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## Forms of the Supernatural on Stage: Evolution, Mutations

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Textes réunis par  
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# Naturalising the Supernatural in a French Reformation Morality:

*Mankind Justified by Faith: Tragicomedy,\**

by Henri de Barran (1554)

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The play I am dealing with here may appear out of place in a setting devoted to Tudor dramatic phenomena. Certainly, it would have seemed so to Hardin Craig, who, in *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (1955), magisterially identified the “universally representative character” as “the fundamental feature of English moralities” (p. 383) and proclaimed it a feature exceptionally exempt from foreign—and especially French—influence (p. 389). Of course, in order to maintain this position, Craig needed to ignore, among other things, the priority of *Elckerlyck* over *Everyman*, which he enshrined as typical of the oldest English tradition (not to say “finest”, although he does [p. 389]). Scholarship has long since kicked this pasteboard cornerstone out from under the house of cards—and continues to trample on the wreckage: witness Anston Bosman’s very recent (perhaps unnecessarily strenuous) wresting of *Everyman* from the cultural grip of the *Norton Anthology* in the cause of rehabilitating it within an “*Elkerlijck* network” (Bosman, p. 311-16).

Of course, *Mankind Justified by Faith*, composed by a Protestant pastor connected with the court of Navarre, is hardly medieval: it was published in Geneva in 1554, two years after its composition, according to the author’s preface. But it certainly is French—the original title makes a point of saying so—and its existence, had Craig known of it (five copies survive, including one in the Bodleian), might have seriously impinged on his narrative. For the protagonist of Barran’s play—“Mankind”, in my translation—is about as universal as they come, and he is placed at the centre of symbolic action that takes him from sinful ignorance to despair to redemption in a comprehensive way comparable to his late fifteenth-century English namesake

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\* Original: *Tragique comedie françoise de l’homme iustificié par Foy*. All citations will be taken from my translation, available online (see Bibliography).

or to *Humanum Genus* in *The Castle of Perseverance*, the most comprehensive surviving morality of all.<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, the very feature that might have most troubled Craig about the mid-sixteenth-century French play might also have helped him, willy-nilly, to bridge a troublesome gap in his narrative, as it passes through the Tudor interlude and into the public theatre of Elizabethan and later London. For he seeks to arrive at an Everyman-like universality as appropriated by numerous characters of the later dramatists—with, naturally, Shakespeare in the forefront—yet finds himself hindered by the contrary centrifugal tendency of the English moral interludes: “most moral plays of the later Tudor period dealt, even when they proceeded according to the pattern of the morality play, with some special human situation already recorded in story or chronicle” (p. 386).<sup>2</sup> Craig’s solution is twofold: on the one hand, he allows that some interludes did present “individual men”—though some women also figure—“whose dramatic situations were all-inclusive and whose actions were typical of human behaviour” (p. 383); on the other hand, he invokes the “moral earnestness of the Elizabethans” (p. 389), which supposedly led them, as if by collective instinct, spontaneously to recuperate a medieval English mode of thinking about character in universal terms.

In fact, Barran’s dramaturgy arguably looks forward to Elizabethan stage practice in ways that go beyond actually providing a universal mankind figure such as Craig had to fabricate virtually. The elements in question bear, in turn, on an evolution in the staging of the supernatural, whereby what the traditional moralities presented as exteriorised

- 1 For that matter, Barran’s is far from the only, or the first, French morality to feature a generalised mankind figure as a protagonist. In the surviving texts, the practice can be traced back at least to the anonymous *Moralité à six personnages* (late fifteenth century), which centres on Aulcune (“someone”, “anyone”) as a typical young man on the make; Chascun (“everyone”) is the protagonist of the probably slightly later *Moralité du lymon et de la terre* (Recueil Trepperel, 19). (On the Trepperel collection, which has never been fully edited but is available on *Gallica* in sometimes hard-to-read facsimile, see Droz, pp. xi-xiv.) Cf. also L’Homme in the *Moralité nouvelle des iiii elemens* (Recueil Trepperel, 22), a similar piece roughly of the *Everyman* stamp, seemingly datable between 1517 and 1521. Both Trepperel moralities have been attributed (doubtfully) to “Jehan d’Abundance” (name regularised according to the BnF standard, whose catalogue terms this a “Pseudonyme d’un poète dont on ignore le nom et la vie, sauf qu’il mourut après 1550”). See also, and especially, L’Humanité in what may (or may not) be the same author’s much later *Le Gouvert d’humanité* (1540-48; see Leroux, ed., p. 16). This last work, a distinctively counter-Reformation drama published in Lyons, presents sufficient points of intersection with Barran’s work to suggest at least the type of Catholic piece which he aimed at countering. (For further detail, see Barran, *Mankind*, trans. and ed. Hillman, Introduction, pp. 9-11.)
- 2 Cf. Bevington on the “increasing structural tendency in the intermediate morality to alternate camps of godly and profane figures”, thereby producing a “bifurcation of the central mankind figure” (p. 153). Bevington’s account, it may be noted, is equally innocent of Continental parallels.

forces of good and evil, linked with the influence of the divine or diabolical, are shown to operate within and through the human “heart”—whatever that may be.

It is tempting simply to associate this shift with the play’s Protestant *parti pris*,<sup>3</sup> and to a point this is fair enough—even making, if we like, a fit with Elizabethan “moral earnestness”. But the extent of Barran’s technical innovation within the morality form can also be measured by comparison with Reform analogues. These include another Continental text which was demonstrably influential within the English dramatic milieu of the late 1580s and early 1590s but which has been equally neglected by criticism. This is the fiercely polemical neo-Latin morality—it is labelled a tragedy—of the German Thomas Kirchmeyer (*alias* Naogeorgus): *Mercator seu Judicium*. *Mercator* was published in 1540 and translated into French some four years after Barran’s work appeared, probably by Jean Crespin, who is best known for applying John Foxe’s model of martyrology in support of the Huguenot cause; the title has become, more optimistically, *Le Marchant converti*.<sup>4</sup> Both the original and (especially) the translation went through several editions, and I have found what seems to me specific influence on at least two public theatre plays: *A Looking Glass for London and England*, by Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene (1589-90?), and Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, whose original version is usually dated between 1588 and 1592.<sup>5</sup>

This evidence confirms continuity with the morality tradition of vividly representing supernatural forces as exterior, even if human reaction to them is necessarily the point. Lodge and Greene have an Evil Angel, who tempts the conscience-stricken Usurer with the means of suicide (V.ii.21 SD), as Mephistopheles does Faustus. And, most unusually for an Elizabethan text, their good Angel is actually addressed by Jonas at one point as “Jehovah”, even as “my God” (V.iii.42, 50). Kirchmeyer, like John Bale, or Lewis Wager in *The Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdelene*, takes the medieval liberty of bringing Christ on stage, although with a distinctly Calvinist twist. For although quite understandably pronouncing the deserved damnation of a Prince, a Bishop and a Friar who adhere to Catholic doctrine, Christ in *Mercator* offers a quite arbitrary-seeming gift of mercy to the Merchant, who is certainly no inclusive Everyman figure, and who, though driven to penitence, is too despairing to ask for mercy.<sup>6</sup>

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- 3 The broad passage of post-Reformation theatre towards evocations of inwardness by way of conscience is at least implicit in the overview offered by Slights, who discusses the morality of Woodes (to be considered below), but who is not concerned with specifically dramaturgical issues.
  - 4 Crespin is identified on the title page only as the printer (in Geneva), not the translator; the latter, whoever he was, shows considerable literary and dramaturgical ability.
  - 5 For details of the connection, see Hillman, “Faustus”.
  - 6 *Pace* Bosman, p. 316, who incorporates *Mercator* within his “*Elckerlijck* network”, claiming that it depicts “the salvation of a merchant from the misguided counsel of a prince, a Catholic bishop, and

The key point for my purposes, however, is that the sinner's penitence in Kirchmeyer's play is not arrived at on stage through inward struggle, as the full Latin and French titles might suggest ("*in conscientiae certamine*", "*au combat de la Conscience*"). Rather, it is effected by the trenchant attacks of the character incarnating that function, Conscientia, seconded by the threats and taunts of an exuberant Satan. Mercator is subsequently purged (literally) of false doctrine by Paul and Luke, whom Christ despatches for the purpose. Such an exteriorised and activist conscience, then, is not an abstract allegory but the key element of a dynamic cluster of supernatural forces. The point is all the clearer by contrast with the silent, mournful and ineffectual figures incarnating the passive consciences of the Catholic characters destined for damnation. (As if in ironic response to this technique, we actually see Conscience brought down to earth, and indeed corrupted, as one of *The Three Ladies of London* by Robert Wilson [1584], who anglicises Kirchmeyer's *Mercator* and *Lucrum* as well.)

In *A Looking Glass*, conscience is not incarnated, but its operation is likewise attached directly to the supernatural. The sinful lords and ladies of Nineveh have their consciences given virtual voices to echo what they hear, as the inspired Jonas delivers his rebukes and the message of divine destruction ("The Lord hath spoken, and I do cry it out" [V.i.129]): "My soul is buried in the hell of thoughts . . . Horror of mind, disturbance of my soul" (169, 174); "Assailed with shame, with horror overborne . . . Woe's me, my conscience is a heavy foe" (184, 191). Next, the play's Usurer, a clear derivative of Mercator (whose crimes include usury), has his conscience jolted into action by what he is given to see in his mind's eye. This includes his victims supplicating God ("Methinks I see their hands reared up to heaven / To cry for vengeance of my covetousness" [V.ii.8-9]), a gaping hell, and finally the Judgement itself: "Methinks I see him sit to judge the earth. / See how He blots me out of the book of life" (14-15).

Conscience as a confrontational instrument of revelation and chastisement is likewise highlighted in *The Conflict of Conscience*, by Nathaniel Woodes (1581), a fascinating hybrid of allegory and pseudo-documentary,<sup>7</sup> notorious for its alternative endings but also notable, I believe, because it actually suggests the influence of Barran as well as Kirchmeyer. (The resemblance of *Sensual Suggestion* to Barran's seductive *Concupiscence*

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a Franciscan friar". This is, at least, a misleading summary, although the play certainly deploys the device of the summons to death and judgement, as well as the Book of Reckoning, while pointedly refuting *Everyman's* Catholic solutions. Curiously, Bosman fails to mention the French translation, perhaps because it does not fall within the Northern European limits he propounds for his "network" (pp. 315-16).

7 The "factual" basis is the well-known cautionary example of Francesco Spiera; on its adaptations and appropriations, see Overell.



is especially strong at several points, even if Woodes disallows female characters.<sup>8</sup>) With regard to Conscience, however, the dominant model is again Kirchemeyer.

As in *A Looking Glass*, God sends a warning, here through the character called Spirit:

Let not Suggestion of thy flesh, thy Conscience thée betray,  
 Who doth conduct thée in the path, that leadeth to all woe:  
 Waigh well this warning giuen from God, before thou further goe.  
 (Woodes, IV.iv)

It is when the power of Suggestion (literally) proves too strong that Conscience confronts the sinner as an exteriorised figure, as in *Mercator*, where Conscientia, by her own account—and she is female, as grammatical gender alone would warrant—has been driven out of the Merchant’s house by his sins. There, she has the backing of a summons by death to render her reproaches efficacious. In Woodes’s play, Conscience at first preaches to no avail. It takes an encounter with Horror to strike Philologus with despair, the “gripping gréeffe of hell”, as in *Mercator*: “The peace of *Conscience* faded is, in stead whereof, I bring / The Spirit of Sathan, blasphemy, confusion and cursing” (Woodes, V.iv). In sum, while all of these are resolutely Protestant plays, there is no radical break with traditional dramaturgy when it comes to the sinner’s confrontation with his dire state. Conscience, personified or not, functions as a discrete force within a supernatural nexus opposing good and evil influences. It is this established pattern, surely, that Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice* plays with in his monologue imagining the conflicting exhortations of the devil and his conscience—the latter at one point “hanging about the neck of my heart” (Shakespeare, *MV*, II.ii.13-14)—as he comically debates whether or not to desert his master Shylock.

What might be termed an “activist” conscience also features in the Tudor interlude that stands in the closest—and most puzzling—relation to Barran’s play, Lewis Wager’s *The Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdelene*. The puzzle is a function of dates. The first edition of *Mary Magdelene* appeared in 1566, some four years after the author’s death, but the Prologue’s reference to a king, rather than a queen, has been taken to push the date of composition back into Edward’s reign (White, ed., pp. xxii-xxiii), hence to at least 1543. It would otherwise seem evident that the author had borrowed a number of Barran’s dramatic ideas. Wager’s vices, including Carnall Concupiscence, are introduced into Mary’s heart at the instigation of Infidelity, child of Satan; her accord with them issues in a song. Infidelitie puts on a Pharisee’s gown. The Law, carrying the Mosaic tables and supported by Knowledge of Sinne (the counterpart of Barran’s Spirit of Fear) “pricketh [Mary’s]

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8 On this point, see Kelly, pp. 395-96.

conscience" (l. 1150)—the occasion, however, for a most un-Barran-like bawdy quibble; she recognises that she can never satisfy the Law and despairs of her salvation, which is nevertheless effected by grace and a personified Faith, with Love delivering the lesson that "by Faith onely, Marie was iustified" (l. 2131).

All these features have more or less close counterparts in Barran's *Mankind*, and obviously there is a fundamental convergence of Reform doctrine. Yet Wager's play is diffuse and composite, drawing on a wide variety of elements, including social satire, in elaborating its very roughly biblical version of Mary's conversion and redemption. It is tempting, then, to take the printed version as reflecting revision and amplification, whether or not by Wager himself,<sup>9</sup> and this is where bits of Barran might have proved useful. In any case, *Mary Magdalene* remains a traditional biblical interlude in its basic structure and dramaturgy, following very much in the line of Bale's *Thre Lawes* in its use of shape-shifting vices, including Infidelitie, and their defeat by divinity (Christ's presence here having, moreover, a "historical" rationale). Then, too, its central figure, while obviously a potential model for all sinners, is hardly Everyman, or even Everywoman.

To return to what is most distinctive about Barran's play, conscience here is no simple minatory spur to conversion through confrontation, and not a character at all, but nothing less than the *theatre* of spiritual operations, *platea* rather than *locus*. It is also explicitly the ground on which spectator and spectacle meet, as the Prologue establishes: "in his conscience / Each one of you will be interpellated" (Pro. 66-67). Indeed, the play's readers, who have access to the author's introductory address "To the Reader", are there exhorted to "realise feelingly in their conscience" (p. 5) the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith which is the play's *raison d'être*. I use "realise feelingly" to translate Barran's "epreuuent", a term which foregrounds the notion of experience. It points, as well, to the extended dramatic mechanism by which Barran's sinner is made aware of his condition, and ultimately redeemed.

The key is the complex role assigned to the Law, which focuses Barran's doctrinal objective. The issue of Law's place in the salvific system is a familiar and important preoccupation of Reform theology, given the supersession of the Old Testament Law of Justice by the New Testament Law of Mercy, as well as the Lutheran principle of *sola fides*. So much is attested by Bale's *Thre Lawes*. But whereas Bale allegorizes and distinguishes these three—"of nature, Moses and Christ"—in expounding their functions, and Wager settles for Mosaic Law's message of sin, Barran presents a composite and enigmatic figure who confronts Mankind—that is, us—with a challenge of interpretation and integration. Mankind is hampered by two factors. Most fundamentally, his vision is clouded by the

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9 A less likely possibility would be a common source, now unknown, presumably in French or Latin, for both Wager and Barran.



seductive blandishments of Concupiscence, the daughter of Satan, implanted within his heart from birth, who at first actually blindfolds him. (She thereby anticipates—but to far greater effect, thanks to her femininity—Wooles’s device of Suggestion, who induces “the blindnesse of the flesh” by way of a “Glasse of vanyties” [IV.iii].<sup>10</sup>) Concupiscence then urges Mankind literally to break the Law (in some form, presumably, resembling the Mosaic tablets), and later, when he has resolved on outward compliance, makes a secret pact with him—and Satan—to remain in his heart.

This inward corruption is abetted, albeit unwittingly, by the figure of Rabbi, the advocate of the Law, who preaches the doctrine of salvation through obedience and good works, in opposition to Paul. Rabbi attempts to turn Mankind to virtue, leading him to the Law (at first together with Paul) and asking her to remove the blindfold and strike him with terror. She does so by having Sin and Death, who, like Concupiscence, are the spawn of Satan, molest and torment him. This is where Law’s role ends in Wager’s play. In a subsequent twist, however, Barran’s Rabbi falsely convinces Mankind that he can satisfy the Law and, to make this plausible, casts a veil over her terrifying countenance. Mankind then embarks on a pharisaical phase, hypocritically showing a pious and virtuous exterior while remaining inwardly devoted to worldliness.

It is in this phase that the play develops its specifically anti-Catholic critique, exploiting the common association in Reform rhetoric between the biblical Pharisees and the clergy of the Roman church. Mankind boasts of fasting and alms-giving. In comparison with such precedents as Bale and Kirchmeyer, however, the critique is muted and assimilated to the doctrinal point. Mankind is now costumed, not like a contemporary ecclesiastic, but like the Jewish priests denounced by Jesus in Matthew 23:5, while the active support of Rabbi keeps the focus on the contrast between Old and New Law.

It is Paul’s highly theatrical removal of the Law’s veil, enacting the imagery of II Corinthians 3,<sup>11</sup> that brings the sinner to insupportable knowledge of his damnable state, which is confirmed by the physical opening of his breast by Sin and Death to expose Concupiscence and associated evils lurking within what Romans 2:5 terms a “hardnes and heart that can not repent”. There follows, inevitably, despair, with the diabolically abetted impulse to suicide, until Paul gets him to listen to the words of Faith. Through

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<sup>10</sup> This is a parodic adaptation of the use of true mirrors of self-knowledge, as in John Redford’s *Wit and Science* (c. 1530-40), where the protagonist receives from Reason a “glas ... wherein beholde yee / Yourselfe to yourselfe” (ll. 2-3), which finally proves efficacious, or *Moralité du lymon et de la terre*, in which Chascun is given a mirror by his parents, Lymon (“silt”) and Terre (“earth”), and enjoined to look at himself daily to keep himself from sin by remembering his mortal nature. They are supported by Reason, but it will take the stroke of Death to convert him.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bale’s *Thre Lawes*, where Ambycyon and Covetousness “A vayne ... have cast doughtles, / The lyght of the lawe to hyde” (III.1245-46); Deus Pater finally removes it (V.1890)

her Mankind is strengthened to receive Grace, who deigns to come to him with the promise of pardon—in effect, to cite Romans again, the “circumcision . . . of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:29). He is thereby freed from fear of Sin, Death and Satan. Concupiscence is duly relegated to a subordinate place. As for the Law, she is no longer terrifying, since Mankind is inwardly in harmony with her just, indeed divine, requirements.<sup>12</sup>

Such a summary suffices, I hope, to throw into relief Barran’s representation of Mankind’s negotiation of the relation between Law and Faith as an inward process involving not just the awakening of conscience in the moral sense but a coming to *consciousness*. It seems very much to the point that “*conscience*” in French carries both meanings, as does Latin “*conscientia*”—and as English “conscience” also did in this period (*OED*, s.v., II).<sup>13</sup> Certainly, Mankind can be hindered and helped by bad and good preaching: the former entails Rabbi’s deceit and exposes Mankind’s reason as inadequate, as when he reckons logically that since he first fell into sin by offending against the Law, he must get out of it by satisfying her. Paul’s preaching, by contrast, carries the authority of the divine word (the printed text abounds with marginal references to scripture, especially to the apostle). But the necessary transformation, passing through torment to comfort, ultimately comes through experience.

To review the cast of characters shown to operate on the universal protagonist, it is striking that only one, Satan, unambiguously incarnates a supernatural entity. The hell to which he strives to bring Mankind is correspondingly real, in Barran’s understanding. The other onstage figures, however, are either allegories or adjutants, or both, and they all lead back to inward process. Even Sin and Death, Satanic offspring though they are in theological terms, work by symbolically producing mental—coded as physical—torment, initially in service to the Law. They, like Concupiscence, are part of the fallen human condition, themselves capable of infiltrating the heart. The Law itself, though divinely established, functions according to Mankind’s varying perception of it. So do Faith and Grace, representing those qualities of heavenly origin that the heart must be ready to receive. With regard to the representation of the supernatural, then, Barran’s dramaturgy marks an evolution of morality tradition. Mankind is no longer the object of contestation between forms, or surrogates, or allies, of the Good and Evil angels. He has become the subject who must work out (the Geneva version reads “make an end of”) his “owne saluation with feare and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

**12** The play thus decisively makes a transition towards the more hopeful and inspiring stance regarding salvation that Happé has usefully traced across a number of English interludes, including that of Wager.

**13** To the extent that “consciousness” opens a broad channel between what is inward and what is outward, this doubleness allows for the shaping of the former by the latter as propounded by Tilmouth.

It is doubtless, in part, Barran's sense of theatrical and theological decorum that keeps him, unlike Bale, Kirchmeyer and Wager, from putting divinity on stage. His pre-fatory address to the reader reveals a deep distrust of the potential of theatricality to impede or even subvert doctrinal instruction. But he nevertheless shows a keen theatrical sense in many respects, and the invisibility of God paradoxically points to a highly personal process of discovery on Mankind's part, such as John Donne evokes in "Satyre III": "on a huge hill, / Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will / Reach her, about must, and about must goe" (ll. 79-81).

Such an evolution at least foreshadows the essentially secular but spiritually resonant adaptations of analogous morality features in the later public theatre—and for once, I am not thinking of the Vice, whose legacy has been so well served by Bernard Spivack and others. Holding in abeyance the possibility of direct influence, I believe that Barran may be brought productively to bear on two comedies of Shakespeare in which an advocate, even an embodiment, of Law-as-Justice sets in motion a potentially tragic process that is only belatedly turned aside by mercy. An intertextual reading of *The Merchant of Venice* might well posit an inflection of the *Il Pecorone* story by Kirchmeyer's *Mercator*, but also by Barran's use of Rabbi in delineating a mankind-figure tormented, and nearly destroyed, by a strict application of the Old Law.<sup>14</sup> It uncannily points up the last-minute intervention of Shakespeare's spokesperson for Mercy that Antonio is nearly put through an opening of his breast that would be more than a symbolic revelation of his heart, and at a moment when he despairingly deems himself "a tainted wether of the flock, / Meetest for death" (IV.i.114-15). (By the way, it is only in Shakespeare's version that the prospective victim's heart is specified.) Similar spiritual terms, in more abstract form, permeate *Measure for Measure*. The hypocritical upholder of the Law in that toughly problematic comedy, a devil posing as an angel, who likewise resists a heavenly discourse of Mercy, finds himself caught out by Law in a way that imposes such agony of conscience—and consciousness—that, like Mankind, or Antonio for that matter, he seeks to die. Mercy in these plays is conspicuously in human hands, and, ironically, neither Shylock nor Angelo appears grateful for it.

More broadly, and of course more distantly from Barran's isolated precedent, the production of subjectivity through conscientious guilt runs throughout Shakespearean tragedy, often by way of dreams or ghosts that exteriorise an inward phenomenon. When the victims of Richard III successively enjoin him, on the eve of Bosworth field, to "[d]espair and die" (*R3*, V.iii.120, 126, etc.), driving him to a sense of self-loss through "coward conscience" (179), the traditional morality structure is adapted, as by Barran, so as to naturalise the supernatural. When Lear is persecuted by a perverse application of

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<sup>14</sup> For such a reading, see Hillman, "Mercy Unjustified".

retributive law—“to willful men / The injuries that they themselves procure / Must be their schoolmasters” (*Lr.*, II.iv.302-4)—he strives to appear “a man / More sinned against than sinning” (III.ii.59-60) but reveals himself desperately in need of grace, which is freely offered from a naturalised “soul in bliss” (IV.vii.45): “No cause, no cause” (74). The point of recalling the morality pattern here extends precisely to the absence of the supernatural.

The universe of Shakespearean tragicomedy literally revels, if one may say so, in attaching supernatural resonances to naturally generated actions, and here too, the pattern of subjectifying conscience/consciousness as a prelude to pardon comes closer to Barran’s tragicomic morality than to Kirchmeyer’s tragedy. The most concise case is Ariel’s confrontation of the “men of sin” (*Imp.*, III.iii.53) with their guilt and the threat of “[l]ing’ring perdition” (77), so that they become “desperate” (104). After Prospero rewards the “penitent” (V.i.28) villains and holds out hope of “pardon” (294) even to Caliban, who will “seek for grace” (296), he makes a famous gesture towards putting himself in their place: “And my ending is despair, / Unless I be reliev’d by prayer” (Epi., 15-16).

It seems most fitting, however, to end this brief tour of a vast territory, if not with Paul, at least with Paulina in *The Winter’s Tale*, who enforces and prolongs Leontes’ guilt-stricken conscience over sixteen years in terms redolent of the familiar spiritual pattern:

Do not repent these things, for they are heavier  
Than all thy woes can stir; therefore betake thee  
To nothing but despair. (*WT*, III.ii.208-10)

The gods, she affirms, will never forgive him. But Hermione will, finally fulfilling her intuition that enduring Leontes’ perversion of Old Law “[i]s for my better grace” (II.i.122). He will be reminded by the sight of Florizel to include his childhood friend in his offences against heaven, which have been punished with a symbolic death:

You have a holy father,  
A graceful gentleman, against whose person  
(So sacred as it is) I have done sin,  
For which the heavens, taking angry note,  
Have left me issueless. (V.i.170-74)

But life will shortly be redeemed from death, and a supposed statue be made to move and speak, on condition that “[y]ou do awake your faith” (V.iii.95).

No medieval or early modern morality that I know models this despairing sinner’s moment of redemption, as managed by Paulina, so closely as does Barran’s—and to the point of gendering the redemptive force as female:

*Mankind.* I feel God’s ire fierce and harsh in me.  
What succour, then, may I from you expect?

No recourse but by hanging to effect  
 My death at once and strangle utterly.  
*Paul.* Wait a little, for you shall presently  
 Hear words delivered by a voice divine  
 To soothe you, if your ear you will incline. (V.vi.1433-39)

The voice belongs to Faith awakened, “from high heaven appearing” (V.vii. 1478),

The cognizance of God with you to share  
 And that supreme benevolence declare  
 He shows to those who for their ill atone  
 And will return, through Faith, to him alone. (1482-85)

Faith must be awakened in Mankind at large—which is to say, in the spectators themselves, who are first exhorted to gaze on an image of their own hard-heartedness, as if on a block of stone, with its message of despair and death, so that they may “realise feelingly” a coming-to-life along with it.

*The Winter’s Tale*, of course, actually puts its key spectators on stage, and Leontes asks, already moving beyond the “hardnes and heart that can not repent” of Romans 2:5, “does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?” (V.iii.37-38). Barran never cites the prophecy of Ezekiel, but he certainly knew it, and it happens to fuse with particular resonance the tragicomic work of Paul and Paulina, anticipating even the assimilation of the Old Law to the New:

I will take away the stonie heart out of your bodye, and I wyll gyue you an hearte of fleshe.  
 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walke in my statutes, and ye shall kepe my iudgements and do them. (Ezek. 36:26-27)

Only with the utmost diffidence would I propose a French morality, perhaps never acted in any country and now all but forgotten, as a theatrical model that even morally earnest Elizabethans would consciously, or conscientiously, have allowed to inflect the evolution of the supernatural and the spiritual on their especially dynamic stage. But I would suggest that Barran’s text substantially illuminates that evolution, at least as background. And I cannot help wondering whether Hardin Craig would be pleased—or not—by the suggestion.



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