversion; the artistically-talented, however, can avoid both by directing their impulses into their artistic output (Storr 93). In fact, as Eagleton explains, he compared art to neurosis, by which he meant that artists, like neurotics, are ruled by powerful instincts which make them transfer their interests from reality to the realm of fantasy (179).

Finally, it should be stressed that Freud’s interest in art, as Jae Emerling indicates, was not limited to psychological circumstances of its production and the artist-as-patient idea. He also investigated the ways in which works of art are experienced by viewers or readers, or, in other words, what is their emotive effect. Clearly, the twentieth century saw psychoanalysis as more than a set of psychological assumptions or a technique of medical treatment. It is important to note, however, that the influence Freud’s theories had on art was extensive, and that it transcended Freud’s occasional ventures into the critical world. Indeed, Blum states that “Psychoanalysis and art, in particular, have had a remarkable relationship, one characterized by mutual stimulation, synergism and antagonism, convergent and divergent points of view” (1409). As Storr indicates, psychoanalysis made a significant impact at that time on both

literature and other modes of artistic expression:

Freud's concept of the unconscious, his use of free association, and his rediscovery of the importance of dreams encouraged painters, sculptors, and writers to experiment with the fortuitous and the irrational, to pay serious attention to their inner worlds of dream and day-dream, and to find significance in thoughts and images which they would previously have dismissed as absurd or illogical. (91)

Such modernist techniques as the stream-of-consciousness strongly relate to psychoanalysis, as do contemporaneous artistic movements, for example Surrealism or Dadaism (91).

Interactions between psychoanalysis and literature continued throughout the twentieth century. In his comprehensive overview of twentieth-century literary theories (*Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 1983), Terry Eagleton puts psychoanalytical criticism among such major approaches as Formalism, Reception Theory, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. He states that psychoanalytical literary criticism can be divided into four areas, depending on the object of investigation: the work's author, its content, its formal construction and its reader. The most problematic, and the most popular, Eagleton explains, are the first two kinds. While submitting an author to psychoanalysis entails the same misconceptions about the nature of literary work as seeking "correct" interpretations in his or her biography, psychoanalysing the characters is limited and reductive (Eagleton 179). It is worth noting that in this way Eagleton questions the methods of applying psychoanalysis to literature followed by Freud, whose critical efforts were always in these two paths. Other ways of categorizing psychoanalytical criticism have also been proposed, for example by Norman N. Holland, who sees three stages of its development: searching for hidden content, the formalist approach based on looking for defensive strategies in the text, and the most complex modern phenomenology (qtd. in Frankland 73). While the analysis of Rubinstein's *Insomnia* focuses on how the morality play becomes adapted and translated into new frameworks (in this case, the psychological framework), in terms of methodology it will follow (despite all potential drawbacks) the second of the modes described by Eagleton, that is psychoanalytical criticism of the content. Finally, it should be stressed that in *Literary Theory* Eagleton proposes a summary of critical trends which were in use by the 1980s. He does not refer in detail to the period when *Insomnia* was written, and while his theoretical outline is of use to this analysis, Rubinstein obviously drew his inspiration from elsewhere.

As mentioned above, adopting psychoanalysis for critical purposes did not pass without complications. In a 1962 article "Psychology and Drama," Richard B. Vowles questions the validity of what he calls "psycho-criticism" by wondering who should be entitled and who is

qualified to perform it. He concludes that while adopting psychoanalytical tools by literary critics brings useful illumination, the tendency of psychologists to venture into the realm of criticism usually results in errors or half-truths. At the same time, he anticipates Barthes' revolutionary hypothesis by five years claiming that "biography is a distraction from the genuine problem at hand" (35). Finally, he gives a pinpointed account of what psychoanalytical criticism can achieve:

It can illuminate the dislocations and juxtapositions of automatic writing. It can explore the dream stuff that is increasingly the substance of literature, but part of a venerable tradition. It can diagnose and shape our perceptions of character, especially the hints, signs, and inadvertencies which make up a behavior pattern, so that character takes on new place and meaning in the structure. (Vowles 35-36)

It is evident that his explanation in significant part corresponds with, and puts in a detailed perspective, the observations made years later by Eagleton. It is also the "dream stuff" he so colloquially alludes to that becomes the axis of the proposed psychoanalytical reading of *Insomnia*. An elaboration on this loosely applied term will be provided below. Finally, it should be stressed that whether Rubinstein purposed to make his play responsive to a psychoanalytical reading is irrelevant. As Vowles suggests, "It is by no means axiomatic that the more conscious the writer's use of, say, Freudian materials, the more legitimate the need for a Freudian criticism" (36). He argues that although psychoanalytical consideration of *Strange Interlude* can bring interesting results, analysing Euripides' *Hippolytus* or Shakespearian plays in such a way proves much more productive.

The psychoanalytical approach has been chosen for the analysis of *Insomnia*, however, not only because of obvious links between the play's content and the concept of the ego, the theory of dreams and the notions of guilt and hysteria. It derives also from a special relationship between psychoanalysis and theatre. The nature of this relationship, Vowles explains, relies on several convergences, the first of which is the act of *mimesis* and the fact that "the play is a performed art . . . [as] in the moment of production it gives the illusion of pure existence" (36). The following convergences relate to the "Character-Actor Dualism" (meaning the bipolar relationship between the actor and his role and the psychology of acting), *catharsis* (whose mechanism can be better comprehended thanks to a "trained psychological method") and the "Dream Analogy" (that is the affinity between the play world and the dream world resulting from play's often illogical, surprising, allegorising nature) (Vowles 36-37).

These correlations obviously apply to almost every play, and a question arises as to any particular relevance they may have to the subject of this analysis. It seems that at least two of

them relate to morality plays (*Insomnia* included) more closely than to plays of any other genre, namely, the understanding of *mimesis* as “the illusion of pure existence” and the “Dream Analogy.” As for the former, direct address used at the play’s opening (“A word with you, Spectator, ere we open:/ Have you experienced insomnia?” (Rubinstein 5)) executes what King calls manipulating the border between the play world and the real world (262) and thus brings the act of illusion realised in stage performance to a new meta level. As for the latter, like in moralities the setting of the play is a dream-like, undefined space suspended between allegorised reality and protagonist’s physicalised conscience. Although in *Insomnia*, the action does not take place in a dream (but as the title suggests in the unfortunate state of permanent wakefulness), it is still heavily allegorical and abstract (“Interior of a Junior Clerk’s Mind” (Rubinstein 5)).

In *Mirror to Nature: Drama, Psychoanalysis and Society*, Margaret and Michael Rustin indicate other correspondences between psychoanalysis and theatre, among them the fact that high-quality drama has always been defined by “a passion for truth,” which has also been the aim of psychoanalysis from the moment of its conception (2). Both drama (as understood by Aristotle) and psychoanalysis are concerned with “understanding how and why one action or state of mind follows from another, and in particular what unrecognised beliefs, desires, or compulsions make people do what they do, even sometimes seemingly against their will or against their better nature” (Rustin and Rustin 3). This search for the reason behind a particular behaviour, and especially the attempt to understand why one “state of mind follows from another” clearly constitutes the axis of *Insomnia*. All the personified abstractions, with The Ego in the lead, throughout the play strive to establish the cause of a Junior Clerk’s sleeping deficiency, which is eventually found in his sense of guilt. In tragedy, Rustin and Rustin state, characters act as they do because they have to: because their nature does not permit them to act otherwise. The analysis of their emotions, ideas and impulses, as well as their circumstances, enables critics to explain the “necessity” behind their actions. Psychoanalysis also revolves around the necessity of human actions, and as with tragedy, its chief tool has always been a case-study, that is the examination of different elements of the self, its history and the trajectory of its psychoanalytic process (3). The inescapable nature of tragic characters which predetermines their behaviour is, of course, never arbitrary, and has to derive from psychology, culture or imposed conventions. This realisation puts both the protagonist of *Insomnia*, and his predecessor – Everyman, in an interesting light. Combining psychoanalysis with morality play invites a question that potentially puts Everyman on two opposite sides of the spectrum. Is he

a patient far removed from the norm, or a weak, misguided human being far removed from exemplarity intended by God when he created man in his image? While not a tragedy, *Insomnia* conforms to this vision of dramatic work as an exploration of characters' natural impulses, albeit to a limited extent: the necessity behind the protagonist's inability to sleep is examined and explained but the necessity behind those of his actions that caused insomnia is not. What is also worth noting is the relation between the potential death of tragedy, which was widely debated in the twentieth century, and psychoanalysis. While examining this problem is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a tentative hypothesis may be offered that the psychoanalytical approach entirely precludes tragedy proper and proposes a psychological drama instead.

According to Rustin and Rustin, both psychoanalysis and drama are highly selective. Psychoanalytical case studies rely on a thorough investigation of details, such as childhood events, dreams, or symptoms, thanks to which a psychoanalyst prepares a narrative which explains how these particulars correspond with an underlying model. In other words, what psychoanalysts pursue is the notion "of what broader pattern has to be understood in order to make sense of the particulars of the patients' experience" (4). Rubinstein's *Insomnia* perfectly exemplifies this search for generalities that should supply answers about some specific display of the protagonist's condition. The efforts of all characters are channelled into finding this "broader pattern" responsible for Junior Clerk's insomnia. It is also a short play, a one-act. This feature corresponds with Rustin and Rustin's remark that drama, as psychoanalysis, is the most selective, intense and compressed mode when it comes to picturing human action; major transformations and conflicts occur within a two- or three-hour spectacle, which is why successful interpretation requires sensitivity to details on different levels of drama, such as plot, setting and characters, connecting these details into a pattern, and the ability to perceive what is hidden, rather than explicit in the text (4). Thus, in broad terms, "There are similarities between the combination of significant detail with an essential connectedness in the procedures of the dramatist and those of the psychoanalyst" (Rustin and Rustin 4).

Finally, the most direct and inextricable connection between psychoanalysis and drama must be recognised in Freud's idea of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* as the illustration of the psychoanalytic process. As Macey explains, according to Freud while dreams are usually dependent on the person's experiences, some of them are universal and related to the development of mental structures. Such typical dreams derive from what he called the Oedipus complex. The myth recounts that Oedipus inadvertently kills his father, then marries his mother and after realising his mistake gouges his own eyes in an act of metaphoric self-castration.

Freud saw the story as a rendering of universal human wish to enter sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex, and its resolution (which involves abandonment of incestuous drives and the realisation of sex differences) as the transformative moment in an individual and civilizational development (119-120).

By finding in the *Oedipus* legend the illustration of his theory, Freud followed an enduring tradition that was strongly rooted in German intellectual environment: the tradition of making Greek tragedy an object of philosophical investigation. Freud himself wrote that the play's action “consists merely in a revelation, which is gradually completed and artfully delayed – resembling the work of a psychoanalysis – of a fact that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius, and the son of the dead man and of Jocasta” (*The Interpretation* 222). As Rustin and Rustin proclaim, for Aristotle, tragedy was “a way of exploring the contradictions of human experience, the terrible collisions that take place between conflicting aspects of human nature, or between what is desired and what is possible in human lives” (5) and psychoanalysis partly echoes this purpose by trying to establish how to gain a mental stability which allows one to live life that will not end in a catastrophe. Thus, the subjects of psychoanalytical and critical inquiry converge in that both psychoanalysis and drama investigate extreme states of mind; the first one to remedy it, the second one to depict it and provide the audience with *catharsis* (5-6).

As far as Simmons's drama is concerned, the first allusion to psychoanalysis can be found already in the play's title. Freud's “psychological” angle on dreaming was not, of course, the first attempt to examine the nature of dreams, as multiple approaches to the matter appeared in antiquity. Such works as David Dean Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa's *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* discuss these approaches in detail. While Freud conceives dreams to be “a phenomenon of our own psychic activity” (*The Interpretation* 39) in the introduction to *Dream Cultures*, Shulman and Stroumsa treat dreams as “cultural acts” whose “interpretation and decoding are expressive of culturally specific themes, patterns, tensions, and meanings” (3). The collection, therefore, comprehensively explores dreams in connection to different religions and cultures, focusing on a broad range of locations and periods. It starts from ancient China, where interpretation of dreams is used to “define causes and consequences,” “structure events” and “impose order on human experience” (Wai-ye 17) and India, continues through Amerindian nations (where “dreaming is accomplished by a segment of a person's self that travels outside the body and has experiences in past, distant, or future times and places” (Tedlock 88)) and the Greek and Roman civilisations of Classical and

Late Antiquity (taking into account also Christian and Jewish discourses) where “dreaming and dream interpretation played a central role in a wide range of contexts” (Oppenheim quoted in Walde 121), and ends with a commentary on medieval Judaism and Islam, as well as western modernity. The last essay is concerned with Freud. Interestingly, editors of the collection summarised above, while including the Freudian perspective in the volume, openly distance their findings from psychoanalysis, claiming that they

sought to understand the significance of dreams in different religious contexts in a way rather alien to the psychoanalytical tradition. [Their] primary assumption— that the place and role of dreams, and the very status of dreaming, are strongly influenced by cultural traditions and religious attitudes— led [them] to search for conspicuous differences in cross-cultural patterns of dreaming and of dream interpretation, rather than for their universal elements. (Shulman and Stroumsa 3-4)

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), which remains one of the key psychoanalytical texts, Freud elaborates on his theory that unconscious desires are symbolically expressed through dreams, whose interpretation he calls “the royal road to the unconscious.” As Stéphane Moses recounts, he starts with juxtaposing his discoveries with ancient beliefs and contemporary findings, in order to underline the novelty of his research, which defies both the assumptions of the psychiatric school that saw dreaming as an entirely somatic process and ancient belief that dreams are epiphanies (303). Thus, in the second chapter of his study, entitled “Method of Dreams Interpretation,” Freud criticises traditional philosophical and religious understanding of dreams as prophecies or as a way into the supernatural world stating that “The laity has . . . always endeavoured to “interpret” the dream” (80). Both ways of interpreting dreams, that is, seeking in them future predictions and treating them as secret codes that need to be deciphered, according to Freud are worthless: “The symbolic method is limited in its application and is capable of no general demonstration. In the cipher method, everything depends upon whether the key, the dream book, is reliable, and for that all guarantees are lacking” (83). Finally, he concludes the discussion of ancient prophetic dream-interpretation theories by stating that while many “quite intelligent persons” still believe in them, it is mainly because of “the fact that the explanations attempted by psychology are too inadequate to overcome the accumulated material, however strongly all those who devote themselves to a scientific mode of thought may feel that such assertions should be repudiated” (3). In an effort to strengthen these scientific explanations, Freud promises to prove that “there is a psychological technique by which dreams may be interpreted, and that upon the application of this method every dream will show itself to be a senseful psychological structure which may be introduced into an assignable place in the psychic activity of the waking state” (1).

It is worth stressing at this point that today's research finds ancient dreaming and dream interpretation a far more complex area of investigation than Freud did. In *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, William V. Harris notices that ancient traditions of interpreting dreams constitute an extensive and complex subject of study, that there were significant differences in how ancient Greeks and ancient Romans understood the process and that modern “scientific” ways of investigating dreams in fact have their precursors in ancient times, in the work of such scholars as Hippocrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero or Galen (3). There are many problems related to dreams, he proclaims, which ancient scholars comprehended and answered with success (3). Like Freud, Harris writes about different kinds of dreams, but he does that by giving them a deeply inquisitive look. He examines, for example, the dreams which belong to the “epiphany convention,” in which the dreamer receives in their dream a message or an instruction from an authoritative, often godly, figure (4). In his research, Harris explores in detail the “conventions and inventions” related to describing dreams in the ancient world and analyses intellectual achievements of antiquity in the context of naturalistic understanding of dreams. Finally, he questions the common conviction (represented also by Freud) that belief in prophetic dreams in ancient civilisation was far-reaching:

Indeed it is a widespread doctrine – often taken over without much thought from the ‘authorities’—that almost everyone in the classical world believed this [that dreams revealed hidden truths]. Since belief in divination appears to have been one of the most conspicuously unmodern characteristics of that world, it is clearly important to know whether dreams were really judged to deserve so much faith . . . A more careful inspection of texts and social practices reveals a far more complex and interesting story than the one usually told. (Harris 5)

Many doubts remained at that time (and often still remain) unanswered, since dreaming is, after all, “a difficult subject, psychologically and physiologically” (Harris 3). Still, as if in opposition to Freud's definite rejection of the ancient outlook on dreams, Harris's modern perspective offers the conclusion that “there is more sense, common and otherwise, in what the ancients thought and wrote about dreams than scholars have sometimes recognized” (3). His contribution, therefore, makes it clear that, in light of contemporary research on dreams, Freud's treatment of the problem seems like a simplification. In a way, Harris defies Freud's statement that “Notwithstanding the effort of several thousand years, little progress has been made in the scientific understanding of dreams” (*Interpretation* 1).

Apart from commenting on ancient dream theories, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud decides to write also on the state of the scientific knowledge of dreams. It is worth noting that Freud was not the only scholar in his times to write on the nature and theory of dreaming, and

that his findings were only one of many proposed approaches. Along with Freud's "psychological" theory of dreaming, there came many other theories with a different focus. In 1986, the French Jewish philosopher Henri Bergman discussed sleep and dreaming in his book *Matière et mémoire (Matter and Memory)* in which he explores the connection between mind and body. He considers the connection between sleep and memory to conclude that some dreams are, in fact, "exultation" of memory and that in dreams "memories which we believed abolished . . . reappear with striking completeness; we live over again, in all their detail, forgotten scenes of childhood; we speak languages which we no longer even remember to have learnt" (Bergson n.p.). In 1907, French scientists Rene Legendre and Henri Pieron released the results of their experiment on sleeplessness in dogs. In 1913, Pieron published *Le Probleme Physiologique du Sommeil*, which was the first scientific study to examine sleep from a physiological point of view. While aware of the variety of research on the subject, Freud immediately dismisses all the gathered data by stating that "no real foundation of verified results has hitherto been established on which future investigators might continue to build" (*Interpretation* 6) and that "every new author approaches the same problems afresh, and from the very beginning" (*Interpretation* 6). Thus, in place of inapt ancient and modern theories, Freud offers an alternative one, which proclaims that "wish fulfilment is the meaning of every dream" and that "there cannot be any dreams except wish dreams" (113).

One obvious objection against Freud's theory that dreams represent unfulfilled desires, was the disturbing nature of nightmares. Although Freud later hesitated on this issue in his 1920 essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Interpretation* he states that nightmares do not contradict his theory, since "the drives that an individual represses are those drives the attainment of whose aim would produce pain instead of pleasure" (qtd. in Sharpe and Faulkner 65). In other words:

The ego, whose defences against the id are lulled when the person falls asleep, eventually responds to the hallucinated fulfilment of the id's wishes in the dream as if responding to a real, external threat. When the resulting anxiety becomes overwhelming, the sleeper indeed wakes to avoid the perceived danger. (Sharpe and Faulkner 65)

In *Insomnia*, however, it is the lack of sleep which demands interpretation, and which brings what is hidden to the light. In *The Savvy Insomniac*, Lois Maharg explains that according to Freud, insomnia results from fear of disturbing discoveries during sleep. Socially impermissible desires which belong to the id, such as murdering a family member or taking part in deviant sexual practices, during the day are repressed by the superego: psyche's internal

ensor. At night, however, the superego stops working and hidden wishes are exposed in dreams, which is often a frightening experience. Freud writes that some neurotic patients admit that their insomnia was in the beginning intentional as they were afraid of their own dreams (qtd. in Maharg n.p.). This seems to be the case also with the protagonist of Rubinstein's play. Finally, when thinking about the revelatory power of dreams, and about the causes of insomnia, one should take into account Paul Ricoeur's statement that "consciousness is just as obscure as the unconscious" (105). Thus, in *Insomnia*, the protagonist's inability to fall asleep proves revelatory, and enables the process of self-discovery. It is the awake state, not a dream, which has to be deciphered and interpreted.

At the play's opening, a reader learns from the stage directions that "*The Scene represents the Interior of a Junior Clerk's Mind; a region bounded by dark curtains which we may presume to be lifted (revealing who knows what sinister mysteries) when the subject is asleep, which fortunately or unfortunately, does not occur in the course of our present excursion*" (Rubinstein 5). Thus, already in the first line of *Insomnia* a clear connection with psychoanalysis is established: the idea of an excursion into dark recesses of human mind. In accordance with Freud's vision of dreams as "disguised, hallucinatory fulfilments of repressed wishes" (Storr 44), Rubinstein presents sleep as a force able to remove the "dark curtains" that conceal "sinister mysteries". Those "dark curtains" stand for the censoring workings of superego, which in waking hours blocks socially unacceptable desires from exposure. This is confirmed in the subsequent statement that they can only be lifted "when the subject is asleep." Moreover, the idea that accessing the subject's unconscious through sleep can be either a "fortunate" or an "unfortunate" occurrence, also returns to Freud and his conviction that a repressed wish can be a wish for both pleasure and pain.

It is worth noting that Freud's theory examines similar contradictions to a great extent. In fact, Macey calls Freud's work "dualistic" since he "speaks of self-preservative drives and sexual drives on the one hand, but he also . . . speculates as to the existence of a destructive drive, or a wish to return to the state of inanimate matter" (119). This provokes an immediate association with Potter's vision of Everyman as a "medieval duality," who on the one hand remains an active seeker inspired by God's grace and made in His image, but on the other functions as a meaningless pawn living a pointless existence which leads to a pointless death. In regard to the pain and pleasure dichotomy, Macey explains that "a further duality is introduced with the concepts of the conflicting pleasure and reality principles, one seeking immediate gratification, the other subordinating that principle to the demands of external reality" (Macey 119).

What is more, the telling use of the indefinite article in “a Junior Clerk's Mind” must be noticed and seen as a nod towards the medieval tradition of making the morality play protagonist a highly universalized type. The article “a” or “an” are used with nouns which refer to non-specific things or ideas. Although combined only with singular nouns, they actually mean “one of many,” or, in fact, “any.” This is exactly the situation with the name of *Insomnia's* protagonist. While Potter warns morality play readers against the oversimplification entailed by treating “everyman characters” as “medieval incarnations of Willy Loman” (40), they were undoubtedly drawn up as representatives of the entire humanity. The use of indefinite article illustrates this point by suggesting that the Junior Clerk of the play is a type, emblematic of certain social class and professional group, rather than an individualized, self-contained entity. The plot of *Insomnia* is best encapsulated by Ricoeur's summary of his understanding of Freud, namely that “Consciousness is not a given, but a *task*” (106). The Ego, forced by insomnia to remain continuously conscious, accepts this task, and the play dramatizes the protagonist's struggle for its completion, whatever it may involve. In the prologue to the play, pronounced by The Ego, insomnia is depicted as a torturous affliction:

A word with your, Spectator, ere we open:  
Have you experienced insomnia?  
If not – why, then, our play is wasted on you;  
The scene obscure, characters unintelligible,  
Action mere mystifying, and our speech  
Positively fatiguing – yea, you shall slumber,  
Who know not impotence to slumber...  
But you –  
You other – martyrs! – that have groaned and tossed  
And prayed and cursed and counted phantom pigs –  
Night never ending: you will understand.  
You who have introspected the stark chaos  
Of your own mind, shall you not recognize  
Another mind? Even a humble brother's?  
Surely to goodness! Its inhabitants  
All too familiar! (*He introduces them*) The Captive  
Ego –  
Myself – defenceless in a torture chamber,

The prey of pitiless tyrants: Mad Melody –  
*(Each in turn rising to acknowledge the indication)*  
Maddening Curiosity, garrulous Memory,  
Stern Conscience, Hope, Fear (truth-perverters both),  
Life Force, a wolf, sheepishly sublimated,  
And Nerves, oh, Nerves, excruciating Nerves! –  
*(They scamper across the stage with a whoop)*  
Ah, yes, we are well acquainted, you and I!  
And so we dedicate these dismal revels  
To those who know us – craving their good-will,  
From a safe distance. And even as our fathers  
Would conjure demons but to exorcise them,  
So we, parading these embodied Furies,  
Proclaim our purpose (for be it noted well-ordered  
This, as a self-respecting modern play, is  
Nothing if not utilitarian) –  
We purpose, then, to entertain you – first –  
And, secondly, to render you immune  
from entertaining us and our attributes  
Till the last sleep of all – when these our actors,  
Being, as I remarked before, all spirits,  
Are faded into air,  
And like the baseless fabric of this vision – (Rubinstein 5-6)

The first significant aspect of the prologue is its undeniably Shakespearian nature. In Shakespeare's plays, the stage is often owned and controlled by dreams. Some of those dreams lead to the truth, while others are deceptive and frightening nightmares. In Homer, Virgil, and later also in many other writers (for example in Kyd), dreams enter through two gates: the Gate of Horn and the Gate of Ivory. It is worth mentioning that Freud also alludes to this distinction in *The Interpretation of Dreams* where he writes that the ancients "distinguished between the true and valuable dreams, sent to the dreamer to warn him or to foretell future events, and vain, fraudulent, and empty dreams, the object of which was to misguide or lead him to destruction" (2). Harris states that as far as Virgil is concerned, while dreams are absent from his earlier works, both true and false dreams appear in *Aeneid* (196), where he employs the Homeric idea of the two gates. Furthermore, it "was through these four lines about the Gates of Horn and

Ivory that Virgil chose to deliver the poem's sharpest shock—the exit of Aeneas and the Sibyl through the Gate of Ivory” (197). In this elusive double reality, actors appear as spirits or shadows: the mediators between the unexplored land of dreams and the actual world.

Thus, those who have not experienced insomnia, will never be able to understand it: “Have you experienced insomnia? / If not – why, then, our play is wasted on you” (Rubinstein 5). It is also worth noting that already in the opening line of the play, the author makes a conspicuous allusion to old moralities by employing the technique of direct address (“A word with your, Spectator, ere we open”). In this line (as later in the prologue), the border between dream and reality is blurred, so that the audience can experience the spectacle, in Potter's words “here and now” (32). Furthermore, in accordance with Freud's vision, Rubinstein describes human mind as the “stark chaos” (Rubinstein 6).

What should also be noted is the telling combination of Christian and pagan references in the prologue. In lines 6 and 7, The Ego's speech temporarily slips into archaism with a bitter line addressed to those who are not affected by insomnia “yea, you shall slumber, / Who know not impotence to slumber...” (6). While the verse does not come directly from the Bible, because of its archaic diction and syntax an association with the Holy Scriptures is immediate. Rubinstein's lines may not mirror any specific lines from the Bible, but sleep is one of its significant themes and it appears in a variety of contexts, some of them more pertinent to this fragment of *Insomnia* than others.

In the Scriptures, sleep often brings regeneration and the sense of safety, for example in Proverbs 3:24: “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet” (*King James Bible*, Prov. 3:24) or in Psalm 4:8: “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (*King James Bible*). If excessive, sleep can also have a depraving influence on the sleeper (“Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread” (Prov. 20:13), “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” (Prov. 6:9). Paradoxically, although it is occasionally mistaken for death, the true power of sleep is realised in bringing rebirth. Mark so writes about Jesus's resurrecting power: “And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth” (Mark 5:39).

Moreover, sleep is often counterpoised with waking, understood not only as resurrection, but as spiritual awakening, as it is described for instance in Romans 13:11: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when

we believed” (*King James Bible*). According to Matthew (8:24), Jesus sleeps throughout the heavy storm on the lake, because he has faith. At the same time, in 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, sleep belongs to night and darkness, and those who follow light should not succumb to slumber: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Finally, one must take into account the episode in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed the night before his crucifixion, and where he was arrested. When he enters the garden with his disciples, he tells them: “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38), suggesting that they will soon learn something important. The disciples, however, keep falling asleep when Jesus prays, which exposes the contrast between Jesus' faith and their doubt. Thus, the disciples are prevented by sleep from observing their teacher and learning about the interconnectedness of inevitability, suffering and transformation.

Not only sleep, but also dreams appear in the Bible. As in ancient cultures, so in Christianity “Dreaming is a soulful experience” which “participates in the intimacy of the Divine–human relationship” (Butler Jr. xiii). Bart J. Koet indicates the Book of Genesis as a part of the Old Testament whose narratives display the power of prophetic dreams especially clearly. As he puts it, while the first chapters of Genesis relate to the entire mankind, from 11:27 onwards it focuses on Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, all of whom were “remarkable dreamers” (21). It is also in Genesis that the word “dream” appears in the Bible for the first time (21). More importantly, however, as Koet explains, dreams in the Holy Scriptures have various sources and not all of them are thought to come from God. Besides the dreams which bring divine messages, the Bible refers also to “ordinary dreams;” for example in the book of Ecclesiastes dreams come simply as effects of daily occurrences such as overworking (“For a dream comes through the multitude of business” (Eccl. 5:3)) (20). Interestingly, Rubinstein's idea of insomnia as a punishment for misconduct also finds expression in Ecclesiastes, where it is written that “The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep” (Eccl. 5:12). It is also referenced in Proverbs: “Do not enter the path of the wicked,/ and do not walk in the way of the evil./ Avoid it; do not go on it;/ turn away from it and pass on/ For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong/they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble (Prov. 4:14-16). What is more, the connection between insomnia and anxiety is explored in The Book of Daniel, where one learns that “in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his

spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him” (Daniel 2:1).

Furthermore, as far as other biblical allusions in the prologue are concerned, The Ego refers to people suffering from insomnia as “martyrs.” While the word has a broad application and does not necessarily connect with religion (there can be, for example, political martyrs), in modern English its connotation is distinctively Christian. In fact, *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists the Christian-oriented meaning of the term as the first definition (“A person who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce faith in Christ or obedience to his teachings, a Christian way of life, or adherence to a law or tenet of the Church” (“Martyr”)), and the broader meaning only as the second definition (“In extended (esp. non-religious) contexts: a person who undergoes death or great suffering for a faith, belief, or cause, or (usually with to; also with of, for) through devotion to some object” (“Martyr”)). This corresponds with the fact that the common understanding of the word “martyr,” is now inextricably entwined with saints and refers to those who were killed or tortured because they would not relinquish their faith. The Christian context is strengthened by the later definition of martyrs in the prologue as those who “prayed:”

You other – martyrs! – that have groaned and tossed  
And prayed and cursed and counted phantom pigs –  
Night never ending: you will understand.  
You who have introspected the stark chaos  
Of your own mind, shall you not recognize  
Another mind? Even a humble brother's? (Rubinstein 6)

What should be noted here as well, is the clever application of bathos, introduced by the humorous combination of the disturbing martyrial imagery of suffering and agony (“martyrs! – that have groaned and tossed/ And prayed and cursed”) with the mundane technique of fighting insomnia (counting “phantom pigs”). This foreshadows the comic tone of the play. Finally, also the mention of a “humble brother,” invites associations with the Bible, specifically with the line from James: “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” (1:9).

In conclusion, it is difficult to argue with absolute certainty that Rubinstein had all these religious connections in mind while writing the prologue to *Insomnia*. On the other hand, he has written several one-act plays with a religious theme, which makes it rather likely that the archaic syntax he used in the lines discussed above was an intended allusion to the Bible. Thus, the imitation of the scriptural style, the explicit reference to sacrificial deeds of Christian saints, and the use of biblical diction in such expressions as “a humble brother” contribute to the effect of playful game with “the sacred.” Combining elements from the religious, or the sacred,

sphere, with everyday language expressions (“phantom pigs”) makes *Insomnia* a hybrid play that mixes *sacrum* with *profanum* and an old genre with contemporary humour.

As far as the intertextual connections of the play are concerned, one must make note of the opening line, which may be read as an allusion to the most broadly-read medieval morality play today. Rubinstein's line “A word with you, Spectator, ere we open,” may refer to the opening line of *Everyman* spoken by Messenger: “I pray you all give your audience/ And hear this matter with reverence” (1-2). In fact, a close reading of the two prologues reveals numerous correlations between the old and the modern morality.

In the introductory section of the medieval *Everyman*, Messenger demands the viewers to closely follow the play which is going to explore the fleeting nature of human life. He warns them against yielding to the sweet idea of sin, which would necessarily result in a “weeping soul” once the body finds itself in the grave. Subsequently, some of the personified abstractions (only the treacherous ones) are enumerated. In such a way, the author of the play prepares the audience for receiving the content and the message of the play:

Messenger:        I pray you all give your audience,  
                          And here this matter with reverence  
                          By figure a moral play-  
                          The Summoning of Everyman called it is,  
                          That of our lives and ending shows  
                          How transitory we be all day.  
                          This matter is wonderous precious,  
                          But the intent of it is more gracious,  
                          And sweet to bear away.  
                          The story saith, -Man, in the beginning,  
                          Look well, and take good heed to the ending,  
                          Be you never so gay!  
                          Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet,  
                          Which in the end causeth thy soul to weep,  
                          When the body lieth in clay.  
                          Here shall you see how Fellowship and Jollity,  
                          Both Strength, Pleasure, and Beauty,  
                          Will fade from thee as flower in May.  
                          For ye shall here, how our heavenly king

Calleth Everyman to a general reckoning:

Give audience, and here what he doth say. (*Everyman*)

Both prologues start with stating the subject, and both speakers ask the audience for attention through the means of direct address. While the Messenger describes *Everyman* as a play about the transience of life (“That of our lives and ending shows/ How transitory we be all day” (*Everyman*)), The Ego makes it clear to the spectators that the play is strictly about insomnia, and only those who have experienced this condition will be able to understand it. Both speakers refer to the (potentially, in the case of *Insomnia*) mysterious nature of the performance (“This matter is wonderous precious” (*Everyman*) “The scene obscure, characters unintelligible, / Action mere mystifying” (Rubinstein 6)). In both prologues, the characters which are going to emerge on stage are referenced. Therefore, the Messenger mentions some qualities that appear later in the play as personified abstractions (fellowship, strength, and beauty). The Ego, on the other hand, provides a complete list of *dramatis personae* by mentioning himself, Melody, Curiosity, Memory, Conscience, Hope, Fear, Life Force and Nerves. Finally, both the Messenger and the Ego openly declare the aims of the plays they are introducing, these aims being, interestingly, entirely opposite. “[T]he intent of it is more gracious/ And sweet to bear away” (*Everyman*) the Messenger promises, “For ye shall here, how our heavenly king/ Calleth Everyman to a general reckoning:/ Give audience, and here what he doth say” (*Everyman*). What the audience should expect is, then, an instructive story of Everyman's painful soul-searching concluded with a severe but fair and gracious morale. In contrast, The Ego's statement of purpose heralds pure entertainment: “So we .../ Proclaim our purpose ... / We purpose, then, to entertain you” (6).

It is worth noticing that both speakers allude to the concepts of conscience and eternal sleep. In *Insomnia*, Stern Conscience appears as one of the characters in the play. The fact that it is just one of many ideas which the play discusses and that it is accompanied by such comrades as Melody or Curiosity, clearly builds up on the Ego's promise that providing entertainment is the paramount objective of the show. In *Everyman*, on the other hand, the viewer is told from the start that the play concerns a “general reckoning.” Its subject, therefore, will be a detailed examination of conscience in face of death. What is more, this portent comes with a frightful warning: “Be you never so gay! / Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet, / Which in the end causeth thy soul to weep/ When the body lieth in clay” (*Everyman*). Paradoxically, towards the end of *Insomnia*, the viewer notices that the play touches upon the idea of conscience in a much broader manner than could be suspected from the prologue. It is true that, unlike *Everyman*,

The Ego does not confront death. It does, however, confront insomnia, whose appearance is triggered by nothing else than an unclean conscience. Only its close examination can help with fighting the enemy which is not as frightful as death, but certainly very inconvenient: the protagonist's inability to fall asleep. Thus, the two types of sleep are compared in these two plays: the eternal sleep, which is feared, perceived as a punishment but eventually accepted, and the restful sleep, which is desired, perceived as a reward, and, in the end, granted. As for the ideas of eternal rest, Rubinstein gives this concept a theatrical twist by equalling “the last sleep of all” with the ending of the performance, or with the moment “when these our actors,/ Being, as I remarked before, all spirits,/ Are faded into air” (6). In his words, the theatre becomes the world proper – the centre of the universe, and the length of the performance becomes the life expectancy. Beyond it awaits eternity of ordinary existence, of which the audience are not told whether it is disturbing or enticing. In the medieval play, eternal sleep appears with all its finality, dreadful and inescapable, represented with images of decay as “the body lieth in clay” (*Everyman*).

Finally, the prologue definitely alludes to Shakespeare's 1611 tragicomedy *The Tempest*, a play widely-discussed in the context of dreaming. According to Rustin and Rustin, it is exactly the dream-like character of *The Tempest* which allows the most meaningful explorations of its themes. There is sometimes no clear distinction between the dream and the reality in the play; in fact, the combination of two worlds is a part of a larger pattern and “the whole point of the setting and action of the play is to bring many different worlds — aristocratic and rustic, young and old, everyday and magical — together” (97). While *The Tempest* belongs to Shakespeare's so called “last plays,” even in the first half of Shakespeare's career he was already using sleep “as a metaphor for the fluid boundaries between reality and illusion, life and art, theater and dream” (Benington qtd. in Sherman 179). One should remember, however, that the theme of reality and illusion (understood as the ontological distinction between the dream world and the real world) appears in the lyric poetry from around 1570. Shakespeare adapts this theme to his own literary needs, just as Rubinstein adapts it later and translates it so that it suits his agenda in *Insomnia*.

As noted by Sherman, on the most basic level the importance of dreaming in *The Tempest* expresses itself in the fact that both being asleep and being disturbed from sleep have significant consequences (179); in fact, “virtually every character . . . apart from the spirits is at some point associated literally or figuratively with sleep” (Hall qtd. in Sherman 179). What is more, “Shakespeare's entire corpus testifies to a deep and enduring preoccupation with sleep and

dreams” (Sherman 179). According to Ronald Hall, in his plays Shakespeare makes a reference to sleep over a thousand times (qtd. in Sherman 179). As Sherman explains, while words “sleep” and “dream” do not appear in *The Tempest* as often as in, for example, *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Richard III*, the play's omnipresent dreamlike atmosphere expresses itself in other elements, such as its fantastical and changeable setting, logical inconsistencies or reliance on music (179-180). What is more, the play makes use of what Sebastian himself calls in Act 2 Scene 1 “sleepy language,” which is why Sherman indicates *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's “most profound exploration of somniloquy, plumbing the power of . . . language about sleep, language in sleep, and even language that brings on sleep” (180). All these sleep and dream references, which in an obvious way correlate with Freud's vision of dream as a tool for bringing what is hidden to the surface, culminate in Prospero's famous monologue “Our revels are now ended” and in the play's epilogue, to which Rubinstein makes several allusions in the second part of the prologue to *Insomnia*. Thus, two among the most widely-recognisable fragments of *The Tempest*:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. . . . (4.1.165-175)

and

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
And what strength I have's mine own,  
Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,  
I must be here confined by you,  
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,  
Since I have my dukedom got  
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell

In this bare island by your spell;  
But release me from my bands  
With the help of your good hands:  
Gentle breath of yours my sails  
Must fill, or else my project fails,  
Which was to please. (5 Epilogue 1-12)

find their way into an early-twentieth-century morality play. The correlations between Rubinstein's and Shakespeare's plays in these fragments are explicit. First of all, Rubinstein's use of the expression "dismal revels" evokes an immediate association with the first line from Prospero's monologue. By referring to the events of the play as "revels" both Shakespeare and Rubinstein bring the viewer's attention to the dreamlike quality of what has been or is to be presented on stage; the word "spirit" could refer to both actors and demons, and the phrase "melted into air" marks the border between dream and reality: between the stage and off-stage. It is worth noticing that while Prospero indicates the fleeting character of theatrical performances only towards the end of the play, The Ego does it at the beginning, thus forewarning the audience that they should not treat *Insomnia* too seriously. Furthermore, both monologues reach towards a meta-theatrical level by laying bare their belonging to the theatrical world. Thus, while Prospero mentions "the great globe itself" (Shakespeare 4.1.170) which is an explicit reference to his theatre The Globe and calls his spectacle "an insubstantial pageant" (4.1.172), The Ego names *Insomnia* "a self-respecting modern play;"(6) in this way, The Ego's mind *becomes* the stage. Finally, Rubinstein decides to include in his prologue, next to metatextual allusions, also a quotation from Shakespeare's play. His lines "when these our actors,/ Being, as I remarked before, all spirits,/ Are faded into air,/ And like the baseless fabric of this vision"(6) correspond with Shakespearian "These our actors,/ As I foretold you, were all spirits and/Are melted into air, into thin air:/ And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, our little life/ Is rounded with a sleep" (Shakespeare 4.1.172-175). Interestingly, two important adjustments made by Rubinstein should be noted, namely exchanging "foretold" for "remarked," in order to modernise the text, and cutting the final words from Prospero's monologue. For those audience members who were well-acquainted with *The Tempest* enough to finish the quotation on their own, dropping the lines "our little life/ Is rounded with a sleep" (Shakespeare 174-175) in combination with the play's title must have functioned as a foreshadowing. Using the phrase "as I remarked before" to introduce a quotation from *The Tempest* can also be read as The Ego's comic attempt to identify himself with Shakespeare.

Another aspect worth noting is the correspondence between the latter part of Rubinstein's prologue and Shakespeare's epilogue. As Shakespeare does in Prospero's last words, so Rubinstein uses the prologue to establish a connection with the audience and secure its good graces. The Ego's statement that they "dedicate these dismal revels/ To those who know us – craving their good-will, / From a safe distance" (6) reflects Prospero's request to the audience to "release him from his bonds/ with the help of their good hands" (Epilogue 8-9). Finally, both monologues promise the audience that their aim is (or in the case of Prospero, was) to please it.

One should note also how Rubinstein combines the declaration of this objective with the concept of utilitarianism: a nineteenth-century ethical system which saw the government's main function as producing "the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people" ("Nineteenth-Century"). It should be noted that the understanding of what a "utilitarian play" is changed significantly throughout the previous century and may refer to different aesthetic and social functions of theatre. Alan Read, for example, perceives utilitarian drama as the theatre of the everyday, untainted by "regard for discipline's boundaries or theoretical loyalties (104):" a theatre in which the audience participates in performance which becomes a communal practice. Such a theatre

would serve causes such as political and social needs, it would be used to provide comradeship and community for those who are isolated, it was an excuse to eat together and to conduct relations outside and away from the family circle and home, it was an opportunity to confront neighbours ... it was an opportunity for those who felt prejudice and disrespect to redress wrongs visited on them. (Read 104)

"This was a utilitarian theatre because everyday life was not expected to cease an entry to, and participation in it," Read adds. In "The Theatre of Attractions," Lars Kleberg supplies a more ideologically-oriented vision of it by stating that "the objective of every utilitarian theatre (agit, poster, health education, etc.) is to guide the spectator in the desired direction (frame of mind)" (78). Howard Barker, on the other hand, presents an understanding of utilitarianism in English theatre compatible with Rubinstein's: "We need not rehearse here the domination of English theatre by post-1956 semi-nationalist, semi-socialist critical values and the continuing utilitarianism that fuels it," he states, "except to emphasize that in populist cultures the entertainment nexus is precisely utilitarian" (n.p.). Therefore, both Barker in his study and Rubinstein in his play, comply with the nineteenth-century interpretation of utilitarian mission which was, in colloquial terms, to make people happy by taking care of their well-being. According to them, theatre could do that by providing entertainment.

Finally, it should be noted that *The Tempest* is also a play widely-discussed in the context of psychoanalysis. The majority of such criticism is concerned with Caliban and his potential role as the dark side of Prospero's nature, or the idea of Caliban and Ariel as two contradictory externalisations of Prospero's psyche. Also the psychoanalytical outlook on dreaming constitutes a significant part of the Freudian analyses of *The Tempest*. "If Shakespeare can be said to have written a dream poem, it may be *The Tempest* rather than *Midsummer Night's Dream*," states Sherman, "indeed, some modern productions have gone so far as to set the play as an elaborate psychodrama taking place within the mind of Prospero" (180). It is in such understanding of *The Tempest* that the play's potential for a psychoanalytical reading is the clearest.

In *Insomnia*, one of the most significant connection between the play and psychoanalysis is the protagonist himself: The Ego. As mentioned above, Freud's personality theory proposed a tripartite division of human psyche into distinct aspects: id, ego and superego. Id is the instinctive, primeval, and unconscious part of personality which contains all the inborn attributes acquired at birth, such as the sex instinct and the aggressive instinct. Since it never interacts with the external world, it stays unaffected by reality, experience, or rational thinking and so it does not evolve throughout a person's life in any way. Based on the pleasure principle, Id is responsive to instincts and wants every need to be satisfied immediately. Since it is inherited, the personality of a new-born baby consists solely of Id, upon which the Ego and the Superego are later developed. Freud has defined Ego as "that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world" (*The Ego* 15). It functions as the mediator between id and the outer world, which means that it is more reasonable, rational and reflective and takes into account expectations and rules of society. As in the case of Id, Ego's chief objective is attaining pleasure, but it follows the reality principle, which means that Ego seeks realistic methods of obtaining satisfaction and sometimes delays it to conform to social norms. Anxiety can result from Ego's failure to observe the reality principle. Finally, superego, which is developed around the age of three, makes use of social values acquired from others, controls Id's aggressive and sexual impulses, and motives Ego to forgo realistic goals for the sake of moral ones in its struggle for perfection. Superego is composed of two elements, namely the conscience and the ideal self. The ideal self represents the version of the self which a person wishes for, in terms of one's career, fulfilling social obligations or their relationships with others. The conscience may punish the Ego by causing the feeling of guilt, if ego fails to satisfy the demands of the ego-ideal, or the ideal self.

It is easy to determine that through the employment of allegory and personification, *Insomnia* concerns itself primarily with the strained relationship between ego and superego; even if, paradoxically, neither character says much, which is all the more surprising given that The Ego is the protagonist. Conscience is from the beginning portrayed as a stern, unrelenting, slightly ridiculous figure, “a Constable, truncheon in hand” who “paces ceaselessly the length of the stage” (Rubinstein 5), and later “pursues his even course, his footsteps resounding like the ticks of a clock” (7). After the prologue ends, Memory, Curiosity, Hope, Fear and, reluctantly, The Ego, discuss the Junior Clerk's insomnia, meanwhile humorously depicting to the audience its destructive effects: “Oh, those awful twelve strokes – clock after clock – scourging the mind like lashes on the body! It's enough to drive one mad” (Rubinstein 8). It does not take The Ego long, however, to identify the reason behind his sleep deprivation.

FEAR. . . . I tell you, we shan't ever sleep again! There is something horrible the matter with us.  
 . . .  
 CURIOSITY. If it were indigestion, we should feel something – in another place – shouldn't we?  
 THE EGO. Of course we should. Of course it's not indigestion... (*pointing to CONSCIENCE, as he tramps his course*). It's that beast making such a row!

It is worth noting that in the context of Freud's theory, the appearance of Fear on stage has its own significance. As Freud explains, “we can tell what lies hidden behind the ego's dread of the super-ego, its fear of conscience” (*The Ego* 55). This play is a one-act comedy, however. Its entertaining tone entails that what The Ego feels towards Conscience is not true fear, but a slight irritation at best, which can be seen in Conscience's response to The Ego's accusation: “Come come, it's my business to keep an eye on you, night and day, and you know it. If I annoy you, you may be sure you are being justly punished for something you have done wrong” (Rubinstein 9). “I've done nothing wrong. Have I, Memory?” (Rubinstein 9), The Ego responds, which sets him on the path towards self-discovery. As Everyman, The Ego takes up the journey unwillingly and initially resists looking at his “Book of accounts:” “Not now, please, Memory. The more we remember, the less likely we are to get to sleep” (9). Later he adds: “To get to sleep – one must think of nothing (9). It seems, therefore, that in denying “having done anything wrong,” The Ego either lies to his comrades, or to himself; were his conscience genuinely clean, he would not be afraid of remembering his past. Thus, the combination of fear and conscience, which psychoanalysis indicates as the causes of serious mental conditions such as neurosis, in Rubinstein's play receives a humorous twist. The Ego may be accompanied by Fear, but what

he actually fears is not conscience but exhausting consequences of insomnia. Finally, it is clear that at this point in the play, the protagonist's understanding of his own situation is superficial. It will take him some time to realise that only a direct confrontation with his memory and Conscience can relieve him of insomnia.

Following the short play, a medieval-oriented reader becomes increasingly aware of the ongoing process of “psychologisation” of the morality play. In *Everyman*, a representative of the entire mankind is punished and warned to follow the prescriptions of the most influential philosophy of the contemporary era. He undertakes a journey at whose end awaits remorse, realisation of his mistakes, and peaceful acceptance of God's will. In *Insomnia*, a modern everyman is placed within the framework of one of the most powerful psychological theories of that time. Both protagonists have to examine their conscience; it is the gravity of the situation which makes them do it that differs. The story arc, is, however, very similar: both characters commit some wrongdoing, both are punished for it, and both experience an epiphany about what they did wrong. Paradoxically, although in the end Everyman dies and The Ego goes to sleep, in fact, they are both figuratively awoken: the former – to the vision of life eternal and the possibility of repentance, the latter – to the psychologically-conceived cause of his insomnia. In other words, one play investigates the soul of the protagonist, and the other his mind, which reflects the shift in the world view that separates the Middle Ages from modernity. Additionally, it is worth noting that Memory metaphorically combines the idea of sleep and death by quoting from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

MEMORY.       *(nodding gravely)*. In the words of the old  
tag: *(He declaims.)*  
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care.  
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath.  
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course –  
Er –, er – (Rubinstein 9)

The intertextual connection between *Insomnia* and *Macbeth* is by no means surprising, as the tragedy is extensively concerned with the themes of sleep and insomnia. Memory remembers only three lines of the monologue (in fact, he is not even sure which play they come from: “Shakespeare . . . Hamlet I expect. . . No, Macbeth” (Rubinstein 10)), but the borrowed snippet comes from a longer passage in which Macbeth describes to Lady Macbeth his auditory hallucinations after murdering Duncan:

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!

Macbeth does murder sleep' – the innocent sleep,  
 Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,  
 The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
 Chief nourisher in life's feast,-- (2.2.47-52)

In one of the most widely-recognisable fragments of the play, Macbeth states that he thought he heard a voice which told him that he should never sleep again. Macbeth “murders sleep” because he slays Duncan when the king sleeps, unarmed and vulnerable. In the monologue, sleep appears as a state in which problems are resolved: a temporary revocable and curative death, as a metaphorical bath after an arduous day, and a fundamental life force. Throughout the play, sleep symbolises innocence, peace, and restoration. Insomnia (as somnambulism), on the other hand, is strongly connected with guilt and anxiety. Lady Macbeth sleepwalks because she is troubled by the reminiscence of the homicide committed by her husband, and Macbeth suffers from nightmares. Although the tone and the scale of guilt in *Macbeth* and *Insomnia* are entirely different, there is an undebatable similarity between the depiction and the symbolic meaning of sleep and sleeplessness as conveyed in both plays. Both Macbeth and Junior Clerk associate sleep with rest and peace, and both have trouble sleeping due to offences which they committed and which burden their conscience.

In broad terms, therefore, *Insomnia* dramatises the superego's overpowering influence on the ego, or in other words, the ego's inability to meet the expectations of the ego-ideal. Freud claims that “Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will . . . ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is mental, between the external world and the internal world” (*The Ego* 29). Rubinstein’s play examines this contrast by looking into the protagonist's mind and assessing how well he functions in the real world. The result of this assessment is that while remaining in an ongoing conflict with his conscience, Junior Clerk cannot reach the ideal, the immaculate version of himself, which results in insomnia.

MEMORY. . . . On Thursday we resorted to a doze in the office.

THE EGO. (*suddenly in pain*). Ow! (*CONSCIENCE is standing behind him, prodding him with his truncheon*)

MEMORY. (*shaking his head*). Yes, yes indeed, well may our Conscience prick us! And it is not the first time we have succumbed during office hours.

THE EGO. (*to CONSCIENCE*). I won't do it again. Please leave me alone now. (*CONSCIENCE resumes his pacing*). I'm so tired and the night is already far advanced. (Rubinstein 8)

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud states clearly that “The tension between the demands of

conscience and the actual attainments of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt” (*The Ego* 29). Throughout the play the protagonist investigates his feeling of guilt, and, as mentioned before, the climax relies on the source of this feeling being revealed. As the action progresses, the reader learns that The Ego used to be a womanizer, but now he has fallen in love with a girl called Marjory. Although Memory teases him about countless sweethearts he used to “love” just as much (“How many times have we expressed this sentiment in other connections, old Memory?” (Rubinstein 11)), Life Force, speaking as if on The Ego's behalf, declares firmly: “I never *meant* it before!” and about his past girlfriends he states decisively “Hang them all! Marjory's worth the lot of them put together!” (Rubinstein 11). It is this discussion, which finally reveals to The Ego the cause of his sleeplessness:

THE EGO. She is never out of my thoughts. . . . (*CONSCIENCE, behind him, begins to prod with his truncheon*). What's the matter?

CONSCIENCE. You want to know why you can't get to sleep at nights. You've just given us the reason.

THE EGO. What was I saying? About Marjory... I was saying she was always in my mind. So she is... You mean the thought of her keeps me awake?

CONSCIENCE. I mean something more than that. *I* keep you awake. (Rubinstein 13)

The short exchange confirms to the audience two important facts. First, that as Conscience's behaviour has foreshadowed earlier in the play, the sense of guilt he brings with him causes insomnia. Second, that this sense of guilt is unconscious. This reflects some of Freud's findings about the workings of conscience:

In our analyses we discover that there are people in whom the faculties of self-criticism and conscience . . . are unconscious and unconsciously produce effects of the greatest importance . . . . But this new discovery, which compels us, in spite of our better critical judgement, to speak of an unconscious sense of guilt, bewilders us . . . and sets us fresh problems, especially when we gradually come to see that in a great number of neuroses an unconscious sense of guilt of this kind plays a decisive economic part and puts the most powerful obstacles in the way of recovery (*The Ego* 17).

Therefore, when placed in the psychoanalytical context, *Insomnia*, while being a rather simplistic play, reaches an unexpected level of complexity. “An interpretation of the normal, conscious sense of guilt (conscience) presents no difficulties; it is based on the tension between the ego and the ego ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency” (*The Ego* 46), Freud explains. *Insomnia*, however, is set in the protagonist's mind, which up to a point is filled with confusion about where from his feeling of guilt comes. The operations of conscience and the self-critical mechanism depicted in the play, work on the

unconscious level, and as such, according to Freud, are more difficult to interpret.

The dialogue continues to specify the nature of The Ego's misdemeanour:

THE EGO.       What have I done?

CONSCIENCE. You've just confessed what you've done! Always thinking of that girl!

THE EGO.       Why shouldn't I?

CONSCIENCE. Let your conscience tell you why you shouldn't. You're neglecting your office work. . . .

You're deteriorating all round. Your sloppy ways are becoming the talk of the whole staff. (Rubinstein 13)

Thus, in the inconspicuous climax, the source of Junior Clerk's sense of guilt is uncovered. Conscience proceeds to interrogate The Ego about his laziness and different office duties he neglected (“What time did you arrive at the office this morning?” (14), “How long did you take over lunch? . . . Five and twenty minutes over the time allotted!” (14), “And *did* you post that letter?” (14)). Just as Everyman, who must confront death to understand his misconduct, Junior Clerk has to confront conscience to learn about how he sinned. “I've been meaning to have it out with you for a long time” (Rubinstein 14), declares Conscience, and then informs The Ego that the only way to make amends is to give up the girl. This leads to an argument, with Life Force proclaiming: “I won't give her up. Nothing will induce me to” (Rubinstein 15), Hope arguing that “There is no danger at present” (15), and Fear taking Conscience's side: “But think what you are risking! Your whole career is in the balance! You will never get a job anywhere else!” (15). To this, Memory responds with another quotation from Shakespeare, stating that “Thus conscience doth make cowards... [of us all]” (15) which is a line borrowed from *Hamlet*, spoken by the prince in the famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy. Hamlet concludes that fear of conscience and of what comes after death ultimately makes people choose life over suicide. It is clear, therefore, that in *Insomnia* applying this quotation has a humorous purpose, as what Conscience, personified on stage, does in the play actually makes other characters fear him.

A further nod to Freudian legacy in the play comes in the character of Some Nerves, which appear in the final stage directions, right before the 'Curtain':

*In the middle of the confusion, to strains of music, a Chorus of Nerves, little bobbing figures in jazz coloured overalls, wielding red-hot poker, emerge from all sides, prodding and tumbling the other Characters in all directions, finally joining hands and dancing around The Ego, to his despair and fury, as the curtain descends. (Rubinstein 19)*

As stated by Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, although the concept of hysteria comes from antiquity and goes back to Hippocrates, it only started to receive wider attention

at the end of the nineteenth century thanks to the works of Jean-Martin Charcot. Two perspectives on the problem emerged at that time: one viewing hysteria as a form of self-suggestion or even simulation, the other seeing it as a “legitimate” disease with well-defined symptoms and on par with neurological conditions (195). Freud learnt from Charcot that although impalpable, ideas can be the cause of neurosis, and that the nature of hysteria can only be properly investigated by turning to psychology, not neurology (Storr 17). His future cooperation with Josef Breuer, an eminent Austrian physician and an inventor of the “talking cure,” propelled further discoveries. Breuer came to the conclusion that every symptom of hysteria can be cured by making the patient re-experience via hypnosis the emotion accompanying its original appearance. These findings they presented in their 1895 work *Studies on Hysteria* (Storr 17) and pinpointed in a famous sentence from its initial chapter: “Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (Freud and Breuer 7). In 1896, Freud made another momentous claim about the nature of hysteria stating that “Whatever case and whatever symptom we take as our point of departure, in the end we infallibly come to the field of sexual experience” (“The Aetiology” 199). Indeed, Freud's study on hysteria constitutes an integral part of his theory system as it was exactly “in the process of bringing the psychical aetiology of hysteria to light that psycho-analysis made its principal discoveries: the unconscious, phantasy, defensive conflict and repression, identification, transference” (Laplanche and Pontalis 195).

Freudian claims related to hysteria are relevant to Rubinstein's play because it ends with a depiction of a hysterical fit. After the discussion about giving up Marjory (THE EGO. “Hear, hear! We'll put it to the vote! Those in favour of shutting up? Those against? The ayes have it, thank goodness!” (16)), The Ego prepares to sleep but suddenly hears a tune from *The Tales of Hoffman*, which pushes him over the brink:

THE EGO        Leave me alone! Leave me alone! I won't have it, I tell you!... I will go to sleep! I will! (*he tries again – ones more MELODY breaks out softly*). Back to your kennel! Do you hear me? (*Another pause, and again MELODY obliges*). I shall murder somebody!

CONSCIENCE    Come, come now, it's no good exciting yourself!

THE EGO        (*by this time quite beside himself*). Will you shut up? I will excite myself! Do you hear me? I'm going to excite myself! I'm boss here, and don't you forget it!

Thus, in Freudian terms, in the final line quoted above, the ego attempts to establish his dominance over conscience (a part of the super ego). This conflict results in a brawl that breaks out among all characters, which represents hysteria. The Ego throws himself at Curiosity, then

Memory, Fear (who proclaims: “I always said we should come to a violent end!” (18)), Melody, Hope (with another reference to a Shakespearean play: “THE EGO. Et tu, Brute!” (18)), Life Force and, finally, Conscience. In the final scene of *Insomnia*, “*all [characters] speak at once, THE EGO hurling himself at the speakers in turn*” (18).

MEMORY. Our nerves have been getting gradually worse, ever since I can remember. . . .

CURIOSITY. (*showing mild interest*). What a funny state of mind we are in. I wonder if there's anything the matter with us. . . .

FEAR. (*shaking*). We're going to have a nervous breakdown! I knew we would. It's been coming on for years. . . .

. . .

LIFE FORCE. Oh Marjory! Marjory! I wish she could know how ill I am; she'd be so sympathetic. I hope I do get ill, and she comes and nurses me. . . .

CONSCIENCE (*rebuking them in turn*). Now then, now then, what's the good of going on like this? Keep calm, can't you? It's all your own fault. You shouldn't be carrying on like this with that sweetheart of yours, etc. (Rubinstein 18-19)

Thus, the conflict between ego and super ego is finally resolved in a fight. It is worth noting that although there is not enough detail supplied in the play to speak with certainty about the protagonist's sexual life, there is an indication of his frequent changes of partners and his disappointment with these relationships. Since Freud argues that different types of neurosis result from sexual dissatisfaction, a link can be posited between the protagonist's relationship history and the “hysterical” resolution of Rubinstein's play.

Finally, it is worth noting that while the inclusion of such characters as Memory, Curiosity, Conscience, Fear or Hope results from Rubinstein's decision to follow the pattern of morality tradition, their stage descriptions clearly indicate a connection with yet another form of Renaissance drama: a one that arrived later than moralities, did not have an educational purpose, originated in Italy and employed stock characters: namely, *commedia dell'arte*. Hugh Macrae Richmond explains that, as implied by the name, *commedia dell'arte* was a form of professional street theatre which employed “skilled professionals following elaborate conventions of character and stage business, which could be adapted *extempore* to various traditional plot outlines, as audience reactions dictated or invited” (113). As Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick state, *commedia dell'arte* emerged in the sixteenth-century Italy “as a popular Italian theatre form in which actors created stock characters, some in half masks, who improvised dialogue from plot scenarios . . . [and it] flourished throughout Europe into the eighteenth century” (1). Although born in Italy, *commedia* made impact on drama in many European

countries, especially France. The form was known to English audiences as well, and sometimes Italian touring groups even staged it on professional London stages. These occasions were, however, infrequent, in part due to the Londoner's unwillingness to accept actresses on the stage. In fact, not only was *commedia* known to English theatregoers, but it also influenced chief Renaissance English playwrights. Shakespeare, for example, included many *commedia*-inspired characters in his comedies, such as the “mask” figures of Gremio, Grumio, Tranio, Baptista, Vincentio and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*, or Holofernes and Don Armado in *Love's Labour Lost*. While Shakespeare's characters drawn from *commedia dell'arte* are mostly “soften[ed] and sweeten[ed],” original Italian plots explore such human vices as cynicism, viciousness, adultery, or lewdness (113).

Characters of *commedia* were stock types. To the male group of characters belonged Pantaloon, the Captain, a Doctor, the Inamorato, and the servants: Harlequin, Brighella and Scapino. Into the female group fell Inamorata, Soubrette (her confidante), as well as Canterina and Ballerina who supplied interludes to the main plot (Cuddon 161). As J.A. Cuddon states, plots of *commedia dell'arte* usually focused on love intrigues involving society members of different age and social standing. The performance and the action were often improvised after only a preliminary rehearsal so as to fit the local expectations, which is why the success of the play would mostly rely on comic talents of performers. In their show they would often incorporate music, farcical elements, pantomime and buffoonery (161). According to Robert Henke, however, the improvised nature enforced some degree of general structure which would unite the movements of all characters. The plays usually centre on one main romantic plot in which a lover is prevented from pursuing his or her romantic interest. Generational conflict often provides framework for the plot, with one lover's father serving as obstacle

either because of financial reasons or because the father has erotic designs of his own. Alternatively, a lover (usually female, in this case) is obstructed by the perfidy or forgetfulness of her beloved. Against the obstruction, the lover either enlists the help of the primo zanni (“the first servant” . . . ) or enacts a plot herself, sometimes aided by disguise. (Henke 13)

Despite apparent repetitiveness and simplicity, the plots and counterplots of *commedia* could become quite complex, “involving disguises, misunderstandings, plots within plots, impersonations, and magical deceptions” (Henke 14).

Two of *Insomnia* characters, that is Pantaloon and Pierrot have definite origins in *commedia dell'arte*. Especially Memory, described as “Pantaloon” invites an immediate association with *commedia dell'arte*, in which Pantaloon would appear as one of the stock characters. As Peter

Jordan states in “Pantalone and il Dottore: The Old Men of Commedia,” it is these two characters who “with their frequently symbiotic relationship ... now stand out as the leading exemplars of professional senescence in our current conception of the Commedia dell'Arte” (63). They played, Jordan explains, the major role in the generational conflict between fathers and children around which the comedies revolved. In fact, Pantalone de' Bisognosi evolved from an even earlier old man figure of *commedia dell'arte* called “the Magnifico.” The character was in the beginning a part of a status-based master-servant duo which constituted a slapstick ancestor of the later, more complicated plots (63).

It must be stressed that while the connection of *Insomnia* with Freud's theory is indubitable, the psychoanalytical reading of Rubinstein's play has not been the only aim of this analysis. The primary objective was to show one of the directions in which the medieval morality becomes transferred into a modern framework in the first half of the twentieth century. Although such works as Arthur Simmons's *Conflict* also modernise the medieval genre by referring to contemporary events such as World War II, they retain their original Christian focus. They preach in a less overt way than medieval moralities and their messages are less “final,” in the sense that their protagonists face an ethical dilemma and not death. *Insomnia*, however, goes further, since, as it has been argued earlier, it submits a moral play to the process of “psychologisation.” The didactic purpose of old moralities is, however, still achieved. Although Rubinstein's one-act does not rely on “precept, except and exhortation” as its organising principle, and events within it do not represent “a sense of decorum based on a large body of pre-analysed doctrinal material” (Jones 215), it does “recommend certain patterns of choice and action to members of the audience” (215) and thus fits into the broadly-defined field of didactic literature. What is more, the intertextual connections with Shakespeare further broaden the contextual scope of the play. In this way, Rubinstein's *Insomnia*, while remaining in artistic terms trifle and simplistic, thanks to the curious combination of the medieval, the Elizabethan and the modern is simultaneously a sensation and a milestone in morality play's evolution. Combining a medieval religious dramatic genre with a novel and largely controversial theory bears witness to morality play as a form extraordinarily adaptable, capacious and able to discuss valid contemporaneous problems.

The situation is similar with *Insomnia*'s indebtedness to *commedia dell'arte*; the highly moralistic quality of English medieval religious drama and the rampant indecency of Italian Renaissance comedy are brought together to create an incongruous effect. Not only does the Modern Morality Play cease to educate the audience about proper Christian behaviour. It invites

associations with one of the most ribald theatrical forms, which was always meant for entertainment rather than reverent reflection (which purpose is even directly stated in the prologue to *Insomnia*). The connection of *Insomnia* to both the morality play and *commedia dell'arte* not only further confirms the adaptive potential of the morality play form in the twentieth century, but also comments on the twentieth-century theatre in general. It is a theatre, one should conclude, in which dramatic forms become extendable and in which combinations unthinkable for the theatre of earlier times, can happen.

Finally, it is interesting to observe that the morality play and *commedia dell'arte* share similar vicissitudes regarding their place in theatre history. According to Chaffee and Crick, although *commedia* thrived well into the eighteenth century, it eventually fell into obsolescence due to its lewd humour, bawdiness, and the general conviction that it was too base a form for serious theatre professionals. The cause of the decline of moralities was, obviously, the opposite. It was its Christian focus and outward moralising that became their bane. Still, like the moral play, *commedia dell'arte* disappeared from popular stages for a number of years to unexpectedly resurge, as Chaffee and Crick declare, in the beginning of the twentieth century: “A great many historical, technical, comparative, and philosophical books have been published about Commedia, and many performances using physical theatre and masks claim to be twentieth or twenty-first century versions of the Commedia style” (1). In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders asserts that “The inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning” (3). *Insomnia*'s connections with Freud's work, Shakespeare and *commedia dell'arte* attest to this statement.

### **Christmas morality plays: A case study of Edith Lyttelton's *A Christmas Morality Play* (1908) and Grace Latimer Jones's *What Makes Christmas Christmas: A Morality Play in One Act* (1916)**

Although Christmas morality plays technically belong to the group of religious Modern Moralities, it is worth considering them separately, since they illustrate an important trend: the emergence of Christmas literature.

As Sally Mitchell states in *Daily Life in Victorian England*, although England saw many new bank holidays introduced in the nineteenth century, the most significant change in this area was “the Victorian transformation of Christmas” (211), which started the process of

commercialising these festivities and of giving them the form known today. According to Mitchell, beginning from the seventeenth century, Christmas “had been a simple religious holiday for most respectable people” (211). It was thanks to Prince Albert's attachment to German traditions, however, that entirely new customs appeared at Windsor, such as, for example, decorating the Christmas tree. Soon, Christmas cards gained widespread popularity thanks to the establishment of the penny post, and from late November shops introduced their own Christmas preparations, which relied on lavish displays of luxury goods, groceries, and meat. The Christmas pudding took several days to prepare, on Christmas Eve family gathered for carol singing, and on the Christmas Day children got their sweets-filled stockings and Victorians would often perform small charity acts (211). Thus, by the 1860s, the middle-class Christmas emerged.

Significant additions to festivities were Christmas books and holiday annuals, which Mitchell defines as “a kind of gift book with poems, stories and handsome illustrations” (211). Megan Mulder states that the rise in popularity of gift annuals was caused mainly by the mechanization of printing and binding. The books were often packaged in silk, decorative paper or leather binding. The majority of the nineteenth-century annuals offered eclectic works, as their authors aimed to find balance between didactic tone and entertaining quality. Occasionally, religious or social institutions published gift books to raise funds and spread their message. A crucial element of annuals were pictures; the newly developed method of steel engraving brought with it highly detailed illustrations, and in the 1840s mass production of colour pictures became possible (Mulder n.p.). The popularity of annuals, both in Britain and in the USA, illustrates the most fundamental connection between Christmas and literature, which is the fact that stories and poems were offered as gifts. Out of this relationship new trends and practices emerged and were soon to become a Christmas tradition in England, for example the collective reading of Christmas ghost stories.

According to Caley Ehnes, the Christmas ghost story, besides being a source of Christmas entertainment, also had an important social and artistic function, as it “negotiated the cultural divide between the superstitions of the past and the rational scepticism of modernity” (7). Despite religion pervading the political and social sphere of the nineteenth-century English society, the Victorians had never entirely relinquished all the remnants of pagan belief, instead appropriating them to their current theological needs. Thus, they considered spirits disturbed souls imprisoned in purgatory and unable to find peace because of their sins. As Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell observe, sometimes Christianity and the supernatural

realm were perceived as interdependent. Walter Cassels, for example, argues that if the supernatural does not exist, Christianity must be discarded as well:

On the very threshold of enquiry into the origin or character of Christianity, we are brought face to face with the supernatural . . . This religion cannot be accepted without an emphatic belief in supernatural interposition, and it is absurd to imagine that its dogmas can be held, while the miraculous is rejected. (Cassels qtd. in Bown, Burdett and Thurschwell 6)

The Victorian's preoccupation with fairies and ghosts rests on one side of the spectrum. On the other, lies the fact that the Victorian era was an era of unprecedented technological progress and scientific discoveries. The so far unquestionable truth of the Bible starts to be challenged by such breakthrough treatises as Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and the birth of palaeontology brought by the first discoveries of dinosaur fossils. The relationship between science and religion grows increasingly tenuous throughout the century to culminate in a far-reaching secularisation. Such a doubly-constructed vision of Victorianism may make Bown, Burdett and Thurschwell's declaration that "The Victorians were haunted by ghosts" (1) seem one-sided. The scientific development and the Victorian fascination with the spiritual world are, however, more closely linked than it is commonly imagined. The contemporary world must have appeared rather supernatural to the Victorians: "Disembodied voices over the telephone, the superhuman speed of the railway, near-instantaneous communication through telegraph wires: the collapsing of time and distance achieved by modern technologies that were transforming daily life was often felt to be uncanny" (Bown, Burdett and Thurschwell 1).

Finally, the relevance of Christmas ghost stories to Modern Morality Plays must be established. While entirely different genres, ghost stories and moralities shared similar social function. Ehnes states that

the publication of Victorian ghost stories in Christmas numbers ultimately repositions the function of the ghost story by transforming it from a modern text participating in contemporary debates on spiritualism into a social text participating in the broader cultural project of reaffirming the nation's (religious) traditions in the face of (secular) modernity. (7)

An almost identical assumption can be made about Modern Moral Plays, both Christmas-themed and other. They re-emerged as a variable of a form which participated in the medieval debate on Christianity, and they became a part of the effort to address the problem of the nation's strenuous relationship with the secular and the spiritual. Even the secularised Modern Moralities propagated such Christian virtues as moderation of earthly ambitions, honesty, or diligence, in the attempt to reform contemporary men and women. The same pertains to the majority of Victorian ghost stories, since, as Ehnes notices, "The ghosts and goblins of

Dickens's Christmas fiction address and attempt to correct the social ills of modern society through a secularized application of Christian values and behaviours" (7).

Ehnes adds that

While the themes of Christmas ghost stories explicitly address social issues and secular, middle-class cultural values, the morals and social traditions promoted by Christmas fiction cannot exist outside of the era's contemporary conversations about the place of religion in a modern, industrial society. (7)

There lies another correspondence between the Victorian ghost fiction and moralities, since morality plays can be viewed as a continuation of the "contemporary conversations about the place of religion." With Nietzsche and existentialism, the twentieth century becomes the time in which these discussions are heightened. As Bown, Burdett and Thurschwell claim, Victorians mocked their own interest in the supernatural through satires and skits (1). Still, they often genuinely believed in occult and the spirit world simply because in their highly sceptical era they were enticed by the old-fashioned idea that "reality might be transfigured by something above and beyond" (1). Modern Morality Plays, especially the ones which retain the religious focus, seem to arise from similar motivation. Their return at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the process of secularization and scientific advancement in England was at its highest, reflects the general demand for the non-scientific. "The supernatural was both fearful and terrible and ardently desired" by the Victorians, Bown, Burdett and Thurschwell state. Perhaps the same can be said about religion challenged by Victorian discoveries and such philosophies as nihilism, and about the Edwardians who also "ardently desired" the return to the comforting presence of God, or at least simple Christian values.

As Louise Henson states, it was Dickens and his Christmas works that established the connection between Christmas and the supernatural world of ghosts (44). Elaine Ostry claims that although the tradition of exchanging Christmas books came from Germany in the 1800s, in England this custom was started by Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. In his study of Dickens, G.K. Chesterton so describes this most famous of all Christmas novellas ever written:

The tone of the tale is everywhere irregular and in some places weak. It has the same kind of artistic unity that belongs to a dream. . . . The incidents change widely; the story scarcely changes at all. *A Christmas Carol* is a kind of philanthropic dream, an enjoyable nightmare in which the scenes shift bewilderingly and seem as miscellaneous as the pictures in a scrapbook, but in which there is one constant state of the soul, a state of rowdy benediction and a hunger for human faces. (85)

It should be stressed, however, that Dickens's Christmas stories functioned in a broader context than this of Victorian holiday entertainment. Ostry indicates it by stating that in Christmas books Dickens "uses fancy, especially in the form of the fairy tale, to communicate his social

vision” (79). This social vision relied especially strongly on his utopian ideas of “hope, charity and memory” (79). “Utopia in these books,” explains Ostry, “is not just related to a vision of a better time, but to the current enjoyment of the senses” (79). Dickens's Christmas utopia also has a didactic dimension, in which the conflation of the familiar and the unfamiliar plays a crucial role:

The Christmas books chronicle the struggle between the monster and the fairy, the wilderness and home. These texts play with ideas of utopia as Dickens posits Christmas and the home as respectively, utopian time and space. Furthermore, he tells readers how to behave in order to create a society one step closer to perfection. (Ostry 79)

This “household utopia” (Chase and Levenson qtd. in Ostry 79), however, is also a dystopia, since Dickens criticises the society and exposes the limits of the utopian tradition (Moylean qtd. in Ostry 80). As Ostry indicates, the fairy-tale nature of the five Christmas books can be inferred from their very titles: *A Christmas Carol in Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* (1843), *The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells that Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home* (1845), *The Battle of Life: A Love Story* (1846), and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain: A Fancy for Christmas-time* (1848). As fairy tales, these books displayed a deeply embedded connection with the oral tradition, were meant to be read aloud at Christmas, and “performed” in front of listeners, preferably at a family gathering (80-81). After establishing his own weekly magazine entitled *Household Words* in 1850, Dickens forsook writing Christmas books and instead cooperated on Christmas numbers together with other contributors. His Christmas stories differ from Christmas books in being more superficial, less interested in discussing serious social topics, and not as didactic (80).

Thanks to their performative potential, Ostry explains, Dickens's Christmas books were quickly adapted for stage (81). Eight theatre adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* appeared by February 1844, enhanced with songs and with heightened melodramatic qualities of the novella (Davis qtd. in Ostry 81). Other Christmas books also received a dramatic rendering and were staged throughout the nineteenth century and beyond (81). As Anne Humpherys reminds, despite the fact that the Theatre Regulation Act from 1737 allowed only two theatres to stage pre-approved drama, playgoing was on the rise as a popular form of entertainment throughout the nineteenth century. Audiences were mixed, coming from different social classes, and the dramatic form which dominated the stage was melodrama, also called a “mixed drama” because it combined action and music. New theatres were being built, including those dedicated specifically to

middle-class or working-class audiences. Under such circumstances, transcribing novels into plays was a natural and demanded process. The idea, in fact, came earlier, when novels gained popularity towards the end of the eighteenth century and when such works as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* were adapted for stage. Novels like *Jack Sheppard* by William Harrison Shepard, or Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* achieved enormous success as performances; the most frequently staged play of Dickens' was *Oliver Twist* (39-40), but each of Dickens's novels was dramatised and revived at least once throughout the nineteenth century. Humpherys states that these were dramatisations and sequels of his works which brought Dickens the largest part of his audience. Indeed, "it was through these adaptations that the lower middle, working and lower classes came to know and love Dickens," she adds. The disadvantage of his stage success was that, according to Robert A. Colby, it may have delayed critical appreciation of Dickens as an exquisite and important novelist (qtd. in Humpherys 40). As Humpherys asserts, Dickens was himself a great admirer of theatre, writing plays in his childhood and wanting to be an actor from his early years. Although the popularity of his novels mapped out another career for him, Dickens was active in amateur theatre throughout his life, for example by performing dramatic public readings of his novels. Moreover, he included much of his experience of theatre in his novels, which:

contain many scenes and characters directly related to it, from the narrator's commentary on the conventions of melodrama in chapter 17 of *Oliver Twist*, to the comic adventures of the theatrical Crummles family in *Nicholas Nickleby* and to Mr Wopsle's performance as Hamlet in *Great Expectations*. Melodrama and farce are threaded throughout all of his works. (Humpherys 40)

In the context of Christmas Modern Morality Plays, Dickens must be considered not only because of his obvious connection and foregrounding contribution to Christmas literature throughout the nineteenth century, but also because *A Christmas Carol* relates to the morality tradition on many levels. The paramount convergence between Dickens's novella and the morality plays is, of course, the theme. Both stories explore the theme of reviewing one's life in face of death (even if in the novella the death sentence turns out to be revocable). Both Everyman and Scrooge are visited by messengers sent to inform them about their upcoming demise (which are The Ghost of Christmas Future and Death respectively). Both are invited to re-examine their pasts, complete their "Books of accounts," face the decisions they once made, and eventually mend the error of their ways. Both Scrooge and Everyman suffer from lack of Good Deeds to balance their sheets, and, in a way, both manage to save themselves from a tragic end. Both *A Christmas Carol* and morality plays employ only black or white characters who serve clearly identifiable functions.

The connections between Dickens and the morality tradition, however, go beyond the similarities in plot and theme. For example, much like medieval dramatists, Dickens relies heavily on allegory in his construction of characters. This already becomes clear in the Preface, where he states: “I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it” (Dickens 3). The “Ghost of an Idea” which is supposed to put readers in good spirits is, of course, the allegorically represented idea of love and generosity which underlies the novella and becomes its chief message. But *A Christmas Carol* features more such embodiments. Following medieval morality play authors, Dickens calls to life characters which, although they do not bear allegorical names, very clearly allegorise different vices and virtues they aim to eradicate or promote. Conceived in this way, Ebenezer Scrooge embodies greed, and would probably be named Avarice in a medieval morality. Also the three ghost visitors that Scrooge receives clearly allegorise his mistakes and vices. Indeed, as John Mullan reflects, “The phantom as literary device enables Dickens to explore the social and moral issues central to his fiction: – poverty, miserliness, guilt, redemption” (Mullan n.p.).

What is more, he declares that “The ghosts borrow in their appearance from a tradition of allegory” (Mullan n.p.). Thus, The Ghost of Christmas Past who makes Scrooge relive the choices of his youth, personifies memory. The recollections, or as the Ghost calls them “shadows of the things that have been” (31) which Scrooge goes back to are painful, and so he is not willing to face them: ““Spirit!” said Scrooge, “show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?”” (41). In a similar way Everyman is forced to relive his life choices once he learns that the allies and resources he trusted are not going to accompany him in his pilgrimage towards death. The second spirit which comes to Scrooge, the Ghost of Christmas Present, is described lavishly and joyfully, surrounded by different attributes of abundance:

Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty’s horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door. (46)

He represents kindness and generosity, which Dickens considered chief qualities of

Christmas spirit. This ghost also introduces Scrooge to two other allegorical personifications in the novella, the children called Ignorance and Want, who are ugly and evil looking:

Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread. (66)

The ghost calls them Man's offspring and warns Scrooge against them: "Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" (67). Ignorance and Want, therefore, symbolise the society's indifference towards the underprivileged and their abandonment. Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, personifies death himself. His silent conduct and the images he shows Scrooge send the same warning underpinned with the *memento mori* motif that Death passes on to Everyman: that the end of life is inevitable, and that it often comes sooner than expected. All the examples given above justify the frequently held view of *A Christmas Carol* as the most famous of allegories.

Finally, the warning given to Scrooge points to the ultimate similarity between the novella and the medieval genre, which is the fact that they both belong to the extensive realm of didactic literature, and both overtly display their didactic intent. What is more, they both set out the same message and they both propagate Christian values of righteousness, forgiveness, generosity and moderation in all earthly endeavours. While Everyman goes to his grave redeemed, Scrooge continues his life journey, educated, improved, unscathed, overjoyed and relieved:

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears. . . . "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!" (85)

Of course, *A Christmas Carol* is a work much less religion-oriented than *Everyman*, and the ideals it promotes can probably be termed "Christmas," rather than "Christian" ideals. It also represents a much more complex idea of conversion than either medieval or Modern Moralities. In his article "Scrooge's Conversion," Don Richard Cox writes about Dickens's "vague nonsectarian Christianity, which often seems to be more a mixture of angels, holly, rum punch,

and the Golden Rule, than anything” (922), about the fact that Scrooge has not really sinned in the conventional sense of the word, and about his ethical transformation which is secular rather than Christian:

When Scrooge makes his promise to “honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year,” we do not necessarily feel that he has become infused with a religious spirit and henceforth is constantly going to honor a holy day. The spirit that has seized his heart is not an angelic one but one that more probably resembles the Ghost of Christmas Present, a jolly bacchanilian ghost. (922)

On the one hand, the ethical turn which Scrooge experiences after being haunted, does change him into a compassionate, generous, and warm-hearted man:

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him. (91-92)

It seems that his transformation is complete and that it instilled in him genuinely Christian virtues. As Cox points out, however, these are not holy spirits which guide Scrooge, but spirits of the material world, and the conversion he undergoes is, in fact, “not a holy . . . but an economic revelation” (922). Before he was a miser and now, cured of this vice, he endeavours to fix past mistakes by buying things for other people and sharing his money with the poor. In this sense, Cox concludes, Scrooge does not “really undergo a spiritual or moral conversion” (923), as he “simply exchanges one set of economic values for another” and “in doing so . . . comes to the rather secular conclusion that it is not money that brings happiness in life, but rather what money can buy” (923).

Finally, numerous Christmas drama traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century should be mentioned, as they provide the theatrical context for modern Christmas morality plays which appeared at that time. An example of such traditions are mummer's plays, performed in the holiday season. As Robert Squillace writes, the origins of these plays are pagan winter-solstice rituals, in which a symbolic assassination and resurrection of a personification of either the year or the sun was re-enacted. In the Middle Ages, mummer's plays became a part of Christmas celebrations, as Christian legends entered their thematic repertoire. Scenes of battles between Christian and Saracen were concluded with dead knights

being brought back to life by a comic doctor figure (173). The tradition of staging these plays during Christmas time survived till the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth.

The Victorian era was also the era of pantomime. In *Politics of the Pantomime*, Jill Sullivan devotes a chapter to “The gorgeous Christmas pantomime.” Preparations for those began in late November in playhouses around the country, which either staged their own pantomimes or bought them from London or other theatres, depending on their financial situation. Providing the audience with a show that met their expectations was crucial, since many theatres relied on the pantomime for a successful closure of the season and the injection of funds needed for repairs. The theatre-goers in the Midlands and the North West during the holiday season could see pantomimes in their fundamental form “which comprised the ‘opening’, culminating in a transformation scene, followed by a short harlequinade, and concluding with an optional finale, sometimes a ballet or tableau” (25-26). As Marty Gould explains, a pantomime appealed to audience members from different social strata and had a plot which

followed a pair of lovers as they work to overcome the obstacles presented by an authoritarian parent opposed to their union. Eventually, a good spirit or fairy intervenes, transforming the lovers into Harlequin and Columbine and their enemies into Pantaloon and Clown (Mayer qtd. in Gould 123). This transformation scene ushers in the Harlequinade, with its peculiar combination of spectacular visual effects and slapstick comedy. (123)

By the 1880s the duration of the pantomime was extended to around three and a half hours, and the customary day for a premiere was the Boxing Day (Sullivan 27). The shows were often underprepared and required a lenient attitude from the audience. As Sullivan recounts:

Most theatres shut for a rehearsal week prior to the first night, but such measures rarely guaranteed a flawless performance. Scenery would stick, the dancers were not necessarily performing in unison and lines were forgotten. Both press and audiences alike were sympathetic; the difficulties of the first night – often compounded by the piece overrunning until past midnight – were also regarded as yet another tradition. What would have been unforgivable in opera or drama was permitted at the pantomime. (27)

Gould states, however, that pantomime was only one of many genres which defined drama of the nineteenth-century England. Others included melodrama, with its small number of characters and gripping plot; a hybrid circus-theatre, which supplied large-scale productions often featuring live animals; comedy, which attracted mainly the middle class audience and through the mixture of humour and social critique explored such themes as marriage, morality, or family life; and farce, which was a more simplistic version of comedy that retained its interest in domestic problems, absurd situations, puns, fake identities and slapstick humour

(122). This is, in broad terms, the moment in the history of British drama and in the history of Christmas literature in England, which Edith Lyttelton's *A Christmas Morality* entered when it was first staged in 1908.

### ***Christmas Morality Play (1908): A Case Study***

Dame Edith Sophy Lyttelton (1865–1948), née Balfour, was a British playwright, novelist, and public servant. As recounted by Mark Pottle, she was born in Sankt Petersburg to a successful merchant as one of eight siblings. She received a private education and in London belonged to an aristocratic clique called “The Souls,” which also included her husband Alfred Lyttelton, a sportsman, a politician, and a nephew of W. E. Gladstone. Lyttelton made a considerable impact on her husband's career, advising him, encouraging him to pursue politics, urging him to support the suffrage cause, of which she was herself an advocate, and occasionally even speaking on his behalf. She also had a vast range of interests, one of which was imperialism that she was determined to promote. She did this, for example, through her activities within the Victoria League: an organisation she helped to establish which raised funds for aiding refugees, maintaining war graves and hosting imperial visitors in England (Pottle n.p.).

As stated by Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, Lyttelton published her first and only novel entitled *The Touch of Sorrow: A Study* (under the pseudonym “Edith Hamlet”) in 1896. After that, she turned towards writing drama and non-fiction (n.p.). Pottle explains that Lyttelton's involvement in the Edwardian movement against sweated labour found reflection in some of her plays, for instance in her first production from 1904, *Warp and Woof*, about the exploitation of female workers in the fashion industry, or in *The Thumbscrew*, a 1912 play performed only once at the Little Theatre. She was also a close friend of George Bernard Shaw. Lyttelton wrote seven plays in her lifetime, but most of them run only for a few weeks, and the last one (an adaptation of Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Tancred*) was heavily criticised by Virginia Woolf (Pottle n.p.). The most significant aspect of her dramatic interest, however, is Lyttelton's involvement with the morality play.

Brown, Clements, and Grundy assert that as one of the founders of the Morality Play Society, Lyttelton was especially interested in this form. In 1912, Lyttelton's Modern Morality *Peter's Chance: A Play in Three Acts* premiered at the Royalty Theatre and was published later that year. The plot revolved around internal conflict of a converted thief, Peter, who finds himself in a mission house run by a priest, Father Ben, and who has to fight the temptation of returning to criminal ways embodied by an attractive female stealer (n.p.). The year 1909 saw the staging

of *St. Ursula's Pilgrimage: A Miracle Play in Five Showings*: a play produced at the Court Theatre (the cast included many important figures of the London society). Apart from that, Lyttelton wrote two one-act morality plays: *Christmas Morality Play* (published by E. Mathews in 1908), which is going to be the focus of this analysis, and *Dame Julian's Window*, which was produced by the Morality Play Society at London's Little Theatre on July 3rd 1913 (n.p.). Brown, Clements, and Grundy enumerate also several of Lyttelton's plays which were unpublished. These include *The Macleans of Bairness* (1906), a historical play about Charles Edward Stuart; *Nyanysa* (1911), set in South Africa and criticising arranged marriages; *Two Pierrots* (1915), an adaptation of *Les deux Pierrots* by a French poet and dramatist Edmond Rostand, and the one-act play *Home from the Ball* (1913) (n.p.).

Finally, Lyttelton also wrote several non-fiction works of miscellaneous nature. As Pottle recounts, her marriage with Alfred Lyttelton was a happy relationship, to which she gave expression by publishing in 1917 a “reverential” biography of her husband (Pottle, n.p.). In it, as Brown, Clements, and Grundy state, she supplies a comprehensive narrative of his youth, his political decisions, their journey to South Africa after the Boer War, and his work as Colonial Secretary. Lyttelton's other non-fiction writings include a biography of her friend Florence Upton (*Florence Upton, Painter*); a leaflet (in fact a summary of a report prepared by Commission for Protection of Women and Children in the Near East) entitled *Protection of Women and Children in the Near East*, which she wrote after participating in the League of Nations assembly; books on parapsychology, in which she took a keen interest (*The Faculty of Communion* (1925), *Our Superconscious Mind* (1931), *Some Cases of Prediction: A Study* (1937)); and, finally, an account of her travels entitled *Travelling Days* (1933). Even a brief summary of Edith Lyttelton's life, work and oeuvre makes clear the fact that religious drama was only one of her interests. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that out of seven plays that she wrote, three can be considered Modern Morality Plays.

*Christmas Morality Play* is a simplistic story of poverty, temptation and a Christmas miracle. It is set in an unspecified location, somewhere in the countryside, in a miserable hut. There are eleven characters in the play: Jasper (the father), Maun (the mother), Crispin (the child), Fear, Envy, Miserie, Want, Hunger (a dog), Archangel Michael and two assisting angels. The stage directions are surprisingly detailed for such a short piece. The play starts as follows:

*It is Christmas Eve on a cold and snowy night. There is no fire on Jasper's hearth – no furnishings in his room but a stool, a wooden table and a bed. At the back is a door and a window. The door is shut, but through the window can be seen heavy snowflakes falling softly on the ground. The moon shines*

*steadily, making the earth yet whiter.* (Lyttelton 9)

They stage directions continue for one more page, and describe how the child, Crispin, wakes up in his bed alone, shivering and scared, and starts to call for his parents. Finally, Crispin's father enters “*shaking the snow off the pelt which hangs from his shoulders. He carries a shepherd's stick and a lantern and has his legs bound with the leathern thongs of his sandals*” (10). The child asks for his mother and food, and Jasper answers: “We parted on the top of the wold; she went one way down the hills, – I another. But I have come back with an empty wallet. No man would give me work” (11). Later, he tries to soothe his son with a song:

When the little Jesus slept,  
Three angels watched beside the stall;  
Out of Heaven they had crept,  
Very shapely, fair and tall.  
God Almighty smiled to see  
What a tender love was there;  
Now He sends His Angels three  
To watch by cradles everywhere. (Lyttelton 11-12)

The ending of the chant coincides with Maun's return. Like her husband, she was not successful in finding employment. The parents grieve over their hopeless situation, and Jasper even considers giving the child away to monks. It is better to die, he claims, than live such a wretched life in which they cannot even provide for their son. Maun, however, does not lose faith in God's mercy and a better future: “Cold and hunger have annulled thee my poor man,” she argues; “Where is thy spirit? Is it ours to deal out life and death? Come, we may not eat, – we must sleep. To-morrow there may be food for us. The Lord cares even for the birds” (Lyttelton 13). The family decides to rest for the night, but they are interrupted by an ominous figure who appears at their door: “*FEAR creeps in slowly and furtively, glancing suspiciously round about him . . . His face is malicious and cruel and it is of a pale livid colour*” (14).

As at the beginning of the play, the stage directions are extensive and detailed. Fear introduces himself and states: “I am no stranger to thee. I have been close to thee very often, and now am I here! Now I am thy master” (15). What is more, Fear (addressing mainly Jasper), talks about his brother Envy who stands outside the house, but who could tell the family where to find food and how to get rich. Maun is apprehensive (“Have a care, Jasper. These men are evil!” (18)), but Jasper invites Envy inside. He is then offered food, wine and golden coins in exchange for a pledge “never again to give – but always to take” (19). While Jasper considers it an easy

promise to fulfill, Maun displays more cunning and foresight: “Jasper, thou hast not pierced this meaning; . . . bethink thee; look at thy child; look at me! Wilt thou never give to us again, wilt thou forswear our Lord Christ?” (19). Eventually, Fear and Envy have to leave with their task of drawing the family to the evil side unaccomplished. There is a new guest coming to replace them, however: Miserie, “*a young woman with a pale face, dressed in clinging grey garments*” (20). She asks for shelter, and while they have nothing to give, Maun offers Miserie the single loaf obtained from Fear and Envy (“This is my answer to your tempting” (21), she tells them). The four share the bread and the water brought by Jasper from outside the house, with him commenting “Our fare is poor and rough – but we still eat on this eve of Christenmass – dipping our bread in the water of affliction” (23) and Maun adding: “May this bread and this water be blessed to our eating . . . Sweet is the bread, and sweet the water, shared in love and brotherhood” (23). The encounter with evil spirits has a healing influence on Jasper as he states: “A wonder has come to pass, for peace has dropped upon my soul” (23). Soon the group is joined by another visitor called Want, followed by her dog, Hunger, to whom Crispin gives his last piece of bread. This small act of mercy towards the beast, and Miserie's ensuing comment (“This house is blessed. The child also gives” (26)) puts in motion a series of climactic events preceded by another long section of stage directions, which describe, among others, the arrival of the Archangel Michael:

*Miserie lifts one lantern, blows it out, places it on the floor, and then stands off to the right. Want does likewise, taking the Hound with her on the leash. They hold up their hands, and both stand in an attitude of expectation. The walls of the chamber divide and the Archangel Michael is seen. He is fully accoutred in his Heavenly armour, and bears a shaft in his hand. The ministering angels stand either side of him, one holding a sheaf of corn and flowers, the other a golden dish of fruit. When he begins to speak, the far-distant music of a carol sung upon the earth is faintly heard. (26)*

Miserie calls for everyone to get down on their knees and Want adds that the Archangel “holds the scales in which men's deeds are weighed” (26). Next, the Archangel Michael explains the reason for his visit:

Once in every year of grace, from the far spaces of Heaven am I sent, to search the hearts of men. On the eve of Christen mass I wander over the murky world, seeking for an open door that belongeth to an open heart. There is great gladness in the spheres when I have found. Even now the choirs of Paradise chant their psalms in honour of this man, this woman and this child. The great choice have been offered them and for that they have chosen to give, and not to take, I am bidden by Him whom we dare not name to ease them of their pain and give them cheer. . . . Doff then thy cloak, Miserie, and become the lusty youth whom men call Joy. Thou, Want, do likewise and henceforth be Dame Content. . . . (Miserie and Want throw off their cloaks and reveal themselves. Miserie is a youth dressed in green,

very lithe and debonair; Want a fair lady in a rose silk gown, demure and staid). (Lyttelton 27)

Finally, Joy takes a sheaf of wheat and flowers from one of the angels and gives it to Maun with an assurance that “fruits and flowers from the fields of paradise” are hers (28). The sound of bells ringing can be heard, and Dame Contentment tells Jasper that it is his sheep moving up the hill. Overjoyed, Maun states that they are saved and the bell-ringing “*grows louder and more joyous*” (28-29). The play ends with the Archangel exhorting: “Hark how all the welkin rings. Behold, I bring ye tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. The Christ is born in ye again this day” (29).

While not directly preoccupied with the narrative of Christ's birth, *Christmas Morality Play* is a variation on traditional nativity play. Raymond Brown, the author of the *Birth of the Messiah* and one of the key scholars in the field of gospel infancy stories, defines a nativity play as an expression of gospel which is “alive and active, forming the Church and its members, rather than merely informing them about the past” (qtd. in Corley 4). Understood in this way, the nativity tradition must have been present in Lyttelton's imagination when she was writing her *Modern Morality Play*. It is true that her play is in many aspects vague and abstract, and, in fact, does not even directly recount the event of Christ's birth. Henry Wansbrough, however, writes that in nativity stories “as in all accounts of the birth and infancy of men and women who have made an indelible mark on the world, exact historicity is not the main interest” (4). “The importance of the infancy narratives,” he adds, “lies not in the precise historicity of the events but in what these narratives show about Jesus” (5). While neither Jesus, nor Mary or Joseph are present in Lyttelton's morality, the narrative concentrates on Jesus in the sense that it dramatises his teachings and from a modern perspective retells the story of enduring poverty, keeping faith in God's plan, resisting temptation and finding one's place in a hostile world. There are also other correlations between *Christmas Morality Play* and the nativity tradition that are worth exploring.

The first and most telling of these correspondences is the fact that Lyttelton's play is set on Christmas Eve, which indicates to the reader or the viewer that they are to expect a miracle to be presented on stage. While the biblical account of Christ's nativity does not mention snow on the night of his birth, a snowy weather has become an indispensable element of the Christmas narrative in both common imagination and the nativity play stage set. There are also other interesting details which bring associations with the traditional Christmas depictions from nativity plays. In the opening stage directions, Jasper is presented as carrying a shepherd's stick and wearing sandals with leathern thongs. Thus, on the one hand, Jasper, Maud and the child,

with their poverty, purity and moral victory may remind the reader of the Holy Family itself. Like Mary and Joseph, Jasper and Maud want the best for their child but are not able to provide it. On the other hand, the obvious references to them as sheep farmers remind one of the shepherds who in the Bible are told by God's messengers about the birth of the saviour and who after finding baby Jesus spread the news about his arrival. Luke's gospel so depicts these events:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, so, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (*King James Bible* Luke 2: 8-12)

As the shepherds in the Bible, Jasper, Crispin and Maud are “living out in the fields.” At the beginning of the play, they are not “keeping watch over their flocks” only because nobody would give them work, so there are no flocks to watch. At the end of the play, however, Jasper hears the ringing of bells as “flocks and herds are moving up the swards” (28). Like the shepherds from the gospel, Jasper and Maud are visited by angels, and are initially terrified by this supernatural occurrence. As God's messenger from Luke's gospel, the Archangel Michael consoles the family, stating that he bears good news. What is more, the play is imbued with Christian symbolism. The bread-sharing scene clearly alludes to the Eucharist and the ritual, which according to the Bible was instituted by Christ during the Last Supper. The final transformation of Miserie and Want into Joy and Content bears the quality of wonder, and together with the appearance of unearthly creatures it completes the pattern of Christmas miracles within the play. Their new attire also has a symbolic significance, with the green colour of Joy's dress indicating renewal, growth and immortality, and the pink colour of Content's dress standing for a proper relationship with God and passion for Jesus.

It may be stated, therefore, that in *Christmas Morality Play*, Lyttelton re-applies the dramatic technique of the Wakefield Master, who in *The Second Shepherds' Play* conflates the biblical and the English reality. A curious example of that are, for example, Jasper's sandals with leather thongs, which he wears in the middle of winter, and which can be associated with ancient footwear. As the shepherd family from *Christmas Morality Play*, the protagonists of the medieval mystery play: Coll, Gyb and Daw, receive a visit from an angel who urges them to go and seek the newly-born Christ. The resolution brings the three shepherds to Bethlehem where they present baby Jesus with symbolic gifts: cherries, a bird and a ball.

In *Christmas Morality* the character of Christ does not appear, and the gifts are not presented

to him, but to the pure-hearted family who succeeds in proving that they conform to the Christian ideal of generosity and selflessness. As the angel states: “The great choice hath been offered them and for that they have chosen to give, and not to take, I am bidden by Him whom we dare not name to ease them of their pain and give them cheer” (Lyttelton 27). Thus, Maun receives a sheaf of flowers and wheat. With the sheaf symbolising unity and strength, flowers – beauty, and wheat – fertility, abundance, and life (but in the Christian tradition also resurrection and Eucharist), the gift stands for the advent of the new order in both the world and Maun's life brought about by Christ. Jasper receives a flock of sheep; a lamb signifies of course meekness, purity, sacrifice and both suffering and triumphant Christ. John Gardner writes that the theme of *The Second Shepherds' Play*, a medieval nativity play, is exploration of the meaning of Christ's birth (1-2). In this sense, *Christmas Morality Play*, although it does not focus on the story of nativity, can also be seen as a morality-play-inspired nativity play.

#### ***What Makes Christmas Christmas: A Morality Play in One Act (1917): A Case Study***

Grace Latimer Jones McClure was born in 1879 in Columbus, Ohio. After graduating from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in 1900, she continued her education at the Ohio State University where she studied philosophy. Before becoming the headmistress of the Columbus School for Girls (1926 – 1938) she taught English and Italian. Jones's tenure, focused on her vision of complete education as one that includes the study of sciences, language, mathematics and arts, made the school one of the most innovative educational institutions in the Midwest (“Grace”).

The list of *dramatis personae* in *What Makes Christmas Christmas* indicates a full-scope morality play. These include Christmas Gifts, Money, Christmas Tree, Christmas Stocking, Plum Pudding, An Old Man, A Child, The King's Son and Spirit. Even though objects are personified here rather than abstractions, the presence of King's Son and Spirit clearly suggests that the play explores the religious dimension of Christmas, negotiates the relationship between its material and spiritual celebration, and delivers a teaching, as Dickensian Christmas literature used to do, about the importance of generosity in the Christmas season.

As in most moralities, all the characters in the story can be easily categorized into black and white ones, with Christmas Gifts, Money, Christmas Tree, Christmas Stocking and Plum Pudding falling into the former, and An Old Man, A Child, The King's Son and Spirit into the latter category. The story dramatises the conflict between five personified elements of

traditional Christmas festivities, each of which feels superior to others. Throughout the play, they aim to establish “what makes Christmas Christmas.” What is more, the appearance of each character is symbolic of their function in the play and their personality. Thus, Christmas Gifts is a “coquettish, elf-like figure in a gold tunic and a stiff skirt” (Latimer 8); the epithet “coquettish” connotes instability, carefreeness, vanity and insincerity. These traits are symbolised also by the golden colour of Gifts's attire, which is associated with wealth. At the beginning of the play, Gifts quarrels with Money (“dressed in a loose brown bag, tied up about the neck with a hempen rope) (8)) telling him: “You're not a very aesthetic creature . . . but we all love you. You're ever so much better than you look” (9) and in this way commenting on the commercialisation of Christmas. To underline this theme, the author has Money complain of growing thin over the recent month (“A month ago my sides were all bulgy with my savings” (9)). The two bicker, with Money accusing Gifts of “thriving at [his] expense” (9). Both characters clearly appear petty, argumentative, malicious and conceited:

GIFTS. (*airily*) It's my artistic temperament, anyway, which furnishes all the charm.

MONEY. Artistic temperament, indeed! When did that ever furnish anything but trouble, I'd like to know? (11)

Soon they are joined by Christmas Tree, who interrupts the argument with a repeated self-praise: “See how I shine!” (10). “Why one hour more and it will be Christmas Mr. Bag. See how I shine with the festive spirit!” (12), he adds. As it turns out at the end of the play, and as the reader can expect already, the moral of this morality teaches that celebrating Christmas in a festive spirit which involves dancing, lavish purchases and focusing on Christmas decorations, is misguided. Christmas Tree, who appears in “a short, flaring green tunic, trimmed with horizontal evergreen bands, green knickers, brown stockings and scarlet slippers” and a “peaked green cap” on his head (12), symbolises another element of the misconceived understanding of Christmas, which should rely on furnishing one's soul with compassion rather than decorating a tree. The misconceptions about what makes Christmas a significant time resurface with each character entering the scene: “GIFTS. You seem to forget that Christmas Gifts must be all things to all men!” (14), “TREE. But what would Christmas be without a Tree? See how I shine!” (15), “STOCKING. 'The stockings are hung by the chimney with care,' you know! That's the very core of the whole thing! What would Christmas be without me? Why, I *am* Christmas!” (15)

At the same time, the personifications comment on difficult truths about those who celebrate Christmas. Tree notices, for example: “Round me the family gather, and look at me with smiling

eyes! I am the shrine of Christmas” (17) which Money counters with “Whoever heard of anyone's keeping Christmas without Money? . . . Money is the biggest thing in life!” (17). It is the last of the “materialist” characters, Plum Pudding (“a portly old gentleman, dressed in black velvet, with red stockings” (19)) who answers the ultimate question of the play by declaring that the road to man's heart leads through his stomach and it is him that “makes Christmas Christmas” (22). Many of these statements are later verified. Gifts, for instance, argues that he “spreads Christmas cheer” when he “visit[s] the rich man in his villa, and the convict in his prison, and the soldier in his trench . . . making all men brothers,” and thus “The whole world becomes one vast fraternity under the charm of the Christmas gift” (17). An Old Man who appears with a Child in later scenes challenges this utopian vision of Christmas as a time equally splendid and gift-filled to everyone (“Christmas is for the rich – not for us poor folk, driven forth on the road, to celebrate with gifts” (29)).

Plum Pudding's statement closes the parade of personifications of the materialistic aspects of Christmas and introduces a new character from another realm: Spirit, described in stage directions as “a lithe, yellow clad figure” who “is dancing and is picking imaginary flowers” (23). Spirit does not reveal where she comes from:

I can't say the exact place. I have come from the mountains of the Sierra Nevada down through a great sweep of wheat country . . . I wandered along the banks of Ohio, and touched the hills again and passed into the mist, over the waves into the great turmoil of the nations. (26)

She enters the stage with a song and enigmatic statements about nature:

I am young and take pride

In the flowers in my hair:

My food the wild cherry,

My bed the brown fern! (23)

...

Morning glories, and rue, and heir bells growing with daisies –

...

All growing under the Christmas star!

...

All sweet flowers for my garland – the rose, the lily, and the stately dahlia. (24)

The passage is permeated with symbols of hope and renewal. The yellow of Spirit's dress symbolises hope and freshness, which relates to the new understanding of “what makes Christmas Christmas” that this character brings. Cherry, sometimes referred to in the Christian

Tradition as “the fruit of paradise” symbolises, as in *The Second Shepherds' Play*, a miraculous birth amid omnipresent death (a fruit born in the middle of winter), and when held by the Christ Child also the joys of God's blessing. Fern stands for sincerity and humility, morning glory for affection, rue for grace and clear vision, harebells for constancy, daisy for innocence and hope, rose for love and admiration, lily for chastity and virtue and dahlia for dignity and commitment. All of these symbolically imbued flowers grow “under the Christmas star,” which means that what they represent makes Christmas Christmas. Moreover, almost all of Spirit's utterances carry symbolic meanings. She states, for example:

I seek with the bee,  
Draining sweet from the thorn,  
Joy touches my heart  
Like the wing of a bird (25)

A thorn evokes immediate associations with both the dichotomy of pleasure and pain and Christ's passion through the image of the crown of thorns; bird's wings are often poetically referred to in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament (for example in Psalms 17:8: “Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings” (*King James Bible*) as the emblems of strength and protection. Finally, almost all lines spoken by Spirit allude to her ability to find joy and consolation in what is immaterial: “The spring is my cup” (26), “I pass here and there, lodging in the hearts of men” (26), “I am not cold at all, for my heart warms me” (27). All these allusions and symbols, as well as the character's name, clearly suggest that Spirit is a creature from another world: a world which acts as a foil to the materialist world of Gifts, Money, Tree, Stocking and Plum Pudding. It also foreshadows the fact that the answer to the question about the true nature of Christmas will come from Spirit.

Paradoxically, it is Tree and Money who admonish Spirit for being unprepared for gift giving:

TREE. This is no time to be thinking about yourself! This is Christmas night, don't you know that – the time when there is love and goodwill among men, and everyone is giving himself in joy and service for others. - See how I shine!

MONEY. Everybody is expected to give a little. (27)

Tree's and Money's reprimand demonstrates that *What Makes Christmas* does not dramatise a clear-cut opposition between good and evil forces as medieval moralities used to do. The only sin the “black characters” of the play are guilty of is misunderstanding. Since they personify material objects, material objects are what they can think to offer. Thus, they are not against giving; they are only mistaken about what is worth giving at Christmas time, they play says.

As if to confirm it, when Spirit proclaims that she has her imaginary flowers, joy and laughter to give, Money retorts that “They don't cost anything. They are just in the hearts of people . . . Everybody is expected to give a little!” (28) and shows a complete incomprehension of Christmas values.

The first confrontation between Spirit and the rest of characters is succeeded by the entrance of two new characters: an Old Man and his grandson, a Child: two beggars wandering in the midst of winter to an unspecified location. An Old Man is not impressed by what material personifications are ready to offer them (“It's a roof not tree that I'm lacking this Christmas eve, young man! (30), “Tonight the highway is my hearth” (30), “We are too poor to keep Christmas” (31)). The only thing he is willing to accept is Spirit's presence: “Ah, company on the long dark road! That's something now, my friends!” (30). Additionally, Spirit makes flowers magically grow around them. While Money takes offence at being rejected and calls the travelling party “a reproach to good people who are enjoying Christmas” (33), Spirit mysteriously declares that “Kings came to Him in His manger” (32) and conjures up a vision of extraordinary journey that awaits them:

The way is bright with moonlight, and the hedges are thick with daisies and hair bells, and the meadows are dotted with buttercups. We shall pass orchards, too, with plums and peaches, and big and little apples, and hanging grapes on a trellis. (32)

Eventually, all the characters can smell a “holy fire” (33), and see a peculiar mist into which Spirit, an Old Man and a Child disappear, which Gifts bitterly criticises with a curse: “A pox on her for taking away the good old ways of celebrating Christmas!” (35).

The last character to enter the stage is King's Son, who, as An Old Man before him, is not interested in gifts offered by the material representations of Christmas; he has already received many presents on previous occasions, he is too adult to hang up his stocking, and he is tired of Christmas trees. Finally, he delivers the longest monologue in the play, in which he elaborates on the question of what makes Christmas Christmas:

All these things are nothing to me, for in my heart there is great heaviness. What is it that makes Christmas Christmas? I have set out tonight on the great highway of the realm to see whether I shall find Christmas there – I have left my father's house, where I walk between walls of beaten walls, lighted with silver lights, and where my father sits on a high throne with a crown on his head and a mastiff at his feet. In the courtyard festive preparations are going forward, and there is a great coming in of Kings and Princes. But Christmas joy has deserted our palace. I remember that time when my heart was high on Christmas night, but now everything is sodden and dull. (37-38)

On the most basic level, King's Son acts as a foil to Christ, whose kingdom, as opposed to

King's Son's, "is not of this world" (*King James Bible* John 18:36). What follows is that King's Son's kingdom becomes in the play the symbol of the degeneration of Christmas traditions and the misjudgement of "what makes Christmas Christmas." King's Son's pessimistic description of the emptiness of Christmas preparations when they are deprived of Christmas spirit, depicts the shallowness which is initially represented by the five "negative personifications." It also introduces the parallel between kings and beggars, the aim of which is to demonstrate that everyone, irrespective of their social status, wants to find in Christmas something intangible and spiritual, and that the commercialization of Christmas unsettles all society members in equal measure.

When King's Son invites Spirit to his father's house, she refuses to go: "In palaces there are sad hearts, burdened with the duties of Christmas. I must be happy and free!" (39), and leaves. Both King's son and An Old Man lament her disappearance: "OLD MAN. With her the way was not dark – while she ran beside us we walked in moonlight . . . But when she was gone our sorrow returned and the weariness of the way, and we could not see ahead" (41). Still, as an Old Man concludes, the intangibility of Spirit's gifts to them, make these gifts eternal:

What I have seen is mine. She offered fair sights to our eyes, and gentle thoughts to our hearts, such as belong to the poor, and to the children, and to poets. The King and the rich hold their possessions in their hands; but who can play the tyrant with the eye and the thought of a poor man? (Latimer 42)

It is interesting to notice that Latimer's play sees the meaning of Christmas in a way exactly opposite to the one depicted in *A Christmas Carol*. While both works praise the importance of giving, in Dickens "giving" has a material dimension since Scrooge's transformation is sealed with a fat turkey being sent to the Cratchit family. *What Makes Christmas*, on the other hand, openly condemns such outward displays of festive wealth and instead recommends to the audience a more measured, ascetic and spiritually-oriented vision of the acceptable way to celebrate Christmas.

In the end, Spirit returns. She does not reappear, but her singing can be heard in the distance (My life is a joy/ That no mystery clouds;/ With no pain and no thanks/ I give and I get" (43)). Thus, as earlier, the significance of selfless giving is stressed. The play closes with an optimistic conclusion:

SPIRIT (*still in the distance*)

My fancy, my palace –

My joy, my throne –

My dreams are my realm –

And my garlands, my crown!

KING'S SON

Though she speeds over the earth tonight, her spirit has found its resting place.

OLD MAN

For she dwells in our hearts! (44)

It is, therefore, the spirit of Christmas, rather than any traditions, which define the character of this special time.

In conclusion, *What Makes Christmas Christmas* fulfills the generic requirements of the morality play in numerous respects, the two most significant of which are the presence of personified abstractions as characters, and the play's didactic impulse. As in medieval moralities, the "walking allegories" can easily be divided into black and white characters. On the other hand, it is difficult to talk about a protagonist in the play, neither one that would represent the whole mankind, nor, in fact, any. Each of the "black" characters has a similar number of lines, and out of the "white" ones, none dominates. Perhaps King's Son and an Old Man can be conceived as representations of social extrema: the rich and the poor. Moreover, although neither Christ, nor God are referred to directly, the play is in an obvious way religious in the sense that it explores the idea of properly Christian celebration of Christmas. Analysing the play from this perspective, one can risk a statement that it is also, in a way, a "post-nativity" play; although it does not tell the story of Christ's birth, it tells the story of how distorted the observance of Christ's birth anniversary has become in the modern society. The simplicity of the play does not surprise, since it was written to be staged at the Columbus School for Girls in Ohio (and, as a "Note" informs the readers, "performed for the first time at the Christmas Dinner, 1916" (Latimer, n.p.)).

The overt didacticism of *What Makes Christmas* must have had, therefore, a practical application, which relied on instilling Christian values in the students of the school. That moral guidance and good breeding became Jones's priorities as a headmaster, becomes evident from an article she wrote for *The Ladies Home Journal* in 1906, in which she points out the dangers of girls' participation in college sororities, one of which is the corruptive influence of a homoerotic crush:

Out of this absorbing society interest may come good things - but less worthy things, too, can come of it. It is conducive to that sentimental relationship between the older members and the younger, vulgarly known as the "crush." . . . All who have seen the "crush" in a developed state, however, will testify that nothing is less conducive to a proper state of mind. As a morbid manifestation it is to be suppressed, for it is a hopeless passion, and is seldom anything but harmful to those who indulge in it . . . [T]he secret

society makes it possible for . . . friendships to be far too intimate . . . It is well known that one girl of evil mind and wrong habits may exert a powerful influence over another, and that she may even vitiate a whole group. (qtd. in Gadd 46)

It is worth noting that the idea of teaching through theatre was at that time in no way innovative. As George A. Wade writes in an article from 1906, performing plays at public schools “dates back to very remote times, and may, indeed, in many cases be set down as almost coeval in origin with the foundation of the schools themselves” (355).

Finally, it should be stressed that, in contrast to almost every Modern Morality from the beginning of the twentieth century, *What Makes Christmas Christmas* has retained a place in modern publishing industry, as it has been reprinted by the Forgotten Books publishing house in 2016.

### **Modern rewritings of *Everyman*: A case study of W.F. Almond's *Everychild* (1938)**

“A long and venerable tradition has existed in British theatre by which successive generations of playwrights have come to Shakespeare’s body of dramatic work with the intention of reclaiming it for their own purposes” (v), claims Graham Saunders in the preface to *Elizabethan and Jacobean Reappropriation in Contemporary British Drama*. While the statement applies to Elizabethan drama, this subchapter will examine the extent to which the same can be stated about the morality play, the twentieth-century dramatists, and the way they reclaimed this genre “for their own purposes.” “Any exploration of intertextuality, and its specific manifestation in the forms of adaptation and appropriation, is inevitably interested in how . . . literature is made by literature,” declares Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (1). The aim of this section will be to illustrate this process by observing the interaction between the medieval and the twentieth-century drama in W.F. Almond's 1912 Modern Morality Play *Everychild*. The close reading of the play will uncover several ways in which the didactic medieval story of embracing death and finding redemption was updated and reworked in the twentieth century in order to fit new contexts. Before exploring modern rewritings of *Everyman*, however, it is necessary to explain what is meant by the terms of adaptation and appropriation and establish how *Everychild* would be categorised from the perspective of today's scholarship.

*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines adaptation as “The process of making a work of art upon the basis of elements provided by an earlier work in a different, usually literary, medium” (Baldick). Sanders significantly broadens this definition by stating that the study of

adaptation from the point of view of contemporary scholarship has to include the critical advancements brought by postmodernism and postcolonialism and that writing a history of adaptation converges at various points with critical theory. Moreover, the process of adaptation can take different forms and have different goals. Thus, it can become a transpositional operation, wherein the text or content is transcribed from one genre into another. It can also rely on the excision or addition of material to the source text and in this way provide a commentary “by offering a revised point of view from the ‘original’” (18-19). This understanding of adaptation becomes especially relevant in considering modern reworkings of moralities which illustrate “the processes of proximation and updating” (19) that Sanders discusses. The last type of adaptation is analogue, that is an adaptation the appreciation of which is enriched when the work is considered together with the original, rather than as a standalone piece (Cartmell qtd. in Sanders 22). Sanders suggests that although the notions of adaptation and appropriation overlap in some respects, there are also significant differences between them. “An adaptation signals a relationship with an informing sourcetext or original” (26); it is, therefore, “a specific version . . . of that seminal cultural text” (26). Appropriation, on the other hand, “affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (26). Thus, in broad terms, even though sometimes an intellectual comparison of the original and the appropriation is required for the proper understanding of the latter, appropriation holds a weaker link with the original than adaptation does. In order to make the discussion of adaptation and appropriation complete, one must also take into account Gerard Genette’s concept of *hypertextuality* postulated in *Palimpsests*, which he defines as “any relationship uniting a text B . . . to an earlier text A . . . upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of a commentary” and “a text derived from another preexistent text” (5). He also outlines two types of *hypertextuality*, of which the latter perfectly encapsulates the type of connection between most Modern Moralities and their medieval prototypes. He describes the bond of this kind as “text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through . . . *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it” (5). Modern Moralities, *Everychild* included, exist through their relationship with medieval moral plays, even though this interdependence is not directly acknowledged, apart from when it is pointed out in the play’s subtitle, such as, for example, “A Modern Morality Play in One Act.”

According to Saunders, the differentiation between adaptation and appropriation in drama (at

least in relation to Shakespeare) was brought by the 1960s, and specifically Tom Stoppard's 1966 ground-breaking absurdist play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Saunders states that using old works to explore contemporary problems from a contemporary perspective was a popular literary practice long before the twentieth century, which is attested by numerous seventeenth and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. For example, many of them introduced alterations to politically dubious language concerning kingship and regicide, so that the plays would better resonate with the new political reality brought by the Restoration. On the opposite side of the spectrum one finds such British playwrights as Arnold Wesker, Elaine Feinstein or Howard Barker, who in 1970s and 1980s “deliberately set out to challenge aspects of Shakespeare’s cultural authority” (vi). It was Stoppard's play, however, which first transformed the way rewriting Shakespeare was approached:

Whereas formerly, these works [based on, or alluding to, Shakespeare's plays] had been considered adaptations, following Stoppard, these encounters with Shakespeare and his contemporaries took on autonomy as *appropriations* rather than the subsidiary status they held before as *adaptations*. (Saunders vi)

Thus, those who followed Stoppard assumed a political position and used Shakespeare's oeuvre to comment on such contemporaneous issues as radical Socialism or Britain's need to re-define her identity after losing the position as the world's colonial hegemon (vi-viii).

Finally, a question arises as to which domain *Everychild* belongs. As it will be demonstrated in the close reading of the play, there are many arguments in favour of adaptation. The first is that the title clearly signals the relation of this work to its source text. In other words, by entitling his work *Everychild*, Almond directly alludes to the most widely-remembered medieval morality play and, thus, openly declares it a re-reading of a classical prototype. Commenting on the popularity of classic adaptations Sanders argues that

formal adaptations carry the same title as their source text. The desire to make the relationship with the source explicit links to the manner in which the responses to adaptations depend upon a complex invocation of ideas of similarity and difference. These ideas can only be mobilized by a reader or spectator alert to the intertextual relationship, and this in turn requires the deployment of well-known texts or sources. (19)

Of course, used in the context of *Everychild*, the statement raises several concerns. It is highly likely that the majority of the original audience of *Everychild* was not “alert” to its intertextual relationship with medieval drama. On the other hand, to any viewer well-versed in the history of drama, the relationship would be undebatable and immediate, and judging on the number of intertextual links it is difficult to imagine that Almond did not intend for his viewers to

recognise this connection, especially since he subtitled his work “A Morality Play in Two Parts for Fifteen Characters.” What is more, it should be remembered that Modern Moralities were still in fashion in the 1930s. It might be that to some audience members at that time relating *Everychild* to *Everyman* was easier than it seems from today's perspective. After all, other *Everyman*-informed moralities were written in the first decades of the twentieth century with similarly formulated titles (for example, Edith Everett's *Everystudent* (1912), Walter Brown's *Everywoman* (1912) or George V. Hobart's *Everywife* (1911)). There are many other elements in *Everychild* to support the hypothesis that it is an adaptation, rather than appropriation.

Instead of beginning his Modern Morality Play with a traditional direct address, W.F. Almond supplies “Argument” in a Miltonic fashion. Its intent is to summarise the plot and explain to the reader the didactic message of the play. “Argument” reads as follows:

'Everychild' is represented by 'Everybody' and 'Everygirl'. They come to church and are welcomed by old 'Experience', who offers to pass them through several of life's typical experiences. They consent, and are immediately attacked by 'Doubt'. 'Faith' delivers them and 'Doubt' is routed. In quick succession they are sharply corrected by 'Ambition'; menaced by 'Terror'; stung by 'Failure'; and so on. Finally 'Death' – austere and chilling – appears on the scene. Her terrible reputation and sombre garments strike awe and fear into the souls of 'Everygirl' and 'Everyboy', and they are visibly agitated. Faith pleads with them to be courageous, but in vain. They cannot stand to it. At last, 'Love' appears, and a great light breaks across their souls, as standing between them and 'Death', 'Love' symbolically reveals to 'Everygirl' and 'Everyboy' the divine radiance and beauty of 'Death'. (Almond 4)

Thus, the reader is immediately presented with a summary of traditional morality play in its almost prototypical form. Amid the unmistakable overlaps with the medieval genre (such the employment of personified abstractions as characters, the protagonist's universality and the motif of *memento mori*) stands out the play's unquestionable association with the realm of didactic literature. The inclusion of a detailed summary prior to the text proper indicates that the author's intention does not rely on creating a dramatic tension; it is, therefore, strictly moralistic. This idea is reiterated in “Hints for the producer,” where Almond warns potential actors against “overacting” the play, advocates simplicity in enactment and states that “The theme dealt with is far too sacred to admit of personal triumph” (6). What is more, the author insists that “Wherever possible, this Play should be presented in the church” as “A sacred 'atmosphere' and organ music deepen its impressiveness immeasurably” (6). From the same passage the reader learns also that the array of personified abstractions is much wider than it has been suggested in “Argument.” Beside Everybody, Everygirl, Experience, Doubt, Faith, Ambition, Terror, Failure, Death and Love, the *dramatis personae* include Sunday School

Teacher, Slander, Chastity, Joy and Romance. As in *Everyman*, one of the characters (Experience) assumes the role of a messenger sent by God to test the protagonists (“So now I will pass ye through several of Life's experiences” (14)). Sanders writes that adaptation relies on “celebrating [the text's] ongoing interaction with other texts and artistic productions” (18), and *Everychild* does it by adhering to the most rudimentary characteristics and goals of the morality play.

Sanders also acknowledges that “it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation . . . take place” (20). Thus, while *Everychild* remains in many respects a traditional morality, while its didactic message is strictly Christian and while, like in *Everyman*, the plot revolves around the moment of confrontation with death, Almond introduces interesting variations. One of them is the employment of a double protagonist, who represents not only every man, but also every woman (or at least every boy and every girl). Walter Brown's aforementioned 1908 play *Everywoman* was already a step in this direction, as well as William Poel's remake with female actresses in the lead role. In *Everychild*, Almond builds upon the idea of a Christian world which is less male-centric, inhibited by both male and female believers in equal need of instruction, and which gives voice to, as Sanders says adaptations often do, “the silenced and marginalized” (19), in this case children.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon professes that “Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (7). *Everychild* subscribes to this definition because of its numerous variations from the source text. For example, unlike *Everyman*, both children prove at the beginning of the play that they are worthy of redemption. When asked by Experience about the reason they have come to church the boy replies: “Where *else* shall we go on God's day? . . . We come, sire, because young as we are, we know we have a *Soul* – a Soul to be taught and cared for” (11-12). The girl adds to Everyboy's pious declaration by stating that she knows how happy it makes God to see her at his home and that one day, when she is no longer able to walk, “God will come in at [her] door to stay with [her] – to the end” (12). This characterisation of Everychildren as innocent, inexperienced and at the same time wisely choosing their priorities relates to the archetype established in the Bible (for instance in Matthew 18:2-3: “And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (*King James Bible*)). It is in the middle of the play when *Everyman* learns that his decision to live a godless life is untenable; *Everygirl*, however, knows it from the start: “We can't *do* without God” (17). Thus, it becomes evident at the beginning of the play that the

children have not sinned like Everyman, and have a much better understanding of the Christian hierarchy of values than him. An assumption can be risked that Everychildren have to be guided in the right moral direction rather than taught a lesson.

On the other hand, the didactic message of *Everyman* still echoes in *Everychild* in the form of an often-repeated instruction which the children try to decipher: “Everyboy, Everygirl, remember *at all times* . . . This is God's World. Never let that truth leave your minds” (14), “God owns it, children – owns it. It's HIS!” (49). Additionally, at the beginning of the play Experience reminds the children that God is not only the owner but also the creator of the world and that any search for knowledge should be centred on getting to know him:

It is a magnificent thing to teach child the names of . . . the great constellations in the heavens above us; to tell it of the wonders in the depths of the ocean; to tell it of the mighty monsters that haunted the primeval forests. Yes it is a noble ambition for a parent to crave these things for their child . . . But – is it a noble thing to search out the Creation, yet never find a Creator? To live in the garden and never meet the Gardener? (11)

The world of *Everyman* is also, indubitably, God's world: a world whose mighty designer observes humanity from above in order to pass harsh judgements:

I perceive here in my majesty,  
How that all the creatures be to me unkind,  
Living without dread in worldly prosperity:  
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,  
Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God;  
In worldly riches is all their mind,  
They fear not my rightwiseness, the sharp rod; (*Everyman*)

What is more, both the medieval and the modern God work through messengers and remain hidden from the protagonists' view while being able to see them. This is reminiscent of the Miltonic God, whose power is based on constant surveillance and about whom Wilma G. Armstrong writes in “Punishment, Surveillance, and Discipline in *Paradise Lost*.” She compares the universe of *Paradise Lost* to the model of surveillance proposed by Michel Foucault and inspired by Jeremy Bentham's idea of Panopticon. “The principle behind Bentham's Panopticon seems to me analogous to the idea of an omniscient, omnipresent God” (100), Armstrong asserts. God's ubiquity and the pervasiveness of his perception are also a theme in *Everychild*. Not only are Everychildren frequently reminded that the world they inhabit belongs to God, but they also are aware of being constantly watched:

EVERYBOY. He *does* take notice of small things, doesn't He?

EVERYGIRL. . . . That's why God watches us all so carefully. (37)

On the other hand, there are also differences between *Everyman's* God and *Everychild's* God; for example, while in the medieval morality God's teaching takes the form of a frightful revenge, in *Everychild* it is rather a gentle instruction. In some ways, they seem to mirror the vengeful and the merciful God of the Old and the New Testament respectively. In *Everyman*, God is angry with men and decides to punish them for their disobedience:

I proffered the people great multitude of mercy,  
And few there be that asketh it heartily.  
They be so cumbered with worldly riches  
That needs on them I must do justice –  
On every man living without fear. (*Everyman*)

While in Almond's play God is still the possessor and sovereign of the world, he is also benevolent and good-natured: “unless this Universe is an accident; unless all those flaming worlds around you are accidents and keep in their appointed places by accident, then this dear old world belongs to God, and – HE LOVES IT!” (50).

The opening episode of the play entitled “The Encounter with Doubt” illustrates another element which has been appropriated from the medieval morality play: the motif of *psychomachia*. The characters in *Everychild* are as black and white as these from medieval plays, and as their prototypes they struggle for the soul of the protagonists. In the first episode, for instance, the forces of good and evil are represented by Faith and Doubt. “Well, how can you be so foolish as to believe in somebody whom nobody has ever seen?” (16), Doubt asks Everychildren; fortunately, Faith comes to the rescue and proves a worthy opponent: “surely, *no* one knows better than you that *wherever* Doubt is, Faith stands ready for the conflict” (17). Finally, she refutes Doubt's argument for God's non-existence with a claim that although, as God, air and love cannot be seen, they certainly exist. She leaves the children with an assurance that “as long as [they] are on this side of the grave, . . . , just so long will Faith defend and fight for [their] souls” (19) and an echoed admonition to remember that “This is God's World!” (19). Perceiving the encounter between Doubt and Faith as an example of *psychomachia* finds support in the strongly battle-related diction used in this and the following scenes where Faith fights against different opponents on the children's behalf. It includes such phrases as “Oh, Mistress Faith, you are a *lovely* fighter!” (19), “They seem to be old enemies” (19), “Terror always yields to faith” (25) or “Did you notice *how* Faith beat Terror?” (26). Still, returning to the idea of adaptation's creative value increasing through infidelity to the original, one should

note how in some scenes the motif of *psychomachia* has been reinterpreted. For example, in the episode of Slander's visit, the proper battle does not eventually take place, as the forces of good already present in Everygirl are from the beginning triumphant. When Slander tempts the girl with promises of juicy gossip ("Just listen to this . . . I know something that happened in a family *you* know, and you wouldn't have believed it" (28)), she does not even consider leaning into the temptation ("I said, you cannot touch my soul" (29)). Therefore, Chastity, Slander's opponent does not even need to fight for Everygirl. At the same time, it is made clear that a person's agency in fighting evil sources is limited, and, as in the Calvinist predestination philosophy, redemption is always distributed by God:

CHASTITY. Everygirl, that was a noble answer you gave just now.

EVERYGIRL. Thank you; it just came of itself.

CHASTITY. Nay, dear one, *such* an answer could never have come of itself. God gave it you because your mind is pure.

Thus, the reader learns that although Everygirl made the right moral decision, it has been divinely inspired. It seems that in this sense, Everyman retains more agency than Everychildren because, as Kahrl suggests, he "is no inert battlefield over which the forces of good and evil march but a being with free will" (106). Even though he has helpers on his way to salvation, his progress is, as are his setbacks, mostly his own doing. The play continues with several other episodes in which personifications of vices and virtues coax and warn the two protagonists. Each positive character leaves Everychildren with a moral teaching and a repeated message that "This is God's own world." Finally, it should be stressed that, as Sanders states, adaptations are "reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of an 'original' or sourcetext's cultural and/or temporal setting" (19), and while some duels between the forces of good and evil depicted in the play refer strictly to the Christian context, others are more "secularized" and thus relocated to a new cultural setting. An example of that would be the encounter with Ambition or Romance.

According to Sanders, adaptation is an attempt "to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences" (19). This means that while remaining overtly didactic, *Everychild* had to be "digestible" to contemporary viewers. The way in which the medieval theme of *contemptus mundi* has been reworked and eased is visible, for instance, in Everychildren's discussion with Ambition: the character who visits the protagonists after Doubt and Faith's exit. In the dialogue, Everyboy proclaims hope for the same future which Edward's father advocates in Simmons's *Conflict*: a future that entails a financial and a social upgrade:

I know you quite well. We are honoured . . . Your name, sir, is Ambition. . . I am ambitious, sir . . . I want to *rise high* in the world; I am going to make a name for myself . . . Yes, sir, I am not going to be a mere nobody. No boy worth his salt would be that. I want to rise *high* . . . and be a somebody. . . That's the finest things I know. That's real ambition. (20)

When questioned about his motivation for “rising high in the world,” however, the boy finds himself unable to answer, which prompts a short sermon:

If you wish to rise high so that you make others feel themselves to be beneath you, then . . . Everyboy, I have *finished* with you . . . This is not ambition: it is vanity . . . But, Everyboy, if you wish to rise high so that others may climb to your shoulders and look through your eyes, why, then Everyboy, I say God Bless You! – And prosper you! For He . . . surely needs such men to-day. (21)

The theme of rising in the world combined with the author's attempt to make the text more relatable to modern audiences appears also in one of Experience's early speeches, where she warns the children that possessing knowledge and unquenched ambition are a double-edged sword with potentially tragic consequences:

So with many practical parents . . . 'My child,' they say, 'go to school, get knowledge, excel, get distinction.' And this (vehemently) when knowledge has got so far out of hand that men are preparing another holocaust of war that will wipe out the very centres of knowledge! (12)

It is interesting to notice that Ambition appears in both Simmons's and in Almond's play, and that it is a black character in the former and a white character in the latter. Thus, in *Everychild*, Ambition's advice is not so much to forgo all earthly aspirations, but to ensure that they have an altruistic underpinning. In this sense, the message of Almond's play is much more measured than the one of both *Everyman* and *Conflict*, which call for a complete abandonment of every earthly desire. Another important aspect of the Ambition episode is the boy's immediate apology for misjudgement (“I can see easily enough now that *my* ambition was a selfish one. You have made me feel ashamed” (21)) and his plea: “you *won't* turn me down because I didn't know, will you, sir?” (21). This tells the audience that unlike *Everyman*, who consciously decided to neglect God and His expectations, *Everyboy* “sinned a little from youth,” as George Gordon claims Shakespeare's Cordelia does in *King Lear* (qtd. in Wilson xxiii). *Everyman*'s conduct needs an absolute reform; *Everyboy*'s conduct needs a slight adjustment. Finally, *Everyboy*'s and *Everygirl*'s innocence is highlighted by the fact that they are first visited by a character called Experience. There are also other moments in the play when God's reward is preferred over earthly success, for example in the Failure and Joy episode, which concludes with the boy's proclamation that “though [he has] lost [his] exam, [he has] won God's smile” (38).

Another difference between *Everychild* and *Everyman* which makes Almond's play a light-hearted adaptation is that even the antagonists are not entirely villainous characters. After losing the battle for Everyboy's soul, Failure almost congratulates him: "You have more grit in you than I thought . . . Yes, and if you face life in that spirit, you *will* one day cry 'Excelsior'. Now, good-bye, Everyboy, and remember. . . , Failure wishes you all the best" (38). Indeed, sometimes the mood of *Everychild* is almost playful; "Well, that's adventure number one, Everyboy, isn't it?" (19), asks Everygirl after the encounter with Doubt. Furthermore, although when the children meet Death they are frightened, it is evident that they see their tests as more of an interesting escapade. Everyman's pilgrimage towards death is presented as a significantly more harrowing experience. The carefree attitude may result from the fact that, like Everyman, Everychildren do not immediately understand the nature of the trial they have to undergo: "EVERYBOY. I can't understand why we should have to meet with Terror/ EVERYGIRL. And why should Slander try to frighten *me*?" (38). The illumination comes after the encounter with Romance, who, surprisingly, represents both earthly passion and Christ's love for humanity and who teaches the children that human love is not to be condemned if it is combined with godly love. After a conversation with Romance, Everyboy states: "I think I begin to see some meaning in it, Everygirl. Old Experience is taking us along what they call the Journey of Life in advance of our time. He is showing us what we may have to meet – and how to meet it" (43). Like Everyman, Everyboy is at this point in the play elevated from ignorance to knowledge in a poignant moment of spontaneous *anagnorisis*. What is more, the structure of Almond's play both reflects and reworks the structure of *Everyman* described by Van Laan:

One movement, a falling action, occupies approximately the first half of the play; it traces Everyman's decline in fortune from Death's entrance, which shatters the apparent serenity of his life, to the depth of his despair, where he can foresee only eternal damnation. The second movement, a rising action, carries him from this nadir to his final salvation, symbolized by the words of the welcoming Angel.  
(466)

While *Everyman's* entire plot covers his descent towards despair and then his ascent to consolation (paralleled also by his transition from ignorance to knowledge), the plot of *Everychild* mirrors this pattern by repeating it multiple times throughout the play. Vices and virtues usually visit Everychildren in doublets (Doubt and Faith, Terror and Faith, Slander and Chastity, Failure and Joy), which is why the children's journey is more of a constant hesitation between distress and certainty rather than a one-time movement between them. On the other hand, it should be stressed that *Everyman's* plot, although clearly divided into a falling and rising action, also includes an element which disturbs this neat division, namely the sudden

abandonment of Everyman by Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five Wits. Finally, it is important to note that the two moralities differ in their sense of direction; while Everyman looks back on his past and answers for his mistakes and misjudgements, Everychildren experience what appears to be a “flash-forward” teaching. They are, therefore, told what tests to expect in adult life and shown the best way to pass them.

Another variation from the source text designed to make the adaptation more relatable to the contemporary audience can be found in the character of Death, which assumes entirely different pose in the two plays. In Almond's drama, the frightful relentless messenger from *Everyman* (“no man will I respite, / But to the heart suddenly I shall smite/ Without any advisement” (*Everyman*)) becomes a benevolent friend. She does not come to take Everychildren away, but simply to talk to them. Although she admits that “[She is] on [her] Father's mission” (46) she is not the executor of God's wrathful punishment. Rather, she is “calling for tired spirits – to carry them – Home!” (46). In the end, she is also presented as “The Spirit of Death, God's most radiant angel” (51) who “stands forth dignified and radiant in white” (51). The idea of Death as not an adversary, but a companion is strengthened by the fact that she appears as Faith's sister. Thus, the play ends with Everychildren's epiphany that it is not Death but Doubt who should be dreaded.

Their final test is to state whether they believe that “this is God's own World” and “No other power owns it” (47). When Everychildren declare their faith, Doubt proclaims herself beaten and Love comes, to finally help the children overcome their fear of Death. In the play's resolution, unlike in *Everyman*, the protagonists neither die, nor are traumatised by their encounter with Death and other enemies. To the contrary, Everygirl is looking forward to entering adulthood (“Life is *very* sweet and *very* great. I'm glad *I* came into it” (49)), and Everyboy calls their encounters with vices “a splendid fight” (49) and “a great experience [which] has left [them] wiser and happier” (54). Thus, while in *Everchild* Death is as unavoidable as in *Everyman* (“God bless ye, children; ye do indeed understand better now. But suppose I tell you that I shall come someday for *you*, what then?” (52)), she is at the same time a patient teacher, rather than an executioner. She explains to the children that, in fact, they would never want to live eternally and see all their friends pass away: “the day would come when you would implore me *with tears* to come for you,” “Your *Soul* would be shut up in the prison of your worn out body” (52)). Therefore, the process of dying in Almond's morality is not a dramatic fight for a place in God's kingdom, but a safe return (“You would see *me*, God's Angel, kissing your friends and carrying them *not to the grave*, Everygirl, not to the cemetery,

. . . No Everygirl, I should be carrying their weary spirits home” (52)) and a gentle passage (“my command . . . is to deal very tenderly with *every* Soul” (53)). In the end, Everyboy calls death “the most beautiful vision of [his] Life” (53).

It is probably in their dénouements where differences between the medieval and the Modern Moralities are the most prominent. While Everyman wins good death having acquired the *ars moriendi*, Everychildren win a chance at good life after learning about an acceptable Christian *modus vivendi*. This is not to say that Death plays a lesser role in *Everychild* than in *Everyman*. The children's most significant victory is still, after all, losing the fear of death. Nevertheless, while Everyman is punished and surprised by a terrifying death, Everychildren are warned and appeased by a well-intentioned death. Everyman wants to negotiate with death while Everychildren want to domesticate it. In *Everychild*, as God, Death is a benevolent rather than a punitive force. Finally, the ultimate didactic purport of *Everyman* is that earthly life must be entirely subjected to securing salvation. In Almond's play, however, Love states that “It is indeed a wonderful privilege to live a few years in this splendid old world” (49).

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of *Everychild* and its source text, *Everyman*, focused on juxtaposing the twentieth-century to the medieval morality in order to indicate how medieval techniques and motifs were appropriated by modernity. It is important to stress that, in accordance with Hutcheon's statement that “the idea of fidelity should not frame any theorizing of adaptation” (7), adherence to the original has not been understood as a criterion to judge the effectiveness or the literary value of the text. It has been used, however, to assess how strongly medieval drama influenced theatre at that time, how some of its elements were reworked, and what level of creativity this connection induced in medievalism-oriented playwrights.

Linda Hutcheon begins the preface to *A Theory of Adaptation* with a statement that “Whether it be in the form of a videogame or a musical, an adaptation is likely to be greeted as minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the original” (xii). The twentieth-century adaptations of *Everyman*, however, prove another point which her study advocates, namely that adaptation deserves a serious academic attention and that adaptation should be seen as a literary entity in its own right. According to Sanders, when it comes to adaptations and appropriations, the “reinterpretative act will . . . involve the movement into a new generic mode or context” (2). The close reading of *Everychild* is a relevant example of how a modern reinterpretation puts original works in new, contemporary contexts. Finally, it should be reiterated that if, as Sanders explains, the objective of adaptation can be to “make texts ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible

to new audiences” (19), *Everychild* definitely fulfills this function. It brings an old medieval form back to life, it transcribes it into modern English, and it makes the characters' motivations and problems relevant to modern audience.

## Conclusions to Part II

Although *Conflict*, *Insomnia*, *A Christmas Morality*, *What Makes Christmas Christmas* and *Everychild* are all Modern Moralities, they could not be more dissimilar. Each of these plays makes use of several morality play characteristics, such as personified characters, a universal protagonist or *psychomachia*, with a different intention, and each play reworks morality play themes in a different way.

*Conflict* retains the religious focus of a medieval morality, but at the same time uses contemporary setting and dramatises contemporary issues, such as the danger resulting from technological progress and the need for mankind to accept responsibility for all its inventions. Employing the motif of *psychomachia*, Simmons introduces the characters of Fear, Passion, Ambition, Truth and Love, who fight over the soul of the protagonist, Edward. Although he does not bear an allegorical name, Edward is a modern “everyman” since he represents an average, middle-class youth who struggles to find his place in the world dominated by materialism. As his medieval equivalent, eventually he finds all the answers in God's love.

The protagonist of H.F. Rubinstein's *Insomnia: A Modern Morality Play*, Junior Clerk, also comes from the middle class, but his representative potential lies in the workings of his psyche. With the play set in the protagonist's mind and using Freudian nomenclature, Rubinstein comments on such concepts as hysteria, guilt, repression, the subconscious, and the theory of dreams. Personified abstractions also appear in the characters of The Ego, Memory, Curiosity, Conscience, Melody, Life Force, Fear and Hope. *Insomnia*, therefore, not only secularises, but also “psychologises” the morality play genre, providing it with an entirely new angle. As in the case of medieval moralities, however, its plot revolves around the need to examine the conscience (this time in face of sleeplessness, not death). As in *Everyman*, this examination supplies results which are inconvenient for the protagonist since the cause of Clerk's insomnia is eventually found in the faults of his character: dishonesty and indolence.

*A Christmas Morality* and *What Makes Christmas Christmas* are two plays which reinvent the morality play genre to fit it into the popular tradition of writing Christmas plays. In this way, Lyttelton's and Jones's plays provide an interesting blend of the morality play and another form of religious drama: the nativity play. While the category of Christmas Modern Moralities overlaps with religious Modern Moralities, these plays were put in a group of their own because they belong to the realm of Christmas literature, and thus illustrate a specific kind of adaptation.

Finally, in the last section of Chapter Three, I looked at W.F. Almond's Modern Morality *Everychild* through the prism of the adaptation theory. I have discovered and discussed numerous references to *Everyman*, among others beginning the story with an explanation of its content, a clearly didactic purpose, the employment of personified abstractions as characters and the motif of *memento mori*. Many of them have been adjusted in such a way as to speak better to the contemporary audience, which sometimes contributed to lightening the mood of the play. This is the case, for example, with the episode depicting Everychildren's encounter with Death.

In conclusion, the close reading of five Modern Morality Plays demonstrates that they were a genre extraordinarily absorptive of new developments in different fields. *Conflict*, while deprived of the medieval message of *memento mori* dramatises the Christian commandment of valuing God's love above anything else, *Insomnia* combines the morality play with new developments in psychiatry, *A Christmas Morality* and *What Makes Christmas Christmas* shows that moralities provided a relevant framework for festivity plays, and *Everychild* supplies a perfect example of a modern adaptation of *Everyman*.

## **Coda: What comes next?**

The following concluding comments regarding the Morality Play Revival will be preceded by short chapter synopses, as well as a few remarks upon how this genre survived into the 1990s and still functions in the 2000s. In the Introduction, I provided an overview of different approaches as to how the Middle Ages, of whose literary culture the morality play is a part, are defined and assessed. From these considerations, the Middle Ages emerged as a period significantly ignored by future centuries, whose name reflects its perception as an era of failure set between two great eras. This judgement was contrasted with the nineteenth-century fascination with the medieval, visible in literature, architecture and art. It has been argued that it was Romanticism which re-invented the Middle Ages in the public imagination and produced its image as it is known today. In the section on medievalism, I defined this term, traced its origins, and the emergence of medievalism as an academic field in the twentieth century.

In Part I of the dissertation, I enumerated several authors whose contribution was crucial in reviving the morality play in the first half of the twentieth century. This part opened with an introduction in which I discussed the key changes which the British society underwent at the beginning of the post-Victorian era and the key social and political challenges that it faced, which could have influenced the enthusiastic reception of morality plays. Among these I put the loss of Britain's position as an international superpower, the rise of antagonism between the ruling and the working class, the conflict with Ireland, the development of the suffragette movement, the arms race and the general awareness of the possibility of war. Subsequently, I indicated the most significant “types” of drama which emerged in the British theatre, that is, “the general drama,” “the popular drama” and “the progressive drama.” The introduction also commented on the condition of the American drama at the beginning of the twentieth century, in order to illustrate what kind of theatrical climate moralities entered. The developments which were taken into consideration included the rise of realism, naturalism and expressionism. I also briefly indicated the connection between Eugene O'Neill's oeuvre and the morality play tradition, the link between expressionism and allegorical drama, and other instances of how the Everyman motif was employed by American dramatists.

In Chapters One and Two, I traced the course of the Morality Play Revival, starting with Richard Ganthony's 1899 play *A Message from Mars*, which was not a full-scope morality play, but which critics defined as a blend of morality play and a fairy tale, and which shares many

characteristics with Modern Moralities. Other examples of returns to the morality play tradition included William Poel's experimental staging of *Everyman* in 1901, Walter Nugent Monck's productions of medieval drama and his morality play *Life's Measure*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1909 play *The Fires of Fate*, whose affiliation with Modern Moralities can be questioned but which Conan Doyle himself considered a morality, Sutton Vane's best known work from 1924: *Outward Bound*, and finally T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), which he confirmed to have been inspired by moralities. In Chapter Two, two more examples of Modern Moralities from outside England were discussed, that is George V. Hobart's *Experience* (1915), which made him one of the richest American playwrights of his time, and *Jedermann* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1911), performed yearly at the Salzburg Festival till today. All these brief analyses of how Modern Moralities entered British, American and European stages, in forms of both experiments and commercially successful pieces, suggested that the contemporary drama in the first decades of the twentieth century found itself demanding novelty and return to past forms at the same time. Part I closes with a concluding section which outlines possible factors that may have sparked the Morality Play Revival, among which I enlisted the rise of the interest in the Middle Ages, started by Romanticism, the public's impatience with realism and the demand for novelty, the efforts of particular playwrights, such as William Poel, who experimented with old forms of drama, the common need for a form of drama ready to solve ethical doubts with simple answers, the general social climate which welcomed plays that supported equality, the ability of morality plays to respond to other trends, such as one-act plays, and the fact that the morality play was a part of bigger concept of returning to the beginning of drama in England.

In Part II, I provided an introduction which aimed to define what a morality play is. Essential features of the morality play, which Leigh designates as: “dramatic allegory, moral lesson, abstractions, representative types, personifications, *psychomachia*, ethical choice, and focus on the individual Christian” (220) were investigated in detail, and their function as a *sine qua non* of the morality play genre was assessed. Drawing from the scholarship of the twentieth and twenty-first century, I also pointed out some facts about the morality play which are not commonly associated with it, for example that as all religious drama, they were meant not only to teach but also to entertain. In Chapter Three, I presented analyses of five Modern Moralities, in order to showcase their diversity and to indicate how responsive this genre was to the changes that were taking place in the society, science and literature of that time. The first analysis explored Arthur Simmons's religious morality play *The Conflict*. It proved that while

keeping the religious undertone, Modern Morality Plays were updated in such a way as to relate to current issues, such as the unprecedented technological progress, World War II or the economic crisis. In the second analysis, I focused on how H. F. Rubinstein's *Insomnia: A Modern Morality Play*, uses the notions borrowed from Freud's psychoanalysis in order to “psychologise” the morality play. It means that different morality play elements, such as the direct address, personifications and universal protagonist, were employed to discuss the workings of human psyche, and especially such notions as repression, guilt and the subconscious. The third subsection situated Modern Morality Play within the realm of Christmas literature to depict it as a highly adaptive and “useful” form written to be performed at different occasions, such as Christmas, and which sometimes successfully blended with other forms, in this case, a nativity play. In the last subsection I explored W.F. Almond's *Everychild* in the context of the adaptation theory, and determined it to be an adaptation, rather than an appropriation.

It should be noted that the story of Modern Morality Plays does not end in the first half of the twentieth century. Three examples of Modern Moralities much more recent than the ones explored so far in this dissertation are Wendy MacLeod's *Sin* (1995), Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1995) and Carol Ann Duffy's *Everyman* (2015).

MacLeod's drama is a contemporary morality play in its purest form. This is evident from the beginning, since in the character list, in addition to regular names, the characters other than the protagonist also receive allegorical names which refer to seven deadly sins:

Avery, a woman, 31, a Traffic Watcher for a local radio station

Man (Lust), a poet

Michael (Sloth), her estranged husband, a doctor

Date (Greed), a Yuppie, 30s

Helen (Gluttony), 32, her friend and roommate

Fred (Envy), her co-worker

Jason (Wrath), her boss

Gerard, Avery's brother (Pride), her brother (MacLeod 6)

*Sin* premiered at The Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 1995. The play is set in San Francisco in 1989, on the eve of the Loma Prieta earthquake (which symbolises the Judgement Day) and dramatises the protagonist's journey to self-knowledge and acceptance of human imperfection. The eponymous sin relates to Avery's mislead conviction of being morally superior to everybody else. Being a traffic commentator for the local radio, Avery sits on a plane, looks

down on the city and its inhabitants from the aerial position of a god, and feels entitled to judge them: “The houses could be happy if people would just stop. Just stop being bad and start being good. Why do people act so stupid?” (7). In addition to thinking of herself as superior, she feels the need to constantly berate others. This reveals her conceitedness, which she mistakes for honesty. Thus, Avery criticises her obese flatmate (“Fine. Eat Chee-tos. I'm tired of trying to help you. But you are getting fat and I know you know because those are the only clothes in your closet that still fit” (MacLeod 26), she instructs her colleague (“If you really want to get promoted you should stop acting like is kicking your chair, quit bitching, be cheerful” (29)), and she cannot bring herself to tell her dying brother that he looks beautiful when he is desperate to hear it (“Well, you look sick, Gerard, I mean not sick, but thin” (38)). At some point, she even considers her AIDS-positive brother deserved his fate: “Well Gerard, you slept around” (43).

As can be gathered from the *dramatis personae*, different characters on Avery's path represent different cardinal sins. Next to overweight Helen who stands for Gluttony, and Gerard who stands for Pride (“Well I think I look beautiful” 38), there is a strange man trying to pick Avery up at a bar (“I'm hitting on you because you have the beautiful smile” (9) representing Lust, her separated husband Michael (Sloth) who refuses to take up an AA therapy, a ruthless businessman (Greed) with whom she goes on a date (“It's my religion! Sex and money” (21)), her colleague Fred jealous of their boss's wealth, and, finally, her boss Jason, who symbolises wrath. Throughout the play, Avery is, like Everyman, in a limbo: she is separated from her husband, she lives with a flatmate with whom she does not have a good relationship and she is trapped in a job which does not satisfy her. “I need some kind of... clarity. If not progress, then, at least, an ending” (15), she states. At the end of the play, Avery gets her redemption.

On the day of the earthquake Gerard dies, and Avery hears some difficult truths. “You're so busy being right, you don't care how you make people feel. You make people feel bad. I'm not saying I'm not fucked up, 'cause I know I'm fucked up but you're fucked up and you don't even know it” (61), Helen tells her. What is more, she enlists other examples of Avery's behaviour which are far from perfection: “you miss the trash can, you . . . or like you leave the iron plugged in” (61). Her brother's passing, Helen's remarks, house fire and the traumatic experience of the earthquake bring about Avery's *anagnorisis*. She regrets judging Gerard: I told Gerard it was his fault he was sick . . . My God, he was dying, it doesn't matter whose fault it was, I was so busy judging him, thinking *he* was prideful, when all the time I was guilty of the same sin” (66). Her husband explains to her, however, that her behaviour was not a sin, but

simply “being human” (66). At some point in the play Avery states: “I lost my job, stupidly, it was so *stupid*, but I couldn't control it, all of a sudden it was in me, anger and envy and hunger and I was like everyone else... and I liked it. I didn't feel so alone” (68), to which Michael responds, “Avery Bly on High, you've come down from the sky” (69). Michael's line, which is also the concluding line of the play, perfectly encapsulates the process of modern adjustment which the morality play underwent in *Sin*. The logic of the medieval moralities becomes reversed. While Everyman is asked to rise above his humanity, Avery has to step down to it in order to be saved. While Everyman is taken up to heaven by angels, Avery comes down from the sky. This reversal has also been noticed by Steven Mikulan, who in the review of the play writes that “MacLeod's play has less in common with Everyman's traditional search through the debris of the temporal world than it does with Everyyuppie's psychological commute from divorce to reconciliation” (Mikulan). The message of *Everyman* is to beware sin, while the message of *Sin* (as far as modern criticism allows one to discuss it) is to embrace the fact that sin is inevitable. This is evident in the fact that all sinners Avery condemns, are, in fact, vulnerable people.

Another example of how morality play elements are employed in the drama of the 1990s is Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-Prize-winner play *Wit*. It must be stressed, however, that this play cannot be considered, as MacLeod's drama, as a full-scope morality. What is more, it is highly likely the author even did not have this intertextual link in mind when she was writing the play. *Wit* was inspired by Edson's experiences with working as a clerk at an oncology ward in a Washington hospital, and it dramatises the story of Vivian Bearing, an English literature professor, diagnosed with metastatic ovarian cancer. Undergoing eight months of experimental chemotherapy treatment, which both Vivian and her doctors know to be doomed to failure (but at the same time crucial to the doctors' research), turns into a pilgrimage towards self-understanding and re-evaluation of life priorities.

*Wit* conforms to the morality play pattern by its educational impulse: in simplest terms, it teaches (as *Sin* does) that being too demanding for others leads to loneliness and isolation. Vivian had always chosen academic career over human contact, which resulted in her having to face her disease alone: “You are not having a lot of visitors, are you?” (29), asks nurse Susie; “None, to be precise” (29), answers Vivian. Her flashbacks reveal that as a student she was ambitious and antisocial, and as a professor demanding and uncompromising. Although upon hearing her diagnosis Vivian behaves bravely (“I have stage four metastatic ovarian cancer. There is no stage five. Oh, and I have to be very tough” (13), as time passes her condition

deteriorates, and she finds it difficult to cope with the indifference of the medical personnel who treats her as an experiment rather than a human being: “I flatter myself. This article will not be about me, it will be about my ovaries” (43). She also begins to question her life choices, first sarcastically and then for real: “Now I suppose we shall see, through a series of flashbacks, how the senior scholar ruthlessly denied her simpering students the touch of human kindness she now seeks” (Edson, 48). Therefore, as Everyman, Vivian is informed that her earthly life is about to end. As Everyman, she sets out on a spiritual journey which can be conceived as a pilgrimage. Finally, as Everyman, she eventually re-evaluates her choices, and receives redemption. This is indicated by her dropping her hospital gown and reaching towards the light in the last scene of the play. Her redemption is ethical, not religious, and the whole play remains entirely secular in its purport.

There are more similarities with the morality play tradition that *Wit* displays. Although no personifications appear in the play, the characters are stock-types, and each could easily be given an allegorical name. Susie, for example, as the only empathic figure, could become Kindness in a medieval morality play. What is more, like moralities, *Wit* opens with a direct address: “How are you feeling today? Great, that's just great. It's not my standard greeting, I assure you” (7). As far as the universality of the protagonist is concerned, while being a distinguished scholar Vivian, as Everyman, is gradually abandoned by all her earthly resources. She loses her beauty due to the chemotherapy treatment, and eventually she also loses her wits when she falls into coma. Finally, she has to fight one of the seven deadly sins: pride (“I know all about life and death. I am, after all, a scholar of Donne's Holy Sonnets”) to find her way to salvation.

Thus, employing many morality play features, *Wit* comments on academia, the healthcare system and medical science, and asks whether there is a place for humanity in any of these fields. It is also a cautionary tale, which advises against putting work over life and intellectual acumen over kindness. “I thought being extremely smart would take care of it. But I see that I have been found out” (Edson, 56), states Vivian in her moment of insight, soon before losing consciousness forever. It is, finally, a play about *ars moriendi*, which tries to determine whether it is possible to prepare for death.

Finally, Carol Ann Duffy's adaptation of *Everyman* must be mentioned in the context of recent moralities. The play by the Britain's Poet Laureate premiered at the National Theatre in London in 2015, starred Chiwetel Ejiofor as Everyman, and was well-received. In Duffy's version, Everyman (or Ev, as he is called by his friends) is a forty-year-old, successful, addicted to drugs

partygoer with a failed relationship and no affection for his senile parents. As his medieval counterpart, he is informed by Death that his time on Earth is over, and he tries to bargain to no avail. An important theme of the play, and one of the main reasons for God's wrath, is people's disrespect towards their planet ("The angels weep to see the ruin of the Earth" (Duffy 5)). A tsunami episode brings to mind the Judgement Day.

It is interesting to note, however, that some critics took issue with the ultimately secular character of the adaptation. Susannah Clapp from *The Guardian*, for example, writes:

There is a difficulty. It lies in Duffy's script. This is lively, demotic, outspoken – as is the 15th-century morality play, though that did not mention colostomy bags. Yet it is also avowedly secular. Take away from *Everyman* the fear of Judgment, and you are left with an often attenuated satire on 21st-century consumerism. Justified, perhaps, but frequently familiar – and, in the case of the coke-snorting, roaring, sharp-suited binge with which the play begins, over-extended. It is unlikely that anyone will leave the theatre frightened for their own life. (Clapp)

This view is seconded by Michael Billington who, while calling Duffy's re-make a "stunning update of the medieval morality play" states that

Even in a version as brilliant as this there is a moment that jars when God/Good Deeds tells us: "Religion is a man-made thing. It too will pass." This seems a gratuitous stroke in a story that shows precisely where a materialistic individualism has led us. (Billington)

*Sin, Wit* and Duffy's *Everyman* are only three examples of how morality play still functions within modern drama. Perhaps the positive reception of these plays results from the fact that, as Potter explains, morality play is able to "show us what we least expect to find, which is ourselves" (vii).

Having examined the output of numerous British dramatists of the twentieth century whose works were inspired by the morality play, I can conclude with certainty that, contrary to the popular academic judgement, this form cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to the modern stage. An investigation of the reception of Modern Moralities based on the reviews from British and America periodicals proves that by adjusting its thematic focus and form to current expectations, the morality play gained appreciation of modern audiences in the first half of the twentieth century. The overview of Modern Moralities and plays inspired by the morality tradition illustrates the significant impact which this form made on both entirely unknown amateur dramatists, such as Edith Lyttelton, and the key figures of the western literary canon such as T.S. Eliot. The close reading of several Modern Moralities reveals the morality play to be an extremely flexible genre which evolved in many directions, which responded to important developments in society and science, such as secularisation or the rise of psychoanalysis, and

which proved an excellent material for adaptation. Potter concludes his study by declaring that “the morality play is still of use to us, and may be for so long as the human predicament remains unsolved, and the greater madness of our lives remains in need of a figurative exemplification” (245). The findings presented in this dissertation confirm this statement.

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## Appendix

### Modern Morality Plays in English in the 1st half of the 20th century

*Everyman's Education: A Morality Play*, C.M. Mathews and Wifred C. Mathews, 1903

*Life's Measure. A Morality Play*, Walter Nugent Monck, 1906

*A Christmas Morality Play*, E.S. Lyttelton, 1908

*The Painter and the Millionaire: A Modern Morality Play in Two Acts*, H. M. Paull, 1909

*The Children of the Chapel ... Including The Pilgrimage of Pleasure: A Morality Play*,  
Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1910

*Everystudent, His Encounters in Pursuit of Knowledge: A Modern Morality Play in One Act*,  
Edith Everett, 1912

*Everywoman. Her pilgrimage in Quest of Love: A Modern Morality Play*, Walter Browne,  
1912.

*Anyman: A Modern Morality Play in One Act*, Mary Katherine Reely, 1913

*Wisdom's Foolishness. A Morality Play in Two Acts*, Helen L. Redpath, 1913

*On the King's Highway. A Morality Play*, Agnes Leathers, 1914

*The Passing of Mars: A Modern Morality Play*, Marguerite Ogden Bigelow Wilkinson, 1915

*The Game. A Morality Play*, Louis Bryant, 1916

*A House: Modern Morality Play*, Ford Maddox Ford, 1921

*The Good Samaritan. A New Testament Morality Play in Four Scenes*, W.H. Temple Gairdner,  
1923

*Via Vitae: A Morality Play in Five Scenes and in Verse*, "By a Sister of Charity," 1923,

*Where Love Is God Is*, A.M.P. Dawson, 1923

*The Sacred Fire. A Morality Play for the League of Nations in One Act*, Amice Macdonell,  
1924

*Insomnia. A Modern Morality Play*, H.F. Rubinstein, 1927

*Peers Woodman. A Morality Play*, Bernard Gilbert, 1927

*Christmas Eve: A Morality Play*, Ben Hecht, 1928

*Devil's Lane. A Modern Morality Play in One Act*, Louise Sublette Perry, 1928

*The Enemies of the Bishop, or Die When I say When: A Morality Play in Four Acts*, 1929

*Work and wealth: A modern Morality Play in One Act*, Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry, 1929

*The King's Highway. A Morality Play*, Frank H. Jones, 1930

*Easy Street: A Modern Morality Play*, John Waddington Feather, 1933

*The Woman and the Walnut Tree. A Modern Morality Play in Six Scenes*, Sydney Box, 1935

*A Modern Morality Play on Social Justice in Three Episodes*, W. Leo Batten; Charles T Broderick; Thomas J Fitzmorris, 1936

*Everychild. A Morality Play in Two Parts for Fifteen Characters*, W.F. Almond, 1938

*Out of Depths. A Morality Play in One Act*, Alex Mathews, 1938

*Johnson over Jordan: A Modern Morality Play in Three Acts*, J.B. Priestley, 1941

*How Long the Night: A Modern Morality Play in Four Parts*, Morris E Guirl; Harry Bertoia, 1943

*Youth Wants to Know: A Modern Morality Play*, Howard Douglas Wadman, 1944

*In the Beginning. A Modern Morality Play in One Act*, Edna Dean Baker, 1945

*If Light Be Darkness: A Morality Play*, Phyllis Benbow Beardsley, 1947

*Choose Your Star! A Modern Morality Play*, H. Richards, 1948

*The World Turned Upside Down: A Modern Morality Play*, Clive Sansom, 1948

### **Modern Morality Plays in English in the 2nd half of the 20th century**

*The Devil a Saint Would Be. A Morality Play In three Acts*, Louis D'Alton, 1952

*Everynun: A Modern Morality Play*, Daniel A. Lord, 1952

*He Who Would Be Greatest: A Morality Play for Young Children*, Joyce Reason, 1952

*It's Everyman's'World: A Modern Morality Play in One Act*, Robert C Mitchell, 1952

*The Little Star. A Christmas Morality One-Act Play for the Young*, Robin Stark, 1953

*Saraband for a Saint: A Modern Morality Play in Two Acts*, Dawn Langley Simmons, 1954

*He Came unto His Own. A Morality Play for Christmas and Epiphany*, Vera Gladys Cumberlege, 1955

*Everyman Today: A Modern Morality Play*, Walter Sorell, 1958

*Crosses on the Hill. A Morality Play*, Eula A. Lamphere, 1959

*Saint David: A Morality Play*, I.E. Edwards, 1960

*Everyman: A New Version of the Famous Morality Play*, adapted by Constance Cox, 1967

*One for the Grave: A Modern Morality Play*, Louis MacNeice, 1968

*The Crucible: A Modern Morality Play*, Carolyn Jean Craig, 1972.

*The Last Lover: A Musical Morality Play*, Robert Starer, 1977, vocal score

*Ivanov/Evanson: Or a Casualty of Glasnost: A Morality Play in six Acts*, Yan A. Galt, Arthur H. Stockwell, 1991



## Abstract

The aim of this PhD thesis is to investigate the phenomenon of the Morality Play Revival, which took place in Anglophone (mainly British and American) drama in the beginning of the twentieth century, and to question the common discard of the morality play as a dramatic form potentially useful to modern stage. A significant part of the twentieth-century scholarship perceives medieval moralities as a dramatic output unsuited to contemporary tastes and expectations because of their overt didacticism, the use of allegorical characters and the predictability of the plot. However, the sudden resurgence of moralities in the first decades of the twentieth century, both in the form of antiquarian experiments in reviving old English drama, and in the form of modernised adaptations, challenges this perception. Furthermore, through analyses of several Modern Morality Plays, this study attempts to hypothesise about the potential causes of the Morality Play Revival and, thus, to explain the surprising popularity of this form.

The thesis contains an introduction, two parts (the first one comprised of three chapters, the second one comprised of one chapter) and a coda. The introduction examines the definition, the timeframe, and the reception of the Middle Ages, as well as discusses the notion of medievalism and its development.

Chapter One characterises the main changes that British and American drama underwent in the first decades of the twentieth century and indicates how the Modern Moralities responded to some of the prevalent trends and motifs at that time. Chapter Two introduces several playwrights who played an important role in the Morality Play Revival. Among them are Richard Ganthony and his 1899 play *A Message from Mars*, William Poel and his 1901 staging of *Everyman*, Walter Nugent Monck and *Life's Measure* (1906), Arthur Conan Doyle and *The Fires of Fate* (1909), Sutton Vane and *Outward Bound* (1923), as well as T.S. Eliot and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). Chapter Three presents two examples of Modern Morality Plays from outside Britain which gained a wide viewership and critical acclamation. These include George V. Hobart's *Experience: A Morality Play of Today* (1915) and *Jedermann* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1911). Part I ends with conclusions which outlines the place the Modern Moralities assumed within the discourse of the Anglophone drama of the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter Four contains analyses of five Modern Moralities. These plays represent specific categories (that is religious Modern Moralities, secularised Modern Moralities, Christmas

Modern Moralities, and modern rewritings of *Everyman*) and each illustrates a different set of developments. Arthur Simmons' *Conflict* (1946) remains Christian and didactic but touches upon significant issues of current times such as the trauma of World War II and excessive consumerism. H. F. Rubinstein's secularised *Insomnia* (1925) "psychologises" the morality play by setting it in the protagonist's mind. Edith Lyttelton and Grace Latimer Jones combine the morality play genre with the nativity play. W.F. Almond's *Everychild* is a modernised adaptation of *Everyman*. These close readings are followed with a concluding section which postulates the potential reasons behind the Morality Play Revival.

In the coda, I briefly present three plays from the late twentieth century and the 2000s which employ morality play elements or are modern adaptations of this medieval form, that is Wendy MacLeod's *Sin* (1995), Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1995) and Carol Ann Duffy's *Everyman* (2015).

## Streszczenie

Celem rozprawy jest zbadanie zjawiska „odrodzenia moralitetu”, które miało miejsce w dramacie anglojęzycznym (głównie brytyjskim i amerykańskim) na początku dwudziestego wieku oraz poddanie w wątpliwość powszechnego niemal rozumienia moralitetu jako formy niezdatnej dla współczesnego teatru. Ogromna większość dwudziestowiecznych opracowań dotyczących moralitetów postrzega je jako sztuki niezdolne do zainteresowania współczesnego widza ze względu na ich jawny dydaktyzm, alegorycznych bohaterów oraz przewidywalność fabuły. A jednak, nagły powrót do moralitetu w pierwszych dekadach dwudziestego wieku, realizowany zarówno w formie eksperymentów antykwarycznych, jak i uwspółcześnionych adaptacji, nie współgra z taką opinią. Poprzez analizy kilku „współczesnych moralitetów”, rozprawa podejmuje również próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, dlaczego moralitet odrodził się właśnie w tamtych latach oraz co było przyczyną jego popularności.

Praca składa się ze wstępu, dwóch części (pierwszej zawierającej trzy rozdziały i drugiej zawierającej jeden) oraz z kody. Celem wstępu jest określenie definicji średniowiecza, jego ram czasowych, opisanie jego odbioru w wiekach późniejszych oraz pochylenie się nad koncepcją i rozwojem mediewalizmu.

Rozdział pierwszy nakreśla główne kierunki rozwoju dramatu brytyjskiego oraz amerykańskiego w pierwszych dekadach dwudziestego wieku, oraz wskazuje sposoby, w jakie „współczesny moralitet” wpasowywał się w ówczesne trendy i motywy. Rozdział drugi skupia się na dramaturgach, których twórczość odegrała ważną rolę w „odrodzeniu moralitetu”. Wśród nich znajdują się Richard Ganthony oraz jego sztuka z 1899 roku „A Message from Mars”, William Poel oraz wystawienie średniowiecznego moralitetu „Everyman” w 1901 roku, Walter Nugent Monck i „Life’s Measure” (1906), Arthur Conan Doyle i „The Fires of Fate” (1909), Sutton Vane i „Outward Bound” (1923), oraz T.S. Eliot i jego „Murder in the Cathedral” (1935). Rozdział trzeci skupia się na dwóch przykładach „współczesnych moralitetów” spoza Wielkiej Brytanii, które zdobyły uznanie publiczności i krytyków: „Experience: A Morality Play of Today” (1915) George V. Hobarta i „Jedermann” Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1911). Część pierwsza kończy się wnioskami dotyczącymi miejsca „współczesnego moralitetu” w dyskursie dramatu anglojęzycznego pierwszej połowy dwudziestego wieku.

Rozdział czwarty zawiera analizy pięciu „współczesnych moralitetów”. Każdy z nich reprezentuje inną kategorię, tj. współczesne moralitety religijne, współczesne moralitety świeckie, współczesne moralitety Bożonarodzeniowe oraz współczesne adaptacje

średniowiecznego „Everymana”. Każdy ilustruje również inny kierunek rozwoju moralitetu. „Conflict” Arthura Simmonsa, choć jest sztuką dydaktyczną i eksplorującą wartości chrześcijańskie, dotyka również współczesnych autorowi kwestii, takich jak druga wojna światowa lub konsumpcjonizm. W „Insomni” H.F. Rubinstein dokonuje „psychologizacji” moralitetu, osadzając swoją sztukę w umyśle głównego bohatera. Edith Lyttelton i Grace Latimer Jones łączą moralitet z jasełkami, a W.F. Almond w „Everychild” proponuje współczesną adaptację „Everymana”. Analizy zakończone są wnioskami, w których zaproponowano kilka hipotez dotyczących źródeł „odrodzenia moralitetu”.

W kodzie omówione są krótko trzy przykłady sztuk z lat dziewięćdziesiątych oraz początku dwudziestego pierwszego wieku, które używają konwencji moralitetowych lub są adaptacjami moralitetu. Są to „Sin” (1995) Wendy MacLeod, „Wit” (1995) Margaret Edson oraz „Everyman” (2015) Carol Ann Duffy.