PERFORMANCE, DRAMA AND SPECTACLE IN THE MEDIEVAL CITY

Essays in Honour of Alan Hindley

Edited and with an Introduction by

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In our media rich age, we tend to assume that the generations that preceded ours lacked entertainment and that their primary purpose in organizing spectacles, or putting on a performance was to provide for themselves the diversion that we can now access with a touch of a button. While this may be true, we should not loose sight of the possibility of deeper social motivations. After all, performance, drama and spectacle have many uses. For centuries various societies have exploited these public arts to make statements of political power. Entertainment or ceremony can – literally – mask power struggles and attempts to claim ideological territory[1]. Orthodoxy and the dogma can be promulgated especially well in an urban setting through public expressions of spectacle: in the Middle Ages a sermon in the vernacular could attract a crowd through the promise of distraction as opposed to instruction[2]. Drama might well combine

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1. The elaborate court entertainments of the Early Modern period are the most overtly political expression of drama as a means of sugaring an ideological pill and it is perhaps no accident that they were often known as *masques*. There are clear continuities between public entertainments of this type and those of the later medieval period, particularly in the form of Royal Entries. See Bernard Guenée and Françoise Lehoux, *Les Entrées royales françaises de 1328 à 1515* (Paris: CNRS, 1968).

2. Perhaps the most famous instance of the sermon as a potential source of entertainment takes us a little away from the notion of public spectacle: Caesarius of Heisterbach tells a famous *exemplum* regarding disinterested monks supposed to be listening to a sermon by their abbot. In order to wake up his dozing brethren, the abbot says: 'Listen brothers! I'm now going to tell you a story about Arthur!' Of course, everyone wakes up and hangs onto his every word, to which the Abbot dresses them down for being interested only in frivolous words and sleeping through a sermon which could save their souls ['In sollemnitate quadam cum Abbas Gevardus praedecessor huius, qui nunc est, verbum exhortationis in Capitulo ad nos faceret, et plures, maxime de conversis, dormitare, nonnullos etiam stertere conspiceret, exclamavit: Audite, fratres, audite, rem vobis novam et magnam proponam. Rex quidam fuit, qui Artus vocabatur. Hoc dicto, non processit, sed ait: Videte, fratres, miseriam magnam. Quando locutus sum de Deo, dormitastis; mox ut verba levitatis inserui, evigilantes erectis auribus omnes auscultare coepistis. Ego eidem sermoni interfui. Non solum personas

the concerns of the ruling classes and those of the populace. Pilgrimage and procession can be seen to operate in a similar fashion. Conversely, the same public manifestations can be used to challenge orthodoxy and subvert dogma. Universally understood metaphors placed in an incongruous context have the potential to do damage or to support a cause.

In the medieval city, all sections of society are implicated. However, not all inhabitants of the city participated at the same level and, since drama *per se* developed hand-in-hand with the development of urban life, what we now know as 'theatre' was far from inclusive. Plays performed by educated or partially educated specialist groups might be commissioned for performance in a private space reserved for members of a Guild, *puy* or *confrérie*, or for invited guests at a wedding[3]. Court spectaculars could choose their audience and participants. The medieval city may have provided the backdrop, but such performances were able to exclude all but a chosen few. This is not to say that the growing urban population was totally starved of drama. In fact, those dramatic forms which were accessible to the populace as a whole, such as mystery plays, often encapsulated expressions of a widespread popular hankering for involvement and investment in dramatic representations[4]. And, of course,

spirituales, sed et saeculares diabolus per somnolentiam tentat et impedit'], Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. J. Strange (Cologne–Bonn: Hebeele, 1851), I, 4: Capitulum 36: *De domino Gevardo Abbate, qui monachos in sermone dormitantes per fabulam Arcturi excitavit*, p. 205. However, there is much evidence that the practice was longstanding and took hold in different contexts. Jeanine Horowitz and Sophia Menache are not alone in noting that this was far from a purely clerical invention of the early thirth-eenth century: 'la ruse est ancienne, antique même. Démosthène reprochait la même légèreté à ses concitoyens', in *L'Humour en chaire: Le rire dans l'église médiévale*, Histoire et Société, 28 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994), p. 111. See also Jacques Berlioz, 'L'Auditoire des prédicateurs dans la littérature des "exempla" (XIIIe–XIVe siècles)', *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 3 (1989), 125–58 (p. 142, n. 48), and Jacobus de Vitriaco, *The Exempla, or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry* ed. Thomas Frederick Crane (New York: Franklin, 1971; orig. 1890), p. xlii.

3. The tradition of private dramatic spectacle continued in the Renaissance and, although as Martin Butler points out it 'comprises only a small fraction of the period's output', it was an influential form because 'the audiences were drawn from the social and political élites, and because the staging was lavish and the rewards substantial', meaning that most major playwrights produced plays for these circles: 'Private and Occasional Drama' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, 2nd revised edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 131–63 (p. 131).

4. Gustave Cohen, *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du moyen âge*, new ed. (Paris: Champion, 1926), p. 254, argues that the best way to evaluate

not all performance and spectacle arose from theatrical representation. An execution, a public affirmation, a sermon, the passage of a pilgrimage through a town, official celebrations of civic events and occasions, collective pleas for divine intervention, chaotic carnival, in fact any event which attracted a crowd for a specific purpose, constitutes a spectacle[5]. City dwellers would become increasingly accustomed to public spectacles as the urban population – and with it a new sense of community – grew[6]. The combination of the city and the pulling power of a performance, drama or spectacle created the potential for very compelling occasions. In many ways, little has changed. It could be that this explains our fascination with the 'performative' aspects of medieval performance, drama and spectacle, aspects which speak to our modern specularity[7].

All aspects of the urban Middle Ages – progressive, festive, juridical, intellectual, religious, commercial – were played out in public. Performance and spectacle were both ludic and functional and were viewed as extremely important when staged in the city. Markets and festivals were easily allied to religious practices and Christian duty[8]. Medieval drama was born, so it would seem, from the liturgy[9]; by the turn of the Renaissance, Christianity was still central to the tradition of dramatic representations even if the latter at times seemed to only to play lip service to faith. New civic ceremonies of all types now also drove the development of performance and spectacle, underpinned always by a religious ardour, often leading to tension. Public events had the power to draw from beyond

the success of mystery plays is to examine the number of tickets sold and concludes that this was a substantial number – possibly as much as 5,000 per day of the spectacle.

5. The line between spectacle and what we would today call 'show business' was constantly blurred in the Middle Ages (as it is today), for political and many other reasons. So, a play might so easily become civic propaganda, and vice versa.

6. For a comprehensive description of the evolution of the medieval city, see David Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City* (London: Longman, 1997).

7. See for instance, *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy F. Regalado and Marilyn Lawrence (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005).

8. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, paperback edn. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 6, refers to popular pageants as 'a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world', but in reality such unofficial ludic manifestations were often allied to officially or ecclesiastically sanctioned celebrations.

9. The recent critique of this view from a Marxist perspective, Leondard Goldstein, *The Origin of Medieval Drama* (Maddison NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), does not dispute the role of the Church in the development of medieval drama, but argues that this role was fostered by the Church's position as a feudal landowner.

the urban environment, but it was not only the 'grander' spectacles that might bring urban and rural together. Town and country were in daily collision at markets and could be brought together in any type of spectacle considered 'popular' by its organisers or participants. The city, with its greater opportunities for leisure and commerce (which often amounted to the same thing) exercised a draw on the surrounding countryside although, as we shall see, it was not always an unproblematic relationship.

The establishment, development and flourishing of the medieval city and of a wide variety of ritual therein has caused much scholarly ink to flow. Historians, theologians, drama specialists, art historians, literary scholars and archaeologists, amongst many others, have turned their attention to the topic for a variety of reasons, often returning to the notion of spectacle as a paradigm for cultural identity[10]. Most obvious, if only for its title, is the collection of essays edited by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson in 1994[11]. Contributors to their *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* write principally on fifteenth-century topics, providing a more-than-useful examination of how ceremony might act as an assertion of political power, a desperate appeal to God, or as more undefined (and by extension perhaps more valuable) expression of popular culture. The editors note the following:

> Broadly construed, urban ceremonial included public functions of multiple sorts. From private, but public, celebrations of births, marriages, and deaths to the grand entries of rulers into cities, the spectacles were designed to impress the events on collective memory. Medieval celebrants had a variety

10. It would clearly be impossible to give a complete list of seminal works. Of particular importance to the editors of the present volume are: Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1969); Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Gustave Cohen, Henri Focillon and Henri Pirenne, *La Civilisation occidentale au moyen âge du XIe au milieu du XVe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1933); Gustave Cohen, *La Grande clarté du moyen âge* (New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1943); Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne. Medieval fantasies of the Perfect Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Lawrence Bryant *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual, and Art in the Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1986); Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen âge: temps, travail et culture en Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978); Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949).

11. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson, *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 6 (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994).

of rituals that made their public messages memorable. The simplest was the visual witnessing of a written charter [...] The most complex were ducal or Royal entries in which tableaux, replete with allegorical meanings, were displayed to the ruler[12].

The essays in the present volume both confirm and progress each of Hanawalt and Reyerson's perceptive comments. Mirroring the bustling image of the medieval urban space, the current volume adds into the mix notions of writing and rewriting; religious dogma and the spectacle of pilgrimage; regeneration and rejuvenation; the city as hub or mere backdrop; multilingualism and multiculturalism. It also revisits and re-assesses the use of documents and archives, going back to the sources to modify assumptions made quickly on the basis of the work of nineteenth-century philologists. Across Western Europe in the Middle Ages shared and divergent value systems are revealed: it is clearly perilous for a modern scholar to generalize, or indeed to overspecialize. 'Culture' in general takes on a truly international nature in major urban centres, but localized cultural manifestations (almost all of which would fall within the remit of the present volume) also bloomed and they continued to flourish long after the Middle Ages. The development of the Chambers of Rhetoric contributed in the Low Countries to the emergence of an increasingly articulate society and, elsewhere, other urban societies found their own voices in manifold ways[13]. Douglas Adams may have been writing a twentieth-century science fiction comic detective story based on the holistic notion of 'the fundamental interconnectedness of all things', but his expression might have been created with *Performance, Drama and Spectacle in the Medieval City* specifically in mind[14].

The growth of urban life in the Middle Ages led not only to the dismantling of feudalism, but as a consequence to the creation of a new value system with cultural and civic manifestations at its heart. The richness of this tradition is evidenced in the breadth and depth of material addressed by contributors to the present volume. If, broadly speaking, the revolution of urbanization took place between the tenth and the thirteenth

12. Hanawalt and Reyerson *City and Spectacle*, p. x.

13. Cf. Introduction to *Urban Theatre in the Low Countries 1400–1625* ed. Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

14. Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1987).

centuries, the movement towards city life did not stop there. Indeed, this period marks just the foundation of medieval urban dwelling: it was only when city life had taken its hold that the new culture to which it would give rise began to mature. The transition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was seamless in at least one sense: urban ceremonies, dramas, shows of power, communities and spectacles had become the norm[15]. Again, this is clear from essays in the present volume (those by Pauline Smith, Catherine Emerson and Cynthia Brown, amongst others). There were immense differences between the image of the city in twelfth- and thirteenth-century romance, pious and moralising works, and of course dramas, and the reality of the (only relatively slightly) later period. The city undoubtedly continued to represent a danger in the pleasures it offered and the iniquities it displayed, but its actual value system, based on the division of labour, on public demonstrations of power, and on civic pride and rivalry, was less a threat than a reality, the rocks upon which society now stood. In every chapter of the current book the reader will encounter commerce, the centrality of wealth – even luxury –, powerful people encountering more humble types, and the assimilation of morals into a collective identity. The cultural melting pot that was the medieval city was the engine which drove society forwards, creating a new urban bourgeoisie with new tastes and values. Agnès Gerhards has written that

> [L]a ville a été le lieu de gestation d'un courant culturel d'une force innovatrice et créatrice sans précédent. Les Universités sont le produit de la ville comme l'est le modèle intellectuel de la scolastique, l'esthétique des cathédrales gothiques ou la spiritualité des Ordres Mendiants, dont les couvents s'installent essentiellement dans les villes[16].

In so saying, Gerhards draws attention to a cultural sea change with urbanization at its heart, where performance, drama and spectacle both drove forward and bore testament to developing or newly developed ethics, aesthetics, and cultural values.

15. Josèphe Chartrou's *Les Entrées solennelles et triomphales à la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1928), argues a transition between medieval and Renaissance motifs in solemn entries and the establishment of a distinctly Renaissance iconography, but more recent scholars, notably Gordon Kipling, have concentrated on the continuities on display.

16. Agnès Gerhards, *La Société médiévale* (Paris: MA Éditions, 1986), p. 262.

Performance was at the heart of the dissemination of information and propaganda, public shows of power, and – almost as a direct result – the creation of meaning. Symbols and codes which might seem to us unbelievably recondite were, in fact, understood, whether on the stage or at a Royal Entry. Display had the potential not only to perform but to be *performative*: as Laurie Postelwate has put it, 'processions, coronations, speeches, trials, and executions are all types of public performance which were acts *and* texts: acts that originated in the texts that gave them their ideological grounding'[17]. It is possible to apply this paradigm further, to the worlds of spectacle, community and show in every respect, whether drama, music and cultural manifestations, to liturgy and paraliturgical exhibitions, tournaments and mock combat. Community and nation building seem in one way or another to be at the heart of many spectacles[18]. In the medieval city, just as today, it is impossible to avoid (if sometimes difficult for us to decode) performance, drama and spectacle. An element of propaganda was and is continually present, in the hall of a guild, on a cathedral square, or on a medieval tradesman's sign or a present day billboard. And of course, at times propaganda invites challenge, often – but not always – taking the form of parody and satire. Such challenges might be born from true conviction, or grow from a spirit of fun. As Cynthia Brown points out in the current volume, the reaction generated by an author contributes in important ways to the 'spectacle' of the late medieval city. In the case of Pierre Gringore, his work can be understood as a series of performances before a paying public, whether watching a play or viewing the paratext of an early printed edition.

In spite of well-intentioned efforts to access less tangible aspects of medieval performance, our starting point is, inevitably, the text[19]. Texts

17. Introduction to *Acts and Texts. Performance and Ritual in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Laurie Postlewate and Wim Hüsken, Ludus – Medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama, 8 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 7.

18. See Charles Phythian-Adams' comprehensive social history of urban 'community', *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

19. Simon Gaunt's *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2001) presents an interesting example of a study in which the author accesses medieval performance through textual traces and illuminates the text by considering the contribution of the oral tradition. Gaunt's conclusion that medieval culture was 'already clearly imbued with the importance of writing,' (p. 23) cannot negate the importance of the oral tradition, but it does make a strong case for a rich interplay between spoken and written word.

are among the few physical artefacts which offer 'concrete' evidence about the past and, unlike many objects studied by art historians, they are able to speak for themselves – albeit not always unambiguously. All types of text represent our 'archaeology' when it comes to medieval drama, and this constitutes a vital part of the present volume, and of the work of its dedicatee. Happily, as the Middle Ages progressed, medieval society produced abundant textual material, much still extant and unexplored, and this material covers almost every aspect of life. Through the texts which survive it is easy to imagine bustling streets offering a variety of temptations and annoyances. Feast days would attract entertainers and performers, might comprise a procession or sermon: it might not take much for a crowd to gather. Local or national events – any form of political propaganda from the Royal Entry to the celebration of the military victory or ducal marriage – would equally provide the spark necessary for ceremonials, rituals, performances and spectacles to take on a life of their own. One spectacle (for example a Royal Entry) would be the catalyst for many other 'lesser' performances. Indeed, the advent of the Royal Entry plays a significant role in our understanding of developments both in the vicissitudes of the great and powerful, and in the expansion of the medieval urban landscape. A king might for this occasion become a performer, recognising the importance of the city by using it as the backdrop for his performance. Whatever the nature of the festivities, this is where the medieval city reveals its own values and tastes – which might or might not be shared by those living in the surrounding countryside[20].

Royal Entries, associated with *tableaux vivants* and any amount of festivities, were perhaps the most obvious manner that the civic authorities could display wealth and power. Lavish displays of propaganda and

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20. Johan Huizinga reminds us that in the fifteenth century festivals 'still preserved something of the meaning they have in primitive societies, and after the supreme expression of their culture, the highest mode of collective enjoyment and an assertion of solidarity', *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIV*th *and XV*th *Centuries* (London: Arnold, 1924, reprinted many times; orig. Herfsttij der middeleeuwen. Studie over levens- en gedachten- vormen de veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden (Haarlem, 1919), p. 250. Anu Mänd, *Urban Carnival: Festive Culture in the Hanseatic Cities of the Eastern Baltic, 1350–1550*, Medieval Texts and Cultures Of Northern Europe, 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005) examines the festival culture of northern Europe in the later Middle Ages. Mänd's particular focus is the German-speaking urban communities of the eastern Baltic. Mänd's analysis covers the main annual festivals of the merchants' guilds and places them in their cultural and local contexts.

pageantry were carefully planned and in many cases the plan incorporated the production of an official record of the pageant, which we can still study today. However, the sideshows and associated activities of the general public are of equal interest and we can often only draw tentative conclusions from fleeting asides. For instance, the application of the term *mystère* to the *tableaux* illustrates a perceived continuity between what might to us seem to be a static spectacle and other more dynamic dramatic forms. Such events in the margins of medieval public display, although lacking in plentiful evidence (documentary, iconographical or other), naturally exercise a fascination over modern scholars. Sadly, Elaine C. Block passed away before she could finalize her contribution to this volume, an essay which would have placed the urban event in the context of the enduring (but largely hidden) artistic heritage of the city. We were privileged to see initial drafts of her work – a development from her definitive career's work on the iconography of medieval misericords and choir stalls[21]. Block was to explore the relationship between these fixed artistic depictions and the temporary world of the civic procession and pilgrimage, in particular whether the former had regional associations or took the form of the triumphal entry characteristic of the emergent Renaissance culture. Through careful examination of surviving choir stalls, and comparison with other visual depictions, Block was able to present a provisional typology of the ways in which processions were depicted in choir stalls. She acknowledged that descriptions of processions are more readily identifiable in texts than they are in carvings, but she argued that examination of the surviving carvings could shed light on the cultural context of the urban procession in the late medieval and early Renaissance period.

Amongst the ways that Block argued processions could be depicted we find four main categories: carvings of individuals or groups that form associations with other carvings in the same set of stalls; a series of stalls, each depicting an individual or group building into a procession; the appearance of figures in traditional processional costumes; or crowds of people shown most probably at the culmination of the procession.

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21. The culmination of this work may be seen in the definitive Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords*. 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003–8), I (France), II (Iberia), III (Belgium and the Netherlands); *Profane Imagery in Marginal Arts of the Middle Age*, Profane Arts of the Middle Ages, 1, ed. Elaine C. Block and Malcolm Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

Block accepted that in any individual instance we are cannot be absolutely certain that an individual, group of people, or even file of people on a misericord or other woodwork of a choir stall represents a procession. However, in comparing files and groups with similar compositions in other media (such as manuscript illuminations and tapestries), she was able to identify more-or-less definitively, and for the first time, certain carvings as depicting part of processions.

Amongst the evidence which Block intended to examine were costumes and lead badges, some associated with pilgrimage. Many lead badges have been dredged up in European rivers, notably those in the Netherlands, Belgium and France[22]. It is no accident that many of these lead badges were manufactured and distributed in the same regions where carvers designed and constructed choir stalls. It is also no accident that the badge motifs, worn on hats, belts or lapels of jackets are often the same as the subjects depicted on misericords[23]. Block's investigations reveal a complex relationship between the two modes of representation, for while misericords (and, indeed, other parts of choir stalls) shared motifs with lead badges, some of the figures carved on misericords also appear to be wearing such badges. An elderly woman, obviously toothless, looks out a window of a turret on a misericord at Sint Pieterskerk in Leuven. She is wearing a hat with a wide raised brim. On this hat directly above the bridge of her nose is a geometric ornament that looks metallic and may well be a lead badge. At Nájera, in the north of Spain and on the route to Compostella, several misericord heads wear bells which may have similar connotations to badges. The bells are worn on hats or as necklaces. They were used to alert people that a pig, attribute of St Anthony and allowed in village streets, was near. Bells were also signs of opulence. The fools who worked for Cardinal d'Amboise and provide attractions on false armrests now at the Basilica of St Denis wore strings of bells around their legs. We also see a sleeping pharaoh on a jouee at the Amiens Cathedral. He wears a belt of bells.

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22. For an overview of medieval lead badges see Jos Koldeweij, *Foi & Bonne Fortune. Parure et dévotion en Flandre médiévale* (Arnhem: Terra Lannoo, 2006), and Denis Bruna, *Enseignes de plomb et autres menues chosettes du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 2006).

23. Amongst such motifs, Block identified mermaids, Aristotle and Phyllis, literary characters, defecators, cockle shells and other insignias of saints, displays of genitalia and geometric abstractions.

Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in interpreting choir stall carvings – many of which are *lacunaire* or have been moved – clues such as similar scenes on other misericords in the set, similar scenes in other media with captions, and other relevant scenes on prints, collectively point to the procession as the underlying focus of the scene. As the Renaissance moved north, triumphal processions replaced those that highlighted local customs. The triumphal processions on the choir stalls of Dordrecht led the Renaissance into the Netherlands. And choir stalls throughout Western Europe are the guardians of many clues and secrets regarding the centrality of processions of many types to life in the medieval and Renaissance city.

Religious as much as civic occasions obviously offered a wide variety of reasons for and uses of medieval urban performance and spectacle. Whether religious or civic, spectacle required a certain ritual to fulfil its role: even an execution served to exhibit power, if with somewhat less opulence than a Royal Entry or with less joy than (but perhaps equal fervour to) a pilgrimage. Intriguingly, the same physical materials might be used to stage urban public events of a very different nature. For example, according to Michel Rousse the scaffold could be the setting for spectacles of every description: 'du prédicateur à l'acteur, ou du tournoi au spectacle de théâtre, la structure matérielle peut être identique'[24]. It is precisely this type of crossover, where boundaries are porous to say the very least, which often beguiles the modern scholar. It is intriguing to reflect upon how performance, ritual and spectacle framed by the city in the Middle Ages shapes our understanding of medieval literature, drama, politics and culture, whatever the nature of the event. There is a flexible (often apparently unspoken) interrelationship between performer audience, author, text, and artefact which can today be theorized to help us imagine how to conceptualise the creation, transmission, and reception of medieval culture in its broadest sense. Just such questions led to Lawrence M. Clopper's superlative work on Drama, Play, and Game[25]. Clopper focuses less on chronology than on community and questions how a rich dramatic tradition could emerge for a second time in Western

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24. Michel Rousse, *La Scène et les tréteaux. Le Théâtre de la farce au moyen âge*, Medievalia, 50 (Orléans: Paradigme, 2004), pp. 71–91 (p. 94); orig. 'L'espace scénique des farces', in *Le théâtre au Moyen Âge* (Montréal: Aurore, 1981), pp. 137–46.

25. Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001).

civilisation. He posits an official condemnation by the Church of the ancient *theatrum* which in reality meant that liturgical and popular forms of drama developed separately. For Clopper, there was no natural *conjoin-ture*. It was urbanization and the growing independence of civic authority in the fifteenth century – themselves a response to changing social condi-tions – that led civic authorities to assume responsibility for lay spiritual edification by presenting biblical drama. Most important for our purposes is Clopper's belief that vernacular drama was created by the common people themselves as part of their own developing institutional and urban life. One logical consequence of this hypothesis is that late medieval dra-matic cycles were primarily vernacular and secular in their concerns, expressing varied degrees of opposition to domination by the clergy.

With dramatic texts, more so even than other literary texts, the inevi-table centrality of the text has its frustrations. Hypothesising a perform-ance of the medieval drama is only possible today if that drama was written down. But, as modern performers of medieval texts constantly discover, so much of the performance is not recorded in the text, even in the early period when it seems that the written word was regarded just as a vehicle to record collective memory or the continuation of a story. Later the written word took on a new meaning as authors wanted their work to be recognized as their own. This progression towards the authorial, subjective 'I' obtains in the realm of medieval drama, as in other literary forms: the fourteenth-century *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personages* were collectively the 'work' of the Parisian goldsmiths' guild, a commu-nal yet anonymous expression of devotion (and an excuse for a party)[26]. If we know that the twelfth-century *Jeu de St Nicolas* was the work of Jehan Bodel, or that Hrotsvita wrote plays long before that time, then these are very much the exceptions for the earlier period. Plays associated with authorial names – Gringore, Brecon, Bale, Sachs, Heywood – are generally from the later period. For us, the physical artefact that is a medieval codex or early printed book can take on a different importance, not to say character, than for its original users. Notwithstanding, it is abundantly clear from the studies in this book that the written word was

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26. The complexity of the late medieval and Renaissance institution that was the confraternity is summed up in Christopher Black's introduction to *Early Modern Confra-ternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher F. Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

of great significance in a wide variety of geographical, temporal and social contexts.

This volume is divided into four sections: 'Town and Country, City and Spectacle', 'Performing on the Urban Stage', 'Re-writing the Reli-gious', 'Recording, Adapting, Preserving'. Such subdivision is of course useful when presenting a large number of essays assessing diverse mate-rial, but it goes without saying that many essays might have their place in more than one section. There are threads which are run throughout the volume and names such as Gringore reoccur, sometimes in unlikely places. Collectively, the essays offer snapshots from across medieval Europe, showcasing interdisciplinary discourse with regard to issues con-cerning the relationship between urban life, performance, the construc-tion and deconstruction of identity, and the subversion and exercise of power.

Since much of this volume takes the perspective of the urban dweller it is perhaps apposite that the first two chapters (by Konrad Schoell and Jacques Merceron) remind us that urban life was not the only – nor even the most common – way of living. Indeed when we consider the frequent medieval topos of the city as fortress we must bear in mind that this creates a group of outsiders as much as it creates a group of insiders[27]. Setting the foundation of what it is to come, a presumed opposition between *théâtre profane* and *théâtre religieux* is overthrown as the two forms reveal themselves to have the same social concerns. These two chapters also establish broadly temporal limits for the period, demonstrating the sig-nificance of the city, the extent of common concerns, and the development of urban life over the later medieval period. The following two chapters (by Jelle Koopmans and Vicki Hamblin) move to a discussion of drama rooted in particular cities: Lyon, Orléans, Seurre. Regional influences on generic expectations and also topographical, pragmatic influences on staging are revealed. Conflict is not absent within the city itself but not all conflicts were resolved on ideological grounds. Nerida Newbigin demonstrates how some were resolved – or failed to be resolved – in the context of public spectacle, civic ceremony, introducing the notion of guilds,

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27. Perhaps the most obvious example is Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la cité des dames*, trans. Éric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau (Paris: Stock, 1986), although it must be remembered that Christine ultimately includes some privileged members of her outgroup – men – in her narrative and, by implication in her metaphorical city.

devotional confraternities and civic bodies within cities. Throughout the first section notions of conflict and competition are important. Cities do not function as organic bodies in the way that St Augustine or Christine de Pizan might have us believe. And they are not quiescent and benign entities. The section closes with Eckehard Simon's discussion of overt expressions of political ambitions and the development of civic identity of cities through public theatre as a controlling discourse. Here the stage is a place to challenge and lampoon political opponents and to assert a separate identity.

The following section, 'Performing on the Urban Stage', moves within the city itself, with Katell Lavéant initially exploring the spaces in which drama was presented. At first, such drama appears to be less conflictual, however, as Catherine Emerson demonstrates, even within the city, drama is still a powerful political tool where the urban audience participates in the creation of the spectacle and, in so doing, actualizes an understanding of its position in the social hierarchy. Emerson draws attention to an extraordinary spectacle, staged by Burgundian statesmen and historiographers, whose paradoxical purpose is to remain concealed. Moreover, as Estelle Doudet reminds us, the chroniclers of the Burgundian court were not innocent in matters of dramatization: in addition to their poetic activities, they were also playwrights and dramatic producers for the spectacle of the court. Peter Happé then lays bare the mechanics of these techniques in his consideration of a fascinating set of stage directions. Happé is able to draw conclusions about how dramatic texts and their audiences were conceived. The following chapter, by Pascale Dumont, addresses a specific facet of dramaturgy, namely the movement of characters on the stage (and off the stage) and the way in which characters move when they are not directly implicated in the action. As with all the chapters in this section, questions of control are to the fore: the extent to which the playwright and/or the *metteur en scène* might control the actions of characters is a constant, as are considerations of the reactions of the audience who may also function as participants in the spectacle.

The essays in the third section, 'Re-writing the Religious', all deal with transference and transferral in religious drama. Pamela King describes the way in which liturgical texts were adapted by English playwrights without, perhaps paradoxically, the new dramatic and performance elements significantly impacting on the static liturgical character of the text. The author persuasively argues that emotional contact with the audience was established through the use of iconographic language and implicit reference

to pre-existing interpretations of the events and liturgy of Holy Week. Jane Tolmie, on the other hand, demonstrates how emotional responses to everyday events can shape interpretations of biblical narrative. The pre-marital pregnancy of the Virgin is treated as if it were taking place in the medieval city, and this brings out the extent to which the Bible story is scandalous and alive. Scandal within the medieval city is also the focus of Francesc Massip and Lenke Kovàcs's chapter, which follows. Whereas much attention has been given to the brutality of the tortures depicted in Saints' plays, the fragmentary nature of the Catalan St Agatha emphasizes the cruelty of the on-stage action (the attempts to coerce the heroine into sexual enslavement). The presentation here of an English translation of this work makes this adaptation of the *Legenda Aurea* available to a comparatist audience for the first time, enabling scholars to examine the ways in which the relatively static narrative is brought to life on the stage. Denis Hüe's discussion of the depiction of animals on stage examines the question of animation from a different angle: the animals described by Hüe cannot be represented by actual creatures, which cannot be sufficiently controlled, but they must be capable of realistic bodily functions, for example breathing over the infant Jesus. Once again, we are reminded that generic frontiers are porous, that religious texts are imbued with motifs taken from secular life and, as Philip Crispin's chapter underlines, even the most ostensibly secular texts – *sotties* – were inextricably bound up with religious teaching and political and civic order and morality. The next two chapters, by Elsa Strietman and Alan Knight, discuss plays which would more conventionally be regarded as morality plays proper, both preserved in texts from North-Western Europe (Lille and most probably Bruges) but engaging with religious tradition in very different ways. One is a sixteenth-century elaboration of a scriptural narrative while the other, probably written at the end of the fifteenth century, takes as its material wider Christian tradition. In this difference we see the influence of the ideas of the Reformation, and a dynamic re-adaption of traditional tropes to a changed ideological landscape.

The final section, 'Recording, Adapting, Preserving', examines the ways in which dramatic tradition has been preserved and passed down to subsequent generations. In the first instance, this inevitably takes the form of a written record. Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès's opening chapter examines codicological evidence to interrogate generic understanding and to approach questions of oral and dramatic performance. Bruno Roy then traces textual evidence to demonstrate how the enactment of a particular

turn of phrase on the stage can throw light on a linguistic development. Proverbial expressions resurface in Olga Anna Duhl's chapter which follows. This chapter illustrates the way in which the written work is at one and the same time a record of a performance and a literary event in its own right, where the words on the page embody both the desire to preserve past performance and concern for posterity. Cynthia Brown's examination of editions and translations of Pierre Gringore's *Complainte de trop tard marié* demonstrates how printers working in different milieux took varying approaches to their debt to posterity, reflected in their use of paratextual material, especially illustration. The survival of narratives of host desecration discussed by Bob Clark demonstrates the way in which dramatic enactments of a controversial site of memory contribute to a multi-vocal posterity, in which each retelling of a story serves a different polemical purpose. As in Pauline Smith's examination of the *Satyre Ménippée*, medieval tropes find resonances in later political circumstances. The medieval city has left its legacy not only in its topography but also in the tales told to define contemporary political realities. The final two chapters of the volume trace some of the more recent developments of this tendency, examining revivals of medieval drama in the twentieth century. Véronique Dominguez reminds us that no attempt at preservation, however faithful to the original it aspires to be, can escape the contingencies of audience, performer and contemporary circumstance, while Adrian Tudor shows how this process itself illustrates the way in which analogous practical demands will also have impacted on the medieval performance. In reproducing Alan Hindley's own performance notes, Tudor shows the interest which that particular scholar has taken in the practical implications of presenting a medieval text (both to a modern audience and, by implication, to a medieval one). This reminds us of the attention that all scholars should pay to the elusive questions of staging which subtend so many of the contributions to this collection.

Conclusion

Contributors to this volume in honour of Alan Hindley were invited to reflect upon some or all aspects of the title of the volume in a geographical and scholarly area entirely chosen by them. To our knowledge no existing work attempts to bring together such a broad variety of interdisciplinary, innovative 'snapshots' from different geographical locations, time frames

and traditions. This is not a 'scattergun' approach but one acknowledging the fundamental mobility of medieval culture, and the interdisciplinarity of medieval studies which is largely taken for granted by scholars today. The result of these independent studies gathered around a central theme makes for compelling reading, in that no contributor has limited her/ himself to just one of the four key words in the title. Every essay, whatever the topic, rather than finding itself shoehorned into considering an arbitrary selection of terms ('performance', 'drama', 'spectacle', 'medieval city'), has actually (and quite naturally) reached out into the other core elements mentioned in the title of the book. Of course, the bringing together of these four concepts is not groundbreaking in itself, and medievalists of every specialism will not be surprised to find discussion of one of the 'keywords' flowing quite naturally into a consideration of the others. Our collective aim in honouring Alan Hindley and his ongoing work was to produce a set of variations on a theme rather than aspire to a convergence in the conclusions reached. This variety is evident in the wide geographical range of the drama scrutinised, in the types of drama studied, in the periods under examination, and in the theoretical and critical approaches taken by the contributors. A number of points do become immediately apparent. The end of the Middle Ages in no way denoted the end of medieval drama across Western Europe. Performance and spectacle played a fundamental role not only in the realm of entertainment but also adopted enormously important (and often unmentioned) civic and religious functions. The cities in the medieval west were not only a hotbed of cultural manifestations but were elemental in the development of most drama. However, whilst performance gave voice to words, in many ways the Word was and remains paramount. Hindley has emphasised the notion of 'community drama', drama necessarily being a communal act or one assuming the existence of a community[28]. In its refusal to accept subjective boundaries and its broad assumption that drama takes many forms and exists to be experienced, it hoped that the current volume will find favour with its dedicatee. Alan Hindley's interests include the early period but also reach well into the sixteenth century (not to say the twenty-first). His work is frequently driven by the dual practicalities of editing and staging. Most important, he is never happier than when introducing the 'less sexy' areas of drama and performance – such as *moralités* and *sotties* – to a modern listening public eager to be edified and entertained.

28. *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. Alan Hindley, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).