STAGING THE STATE AND THE HYPOSTASIZATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIEVAL 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'. 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. 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. 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', 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.'

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. 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. 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', 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 reconfiguration 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'. This is a process that Zygmun 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'. 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'.

This is an important aspect of modern forms of power as 'action at a distance' with moral consequences including the 'banality of evil'. 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.

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 Meriaze, 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 
vioence 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 distin-
guished 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 
vioence, the torturers stand out, indeed, stand apart, from the per-
formance 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 whatso-
ever. However, Olson has recently suggested that the central theme of 
the later cycle ‘Beunans Meriasek’ is a historically positioned critique
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.

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:

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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
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.]
messeyger my bel aber
dus thy’mmo ketoth ha’n ger
rag colenwel voth ov brys 31

[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 thotho yn lowen
del ywe ow sye 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.
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
Hayll constantyn in the dour
me a wor ty a wetsa
bones grueys dyso enour
ha the gregyans a pe da
ny an gressa
rag the voys in dysgregyans
awos ovn gothie mermans
inclenya dys ny vanna
[ascendit]

SILVESTER
Hail, Constantine, in thy tower!
I know thou deservest
That Honour be done to thee,
And if thy faith were good
We would do it.
Because of thy being in unbelief,
For fear of suffering death,
Incline to thee I will not.
[He goes up]

CONSTANTINUS
Seluester wolcum owhy
ynsyw awos drokcoleth
ythogh kerhys dymövy

CONSTANTINE
Silvester, you are welcome
It is not on account of an ill deed
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).

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 of mediated 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. 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.\textsuperscript{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'.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{43} while angels work primarily as messengers (Gabriel to King David, for example).\textsuperscript{44}

Modern critics have found fault with medieval drama in the
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'. 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.

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

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 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. In short, just
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 (Ordinaria) or up to three or four (Beunans Merisesek) 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. 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 Ordinaria (respectively Pharaoh and Pilate). The SW position, between the S associated with spiritual authority (Abraham, Bishop Caiafas, 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 Teutar), 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.\textsuperscript{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 potentes, 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-rēx* 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 (Pharaoh 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 1506). 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. 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. Therefore, the unified position of the *Ordinalia* is broken down into a sub-typology of 'temporal authority' into 'Tyrants' and 'Emperors'.
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-fro 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 for 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'.

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: makeup, 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.

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. To this list we could add their other 'grotesque' features, notably their fascination with the literal 'gory 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.'

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, 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 lowness, and this in particular through comic and grotesque effects, which then contribute to produce alienation.

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 potenial 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 mediators 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. 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 distantiated 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 Caiphas (S) in the Passio:

heyl volaueth volaueth
uthyk mur ty the areth
leman worth agan gylwef
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 buth
agas clewos opur 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,
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

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' (pompata) which is typical of seated characters when they first appear).67

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

**O very rascals, where were ye?**

**Very loud was heard the cry**

by me to you calling.

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**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]

---

**As we are thy loyal people**
Come are we together.

---

**TEUDARIIUS**

mahum darber hardygrath
Ze neb a ruk ov trobla

[ascendit]

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

[descendit]

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

---

Hov how pythesogh matis
y besche reb your patis
pendra reny dar napy
ay num clewugh ov kelwel
tanegh honthsel kyns sevel
go to daletugh frappia

[et verberabunt eos]

---

**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.**69 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. 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 latter 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 exclusively 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 unequal, 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)'. 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 *Ordinallis*, 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.

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

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.
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 bulletthole 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.
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.
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. 316–37; 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 Plessch, '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 iconicographic 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.
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.

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.


51. Olson, 1997, p. 56.

52. On these traits see Olson, 1997.


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 (BK 107). 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), Cador the 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, Gwynwern 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).


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!")
EDITOR'S NOTE

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

Introduction 1

1 Discourse and Social Science in Cornish Studies—A Reply to Bernard Deacon
   Malcolm Williams (University of Plymouth) 14

2 Scatting it t’lerrups: Provisional Notes Towards Alternative Methodologies in Language and Literary Studies in Cornwall
   Alan M. Kent (Open University) 23

3 Why Move the Lighthouse? Virginia Woolf’s Relationship with St Ives
   Michael Bender (University of Exeter) 53

4 Jack Clemo’s Mystical-Erotic Quest
   Andrew C. Symons (Penzance, Cornwall) 70

5 William Seawen (1600-1689)—A Neglected Cornish Patriot and Father of the Cornish Language Revival
   Matthew Spriggs (Australian National University) 98

6 Staging the State and the Hypostasization of Violence in the Medieval Cornish Drama
   Paul Manning (Trent University, Ontario, Canada) 126

7 ‘Too Rarely Visited and Too Little Known’: Travellers’ Imaginings of Industrial Cornwall
   Cynthia Lane (Perth, Western Australia) 170

8 Bridget Cleary and Cornish Studies: Folklore, Story-telling and Modernity
   Philip Payton (Institute of Cornish Studies) 194