

STAGING THE STATE AND THE HYPOSTASIZATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIÉVAL CORNISH DRAMA

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INTRODUCTION

Medieval European drama, particularly Cornish drama, is notable for graphic depiction of extreme violence and cruelty. Its blurring of the boundaries between real and realistic violence is so pervasive that one commentator has dubbed the genre 'Medieval Snuff Drama'.¹ The staging of violence in medieval drama elicits conflicting responses from a modern audience. On the one hand, it seems to confirm the general opposition by which the Medieval stands to the Modern as a world in which violence is omnipresent in everyday life, in contrast to a modern world where violence seems generally to have been 'confined to barracks' by a civilizing process.² On the other, the way in which the medieval plays dwell on the realistic, even grotesque, depiction of violence, reminds us of our modern selves, who live in a world in which violence, when and where it appears, is found in ever more extreme forms, and represented ever more realistically.³ I argue that the Cornish miracle plays, and in particular their detailed staging instructions, provide material of great interest to historical anthropologists and sociologists who are interested in the way that violence is imagined in relation to the emerging notion of a state as an entity with a monopoly on violence, or a civilizing process in which violence is increasingly displaced from everyday life and 'confined to barracks'.

The stage diagrams of Cornish plays are microcosmic representations of a broader macrocosm, a map of a medieval cosmos, in which all the components of the modern state are represented and made

visible. And given that alongside such obviously important entities such as God and the Devil, Kings and Bishops, there are unchanging stage positions for agents of violence, Torturers, it seems that violence itself is highlighted in these stage diagrams as an integral part of a medieval cosmology. In this paper, then, I argue that the staging of violence is central to the staging of the state itself in Medieval Cornish drama. Since no actual political arrangement at that time 'on the ground' corresponded to our notion of a state, it can be argued that the idea of the state may have emerged in the imagination long before it corresponded to anything 'real'. If the modern state is an imagined entity, a 'state idea', rather than something 'out there', what better place to study its rise than in the medieval imagination? If 'the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is',⁴ then the theatre would seem to be as good a place as any to start studying the idea of the state. Violence and media of power are quite real, of course, 'but it is their association with the idea of the state and the invocation of that idea that silences protest, excuses force and convinces all of us that the fate of the victims is just and necessary.'⁵

I am not so much interested here in the way that the pre-modern or modern state *displays itself* dramaturgically through public exhibitions of pomp and power, as Geertz's famous analysis of the Balinese 'theatre state' or the many discussions of 'state spectacles' in the anthropological literature.⁶ I am interested in how relatively autonomous ritual or theatrical occasions act to represent a timeless and distantiated cosmology in which the legitimacy of the state and violence are a major part of the narrative argument. As Abrams points out, 'the state is a unified symbol of an actual [political] disunity', and (unified) states are things you *believe in*, in much the same way you believe in God.⁷ As an invisible cosmological principle and a symbol unifying existing visible practices of power, it must be *displayed somewhere* to be understood and imagined as a unity, often in tandem with the rest of the cosmological order in which it is embedded, which is no more obvious to the naked eye. While the power of the pre-modern state was undoubtedly 'made visible through signs displayed in the form of theatre, with processions, progresses, royal entries, coronations and funerals, and rituals which guaranteed the well-being and continued power of the rulers',⁸ alongside this 'state theatre', the state idea was equally represented as part of other dramatic representations of a broader medieval cosmology, dramas that were narratives of salvation extending across all of time, including as part of their argument the genesis of the state, its separation from the church, and its final integration, and at the same time the integration of violence, into a

Christian state. An ordinary peasant in a place like Cornwall might well have encountered very concrete power, violence, as well as scattered instances of pomp, in their everyday life, but need not have experienced them as being part of a unified state unless they were presented, in some way as being graspable as part of one. And this might as easily have been accomplished by watching a dramatic spectacle *about the state* as it would have been accomplished in watching a *state spectacle*.

The medieval theatre may be a good set of texts through which to apprehend medieval cosmologies, including the state idea, but why Cornish theatre in particular? Cornish plays are noteworthy in that they not only have full texts available (the recent discovery of a new play makes the cycle of Cornish plays almost unique), but also their stage diagrams and staging instructions are well-preserved, making them a uniquely detailed resource for studying the way that these plays 'stage the state'. In the staging of these plays three factors emerge which I argue must be understood in tandem and in relation to the staging of pomp and power:

- 1) First, the stage diagrams of the plays do not portray arrangements in physical space as might a modern stage diagram, but rather, divisions in social space in which the feudal estates are given a special place and are separated from the locus of their activity and aligned with an unchanging cosmological order. The stage diagrams amount to a microcosmic model of a whole medieval cosmology. Part of this organization of space separates the agents of violence (torturers) from their principals, implying that violence is an unchanging part of a cosmological system, apart from the persons who employ it and upon whom it is employed.
- 2) The staging of these plays are peculiar to the modern spectator in that they involve a great deal of what has been called 'pointless to-and-froing', during which characters who are separated from the playing space by the conventions of the stage diagrams (1) 'act at a distance' through complex arrays of mediators. Much of the action of the plays involves 'mediational routines' that, far from being pointless, enact both pomp and power as the ability to 'act at a distance'.
- 3) Among the mediators, the most peculiar are the figures called the torturers, who are clownish characters who have a monopoly on the portrayal of all that is grotesque, most particularly realistic violence. Medieval plays are noteworthy for the way they restrict dramaturgical realism to grotesque realism, in particular realistic displays of violence. Torturers are not only separated from their

principals and located as an unchanging principal within the stage diagrams (1), they also serve as intermediaries within mediational routines (2), routines that involve a specific form of performance that they monopolize, a 'grotesque' materiality of staged violence contrasts with other forms of activity.

My argument, then, is that a central theme of the Cornish miracle plays is the cosmology of the state, and the torturers are the incarnation of the principle of monopolization of violence upon which states depend. The plays produce a cosmological reconciliation of violence and the state. They do this by providing an alibi for violence as technical means for the moral ends of the state; violence becomes 'socio-technical'.⁹ This is a process that Zygmunt Bauman calls the *adiaphorization* of violence, a process by which violence and other forms of social action, is rendered indifferent, *adiaphoric*, that is, 'neither good nor evil, measurable against technical (purpose-oriented or procedural), but not moral values'.¹⁰ *Adiaphorizing* actions, including social actions like violence, requires 'articulation of [social] action into the hierarchy of command and execution: once placed into the "agentic state" and separated from both the intention conscious sources and the ultimate effects of action by a chain of mediators, the actors seldom face the moment of choice and gaze at the consequences of their deeds'.¹¹ This is an important aspect of modern forms of power as 'action at a distance' with moral consequences including the 'banality of evil'.¹² Ironically, the *adiaphorization* of violence, a consequence of modernity, is itself a partial product of the civilization process, which according to Elias attempts to separate violence from everyday life, thereby producing both the formation of the state with a monopoly on violence and the concomitant 'pacification of society' and civil life. As I will show below, the articulation of social action into component parts of command and execution produces a sense of power as 'violence at a distance'. Such mediational performances in other domains are also constitutive of ceremony and pomp as well as power, both of which are characteristic of the medieval play.¹³

I argue that a focus on the staging of pomp and power turns these plays into a valuable resource for studying medieval political imaginaries. In particular, subtle differences in political imaginations of the correct use of power can be discovered by careful attention to the differences between individual plays. Subtle changes in the staging of torturers and other characters between earlier (the *Ordinalia* c. 1350-75) and later plays (*Beunans Meriasek*, c.1504) articulate broad differences in models of the relation of violence and legitimate political authority. In earlier plays, violence is a legitimate means if its ends are

legitimate within a Christian kingship, while in the later plays the dualistic opposition within political authority between tyrants and kings associates violence in the form of the torturers only with illegitimate, tyrannical, political authority.¹⁴

Weber famously locates the relationship of real physical violence, its abstraction as a property from diverse real relationships, its incarnation, accumulation and monopolization as a general *means* for diverse *ends*, as being the very stuff of the state. Whatever else states do (and of course, this includes many things), this they must *specifically* do in order to be called a state.¹⁵ At the same time, as Elias notes, as violence is aggregated and monopolized to serve a specific set of masters in the process of state-formation, violence must at the same time be banished normatively from other domains, 'confined to barracks'.¹⁶ And the anonymous dramaturges of the Medieval Cornish stage implicitly made just such an argument four hundred years before, in the way they represented the position of violence in the cosmology of estate and state represented in the stage diagrams of the Cornish stage. The special position of the torturers, separated from the activity of the play (confined to barracks) until they are called to perform their special task, their monopolization of staged violence, all anticipates on the stage the attempted monopoly of violence central to the formation of states.

This may seem remarkable, since the medieval world is distinguished from the modern, for one, by the lack of the very idea of distinct sphere of the 'state'. And even if there is a medieval idea of the state, it is one that lacks the monopoly of violence that is central to any definition of the modern state. Unmonopolized, unspecialized violence was a ubiquitous, pervasive, immanent aspect of medieval realia, but there is a difference between sporadically violent actual relationships, and the relationship of potential violence that the state attempts to wrest from other actors. This relationship, violence, and its agents, become a specific form of unilateral mediation constitutive of states and their subjects. In the Cornish miracle plays, there is, in fact, a *represented* monopoly on violence as a pure technical means abstracted away from any moral ends to which it may be put. The torturers, ubiquitous characters honoured with their own position in the stage diagrams, embody this principle, possessing a monopoly on actual depicted violence, even if the agents for whom they are the means are as diverse as the moral ends they are put to. The torturers stand apart in the stage diagrams, and stand out in the way they enact realistic violence on the stage, as a constant separated from, and yet ubiquitous in, the rest of the dramatic universe.

If the birth of the state, or the idea of the state, lies in the

monopolization of violence as technical potentiality, then surely logically prior to this is the abstraction of violence from actual social relations (in which violence exists, but is not rationalized, functionalized as a homogenous means that is 'multifinal' with respect to ends) as a purely technical potentiality that can be monopolized.¹⁷ Not yet monopolized, the torturers still represent monopolizable violence, violence as such, violence as means, violence as cosmological functional principle, alongside kings, priests, god and devil. The Cornish miracle plays, if they cannot yet be said to be 'about the state', contain within them all of the cosmological primes from which the modern idea of the state can be built, and all of them are presented as just that, cosmological primes, invariant positions in the stage diagrams of the plays, which at the same time are diagrams of the cosmos.

In medieval Cornish drama, the figure of the torturers, ever-present characters who specialize, as it were, in the representation of enacted violence, has drawn a fair degree of attention in the past, connected as it is to the pervasive themes of violence in medieval theatre. What is particularly peculiar about the torturers in Cornish drama is their omnipresence (not a single play lacks them), as well as their prominent and invariant position in the stage diagrams. Like violence, the torturers stand out, indeed, stand apart, from the performance in which they play a singular functional role. The distinctive and unchanging position of the torturers in the north-east corner of all stage diagrams in all Cornish plays draws our attention to the semiotic principles underlying the staging of these plays. Why do such minor characters as the torturers warrant a special position in the stage diagrams alongside Heaven, Hell, Kings and Priests? Bakere proposes the following explanation in her discussion of the *Ordinalia*:

It is, at first sight, surprising that the Torturers should be considered important enough to have their own permanent tent while major characters like Noah and Moses do not have any. The reason is, presumably, that the Torturers stand for the constant elements of cruelty and brutality in man, and thus must have a permanent place in the microcosm of the stage as they do in man himself.¹⁸

Bakere here suggests that the *invariant* character of the staging of the torturers represents some timeless human capacity for evil and violence. This is in keeping with her view that the themes of the Cornish plays are strictly religious, with no secular concerns whatsoever. However, Olson has recently suggested that the central theme of the later cycle 'Beunans Meriasek' is a historically positioned critique

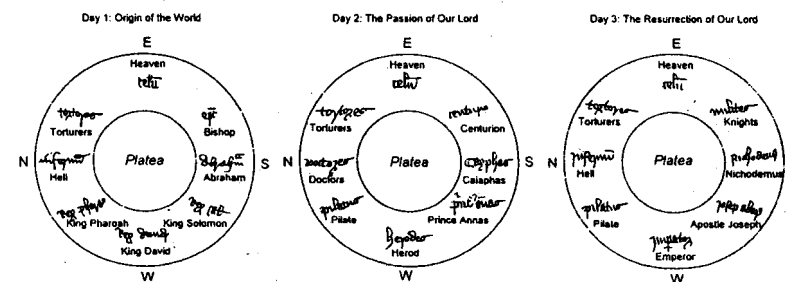
of tyranny.¹⁹ Following her lead, I consider the changing symbolism of seemingly invariant formal elements, such as staging and the position and role of the torturers, to explore the political cosmology and ontology of the state that is an ever present theme in a cycle of plays whose thematic always includes the articulation of secular and spiritual authority, and the relation of legitimate authority of kings and the illegitimate authority of tyrants. In these matters the shifting allocation and valorization of an otherwise invariant element of violence, embodied in the torturers, produces a kind of theodicy of violence, by which the specific employment of violence in a given case is diagnostic of legitimate kingship or tyranny, but violence itself is elevated to an invariant cosmological principle. The plays thus produce a moral critique of specific instances of the employment of violence, but at the same time violence itself and its agents, and by extension, the state's monopoly on violence, is hypostatized as a technical invariant irrespective of the moral ends to which it is put. By exploring the semiotics of staging, I will argue that the figure of the torturers represents in the first earlier cycle of plays (the *Ordinalia*, c.1350-75) in effect a theodicy of the state's monopoly on violence, while in the later cycle of plays (*Beunans Meriasek*, c.1500) it becomes in effect synonymous with illegitimate state power that must resort to coercion rather than consent. Other changes in the stage diagrams between these cycles, particularly in the position of kings, parallel changing political orientations to the role of violence in the constitution of the state. In the *Ordinalia*, we see represented over the period of three days the historical process that Perry Anderson, in his *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, called the 'upward displacement of coercion'. This process has two historical phases, the first being the 'centralisation and coordination of feudal domination . . . a shift from individualised to concerted coercive subjection of rural populations'.²⁰ This is represented as an idealized project in the way that violence moves from being something used directly by one ordinary character on another (Cain killing Abel), to something monopolized by a special group of characters who have no other function other than violence (the torturers), and secondly that the torturers (coercion personified) are commanded only by seated characters (nobles) and perform acts of violence only on characters that lack seats (rural populations). The second stage of the process is one in which this upward displacement of coercion (which produces and articulates the difference between estates as a function of violence) is combined with centralization of violence, and the king emerges as a monopolist of violence (and violence moves from producing estates to producing the state).²¹ The parallel on stage is when torturers move from being at the beck and call

of a rather diverse group of rather lowly feudal characters (bishops, characters like Pilate and Prince Annas) to being monopolized by the Christian Emperor at the end. This process happens in *Beunans Meriasek* with the defeat of tyrants by legitimate emperors and the abolition of torturers for knights.²²

In order to properly assess the changes in the position and role of various invariant formal elements, we need to describe the relatively invariant contexts in which they appear. The peculiarity of the torturers only emerges against a backdrop of normal expectations, from which they differ systematically in both behavior and staging conventions. Therefore, we must delay our discussion of their position until we have a normal context in which their insistent abnormality becomes visible.

STAGING ESTATE: THE DRAMATURGICAL REPRESENTATION OF FEUDAL ORDERS

There are two Cornish miracle plays for which we have full stage diagrams preserved, these are the 14th century *Ordinalia*, a play designed to be played over three days, with separate diagrams for the play of each day: *Origo Mundi* (the Creation of the World), *Passio* (the Passion play), and *Resurrexio* (The Resurrection play, c.1350-75), and *Beunans Meriasek* (the life of Saint Meriasek, c. 1504), designed to be played over two days, with separate diagrams for each day. The *Ordinalia* stage diagrams show a circular arrangement dividing a central playing area (*platea*) surrounded by eight peripheral *sedes* (seats) associated with named characters. The diagrams show certain commonalities, in that there is a seat for Heaven in the top (which is East, as in most medieval world maps, the location of the altar in a medieval church), the Torturers in the NE corner, and all, except the Passion play, have Hell in the North:



The *Beunans Meriasek* (henceforth BM) stage diagrams again show an identical distinction between *platea* and *sedes*, but the number

of the latter is much larger and varies considerably, forcing some seats like Heaven and Hell to be 'scrunched' into a small space, it being unclear whether this is an artefact of scribal representation or actually the disposition of the seats in playing space. The stage diagrams of BM show some of the same properties as were found across the days of the *Ordinalia*, with Heaven in the East and Hell (roughly) in the North and the only seat intervening between them being the torturers (see below for the diagrams from BM).

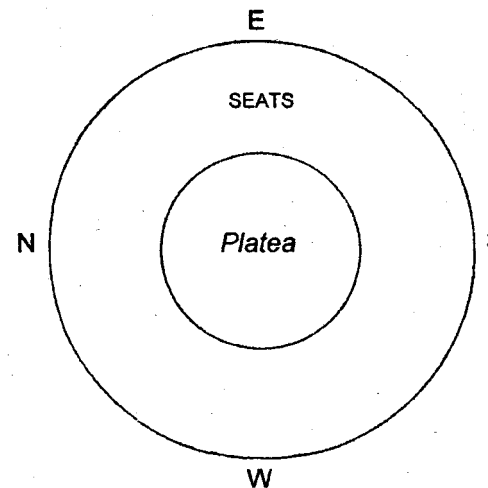
These two plays, coming perhaps from different areas of Cornwall over a century apart, on widely different themes, nevertheless show important parallels in staging that point to a shared tradition of staging in formal terms irrespective of dramatic content in terms of plot. Perhaps the most striking is the constancy of position not only of Heaven and Hell, but also the position reserved in all plays for the torturers, which is the point of ultimate interest in this paper. I will discuss the category oppositions that inform these stage diagrams beginning from those shared across most, if not all medieval drama, moving from these to those categories that are specific to Cornish staging. I will look at the diagrams as static elements of positional symbolism before I look at how they affect performance.

Throughout the discussion it should be obvious that Cornish stage diagrams are not well served by a methodology which assumes that they served dramaturgical ends of performance first and foremost, at least not in the modern sense. Modern stage diagrams, and modern stages, are 'addressed' to the problem of showing a narrative to an audience, whereas these stage diagrams not only make no provision for a space for the audience, they seem to be addressed, rather, to the problem of fitting or orienting the action in the play into a larger cosmological system, making the stage diagram a microcosmic representation of the macrocosm. In this sense, medieval drama resembles ritual.²³

SEAT AND PLATEA

Cornish miracle plays were played 'in the round', a round being divided in turn into *sedes* ('seats', also *loci* 'places') and *platea* ('place'), the former in this case forming a raised amphitheatre where (presumably) the audience sat and where the seats of certain players were placed, surrounding the place where the principle action of the play was conducted.

This central dramaturgical distinction between *sedes* and *platea* in the theatrical space of the Cornish miracle plays, rather than the opposition between the stage and the audience in modern theatre, is the central organizing opposition of most medieval drama, however it is expressed in physical terms:



The *locus*, or *sedes*, is recognized as the unit of specified place, often sacral in significance, like the crib or Easter Sepulchre, the focus of performance analogous with the altar, the focus of worship . . . The area between and around the *loci*, where commuting and other non-specifically localized action takes place, is known as the *platea* . . . The *platea* is the location of movement and action, of transition between those pictures [represented by the *loci*].²⁴

First of all, this opposition is one between semiologically marked (*sedes*, *loci*) and unmarked (*platea*) terms: the elevated seats are associated with specific named persons or places, and have specific ('marked') values, while the *platea* is effectively defined as simply the lowered empty space between these seats with no positive properties ('unmarked'). Having no intrinsic properties, it can serve simply as an empty space between the seats, for transitions or movement, or it can be given specific dramaturgical values by setting up scenery representing specific places within this space.

At the same time, as King notes, the opposition between seats and *platea* spatially articulates a kind of cosmological presupposition of the feudal order, with 'the movement or disorder of the *platea* alternating with the order presented by the *loci*'.²⁵ As we will see, the seats are the point of origin of violence, but never its end point, violence is a unidirectional relationship between seats and *platea*. As King notes, the specified places represented by seats represent

essentially a miniature diagram of status positions within a cosmological and feudal order, rather than specific locations or sets as in a modern play.²⁶ There can be no question that seats, on the whole, are given to characters who are 'important' in an absolute sense (in spiritual, secular or cosmological terms), regardless of the relative dramaturgical importance of the role they play in the narrative itself (which is often vanishingly minor). Unlike the occasional pieces of moveable scenery that dot the *platea*, seats do not have a directly 'representational' function, rather, they represent social stations, estates, in the first instance, and only residually do they represent those places, like towers, castles, heaven, hell, associated with such social or cosmological stations.²⁷ Moreover, the asymmetric opposition between lowered place and raised seat resembles (is iconic of) social hierarchy.²⁸ Therefore, the allocation of seats, as well as the opposition between seats and *platea*, produces a diagrammatic icon of the feudal order, between secular and spiritual authorities and an unclassifiable residue of peasantry.²⁹ In the Cornish plays, then, the spatially encoded opposition between unseated characters and seated characters is essentially an icon of a social opposition of symmetric community (since the level *platea* allows no spatial distinction of rank between characters), and asymmetric hierarchy (since the seats themselves represent 'hierarchy' in relation to the 'community' of the place, and, amongst themselves, hierarchical relations are coded both by static value of seats and dynamic interaction).³⁰

The characters themselves in many of the plays can be classified into three groups, 'platea' characters, 'seated' characters, and characters who mediate on behalf of seated characters in the *platea* (messengers, for example). So this opposition in staging is also a principle of social classification, the characters of biblical drama are classified in terms of this representation of a hierarchical feudal order. Taking the first two groups, characters with any sort of feudal rank (either secular or spiritual authorities: kings, princes, earls, knights, popes, bishops) will always have seats, while the groups of characters who begin in the *platea* (the unclassifiable residuum) tend to be relatively egalitarian (Adam and Eve, Noah and his family) or tend to be groups that are 'low' with respect to some feudal personage (Moses and his people versus Pharoah and his [seated], Jesus and his disciples versus Herod, and so on).

STAGING POMP AND POWER: MEDIATIONAL PERFORMANCES

Since spatial seatedness and social rank are identical, interactions between seated characters present problems for performance, for the

rigidity of the staging forces all interactions into hierarchical grooves. For one seated character to interact with another, either they must happen to meet on the neutral ground of the *platea*, or one must *descend* from his seat and accede to the presence of the other who is seated, or a messenger or other mediator must be used to summon one seated character into the presence of another. This leads to the multiplication of mediating figures in medieval drama. The opposition between seat and *platea* makes momentary relations of hierarchy unambiguous, and a good deal of the dramaturgy of the plays is geared to overcoming these oppositions, generating not a little 'to-and-froing' of mediators between principals.

There is little question that these questions of hierarchy are extremely important and 'real' for the playwright and audience. Interactions between rulers and their subalterns should ideally be asymmetric, with one seated and the other in the *platea*, particularly when the former is issuing a command to the latter. There are occasions when a 'seated' character who is on the *platea* will ascend to his seat solely to issue a command, as if the asymmetry of the speech act of command must be replicated in the asymmetry of the positions of the characters engaging in it. King David, standing in the *platea*, must 'ascend' to his seat specifically to summon and command his messenger, who is presumably located, waiting, at the seat or in the *platea* nearby:

[ascendit rex dd.]
messenger my bel aber
dus thy'mmo ketoth ha'n ger
rag colenwel voth ov brys³¹

[King David goes up]
Messenger, my fair servant,
Come to me soon as the word,
To fulfil the wish of my mind.

At the same time, if a seated character must go into the presence of another seated character, the temporary asymmetry produced by the apparent accession of one ranked character into the other can be mitigated. For example, the seated character can invite the character to sit with him, so that symmetry is restored (as does Caiaphas for Annas, whom he has summoned with a messenger).

PRINCEPS ANNAS
me a thothe yn lowen
del ywe ow syre da
rak dyswythyl an bylen
mar kevs erbyn a laha

PRINCE ANNAS
I will go to him joyfully,
As he is my good sire,
To despatch the villain,
If he speaks against the law.

[*et tunc iet ad episcopum descendit*] [*And then he shall go to the bishop*]
 [He goes down]
 hayll cayfas syr epscob stovt Hail Caiaphas, bold sir Bishop;
 dek can quyth thy's lowene Ten hundred times joy to thee!

CAYPHAS CAIAPHAS
 wolcom by mahommys blout Welcome, by the blood of Mahound;
 dues nes hagh yse gene Come near and sit with me
 [ascendit annas]³² [Annas goes up]

In the same fashion in BM, Pope Silvester, summoned into Constantine's presence by a messenger, shows that he will not 'incline' to Constantine by ascending to his throne (tower) without permission. The act of equalizing their position by ascending is taken to directly encode this:

SELUESTER SILVESTER
 Hayll constentyn in the dour Hail, Constantine, in thy tower!
 me a wor ty a wetsa I know thou deservest
 bones grueys dyso enour That Honour be done to thee,
 ha the gregyans a pe da And if thy faith were good
 ny an gressa We would do it.
 rag the voys in dysgregyans Because of thy being in unbelief,
 awos ovn gothe mernans For fear of suffering death,
 inclenya dys ny vanna Incline to thee I will not.
 [ascendit] [He goes up]

CONSTANTINUS CONSTANTINE
 Seluester wolcum owly Silvester, you are welcome
 nynsyw awos drokcoleth It is not on account of an ill deed
 ythogh kerhys dymovy³³ That you are fetched to me.

The Emperor Tiberius, when Pilate (a near equal as a seated character) is led unceremoniously into his presence by torturers, still has the grace to descend to greet him in the platea as an equal, all of which upsets the torturers, since it is in conflict with the expectations of how someone summoned by torturers should be treated (certainly in the Passion no one descends from their seat to greet Christ when he is brought with torturers).³⁴

All of this leads to a certain amount of the plays being taken up in representations of ceremony (an extreme example being the immense amount of time devoted to portraying pomp in the second day of the newly discovered play *Beunans Ke*): status is not merely represented in

the static oppositions between seated characters, but also in their interactions in performance. Many characters have no other purpose than the mediate between seated characters. On the one hand, there are the multitudinous messengers and their functional equivalent, who presumably are to be found initially seated near the principals for whom they act as agents. These characters allow seated characters to interact with other seated characters and characters in the *platea* alike without themselves moving. On the other hand, there are figures like the torturers, who sit apart from their principals in a special seat, and are specialized for violent interactions between estates and the platea. In the middle are characters like knights, who may be seated with or apart from their principles, and are used to suggest the possibility of violence, enacting instead coercion without actualized violence.

This classification of mediators is at the same moment a classification of types mediational performance, in terms of power (persuasion, coercion, and outright violence), and it is also a classification of the proper *addressees* for each kind of performance. Messengers (and their functional equivalents) can be used to allow a seated character to interact with anyone, seated or not, but their special purpose is to interact with other seated characters, to summon them when going oneself would imply self-abasement. Torturers, on the other hand, are generally used on 'low' characters, characters of the platea, but even when they are used on seated characters, this can only happen when the seated character is in the platea. Knights, though they may not use real violence, are essentially hybrids of messenger and torturer, using threats and some physical coercion (but no blood!), when interacting with platea characters. Interactions between seated characters are typified by the peaceful intercourse mediated by the messenger, interactions between seated characters and the platea are typified by violence represented by the torturers.

This mediation is, however, not merely a functional response to dilemmas for performance produced by the rigidity of the stage diagrams. Rather, mediation is an end in itself, multiplying mediation, separation between the command of the seated, unmoving principal and his mobile agents, itself produces, dramatizes and poeticizes how authority can be translated into *power*, that is, the ability to 'act at a distance'. Commentators on Medieval plays of various kinds are frequently mystified by the large amount of time and personnel devoted to representing the fact of mediation, valued seemingly in itself as a means of representing pomp and authority.³⁵ However, important as this was for the medievals, it plays little role in the modern analysis of the plays: 'The issuing of commands, accompanied by ceremonial entrances and exits to repeat them, forms the basis of

action at Herod's court. This pompous and unnecessary to-and-froing is evidently a dramatic end sought in itself, for it complicates and slows down the plot'.³⁶

This to-and-froing, so pointless to the modern eye, that characterizes medieval drama forms a kind of performance that R. Bauman has termed a 'mediational performance'.³⁷ A mediational performance is one that breaks down a single act (whether of speaking or other act) into component parts or roles, resolving simple acts performable by a single actor into complex ones involving many participants. Mediational performances highlight the way a simple act is now transformed into the ability to 'act at a distance', 'they place the complexities of participation structures on display, inviting the contemplation of the analyst and participant alike'.³⁸ If mediational performances serve the ends of pomp, by poeticizing and magnifying every action as an end in itself, they also serve the ends of power, for an important basis of modern notions of power is the ability to 'act at a distance'. Ironically, then, mediational performances in the service of pomp seem peculiarly medieval, while those in the service of power seem quite modern.

Mediational performances are in effect the flip side in performance of the division of theatrical space into seats and platea. For some seated characters, the ability to act within the platea comes about only through mediating characters, who represent them in the platea while they remain seated (for example, God in the *Ordinalia* does not frequently descend from heaven after the first day of the play, and never in BM, presumably to preserve his otherworldly majesty; there are similar arrangements in Hell). Some seated characters lack mediators, variously Knights, Torturers, Doctors; this is because they are *themselves* mediators for other seated characters. The remainder of the seated characters have such 'mediators' who perform services for them in the platea, whether or not these mediators have seats of their own. For example, kings have entourages of various sizes and descriptions, as do Bishops, as do God and the Devil. These last two characters provide interesting analogs to the opposition between messenger and torturer, for just as the messenger primarily deals in speech, the torturer in material violence, so too the angels deployed by God act primarily as messengers, the demons deployed by the devil act both as messengers, but also as violent counterparts to the torturers, whose duty is to drag souls or bodies of the dead to hell. Messengers and angels act primarily on incorporeal signs and souls (spiritual authority), torturers and demons act on corporeal bodies (temporal authority); the former manifests itself through decorous speech, the latter through corporeal violence and grotesque realism of speech and

action.³⁹ The dualism dividing temporal authority in the play BM, which I discuss below, again reveals itself here cosmologically, torturers and tyrants worship the Devil, just as legitimate authorities worship God.

In spite of all this apparent diversity, there are basically two opposed kinds of mediator (and mediational performance) based on different types of power, messengers and torturers (with knights in between). Unlike torturers, messengers as figures are typically seated with the principals for whom they are agents, and hence (unlike the torturers) are specialized depending on their principal. Kings and emperors employ messengers, while God employs angels (whom he sometimes calls 'messengers') or saints, Satan employs devils, bishops employ crozier-bearers. Again, unlike torturers, messengers do not, in general, coerce their target; if coercion is to be done, knights, jailors or torturers are used instead. But it is important to stress that only torturers can actualize their potential for violence on their targets, the knights, jailors and others coercively escort them from place to place, but do not kill. Torturers in the *Ordinalia* complain bitterly when they are summoned merely to invite Pilate into the Emperor's presence, just as if they were messengers.⁴⁰ Indeed, the only characters in the *Ordinalia* who kill, other than the torturers, include the first murderer, Cain, and Pontius Pilate, who kills himself (saving either the torturers or the emperor himself from killing him, an act from which the Emperor has to be restrained).⁴¹

Most importantly, messengers are the only mediator that can be used for symmetric intra-estate interactions, interactions between two seated characters, while torturers and knights are alike in that they are usually characteristic of asymmetric inter-estate interactions between seated characters and 'commoner' characters in the platea. In BM, moreover, messengers are *only* used by secular authorities (seated in the West or South West) to summon spiritual authorities (typically seated in the South East). Interactions involving messengers seem to imply symmetry, here, coordinate and complementary authority between Imperial and Papal hierarchies. When messengers are addressed to non-seated characters, they use the language of command and issue threats of violence.⁴² Similarly, as messengers mediate within and between estates, angels and devils or demons mediate between cosmological orders, allowing their principals, God and Lucifer, to remain in Heaven or Hell. The primary difference is that devils seem to work both as messengers and as physical agents of coercion, dragging bodies or unsaved souls of the dead to hell,⁴³ while angels work primarily as messengers (Gabriel to King David, for example).⁴⁴

Modern critics have found fault with medieval drama in the

'pointless to-and-froing' of these messengers, but I would argue that their existence not only solves important dramaturgical problems of hierarchy encoded in the stage diagrams, but also, by creating a distinction between principal and agent that is displayed in this mediated communication, encodes the authority and power of the principal, who can act therefore 'at a distance'.⁴⁵ The basic distinction between seat and platea is an icon of static hierarchy, but when placed in motion in performance through mediation it becomes a distinction of *power* between the immobile principal (seat) and the platea as the scope or field of their actions carried out by agents. Both messengers and torturers serve to magnify the power of the seated character by displaying an opposition between principal and agent, seat as locus of conception and platea as locus of execution, but in different ways, on the one hand in words, in the other deeds.

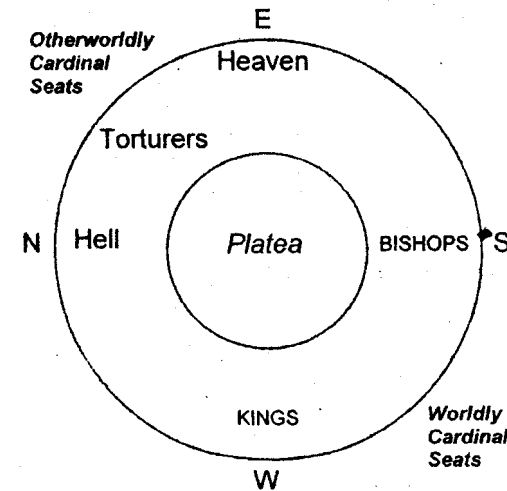
The most distinctive difference between messengers and other types of mediators is in seating: messengers are always seated with the figure they mediate for, torturers are always seated apart (knights, once again, can be apart or together with their principal). Violence appears to be separated from the person who commands it not only in mediational performance, but also in the stage diagrams themselves. Violence, at once very common and very gruesome on the medieval stage, is nevertheless 'confined to barracks' when not in use. In order to explore this dimensions of power, we need to know how violence in the form of the torturers fits into the diagram of the cosmos represented by the arrangement of seats on the stage.

STAGING COSMOLOGY: *THEATRUM MUNDI*

The seats and their functions in the play are articulated to the points of the compass, an orientation which makes the medieval Cornish stage is a microcosm of the world itself, a *theatrum mundi*. Stevens has persuasively argued that medieval stage diagrams (*theatrum mundi*) are replicas in miniature of the world as a whole (*mappa mundi*), a 'cosmic stage', just as the iconography and architecture of the medieval church follows a similar plan with an identical orientation. All three, stage, map, church, serve as parallel images of the world. The first parallelism is the circular form of the stage and the medieval T-O map. The other is a series of parallels in orientation to the points of the compass. The East (the location of the altar in a church) is pervasively associated with Heaven or Paradise in both stage diagrams and *mappa mundi*, just as the North is associated with Hell. Interestingly, the North East, the location of the torturers in Cornish stage diagrams, is associated with the walled region inhabited by Gog and Magog, 'where the unclean semi-human monsters roamed' in many *mappa mundi*.⁴⁶ In short, just

as the temporal cycle of the plays spanned all time producing a complete map of the economy of salvation from genesis to the resurrection or beyond, so too the plays themselves in their stage diagrams 'replicate . . . a plan of the universe'.⁴⁷ Not merely a miniature plan of the universe, the stage diagrams by their orientation are part of, point to, that same universe they replicate.

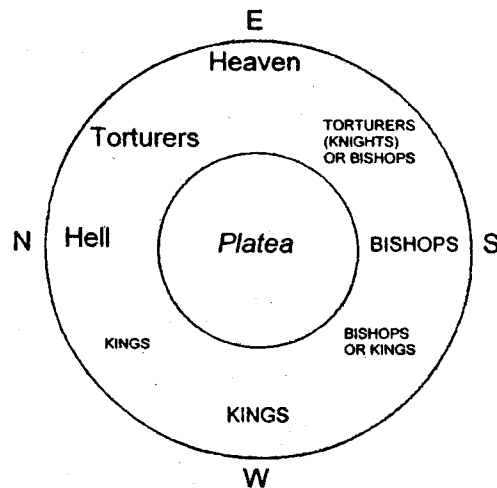
The seats most important to articulating the changing stage diagram of each play to a broader unchanging cosmological scheme are those oriented to the cardinal directions. Cardinal seats such as Heaven (East) and Hell (North) (the Torturers, although non-cardinal (NE), fit in here too) remain unchanging both in position and occupants across all plays. These seats represent basic 'anchors' for the whole medieval cosmology. The other cardinal seats link the cosmological order to the anchoring points of the feudal order: seats like West (Kings and Emperors), and South (priests and bishops) do not change position, and are reliably typological, that is, they have the same *type* of occupant across all plays, even if the name of that occupant changes.⁴⁸



This is the case in the *Ordinalia*, but the situation in BM is slightly more complex. In BM the larger number of seats guarantees that while Heaven is insistently in the Eastern position (and the Heaven seat appears to be the 'anchor of anchors', the seat most consistent across all existing medieval stage diagrams), Hell and the Torturers are forced into a small space in the NNE corner. Moreover, the 'cardinal' Western and Southern cardinal positions are not occupied, rather they form

boundaries between mirror image opposite forms of authority. The Southern position faces off a Bishop (the bottom of a Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy terminating in the Pope adjacent to Heaven) with a Duke or an Earl (the bottom of a Christian secular hierarchy terminating in the Emperor). The Western position faces off a Pagan Tyrant (the acme of a pagan secular hierarchy) with a Christian Emperor (the acme of the Christian, secular hierarchy). The Western position is still the summit of worldly power, but disputed, and the southern seat still is associated with ecclesiastical power, but the summit of ecclesiastical power is nearer heaven. The opposition between these two pairs of cardinal seats is at the same time the opposition between an unchanging set of eternal, otherworldly seats (Heaven and Hell) and their historical, worldly equivalents (Bishops adjacent Heaven and Kings adjacent Hell).

Lastly, there are seats, always associated with non-cardinal directions, that change both in position, number and location (ranging from one to three seats between the cardinal seats) and type of occupant, though the type of occupant will be in general similar to one of the adjoining cardinal seats. The situation in BM roughly follows this pattern as well, except that the adjoining non-cardinal seats are formed into recognizable hierarchies. The seat of the torturers is extremely odd in this respect, being the invariant and only permissible NE seat between Heaven (E) and Hell (N) in *all* plays. It is the only non-cardinal seat that shares in all the properties of cardinal ones, it is the only 'worldly' seat that is as eternal as the otherworldly seats of Heaven and Hell that stand to the left and right of it.

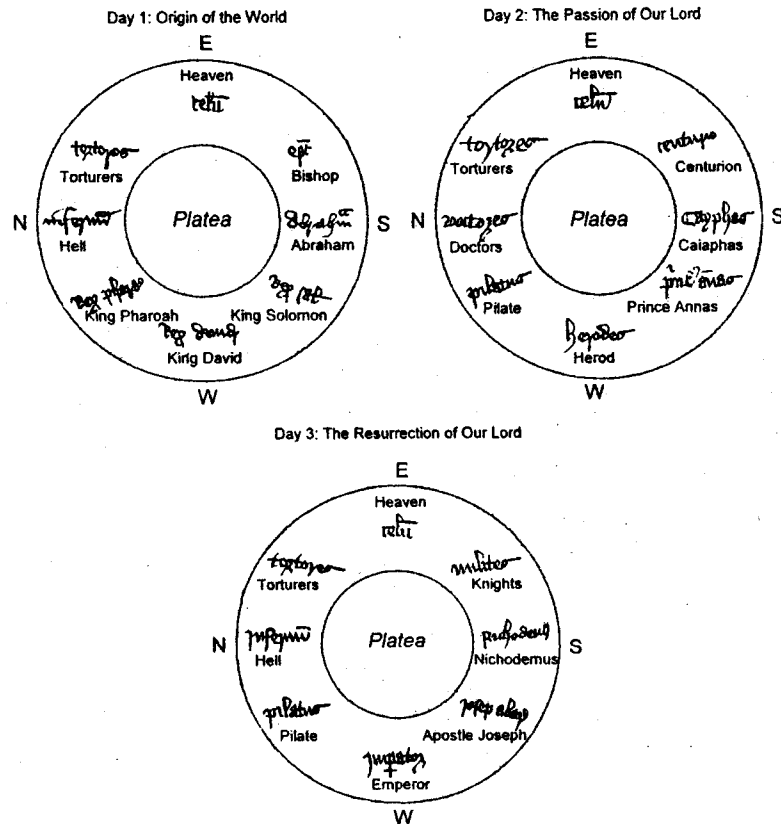


Seats can therefore be divided into two groups according to whether they serve a *typological* or *cosmological anchoring* function across all plays (what I will call *cardinal seats*, since most of these are aligned to cardinal directions, plus the NE seat occupied by the torturers) versus those that have values that are more variable typologically (based often on semi-fortuitous associations with adjacent *cardinal seats*), and in number (a varying number of such seats between one (*Ordinalia*) or up to three or four (*Beunans Meriasek*) are possible), which are always non-cardinal points of the compass (hence *non-cardinal seats*). Cardinal seats are invariant across all stage diagrams in all plays (with one exception), they are cosmologically and paradigmatically anchoring positions in terms of which the more variable seats take their syntagmatic values.⁴⁹ The cardinal seats have a typological function, establishing relations of equivalence of type between successive occupants of a given seat over each day of the play, hence they establish typological relations of equivalence between 'kings' (W) and 'priests' (S), respectively.

As noted, the cardinal seats are further organized into two opposed sets. Heaven (E) and Hell (N) are 'otherworldly' powers standing opposed to their 'worldly' equivalents, representatives of spiritual authority (priests in the S seat) and temporal authority (kings in the W seat), respectively. This delineates a mirror-image arrangement in which the division of unchanging otherworldly authority between Heaven (spiritual) and Hell (temporal) is reflected in the division of temporal authority between spiritual and temporal powers (priests and kings, respectively), an immutable set of first principles opposed to a mutable temporal order (composed of changing occupants of the same eternal seat). Again, the NE position of the torturers, standing as the only seat between Heaven and Hell in all plays, has an ambiguous position as an immutable cosmological prime in a non-cardinal position.

Other than the torturers, the non-cardinal seats are all unambiguously worldly seats. These seats are doubly mutable: not only are their occupants variable at the individual token level, but the type represented is itself also variable, and, indeed, the number of such seats is also variable, ranging from one to many. These seats take on their typological values by association with adjoining, typologically invariant, cardinal seats: the NW position (adjacent to the W position of kings) can contain only (usually) tyrannical figures of temporal authority in the *Ordinalia* (respectively Pharaoh and Pilate). The SW position, between the S associated with spiritual authority (Abraham, Bishop Caiaphas, Nichodemus) and the W associated with temporal authority, contains either 'kings' or 'priests' (Solomon, Prince Annas,

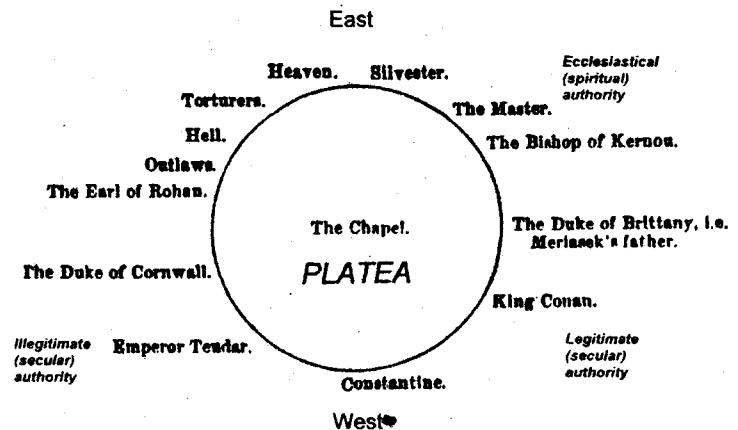
Joseph of Arimathea). The SE position, standing nearest either the torturers (ignoring Heaven for the moment) in the NE or priests in the S, can contain either 'priests' or quasi-torturers (respectively a Bishop, a Centurion, and Knights).



This is the pattern in the *Ordinalia*. In BM there are instead multiple seats between each cardinal seat (with the exception of the NE seat of the torturers), and dividing the round into three sectors of mirror image hierarchies. On the first day of the play, from N to W runs an ascending hierarchy of secular authorities up to a Tyrant figure nearing the W position (Respectively Outlaws, the Earl of Rohan, the Duke of Cornwall and Emperor Teudar), all of these are figures of temporal authority associated with Cornwall, good or evil; from W to S

is a descending hierarchy of legitimate secular authorities from the Emperor Constantine (Constantine, King Conan, the Duke of Brittany, all associated with non-local secular authority); from S to E is an ascending hierarchy of spiritual authority from a Bishop of Kernou in the S to the Pope Silvester nearest heaven in the E (These images are modified from the transcriptions of Whitley Stokes, with the positions of characters more nearly approximating the relative positions indicated in the original Peniarth manuscripts):

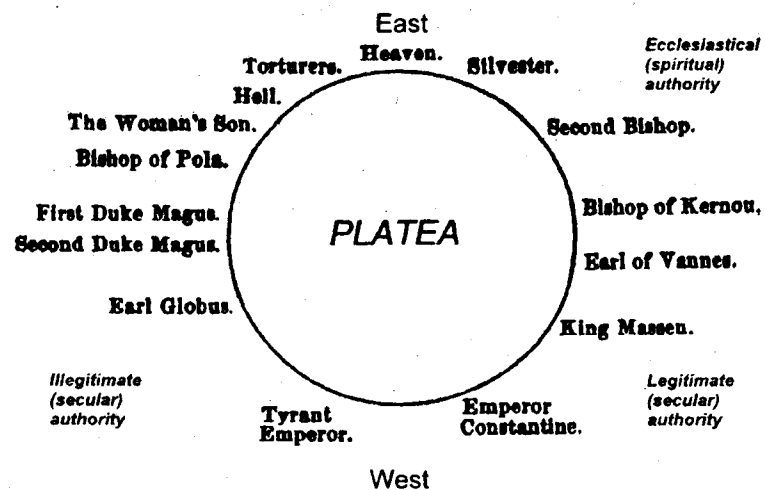
BM Day 1



On the second day, the axis from N to W begins with a minor character (the woman's son), through the (pagan) Bishop of Pola, through two pagan characters, Duke Magus 1 and 2, the good Earl Globus, with the generic Tyrant Emperor in the W; from W to S we begin again with Constantine, followed by King Massen, to the Earl of Vannes; from S to E we again ascend from the Bishop of Kernou, to the second bishop, to Pope Silvester.

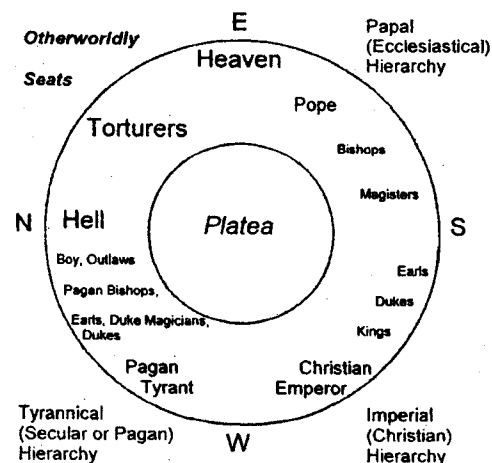
BM Day 2

Just as cardinal seats in all plays seat up a parallel series of mirror-image oppositions, such that Heaven (E) and Hell (N) stand as 'that world' to the seats of temporal (W) and spiritual (S) power of 'this world', on the one hand, and on the other E and S pair off as 'spiritual' to N and W with pair off as 'temporal', in this play the non-cardinal seats are each linked to the non-cardinal seats as a set of mirror-image hierarchies. These hierarchies parallel one another in content (each



one having a parallel system of ranks from bishops to popes; earls, dukes, kings and emperors), just as they are mirror image reflections of one another in precisely this way, so that the Christian secular hierarchy terminating in Constantine is a mirror image reflection of the Christian spiritual hierarchy terminating in Pope Silvester, and the parallel secular hierarchy in the NW terminating always in a Pagan tyrant emperor figure is in turn a mirror-image reflection of the Imperial hierarchy of Constantine, producing an image of each as equivalently structured mirror images, a common medieval motif articulating different orders, using the 'mirror' trope as a semiotically organizing principle (see the diagrams from BM above).

To each ecclesiastical power there corresponds a lay power, governed by the *saeculare jus* [Secular law]; hence are derived the pairs *papa-imperator*, *primates-rex*, *episcopus-comes*, *sacerdos-miles* [Pope-Emperor, Primate-King, Bishop-Duke, Priest-Knight] . . . [T]he unified physiognomy of culture . . . is reflected in each microstructure in exactly the same way as—to take up a simile much used in the Middle Ages—the same image is reflected in a mirror, or on a smaller scale in each of the fragments of the same mirror once it has been shattered.⁵⁰



But these close parallels between the two plays belie an important difference. In the *Ordinalia* there is only, in effect, an opposition between *all* secular authority (centered in the Western seat, nearer to Hell) and *all* spiritual authority (centered in the Southern seat, nearer to Heaven). In *BM*, in addition to a general opposition between spiritual authority centering in the SE opposed to secular authority in the West, the secular authority is itself divided into two. In the NW secular authority (associated with Cornwall, that is, local political authority, on the first day if not the second) terminating in a tyrant, is characterized by a lack of cohesion, a chaotic confusion, between its hierarchically ordered members, some of whom are pagan or devil-worshippers, others of whom are Christian, and consists of an odd mixture of commoners (Outlaws, the Boy), Pagan spiritual authorities (Bishop of Pola), secular authorities (dukes and earls, some of whom are Christians), and even mixed types (the Dukes Magi are simultaneously the pagan equivalents of Dukes and Bishops). This confusion is mirrored by *legitimate* and *cohesive* secular Christian hierarchy in the SW headed by Constantine. The West position is unique in the *Ordinalia*, in which secular authority, for good or ill, is unified, and episcopal authority is generally more malign than regal authority in a set of plays in which Herod, though evil, is mild mannered, even understated. This same position appears divided into a manichean opposition in the later play between a Tyrant and an Emperor. Corresponding to this division of secular authority is a functional division in the principals who can command torturers. In the former

play all kinds of authorities (spiritual or secular) can command the torturers, while in the latter play only tyrants can do so.

STAGING THE STATE: TYRANTS AND EMPERORS

The organization of the stage diagrams, then, presents a feudal order of estates (the *sedes*) opposed to a residual order represented by the *platea*. These seats are doled out on the basis of character status, regardless of relevance to story (some seated characters have little or no role in the plot): emperors, kings, popes, bishops, priests, and subaltern potentates, and sometimes knights all have seats. This feudal order is at once a cosmological order, the stage is a *imago mundi*, representing the entire universe from Heaven to Hell. The cosmology presents the temporal order as being at once a reflection of the cosmological order, and is invariant in itself in the sense that there will always be *sedes* for kings and priests, even if the specific occupants are variable. And, moreover, there will always be violence, for the NE position of the torturers is presented as a cosmological given, an invariant type as necessary as Heaven, Hell, Kings and Priests. The stage diagrams then, make an almost Weberian argument about definitional role of violence to the proto-state. At the same time, differences in the organization of the stage diagrams can show us different models of kingship, and different models of the role of enacted violence in the political and cosmological order.

As noted, the main difference between the *Ordinalia* and the later play *Beunans Meriasek* is that the Western position, the position of secular authority, kingship, is unitary in the former plays, and is bifurcated in the latter. That is, in the *Ordinalia* the W position is unambiguous, while in BM the W position is usually composed to two emperor like potentates, one a Tyrant Emperor slightly to the N, the other an Emperor slightly to the S. Moreover, these two opposed types of 'emperors' each stand at the head of mirror-image hierarchies of feudal authority.

This minor change produces a distinction between two models of secular authority, which corresponds to very different models of the role of violence, personified by torturers, in the medieval 'state'. In the *Ordinalia* Kingship (W) as a whole is legitimate, with Tyrants relegated to a non-cardinal position (NW). Consequently, torturers (who serve both good and evil characters), when they come to be in the service of Christian kings, are legitimate expressions of power. In the later plays, instead, there is an equipollent manichean opposition between tyrants (who employ torturers) and kings (who employ knights), represented in the stage diagram by having the western position divided between opposed tyrants and kings.

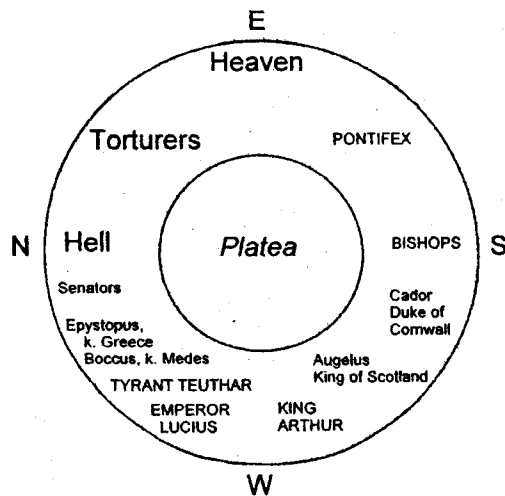
In the *Ordinalia*, the first occupant of this position is King David, who as the *sacerdos-rex* contains within his person both the typologized functions (king and priest) which render his rule legitimate. Solomon occupies this seat after the death of David, changing from his non-cardinal seat as heir apparent (SW) to the cardinal seat of true king (W) upon his coronation. Herod inherits from Solomon the title of 'secular king' as opposed to 'divinely legitimated emperor'. Finally, the emperor Tiberius reconciles secular with spiritual authority by accepting Christianity. Therefore this seat (with its succession David, Solomon, Herod, Emperor) is associated with the line of David, and with legitimate kingship as such (as each king is in some sense legitimated by the Jewish, and later Christian, God). It stands opposed to the position in the NW, which are unified in opposition to this seat by including only 'Pagan' kings (Pharoah and Pilate) who, unlike Herod, are completely divorced from legitimating cosmological principles. In this play, the torturers are first employed at the service of evil characters in the first two plays, in both cases evil bishops, until in the final day of the play they come to be in the service of the Christian king Tiberius. Violence in the service of evil is associated not with kings, but with subaltern potentates, specifically evil priests, while violence redeemed in the service of good is associated with Christian kingship.

It is in *Beunans Meriasek* where this opposition (implied in the *Ordinalia*) between 'legitimate, Jewish or Christian' (W) and 'illegitimate, Pagan' (NW) king is brought to the fore, for here at first glance it appears that we have no single 'Western seat', but rather the Western seat is bifurcated into two seats, side by side. As Olson argues, the unifying theme of this play is tyranny, or more specifically, the opposition between illegitimate and legitimate temporal power (tyrants and emperors), with possible linkages to Cornish hostility to the English monarchy following the 1497 rebellions (with the redaction of the play dated at 1508).⁵¹ This dualistic conception of secular authority is reflected in the modifications of the stage diagrams. The western seat closest to Hell is associated with evil 'tyrants', who are presented as doubly illegitimate rulers (having no clear title ('usurper') and being pagan rather than Christian), who worship the devil, employ torturers instead of knights, and lack legitimacy or mercy, and whose own servants show no loyalty.⁵² The western seat closest to Heaven is occupied by legitimate 'emperors' (or rulers who are to be legitimated later, notably Constantine, who is converted on the first day of the play), who show all of the opposite tendencies.⁵³ Therefore, the unified position of the *Ordinalia* is broken down into a sub-typology of 'temporal authority' into 'Tyrants' and 'Emperors'.

In fact, Constantine himself makes the transition from tyrant to emperor on the first day of the play.⁵⁴ Since, according to Olson, the struggle between illegitimate 'tyrants' and legitimate kings and emperors is a basic dynamic of these plays, this bifurcation of the single position into a Manichean equipollent opposition is part of the rhetoric of the individual play. Therefore, the 'bifurcation' of the Western position may in fact be only apparent, for it seems that the Cardinal Western position is not only a position of temporal authority, but in this play, temporal authority is typically evil, rather than good.

Here, then, we have a situation where a specific change in the stage diagrams (the bifurcation of a once unitary cardinal position into two opposed positions) produces in itself a new view of the nature of political authority and power. In the *Ordinalia* kingship is ultimately unitary and legitimate in its use of violence, while in *Beunans Meriasek* the position of kingship is in turn divided into Tyrants and true Kings. What is crucial is the valuation of the torturers. In the *Ordinalia* the torturers are ultimately neutral personifications of violence, capable of being employed by evil bishops or good kings. In BM good kings have knights (characters who represent the potential for violence), evil tyrants have torturers, these being the only characters who are allowed to enact violence on the stage. In the *Ordinalia* kingship and violence are ultimately legitimate, while in BM there is a dualistic view of the legitimacy of the state and violence.

Reconstructed (hypothetical) stage diagram for *Beaunans Ke*



A similar set of oppositions between tyrants and emperors can be gleaned from what little information we have for the newly discovered Cornish play *Beunans Ke* (BK). Internal textual evidence indicates the presence of a certain number of 'worldly' seats, and given the presence of the torturers, we can reconstruct a sense of the 'otherworldly' ones as well (remembering that Heaven and hell seats are consistently present even in plays that make little use of them). The first day of the play features a Tyrant Teuthar (presumably in the NW), replaced on the second day by the Roman Emperor Lucius, who is opposed to King Arthur (presumably in the SW), each with their allied kings and potentates (NW and SW, respectively). There are also signs of separate seats for bishops and a pontifex. On this basis, we can provisionally reconstruct something like this as the general stage diagram for this play:⁵⁵

STAGING VIOLENCE: THE FIGURE AND PLACE OF THE TORTURER

The figure of the torturer and his valuation within the larger staging conventions becomes part of very different models of the role of violence in the state in these two plays. In this final section I want to sum up some of the marginal features of the torturers that makes them central to the imagining of the relation of violence to the polity in the medieval plays.

First, the torturers are marginal characters in staging. They have a seat of their own in the NE, a seat that in almost all respects behaves as an entity of a cosmological order rather than a feudal one. The seat of the torturers is consistently the only seat between Heaven and Hell, corresponding to the location of Gog and Magog in Medieval *mappa mundi*, who are also uncomfortably poised between being historical and cosmological agents (waiting to serve as the armies of the antichrist), the torturers seem to represent not concrete historical characters like David, Caiaphas, and Solomon as much as they represent violence itself, elevated to a cosmological principle. While they seem to be 'worldly' characters in most dramaturgical respects, notably that they can be freely approached in their seats and summoned by other worldly characters (unlike Heaven and Hell), their staging seems to imply that they instead belong along with Heaven and Hell to cosmology. Secondly, the torturers are the only 'low' characters to be given a seat of their own, they are not so much estates of the feudal hierarchy like those represented by the other 'worldly' seats (kings, priests, knights) as abstract presuppositions of that feudal hierarchy. In this respect they differ from other 'low' characters who serve as mediators, such as sundry messengers, crozier bearers, demons

and angels, whose incessant to-and-froing makes up much of the action of the plays, in that unlike messengers and the like, who are seated with those they serve, they have a seat of their own, presenting special problems when they are summoned. Not only do they separate their principals, those who command them, from the violence they command, but they also are separated physically from those who command them in the seating. Lastly, while messengers can mediate between different estates, between seated characters as with characters in the platea, the torturers represent a specific articulation of the seats and the platea: the torturers always act on behalf of seated characters against characters whose current location is the platea, and, moreover, only torturers can actually enact violence on those characters.

The torturers are not merely deviant in terms of their staging, they are marginal and monstrous in other respects as well, their portrayal embodying a familiar set of aesthetic conventions that link them to the lowly, the comic, the bodily and material, and the grotesque. In general, the aesthetic of realism is linked to that of the grotesque, and both of these to evil, just as schematic and ideal images are linked to holiness and good, this particularly applies to images of realistic grotesque violence and its perpetrators, as Camille notes for the iconography of the period as a whole: 'This equation between realistic depiction and evil is interesting in terms of the dialectic in medieval art between the abstract schematic forms of the good—the frontal hieratic figures of saints—as opposed to the vigorous, lively gestures of their tormentors'.⁵⁶

The torturers' grotesque realism resemble other forms of performance that rely exclusively on embodied performances with no transcendent verbal element, *histriones* (mimes) and *meretrices* (prostitutes):

What brings the two *status* [of *histriones* and *meretrices*] together, then, is primarily the use made of the body and of parts of the body exclusively within the existential sphere, as if the world of *res* [material things] could hope to be complete in itself. What is more, *histriones* and *meretrices* make use of complementary signs of purely bodily message: make-up, disguise, masks, all elements which themselves become charged with the vital and corporeal. A realism, and a grotesque one at that, appears as a form of communication which is antithetical to that the cultural codes offer, codes for which the parts of the human body have no value unless in function of something else which is not corporeal, on the basis of the general principle *per visibilia ad invisibilia*.⁵⁷

For the torturers of the Cornish plays, Cross draws attention to their motley dress, their grotesque embodiment and fascination with scatology and sex, their 'amoral and antisocial' character, and their lack of ability to assimilate or reflect upon evil, part of a general disjuncture between 'reality and reflection' that they display.⁵⁸ To this list we could add their other 'grotesque' features, notably their fascination with the literal 'gorey details' of their actions, the accidents of bodily mutilation and disfigurement, over the transcendent meaning or teleology of their actions as they inscribe power on the bodies of their victims. This is parallel to their general fascination with their own embodiment, as they draw attention to their various bodily processes, such as sweating, trembling, exhaustion. As Cross points out, 'The torturers . . . are in that peripheral position, entering the scene to perform an act which is not related to any moral or ethical commitment to their victim. Torturing is their vocation rather than their ethic'.⁵⁹

The general way that torturers (and devils and demons) embody a general aesthetic register of the comic, bodily-material and grotesque across speech, action and appearance, a kind of medieval equivalent of modern 'splatstick' horror film violence,⁶⁰ has been explored by Veronica Plesch for the French Passion Plays, and her conclusions are worth quoting at length. In essence, all this aesthetic of the comic, bodily-material and grotesque does not imply that torturers and demons are carnivalesque spirits of resistance, rather, they produce an aesthetic disconnection between the agents of violence and their principals:

The community has recourse to specific techniques to emphasize its disconnection from the executioner . . . [T]he community engages in a 'comedy of innocence' in order to deny any responsibility in the decision and the implementation of the murder. The executioner thus belongs both to the community and is rejected from it: hence the fundamentally human nature of the tormentors in these plays, with their very down-to-earth reactions, of pleasure, fear, pain, tiredness . . . At the same time, the playwrights emphasize their lowliness, and this in particular through comic and grotesque effects, which then contribute to produce alienation.⁶¹

In dramaturgical terms, too, the torturers occupy a unique and marginal position. In the *Ordinalia* the torturers have a monopoly of enacted violence: not only do they embody a cosmological invariant of violence, they monopolize *embodied violence*. If actual enactments

of beatings, torture, and death are to be inflicted on other players, frequented attended by grisly special effects technologies, only the torturers can display this violence. The realism of this violence, as opposed to the conspicuous lack of realism anywhere else in these plays, again links the torturers and their function to the register of the grotesque. Other characters who represent a *potential* for violence (knights, squires, others) can never actually *actualize* this violence (unless it is inflicted on these self-same torturers, for torturers can receive, as well as give, violence). In BM, where the torturers represent the violence enacted by tyrants, knights in the service of kings acquire some of the attributes of torturers in this respect, but for the most part they are employed in battle against these self-same torturers.

The torturers, moreover, represent a specific form of mediation in the plays: the torturers enact violence against characters in the *platea* commanded by seated characters, they delineate a vector of violence between the *sedes* and the *platea*. In those rare circumstances where violence must be done against a seated character, the torturers will not perform this violence until the character is in the *platea*, and not even then, because in this circumstance the seated character (Pilate) kills himself. The torturers, then, are not like other seated characters who are principals of their actions, rather, they serve a very specific subtype of the same general dramaturgical function of *mediator* as the host of other mediating figures that populate the medieval stage, sundry knights, messengers, crozier bearers, demons, angels, and so on.

Virtually all seats that represent priests or kings have mediators of one kind or another directly associated with the seat. The only seats that lack mediators, in fact, are those seats that are seats of characters that themselves *are* mediators (torturers or knights). Naturally, mediators who are seated with, or standing near, the seat they serve, can be ordered about by a seated character without further ado. However, a problem arises when a seated character wishes to summon torturers, who are themselves seated, and at some distance. One cannot approach them (this would be self-abasement, though tyrants routinely do this in BM), nor does one summon them by messenger (which presumably would magnify them by using a mediator to summon a mediator, treating them as status equivalents of other seated characters). How, then, does one summon them?

Like messengers and other mediators who are seated with those they serve, the torturers are summoned by direct command by a seated character. This is the one example in the plays in which two seated characters are allowed to interact directly with one another. Since commands, as we have seen, should be issued to subalterns from a seat, it is impossible that such a command be delivered from the *platea*.

Moreover, since the torturers are seated until they come, it is impossible to accede into their presence without the ruler subordinating himself to the subaltern character (though this does happen to tyrants in BM, see below). At the same time, sending a messenger to them would be in effect treating them as if they were coordinate potentates, and not distant servants, so this too is unacceptable.

This logical impasse generated by the logic of seating is 'solved' by allowing seated characters to bellow their commands from their seat to the torturers at some distance away. For the most part, in both plays, the characters who issue commands to torturers are seated, and some, like Teudar, specifically ascend to their seat to issue the command to the torturers.⁶² This is, in fact, the only time in the plays that seated characters are allowed to speak to each other while seated, as if the physically distanced seats were in fact co-present (but note, again, the torturers reply only when they accede to the presence of the summoner).

This summoning is structurally similar to the way a command is given to a near-by attendant, like a messenger, who is presumably seated with the character (such as the example of David and the messenger given above). But given the maximally large distance between the seated character (often in the W or S) and the torturers (in the NE), the command would have to be quite loud to carry across the entire *platea*. The dialog itself continuously draws attention to the loudness involved in commands issued to the torturers, as well as the distance travelled by this loud command. The torturers, in their replies in the *Ordinalia* draw specific attention to the fact that their summons is bellowed (and oblique reference is made in BM to their summoning as being 'cried'). Reference is made to the loudness of the summons on two separate days of the *Ordinalia*, once in response to a summons from Caiaphas (S) in the *Passio*,

heyl volaueth volaueth
 uthyk mur yv the areth
 leman worth agan gylwel⁶³

Hail, high priest, high priest,
very loud is thy speech
 now calling us

And once in the *Resurrexio*, when the torturers reply to a seated Tiberius, the torturers reply that his cry was so loud it caused them fear,

melord anon her we both
 agas clewas o pur uth
 crye mar bras
 lemmyn worth agan gelwel

My lord, anon here we be;
Of you very loud was heard
The cry so great
 But at calling to us,

rak ovn desefsen merwel
me a crennas⁶⁴

From fear I would have desired to die;
I trembled.

In the next summoning in the same play, attention is drawn in the Torturers' reply to the almost absurd distance over which the summoning is conducted. The torturers reply indicates that they were 'coming from Spain, in Germany, at a tavern' when called. In the final summoning by Tiberius, the command itself draws attention to this aspect of summoning, complaining about loudness of the cry needed to call them, their apology implies that they tend to wander away when they have nothing to do.⁶⁵

a pur harloth ple fugh why
pur vth o clewas an cry
genef orth agas gylwel⁶⁶

O very rascals, where were ye?
Very loud was heard the cry
by me to you calling.

The torturers, then, are summoned in a way that is very similar to the way that, for example, messengers are summoned (that is, by a seated character). The main difference is that the torturers have their own seat, while messengers are generally seated with the character they serve or on the platea nearby. Therefore, commands to torturers must be bellowed to overcome the distance. Commanding the torturers in this way allows seated characters to interact directed with seated characters without sending a messenger or going themselves to fetch them. Functionally, messengers and torturers alike respond *directly* to commands as if they were equally present, but torturers are seated apart and distantly.

This is as true in BM as in the *Ordinalia*. Constantine summons his torturers by simply shouting at them from his seat, as if they were present. Their answer does not make anything of the loudness of his voice, but it is clear from the first time they are summoned that they are being summoned from their seat (they engage in an action of 'parading' (*pompare*) which is typical of seated characters when they first appear).⁶⁷

CONSTANTINUS
tormentoris guesyon fol
tormentoris dugh thym ol
aberth mahum ha soly
[*hic pompabunt tortores*
[*w swerdys*
heyl constenten the nobil

CONSTANTINE
Torturers, mad lads
Torturers, come ye all to me
On behalf of Mahound and Sol
[*Here the torturers shall parade*
[*with swords*
Hail Constantine the Noble!

del onny the lel bobil
devethys ython warbarth

As we are thy loyal people
Come are we together.

As Constantine becomes Christian, control of the torturers passes on to his tyrannical counterparts, to whom, however, the torturers are *not* loyal. One sign of Teudar's tyrannical impotence in BM as a ruler is that the torturers do not pay any attention to his commands shouted in the proper style from his seat. As a result, Teudar must *descend* from his seat to find them and beat them in order to get them to obey. Teudar, after speaking with Meriasek and desiring to demonstrate his power, ascends to his seat to call the torturers; since the torturers are paying no attention to him, he descends again, and says that he needs to fetch them, making a mockery of himself, he and his men then go to the torturers to beat them, and then returns home (to his own seat) when they agree to obey.⁶⁸

TEVDARIUS

mahum darber hardygrath
Ze neb a ruk ov trobla

[*ascendit*

Tormentoris dugh in plen
tormentoris marsogh len
tormentoris dugh dym scon
ay ay ay dar ny regh vry

[*descendit*

reys yv age herhes y
pan yv mogh ol ov duwon
[*her yerdis aredy for teudar and*
hys men

Hov hov pythesogh matis
y besche reb your patis
pendra reny dar napy
ay num clewugh ov kelwel
tannegh honthsel kyns sevel
go to dalethugh frappia
[*et verberabunt eos*⁶⁹

TEUDAR

Mahound, provide hard grace
For him who hath troubled me!

[*He Ascends*

Torturers, come into the field.
Torturers, if ye are loyal,
Torturers, come to us at once!
Ay, ay, ay, ruin, you don't regard!

[*He descends*

Need is it to fetch them
since all my grief is a mockery
[*Here staves ready for Teudar and*
his men.

How, how, where are ye, mates?
I will baste ye (?) by your pates.
What shall we do, nap? (??)
Ah, you hear me calling?
Take handsel before rising.
Go to, begin striking!
[*And they shall beat them.*

Teudar beats his servants when they do not respond to his call, and when they fail at their assigned task, he descends from his seat to beat them again.⁷⁰ Similarly, the torturers descend from their seat to hide from the Tyrant Emperor of the second day of the play in an adjacent tent (the tent of the woman's son, now become a tavern), because their

wages are not paid.⁷¹ Their drudge, whom they have sent to spy on the tyrant, instead rats them out and the tyrant is forced again to descend, search their vacated seat and eventually find his hiding servants and beat them.⁷²

It is the nature of tyrannical power that each Tyrant must in fact go to the seat of his own torturers and beat them to get them to beat others, just as it is in the nature of legitimate power that legitimate kings have their commands obeyed, and their servants, in turn, need never actually use the force that lies behind their commands. The critique of tyrannical power in BM works by inversion of the model found in the *Ordinalia*. In the latter play, torturers are employed by both legitimate and illegitimate authorities, while in the former torturers are diagnostic of illegitimate authority. Moreover, in the *Ordinalia* the torturers are used alongside messengers by the same set of authorities for *functionally* discrete ends (torturers act on characters in the *platea*, while messengers act both on seated and unseated characters, torturers enact violence between estates, messengers communicate between and within estates). In the play BM, torturers are the exclusive province of tyrants, paralleled by knights and messengers amongst legitimate authorities (Constantine, while still a pagan tyrant, uses torturers, but eschews their use upon becoming a Christian king). Lastly, while the torturers are always obedient in the *Ordinalia*, magnifying the power of the king by displaying a mediated model of agency distinguishing between seated principal and mobile agent in the *platea*, in BM the principal must often undermine his own authority by inflicting violence directly upon his own agents of violence, in effect effacing this distinction between immobile principal and mobile agent.

CONCLUSION

The special position of the torturers seems in general to decouple them from any specific principal, so that they become a hypostasis of violence as such, the differential capacity for which is constitutive of temporal power. Their essential function is violence: torturers represent in the purest form of actual violence (and the knights the subdued form of potential, but never actual, violence), and whose inherently asymmetric mediating function can only be directed by a seated character against a character currently in the *platea* (unlike messengers, who may approach either sort of character). Their separated seating segregates the instrument from the power it serves, as if to insulate power from the pollution of the means of its realization (violence), as well as to hypostatize violence as something unto itself, that can be invoked for good or evil, legitimate or illegitimate ends. The torturers, the bearers of 'actual violence', cannot, given their at

once comic and horrifying grotesque bodily features and tendencies, be seated with the power they serve without somehow assimilating it to that power, polluting it (unlike knights, for example, who, like messengers, never actualize their potential for violence). Indeed, in the *Ordinalia*, the good Emperor wishes to descend from his throne to kill Pilate himself, but his underlings restrain him from an act that would at the same time diminish his kingly power by refusing to divide agency into immobile principal and active agent, but would also pollute him with the bloody deed. Moreover, the pollution of the sin of Cain (the only other character in the plays shown to kill) that accrues to them because of the fact that they are actually shown to kill their victims means they must be kept apart from those they serve. They are summoned by word to perform unspeakable deeds. They are bearers of 'violence as such', the very political basis of the economic order in question is hypostatized as a force that stands (or rather, is seated) apart as a purely technical apparatus of violence independent of its teleology. My analysis parallels Bakere's here, although Bakere sees this hypostasis of violence as being essentially of psychological moment, a fact about 'humanity', rather than as being a sort of attempted theodice of temporal power that separates the teleological from the technical apparatus of power, as I am arguing.

In the *Ordinalia*, then, there is as part of a general economy of salvation presented in that play a historical theodice of power and violence. The torturers are introduced in the service of evil to produce martyrs and ironically, the means of salvation (in crucifying Christ), but it is in the *Resurrexio* that they are recuperated as being part of the new divinely legitimated imperium, and they do this by attempting to avenge the death of Christ on the body of Pilate (Pilate kills himself, alleviating the need to depict actual violence on a seated character). They must, however, remain (physically) separate from power partially because they serve and constitute different temporal powers (good or evil) indifferently, and partially because in this way the pollution of the agents of the deed that constitutes power is separated from the principal on whose behalf it is done, or lastly because the means of power (actual or potential violence in the form of the torturers or the knights) must be seated apart from the order it serves (the temporal order, legitimate or otherwise).

At the same time, the order of estates is itself reinforced dramaturgically, in that intra-estate interactions between seated characters is typified by the mediating figure of the messengers, just as inter-estate interactions between seated characters and the *platea* are typified by violence incarnated in the torturers. Since estates are multiple and coordinate in seated characters, each such seated

character must possess his own proximate mediating figure to mediate intra-estate interactions (as well as, of course, non-violent inter-estate interactions), variously messengers, crozier-bearers, angels, demons. But in the *Ordinalia*, inter-estate interactions between seated characters and platea characters are general, and there is, in essence, only one mediating figure, the torturers, that stands as it were between all the seated characters and all the platea characters. The exception here is Pilate in the third play, who, in contrast to Maximilla of the first day and Christ of the second, cannot be killed by the torturers and kills himself in prison.

In BM, by contrast, the torturers (actualized violence) become a figure of pure and unmitigated evil, whose employment is, by virtue of a kind of miasma, a diagnostic of tyrannical, rather than imperial, authority. This opposition in the staging diagrams is also found in the function of the torturers, who no longer exclusively bring violence from seat to platea (inter-estate), but also intra-estate violence between seated characters on either side of the divide between legitimate and illegitimate temporal authority. The fact that tyrannical authority is based on actual violence and coercion is emphasized because the torturers themselves must occasionally be beaten in order to get them to beat others, while the legitimate imperium is ruled within by authority, rather than coercion, and hence knights are only needed to coerce those outside its domain (like tyrants), and remain symbols of potential violence in other respects.

All medieval plays share a formal dramaturgical arrangement that not only multiplies and rigidifies the status distinctions between characters by encoding them directly into the staging itself, but also by multiplying the number of mediating figures, such as messengers and torturers, who further represent the power that is concomitant between such estate distinctions by creating distinctions between immobile principals and mobile agents. On this level, then, the 'pointless to-and-froing' of medieval drama as a whole is anything but pointless, it is integral to the staging pomp, 'staging of estate' (directly encoded in the invariant spatial arrangement of the stage diagrams), and, one might argue, to representing formally the nature of power itself, 'staging the state' by representing dramaturgically the basic distinctions between immobile principals (seats) and mobile agents (platea) which allow the representation of projectable and magnifiable power and authority as being essentially about mediation of agency. All this 'to-and-froing' decomposes a single act of communication, command or violence, into discrete roles and distributes them across characters, magnifying the social, spatial and temporal gap between the principal, his agents and his targets, displaying dramaturgically the nature of

pomp and power alike as being proportional to the distance between command and execution.

But these two plays do more than this. In the changing allocation of the figure of the torturers, these plays make very different arguments about the kinds of power and authority that are typical of the emerging model of state. In the *Ordinalia*, state-like activities are essentially unitary, the torturers are spread as agents across a diverse array of spiritual and secular authorities, legitimate and illegitimate, though they serve only one master on any one day of the play. In BM, the torturers are specifically diagnostic of tyrannical authority, and far from magnifying this authority, they in fact undermine it, for the tyrant lacks authority over his own subalterns. He must coerce his coercers, coercion is diagnostic of tyranny 'all the way down', just as for a legitimate king, except when in battle with tyrants or dragons, his peaceable authority 'goes all the way down'.

But lastly, the decomposition of action (command or coercion) into a dramaturgically mediated complex not only allows the projectable power and authority of the principal to be magnified by the gap between himself and the locus of realization of his power or authority, it also allows the *means* (incarnated in the agent) to be separated from both *principal* and *ends*. Monopolizable violence, the very stuff of states, as such emerges incarnated in a single figure, the torturers, standing outside the system of estates as a cosmological prime, and separated from them as an unclean, almost demonic or monstrous, means to diverse ends.

This brings us finally to the position of violence in the cosmology of the plays. As notes, the torturers are ambiguously staged, located between Heaven and Hell, they seem to be an eternal seat of a cosmological principle. At the same time, they are thisworldly enough to be summoned by emperors and bishops from their seats, they are lowly mediators of kings and bishops who happen to be seated apart. They are liminal, therefore, sharing in properties of two kinds of seats, at once worldly and otherworldly. It's worth suggesting that this positioning does not merely have the function of separating torturers from their principals, *adiaphorizing* violence by separating it as a purely sociotechnical apparatus from its moral sources and moral ends, but it also contains an argument that violence is eternal, and even part of the cosmological economy of salvation the way Heaven and Hell are. How? The four torturers (there are always four) can be linked allegorically to another 'four torturers (the jail of earthly life, misery, death and worms)'.⁷³ If that is correct, then the torturers stand as the cosmological entity that has power over, or most characterizes *this world*: violence, misery, death, and worms. Standing between Heaven

and Hell, they are also the powers that take living beings from this world represented by the *platea* to one or the other of those other worlds. By killing them. This positioning makes them cosmological mediators between life (the *platea*, this world) and death (Heaven and Hell, that world), just as they are worldly mediators between worldly principals and worldly victims.

But these torturers also have a changing position within the economy of salvation of the plays. In the *Ordinalia*, these figures of violence are ultimately recuperated within a single logic of kingship and economy of salvation, themselves recuperated at the same time as legitimate secular authority is reconstituted when the pagan emperor becomes a Christian. In BM, there is a dualistic logic in which coercion is once and for all separated from the legitimate arts of kingship, torturers are forever associated with tyranny.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Richard Bauman, Steve Coleman, Michael Silverstein, Rupert Stasch, for encouragement and comments on various drafts of this paper. I would like to thank Anne Meneley and Veronique Plesch for providing especially detailed comments, for which I am indebted. Errors are my own.

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3. On the portrayal of violence in medieval plays see John Gatton, "'There must be Blood": Mutilation and Martyrdom on the Medieval Stage', in Redmond (ed.), *Violence in Drama*, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 79–100; Veronique Plesch, 'Etalage Complaisant? The Torments of Christ in French Passion Plays,' *Comparative Drama* 28, 1994–95, pp. 458–85; Veronique Plesch, 'Notes for the Staging of a Late Medieval Passion Play', in Clifford Davidson (ed.), *Material Culture and Medieval Drama*, Kalamazoo, 1999, pp. 81–4. Michael O'Connell persuasively argues that this grotesque realism of the portrayal of blood and physical violence is related to the focus on embodiment and materiality of medieval 'incarnational drama' (which echoes the centrality of the incarnation of Christ in Medieval Christianity), and therefore should be central, rather than peripheral, to our understanding of the genre, as opposed to the 'textualization' of God's body in more modern drama, Michael O'Connell, 'God's Body and Incarnational Drama', in his *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England*, New York, 2000, pp. 67–88.

4. Philip Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1:1, 1988, p. 58.
5. Abrams, 1988, p. 77.
6. Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, Princeton, 1980; Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirks, 'Beyond the Fringe: The Nation State, Colonialism, and The Technologies of Power', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1:2, 1988, 224–9; For a period example of 'state spectacle' for comparison, see Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph*, Oxford, 1998.
7. Abrams, 1988, pp. 77–79.
8. Cohn and Dirks, 1988, p. 224.
9. Elias terms the monopoly on violence and its attendant specialists a 'sociotechnical invention of the human species' (Elias, 1988, p. 179). Technical here normally refers to human interactions with nature, hence sociotechnical, yet at the same time social and yet technical, in the sense that violence is separated from its moral ends or goals (part of what Bauman (below) calls 'adiaphorization'), as if, for example, torture were simply a technical skill with its own specialists like drilling for oil and its experts.
10. Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Social Manipulation of Morality: Moralizing Actors, Adiaphorizing Action', *Theory, Culture and Society* 8, 1991, p. 144.
11. Bauman, 1991, p. 145.
12. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge, 1989.
13. Richard Bauman, 'Mediational Performance, Traditionalization and the Authorization of Discourse', in Hubert Knobloch and Helga Kotthoff (eds), *Verbal Art across Cultures: The Aesthetics and Proto-aesthetics of Communication*, Tübingen, 2001, pp. 91–117.
14. For the *Ordinalia* (c. 1350–75) I use the standard edition of Edwin Norris, *The Ancient Cornish Drama*. 2 volumes, Oxford, 1967 [1859], citing by line number, using the following abbreviations, *O[rigo Mundi]*, *R[esurrexio]*; the Passion Play is usually abbreviated as *D* to prevent it from being confused with another Cornish passion text abbreviated using *P*; *Beunans Meriasek* (BM, c. 1504; Whitley Stokes, *Beunans Meriasek: The Life of St Meriasek, Bishop and Confessor: A Cornish Drama*, London, 1872); *Bewnans Ke* (BK, c. 1500, O. J. Padel, 'Bewnans Ke': *The Life of Saint Ke*, 2003 available at <http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/resource/BewnansKeText-20March03.pdf>).
15. 'The claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force' (original emphasis), Max Weber, *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Volume I*, Berkeley, 1978, p. 54; Elias, 1988.
16. Elias, 1988; Fletcher, 1997, p. 36.
17. Bauman, 1989, p. 100; Elias 1988, pp. 177–9.
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24. Pamela King, 'Spatial Semantics and the Medieval Theatre', in *The Theatrical Space*, London, 1987, p. 47.
25. King, 1987, pp. 45-6.
26. King, 1987, p. 53.
27. The dialog makes it clear that these are sometimes understood to be castles or palaces of those characters, and are elevated. There is one exception to the rule that 'seats' are not 'sets', the seat of a minor character of the later play BM is transformed into a tavern, that is, from a medieval 'seat' to a modern 'set'.
28. Throughout I will occasionally be using the terminology of Peircean semiotics. The division of possible relations between signs and their objects I will be employing includes ICONS (iconic relations), INDEXES (indexical relations) and SYMBOLS. Icons are those signs which stand for their objects by virtue of RESEMBLANCE. Diagrams are simplified icons, whereas portraits are fuller icons. Indexes are signs that stand for their object by virtue of some really existing relationship in space, time or causality. So a weathercock points in the direction of the wind because the wind makes it do so, a bullethole points to the bullet that made it. Any sign that lacks these two relations is a symbol, a sign that stands for its object by convention. Mixed signs are possible, and in particular I will speak of 'indexical icons' (Manning, 2003), signs that both resemble their objects (icon) and are really connected to them too (index). The stage diagrams are an example, they are both models of the universe (icons) and they are part of it (indexes): their orientation in space in terms of the directions makes each part of the diagram 'point' to its notional location in real space. A diagrammatic icon is something like a road map, or a stereo diagram, where none of the individual parts of the sign resemble their objects (dots do not resemble cities), but the relationship of the parts of a diagram resemble the relationships between the parts of the object (the relationship between dots in a road map resembles the relationship between cities in the universe in terms of relative distance).
29. On the contrast between classifying typology of higher social orders and unclassifiable residuum of lower social orders associated with a grotesque materiality, embodiment and realism in medieval social models, see Maria Corti, 'Models and Antimodels in Medieval Culture', *New Literary History* 10, 1979, pp. 352-3.
30. 'The open playing-area at the foot of the church steps, the *platea* . . . , and

- the audience were on the same level . . . the *platea* is associated both with earthly and diabolical activity, and assumes different identities as need arises.' William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions c. 800-1576*, Cambridge, 1978, p. 123; also Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, Baltimore, 1978, p. 84.
31. O. 2270-3.
 32. D.569-576.
 33. BM.1759-1769.
 34. R.1802-1827.
 35. A limiting case is represented by the newly discovered play *Beunans Ke* (BK), in which the back and forth movements of assorted messengers, legates, senators and kings between two emperors and their respective subjects leading up to a rather short battle form the bulk of the action of the day.
 36. Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages*, Pittsburgh, 1974, pp. 78-9.
 37. R. Bauman, 2001, p. 96.
 38. R. Bauman, 2001, p.96. 'Participation structures' for instances of talk typically involve decomposing a unitary speaker into a number of sub-roles, minimally, the *principal*, the person responsible for the text, whose position the text expresses, *author*, the person who composes the text, and *animator*, the person who performs the text, for other kinds of actions our terminology is reduced primarily to the opposition between principal and agent, see Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, Cambridge, Mass., 1974, p. 516-37; for further discussion see Adi Hastings and Paul Manning, 'Acts of Alterity', *Language & Communication* 24:4, pp. 291-311.
 39. For the opposition between immaterial signs and corporeal things, and grotesque realism as being the sphere of the latter, see Corti, 1979, pp. 352-3. For other parallelisms between devils and torturers in French plays of the same period, including comic grotesqueness of speech, action and appearance, see Veronique Plesch, 'Killed by Words: Grotesque Verbal Violence and Tragic Atonement in French Passion plays', *Comparative Drama* 33, 1999, pp. 22-55. The same parallelisms are found on these levels in the Cornish plays. For general iconographic parallelisms in other visual media between torturers and other monstrous entities, including demons, Jews, and Saracens, see Deborah Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, Princeton, 2003.
 40. R.1823-5.
 41. R.1965-1976.
 42. O.2297-2302.
 43. R.1906-1955, Belsebuc to Pilate's wife; O.541-70 (Abel), O.881-916 (the soul of Adam), R.2307-2360 (the body of Pilate).
 44. O2229-2254.
 45. Z. Bauman, 1989; see R. Bauman, 2001, for an account of 'action at distance' that focuses specifically on verbal mediators.

46. Martin Stevens, 'From *Mappa mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*: The World as Stage in Early English drama', in John Alford (ed.), *From Page to Performance: Essays in early English drama*, East Lansing, 1995, pp. 32–5. For a classic discussion of the 'stage-world' (The 'little O, the Earth' and the 'wooden O', the stage) relation, see Thomas Stroup, *Microcosmos: the Shape of the Elizabethan Play*, Lexington, 1965.
47. Stevens, 1995, p. 37
48. The Western King position must always be occupied, and when its occupant dies, as happens at the end of *Origo Mundi*, Solomon ascends to the Western seat of King David upon coronation.
49. See King, 1987, p. 54 for a parallel distinction within the pageant plays.
50. Corti, 1979, pp. 342–3.
51. Olson, 1997, p. 56.
52. On these traits see Olson, 1997.
53. Olson, 1997, p. 55.
54. Olson, 1997, p. 55.
55. The newly discovered Cornish play, the Life of Saint Ke (BK), has no stage diagram associated with it, but from the stage directions it can be concluded that the play features seats for characters similar to the ones in these plays. The Tyrant Teuthar has a seat (explicit references include BK.19, 43–44, 50–1, 60, 72, 151, 158), including a full retinue including a counselor, jailor and servant, and two messengers. There are also torturers serving the tyrant (for example, 84ff), but the section in which they are summoned is missing, though when they leave his presence it is implied they return to their seat (BK107). A very large assortment of other feudal personages have their own seats or are associated in some way with the seats of others (there are several dozen kings and assorted potentates, who cannot possibly all have their own seats). These counts are based on explicit references to seats or actions involving seats in either character speech or in stage directions: 4 soldiers (*armiger*, BK 181, 186), Cadur Duke of Cornwall (BK. 182–3), Augelus King of Scotland (184), a pontifex (187–8, 392–3, 396), the second bishop (191); Arthur King of Britain, Gwynwver and Mordred together (202, 211, 225–6, 229–30, 263, 265, 276–7, 280, 286–7, 356, 359, 385, 401, 410, 430), Lucius Emperor of Rome (231–4, 235, 244, 338, 355), Boccus, King of the Medes (315), Epystopus, King of Greece (316), 2 Senators (326, 331, 370).
56. M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*, Cambridge, 1989, p. 65.
57. Corti, 1979, pp. 352–3.
58. Sally Joyce Cross, 'Torturers as Tricksters in the Cornish "Ordinalia"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 4, 1983, pp. 448–55; see also Hans Jürgen Diller, 'The torturers in the English mystery plays', in Meg Twycross (ed.), *Evil on the Medieval Stage, Medieval English Theatre* 11, 1992, pp. 57–65.
59. Cross, 1983, p. 454.
60. The term 'splatstick' is a blend word that was coined by horror film actor Bruce Campbell to describe his genre: "Splatstick" is physical comedy (slapstick) that involves evisceration (things that go "splat!")'

(http://www.pro-researcher.co.uk/encyclopaedia/english/splatstick_film). It would not be going too far to use this term to describe Medieval grotesque realism in violence.

61. Plesch, 1999, p. 47.
62. BM.949–52.
63. D.953–5.
64. R.1767–72.
65. R. 2148–2240.
66. R.2242–4.
67. BM.170–1177, 1521–1532.
68. BM.949–55.
69. BM 848–961.
70. BM.1053–1065.
71. BM.3245–3280.
72. BM 3281–3345.
73. Andrzej Dabrówka, 'Medieval Theatre of Schools: Educational Beginnings of Early Drama', Miskolc, Hungary, 2002 (<http://www.mediewistyka.net/dab/miskolc.htm>).

INSTITUTE OF CORNISH STUDIES



EDITOR'S NOTE

Cornish Studies (second series) exists to reflect current research conducted internationally in the inter-disciplinary field of Cornish Studies. It is edited by Professor Philip Payton, Director of the Institute of Cornish Studies at the University of Exeter in Cornwall, and is published by the University of Exeter Press. The opinions expressed in *Cornish Studies* are those of individual authors and are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher. The support of Cornwall County Council is gratefully acknowledged.

Cover illustration: Virginia Woolf at the age of twenty.
Photograph by G. C. Beresford (reproduced courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery).

CORNISH STUDIES

Second Series

THIRTEEN

Edited by

Philip Payton

UNIVERSITY
of
EXETER
PRESS

First published in 2005 by
University of Exeter Press
Reed Hall, Streatham Drive
Exeter, Devon EX4 4QR
UK
www.exeterpress.co.uk

© Institute of Cornish Studies 2005

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library

ISBN 0 85989 771 0
ISSN 1352-271X

Typeset in 10/12pt Times by Kestrel Data, Exeter

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Short Run Press Ltd, Exeter

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