# THE USE OF THE RHETORICAL EXORDIUM IN MIDDLE ENGLISH DRAMA

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When R.B. McKerrow wrote his now classic paper "Form and Matter in the Publication of Research," he recommended that the following main divisions precede the actual body or demonstration:

> 1.  The *introduction*, in which the author briefly states the present position of research on his subject and the views currently held on it.
> 2.  The *proposal*, in which he describes in outline what he hopes to prove.
> 3.  The *boost*, in which he proceeds to magnify the importance of his discovery or argument and to explain what a revolution it will create in the views generally held on the whole period with which he is dealing.  This is, as it were, a taste of sauce to stimulate the reader's appetite.[1]

In this he was, of course, reflecting one of the oldest divisions of discourse, the exordium, meant to provide the audience with a brief, lucid, and interest-arousing summary of the oration to come.  The doctrine is well entrenched in all leading general discussions of rhetoric throughout the Classical period and the Middle Ages and finds its way into the more specialized sub-divisions of rhetoric, the *artes poetriae*, the *artes dictaminis*, and the *artes praedicandi*.  Writers of Latin or vernacular prose

and verse, poets, philosophers, and historians all pay homage to the doctrine. In this paper I wish to single out one group of Middle English writings, the mediaeval drama, to examine more closely the interesting applications of the doctrine as exhibited in the "banns" of the miracle plays and of certain moralities, and in the traditional prologues, but especially in the more "organic" solutions arrived at by the authors of *Mankind* and *Everyman*.

The theory of *exordia* or *introductions* is masterfully summarized in the standard mediaeval handbook of oratory, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, until modern times ascribed to Cicero. Here we are told that whether one uses the "Direct" or "Subtle" approach "the exordium prepares the hearer to attend [the orator's] speech" enabling him "to have hearers who are attentive, receptive, and well-disposed."[2] To secure these attitudes rhetorical manuals, while discussing a number of ways and means, all stress one basic method, the presentation in summary form of what is to follow in such a way as to capture the audience's attention:

> Dociles auditores habere poterimus, si summam causae breviter
> exponemus et si adtentos eos faciemus; nam docilis est qui adtente vult audire. Adtentos habebimus, si pollicebimur nos de
> rebus magnis, novis, inusitatis verba facturos . . .; et si
> rogabimus ut adtente audiant; et si numero exponemus res quibus de rebus dicturi sumus.
> [We can have receptive hearers if we briefly summarize the cause
> and make them attentive; for the receptive hearer is one who
> is willing to listen attentively. We shall have attentive
> hearers by promising to discuss important, new and unusual
> matters, . . . by bidding them to listen attentively and by
> enumerating the points we are going to discuss.][3]

In this, rhetoricians claimed to be imitating the great epic poets who had preceded them and whose genius had led them to discover these artistically satisfying openings. Quintilian, for example, following tradition, cites Homer and Virgil as the foremost models, stating:

> Docilem sine dubio et haec ipsa praestat attentio; sed et illud,
> si breviter et dilucide summam rei, de qua cognoscere debeat,

indicaverimus, quo Homerus atque Vergilius operum suorum prin-
cipiis faciunt."

["but we shall contribute still more to this effect (of obtain-
ing audience attention) if we give a brief and lucid summary of
the case which we have to try; in so doing we shall be follow-
ing the method adopted by Homer and Virgil at the beginning of
their poems.][4]

In the earliest treatise on the highly specialized mediaeval offshoot of
classical rhetoric, the *ars dictaminis* or art of letter writing, the same
theory of the exordium is traced back to the practice of epic poets such
as Virgil, but the list of authorities is broadened to include two writ-
ers of expository prose, Augustine and Boethius:

Augustinus sic incipit: "Habemus loqui vestrae fratres carita-
ti, quid salutem vulneret, quid vitam generet, quid sequens
vivendo surgas, quid fugiens moriendo procumbas." Virgilius
sic incipit

"Arma virumque cano,"

etcetera. Boethius

"Carmina qui quondam studio florente per egi

Flebilis heu maestos cogor inire modos."

Vides ut ex sequentibus praemissa pariantur ut mentem praeli-
bando auctores historiae futurae premoneant. Si enim alienum
principium fuerit, idem est ac si lapidem porrigas cui aurum
promiseris.

[Augustine begins in this way: "We must address ourselves to
you in love, my brothers, concerning that which is dangerous
to your salvation and that which will bring you new life, that
with which you will rise with the living, without which you will
sink with the dying." Virgil begins (*Aeneid* I.1): "I sing of
arms and the man . . ." Boethius writes (*De Consolatione Phi-
losophiae* I.1): "I who once wrote verses in the passion of
youth / Begin now weeping to use a mournful strain . . ." You
see that the messengers sent before are born of the thoughts
that will follow, that authors foreshadow the story that is to

come by giving to the mind a preview.  Indeed if you would of-
fer any other kind of beginning, it would be the same as giv-
ing a stone to one to whom you have promised gold.][5]

Mediaeval writers of treatises on the art of poetry list what we
may call "plot-summary" exordia as the method prized by the epic poets of
old.  John of Garland, for example, after listing eight "modern" begin-
nings, adds a ninth type:

> Nonus Modus.  Sicut predictum est exhordiri debemus in poema-
> tibus aput modernos; quidam tamen antiquorum, sicut Virgilius
> et Lucanus, artificiale principium observaverunt narrationi
> preponentes proposicionem, invocationem, et causam hystorie.
> Dicit enim Virgilius in libro Eneydos:  Musa, mihi causas
> memora, quo numine leso, etc.  Eum sequens Lucanus dicit:  Fert
> animus causas tantarum promere rerum.
> [We moderns are supposed to begin, in poems, in the ways I
> have just prescribed; nevertheless, certain of the ancients,
> Virgil and Lucan for instance, observed the artificial begin-
> ning by putting before the narration the proposition, the in-
> vocation, and the motivation of the plot.][6]

Nevertheless, like John of Garland himself, they prefer to prescribe the
"theme" related exordium.  Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria Nova* pro-
vides the best statement of how such an opening by "proverbia" or "ex-
empla" casts light on the meaning of the entire work, forming a thematic
summary:

> Si pars prima velit majus diffundere lumen,
> Thematis intacta serie, sententia sumpta
> Ad speciale nihil declinet, sed caput edat
> Altius ad quoddam generale; novoque lepore
> Materiae formam nolit meminisse, sed ejus
> Abneget in gremio, quasi dedignata, sedere:
> Supra thema datum sistat, sed spectet ad illud
> Recta fronte; nihil dicat, sed cogitet inde.
> [If you should wish the opening to send forth a greater light,

without disturbing the natural order of the theme, let the
sentiment you begin with not sink to any particular statement
but rather raise its head to a general pronouncement.  With
this new grace it is unwilling to think of the details at hand,
but almost disdainfully refuses to remain in its bosom.  Let
it stand above the given subject; pondering thereon but saying
nothing, let it gaze with brow uplifted.][7]

What is recommended, then, is an exordium stating the truth central to the
narrative itself, what amounts to its main structural principle.

Such thematically centred exordia were ideally suited for another
genre, the mediaeval university sermon, and are described at great length
in another late mediaeval offshoot of classical rhetoric, the *ars praedi-
candi*.  According to Thomas Waleys the sermon consists of three principal
parts:  the introduction of the theme, its division into parts, and the
development of these parts.[8]  It is clear from Waleys' subsequent discus-
sion and from other *artes* that the "development" is the body of the ser-
mon and those parts preceding it make up the introduction.  It is also
clear that the whole reason for this introductory material is to give the
audience in summary form the essence of the exposition which is to follow
in the body of the sermon.[9]

Latin and vernacular poetry of the Middle Ages consistently pays
homage to the rhetorical doctrine of the exordium and though the rigidity
of rhetorical prescriptions frequently led to the creation of pedestrian
verse, it is difficult not to admire the beauty of the opening five-line
exordium of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, classical in its clarity and
conciseness:

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  (1-5)

But consummate artist that he was, Chaucer could and did transform the
classical exordium into something much more organic to his work.  In *The

*Canterbury Tales*, for example, the exordium is spoken by Chaucer the pil-
grim, one of the central characters of the *Tales*, and the revelation it
provides, not only of the future development of the work but also of the
character of the speaker himself, gives to it an immediacy not normally
found in such introductory passages. The same may be said of Will's ini-
tial vision and dialogue with Holy Church in *Piers Plowman*. As in *The
Canterbury Tales*, the exordium here takes on the guise of a first-hand
experience by one of the central characters, which results in a masterful
fusion of exordium and body.[10]

Interestingly enough the doctrine of introductions is not carried
over in a traditional form into early Middle English drama. A study of
the opening play of each of the four craft cycles, the earliest extant
form of Middle English drama, reveals nothing that corresponds to the clas-
sical exordium. The initial plays do not give a narrative or thematic sum-
mary of the entire cycle but deal exclusively with the matter of the cre-
ation of the world, the subject of the first pageant only. However, the
"banns" read some time before the actual production of the cycle corres-
pond to what is expected of the classical exordium. Audience interest
was undoubtedly aroused by the "Riding of the banns," a colourfully fes-
tive spectacle.[11] The banns of the Hegge Cycle call for three *vexilla-
tores* to summarize in turn the "hool mater þat we thynke to play" (517),[12]
while at the same time providing certain information essential to a pro-
per understanding of the cycle. For example, the audience is advised that
the materials to be dramatized are not to be treated lightly for "Of holy
writte, þis game xal bene / and of no fablys by no way (520-21) and the
participants are urged to "prente wyl . . . in ȝour mende" certain les-
sons essential for salvation taught by the plays, such as the following
which the *vexillatores* claim the Doomsday pageant will illustrate:

> Who so to god hath be unkende,
> Frenchep þer xal he non fynde,
> Ne þer get he no grace. (513-15).

The worshipful tone of the cycle is prepared for in the frequent prayers
for God's blessing upon the audience, notably in the opening and closing
lines of the banns:

> Now, gracyous god, groundyd of all goodnesse,
>
> As þi grete glorie nevyr begynning had,
>
> So þou socour and saue all þo that sytt and sese. (1-3)
>
> Now god þem save from trey and tene
>
> ffor us þat prayth upon þat day,
>
> and qwyte them wel þer mede. (522-24)

The banns, then, provide an ingenious solution to the formal problem of an exordium by combining with the classical elements of the introduction the feature of early advertising and the time-saving feature of presentation at an earlier date of materials which, if presented at the time of performance of the cycle, would put greater pressure on an already crowded schedule.[13]

To claim that the banns fulfilled the role of the traditional exordium is not, however, to claim that the authors of cycles did not employ exordia elsewhere. Several pageants, such as the *York* "Judgment Day"[14] for example, provide excellent examples of this rhetorical device. The play opens with an eighty-line speech by God the Father, who after a forty-line summary of the entire History of Salvation delivers a forty-line exordium in which He laments the evils of men, decides to put an end to "mannes folie" (56), calls for His angels to blow their trumpets announcing the end, exalts His Son's Passion, and alludes to the separation of the saved and the damned. This is the shape the pageant then takes: the angels do God's bidding, Christ is exalted, and after repeating the story of His Passion He proceeds to separate the bad from the good souls. God's opening speech, then, provides an excellent example of an "organic" exordium to the "Judgment Day" pageant. Similar craftsmanship is not necessarily evident in all "Judgment Day" plays. The corresponding *Chester* pageant,[15] for example, opens with a twenty-four line speech by God in which He announces His decision to judge all men, calls for His angels to blow their trumpets, and exalts the Cross and other instruments of Christ's Passion. This opening section does not, however, prepare us for the way in which the play unfolds. After the blowing of the trumpets by two angels, we hear a long series of lamentations from saved and damned popes, emperors, empresses, kings, queens, and so on. Christ then appears and

recounts His sufferings for man. He proceeds to welcome the elect and then, after two demons call for the condemnation of the damned and after several of the damned voice their objections, He condemns them to everlasting torment, much to the satisfaction of the devils. The play ends with short speeches by the four Evangelists testifying to the righteousness of Christ's judgment.

It is possibly in part because of its success in the cycles that the "banns" type of exordium, rather than some other form, was carried over to the earliest extant Middle English morality, the *Castle of Perseverance*, although we should also add the author's sure dramatic sense, which has him give the opening stage not to the speaker of a lengthy exordium but rather to the rantings of three of his most fascinating evil characters, *Mundus, Belial,* and *Caro*. The complexity of the *Castle*, which ambitiously covers almost all the themes later moralities would treat individually, which combines several plots spanning the whole life of man, and which marshals some thirty-five characters arranged into opposing camps, requires a fairly lengthy summary of the action. Some days before the performance of the play the future audience is again treated to the spectacle of a "riding of the banns" with musical accompaniment (156) as two *vexillatores* present a one-hundred-and-seventeen-line summary of the plot of the *Castle* along with numerous brief explanations of the allegory. Like those of the *Hegge Cycle*, the banns of the *Castle* open and end with prayers for God's blessing upon the audience.[16]

With the late fifteenth-century *Conversion of St. Paul* we move from an exordium of the banns type to an interesting example of an attempted fusion of introductory materials with the performance of the play, which we saw in germ form in certain pageants in the *Cycles*. In a fourteen-line opening address the character *Poeta* asks God's blessing on the audience and then states the purpose of the play, a dramatic presentation of the conversion of St. Paul based on the Acts of the Apostles.[17] *Poeta* subsequently reappears at the end and beginning of each of the play's three stations, seemingly with the sole function of indicating the end of one station and the beginning of another. He does not participate in the action of the play, and the opening speeches of the characters themselves do not reveal an attempt at an organic inclusion of the exordium of the type found in Chaucer and Langland.

The two most interesting uses of the exordium, in what I have termed its "organic" form, appear in the late fifteenth-century moralities *Mankind* and *Everyman*. The text of *Mankind* (ed. Eccles, n. 16 above) as we have it has no banns and no prologue spoken by a commentator such as *Poeta*. Instead, one of the chief characters, Mercy, delivers an opening speech, which addresses several of the play's key themes. After reminding man of the course of salvation history and of the place of mercy in this scheme, he pleads: "Dyverte not yowrsylffe in tyme of temtacyon" (19). He refines his theme by explaining: "Pryke not yowr felycytes in thyngys transytorye / Beholde not þe erth, but lyfte yowr eye uppe" (30-31). He then points out the punishment to be meted out to those who have not followed his advice. He is interrupted at this point by the early and brief appearance of the evil characters Mischief, Nought, New-Guise, and Nowadays, who provide an excellent illustration of those very "thyngys transytorye" that Mercy has been warning against. Also, because of the centrality of festive laughter to the meaning of the play, it is important that these comic villains appear as part of the exordium.[18] After their exit Mercy resumes his summary of the play and disquisition on the dangers of vicious guise as opposed to the good new guise nowadays and repeats his warning about final judgment when Mercy will be of little use. The audience has, then, at this point the plot and central themes in capsule form.

Like the *Conversion of St. Paul*, *Everyman*[19] begins with a prologue summarizing the play's action and its main themes, spoken by a messenger, who, like *Poeta*, does not participate in the action. If we leave aside this prologue, however, we discover, as in *Mankind*, that the first appearance of the play's central character, Everyman, is preceded by a 58-line dialogue spoken by God and Death, which in fact constitutes an organic and dramatic exordium. God first bemoans the falling away from Him of His beloved creatures and decides to

> Haue a rekenynge of euery mannes persone;
> For, and I leue the people thus alone
> In theyr lyfe and wycked tempestes,
> Veryly they will become moche worse than beestes! (46-49).

There follows in an 18-line dialogue between God and Death a brilliant

summary not only of the play's central themes but also of its plot with a subtle allusion to the play's denouement. Through the use of terms such as "pilgrimage," "sure reckening," "no escape," and "without delay" God sets out the basic truths about life and death that must be imparted to Everyman if he is to save himself, truths echoed throughout the play by Death, Good Deeds, and others, as Everyman attempts to understand fully what at first is only a "blinde mater" to him. In his reply and brief aside (72-84), Death, after vowing to carry God's message to Everyman, singles out the two problems that Everyman must face to comprehend these truths and achieve salvation: he must identify his true friends and endure the pain that accompanies the true pilgrimage to God. Much of the play is taken up with Everyman's search for the "good frende" mentioned by Death (78), and the ultimate answer comes to him only at the play's end when he is about to descend into his tomb. Death's references to "grete payne" (83) also forecast the suffering that Everyman must face to prepare himself properly for his meeting with God -- from the pain of abandonment by pseudo-friends, through the self-inflicted pain of penance, to the final agony of seeing himself stripped and naked at the moment of death. This brief introductory passage, then, not only clearly states in summary form those truths about life and death that the play then goes on to develop fully but also marks out those paths that the action will take as Everyman searches for and finds salvation.

In conclusion a note of caution is in order. I do not espouse an evolutionary view of drama here, although the later type of exordium, which I have termed "organic," has received a more sympathetic treatment as a matter of personal preference. The prologue type of exordium, for example, with its roots in the classical Greek chorus, was used successfully by Shakespeare and his contemporaries and later dramatists down to our own time. Even without supporting an evolutionary view, however, a study of the exordium in the Middle English drama does lead the student to understand more fully that when faced with certain formal problems mediaeval dramatists devised sophisticated and ingenious solutions. Their solutions to the problem of the exordium provide us with yet another proof of their

greatness and of the greatness of their art.


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<center>NOTES</center>

[1] *PMLA* 65 (1950) 5; rpt. from *RES* 16 (1940) 116-21.

[2] "Principium est sum statim auditores nobis idoneum reddimus ad audiendum.  Id ita sumitur ut adtentos, ut dociles, ut benivolos audi-tores habere possimus." *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. Harry Caplan (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1954) I, iv, 6 (pp. 11-13).  Cicero gives the three aims as "ut amice, ut intellegenter, ut attente audiamur" in *De Partitione Ora-toria*, ed. H. Rackham (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1948), viii, 28 (p. 332). Although these are aims of the Prooimion or Direct Opening, they also ap-ply to the Ephodos or Subtle Approach but through "dissimulation":  "at insinuatio eiusmodi debet esse ut occulte, per dissimulationem, eadem illa omnia conficiamus, ut ad eandem commoditatem in dicendi opere venire pos-sumus" (*Ad Herennium*, I, vii, 11 [p. 20]).

[3] *Ad Herennium*, I, iv, 7 (pp. 12-14).  Cicero espouses the same view proposing a clear summary of parts of the case to be heard; "Sed facillime auditor discit et quid agatur intellegit si complectare a principio genus naturamque causae, si definias, si dividas, si neque prudentiam eius im-pedias confusione partium nec memoriam multitudine" (*De Partitione*, viii, 20 [p. 334]).  See also Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. H.E. Butler, (London-Cambridge, Mass. 1921), IV, i, 23 and 34-35 (pp. 16 and 25).

[4] *Interpretationes Virgilianae*, ed. Henricu Georgius (1905; rpt. Stuttgart 1969).  Donatus sees in Virgil's prooemium to his *Aeneid* the breadth of the entire work:  "itaque conponit, non ut alii putant, car-minis caput, sed, ut nos adserimus, carminis thema tanta subtilitate ar-tis, ut in eodem, hoc est in eius brevitate, latitudinem magnam futuri operis demonstraret" (p. 3).  Fulgentius goes even further, finding the

entire epic encapsulated in the first three words; see *Continentia Virgiliana in Opera*, ed. R. Helm (Leipzig 1898) 87-90.

[5] *Alberici Casinensis Flores Rhetorici* ed. D.H. Inguanez and H.M. Willard (Montecassino 1938), II, 1 (pp. 33-34). The text is generally dated c. 1087; see James J. Murphy, "Alberic of Monte Cassino: Father of the Medieval Ars Dictaminis," *American Benedictine Review* 22 (1971) 129-46. The translation is from Joseph M. Miller, Michael H. Prosser and Thomas W. Benson, eds., *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric* (Bloomington, Indiana 1973) 133. In the anonymous *Rationes Dictandi* written in Bologna in 1135 and translated in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley 1971) the theory of the exordium, relegated to a section on the securing of goodwill, is briefly alluded to without references to past writers; see especially section vi (p. 17). Murphy's translation must, however, be used with caution as Traugott Lawler points out in his review in *Speculum* 48 (1973) 388-94.

[6] *Parisiana Poetria*, ed. Traugott Lawlor (New Haven 1974) 56.

[7] The *Poetria* is edited and translated by Ernest Gallo (The Hague 1971). Gallo sees this use of proverb and example to introduce a literary work as "Geoffrey's contribution to rhetorical theory" (p. 150). It should be noted that proverb and example here may not be used with their traditional meanings. Gallo says that Geoffrey's *exemplum* "is not a short narrative meant to illustrate a point. Many of his *exempla* are quite proverb like" (p. 140). Jane B. Kopp says that by "proverb" Geoffrey may also have in mind an original generalized moral, to be drawn by the poet himself after reflections on the implications of his plot; see *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (n. 5 above) 37, n. 16.

[8] In his *De Modo Componendi Sermones*, Waleys states: "ita quod sermo, juxta consuetudinem modernam, in tres partes dividitur principales, videlicet in introductionem thematis, et ejus divisionem in diversas partes, et in partium illarum prosecutionem": *Artes Praedicandi: Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, ed. Thomas M. Charland (Paris 1936) 356. I leave aside here the question of initial prayer and protheme, which, according to Waleys at least, do not appear to be absolutely necessary. There is some indication in Waleys and in the work attributed to Henry of Hesse that by the mid-fourteenth century the protheme

had become fused with the introduction to the theme.  See Charland, p. 137, and Woodburn O. Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons* EETS, O.S. 209 (London 1940) xlv.  For the views of Henry of Hesse see Harry Caplan, "Henry of Hesse *On the Art of Preaching*," *PMLA* 48 (1933) 348.  See also Caplan's "A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching," in *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking in Honor of James Albert Winans*, ed. A.M. Drummond (New York 1925) 74.

[9] In his *Artes Praedicandi* Charland writes of the introductory material:  "L'introduction est une présentation globale du thème.  Elle sert soit à dégager le sens général du thème en même temps qu'à préciser l'intention du prédicateur dans son utilisation, soit à en prouver la vérité ou simplement l'opportunité.  Elle est suivie immédiatement de la division du thème en parties.  Le thème a été produit à la fin de l'introduction, soit comme confirmatur, total ou partiel, d'une déduction déclarative, soit comme conclusion d'un argument probatif.  On en annonce aussitôt la division par la formule:  *In quibus verbis tria tanguntur*, ou une autre semblable.

La division du thème en parties a l'avantage de fournir au prédicateur plus de matière à développer.  Suivie avec ordre et clarté, elle permet encore à l'auditeur de saisir et de retenir avec facilité non seulement la matière, mais aussi la forme du sermon et la façon de procéder du prédicateur" (at n. 8) 150.  See also Ross (at n. 8) xliv-xlvi.

[10] The importance of the exordium as the gateway to the meaning and structure of mediaeval texts in general is pointed out by Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris 1972) 23:  "J'emploierai, il est vrai, dans ce livre, le mot de *thème*, mais dans un sens très spécial et plus ou moins étymologique:  pour désigner l'assertion initiale, qui 'pose' le texte dans son plan, en vertu d'une tendance générale dans les arts médiévaux, pour qui la teneur, le porche, la phrase d'ouverture, toujours fortement formalisés, fixent l'axe sémantique fondant les effets des sens subséquents."  The quotation from *Troilus* is taken from F.N. Robinson, ed., *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (2nd ed., Boston 1957).  For a brief discussion of the beginning of the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* as an exordium, see Ralph Baldwin, *The Unity of the Canterbury Tales, Anglistica* 5 (Copenhagen 1955) 29-35.  For *Piers Plowman* B, Passus I as a summary of

the structure of the entire poem, see R.E. Kaske, "Holy Church's Speech and the Structure of *Piers Plowman*" in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossel Hope Robbins*, ed. Beryl Rowland (London 1974) 320-27.

[11] David Bevington writes of the banns that they combined "showmanship and advertisement with a serious ceremonial purpose. Despite the fact that this occasion usually took place several days in advance of the actual dramatic performance of the cycle, an audience evidently gathered together and sat patiently in order to hear this important announcement. The audience witnessed a procession, heard music performed by minstrels, and received a brief account of each individual pageant in the ensuing cycle" (*Medieval Drama* [Boston 1975] 242).

[12] K.S. Block, ed., *Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie called Corpus Christi* EETS, E.S. 120 (London 1917). The banns of the *Ludus* do not agree with the contents of the cycle as we have it. They most probably belong to a time before some major revisions were made to the cycle, but scholars have not yet determined why the scribe did not alter the banns accordingly. See Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama* (London 1955) 243-46.

[13] Early advertising rather than length or complexity of material seems to be the only reason for making use of this method for the *Play of the Sacrament*, a late fifteenth-century "miracle" of the type popular in France. Again audience interest is assured by spectacle, described in the following terms by Bevington: "these banns . . . are designed for festive and colorful presentation. Minstrels are in attendance. The banns also feature a procession, a gathering of the audience several days prior to the actual play, and possibly some kind of tableau display of the action" (at n. 11) 756. Two *vexillatores* present "the purpose of this play" in a forty-five line plot summary (11-56), adding certain didactic comments to guide audience interpretation, for example that members of the audience should "with all your myght / vnto your gostly father shewe your synne; / Beth in no wanhope, daye nor nyght" (65-68). See Norman Davis, ed., *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments* EETS, Supp. 1 (London 1970) 58-89.

[14] Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., *York Plays* (1885; rpt. New York 1963) 496-513.

[15] Hermann Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays* EETS, E.S. 62 (London 1892) 427-453.

[16] Mark Eccles, ed., *The Macro Plays* EETS, O.S. 262 (London 1969). Eccles agrees with most critics that the banns are most likely the work of a second author (p. xvii). See also Craig (at n. 12) 243-44.

[17] F.J. Furnivall, ed., *The Digby Plays* EETS, E.S. 70 (London 1896). The *Mary Magdalene* also from the same manuscript does not make use of *Poeta* or a like figure, and the opening speeches of its characters do not provide the narrative or thematic summary of the traditional exordium. Such a figure did occasionally appear in the *Cycles*. See, for example, *Contemplacio* and his introduction to the second Passion Play in the *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. K.S. Block, EETS, E.S. 120 (London 1917) 271.

[18] In "Doctrine and Festive Laughter in Mankind read at the Fifteenth International Congress on Mediaeval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 1980, Theresa Coletti said of the centrality of the comic villains and their antics: "Rather than being at odds with the doctrine of *Mankind*, the festive laughter confers upon it its fullest meaning. It is one side of the play's Janus face. The voice of carnival in *Mankind* demands to be heard. For a time, at least, it is as strong and as clear as the voice of Lent." I wish to thank Professor Coletti for making a typescript of her paper available to me.

[19] A.C. Cawley, ed., *Everyman* (Manchester 1961). Cawley writes of the Messenger's prologue: "The prologue to *Everyman* is not paralleled in the Dutch *Elkerliijc*; and, in view of its inaccuracies (Iolyte and Pleasure 16-17 have no part in the action of *Everyman*), it may have been written by someone other than the translator of the play" (p. 29). For a summary of the arguments concerning the translation of the play from the Dutch, see pp. x-xiii.