Theta XIII
Forms of the Supernatural on Stage: Evolution, Mutations

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Supernatural Characters
in Interludes

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The main objective for this essay is to consider the interrelationship between ideology and theatricality in the use of supernatural characters in interludes. These two topics are closely intertwined and I shall have to confine myself to a limited sample from the available corpus. Before doing so, it is desirable to take a brief look at the types of character that might be considered, and to notice some details and characteristics of the plays which are commonly called interludes. The question under review also raises some issues about how characters are used in these plays, which are not for the most part concerned with realistic presentation.

If we take twenty-nine plays, from *Wisdom* (written *c.*1460) to Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* (printed in 1578), we find that the commonest type of supernatural characters are the devils, of which I have counted thirteen examples. There are nine plays which feature Christ and five with God the Father, though in a few cases it is difficult to identify which is predominant.[1] Angels appear in six plays, where they act primarily as messengers, and there are three with classical characters. This last category is intriguing, if only for its paucity. It suggests that although the classical pantheon was well known, it did not appeal to dramatists, even if they had humanistic interests. The appearance of Jupiter in John Heywood's *The Play of the Wether* is an exception, one that may have been engendered in the interest of satire, or possibly out of the need to tread warily, especially if anyone realised who was being implied by this character.

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[1] One of the plays in the sample is *Everyman*, in which God appears at the beginning when he summons the protagonist. But the English version is a translation which follows the Dutch original in this episode. See *Everyman and Its Dutch Original Elckerlijc*, ed. Davidson, Walsh and Broos, pp. 16-21.

In spite of such reference, the characterisation of this figure is largely comic and the style of his speeches invites a bombastic performance.[2]

The incidence of supernaturals may have been determined by theatrical considerations as well as ideological ones, as we shall see. It is noticeable that for most of these plays the supernatural characters appear in short episodes, suggesting that their usefulness to the writers and performers was rather limited, or perhaps that other types of characterisation had a stronger appeal. Probably they were used because they were convenient as a means of framing other structures, such as narrative or debate. The most frequent use of supernatural characters is that they set up the action, giving it a starting point and picking out themes to be treated. Though there are exceptions, for the most part the supernaturals were less active in the main part of the plays, but they sometimes reappeared near the end so as to be present at the resolution. The main part of the plot dealing with the attack upon the protagonist is often the work of the Vice and his close companions, though there are some interludes where he is linked with devils. Nevertheless, the inclusion of devils is notable for both ideological and theatrical reasons. The chronological spread of a little more than a century in the sample is relevant because it shows that the number of such characters increases, and we should bear in mind that this period was one of enormous and contradictory changes in systems of religious belief and in the development of the nature of theatre. The latter is especially relevant because it involved changes in text, in performance, and in the popularity of plays as ways of ensuring exposition and engagement with didactic as well as controversial topics.

There is another feature to bear in mind with these changes, in that printing became a factor in disseminating plays to readers, and to those interested for ideological reasons, as well as to theatrically motivated producers or performers. It was a complementary relationship, as printing encouraged plays and plays encouraged the printing and the reprinting. The development was no doubt related to the attempts to control both printing and performance which are evident in the sixteenth century, as interludes became more and more involved with political and religious confrontation, and indeed what we might now regard as propaganda for the governing authority.[3]

The genre of plays called "interludes" is rather permeable. The word was used commonly on title pages and within plays, as well as in other types of writing, including financial documents and records of expenditure. It is especially common in court records, which show that Christmas entertainment regularly, year by year, required payments to

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2   In the anonymous *Jack Juggler*, which is an adaptation of *Amphitryon* by Plautus, the translator has converted Jupiter and Mercury, his messenger, into human beings.

3   There were proclamations against interludes in 1543, 1545, 1549, 1553 and 1559; see *Tudor Royal Proclamations*.

interluders from court expenditure. This holds true for all the Tudor monarchs, in spite of their differences in belief and policy. Nevertheless, a precise definition for "interludes" is hard to find, and it seems likely that it became a common, catch-all designation for "plays", and it so happened that there were some features which were commonly used. For example, in the surviving texts we find that interludes were often performed by small companies of up to six players, and it was a characteristic of the structure of these plays that they were adaptable to a variety of locations and capable of being taken on tour. There were very few purpose-built playing places available, and plays were constructed to have few specific physical requirements for performance. Interludes could no doubt be managed so as to fit into spaces at short notice. At court, however, expenditure could be rather higher, on furniture as well as costume.[4]

From the corpus of surviving plays it is apparent that there was a culture of perform-ance involving subject matter and stage proceedings. Most of the interludes were peopled by abstract characters, who were used to construct an allegory illustrating the play's main message. For the purposes of this investigation, it has been interesting to ask whether such abstract characters should be considered as supernatural. Although they are like supernaturals in not being realistic or human, and in being perennial, the answer is prob-ably negative. But they do share with supernaturals a function which operates alongside the unfolding of the main narrative, making them useful as a means of commentary and interpretation, and in creating a different perspective. Such abstract characters were fitted into patterns which became conventional, often showing a rise and fall in the fortunes of the principal character and a conflict between personifications of vices and virtues. Stage proceedings like the adoption and forgetting of aliases, the redemption of the fallen, and the exposure and punishment of transgressors became common. It was usual procedure to manage a large number of characters by having the individual players double several roles, and this required skill in construction from the playwrights and adaptability from the performers.

The supernatural characters had to be fitted into this theatrical culture, and it is clear that they made a significant contribution. Since many of the characters were abstractions, these supernaturals provided an extra way of interesting the audience, not least because they could be made to offer entertainment of various kinds, including singing, dancing and word-play. Their physical appearance in costume might be another factor. It should not be forgotten that allegory itself could be made entertaining through the ingenuity expended on it and the appreciation of its appropriateness. Perhaps it could be welcomed by audiences recalling earlier presentation of allegories in morality plays. The devils must

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4　　See the index in Streitberger.

have been especially valuable because of the mixture of apprehension and comedy they could bring to performances. Their effect upon individuals in the audience may have varied considerably, but it should not be forgotten that the performances took place at a time when it was normal and expected that onlookers would accept the existence of a supernatural world alongside the everyday one. It seems possible that some of the audience might experience a mixture of fear and amusement, and such an ambiguous effect is likely to have been engaging for the audience. It would also provide a tempting device for authors.

From the fifteenth century there are three extant representations of devils in the morality plays. This type of play is difficult to generalise about, as there are so few survivals, but what is available may give us some clues about the inheritance available to those composing interludes in the sixteenth century. What remains points to some variety in concept and design. In *The Castle of Perseverance* we have a play conceived on a large scale and with more than thirty characters. The devil, here called Belyal, appears as part of the traditional configuration of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, each of these enemies to human beings having his own stage in the acting arena. In his exposition Belyal explains that he is supported by the Deadly Sins of Pride, Anger and Envy. He also attracts Backbiting (Detraccio). The characterisation is consistently allegorical, as the three main enemies besiege Humanum Genus in the castle and Belyal takes an active part in urging on the attack (*Castle*, ll. 945-57) and in the fighting:

> Haue do, boyes blo and blake.
> Wirke þese wenchys wo and wrake.
> Claryouns, cryeth up at a krake,
>   And blowe ʒour brode baggys! *Tunc pugnabunt diu.*[5] (ll. 2195-98)

The other two morality plays are conceived quite differently. Though *Wisdom* is not on as large a scale as *The Castle of Perseverance*, it was apparently written for a spectacular production, and we have in the text some useful details about the dramatic method, including costume and movement. Lucifer appears in "a dewyllys aray wythowt and wythin as a prowde galonte" (*Wisdom*, SD preceding l. 325), and he switches his costume when further deception is needed. He promises an attack upon the Soul, who is the protagonist: "I xall make yt most reprouable / Ewyn lyke to a fende of hell" (ll. 537-38). This intention is fulfilled subsequently, as a further stage direction reveals: "Here ANIMA apperyth in þe most horrybull wyse, fowlere þan a fende" (l. 902 SD). The spectacle is further developed moments later: "Here rennyt owt from wndyr þe horrybyll mantyll of

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5   "Then they will fight for a long time."

þe SOULL seven small boys in þe lyknes of dewyllys" (l. 912 SD). Wisdom comments here that the act of contrition has driven out the evils (l. 979), but this is a good example of how fitting and intriguing an allegory might be, as the components are recognised and appreciated.

Further details suggest that the costumes for this play were elaborate and that this entertainment was designed for a socially superior performance, including masks, dances, instrumental music and expensive costuming. This elaboration is matched by the use of richly suggestive language. For *Mankind*, which was planned for an itinerant perform-ance, in almost any convenient location, the performance was much more basic and the language more demotic in places. The devil Titivillus, who has a history outside this play, fulfils a crucial part in the plot against Mankind.[6] He manages to trick the hero into evil ways and to make him absent himself idly from church, when the other conspirators, who are the abstract characters New Guise, Nowadays, Nought and Mischief, have all failed.

These elements suggest that as the interludes were developed in the sixteenth century, the presence of the devil was valuable and almost inevitable in view of the moral conflict.[7] We shall see that a series of conventional aspects came to be part of this, but it is inter-esting that he did not become either a sole figure or one closely involved in the details of trickery and seduction. As we have noted, he was used more generally to start things off, and sometimes to re-appear at the end to complete the plot. His presence was probably an indication of the inevitability of the long-term struggle between good and evil.

The process I am considering here has a chronological aspect, and before looking in more detail at the use of the devils in the interludes, I should like to start with the plays of John Bale, which were written in the 1530s, apparently with support from Thomas Crom-well, who was interested in the promotion of Protestant ideology. At this time the Eng-lish mystery cycles were still being performed in a number of places, notably at Chester and York, and they were undergoing further development, as they were being created or enlarged. This happened partly as a response designed to counter Protestant pressures and sometimes as an emphasis upon Catholic values of the old religion. In the history of the mystery cycles in the sixteenth century, it is undeniable that they were changed and enlarged for a number of different reasons, some of which were religious or philosophical rather than theatrical. In the biblical drama the use of supernaturals was commonplace, as there was so much legendary material interwoven with the biblical narratives. Bale, in his work as a reviser or re-writer of the cycles, would follow his own Protestant agenda, which avoided the traditional flow of narrative and substituted episodes which he could

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6   See Jennings.

7   This point is made by Cox; see pp. 76-81 and 225.

use as opportunities for carrying Protestant messages. His use of supernaturals shows that he was not afraid to incorporate God or Christ for specific situations which could be justified.

We can illustrate this by contrasting the use of God in *God's Promyses* (1536?) with that of Christ in *The Temptacyion of our Lord* (1536?).[8] The structure of the former in seven acts comprises a series of exchanges between God and chosen human representatives from Adam to John the Baptist in a chronological sequence, but one which virtually ignores realistic time. In a parallel structure, each act contains the wrath of God, as well as his merciful promise to each generation if they follow him. For Adam this comprises enmity with the serpent with forgiveness if the people reject this enemy. Noah learns that God's vengeance shall never again destroy mankind. Abraham is promised that he will be the father of generations, with circumcision as a sign.[9] Moses will conduct God's people and a prophet shall come to them. David will rule God's kingdom and will be allowed to begin building the Temple. Isaiah will have the rod of Jesse to save all, bringing the spirit of heaven. John the Baptist should preach repentance and give baptism of the spirit. Each act ends with the singing of an appropriate antiphon, which the human representative begins, the Latin words of each being translated in the text. Bale's method is thus to use the character of God with his unique oversight to create the possibility that all generations might be faithful to him. There is no narrative here, and the play works by establishing a repeated pattern for each of the promises which emphasises that they are to be trusted. It is likely that if Bale was looking towards the development of a Protestant version of the mystery cycles, the comprehensive presentation of spiritual history in *God's Promyses* was intended to be the opening episode. The play was probably written at a time when Bale was much concerned with revaluing historical events in the light of his developing Protestantism. In doing so he used material that is based upon biblical reference, even though he avoids a narrative where possible. However, the music in this play adds much that might have been attractive and familiar to many in an audience, even though its origin was a traditional rite which Bale sought to adapt.

For *The Temptacyion of our Lord* there is also some biblical support, and Bale's plan was to observe the scriptural narrative, but to elaborate the encounter between Christ and Satan to draw attention to the false arguments of the latter and to support other points of doctrinal dispute. These included rejection of the supposed value of fasting and

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8   Bale's plays are cited from Bale, *The Complete Plays*, ed. Happé, vol. II.

9   The Abraham episode has him search for reassurance that if there were fifty faithful people God would spare a city, and then, to show the quality and reliability of God's mercy, Abraham negotiates with God the requisite number of faithful downwards until it is as low as ten (*God's Promyses*, ll. 347-77).

of the element of the miraculous in the story, both of which were not acceptable to many Protestants. An important clue to Bale's approach comes in the characterisation of Satan. Although he is required to wear a religious habit to facilitate his deception (*Temptacyion*, l. 77 SD), there is no sign of comedy or mockery in what he does and says, and the conventions of stage jokes and word-play, as well as grotesque appearance, found elsewhere in the representation of the devil in interludes, are not found here. The Prolocutor makes this serious emphasis quite clear at the beginning of the play: "ye maye loke to have no tryfelinge sporte / In fantasyes fayned, nor soche lyke gaudysh gere" (ll. 17-18). From this response it looks as though Bale was reacting against the commonly ludicrous aspects in the presentation of devils. The representation of Christ dwells upon his humility and his ability to outwit Satan by his knowledge of the bible, and to this end Bale creates a dialogue which shows Christ's skill in argument. The latter detects Satan's distortion of the bible, and the devil's crafty presentation of himself. In this Satan pretends to be holy and to have power on earth, which he uses for his own benefit. The characterisation is firm and powerful but entirely without self-display. After Satan disappears, Christ talks to the Angels who come to succour him. He explains that he has not come to seek glory (l. 377), and his last words are a version of John 14:6: "For I am the waye the lyfe and the veryte / No man maye attayne to the father but by me" (ll. 393-94). In these aspects of the characterisation Bale exploits the dual nature of Christ by making him seem very human and, as the Angel says, "In mannys frayle nature ye have conquerred the enmye" (l. 395).

These examples come in plays which are recognisably versions of episodes in the mystery cycles, but in *Thre Lawes* Bale followed a significant custom of the morality plays, adopting extensive allegory. God is used in two traditional places: as part of the setting-up of the moral structure and as a contributor to the final resolution. The play begins with an echo of God's self-description in the mysteries, as he seeks to present his spiritual essence and he gives himself a name and recalls the Trinity: "I am Deus Pater, a substaunce invysyble / All one with the Sonne and Holy Ghost in essence" (*Thre Lawes*, ll. 36-37). In Act One he sets up the structure and function of the three laws, and stage directions require that he gives to each of them an appropriate sign: a heart for the Law of Nature, stone tables for the Law of Moses, and a New Testament for the Law of Christ. At the ending of the play in Act Five, Bale exploits the supernatural in a different way by bringing on a character called Vindicta Dei. At first this character is separated from Deus Pater, giving his own name (l. 1781). He punishes Infidelity, the Vice, with water, sword and fire and drives him away. At this point he changes into Deus Pater, and the speech prefixes are altered in the text accordingly. The other characters address him as though he is now God the Father, and his speeches and actions are made to match this new identity. His last move is to instruct the Laws to teach the people about the truth and, reminding them of his promises, he blesses them on their way. This sequence is particularly inter-

esting because Deus Pater is supernatural and yet he is talking with characters having abstract names, and he refers to his people, who presumably are human beings. Bale is thus able to make effective use of three different concepts of characterisation in order to achieve his didactic objective.[10] He moves between supernaturals, abstractions and human beings. We may suppose that Bale sought to use this manipulation of traditional elements in ways which would be noticeable to those familiar with them.

The three examples of the devil in interludes which I am going to deal with were written after 1562, and by that time they operated in different contexts, and the interludes that include them are designed with individual purposes. Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like Quoth the Devill to the Collier* illustrates a proverb, and although the play has some moral content, it is really conceived as a kind of joke, which is repeated as often as possible with reference to a series of circumstances, the recognition of which seems to be the main business of the play. However, the play is a notable example of the interaction between a devil and a Vice, as it draws upon a number of characteristics conventional to the latter. The Prologue explains that what is to follow will "moove you to be mery" (Fulwell, l. 9), and this is echoed a number of times in this preliminary speech. There is some reference to "[t]he avauncement of virtue, and of vice the decay" (l. 18), but the impression that the attempt to create mirth outweighs the serious parts is sustained through the play as a whole. Indeed, the first half is almost entirely given over to comic material.

The Lucifer who appears in this follows some conventions of the part and is treated with such ridicule that he is hardly a serious threat. Nichol Newfangle, who is called the Vice on the title page, introduces himself as soon as the play begins, and he is quick to explain that he has made a journey to hell, where he was apprenticed to Lucifer. He tells the audience that Lucifer must have his name on labels on his chest and back. There is some scatalogical mirth around the description of Lucifer as a "bottle-nosed knave" (l. 89), but that does not prevent him from calling Newfangle "mine own boy" (l. 77), while the latter responds by calling Lucifer his "godfather" (l. 82). It must be admitted that these devices are ;at a pretty basic level of comedy, but there is no doubt about what Fulwell is trying to do in providing "mirth". Perhaps the salient moment is when Lucifer is required to take the Collier by the hand (l. 168 SD) and presumably they pose while he applies the eponymous proverb "Like wil to like" (l. 170). This pose, incidentally, makes it apparent that this devil must have a black face to match the Collier's. Lucifer tells New-fangle that his task is to adjoin like to like. The episode ends with a dance performed by the three characters, who add a song which repeats the proverb twice. This is a dancing

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10   Though the circumstances are rather different, it may be that Bale shows a similar imaginative flex-ibility in characterisation when Sedition, the Vice in *King Johan*, is changed into the historically real character of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

devil, noted for his clumsiness (l. 72). Lucifer, following precedents in other interludes,[11] then blesses Newfangle, who turns each phrase of the mock ceremony into nonsense. The approach here has very little moral content, though Lucifer does remind Newfangle at one point that he fell from heaven through pride and he urges him to stimulate pride by using new fashions (ll. 103-10).

As the play develops, Newfangle makes a mockery of a group of low-class crooks, but Lucifer does not reappear until they have been sent to the gallows through the machinations of the Vice. Lucifer then invites Newfangle to leap on his back (l. 1204). The latter claims he is going to ride to Spain, but the presumption must be that this conventional exit will take him back to hell as quickly as possible. Like many other Vices, he claims that he will soon be back again to resume his wicked ways.

To sum up the details of this supernatural characterisation, it is evident that although Fulwell does show an appreciation of evil in his allegorical characters, especially Virtuous Living, he was determined to rely heavily upon the comedy of evil, making use of many conventional elements to sustain the performance.

The tone of Thomas Garter's *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* is altogether more serious, and it has a convincing presentation of the evil aspirations of the two lustful judges, here named Sensualitas and Voluptas. The serious aspect of the play, drawn from the Book of Daniel in the Apocrypha, turns on Daniel's exposure of the inconsistency of their accusation that Susanna is unchaste and unfaithful to her husband. Garter approaches this by means of a close relationship between Sathan and his "child", Ill Reporte, who is named as the Vice. This name is well chosen, in that the play is clearly intended as a comment upon legal issues regarding evidence, and there must be a possibility that it was intended for performance in a legal context. In its leading theme, it is altogether more serious and profound than the routines using "like will to like", but the author broadens his approach and takes in a good deal from the conventions of presentation of evil.

The play begins with Sathan's typical boast about his power and achievement:

> I wallow now in worldly welth,
> And haue the world at will,
> Into eche hart I créepe by stealth,
> Of blood I haue my fill. (Garter, ll. 31-34)

But because he is frustrated that he has had no success with the exceptionally virtuous Susanna, he calls upon Ill Reporte to help him. Though this Vice recognises the prob-

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11   Titivillus blesses his associates with his left hand in *Mankind* (l. 522).

lem, he calls his father a "crookte nose knaue" (l. 61) and, following the convention, he mocks him and his appearance in a typical way: "You neuer saw such a one behynde, / As my Dad is before" (ll. 94-95). The Devil blesses Ill Reporte, but what he actually says is a mocking deception as well, for he claims that his blessing is the same as the one God gave the serpent who tempted Eve, and the one given to Cain for the killing of Abel, and it comes with "a thousande plagues more then euer were found in hell" (l. 128). In reply, Ill Reporte offers Lucifer ten thousand more plagues. As they part, the Devil leaves a "pestilence" and the Vice a "vengeaunce" (ll. 135-36). This exchange is followed by the Vice's introductory soliloquy, in which he explains how he will "blow the leaden Trumpe of cruell slaunderous fame" (l. 180), and that is how he makes his assault upon Susanna's reputation by tempting the two judges to rely upon an "ill report". Daniel's demonstration of an inconsistency in their evidence destroys them, and they are stoned to death. However, the stage direction reveals that the Vice's conduct is substantially comic, and includes a fight:

> *Here they stone them, and the Vyce lets a stone fall on the Baylies foote, and fall togither by the eares, and when the Iudges are deade, the Vyce putteth on one of their gownes.* (ll. 1251-54)

Ill Reporte, after more comic byplay, is tried and hanged, though his end is complicated by his ridiculous negotiation as to whether he will say his *pater noster*. Once he is dead, Lucifer reappears, crying, according to a stage direction, '*Oh Oh, Oh*' (l. 1383). He complains about how God keeps on doing him wrong, and then he turns to Ill Reporte, who is probably still hanging onstage, presumably dead, as he does not say anything. Lucifer then describes what will happen to him in hell. However, the threats are all comic, though potentially devastating if taken seriously. Lucifer intends to gnaw his bones and, recalling his designs upon Susanna, he claims that "what I would haue done to her, thou shalt haue all and some" (l. 1401). This sequence is interesting, in that the Vice, who sometimes appears as though he too were supernatural, is actually to be subjected to torments usually applicable to human souls. We see here that the distinction between natural and supernatural is permeable and the playwright's procedure is opportunistic.

The third play featuring a devil, Thomas Lupton's *All for Money*, is one of a group of early Elizabethan interludes dealing with wealth and money, its consequences and responsibilities, and the disastrous effects of its misuse.[12] These plays are less focused upon spiritual matters than upon the virtually satirical exposure of corruption in the use of money in this world. Lupton writes a complicated moral play, with a large number of

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12   See Harper and Mize.

characters, to demonstrate how urgently discipline is needed in making the right choice. Most of it involves the interaction between moral abstractions and figures representing social types, such as the use of bribery and the plight of those without money. But Lupton starts the play with an elaborate demonstration of the links between some of them which is allegorical in nature. This provides a useful demonstration of how an allegory can be made to comment upon the action, and in this respect it operates similarly to the supernaturals as a register outside the plot. The text requires that Money has a "*chayre for him to sit in, and under it or neere the same there must be some hollowe place for one to come up in*" (Lupton, sig. Aiiii^r SD). This prop is the means of making an allegorical motif work. Money becomes sick and vomits up Pleasure. He in turn vomits Sin, who vomits Damnation (sigs. Bi^v-Bii^r). Satan then appears '*as deformedly dressed as may be*' (sig. Biii^r SD), and rejoices in this genealogy. He cries and roars and gets into a quarrel with Sin. Later, when the corruption has been portrayed, Sin, having reported his success to the Devil, asks a blessing from Money, which he proceeds to mock as it is pronounced (sig. Ciiii^r). This action again puts in question the nature of these abstract allegorical characters. They could be regarded as supernatural, drawing upon similarities of different kinds, but rather they are a sort of hybrid, partaking of some supernatural characteristics, but also separated from the other characters by their function as part of the allegory. The Virtues, working against abuses, plead in favour of charity and against the inordinate love of money. The predicament is made more complicated later when Judas and Dives come on, apparently as human beings drawn from the bible, who bewail their earthly life. Damnation takes them over and a familiar motif ensues, in that they are taken back to hell.

Though the devils we have been considering are only a part of the portrayal of evil, there is little doubt that they were theatrically impressive, perhaps indeed a high spot in the performance. As supernaturals they have an iconic significance, and they are used to respond theatrically by the mixture in their status, whereby they might induce mirth as well as revealing their faults. It may be that, although they are persistently comic, they have a sort of authority which is embedded in their not being human. They have a different reference from human characters, and they are not integrated into the allegories which are so common in the interludes and which provide much of their structure. But they are sometimes linked with other allegorical evil characters as though by family relationships. In the case of the devils in particular, their immunity from death makes it possible for them to have a distinctive status which can be exploited. Presumably they were expected to go on with their evil work until Judgement Day, and then go on boiling away for ever after that.

From the practices we have been describing, it is apparent that authors of interludes found it useful to exploit the supernaturals as an extra dimension in their plays. Such characters could carry authority, as well as enhancing the threat to human beings

in the moral and political confrontations. The use of angels is pertinent here because they provide a direct link between the eternal and permanent, on the one hand, and the transitory nature of everyday life, on the other. This extra dimension linked ephemeral actuality to a set of values which could be perceived as transcending the normality of life and presenting something permanent and unchanging. Alongside this, the need to interest and affect an audience led to ingenuity in creating stage conventions and developing them over about a century. This process would have been influenced by a variety of beliefs. As it happens, the material we have before us is slanted in one particular dimension. Most of the plays we have discussed here are Protestant in their orientation, and that raises the question of how far such an orthodoxy would regret the use of the stage with all its temptations and distortions. The imbalance in the survivals may be the effect of censorship by the government, but it is interesting that authors felt they could use the supernaturals that had come down to them from the earlier drama, including the mystery cycles. However, as the appearances of God and Christ are relatively rare in the interludes, it seems likely that there was some inhibition about their appearance, whereas for the mystery cycles these characters appeared where the narratives from the bible or other sources required them.

In the case of the devils, this survival from the earlier forms is an indication that drama, like most art forms, is in part dependent upon memory and the recall of something previously experienced, even though the later requirements were to change it, rather than merely to preserve the earlier form. However, it seems to me that we should see this as a dynamic process which could be influenced by later recall and the exigencies of giving the audience something they could enjoy afresh on stage. But such conventions eventually came to the end of their time when plays with different theatrical idioms were evolved, and the devils could hardly go on being figures of fun as the drama developed new forms and purposes. But Ben Jonson was one of those who did not lose a comic view of them, as he showed in the relationship between Satan and Pug in the 1616 play which he entitled *The Devil Is an Ass*.

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