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The understanding of the devil in the “Macro Moralities”

To what extent do the “Macro Moralities” communicate a different understanding of the devil compared to other contemporary portrayals of the devil on the eve of Reformation?

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The fifteenth century *Macro Moralities* are to be recognised as morality plays that are allegorical in structure, its purpose is the teaching of some lessons for the guidance of life and in which the main characters are highly universalized types or personified abstractions.¹ In these plays teaching morals is done by portraying the influences of good and evil on Mankind's life, often evil is portrayed as sinning which is driven by the devil, therefore one could argue a role of the devil in the plays is to teach morality. However, there is more to the devil's character, for in most of the morality plays his dialogue and actions are staged in a humorous way, furthermore Morgan Matos identifies the devil's role as 'crowd pleaser'.² In the fifteenth century a shift is to be observed from plays predominantly being influenced and conducted by the church to plays designed partly by the laity and including secular elements, this also influenced the portrayal of the devil, which makes the *Macro Plays* originating from that period an interesting source for researching the devil's portrayal.³ The study has pointed out that the *Macro Moralities* with regard to its comical devil and portrayal of the devil's way of approaching Mankind and the audience communicate quite a different understanding of the devil compared to the observed contemporary sources. I will begin by elaborating on the morality play genre after which background information on the *Macro Plays* will be given, followed by an analysis on the portrayal of devil in the plays and some contemporary sources.

During the Medieval period in Europe three kinds of vernacular drama were performed, which were often referred to as being part of the same vernacular drama: the miracle play, the mystery play and the morality play. Matos nevertheless argues that the morality play is a genre on its own and differs significantly, although he points out as well that 'the later success of morality plays can be attributed to the cycle plays and their long-term effect on audiences'.⁴ While researching the morality plays it is important to be aware of the fact that the dramatic ideas within the collection of medieval plays varies widely, especially within the morality plays. Each play has a different style, scope and stage effect, as pointed out by W.A. Davenport. To form an understanding of the English morality plays of the fifteenth century, Clifford Davidson states that the *Macro Plays* are the most important source we have, although we do not know how widely these plays were distributed. Furthermore Davenport uses these plays to show how unstable this genre is.⁵ According to Edgar Schell and J.D. Shuchter it is hard to tell how morality drama developed and they point out that it is likewise difficult to know whether the surviving texts represent the actual corpus of plays. Even more it is important to point out that the

¹ W. Roy Mackenzie, *The English Moralities from the Point of View of Allegory*, Harvard Studies in English, volume II (New York, 1966), 9.

² Morgan Matos, 'The Satanic Phenomenon: Medieval Representations of Satan', *Masters of Liberal Studies Theses*, 28 (2011), 69-70.

³ Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 53, 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵ Clifford Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life : medieval iconography and the Macro morality plays* (New York, 1989), 2. And W.A. Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama: The Early Moral Plays and Their Literary Relations* (Cambridge, 1982), 2-3.

morality genre is artificial; nobody would have distinguished these plays as belonging to a distinct 'morality genre' in the Middle Ages. The characteristics identified as belonging to the morality genre originate from the eighteenth century, when critics set out the criteria for defining the genre of morality plays. According to them, these moral plays bridged 'the gap between allegedly inferior biblical drama produced by "rude mechanicals" and the high art of the Elizabethans' and therefore had to be characterized as a genre of its own.⁶ However, nowadays 'morality plays' are broadly recognised as a distinctive genre, especially compared to the former mystery and saints plays. Therefore I shall start by comparing these genres, after which I will elaborate on the purpose of the morality plays and the role of the devil in it.

John Payne Collier, the first scholar to study the *Macro Plays*, drew a connection between different kinds of medieval plays. He suggested that emblematic figures in the morality plays had evolved from abstract impersonations that had found their way into miracle plays.⁷ In contrast to most scholars, Collier explains the origin of the morality genre within the context of a successive dramatic development.⁸ Davenport, in identifying three types of didactic dramas – *mystery plays*, *saints' plays* and *morality plays* – nevertheless argues that it is important to point out both differences and similarities. For -according to him- they should not be viewed as an unfolding of successive dramatic development.⁹ In terms of the plays' formation, Matos points out that the content of the cycle plays was predominantly directed by the Church. In contrast to the morality plays on which the laity was able to exercise its influence, this becomes apparent from the use of more secular elements.¹⁰ David Bevington also emphasises the difference of the morality plays from the cycles and saints' plays for they had no precedents in earlier church drama as Matos points out, there is little connection between the morality play and early liturgical drama, therefore they both claim it was a new genre in the fourteenth century.¹¹

The morality genre is distinctive as well for its ability to transcend criticism and 'adaptability to new ideologies and secular socio-cultural conditions', when cycles and saints' plays by the late fourteenth century were critically examined by the churches of the reformation.¹² A shift in focus from the collective history of all men, portrayed in the mystery plays, to a story of the individual Christian in the morality plays is to be observed, according to Matos to make the play more relatable because the morality plays needed to serve the secular element of being entertaining, as well.¹³ Despite the fact that morality plays included secular issues, strong religious themes are nevertheless ever present, for the plays always end with some form of salvation.¹⁴ According to Davidson, the purpose of morality plays with regard to the *Macro Plays* is to be identified, as allegorical and emblematic and therefore

⁶ Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 4.

⁷ Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 1-2.

⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 69, 70.

¹¹ Ibid., 54. And David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston, 1975), 791.

¹² Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 54.

¹³ Ibid., 69-70.

¹⁴ Edgar Schell and J.D. Shuchter, *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes* (New York, 1969), vii.

ultimately as didactic.¹⁵ However, Davenport and Bevington point out that during the Reformation in the sixteenth century morality plays were used for political and religious propaganda both by Protestants and Catholics promoting political, sectarian or broadly social salvation.¹⁶ The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries morality plays focus on religious salvation, this is similar to the cycle plays in which historical events are interpreted from a thoroughly Christian perspective. The timespan covered in the cycle plays differs from the morality plays as well. The former contain the complete account from Creation to the Last Judgment in which the central figure is Christ. For as in the morality plays, Mankind is the central figure therefore its timespan is limited to an individual human life.¹⁷ The saints' plays have a similar timespan for the life of one saint is portrayed. Schell and Shuchter state that the roots of the morality plays lie in the sermons of medieval preachers, for they observe a close relationship between sermon literature and morality drama.¹⁸ According to them 'morality plays are *sermones corporei*, embodied sermons aimed without equivocation or evasion at the moral betterment of their audiences'.¹⁹ All in all Bevington argues that mystery, saints' and morality plays might have influenced each other and that they show resemblances as well as differences, for scholars think the morality plays emerged in the fourteenth century more or less at the same time as saints' plays and the great cycles.²⁰

Within the morality genre able of adapting to new ideologies by deviating from the exclusively biblical narrative, the devil's portrayal had to be reshaped as well according to Matos. He conducted a study of the medieval representation of the devil and states that his portrayal was eventually separated from the purely biblical narrative and thereby was able to reshape the view of sin, evil and temptation into more personal and relevant terms in the fifteenth century. The *Macro Moralities* originate from that period in which the devil's portrayal was reshaped as well, which makes them interesting for researching the devil's understanding in addition the devil is a significant figure in these plays as well.²¹ Compared to didactic dramas, similarities are recognizable with regard to the use of allegories like the Seven Deadly Sins for the portrayal of the devil.²² The battle between the devil and God is a recurring subject as well, though the use of more secular elements in the morality plays is different - for example the use of vulgarity and violence- to characterise the devil, which Matos attributes to the influence of the medieval laity on the plays dramatic content.²³ According to Matos, the entertaining aspect of the devil in combination with the traditional Catholic representation and secular elements shaped the medieval understanding of the devil, 'who had become a two-fold character closely resembling the dual faces of drama, the masks of comedy and tragedy'.²⁴ The devil resembled comedy

¹⁵ Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 5.

¹⁶ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, vii. And Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 795.

¹⁷ Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 4.

¹⁸ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, x.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vi-vii.

²⁰ Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 791.

²¹ Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 2. And Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 2-3.

²² Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 53, 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

through his humorous deeds for example in tricking Mankind, his dialogue of vulgarity and mocking, though he resembles tragedy as well for his actions led to the damnation of Mankind.

Quite a number of scholars have studied the portrayal and role of the devil in English mystery plays. In 1994, John Cox completed a study on the social role of the devil in mystery plays. William Marx followed this in 1995 with a discussion about the religious social role of the devil, and the question whether the devil portrays an abuse of power in the mystery cycles, building upon the ‘abuse-of-power theory’, introduced by Timothy Fry in 1951. However, with regard to morality plays the amount of scholars that have studied the devil’s portrayal and role is distinctly smaller. Furthermore the portrayal of the devil is most often solely studied within the context of the play. Therefore I believe a comparative study between the morality plays and other contemporary sources from which an understanding of the devil becomes clear would be an enrichment to the historiographical debate about the portrayal of the devil.

The Macro Plays

The three plays discussed here derive from the *Macro Moralities*, preserved in a collection by Cox Macro. There is a theory that all of them were owned by the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds. However, Bury St. Edmunds shows no significant record of any dramatic production of morality plays.²⁵ Records of the early performances of these plays are generally absent. It is therefore hard to localize early performances and to obtain a good understanding of the regional conditions of their presentations and how they might have circulated. In addition, Davenport points out that morality plays were often non-recurrent, because of their ‘topical and local allusions’ in contrast to the cycles that were annually performed and therefore often revised.²⁶ This does not seem applicable to the *Macro Plays*, for they are all about Mankind’s soul, a much discussed topic in the Middle Ages. It is impossible therefore to place the plays in a concrete geographical context and to point out how widely they circulated. It is nevertheless worth exploring their contents, because Davidson whom identifies the *Macro Plays* as the most important source for English fifteenth century morality plays, confirms that blank spaces appear into which would be inserted the names of towns; this has been interpreted as evidence they were traveling plays furthermore Mark Eccles identifies Mankind as one of the most popular plays of the fifteenth century.²⁷ Firstly I will discuss the content, origin and context of each play, which will be followed by an analysis on the understanding of the devil in each play.

The *Castle of Perseverance* was composed between 1400 and 1425 and is therefore the earliest English morality play to survive almost intact.²⁸ The play is about the battle between good and

²⁵ Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 2-3.

²⁶ Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 2.

²⁷ Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 3. And Mark Eccles, *The Macro Plays. The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*. (Oxford, 1969), xlv.

²⁸ Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, x.

evil powers for the soul of Mankind. Evil persuades Mankind into becoming rich and lord-like, which results in much sinful behaviour. After a while the Virtues guide him towards confession and absolution and protect him against the Devil and the Flesh.²⁹ The soul of Mankind forms the centre of the play for which opposing camps fight for example the Good/Bad Angel, the seven Cardinal Virtues/Deadly Sins.³⁰ Schell describes it as a play in which ‘the whole course of man’s moral life is delineated, his youthful inclination toward worldly pleasure and toward sin, his return to virtue in maturity, his lapse back into sin with the coming of age, and finally his salvation’.³¹ *The Castle* is the longest play in the *Macro Plays* its thorough way of describing the course of Man’s moral life, strong biblical narrative and scarcity of humour shows of the three plays the strongest similarities with the mystery plays, this is to be explained by its early composition.

Wisdom was presumably written between 1465 and 1470. It has the same theme as *The Castle*, namely a battle between good and evil over Mankind’s soul, although the struggle is now solely between Christ and Lucifer, ‘a clear conflict between white and black’.³² The play’s structure is different as well. It starts and finishes as a sermon, telling the audience that everyone’s soul is black from sin but could become white by knowing God. The character of Mankind is presented differently namely in the Three Might; Mind, Understanding and Will. According to Christian and Aristotelian psychology these are the faculties of the human personality.³³ Lucifer tempts the Three Might with friendly advice and persuades them into pride, covetousness and lechery. *Wisdom* shows them what they did to Anima, the soul, whereupon they repent. The play ends with Anima who rejoices that she is freed from sin through Jesus.³⁴ Eccles points out that the play consists of four scenes: Innocence, Temptation, Sinful Life and Repentance. According to Schell this recognises the play’s concern with theology, however, this becomes throughout the play more evident from dialogues between *Wisdom* and Lucifer competing for Mankind’s soul.³⁵

Mankind was likewise presumably written between 1465 and 1470. It is especially designed for an ‘itinerant troupe’, and is therefore a play that would have been performed in different places. As a result, this play is much shorter than, for example, *The Castle*. For this purpose, the typical soul-struggle plot was shortened and slapstick comedy was added.³⁶ Davenport points out that it contains considerable mockery of virtue and is therefore often described as a degenerate play appealing to the preferences of a more secular audience: an example of medieval comedy.³⁷ This play is about repentance, for God will show mercy. Mankind is struggling to cope with all the frustration of his farming existence and the devil tries to lead him away from the moral life by constantly testing his patience. When Mankind is about to hang himself, Mercy rescues him and guides him to confession

²⁹ Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, xxiv-xxv.

³⁰ Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 796-797.

³¹ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, vii-viii.

³² Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, xxxv.

³³ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, xvii.

³⁴ Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, xxxv-xxxvi.

³⁵ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, xvii.

³⁶ Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 901.

³⁷ Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 3-4.

and forgiveness.³⁸ Eccles concludes that the author had a serious didactical purpose and to achieve this goal he used lively humour and comic action, which made it one of the most popular plays of fifteenth century.³⁹

The understanding of the devil in the Macro Plays

The analysis of the *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Wisdom and Mankind* reveals the devil occupying a particular place in the cosmos. Each play mentions him as part of an anti-trinity: the World, the Flesh and the Devil, the traditional Three Enemies of Mankind.⁴⁰ David Klausner points out that the idea of an evil parallel to the Trinity was widespread, though the paradigm could differ. He suggests that the idea of anti-trinity may ultimately derive from the *Meditations* that circulated in the thirteenth century.⁴¹ In *The Castle*, the devil is referred to as Belial, derived from the 2 Corinthians 6:15. In Hebrew the term means ‘worthless’.⁴² Belial became a mythic personification of evil in late biblical times and thus Belial became the name of a satanic figure.⁴³ In *The Castle*, each enemy has a trio with them: their children. Belial’s children are Pride, Wrath and Envy, each part of the Seven Deadly Sins. The World has with him Pleasure, the Boy and Folly and the Flesh has with him Gluttony, Lechery, and Sloth. In *Mankind* multiple devil figures are present instead of one devil. With regard to the anti-trinity, the World is represented by ‘Newguise, Nowadays and Nought’ and Titivillus signifies ‘the fend of helle’ (the devil). The Flesh is not represented by a figure, but in general as ‘the unclean carnal desire’.⁴⁴ A certain hierarchical structure in *Mankind* of malice exists in which Mischief is the immediate superior of Nought, Nowadays and Newguise and Titivillus is the most powerful figure.⁴⁵ In *Wisdom* the three traditional enemies of Mankind are mentioned as well. The representatives of the devil’s sins are recognised to be Pride, Envy, and Wrath, similar to *The Castle*.⁴⁶ The emphasis in this play is on the three Mightes of Mankind: Mind, Understanding and Will. Lucifer explains that the Mind will fall to the devil’s sin of Pride, Understanding to Avarice or Covetousness (identified by Klausner as the principal sin of worldliness) and Will to Lechery (identified as the principal sin of the physical body).⁴⁷ It has become apparent that the devil in the *Macro Plays* is not a universal or unilateral figure

³⁸ Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, xliii-xliv.

³⁹ Ibid., xlv.

⁴⁰ *The Castle of Perseverance*, David N. Klausner, Robbins Library Digital Projects TEAMS Middle English Texts (Michigan, 2010), 29.

⁴¹ *Meditations*: in chapter 12 of the *Meditations* “De tribus inimicis hominis, carne, mundo, et diabolo” (“On the Three Enemies of Man, the Flesh, the World, and the Devil”). Falsely attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux *Two Moral Interludes: The Pride of Life and Wisdom*, David N. Klausner, Robbins Library Digital Projects TEAMS Middle English Texts (Michigan, 2008), 294.

⁴² Devorah Dimant, “Between Qumran Sectarian And Non-Sectarian Texts: The Case Of Belial And Mastema” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture* 93 (2011), 235-256, here 235.

⁴³ Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets, Part 2* (Grand Rapids, 1999), 46.

⁴⁴ *Mankind*, ed. Kathleen M. Ashley, Gerard NeCastro, Robbins Library Digital Projects TEAMS Middle English Texts (Michigan, 2010), 884-887.

⁴⁵ *Mankind* Ashley and NeCastro, p. 17-18 and line 895-896.

⁴⁶ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 691, 752.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 522.

for he is part of the anti-trinity (mutually connected) and expresses himself through multiple abstractions that differ according to the play.

Another similarity between the plays can be found in the final purpose of the devil, for in all the plays he urges for the destruction of Mankind, although his approach differs. In *Wisdom* Lucifer explains what brought him to his position. According to him, God had created Mankind to restore Lucifer's former place in heaven.⁴⁸ As Meekness points out in *The Castle*, Lucifer fell to hell because of pride.⁴⁹ Lucifer states in *Wisdom* that it will make him mad if Mankind ends up in heaven, and therefore he will sorely tempt Mankind, for he is the one who initiated Sin: 'For I am he that syn begane!'.⁵⁰ In tempting Mankind, Lucifer in *Wisdom* and Titivillus in *Mankind* make use of their worldly knowledge, which, according to Klausner, is a direct contrast to the wisdom represented by Christ.⁵¹ The devil's role is thereby opposite to God's role, though the devils simultaneously identify themselves or their minions with God for example Titivillus in *Mankind* is paralleled with God by being described as *omnipotens* and even more interesting the devils in *Mankind* and *Wisdom* use the Bible to deceive Mankind.⁵² For in *Wisdom* Lucifer 'will twist theological arguments to his own purpose'.⁵³ Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen point out that in *Mankind* the biblical messages are alternated by using 'mock Latin', often followed by a parodied exegesis. This was important for the comedy of the play as well.⁵⁴ Though 'mock Latin' is absent in *The Castle*, the devil's war speech does seem to include a level of obscenity, which served to entertain the audience as well.⁵⁵ In addition Kathleen Ashley and Gerard NeCastro point out that the devil figure Mischief in *Mankind* uses a more intimate and an informal style of discourse especially through the frequent usage of first person pronouns, this is imitated by Newguise, Nought, and Nowadays.⁵⁶ According to Ashley and NeCastro, this personal discourse is 'fundamental to the successful seduction of Mankind as it produces a false sense of camaraderie and belonging'.⁵⁷ It has become apparent that the devil's dialogue had an important role in amusing the audience, though Schell and Shuchter point out it is also embedded for homiletic aims, for 'the jokes are ultimately the vices themselves'.⁵⁸ The devil's position as part of the anti-trinity and destroyer of Mankind, as well as foil to God, is therefore clearly similar in each play.

Although the use of language and the general purpose of the devils and his minions are similar in each play, the relationship of the devil with Mankind nevertheless differs, especially the way in which the devil approaches Mankind. In *The Castle* Mankind is lured towards the devil by his Bad

⁴⁸ According to Klausner in plays it was often suggested 'that Mankind was created to fill the gap left when Satan and his horde of angels fell', for this occurs in the York Cycle and N-town plays as well. *Wisdom*, Klausner, 327-328.

⁴⁹ *Four cycle plays and The Castle of Perseverance*, Brian Stone and John Purkis, Medieval English Drama units 5-6 (St Albans, 1977), 2095-2099.

⁵⁰ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 324-332.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 324-332, 341-342. And *Everyman and Mankind*, Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen, Arden Early Modern Drama (London, 2009), 567-568, 572.

⁵² *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 516a. And *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 461.

⁵³ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 394.

⁵⁴ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 57-58.

⁵⁵ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Stone and Purkis, p. 77, 2198.

⁵⁶ *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 71.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, xv.

Angel. He is the one who interacts with Mankind and talks to him. In the play, it is pointed out that God has given every man a Good and a Bad Angel, though God has given Mankind a free will to save or destroy his soul.⁵⁹ Belial does not directly interact with Mankind, however, he goes to the Castle to retake Mankind and states that once Mankind is dead he will bind him in hell ‘as cat doth the mouse’.⁶⁰ For Belial says he is in great anxiety ‘Whyl Mankynd is in clene lyve I am nevere wel at ese’.⁶¹ Belial has a fairly passive position regarding the destruction of Mankind, compared to the Bad Angel who takes the most initiative. In *Mankind* Mischief has no direct interaction with Mankind at all. Mischief acknowledges his presence has been lacking and that he was unable to teach Mankind.⁶² At this point Titivillus is called in and tries to distract Mankind from his proper course through dialogue, by hanging a net before Mankind’s eyes and by sabotaging him while he is invisible.⁶³ Bruster and Rasmussen point out that the devil was traditionally ‘portrayed as trying to entrap mankind with a net’.⁶⁴ In addition Titivillus diverts Mankind from righteousness by making him feel the need to urinate and defecate while he was praying, portraying that the devil has gained control over Mankind’s body as well.⁶⁵ Lucifer intends to pervert Mankind’s soul by approaching the Three Mightys individually. In order for them to listen to his speech, he confuses Mankind’s mind and physically affects Mankind’s body and surroundings.⁶⁶ Titivillus and Lucifer’s approach of active interference is very different from the approach of Mischief, who chooses to wait, and the violent and ‘agitating’ approach of Belial, by which Mankind chooses himself to sin.⁶⁷ Some tactics of the devil and his minions show resemblances, for example Backbiter and Titivillus who are both recognized as collectors of idle words to use against Mankind. However, there are no identical figures and approaches present in the *Macro Plays*.⁶⁸

The devil’s physical approach to Mankind differs as well in each play. For example in *Wisdom*, Lucifer changes himself into brightness to tempt Mankind to his likeness for he realises his appearance will frighten him. He enters the stage in a ‘devellys aray without, and within as a prowde galonte’. Klausner explains this by arguing that the devil is disguised, for his devil’s costume covers a ‘gallant flamboyant clothing’, which makes him into a fashionable man.⁶⁹ Half way through the play the devil leaves the stage with his devil suit and ‘cummyth in ageyn as a goodly galont’.⁷⁰ Lucifer also advises Mind on his clothing, he ‘change that syde aray’ for a presumably shorter more fashionable

⁵⁹ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 18-20, 25-26.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 952.

⁶¹ Meaning: ‘He is never well at ease while Mankind lives a virtuous life’. *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 1899-1911.

⁶² *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 414-419.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 530. And *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 525-528.

⁶⁴ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 530.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 567-568, 572. And *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro 560.

⁶⁶ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 341-356, 377-380, 431, 451-456.

⁶⁷ ‘Agitating’ is derived from the Bible as well for Lucifer was already agitating when he first approached Eve. *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 226.

⁶⁸ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 301.

⁶⁹ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 324.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 380.

coat.⁷¹ This is different from Newguise's advice to Mankind to wear a long coat. As Klausner argues, 'a primary focus of anti-fashion satire in the fifteenth century was the short coat which provided little protection from the elements but displayed the wearer's attributes to advantage'.⁷² Klausner presumes that the shorter coat was probably more fashionable, which would display its wearer's taste for fashion. Titivillus in *Mankind* is described by Newguise as the man with a head that is of great omnipotence, which could imply both the size of his head and his power.⁷³ In folk plays a big head was typical of its characters, it was presumably literally a big head as part of a costume, though an explicit description is absent in *Mankind*.⁷⁴ Titivillus 'goes invisible' when approaching Mankind, which enables him to sabotage Mankind's farmland and to whisper lies about Mercy and sinful desires into Mankind's ear in order to make Mankind weary of his labour.⁷⁵ The stage description does not elaborate on how Titivillus 'goes invisible', though because Titivillus explicitly says he goes invisible and remains physically on stage, the actor playing Mankind will have acted as if he was unaware of Titivillus presence. In this, Titivillus 'foreshadows Shakespeare's Puck, Petruchio, and perhaps Falstaff, [and] is the "star" of the show for all of his trickery, wild dress, and humour'.⁷⁶ In *The Castle* Belial's appearance is presumably a theatrical experience of its own. He is described to be having 'gunpowder burning pipes in his hands and in his ears and in his arse when he goeth to battle'.⁷⁷ The gunpowder might indicate a special effect, though the play does not elaborate on that. It has become apparent that while the physical appearance of the devil differs in the three plays, in all of them, he is disguised to enable him to mislead Mankind, often in a humorous way. This comedy was most probably also used as 'theatrical bait' as well to make sure the audience would stay and hear the sermon, according to Schell.⁷⁸

Another theatrical device is evident in the devils interacting with the audience. In *Wisdom* Lucifer interacts with the audience by referring his speeches directly towards the audience. For example when he says 'her ys a wolffe in a lombys skyn!', this line could have been directed at a clerical member of the audience.⁷⁹ The play consists mainly of dialogues, though Lucifer has one striking action when 'he takyt a schrewede boy wyth hym and goth hys wey, cryenge'. Klausner points out that this boy could have been part of the acting company or he might have been a mischievous and annoying child from the audience. This abduction of an annoying child might have been intended as a warning to the audience of the devil's power over them.⁸⁰ In *Mankind* the Three N's are uniquely used for the collection of money, according to their own explanation the audience had to pay Titivillus for his

⁷¹ *Wisdom*, Klausner., 510.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 461.

⁷⁴ *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 461.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 593-604.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁷⁷ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Stone and Purkis, p. 77.

⁷⁸ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, ix.

⁷⁹ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 491.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 549.

services.⁸¹ Titivillus himself even involves the audience in the process of misleading Mankind, for he commissions them to keep silent after he has sabotaged Mankind's farmland and stolen multiple objects, after which he thanks them for doing so. Anne Brannen calls this 'the height of the audience involvement with evil'.⁸² In their interaction with the audience, the devils break the fourth wall, because this strongly intensified the theatrical experience and the relation between the figures and the audience, for the audience is involved in the play itself.

In *The Castle of Perseverance* interaction with the audience does not become apparent through dialogue, but through its stage planning of which the audience was a part. Richard Southern did a study on the theatre of *The Castle* and believes it was circular and had five scaffolds most probably with six areas where spectators could stand in the circular theatre.⁸³ As Brian Stone and John Purkis explain, such a theatre had an extraordinary potential for audience involvement, for the average distance of a spectator from the action was much smaller than in any other medieval theatre, in addition action happened 180 degrees round any spectator and for many even up to 310 degrees.⁸⁴ The separate stages also enabled hell and heaven to be simultaneously present, thus framing the events happening in the spiritual realm with that of the physical realm, which would have influenced the devil's role as well.⁸⁵ Because he is always visibly present on stage, it would become clear to the audience that the devil is constantly involved in human affairs. According to Stone and Purkis, the stage setting intensified the theatre experience and 'made it harder for anybody present to detach himself mentally or emotionally from the action'.⁸⁶ To a certain extent *Wisdom* and *Mankind* were capable of creating a similar theatrical experience.⁸⁷ This has to do with the way in which the plays acknowledged and involved the audience. There was no division between the stage and the auditorium, because the plays were performed in market squares, alongside churches or at street corners or in open fields.⁸⁸ This interaction with the audience could have strongly influenced the audience's understanding and experience of the devil. It is nevertheless important to bear in mind that we have no knowledge whether the plays were performed in accordance to the written text.

Throughout this analysis, it has become apparent that the devil cannot be observed as an individual in the plays for he is part of the anti-trinity and he expresses himself through abstractions as well.⁸⁹ Similarities are to be found in the ultimate purpose of the devil and his minions to lead Mankind to damnation, their informal and intimate dialogue and mockery of God, their disguised appearance and interaction with the audience. Though their behaviour and way of approaching Mankind is very different an awaiting approach opposed to a violent, 'agitating' and actively interfering approach and the devils physical appearance differ strongly as well. In the plays different

⁸¹ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 462 .

⁸² *Ibid.*, 539, 589, 604.

⁸³ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Stone and Purkis, 73, 74. And Richard Southern, *the Medieval Theatre in the Round. A Study of the Staging of the Castle of Perseverance and Related Matters* (London, 1975), 123.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸⁵ Matos , 'The Satanic Phenomenon', 43.

⁸⁶ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Stone and Purkis, 75.

⁸⁷ Schell and. Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, x.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 207, 948.

types of minions are present and their significance in misleading Mankind and ways of interacting with the audience is different as well. Audience interaction predominantly happens through dialogue and stage planning, though also by making the audience accomplice of the devils deeds as well.

The understanding of the devil compared to other contemporary portrayals of the devil

To gain an understanding of the representativeness of the versatile portrayals of the devils in the *Macro Plays*, it is worth examining them in context through a comparison with contemporary depictions and written sources. A significant characteristic of the devil in the *Macro Plays* is his place in the cosmos as opposite to God, which becomes especially apparent from his dialogue. John Velz has researched Satan's and his underlings discourse in Medieval Plays, among others the Chester Cycle and Paradise Lost, and describes it in general as: abrupt, scatological, earthly and adoxographic, praising the world of sin and hell.⁹⁰ Velz points out that adoxographic dialogue - in terms of praising an unpleasant idea- is a 'mirror image', for the devil inverses God's dialogue, as pointed out before. This derives from the medieval view of the devil as God's adversary, the etymology of the devil's name in Hebrew.⁹¹ For Lucifer says in *Wisdom* to the Three Knights in Latin 'why do you stand the whole day here in idleness?' ironically, for this verse from Matthew 20:6, points out that the state of idleness is a sinful state that belongs to the devil.⁹² Lucifer uses these Bible passages to cleverly support his argument. Lucifer portrays himself also as the adversary of God, by devoting himself to making sure Mankind will not dwell in heaven. In addition his use of worldly knowledge is in direct contrast to the wisdom represented by Christ, as mentioned earlier.⁹³ Titivillus in *Mankind* portrays himself similarly by stating his aim is to distract Mankind from his proper course: 'I shall make hym to dawnce another trace'.⁹⁴ An inversion of God's dialogue is also recognizable in Titivillus' opening speech: 'Ego sum dominancium dominus and my name ys Titivillus', in which he calls himself Lord of Lords.⁹⁵ Ashley and NeCastro point out the irony in him saying he is the Lord of Lords, for in the Bible this refers to God and not to a devil.⁹⁶ In *Mankind* adoxography also becomes apparent when Mercy asks Mischief to leave 'in God's name', whereupon Mischief responds by saying he will stay because Mercy did not invoke him '*in the devylls name*', an inversion of the typical oath.⁹⁷ The use of adoxography is evident in Lucifer's speeches, which aim to pervert 'the flesche of man'.⁹⁸ He makes sinful suggestions to Mind, brings pleasure to Understanding, and makes Will conform to sin.⁹⁹ Lucifer nevertheless makes it appear to Mankind 'that perfection is sin and prove virtue to be

⁹⁰ John W. Velz, 'Adoxography as a mode of Discourse for Satan and his Underlings in Medieval Plays', in: Clifford Davidson (red.), *The Dramatic Tradition of the Middle Ages* (New York, 2005), 98-108, here 98.

⁹¹ Velz, 'Adoxography as a mode of Discourse', 104-105.

⁹² *Wisdom*, Klausner, 394

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 341-342.

⁹⁴ *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 525-528.

⁹⁵ Bible: Deuteronomy 10:17, Revelation 19:16.

⁹⁶ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 475.

⁹⁷ *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 70.

⁹⁸ *Wisdom*, Klausner 357-372.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 357-372.

wickedness' in order to 'pervert all things under false pretences', for he will never rest until he has defiled Mankind's soul.¹⁰⁰

The use of adoxography as identified in the *Macro Plays* appears in line with contemporary perceptions of the devil found in other related sources. Another source to look at in respect to the devil's dialogue is 'The Devils' Parliament', a fifteenth-century Middle English poem.¹⁰¹ The poem is about the devil's ignorance of the identity and nature of Jesus as Christ and takes the form of a debate between Christ and the devil. The beginning of the devil's revenge-plot against Christ is to be traced back to the N-Town play that treated temptation in the conventional way, by elaborating on the devil's attempt to tempt Christ for example by suggesting to him to make stones into bread.¹⁰² The poem is a didactic text deriving from Latin writing and Middle English Drama.¹⁰³ The poem was read aloud on a specific day in the Church's liturgical year and thereby meant for public presentation. The devil's narrative is presented as expressing frustration with Christ and ignorance of Christ, his nature and identity. Similarly to the *Macro Plays*, the devil's dialogue is a first-person narrative, though different in purpose for it was, according to Marx, intended to dramatize the devil's frustration instead of creating a false sense of camaraderie as Mischief did in *Mankind*.¹⁰⁴ Just like in the *Macro Plays* the devil is perceived here as a comic figure, though not because of his 'Mock Latin' or actions, but because he is being presented as a narrator who becomes the victim of his own plot because he fails to discover the identity of Christ. Marx points out that the devil's role was to reinforce Christian orthodoxy. However, the audience was responsible for interpreting the narrative correctly in what he refers to as 'vernacular theology'. We find a similar situation in the *Macro Plays*, for the plays show the devil tempting Mankind, Mankind enjoying sin and eventually being led to damnation, though the plays do not explicitly point out all the dangers the devil presents; the audience has to observe these themselves.

Contemporary sermons seem to include a more straightforward warning of the devil than the *Macro Plays*. Here, little is left to interpret.¹⁰⁵ This can be seen for example in the fifteenth-century English macaronic sermons manuscript copied by an 'anonymous' scribe. Several references identify the anonymous scribe as Benedictine, who associates himself with Oxford University, presumably a student or faculty member. At the Benedictine abbey of St. Peter's in Gloucester, the MS Bodley 649 a compilation of several sermon booklets was bound. The sermons are attributed to John Swetstock, though nothing further of him is known.¹⁰⁶ These sermons are linguistically-mixed in that they consist of a mixture between Latin and English. They represent, according to Patrick Horner, a 'large corpus

¹⁰⁰ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 377-380.

¹⁰¹ William Marx, 'The Devil as Narrator of the Life of Christ and the Sermo Literarius', in: Martha W. Driver and Veronica O'Mara (red.), *Preaching the Word in Manuscript and Print in Late Medieval England*, 63-78, here 63.

¹⁰² Marx, 'The Devil as Narrator of the Life of Christ', 69.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 63-65.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 75, 77.

¹⁰⁶ *A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England*, Patrick J. Horner, Oxford MS Bodley 649 (Toronto, 2006), 4.

of ‘modern’ and ‘university’ sermons, for they follow the structural and rhetorical principles laid out in the *artes praedicandi*, the handbooks of homiletics developed in the later Middle Ages’ and include many anti-Lollards remarks with specific references to King Henry V.¹⁰⁷ The sermons were according to Horner intended for a clerical and lay audience at once, for in the sermons it becomes apparent that he is shifting between registers.¹⁰⁸ In the fifth sermon, the danger of the devil is made clear: ‘the demon of hell... opposes man and utterly destroys him’.¹⁰⁹ In another sermon in the same collection is pointed out that ‘the human race willingly submits itself to the demon, so the tyrant of hell is pleased and loved’.¹¹⁰ In addition the devil is always alert to human misery, whereupon Mankind is warned for the devil leading him into ‘wanhope and despair ... prepared to perish and to lose *oneself*, bound in chains and let about by demons’.¹¹¹ Mankind is warned in the sermon as well against witches, wizards and fortune-telling, ‘for it is nothing but a trick or a deception of the demon for blinding men, for drawing them to sacrilege and eternal damnation’.¹¹² The role of the devil of leading Mankind into damnation in the sermons is similar to its role in the *Macro Plays*. A difference is nevertheless observable in the description of the devil, for the sermons’ understanding is predominantly based upon Bible quotations and references. For example, the desire of sinning and submitting to the devil is explained with regard to Adam eating the forbidden fruit, i.e. original sin.¹¹³ In the *Macro Plays* biblical references are present, but the devil is separated from the purely biblical narrative, which becomes apparent from the devil’s comical characteristics in the plays, that reshaped the view of sin, evil and temptation into more personal and relevant terms.¹¹⁴ An interesting new insight is the understanding of the devil represented through witchcraft. This connection is completely absent in the *Macro Plays*, which shows, something Marx had already pointed out, that medieval sermons straightforwardly warned people about the everyday appearances of the devil.¹¹⁵

Another important aspect of the devil’s representation is his relationship with Mankind, and the way in which he approaches Mankind. The analysis of the *Macro Plays* has shown that the devil often disguises himself and uses adoxography ‘in order to tempt Mankind to his likeness’.¹¹⁶ The sermons describe a similar approach to Mankind, in which the devil ‘flattered him with nice words’, promises ‘you will have wisdom and discretion just as the gods themselves’, uses tricks or treachery’ and ‘a feigned kind of appearance’.¹¹⁷ This description of the devil is derived from Genesis 3:1-5, in which the devil is disguised as a serpent and tempts Eve with worldly knowledge by promising: ‘the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’.

¹⁰⁷ *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, Horner, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 140, 142.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 140, 142.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 144

¹¹⁴ Matos, ‘Medieval Representations of Satan’, 53.

¹¹⁵ Marx, ‘The Devil as Narrator’, 75, 77.

¹¹⁶ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 341-356, 377-380, 431, 451-456.

¹¹⁷ *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, Horner, 134.

In addition to the devil's feigned kind of appearance through his dialogue of adoxography, the devil also physically disguises himself. We have seen that in the *Macro Plays* the devil disguises himself in multiple ways, for example by dressing fashionably, which will be compared to contemporary depictions. Joyce Coleman points out that in early manuscripts, devils are barely depicted for mainly divine figures, patrons and scribes are presented.¹¹⁸ Jeffrey Russell's studied the representation of Lucifer in High Medieval Art Literature and states the theology of the devil 'went through several movements of decline and revival in the central and late Middle Ages'.¹¹⁹ Until the eleventh century the devil was portrayed as a black human or imp. However, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the combination of free-will nominalism and the many famines and plagues created in much of later medieval art and literature an understanding of the devil as an intensely threatening figure and he was portrayed as a monstrous composite of animal and human.¹²⁰ The Luttrell psalter, commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell a lord of Irnham in Lincolnshire, includes an early fourteenth-century depiction of the devil looking like an animal with a face on his belly. It depicts the story of how Dunstan nipped the devil by the nose, which became a popular legend in England (see figure one). However, Russell points out that the devil's shape also depended on the materials that were used and the skills of the artist, for a human or quasi-human was easier to portray.¹²¹

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 'the grotesque was brought to artistic heights'.¹²² In this new artistic movement, the devil was portrayed with horns on his ankles, knees, or calves and with faces on his belly, buttocks or chest reflecting Lucifer's inner moral monstrosity.¹²³ An example of this is found in the translated version of the Latin *Meditations on the Life of Christ* by Nicholas Love in his manuscript *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* from ca. 1400 for the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel. Michelle Karnes points out that this manuscript was widely known for it was published ten times in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and we have many remaining copies. Although it was presumably intended mainly for a scholarly audience, judging from the theological discussions that are included, however, they are written in the vernacular which would have made it accessible to a larger audience.¹²⁴ *The Temptation of Christ by the Devil* depicts all three temptations of Christ, at the bottom the devil speaks the words from Matthew's gospel in which he tempts Christ to turn stone into bread.¹²⁵ In the middle of the depiction Christ appears at the top of the church and the devil stands below him, when he tempts Christ to cast himself down for the angels would catch him.¹²⁶ At the top of the depiction, Christ is standing at the summit of a high mountain in order for

¹¹⁸ Joyce Coleman, 'The First Presentation Miniature in an English-Language Manuscript', in: Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse and Kathryn A. Smith, *The Social Life of Illumination. Manuscripts, Images and Communities in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013), 403-437, here 403.

¹¹⁹ Jeffrey B. Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1984), 208.

¹²⁰ Russell, *Lucifer*, 208-209.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 210.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, meditation, and cognition in the Middle Ages*, (Chicago, 2011), 212.

¹²⁵ Clifford Davidson, *Deliver Us from Evil: Essays on Symbolic Engagement in Early Drama* (New York, 2004), 66.

¹²⁶ Davidson, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 66.

everyone to observe the devil offering him power over the entire world if he would do an act of worship to him. It shows the temptation unto evil ‘with the veil of illusion stripped away’, for the devil is depicted as a frightfully ugly figure, evil is presented in its own form: unattractive in the extreme.¹²⁷ In this, it is closely connected with the temptation of Mankind for it represents Jesus who shares the same feeling and fears of the temptations of the devil that afflict all of Mankind.¹²⁸ The temptation of Christ is of astounding importance according to Davidson, though there are not many depictions for this was normally not an obligatory scene in the iconography of the parish church.¹²⁹ The devil is represented in this image with a hairy pelt, a tail, bat wings, webbed feet and horns (see figure two), which is very different from the devil’s appearances in the *Macro Plays*, though the devil’s representation of promising power to the ones who would worship him is similarly found in the *Macro Plays*.

Yet another depiction of the devil in a contemporary source comes from the *Ars Moriendi*, an instruction manual on the art of dying, written within the context of the Black Death sixty years before. It was very popular and translated into multiple languages; the original version is from 1415 and was composed by an anonymous Dominican friar, most probably at the request of the German Council of Constance. Around 1450 the *Ars Moriendi* included wooden engravings by the Master E. S., an unidentified German engraver, printmaker and goldsmith. The allegorical images depicting the good and evil sources debating over Mankind’s soul, served the same purpose as images in churches to remember easily a biblical message. It remains hard to determine its audience, for it was translated into many European languages and had many copies, though the manuscript was presumably predominantly in the possession of churches, monasteries and a (scholarly) elite, for manuscripts were very expensive. However, its popularity makes it very likely that the manuscript and depictions were discussed in church services as well. The devilish figures in the wooden engravings are similar to the devil on ‘*The Temptation of Christ by the Devil*’, with wings, horns and hair. However, they represent particular sins as well, namely the vices Vanity and Avarice (see figure three and four). In the depiction of Vanity, the fourth temptation, Mankind is surrounded by Christ, the Virgin and God looking on as devils bring crowns to his deathbed.¹³⁰ Avarice, the fifth temptation, is depicted as Mankind laying on his deathbed surrounded by devils, at the bottom a man is depicted with a large house and a horse that most probably represents the dying man himself and at upper left his false friends are depicted who intent on inheriting his possessions.¹³¹ These devilish figures depicting particular sins are also present in the *Macro Plays*. Vanity, for example, can be recognised as Pride in *The Castle of Perseverance* and in *Wisdom* Lucifer says he will tempt Understanding with

¹²⁷ Davidson, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 65

¹²⁸ Ibid., 66.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ British Museum, ‘Collection Online *Ars moriendi* illustrations’

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1459851&partId=1&searchText=ars+moriendi&object=23884&page=1 [April 2017]

¹³¹ British Museum, ‘Collection Online, *Ars moriendi* illustrations’

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1459757&partId=1&from=ad&fromDate=1400&toDate=1500&object=23884&page=3 [April 2017]

Avarice. This shows a similar understanding in the *Ars Moriendi* and the *Macro Plays* of the devil tempting Mankind through abstractions as Avarice and Vanity.

Shortly after, in the fifteenth century Dieric Bouts and Hieronymus Bosch amongst others brought the grotesque of the devil to artistic heights.¹³² Hieronymus Bosch, a Dutch painter, depicted the devil and his minions both in the more traditional way with wings and horns, similar to Dieric Bouts, and in a new way, in which the devils consist of multiple different body parts and objects. In *The Garden of Earthly Delights* the devil is recognised in the bird-headed figure, for it is the largest and most prominent (see figures five, six and seven). The patrons of Bosch were predominantly of Dutch or Belgium origin, merchants, clergy, Dukes and some members of the order of the Golden Fleece. According to Russell, Bosch portrays the psychology of the unconscious and makes also a moral statement, for he portrays the world as a mirror of hell. This is in accordance with the medieval didactic tradition of art and also with the critique of scandalous behaviour of priests as expressed by people like Erasmus.¹³³ The depictions of the devil's minions in the images are often similar to the portrayals of the devil, for Russell points out as well that representing the precise theological difference between demons and the devil in art is difficult, therefore 'the amalgamation of the two is common'.¹³⁴ The *Macro Plays*, however, do not elaborate on the physical representation of the devil's minions, although their behaviour is similar to the devil in terms of dialogue and tempting of Mankind. Although the depictions originate from different geographical areas, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and the *Ars Moriendi* were widespread, whereas for the Dutch and Flemish paintings it is a bit more difficult to indicate how well-known their paintings were. We do know that the artists had pupils from foreign nations, who spread their master's techniques and iconographies. The first written account on Bosch's paintings is from his Spanish pupil Felipe de Guevara.¹³⁵ All of the depictions of the devil and his minions nevertheless show a predominantly physical 'horrific' appearance when approaching Mankind. Very different to the devils in the *Macro Plays*, in which the devil was usually disguised into a more pleasant appearance in order to mislead Mankind and often in a humorous way, which is seemingly unique compared to other contemporary portrayals.¹³⁶ One could argue in Bosch's way of mirroring the world to hell by depicting deformed figures that supposedly represent priests as well is a form of mocking and to some extent humour, though it is hard to say whether this entertained the audience in a similar way as the plays did. Davidson points out that 'showing Satan in lay or clerical disguise in the illustrated temptation scenes would only come into fashion in the sixteenth century'.¹³⁷ However, the *Macro plays* were already written in the fifteenth century, leading to the potential conclusion that their representation of the devil was unique when compared to visual art of the same period.

¹³² Russell, *Lucifer*, 209.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Walter Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York, 1973), 9.

¹³⁶ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 324.

¹³⁷ Davidson, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 65.



1. Dunstan and the devil (1325-1340). In *Luttrell Psalter*, British Library, MS 42130, f. 54v.



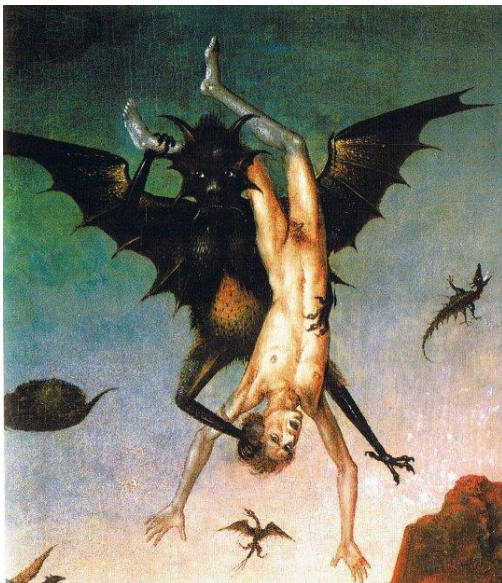
2. The Temptation of Christ by the Devil (ca. 1400). Manuscript illumination, Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, National Library of Scotland, MS. Advocates 18.1.7, fol. 49.



3. Vanity, the fourth temptation (ca. 1450). Manuscript illumination in *Ars Moriendi*. British Museum, MN 1845,0809.468.



4. Avarice, the fifth temptation (ca. 1500) Manuscript illumination in *Ars Moriendi*. British Museum, MN 1845,0809.463.



5. The Fall of the Damned (circa 1450). An oil on wood Christian religious-themed painting by Dieric Bouts, an Early Netherlandish artist. Currently in Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille.



6. Fragment of The Garden of Earthly Delights (1495-1505). A triptych painted by Hieronymus Bosch, an early Netherlandish artist. Currently at the Museo del Prado in Madrid.



7. Fragment of Hell, (ca.1490). Part of a panel, series of four, the others are *Ascent of the Blessed*, *Terrestrial Paradise* and *Fall of the Damned into Hell*. Painted by Hieronymus Bosch. Currently in the Palazzo Ducale, in Venice, Italy

Concluding remarks

In addition to comparing contemporary sources to receive an understanding of the differences and similarities in the portrayal of the devil in the *Macro Plays*, the analysis also gives an insight in the understanding of the relation between the devil and Mankind of the fifteenth century society. All three plays share the important aspect that defines the devil's relationship with Mankind namely his reason for approaching Mankind, to bring him to damnation. By approaching Mankind with a feigned appearance and using trickery, this indicates a relationship in which Mankind is to be perceived more as a victim being harassed by the devil rather than someone with agency equally aware of what is going on and able to respond accordingly.¹³⁸ However, the agency of Mankind in the *Macro Plays* differs depending upon the extent to which the devil uses trickery and has a feigned appearance. For example in *Mankind* Titivillus goes invisible when he is sabotaging Mankind and gains control over his body as well, which indicates a situation in which Mankind has almost no agency, in contrast to *The Castle of Perseverance* in which the devil figures mainly tricks Mankind with earthly promises, giving Mankind the agency to decide to sin himself.

Another aspect indicating Mankind's agency is the way of communicating with the devil, for in *The Castle* Mankind never directly speaks with the devil, though Mankind speaks thoroughly with his Bad Angel, the World, Avarice and other abstractions of the devil as well. In *Mankind* Titivillus solely whispers into Mankind's ear and at the end of the play Mischief briefly speaks with Mankind, though the main communication is between Mankind and the Three N's. In *Wisdom* Mankind is presented through the abstractions Mind, Will and Understanding, indicating that Mankind communicates via his subconscious which presumably limits his agency. Lucifer communicates directly with Mind, Will and Understanding and briefly speaks with Anima as well, though a substantial part of the play is the dialogue between the Three Mightes of Mankind itself. Interestingly to point out with regard to agency is Mankind's power to determine his fate for some of the devilish figures represent Mankind's own vices for example Avarice, whereupon one could argue Mankind himself is to blame for sinning. However, as Lucifer has pointed out in *Wisdom* his active interference is required to make Mankind sin for he is not by definition sinful.¹³⁹ In *The Castle* the Good Angel says Mankind is blinded, nevertheless Mankind is hold accountable for his sinning and will go to hell if he does not confess and repent.¹⁴⁰ In addition interestingly his fate is also depended upon the abstractions Justice and Peace pleading before God.¹⁴¹ Similar to *Mankind* in which Mercy says he will win the debate with Justice, Equity and Truth and save Mankind's soul, though Mercy says Mankind should still ask for mercy.¹⁴² In *Wisdom* Mankind is warned of his dark soul destined for hell by Wisdom. He advises Mankind to repent, whereupon the Soul, the Three Mightes and Wisdom

¹³⁸ *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, Horner, 134.

¹³⁹ *Wisdom*, Klausner 357-372.

¹⁴⁰ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Klausner, 1294.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1455-1467, 1294

¹⁴² *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro 816, 879.

discuss how this should be done. Very different from the other plays in which abstractions of good and evil, like Justice are ultimately debating about Mankind's soul with scarce interference of Mankind himself.¹⁴³ Overall Mankind did not seem to have much agency in resisting the devil's temptation, judging from his direct communication with the devil, awareness of his presence and ability to determine his own fate. Contemporary sources do not elaborate extensively on the way in which the devil approaches Mankind and how Mankind responds, though the Macaronic sermon showed similarly how the devil flatters and makes promises of wisdom and uses tricks or treachery' and 'a feigned kind of appearance'.¹⁴⁴

The devil approaching Mankind in a feigned kind of appearance mentioned in the Macaronic sermon, indicates an alteration of physical appearances, also apparent in the *Macro Plays*, however apart from Bosch's 'composite' depiction, all devilish figures looked quite horrific and not disguised. This stands in strong contrast to the devils in the *Macro Plays*, who were mostly disguised, e.g. in fashionable clothes, in order to mislead Mankind and often in a humorous way. For uniquely compared to other contemporary sources the devil in the *Macro Plays* was predominantly perceived as a comic figure through his actions and dialogue and intended to amuse the audience, though Schell and Shuchter point out this is also embedded for homiletic aims.¹⁴⁵ In the 'The Devils' Parliament' the devil is perceived comical for he is unaware of Christ's identity, though the devil's role was recognized to be predominantly to reinforce the Christian orthodoxy, which the audience had to derive from the devil's narrative and dramatic character according to Marx. Similar to the contemporary sermons, however, they include a more straight forward warning of the devil.¹⁴⁶

One could argue that the compatibleness of homiletic aims and entertainment is questionable for portraying the devil as a comic character might diminish the seriousness of his message of evil. Though this should be perceived as the 'hidden' homiletic strength of play for the extent to which the audience can relate to the play and enjoy it also determines its impact. I believe that the message of the danger of the devil has more impact, once the audience has 'caught' himself enjoying the devil's appearance and at the same time witnesses the inevitable fate resulting from interfering with the devil, for the audience has been able to relate to Mankind and share in his experience. With regard to the impact of the devil's character on its audience Roy Mackenzie's points out we should not view the devil in *Moralities* as merely an abstraction or as a mouthpiece for some messages. He stresses they were real and living personages to the fifteenth century society producing and watching *Moralities*, which gives an insight in their understanding of evil.¹⁴⁷ Evil figures were to be recognized as having ungodly acts attributed to them and carnal conversations, for the audience to see that 'Vice is not always a monster of frightful mien, but that he frequently appears as very amusing and companionable creature' in order to identify themselves with them, this gives an insight in fifteenth century humour as

¹⁴³ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 872-879.

¹⁴⁴ *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, Horner, 134.

¹⁴⁵ Schell and Shuchter, *English Morality Plays*, xv.

¹⁴⁶ Marx, 'The Devil as Narrator', 75, 77.

¹⁴⁷ Mackenzie, *The English Moralities*, 2, 3, 267.

well.¹⁴⁸ According to Mackenzie this was done to encourage morality, for the spectator was persuaded to be good by being taught that the devil at first sight is ‘pleasant to each man’s intent’, though his ‘ways lead down to hell’.¹⁴⁹ Mackenzie argues that this representation of the devil must have been to a certain extent in line with the public understanding of the devil for when men are engaged in serving the public the broad lines of their work are laid down by that public itself. By this he means that the play writers were writing the play for the audience to enjoy and understand it, the devil’s portrayal had to fit the contemporary understanding in order for the audience to identify themselves with it.¹⁵⁰ The fifteenth century society’s communication of evil proved to be a perfect compatible combination of entertainment and homiletic aims furthermore entertainment reinforced the didactical aims, namely through the portrayal of recognizable and identifiable temptations of the devil.

The discussed contemporary sources reflect similar to the *Macro Plays* the fifteenth century society perceptions of evil and good forces, though to a broader extent they can reflect the society in which they were produced as well. As Horner points out, the ‘collection of sermons offers much of value about ... a period that might fairly be seen as a crossroad, a time of ecclesiastical, social, and political adjustment in England’.¹⁵¹ He observes criticism of devotional practices, ecclesiastical privilege and theological formulations. Horner states that the sermons at least symbolize a beginning in the transformation of thoughts concerning social roles and religious belief.¹⁵² However, this beginning transformation of social roles and belief is not yet noticeable in the *Macaronic Sermon Collection* with regard to the portrayal of the devil. Here, the audience is warned of the dangers of the devil derived directly from the Bible, and he is not used to criticise traditional roles. The devil and his minions in the *Macro Plays* do criticise the clergy for example when in *Mankind* the Vice Nought, a representative of the devil, brings up penance in the form of indulgences, to make fun of them. He even makes vulgar jokes towards the Pope and his ‘wife’. Bruster and Rasmussen point out that in the Middle Ages the sale of indulgences became extremely controversial.¹⁵³ This should not immediately be perceived as evidence of a transformation; however, throughout the Medieval period anti-monastic satire was popular and even survived through the Reformation.¹⁵⁴ There might be one exception in *Wisdom*, for Lucifer’s dialogue might be interpreted as being in favour of the ideal ‘mixed life’: a combination of contemplation and the living world, in an opposition to a strictly cloistered life.¹⁵⁵ Suggesting submission to the mixed life was probably more successful than asking the Three Knights to abandon contemplation entirely, quite possibly suggesting to abandon monastic values completely would have also been too revolutionary. It remains interesting that Lucifer argues partly in favour of religion by

¹⁴⁸ Mackenzie, *The English Moralities*, 266, 267.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 267.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 268-269.

¹⁵¹ *A Macaronic Sermon* Horner, 23.

¹⁵² Ibid., 23-24.

¹⁵³ *Mankind*, Bruster and Rasmussen, 143-146.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 325-326.

¹⁵⁵ *Wisdom*, Klausner, 395-396, 400-412.

promoting the mixed life, however, he emphasises on the necessity of being in the world.¹⁵⁶ Matos and Bevington had already pointed out that morality plays proved to be adaptable to new ideologies by including secular elements in order to make the play more relatable to its audience.¹⁵⁷ The depiction of the devil in the *Macro Plays* does match some other contemporary written sources, though big differences appear as well. It remains difficult to say whether the plays really do or do not reflect their time, for they do include some of the elements that we traditionally associate with currently such as anti-clericalism, though the late medieval society was fairly easy going with anti-monastic satire and in the plays it's only presented in quite a limited way.

All in all from the *Macro Plays* results a multiple understanding of evil represented through the devil and his minions as opposed to the good represented through God, his angels and abstractions, like Mercy. A significant characteristic of the devil in the *Macro Plays* and contemporary sources is his place in the cosmos as opposite to God, which becomes ultimately apparent from his urge to lead Mankind to damnation. Another important similarity with regard to the devil's portrayal is his use of adoxography and a first-person narrative, though the purpose for using this kind of dialogue differs between the *Macro Plays* and contemporary sources.¹⁵⁸ Important for the devil's portrayal in the *Macro Plays* is the understanding of him as a part of the anti-trinity (mutually connected), therefore the devil expresses himself through multiple abstractions that differ between the plays. This portrayal contrasts with the contemporary descriptions in which the devil is often identified as an individual figure, though some depictions also show the devil represented through different abstractions, for example in the *Ars Moriendi*.¹⁵⁹ With regard to the devil's approach of Mankind internal differences do occur between active interference, a violent, 'agitating' and awaiting approach as well. In the plays the devil is portrayed as having significant power with regard to tempting Mankind; however, the extent to which he could control Mankind's mind and body differs in the plays. The fact that the devil's way of approaching Mankind is often in a humorous way, signifies that the plays seem to have let go of the purely traditional biblical representation, still present in most of the contemporary sources, and chose for a more 'creative' secular representation for the plays became to serve the purpose of being entertaining as well, for example through the plays' unique use of 'Mock Latin'. However, this does not diminish the seriousness of the imbedded didactic lesson on the dangers of the devil, for as pointed out before humour increased the theatrical experience and thereby the impact of the didactic message as well. Though portraying a disguised 'funny' devil communicating a didactical message, which made the devil and his temptations more relatable for the audience; this was quite different compared to the forms of transmission in the discussed contemporary sources.¹⁶⁰ In addition

¹⁵⁶ *Wisdom*, Klausner., 428, 440, 468.

¹⁵⁷ Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 54. And Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 791.

¹⁵⁸ *Mankind*, Ashley and NeCastro, 71. And Marx, 'The Devil as Narrator of the Life of Christ', 69.

¹⁵⁹ British Museum, 'Collection Online Ars moriendi illustrations'

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1459851&partId=1&searchText=ars+moriendi&object=23884&page=1 [April 2017]

¹⁶⁰ Matos, 'Medieval Representations of Satan', 53.

the understanding of the devil was personalised by the devil's audience involvement and the plays being performed in the streets or a circular stage amidst its audience, for this made the audience emotionally and mentally closely attached to his actions.¹⁶¹ Therefore, I would argue -noted that we have no knowledge whether the printed text is in accordance with the original written and/or performed play and that we have limited knowledge of how widespread and well-known the compared contemporary sources and plays were as well- that the *Macro Moralities* especially with regard to the devil's way of approaching Mankind, his physical appearance and his ability to interact and influence its audience irrespective of internal differences communicate quite a different understanding of the devil compared to contemporary sources. With regard to the fifteenth century society the *Macro plays* give an insight as well in their understanding of the power of the devil, his relationship with Mankind and Mankind's power to determine his fate of, especially since the *Macro Plays* were didactic works. The plays portray an understanding of Mankind's limited agency in resisting the devil; however, Mankind is understood to be responsible for his sinning and fate. The plays show that Mankind can only resist the devil with the help of the Good forces. Showing Mankind's susceptibility of the devil's temptation is inevitably also a particular religious didactic message to educate the audience on the devil's temptations and to inspire them to strive for eternal life by depending upon God instead. For the main purpose of the morality plays inevitably similar to contemporary sources was to teach lessons for the guidance of life, though in a unique, refreshing and entertaining way strongly depended upon the new portrayal of the devil that reshaped the view of sin, evil and temptation.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *The Castle of Perseverance*, Stone and Purkis, 75.

¹⁶² Davidson, *Visualizing the moral life*, 2. And Davenport, *Fifteenth-century English Drama*, 2-3.

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