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# Orality in Medieval Drama
## Speech-Like Features in the
## Middle English Comic Mystery Plays

vorgelegt von

Christiane Einmahl

an der

Fakultät Sprach-, Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften

der Technischen Universität Dresden

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> But, in all the wonderful worlds that writing opens, the spoken word still resides and lives. Written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings.
>
> *Walter J. Ong (1982)*

# 1 Introduction

Dramatic dialogues from the Middle English mystery cycles have been regarded as potential representations of the spoken language of the period. But how much and in what ways can these texts be considered close or even similar to 'real' conversations from the past? How much interpersonal immediacy is represented in these written data and in what configuration? Consider the following extracts:

> **Secundus Pastor**. […] How, gyb, goode morne / wheder goys thou? / Thou goys ouer the corne / gyb, I say, how!
> '[…] How, Gib, good morning, where are you going? You go over the grain, Gib, I say, how!'
> **Primus Pastor**. Who is that? John horne / I make god a vowe! / I say not in skorne / thom, how farys thou? [Towneley 12.82–5]
> 'Who is that? John Horn, I make a vow to God! I say not in scorn, then, how are you?'

> **Primus Miles**. Dame, abyde, and lett mee see / a knave-child if that yt bee. / The kinge hase commanded me / all such for to areste.
> 'Dame, wait, and let me see a male child if that it be. The king has commanded me to capture allsuch (children).'
> **Prima Mulier**. Arest? Ribott, for-thee / thou lyes, by my lewtye. / Therfore I read fast that thou flee / and lett mee have my peace.
> 'Capture? Rogue, you lie, by my faith. Therefore I advise that you flee and let me have my peace.'
> **Secundus Mulier**. Saye, rotten hunter with thy gode, / stytton stallon, styck-tode. [Chester 10.305–14]
> 'Ah, wicked robber with your goad, lecherous stallion, toad-stabber!'

> **Noe**. […] All that has ban or bloode / Sall be ouere flowed with the floode.
> '[…] All that has bone or blood shall be overflowed by the flood.'
> **Uxor**. In faithe, the were als goode / To late me go my gatte. / We! Owte! Herrowe!
> 'In faith, you may as well let me go my way. Ah! Out! Help!'
> **Noe**. What now, what cheere?
> 'What now? What's the matter?'
> **Uxor**. I will no nare for no-kynnes nede. [York 9.97–103]
> 'I will go no nearer at any need.'

Did medieval peasants exchange greetings like the shepherds greet each other in the extract above? Did people swear *by my lewtye* like the First Mother from the Chester play, or use abusive address terms like *ribott* and *styck-tode*? When Noah attempts to drag his wife onto the ark and she cries out *We! Owte! Herrowe!*, is this merely literary language, or is it

something a medieval speaker might have said when calling for help? There is, of course, no way to hypothesise how these dialogues would have sounded to a medieval audience. We have to draw upon evidence from written records that permit us to theorise about features and constructions that give an impression of authentic speech. Literary texts, for example, may strive to simulate actual spoken interactions; dramatic dialogue is in fact composed almost entirely of the interaction between interlocutors. But it is still a moot point whether such evidence can be considered reliable to draw conclusions about the spoken language of the past.

My main motivation for writing this thesis is to provide a more representative picture of the medieval dramatic world in linguistic terms. The main concern of earlier studies (starting from Chambers' (1903) notable monograph to Kolve 1966, Hardison 1969, Diller 1973 and Craig 1978) was the reconstruction of the mystery cycles' origin and their place in the aesthetic and literary history of English drama. Scholarly texts from the 1980s onwards (e.g. Woolf 1980; Wickham 1981; Stevens 1987; Clopper 2001) have been focused mainly on the interpretation of the play texts. In addition, they increased our knowledge about the sociocultural context in which the texts were constructed and about the relevance of the texts in connection with that context. Still, a stylistic or linguistic investigation has largely been missing in scholarly literature. Consequently, anyone interested in the representation of orality in Middle English drama has been been reliant on literary or history-oriented studies.

## 1.1 Premises and aims

The notions of 'orality' and 'literacy' can be investigated from different perspectives, which directly shape the definitions and linguistic manifestations of each mode (see Wårvik 2003: 14). Until the late 1970s, however, the comparison of speech and writing, including the linguistic features associated with both modes, remained largely uninvestigated: "For a long time linguists have generally been oblivious to the spoken-written distinction" (Schaefer 2012: 1275). Historically, written language has been considered the true form of language, while speech was regarded as the transient, deficient variant of the actual, written form:

> So sah man denn auch in der Sprachbetrachtung lange Zeit die geschriebene Sprache als alleiniges Forschungsobjekt an. Dies hatte sowohl sprachtheoretische (unhistorische Normfixiertheit, literarisiertes Sprachideal) als auch methodologi-sche Gründe (‚Flüchtigkeit' gesprochener Äußerungen). (Koch and Oesterreicher 1985: 25)[1]

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1    'For a long time, linguists saw written language as the only object worthy of investigation. The reasons for this view were theoretical and methodological – e.g., an unhistorical preoccupation with norms, a literature-oriented ideal of language, and the ephemerality of spoken utterances' (Trans. Koch and Oesterreicher 2012: 451f.).

In the nineteenth century, however, scholars such as Humboldt and the Neogrammarians started to emphasise the primacy of speech (see Koch and Oesterreicher 1985: 25). With the advent of structuralism in the early twentieth century, most linguists began to consider writing as a secondary system of language which is merely a reflection of the primary, spoken form (see Biber 1988: 6; Hughes 1996: 12). In his discussion of what constitutes the suitable object of linguistic study, Ferdinand de Saussure claimed that writing is merely a means of representing the abstract system of signs that makes up *la langue*: "Langue et écriture sont deux systèmes de signes distincts; l'unique raison d'être du second est de représenter le premier" (1916: 46).[2] He argued that studying writing can be compared to studying a photograph, i.e. the image of a person rather than their real face (Saussure 1916: 46). Saussure adds that the graphic, permanent nature of writing may seem "plus propre que le son à constituer l'unité de la langue à travers le temps" ('more fitting than its sound to act as a linguistic unit persisting through time'; 1916: 47).[3] But under no circumstances should this tangibility and degree of independence lead one to think that writing constitutes a legitimate object of linguistic study: "[...] l'objet linguistique n'est pas défini par la combinaison du mot écrit et du mot parlé; ce dernier constitue à lui seul cet objet" (1916: 46).[4]

The structuralist approach leads to methodological problems for any linguistic study of a historical text. Historical linguistics is inevitably based on written evidence: scholars have to draw conclusions about the spoken language of the more distant past from written artefacts (Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 176, 2010: 6; Jucker 2000a: 17; Doty 2010: 625; see also Archer 2005: 10; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 18). Rissanen comments on the lack of truly 'natural' data: "It is a constant source of frustration for the language historian that all observations and analyses of the early periods have to be based on written evidence only, while the importance of speech in the development of the language is self-evident" (1999: 188). The 'bad data problem' has been discussed widely, and scholars have confronted this methodological obstacle in various ways (see Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6ff.; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 18ff.; Jucker 2008: 895ff.).[5]

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2   'Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first' (Trans. Baskin 1966: 23f.).

3   Hughes (1996: 126f.) and Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 4) note that Saussure also dismisses actual examples of language use, i.e. *la parole*, as a proper object of linguistic study. Speech, according to Saussure (1916: 31), is characterised by instability, unpredictability and idiosyncrasy.

4   '[...] the linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; the spoken forms alone constitute the object' (Trans. Baskin 1966: 23f.).

5   This so-called "bad data problem" which was formulated by Labov in the context of historical sociolinguistics as an inherent quality of evidence before the advent of audio recording has become a commonplace in historical linguistics, especially his oft-quoted statement that historical linguistics is "the art of making the best use of bad data" (Labov 1994: 11; see also Moore 2016: 200; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010: 7). What makes historical evidence bad data is, first of all, the survival "by chance, not by design", and secondly, the likeliness that written evidence is "riddled with the effects of hypercorrection, dialect mixture, and scribal error" (Labov 1994: 11).

A possible solution for the lack of recorded spoken data from previous centuries is to work with written sources that provide rough approximations to the spoken discourse of a given time: "Here, face-to-face spoken interactions are embedded within written texts" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 9; see also Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 7, 10; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003: 7; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 18; Walker 2007: 4f.).[6] Culpeper and Kytö have divided such "speech-related texts" (2000a: 176; 2010: 2, 15f.) into reconstructed recordings of speech such as trial proceedings and witness depositions, or constructed, imaginary speech like comedy plays or prose fiction (see also Kytö and Walker 2003: 221; Archer 2005: 10; Defour 2007: 39; Walker 2007: 4f.; Kytö 2010: 48).

Even with such speech-related genres possibly reflecting actual language use, the process and medium of transmission – "the vicissitudes of copying and preservation" (Arnovick 2006: 9) – have to be taken into account in a linguistic analysis (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003: 7f.). Apart from the type of data analysed (i.e. the genres represented by particular texts), the reliability and consistency of the editions constitute a major concern for historical linguists. As in all historical work that relies on editions, we must remain aware of the degree of scribal as well as editorial interference (Traugott and Dasher 2005: 46; Kytö and Walker 2003: 228f.). Certain elements typical of speech are difficult to represent in writing or were removed by the scribe as superfluous or inappropriate for the written medium, such as repetition, false starts, pauses, abusive language and phatic expressions (Kytö and Walker 2003: 225; Kytö 2010: 48). We may add another problem to the list: the surviving written testimonies commonly post-date the original speech event (Kytö 2010: 50).

In order to reconstruct the structural and stylistic aspects of the language of the text, historical texts have to be analysed in their entirety, including the socio-historical background and their production process (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 12; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 22f., 28; Doty 2010: 642). This involves a thorough assessment and description of a text's literary and sociocultural context: "We must be alive to the historical conditions in which a text is constructed, transmitted and received, and the ways in which pragmatic shifts and changes might be affected by changes in those material historical conditions" (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 30). Text-internal and/or secondary evidence may, however, provide only little contextual information as regards, for example, the production and reception process (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 7; Kytö 2010: 50). All in all, this means that the study of historical texts is complicated and far from ideal, especially for the earliest periods of the language (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 11).

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6   The 'faithfulness' of written historical records as reliable representations of the spoken language of the time is a complex issue. For a discussion, see e.g. Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6ff.; Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 175ff.; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 7ff.; Kytö 2010: 48ff.

Medieval discourse illustrates how difficult it is to handle textual evidence from the past. It is a well-known truth that the transition from orality to literacy was a long and complex process in the Middle Ages (see Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 19). While literacy had spread dramatically in Western Europe since the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Schaefer 2004: 86), "the expanding chirographic tradition does not simply and immediately replace oral signification" (Arnovick 2006: 13). Structures, conventions, and paradigms that developed under orality continued to exert their effect on written texts. As a consequence, medieval discourse may contain features of oral discourse – traces of what Ong has called "oral residue" (1971; see also Sikorska 2000: 401). The rebirth of literacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Western Europe thus did not bring about sudden change but rather stimulate the interrelationship of orality and literacy (Gellrich 1995: 18). In other words, orality and literacy are "superimposed upon and intertwined with each other" (Tannen 1982: 3) in the medieval period . As we have to rely solely on the written medium, the historical evolution of literacy is easier to trace than the persistence of oral patterns and conventions. As Stock remarked on the interactions between the written and spoken mode: "The central problem in the Middle Ages is the relation of orality to a world making ever-increasing use of texts" (1990: 35). While we cannot study orality *per se*, we may seek traces of orality embedded in written records. provided that we take into account the complex process of transmission which complicates the access to medieval texts (see Gellrich 1995: 6; Arnovick 2006: 9).

The Middle English mystery plays have been called "the most extensive and elaborate collective theatrical enterprise in English theater history" (Beckwith 2009: 85). The four extant play cycles each constitute a cosmological history of the world in Christian time, from the Creation, through the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Christ, to the Last Judgement (Happé 2004: 34; Johnston [2]2008: 8). The plays are called 'Mysteries' because they centrally concern the mysteries of the Christian religion, or because some of them (York and Chester) were produced by the craft guilds of the cities which were sometimes called *mysteries* (Beadle and King 1995: xvf.; see also Happé 2004: 15ff.).[7] The Middle Ages most frequently referred to them as 'Corpus Christi Plays' because at least the plays of York and Chester were originally produced on the day of the Corpus Christi feast (Mills 1992: xi; Happé 2004: 20, 28ff.).[8]

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7   The *OED* notes that the term "mystery" may refer to "the Eucharist; the consecrated elements used in the Eucharist" but also to "an action or practice about which there is or is reputed to be some secrecy; esp. a highly skilful or technical operation in a trade or art."

8   This feast, which was instituted in 1264 by Pope Urban IV and became officially adopted by 1311, was held annually on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist and the act of transubstantiation (see Happé 2004: 32; Normington 2004: 6). While scholars agree on the fact that the evolution of the cycle plays was in all probability much affected by the feast of Corpus Christi (Woolf 1980: 3; Diller 1992: 73f.; Happé 2004: 32; Normington 2009: 70), the influence of the feast and festive characters, games and culture on the play texts has been subject to discussion (see e.g. Williams 1973: 113; Wickham [3]1992; Diller 1992: 73f.; Ishii 1993: 16; Beadle and King 1995: x; Clopper 2001: 105; Happé

It has been considered a specific characteristic of the English mystery play collections – York, Chester, Towneley and N-Town – that they appear in the form of extensive cycles.[9] Some scholars, however, have now reached the conclusion that the texts of only two true play cycles survived: the civic and craft plays from York and Chester (see King 2010: 626; see also Johnston [2]2008: 8). The plays of York have been preserved in the form of an authoritative 'Register' initiated by the civic authorities. The York 'Register', comprising forty-eight plays, was compiled between 1463 and 1477 (some one hundred years after the first record of performance in 1376; see Bergner 1988: 167; Happé 2004: 36; see also Mazzon 2009: 5). The extant texts from Chester are believed to be from the sixteenth century and are thus much later than those of York. The earliest manuscript of the Chester cycle dates from 1591, and post-dates its last performance in 1575 (Forest-Hill 2000: 2). What can be inferred from the scarce evidence is that the Chester and York plays were staged processionally on pageant wagons in the city streets. But while the York cycle was connected exclusively with the feast of Corpus Christi, the Chester plays were later performed over three days at Whitsuntide – at least from the 1520s onward (see Mills 1998; Diller 1992: 74).

The N-Town manuscript (c. 1500, the 'N' stands for *nomen*, the name of any town where any play from the cycle could be performed) is a compilation with disparate component parts, which were apparently not meant to be staged on pageant wagons; there is no reference to craft guilds (see Sugano 1994: 222; Happé 2004: 38f.). It has been argued that the manuscript may have been used for private devotional reading by the compiler (see Sugano 1994: 223). Yet, a considerable number of the plays contain very detailed stage directions about costumes and actors' positions, to the extent that it seems highly probable that the N-Town plays are indeed a collection of independent dramatic manuscripts or "playbooks" (Sugano 1994: 228) which were performed in the East Anglian region (see also Happé 2004: 38f.; Mazzon 2009: 10).

The Towneley collection (c. 1450/1500, extant in the manuscript Huntington Library MS HM1) is known by the name of the family who held the manuscript. The plays, formerly associated with Wakefield and south-west Yorkshire, were evidently written by various authors. Five Towneley play texts have been attributed to an anonymous playwright commonly known as the 'Wakefield Master', because of his skilfull handling of language, metre and rhyme (see Happé 2004: 37; Johnston [2]2008: 9). Six or seven of the plays show much similarity to York, making it likely that

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2004: 20; Edminster 2005; Beckwith 2009: 85, 89; Mazzon 2009: 6, footnote 7).

9    Early histories of medieval drama relied almost exclusively on the extant canon of play texts. To make external sources accessible, the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project (founded in 1976) has been locating, editing and publishing historical documents relating to dramatic and para-dramatic activities (see Happé 2004: 19; Johnston [2]2008: 8; King 2010: 626). The searches by REED editors have uncovered relatively few surviving play-scripts, suggesting that cycles were developed in only a small number of places. Apart from the York, Chester, Towneley and N-Town collections, there is fragmentary textual or documentary evidence of similar long sequences from Coventry, Newcastle and Beverley (Johnston [2]2008: 8).

material had been borrowed and adapted from there (see Happé 2004: 37; Normington 2009: 87). What is true for all mystery play collections is that the surviving manuscripts all post-date original performance, some by a considerable time span. King concludes:

> The surviving body of English medieval plays is more securely viewed as a random and eccentric corpus of texts written by unknown authors for ephemeral performance and recorded in a variety of manuscripts. [...] Many of them are not strictly 'finished', but are imperfect on-going and interrupted attempts at civic control, or at record-keeping, or are the products of early antiquarian exercises in retrospective preservation. (2010: 626)

A number of scholars (Clopper 2001; Happé 2004; Mazzon 2009; see also Johnston [2]2008: 7; Normington 2009: 70f.) have recently argued that the cycle plays developed, above all, as a result of the influence of civic organisations (craft guilds, lay religious fraternities, municipal corporations). The increasing wealth of some cities provided the resources for large-scale performances which required sufficient space and a considerable amount of time: "In the light of the necessity for urban wealth and civic pretensions, it is not surprising that geographically the known cycles are found in areas where there was a collection of prosperous urban centres like north east France, and northern England [...]" (Happé 2004: 20f.). Johnston ([2]2008: 7) confirms that northern English cities with strong civic authorities and craft guilds were particularly inclined to produce religious plays as a means of both reflecting and increasing civic wealth, prestige and devotion. In spite of their close relation to religious doctrine, Mazzon, following Glynne Wickham (1959: 123ff.), states: "[C]ycle plays seem, also given their close association with town administration and craft guilds, a mainly secular enterprise, at least when they reached their fully-fledged form" (2009: 7). This does not, however, diminish their overall devotional purpose.

Apart from social and economic purposes, Clopper has stressed a further motive for the production of the cycles, namely that urban authorities "recognized themselves to have a separate responsibility from the clergy for the morals and education of their people" (2001: 159), i.e. they felt responsible for the spiritual welfare of their citizens and perceived vernacular drama as a vehicle for public religious instruction. The dialogues are therefore shaped by a distinctly informative, didactic component. After all, the "exploratory, allusive, and fundamentally complex plays" (Walker [2]2008: 81) were intended to familiarise "an audience which was, by and large, not theologically educated" (Bergner 1998: 77) with religious doctrine.[10]

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10  In this didactic aim, the mystery plays must have been largely successful since the clergy seems to have  tolerated or even supported their production throughout the three centuries of their popularity (Jack 1989: 7). The cycles were withdrawn in the sixteenth century, as a decree from Elizabeth I officially forbade the performance of religious drama in 1559. However, it took a number of years before it became effective), because, according to Muir, in the age of reform and counter reform, "the medieval emphasis on God incarnate in contemporary society was replaced on the one hand by the Inquisition-enforced authority of the Church and on the other by the equally strict control of the ministers of the word of god and a fundamentalist approach to the Bible" ([3]2003: 9; see also Tschipper 1969: 39).

In general, the mystery cycles should best be seen as heteroglossic, in that they were shaped by many voices. These include the civic authorities, the clergy, the craft guilds (at least in some cities) and the community of spectators (Normington 2004: 6; see also Wickham [3]1992: 69). The result were hybrid texts which primarily fleshed out biblical narratives but also incorporated secular material from folk tales to popular songs (Mazzon 2009: 48, 162). For that reason, there is a certain amount of comic or farcical byplay in these texts, and a lay, extra-biblical outlook sometimes surfaces (Colish [2]2002: 209; see also Walker [2]2008: 76).

All in all, these texts would seem to be far from ideal for information about the spoken language of the time. What Bergner (1995) calls "the openness of medieval texts" is a specific quality in the case of the mystery plays. It results from the social and cultural framework of these texts, from the lack of linguistic standards and from the problems related to transmission and editorial practices (see Bergner 1995: 49; see also Bergner 1992: 170f.; Mazzon 2009: 13). In spite of the problems and necessary limitations, the mystery cycles were chosen for this study because they contain comic plays with farcical action and humorous elements, while remaining specifically religious dramas aiming at theological, spiritual instruction. According to Davidson, the plays were "deliberately designed to impress feelingly upon the people the spectacle of the Christian story" (1984: 133), and the more naturalistically the subjects were presented, the more moving they would be for the audience. The wish to move and engage is mirrored in the emphasis on human nature and everyday life in some plays of the mystery cycles (Mazzon 2009: 8). Thus it is one of their essential features "[...] to connect the events at the same time with the lives of real people, to use emotions and psychology and to extend it to the reality and the experience of the spectator witnessing the play" (Bergner 1994: 40). Moreover, some plays set biblical and apocryphal episodes in a distinctly medieval context:

> These were plays of and for the day rather than attempts at 'authentic' historical recreation" [...] Hence the shepherds of the Wakefield (Towneley) and Chester plays are as much contemporary Yorkshiremen and Cheshiremen as they are biblical Jews, reacting to the news of the Nativity as if it had been announced in their own time rather than as they imagined their ancient forebears would have done. (Walker [2]2008: 76)

It is natural to assume that this anachronistic tendency may have had an impact on the syntax and lexis employed in these plays. Mazzon states: "These texts therefore, even though they do not come close to transcriptions or recordings of actual conversations, look closer to plausible language use than 'literary works' proper" (2009: 162). In fact, her recent study of interactive dialogue sequences in the N-Town cycle (2009) revealed that there is, indeed, scope for a more systematic (pragmatic) investigation of the mystery cycles. Mazzon has demonstrated that Middle

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Johnston ([2]2008: 8) has claimed that it is partly due to its suppression during the Reformation that the extant canon of medieval English drama is much smaller than that from most Continental countries.

English drama offers "a good start for an attempt at capturing a glimpse of 'conversational rules' in Middle English" (2009: 5), providing attention is paid to the difficulties noted above about the handling of medieval texts.

The aim of this thesis is to study the speech-like characteristics in the comic texts of three mystery cycles – Chester, York and Towneley – on a micro level, on a macro level, and on a sociocultural level.[11] The corresponding texts from the N-Town collection will be useful to discuss the information yielded by the analysis of the core sample. In recognition of the fragmented nature of the surviving medieval play collections, I will investigate linguistic features across the range, rather than the frequencies of elements in a single cycle (cf. King 2010: 627). A wide range of terms, methodological tools and assumptions will help me to address my research questions, including various forms of politeness strategies, deixis, speech act theory, the socio-pragmatic scale of power and solidarity, conversation analysis, discourse analytical investigations, and the oral/literate continuum. Hence, pragmatic theory is not incorporated in the present study as an end in itself, but rather as a means of elucidating the 'speech-likeness' of dramatic dialogue. That said, I will devise a specific theoretical framework for each empirical chapter. This procedure should allow me to address a number of questions:

1) To which extent may fictional dialogues be classified as reliable evidence in searching for traces of authentic spoken interaction? How does the language of play texts differ from 'real' spoken discourse?

2) How do medieval notions of 'comedy' differ from modern ones? Can we conceive of texts from the Middle English mystery cycles as comedies? What historical/sociocultural factors may have shaped the language and style of the play texts?

3) Do the mystery plays contain speech-like features? In how far do these elements contribute to creating an impression of 'authenticity' and 'lifelikeness'?

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11 I will leave out of consideration two large groups of phenomena. First, I will not consider the morality plays, such as *Mankind* and *Everyman*, which exemplify through allegorical or typological representation the human soul and its ethical dilemmas (see Davenport 1982; see also Bergner 1994: 40; Colish [2]2002: 210; Crane 2007: 54ff.). While there is no doubt that this dramatic genre is important, the morality plays have their focal point and their heyday in the Early Modern English period. I have also excluded the miracle plays (dramatisations of the lives of saints) from the analysis, since we are left with only a few extant texts of this genre (see Grantley [2]2008).

## 1.2 Outline of the study

An investigation of orality in medieval drama requires an examination of possible approaches to the spoken discourse from the past, and speech-related genres have been regarded as valuable sources. Chapter 2 seeks to illustrate which types of speech-related texts may contain indications about the spoken language of the medieval period. Starting from Koch and Oesterreicher's (1985, 1994) discussion of orality and literacy, I will examine the concept of 'communicative immediacy' and its interrelations with the phonic/graphic code. The chapter will also provide an exploration of Culpeper and Kytö's categorisation of speech-related genres (2010). Comedy has been described as "a stereotypically 'oral' register" (Biber and Finegan 1997: 260), but it is debatable to which extent dramatic dialogue can be taken as providing data for authentic spoken interaction, given its fictive character. Accordingly, I will outline some of the basic resemblances and major differences that have been put forward to date, and thus examine the extent to which dialogue in play texts may be investigated searching for traces of 'real' orality.

Chapter 3 discusses in how far the Middle English mystery cycles might be considered 'comedies'. From the classical period on comedy is often treated as a problematic rhetorical mode. Because of its transgressive potential which may threaten moral-ethical values, writers on rhetoric seem unsure whether "they can responsibly enjoy comedic discourse, carefully prescribe its techniques and effects, or critique it" (Davis 2003: 205). It is unlikely that a developed theory of 'comedy' existed in the Middle Ages. The *comoedia* in the medieval period merely meant "auszeichnende Merkmale innerhalb der verschiedensten Dichtungsarten" ('distinguishing features within the most diverse types of genre'; Cloetta 1890: 53). In order to assemble some of these "auszeichnende Merkmale", classical texts and medieval poetics, with their formal categories and classifications of style, will be brought to bear heuristically on establishing and delimiting some generic characteristics of roles, themes and plot structure. The subsequent section of the chapter provides an outline of prevalent medieval attitudes to the subject of laughter, wit and humour and, in particular, of the guidance provided on this matter by the main textual source for Christianity, the Bible. My primary emphasis in this section is upon examining whether the raising of laughter was allowed within the governing theological framework of the cycle plays.

On the basis of the identified generic conventions, the comic texts from the mystery cycles will be assigned to three different groups. Once we have defined three groups of comic texts in the cycles, we need to assess their potential for linguistic mimesis, i.e. in how far these texts may have approximated spoken discourse. After having placed the mystery 'comedies' in their larger literary and sociocultural context, the section looks at style as a way to contextualise and frame notions of 'real' Middle English usage. Notably, Koch and Oesterreicher name comedy among

"Diskurstraditionen auf der Linie des *genus humile*, […] in denen Mündlichkeit bewusst hergestellt wird" ($^2$2011: 22).[12] In fact, I shall examine the influence of formal and stylistic guidelines for comedy as prescribed by classical and specifically Christian rhetoric. An awareness of this problem is necessary as a prelude to determining whether comic play texts were conceived in a style that is intended to evoke the spoken language of the period.

The main part of the present work is devoted to the empirical analysis of 30 comic texts from the Towneley, Chester and York mystery cycles. Culpeper and Kytö (2010) have brought together speech-like parameters and associate them with speech-like characteristics which other scholars have also held to be speech-like in some respect. The methodological chapter will apply Culpeper and Kytö's parameters to my Middle English sample. The empirical analysis discusses whether the comic texts of the mystery cycles contain speech-like features (such as terms of address, lexical repetition, demonstrative pronouns) and also identify the functions they serve in the texts at the micropragmatic level. Before discussing the occurrence of speech-like features in the sample, I will make explicit in which way the features under investigation are fundamental to spoken interaction.

The first two sections of my empirical chapter deal with interaction 'within the text'. Interactivity between characters is reflected by the use of second-person pronouns in the play texts. A more profound insight can be gained through an investigation of the choice between *T*- and *V*-pronouns, in order to draw conclusions about the usage and perception of politeness strategies and the power-solidarity semantic in a given period. The following section concentrates on interactivity in pair structures in the form of question-answer, imperative-compliance sequences, dialogic repetition and turn-initial discourse markers. The section on the speech-like dimensions of sharedness and function focuses specifically on the pragmatic analyses of interjections, demonstrative pronouns and deixis. I am particularly interested in illustrating their use to express the speaker's involvement and 'personal affect'. As we deal with versified texts which are governed "by the often intricate rules of rhyme and stanza" (Bergner 1998: 77), we have to examine to what extent the examined features are employed as mere line-fillers intended to maintain versification patterns, or whether they contribute to meaning-making proper.

The results for my core sample will be validated through cross-checking with the corresponding N-Town texts which are believed to tend more towards literacy than the other mystery play collections (see Mazzon 2009). Section 4.5 then summarises the findings I gained from investigating the speech-like features in the texts, and discuss them in relation to the research questions listed above. While examining stretches of dialogue that have particular

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12  'Discourse traditions in line with the *genus humile*, [...] in which orality is consciously produced' (my translation).

immediacy or interpersonal content, I will take into consideration how various linguistic features work in combination to convey power dynamics, cooperation and conflict, emotion and emphasis. In sum, careful quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data will help to get a clearer picture of the degree of communicative immediacy of the selected play collections, i.e. to which extent they may have preserved the features of spontaneous speech of the Middle English period. In this vein, the present work is also supposed to contribute to the discussion of realism in the cycle plays.

The final remarks provide a summary of the results in the preceding chapters and looks at some remaining problems. I will also consider the applicability of modern pragmatic approaches to historical data by reflecting upon the extent to which this study has (a) improved our understanding of Middle English drama, (b) offered empirical results that can be compared with contemporary research, and (c) provided a contribution to the 'realism debate'. Finally, I will briefly discuss ideas for further research.

# 2 Comedy play texts as a speech-related genre

## 2.1 Speech-like genres and 'communicative immediacy'

The elusive notion of 'authentic' spoken interaction in Middle English texts is closely connected to the relations between forms of writing and spoken language. One vector that scholars have used to approach historical oral discourse is genre, i.e. "the differences between types of texts and the ways that each might provide clues to ordinary usage" (Moore 2016: 198).

As spoken interaction from the past is not directly available for inspection, historical pragmatics has to rely on written sources. However, because of the supposed binary opposition between speech and writing, spoken language was long considered to be the only legitimate data source for pragmatic studies. Drawing upon Ludwig Söll's (1985: 17ff.) discussion of orality and literacy, Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher (1985, 1994) redefined this rather crude dichotomy between spoken and written language with a model which "has since been further made fruitful for historical considerations" (Schaefer 2012: 1278).[13] First of all, their model draws a distinction between code/medium and conception.[14] While the medial opposition with regard to the communication channel (phonic vs. graphic) represents a clear-cut dichotomy, the conceptual dimension can be best represented as a continuum. The conceptual continuum ranges from highly informal language at one pole to highly elaborate, formal expressions at the other pole. In order to avoid the ambiguous designations 'orality' and 'literacy', Koch and Oesterreicher employ the term *Sprache der Nähe* ('language of immediacy') for the informal/oral type of linguistic conception and the term *Sprache der Distanz* ('language of distance') for the formal/literate type.

Since there is no one-to-one relation between medium and linguistic conception, the type of language and the degree of 'immediacy' or 'distance' of a text must depend on factors other than the medium itself. The following list comprises a number of different communicative parameters that characterise communicative conditions of immediacy and distance, respectively:

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13   See also Bader 1994: 44ff.; Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6f.; Jucker, Fritz and Lebsanft 1999: 5f.; Koch 1999: 399ff.; Jucker 2000a: 17ff., 2006a: 326, 2008: 895ff.; Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 176ff., 2010: 10ff.; Kytö 2010: 49; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010: 9f.; Schaefer 2012: 1278; Støle 2012: 6.

14   With the exception of Culpeper and Kytö (2010), English(-language) studies concerned with the relation between spoken and written language have largely relied on the multi-dimensional study of register variation by Douglas Biber (1988) rather than on Koch and Oesterreicher's model of communicative immediacy and distance (1985, 1994).

| Prototypical parameters of 'communicative immediacy' | Prototypical parameters of 'communicative distance' |
|---|---|
| physical (spatial, temporal) immediacy | physical (spatial, temporal) distance |
| private setting | public setting |
| familiarity of the partners | unfamiliarity of the partners |
| high emotionality/involvement | detachment |
| dialogue | monologue |
| maximum cooperation of the partners | minimum cooperation of the partners |
| free development of topics | fixed topics |
| spontaneity | reflexion |
| ... | ... |

Figure 1: Parameters of 'communicative immediacy' (based on Koch 1999: 400; see Koch and Oesterreicher 1985: 23; 1994: 588)[15]

Apart from the first one, the communicative parameters are all of a scalar nature, "thereby contributing decisively to the continual character of the conception of linguistic utterances" (Koch 1999: 401). The combination of parameter values determines the text's position on the conceptional continuum. The more the text is formulated under the extra-linguistic conditions of immediacy (private setting, familiarity, spontaneity, etc.), the more the genre will be assigned a position close to the 'communicative immediacy' pole. Even though linguistic conception is not governed by the medium, there is nonetheless an undeniable affinity between them (see *Figure 2*). Texts in the phonic medium (e.g. spontaneous everyday conversation) tend to show more traces of communicative immediacy; typical written language types, such as legal documents, scientific or academic writing, primarily show features of communicative distance. Moreover, some parameters of the communicative situation are basically predefined by the medium. But this affinity, by no means, "invalidate[s] the fundamental rule: that medium and conception are independent of each other" (Oesterreicher 1997: 195). Koch and Oesterreicher's model incorporates non-prototypical language types of both the phonic and the graphic medium. Texts in the phonic medium, such as public lectures, formal speeches or sermons, can display features of communicative distance, while texts in the graphic code, for instance private letters, diaries, plays or e-mails, may nevertheless be close to communicative immediacy. In other words, as summarised by Jucker, "the language of immediacy also occurs in the graphic code, and the language of distance also occurs in the phonic code" (2000a: 20).[16]

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15  See also Bader 1994: 46; Jucker 2000a: 21; Kytö 2010: 49; Lutzky 2012a: 46.

16  This line of thinking tallies well with the results that Wårvik presented in her study on orality and literacy in Old English texts: "Through the use of these high-involvement features typical of spoken discourse, a literary text can create the same kind of involvement despite the detachment natural to the written mode in which it usually appears" (Wårvik 2003: 26). Analogously, Tannen has noted the existence of
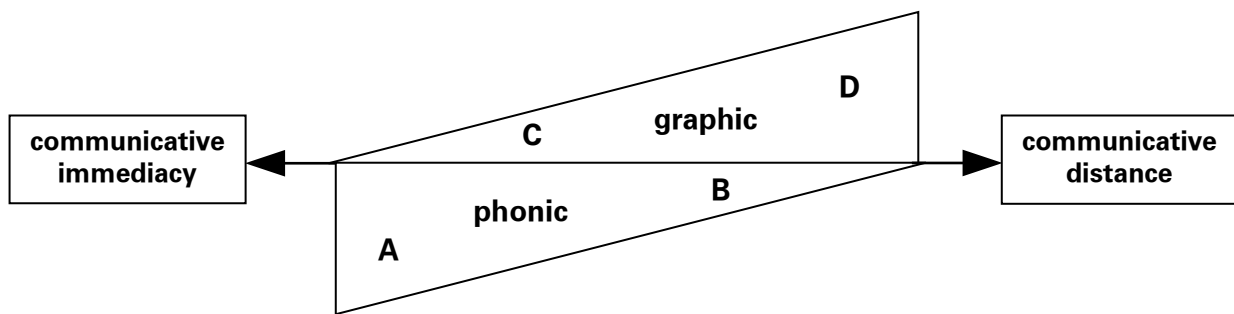
Figure 2: Phonic/graphic medium and the continuum of 'communicative immediacy' and 'communicative distance' (adapted from Koch and Oesterreicher 1985: 18, 23, 1994: 588; Koch 1999: 400; see also Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 11)

Koch and Oesterreicher's model demonstrates that although historical pragmatics has to rely on texts in the graphic medium, it is not restricted to studying the language of communicative distance. There is sufficient data on the language of immediacy, as texts in the graphic code may capture features of the language of immediacy (see Koch 1999: 402; see also Jucker 2000a: 24, 2008: 896; Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 19; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010: 10; Lutzky 2012a: 46). Therefore, historical linguists have sought to sample text types of area C in *Figure 2*, i.e. written material close to the pole of communicative immediacy.

According to de Beaugrande, "data closer to actual speech show more and more spontaneous functional aspects, whereas data closer to standardized written prose show fewer and more deliberate functional aspects" (1994: 43; see Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 9). Thus, text types which imitate or record oral discourse, such as plays or trial proceedings, contain linguistic exponents of communicative immediacy and are therefore more closely related to the actual spoken language of the past than other text types which are not based on or related to oral discourse: "Here, face-to-face spoken interactions are embedded within written texts" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 9). Apart from trial proceedings, drama, and prose fiction, texts which were designed to be read aloud like sermons as well as parliamentary debates, personal correspondence, diary entries, or conversation manuals are considered to be speech-related (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 7ff.; Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 176ff., 2010: 21ff.; Jucker 2000a: 24; Kytö and Walker 2003: 221ff.; Traugott and Dasher 2005: 47; Fischer 2007: 13; Kytö 2010: 35, 48; Lutzky 2012a: 47; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 13). Careful analysis of these texts may provide a number of indirect hints about the oral register of earlier language varieties.

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texts which combine "the involvement of spoken language with the integration of writing" (1982: 13). She states that features which have been identified as characterising oral discourse are also found in written discourse: "[S]trategies typically associated with spoken discourse can be and are used in writing, and strategies typically associated with written language are likewise realised in speech" (1983: 80).

In Chapter One of *Early Modern English Dialogues*, Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 17f.) classify speech-related genres, as opposed to writing-based and -purposed genres, with the help of three categories: 'speech-like', 'speech-based' and 'speech-purposed' (2010: 16f.):
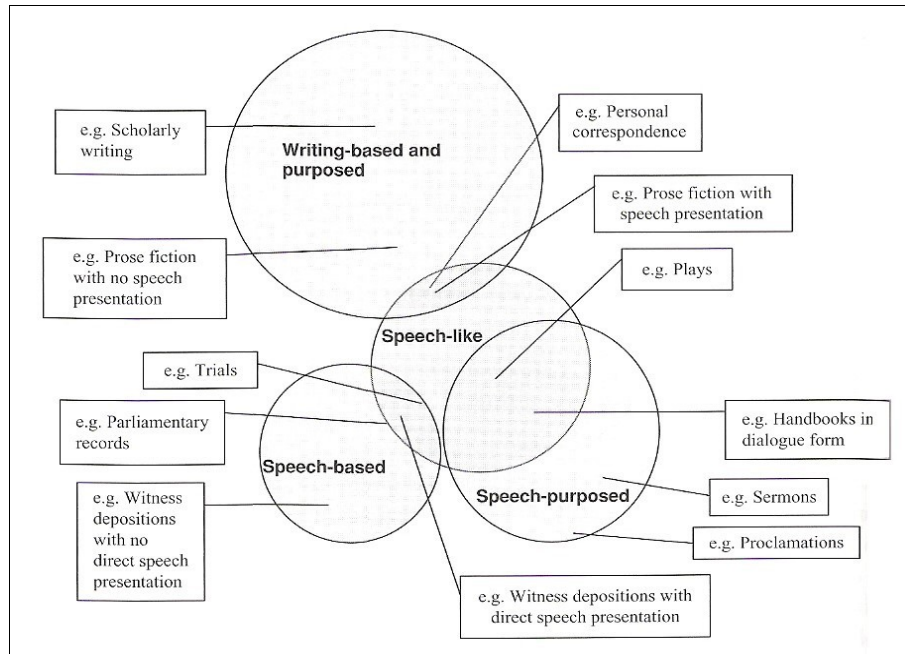


Figure 3: Interrelations between written speech-like, speech-based and speech-purposed genres, as well as writing-based and -purposed genres in the Early Modern English period (source: Culpeper and Kytö: 2010: 18)

'Speech-like' genres, such as personal correspondence, contain the parameters of Koch and Oesterreicher's communicative immediacy. 'Speech-based' genres, such as trial proceedings, are those that are based on an actual 'real-life' speech event. In contrast to modern audio or video recordings, these historical texts are generally not viewed as exact recordings but rather as reconstructions of speech events (see Lutzky 2012a: 47). 'Speech-purposed' genres are designed to be articulated orally. Some 'speech-purposed' genres, such as sermons and proclamations, are designed merely to be recited, but others, most notably plays, are designed to be performed and therefore produce real-time discourse in the spoken medium (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 17). Culpeper and Kytö's categories are dependent on the historical and cultural context (Moore 2016: 200). Drama was perhaps more of a speech-purposed genre in the Middle English period, since we know that in the Middle Ages, play texts were designed almost exclusively for performance – such works as the mystery plays were rarely intended for private reading. Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 17) claim that play texts generally seek, at least in part, to be mimetic of oral discourse for the purposes of performance, in order to dramatise interactions and involve the audience. It is of course debatable in how far fictional dialogues may be classified as reliable evidence for the communicative practices of historical speech communities. The extent to which the language of play texts can be considered similar to spoken discourse will be examined in the following section.

## 2.2 Play texts vs. 'real' spoken discourse

The language of play texts has for a long time received relatively little attention from stylisticians compared to the amount of research carried out into the language of poetry and prose. Drama has therefore been called 'the neglected child' of literature (see Macrae 2014: 253). For Culpeper and Kytö, "[p]art of the problem may lie in the fact that spoken conversation has for many centuries been commonly seen as a debased and unstable form of language, and thus plays, with all their affinities with speech, were liable to be under-valued" (2010: 9). I believe that the style of drama has been largely neglected because prior to the advent of sociopragmatics and discourse analysis, stylisticians did not have the adequate methods or tools to analyse dramatic texts. Scholarly attempts to generalise about 'oral style' have sometimes fallen back on inadequate or inaccurate notions about the spoken language of the past. The sense of what sounds most speech-like "will often correlate more with what sounds like our contemporary diction or grammatical structures, and less with Middle English everyday diction and grammatical structures" (Moore 2016: 192). As a result, literary critics who have described certain portions of dialogue in drama as 'literate' and 'formal' or 'authentic' and 'realistic' have often relied upon mere intuition or impression. Shakespeare's comedies, in particular, have been regarded as direct representations of the norms of colloquial Early Modern English (see Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 175, 192). Precise descriptions of these norms of speech have only rarely been provided by literary critics. Salmon comments:

> […] in the absence of objective criteria for describing colloquial English of the period, assessments of his style as realistic or artificial must depend on critical intuitions which may differ widely. One critic feels that we know 'by instinct' that in Shakespearean drama we are listening to 'the real language of men', and she is supported by another who regrets that 'To the subtle realistic language of the Falstaff scenes justice has seldom been done'. (1987: 37)

During the second half of the twentieth century, research on the language of drama gradually gained momentum (Macrae 2014: 254). The development of stylistics in the 1960s was advanced by new developments in linguistics in the late 1970s and in the 1980s which equipped stylisticians with methods of analysis for pragmatic studies of literary dialogue. Conversation analysis, including the norms of conversational turn-taking, speech act theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) provide useful approaches for the study of dramatic dialogue. Despite the availability of suitable linguistic methods and frameworks, the style of play texts remains largely unexplored from a purely linguistic point of view (see Betten 1994: 531). Yet, since the advent of sociopragmatic theory a number of scholars (e.g. Herman 1995; Short 1996, Culpeper and Kytö 2000a) have commented on the relation between drama and

'real' conversation and somewhat confirmed older assumptions about speech-related drama on a more solid basis.

It is now generally acknowledged in studies on play texts that dramatic dialogue is not similar but close to real-life dialogue. Short, for instance, considers drama as the literary genre which "is most like naturally occurring conversation" (1996: 168). Studying colloquial speech in the *Canterbury Tales*, Salmon (1975) finds several features in Chaucer's dialogues that are related to oral discourse, such as hesitations, oaths and greetings. Furthermore, Salmon had claimed in her article on Shakespearian English that some sections of the dramatic dialogues are "reasonable imitations of Elizabethan speech" (1965: 106). Magnusson's stylistic study of Shakespeare's works argues that his dramatic language represents "a sophisticated rhetoric based not so much upon literary artifice as upon the potentialities of conversation" ([2]2004: 2; see Fitzmaurice 2010: 690). Brown and Gilman justify the selection of four Shakespearean tragedies for their analysis on politeness by stressing the fact that "dramatic texts provide the best information on the colloquial speech of the period" (1989: 159). Lakoff and Tannen chose play texts in their article about conversational strategy because they "wanted something that was supposed to approximate natural conversation, and that would seem to its audience to be natural and something they could identify with, something similar to their intuitive assumptions about ordinary conversation" (1984: 325). In his investigation of the syntax and textual functions of comparative constructions in Middle English, Norrick (1987: 256) claims that drama is generally closest to everyday language among the literary genres. According to Biber and Finegan (1992: 699), the relatively focused norms, the relative lack of movement, and the nearly consistent oral characterisations of dialogue in fiction and drama indicate that literary dialogue is fairly similar to 'real' conversation in some respects. For Herman, "the whole range of the interactive potential of language use is, of course, what dramatic dialogue mobilizes" (1995: 157). Investigating discourse markers in Early Modern English, Jucker argues that "[f]ictional dialogues in plays and prose fiction contain many features that are absent from other types of language and that are similar to features that in Modern English are part of spoken language" (2002: 211). Archer and Culpeper have described drama texts as comprising "interactive, face-to-face, speech-related data, which has only a minimum of narratorial intervention" (2003: 43). Mazzon, in her study on address terms in Shakespearean plays, states that "theatrical works mimic spoken interaction relatively more faithfully than other types of literary works" (2003: 223). Taavitsainen and Jucker confirm this view, in that dialogues in literary texts, though following genre conventions and displaying "condensed, stylised, or stereotypical" language use, "are in imitation of normal, everyday communication and thus closer to spontaneous speech than other genres" (2008: 134). More recently, Moore (2016: 201) lists

'play texts' (which often purport to mimic speech) as one genre that is potentially promising as a source of everyday English.

Within the dramatic genre, comedy play texts have been considered most 'speech-like' on the immediacy-distance continuum (see Walker 2007: 18). Investigating interjections in Early Modern English, Taavitsainen finds that of the genres included in the *Helsinki Corpus*, drama comedies provide "the nearest approximation to everyday spoken language in historical texts"(1995a: 460), as they are based on dialogue and attempt to reconstruct the less formal register of the middle layers of society and thus of the less educated, common people. In their study "Data in Historical Pragmatics: Spoken Interaction (Re)cast as Writing" (2000a), Culpeper and Kytö apply their knowledge about speech-related genres to a pilot corpus of different Early Modern English text types, in order to determine whether and in what ways they are linguistically similar to spoken face-to-face interaction. They select four genres from the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760* which represent either authentic dialogue (trial proceedings and witness depositions) or constructed dialogue (comedies and prose fiction). They conclude that comedies provide the closest approximations to impromptu speech in displaying high frequencies of five out of six selected speech-like features. Other recent analyses have confirmed comedy play texts to be closely related to spoken language. Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice consider "drama comedies as the closest to speech" (2007: 18), and Lutzky states that "the text type drama comedy imitates spoken conversation to a certain extent" (2012a: 247).[17]

How adequately the play text represents the linguistic characteristics of speech in a given period may be dependent on the author's skill. Salmon states: "It is, of course, a selective and inadequate representation of speech; but the more skilful the dramatist the more skilful he will be, if presenting the normal life of his time, in authenticating the action by an acceptable version of contemporary speech" (1965: 105). In their study of the development of written and spoken genres over four centuries, Biber and Finegan analyse both dialogue from plays and from prose fiction as two speech-like genres written for spoken delivery.[18] They confirm Salmon's argument: "Though written and carefully edited, these genres are both modelled after face-to-face conversation; the extent to which they show the linguistic characteristics of conversation depends on an author's skill" (1992: 693).[19]

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17  Such findings are challenged by Hope's study (1993) of *thou* and *you* in the Early Modern English period. Hope warns against the assumption that dramatic dialogue adequately mirrors contemporary spoken language. His evidence from the Durham ecclesiastical court records suggests that the written discourse in depositions provides the most accurate representation of the spoken original compared to other text types (see also Kryk-Kastovsky 2006a: 168).

18  In a later study concerned with differences in the language behaviour of men and women from earlier historical periods, Biber, this time together with Burges (2000), uses fictional and dramatic dialogue again as a source that provides fairly accurate representations of historical spoken discourse.

19  But they also note that literary dialogue in all periods is different from 'real' conversation with regard to its higher "conversational load," which may result from the need to advance the plot (Biber and Finegan

Some scholars assume that drama dialogue in general can be close enough to authentic spoken discourse, so that hypotheses and conclusions drawn from drama would also apply to everyday conversations. Burton (1980: 96) writes that the language of literary dialogues is similar to real-life conversation since they rely on the same processes and conventions. For LuMing Mao this is mainly true for pragmatic mechanisms:

> Fictional conversation is no less liable to pragmatic principles and constraints, and all participants in fictional conversation are just as rational and cooperative in honouring Gricean conversational maxims either by observing or flouting them to generate 'standard' or conversational implicatures. (1992: 61)

The conventions, principles and rules which are typical of real-life spoken interaction are exploited by playwrights in order to create literary language which is then interpreted by the readers/spectators according to precisely these conventions, principles and rules (Herman 1995: 6). The construction of a play text's meaning is therefore dependent on the communicative competence of the audience: "The cooperative principle of conversation extends to literary discourse: assuming that meaning is intended, readers will try to decode a text according to their competence with the language" (Arnovick 2006: 11). Tim Machan argues that "when utterances, speech acts, or the representation of varieties serve the mimetic aspirations of a work's fictional world, they succeed or fail in accordance with how well they reproduce the linguistic semiotics of the reader's social world" (2003: 17). While literary dialogue may be primarily a creative tool for the author, it has to be comprehensible and sound familiar to the reader or audience. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine how the audience is able to recognise and react to dramatic dialogue as a version of 'real' conversation if the two did not share significant features (see Short 1996: 179).

This has to do with the fact that many constructions in conversation are ritualised, "with specific phrases taking on discourse functions; dramatic and fictional dialogue exploits the knowledge speakers have of discursive frames and the associated formal routines" (Mazzon 2009: 121). Dramatists may employ well-known sayings, proverbs and other prefabricated constructions in their play texts. The familiarity of these items establishes a link between play and audience, aiming at sympathetic attention, recognition effects and memorability (Brewer 1988: 87).

The maxims of conversation identified by Grice (1975) can also be effectively manipulated within dramatic discourse. A significant part of conversation works through deliberate and overt violation of Grice's maxims. In a play, the characters' non-observance of conversational maxims can generate 'conversational implicature' in that the hearer expects that a particular communicative strategy underlies the speaker's flouting and thus deduces meaning from it (see Tan 1993: 30; Macrae 2014: 259).

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1992: 699ff.).

One might note Tannen's (1984: 153ff., 159) argument that literary discourse is close to ordinary conversation, as both derive their impact from speaker/writer–audience involvement: "face to face conversation, like literature, seeks primarily to MOVE an audience by means of involvement, as opposed to (typically) expository prose […], which seeks to CONVINCE an audience" (1984: 153). That is why, according to Tannen, written imaginative literature builds on and intensifies features of face-to-face conversation (1984: 153f.). Studying Chaucer's representation of speech, Salmon (1975) likewise observes that the dialogues imitate expressions of involvement, such as oaths, more typical of speech.

However, dramatic speech can only be assimilated to actual face-to-face communication. "There is interdependence but not identity between them" (Herman 1995: 7), and although some similarities have been identified, there are also fundamental points of difference:[20]

a) Syntactic orderliness

Because of the need for comprehensibility on the part of the audience, dramatic dialogue is typically viewed as "tidied up speech" (Herman 1995: 94). Leech and Short therefore define features "which interfere with and interrupt the fluency of speech" ([2]2007: 130) as the main differences between on-line spontaneous speech and dramatic dialogue. These non-fluency elements include false starts (repetition or reformulation), personal allusions, overlaps, digressions, sentence fragments, hesitation pauses, hesitation fillers, repeats, etc. (see Hess-Lüttich 1985: 203; Leech 2000: 698; Mazzon 2009: 121). If non-fluency elements do occur in play texts, they "cannot be dismissed as unconscious non-strategic items, since they have been put there on purpose by the author, to appeal to or manipulate the reader, to assist in characterisation, and so on" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 84).

b) Informational intensity

Spontaneous interaction is usually concerned, on the one hand, with controlling and maintaining the process of communication and, on the other hand, with conveying the message. Hughes notes that in a literary context, "these interpersonally generated features are not the primary concern, rather the dialogue seeks to convey information needed to carry forward the action and/or relate significant interactions to broader themes in the work as a whole" (1996: 49). Biber and Finegan confirm that "[l]iterary dialogue in all periods is unlike modern conversation with respect to its 'Informational/Involved Dimension'" (1992: 699ff.). Furthermore, the information structures involved in drama

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20 The differences between dramatic dialogue and real-life conversation outlined in this section largely resemble Keir Elam's (1980: 110ff.) framework in his work *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*.

dialogue are primarily tailored on the audience's knowledge and expectations. Many plays contain audience addresses, repetition, verbal staging, etc. These resources filled in the audience and allowed better comprehension of the action, emotions and moral intentions of the performed play (see Mazzon 2009: 122).

c) Illocutionary purity

The illocutionary progress of the dialogue is indispensable for the development of dramatic action. Thus, drama usually exhibits better-structured and more coherent global units than actual spoken interaction: "Each individual illocution generates the next in a dynamic chain" (Tan 1993: 28).

d) More systematic floor-apportionment control

The construction of dramatic dialogue is dependent on turn-taking strategies and the control of the 'floor', including the choice of interactants, the order of turns and floor-apportionment control within a segment or scene: "Floor creation and floor management options are foundational aspects of dialogic, dramatic art, since they control how speech itself may function in an episode, segment or scene" (Herman 1995: 93). However, while the general rules of turn-taking and strategies of floor management have similar meanings in spoken interaction, "drama dialogue manifests these rules in a neater manner" (Tan 1993: 29).

The process of constructing a play accounts for other differences between drama and genuine face-to-face interaction. According to Hughes, when writers endeavour to imitate naturally occurring conversation on the page, "they face an initial problem in that they are transferring what is dynamic, primarily oral/aural, interpersonally motivated and strongly temporally dependent to a medium ill-suited to showing these distinctive features" (1996: 60). The dramatic text, as written text, is transferred to the spoken medium in performance. But even if written dialogue is designed to be staged and 'overheard' by the audience, "kann er seine papierne Herkunft nicht völlig abstreifen, sondern allenfalls die Illusion spontaner gesprochener Sprache erwecken"[21] (Goetsch 1994: 40), precisely because it was written out before the performance. For Goetsch (1994: 40), dialogue in drama is therefore generally planned, fixed, reflective, complex, aesthetically formed and never in a literal sense spontaneous, disintegrated and fragmentary. In addition, the performance of the written dialogue requires another fundamental change in mode of discourse:

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21 'It cannot completely strip its paper origin, but at best create the illusion of spontaneous spoken language' (my translation).

> […] the transformation and transmutation of the written lines into the dynamics of spoken speech, which involve more than the recitation of the lines of the text by actors. […] It is as spoken speech, too, that the linguistic code which is employed in dialogue is integrated with the visual, auditory as well as other codes of theatre – paralinguistic, kinesic, gestural, etc. […]. (Herman 1995: 13)

Finally, apart from the differences enumerated above, the discourse relations in which dramatic dialogue unfolds are much more complex than the communication process in naturally occurring conversation that is straightforwardly face-to-face. Short suggests that the 'discourse architecture' of prototypical drama includes at least two levels of communication: The superordinate level of discourse is that between the playwright and the audience/reader. Embedded in that higher level of communication is the discourse between the characters of the play (Short 1996: 169). Diagrammatically, this could be represented as follows:
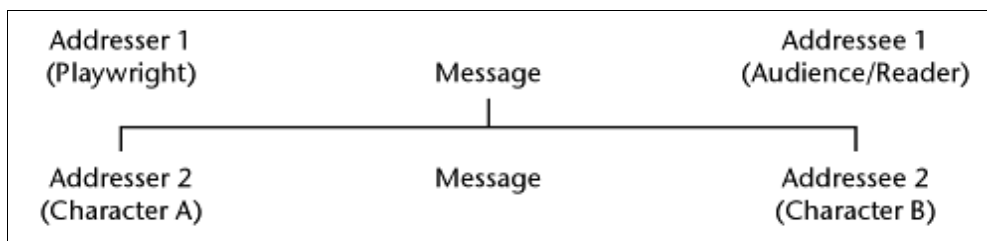


Figure 4: Short's model of dramatic discourse (1996: 169)

Every play consists of a series of such multiple discourses, and there can be even more layers, "as when one character reports to another the words of a third" (Short 1996: 169).[22] In addition to this, Short's model of dramatic discourse emphasises that the communication between the plays' characters is intended to communicate meaning to the 'overhearing' audience, i.e. to convey the message from playwright to audience: "the interactions in the play world among specific personae, in the 'lateral' dimension, operate simultaneously on the 'projective' dimension, towards receivers, the audience or readers" (Herman 1995: 29). The interactionality of the author–audience discourse level is often a question of degree. Meaning transference in drama may, however, not follow a predetermined, finite course from playwright to audience, as suggested in *Figure 4*. According to Tan, comedy, specifically, aims at an "engaging activity" (1993: 27) between writer and audience, and therefore points particularly towards interactionality. Current approaches in pragmatics and cognitive linguistics have stressed the role of both the context and the audience in the construction of meaning, thus revising the unidirectionality of the 'message' at the superordinate level of discourse in Short's model of communication (see Macrae 2014: 258). What we encounter in plays is "interpreted action" (Herman 1995: 6), depending on the active

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22   See also Pfister's communication model for dramatic texts ([8]1994: 21).

intellectual and emotional participation of the audience (Herman 1995: 6). There seem to be three indispensable elements of drama: action, speech, and their perception and evaluation. In fact, the dramatist's assumptions about the text's reception by the audience can influence its formation:

> As far as dramatic speech is concerned, such pressures ensure that the face-to-face interactions that inform the dialogic scene are always responsible to the audience presence – however the role of the audience is assessed, as overhearers or participants – and to the necessities of presentation. (Herman 1995: 10)

What is remarkable about comedy is that the comic effect of a particular scene, dialogue etc. may be apparent to the audience, i.e. to the external level of communication, yet imperceptible to the dramatic figures of the play, i.e. to the internal level of communication. According to Pfister ([8]1994: 81ff.), the comic generally evolves from of the discrepancy between the superior awareness of the audience and the inferior awareness of the characters. This superior awareness puts the spectator in a position "aus der er die einzelnen Situationseinschätzungen der Figuren als abweichend von der Norm des faktisch Angemessenen beurteilen kann" ('to judge to what extent the figures' differing assessments of a given situation deviate from the facts'; Pfister [8]1994: 82). The dramatist may thus manipulate and exploit the roles of characters and audience, so as to generate (comic) meaning out of the confirmation or violation of shared norms, value and modes of conduct. Dramatic action hence depends for its effect on the conventions invoked in a play, "which are drawn from the wider context created by the time, place and situation in which dramatic activity is embedded" (Fitzmaurice 2010: 692).

To summarise thus far, the difference between the language of drama and the language of conversation concerns not only the 'syntactic orderliness', 'informational intensity' or the fact that dialogue is written to be spoken but also the idea of the layered communication structure as well as the influence of external factors, such as the text type, the literary and societal conditions and the contemporary tastes of the audiences (see Goetsch 1985: 215). Considering these differences, we can conclude that even speech-purposed genres like play texts may not adequately represent the linguistic characteristics of speech in a given period. They operate differently and thus have to be interpreted differently than actual orality. But if we keep in mind that they are a few steps removed from authentic spoken interaction, we may extract indirect evidence from written texts, i.e. "traces or indications of conceptional orality, the *disiecta membra* of the language of immediacy" (Oesterreicher 1997: 199).

## 2.3 Conclusions

The carefully constructed language of drama cannot be regarded as a true representation of spoken interaction. These written data "give us, even at best, an inaccurate and skewed picture of spoken language" (Rissanen 2008: 60) and are therefore at best approximations to the oral discourse of a given period. But there is a strong case for claiming drama to be close to 'real' spoken interaction. Play texts are therefore rightly categorised as one of the genres that may "offer a way forward for understanding historical spoken interaction" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 2).

In fact, in the study of historical dramatic texts, it is not so much the 'real' spoken language of the period in question that one may investigate, but rather the way dramatists chose to indicate spoken interaction in their plays (Jucker 1998: 6; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 8f.; Pakkala-Weckström 2010: 220; Lutzky 2012a: 46; see also Jucker 2002: 211; Mazzon 2009: 5). Consequently, in studying literary sources, we can investigate the degree to which their representation, not their reproduction or imitation, comes near to actual everyday language. In addition, the way in which writers chose to represent the everyday language of the period may reveal the literary conventions that signal orality to the audience (Moore 2016: 192). Therefore, on the one hand, these historical records of spoken language have a functional tie to 'real' contemporary face-to-face communication; on the other hand, they contain data that justify a pragmatic analysis in their own right (Jucker 2006a: 326; Pakkala-Weckström 2010: 220). Therefore, we may analyse the use of discourse markers in medieval literary texts, not only because we believe that this is a more or less adequate approximation to how discourse markers were used in spoken interactions of the time, but because we are directly interested in how medieval playwrights used discourse markers in his plays (cf. Jucker 2006a: 326).

Even if dramatic dialogue can never contain fully authentic spoken discourse, "salient signs of communicative immediacy" (Koch 1999: 408) may be detected in play texts from past periods. An adequate investigation of orality in historical texts requires a precise analysis of the context of the communicative events. It is necessary to evaluate the linguistic data "with respect to both the underlying discourse traditions and the relevant communicative constellations" (Oesterreicher 1997: 206). Studying the language of drama thus involves understanding the speech conventions of the time but also the sociocultural context, intertextuality and stylistic guidelines of the play texts.

# 3 'Comedy' in the mystery cycles

## 3.1 The medieval sense of 'comedy'

In Chapter 2, I identified 'comedy' as a speech-purposed genre whose written language might provide clues to spoken conversation. The following sections will reveal whether we shall regard texts from the Middle English mystery cycles as 'comedies' according to medieval and modern notions of the genre. Only if these play texts can be considered instances of the speech-purposed genre 'comedy plays', may we look for strategies of spoken discourse and features of communicative immediacy.

The crucial thing to bear in mind from the start is that literary concepts and ideas were ambiguous and diffused in the Middle Ages: "[...] medieval culture lacked a critical paradigm for the writing of comedy" (Valdés Miyares 2010: 114; see also Bareiß 1982: 231; Jack 1989: 2f.). This lack of clearly defined categories is related to educational values. Medieval poetics did not follow the Aristotelian tradition where poetry is a distinct discipline in its own right, comprising epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry and even instrumental music (see *Poetics* 1447a). The mediaeval educational system was still based on the seven liberal arts. Study of the *trivium* comprised grammar, rhetoric and dialectic (or logic), while the *quadruvium* was composed of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy (see Jack 1989: 2; Wickham [3]1992: 107; Curtius [11]1993: 47; Habib 2005: 154). It was in relation to these particular disciplines that poetry tended to be assimilated in the later Middle Ages: "Somewhere between the seven liberal arts and the four faculties what we could call literature or aesthetics had been skirted" (Jack 1989: 3).

From the beginnings of western civilisation, the theory and practice of literature had been closely connected with rhetoric (Curtius [11]1993: 235; Habib 2005: 175; Arnovick 2012: 569). One of the three major divisions of medieval rhetoric, for example, involved instruction in poetic composition. The connections between the two traditions are so manifest that Curtius postulates the "Herrschaft der Rhetorik über die Poesie" ('dominion of rhetoric over poetry'; [11]1993: 158). In the later Middle Ages, the study of poetry was then increasingly absorbed by the grammatical tradition (Habib 2005: 175). Thus, the term 'comedy' was largely neglected in the medieval period partly because of the greater power of other disciplines, some of which "tended to draw literature into their service on their own terms" (Jack 1989: 3).

There are, however, other reasons why "the identity of comedy became confused and its boundaries blurred" (Stott 2005: 20). Bareiß (1982: 137ff.) discovered this early on in his comprehensive study on classical and medieval theories of comedy. He claims that in antiquity *docere* and *delectare* are in a fairly balanced relationship. But the principle of *delectare*, associated

with comedy and the principle of *ridiculum* in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1449a) and *Rhetorica* (1371b), is spurned by medieval Christianity (Bareiß 1982: 67, 121). Indeed, Bareiß (1982: 121ff.) notes an almost unanimous rejection of every form of theatre, from the time of the Church Fathers to the late Middle Ages. St. Jerome, in his *Epistle to Pope Damasus*, condemns comedies, associating them with pagan decadence and the world of illusion:

> At nunc etiam Sacerdotes Dei, omissis Evangeliis et Prophetis, videmus Comoedias legere, amatoria Bucolicorum versuum verba canere, tenere Virgilium: et id quod in pueris necessitatis est, crimen in se facere voluptatis. (21.13; see Jack 1989: 4; Auksi 1995: 151)[23]

Lawrence M. Clopper (2001: 21) has outlined the medieval perception of *theatrum*, claiming that the term came to be associated with obscene pagan practices and the games of the Roman circus. Suchomski confirms this in his study of the medieval *comedia*:

> Es ist bekannt, daß dramatische Gattungen im Mittelalter durch Jahrhunderte nicht gepflegt wurden. Eine maßgebliche Ursache dafür ist wohl die früh-christliche Polemik gegen das spätantike Theater. Die Praxis, soweit sie nur entfernt mit theatralischen Darbietungen verwandt erscheint, wird [...] von der offiziellen Kirche ausdauernd bekämpft. (1975: 226; see also Clopper 2001: 50)[24]

During the Latin Middle Ages, the words *mimi* ('mimes'), *ioculatores* ('jesters') and *histriones* ('actors') did not refer to those participating in representational drama. Rather, they designated a continuing tradition of entertainers similar to the jugglers, jesters, singers and tumblers who performed in the taverns and courts of Rome and throughout Western Europe during the early Middle Ages. Schabert calls these travelling mimes and jugglers "kärgliche[n] Bruchstücke[n], die von der dramatischen Kultur der antiken Welt [...] in das Mittelalter gerettet worden waren" ([3]1992: 43; see also Johnston [2]2008: 3).[25] Even Isidore, who was well aware that comedies and tragedies were public spectacles seems to have had no accurate picture of ancient theatre practice. In book 18, where he discusses tragedy and comedy in the context of public theatre, *scena* is defined as follows: *Scena autem erat locus infra theatrum in modum domus instructa cum pulpito, qui pulpitus orchestra vocabatur, ubi cantabant comici, tragici, atque saltabant histriones et mimi* (18.43.).[26] In his entry on *histriones*, which he defines as those who would represent the deeds of

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23 'But as it is, we see even priests of God slighting the Gospels and the prophets, reading comedies, reciting love passages from bucolic verse, cherishing Vergil and voluntarily making themselves guilty of that which in the case of children is done under compulsion' (Trans. Mierow 1963: 118f.).

24 'It is well-known that medieval dramatic genres were not cultivated for centuries. A significant reason for this is probably the early Christian polemic against late ancient theatre. If it bears only the slightest resemblance to a dramatic performance, (theatrical) practice will be [...] persistently fought by the official Church' (my translation).

25 '[...] the scanty fragments from the dramatic culture of the ancient world that had been passed on to the Middle Ages' (my translation).

26 'The stage building was a place in the lower part of a theater built like a house, with a platform which was called the *orchestra*, where the comic and tragic performers would sing and where the actors and mimes would perform' (Trans. Barney et al. 2006: 369).

shameless women, he notes that they would show stories and events by dancing (18.48). *Mimi*, according to Isidore's definition, are imitators (*imitatores*) of human activity. They had their own narrator, who would tell the plot before they performed their mime (18.49). The entries in his *Etymologiae* imply that for Isidore, comedies and tragedies were performed by singers whose recital was illustrated with gestures by actors and mimes. In fact, till the thirteenth century and later, medieval scholars believed that classical plays had been presented as recitations: "this shows the sort of basic uncertainty impossible today and gives another reason for regarding poetry and drama as less clearly differentiated in an age when the former was often declaimed anyway" (Jack 1989: 3; see also Suchomski 1975: 314, footnote 655; Bareiß 1982: 170; Kelly 1993: 43; Clopper 2001: 9, 41ff.; Johnston [2]2008: 3).

Accordingly, the 'theatre-hostile' attitude of Christianity after the Fall of the Roman Empire prevents the consistent development of a theatrical practice that conforms to Aristotle's classification or directly imitated the dramatic genres of classical antiquity (Stott 2005: 20f.). This also excludes the formation of a specifically Christian theatrical practice and a related Christian tradition of dramatic theory. Bareiß aptly remarks that "letzten Endes jedes dramentheoretische Wissen nur in Verbindung mit einer entsprechenden Bühnenpraxis einen Wert hat" (1982: 137f.).[27] Indeed, ancient comedy theory was connected with Greek and Roman comedy practice, for which it developed specific rules and regulations (see Stott 2005: 20). In the absence of a corresponding medieval comedy practice, the only possible orientation is ancient comedy as a basis and model for development. Clopper (2001: 33) argues that knowledge of the actual nature of classical comedy, including the New Comedy of Menander and its Roman followers, was scarce in the Late Middle Ages (see also Valdés Miyares 2010: 114). The only classical dramatist whose plays continued to be well-known in the Middle Ages were the comedies by Terence: "Denn bekanntlich werden diese im Rahmen des Grammatikunterrichtes zur Pflege eines eleganten Lateins in der Schule gelesen, so daß sie allen Gebildeten bekannt sind" (Bareiß 1982: 204; see also Hess 1965: 12; Woolf 1980: 25; Burrow 1982: 58; Clopper 2001: 59; Colish [2]2002: 206).[28] Alongside the plays by Terence, treatises and commentaries by grammarians of the late classical period such as Diomedes, Evanthius, and Donatus were important transmitters of ancient ideas about classical comedy and tragedy to the Middle Ages. But while some ideas about the drama of antiquity were passed on, scholars "had little or no first-hand experience of what they were writing about" (Stott 2005: 21).

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27  'Any theoretical knowledge about drama is ultimately valuable only in connection with [...] stage practice' (my translation).

28  'They are read in the context of grammar teaching at school, in order to cultivate an elegant Latin, so that they are well-known to all educated people' (my translation).

A number of confusions remained unexplored and became increasingly widespread, as will be shown later in this section. The discrepancy of comedy theory and comedy practice must hence be seen as an essential factor in the representation of the medieval discourse on the genre. It seems necessary at this point to look more closely at learned medieval notions of comedy, which were in some respects different from classical comedy. Various ancient and medieval sources may help in establishing and delimiting at least some generic characteristics of plot structure, characterisation and style.[29] I will use 'comedy' to indicate the classical or modern sense of the dramatic genre. I will use '*comoedia*' whenever I want to indicate that we are talking about medieval usage. The use of different terms shall also function as a sign that we should not confuse medieval notions with modern ones (cf. Clopper 2001: 12 on the distinction between 'theatre' and *theatrum*).

## a) Etymology, roles and themes: rustic stock characters

The Latin word *comoedia* was supposed to be a compound of *comos* (*villa*) and *odos* (*cantus*). Thus, *comoedia* was often interpreted as *villanus cantus* or *cantica agrestica* ('village/peasant song') in the Middle Ages (Suchomski 1975: 221f.; Bareiß 1982: 196, 199; Kelly 1993: 114; Kendrick 2000: 90f.; Stott 2005: 3). A rarer etymological definition emphasised the connection between comedy and *χῶμος* ('festive banqueting'; Kendrick 2000: 91). Isidore says, writers of *comoedia* were named either from the places where they performed, or from the times when people came to hear them, namely, after dining: *Comoedi appellati sive a loco, quia circum pagos agebant, quos Graeci κώμας vocant, sive a comisatione* (8.7.6; see Kelly 1993: 39).[30] Isidore's etymology was adopted in thirteenth-century encyclopedic works – for example, in Huguccio's *Magnae derivationes*, Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum doctrinale*, or John Balbus Januensis' *Catholicon* – which in turn contributed greatly to the spread of this particular etymological interpretation in the late Middle Ages (Suchomski 1975: 221).

The role and meaning of the etymology suggest that the derivation of the word *comoedia* from 'village' or 'feast' could be an indication of some of the genre's essential characteristics. It is important to note that 'etymologising' in the Middle Ages had an intrinsic value even if the derivation of a word was not understood any more or even historically wrong (see Suchomski 1975: 221; Bareiß 1982: 194f.; Curtius [11]1993: 486ff.; see also Bergner 1992: 167, 1995: 39f.). The method of reconstructing the roots and deeper meaning of proper names and words *ex causa, ex origine* or *ex contrariis* was made fruitful for religious writings as well as poetry. Exemplary of

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29   For a detailed discussion of medieval notions of the *comoedia*, see Suchomski (1975), Bareiß (1982) and Kelly (1993). Most examples in this section are lifted from their works.

30   'Writers of comedies are so called either from the place, because people performed them in rural districts, which the Greeks call κώμας, or from revelry (*comissatio*), for people used to come to hear them after a meal' (Trans. Barney et al. 2006: 180).

medieval etymologising as a heuristic procedure are grammar, rhetoric and poetry of the ancient world, but especially Isidore's *Etymologiae* (Suchomski 1975: 221f.). The important role of etymology as a means to detect the hidden meaning of a term suggests that both the derivation from 'village song' as well as from 'feast' may give clues to major characteristics of the genre. Bareiß states that "die Etymologie der Komödie in den mittelalterlichen Werken keineswegs Selbstzweck ist, sondern schon funktional gedeutet und als wesentlicher Hinweis auf die anderen Kriterien der Komödie gesehen werden muß" (1982: 199).[31]

A literal interpretation of its etymology would imply that the matter of *comoedia* is *vilis* or *humilis* and restricted to rural or peasant themes and characters. In Isidore's Etymologies, we find the following distinction between characters in *comoedia* and *tragoedia*: *Sed comici privatorum hominum praedicant acta; tragici vero res publicas et regum historias* (8.7.6; see also Isidore *Etym.* 18.46; Kelly 1993: 39).[32] For Suchomski (1975: 222f.), this implies that Isidore extends his *comoedia* personnel to the middle social stratum or, in general, to non-aristocratic characters. The distinctive feature here seems to be that with the *comoedia* we enter into the privacy of individuals, which may belong to both the lower or the middle social layer (Bareiß 1982: 203). Suchomski concludes: "Auf keinen Fall zeichnet sich das Mittelalter aber durch die simplifizierende Gleichsetzung von *comoedia* und niederen Personen und von *tragoedia* und hohen Personen aus" (1975: 223; see also Bareiß 1982: 206, 209).[33]

Medieval knowledge about themes and roles of the *comoedia* is not limited to the definition of the appropriate social sphere. As noted above, the reading of Terentian plays was influential in the Middle Ages. In fact, Terence's comedies serve as source material for typical themes and characters: "Klingen die meisten Definitionen und Meinungen auch recht abstrakt, so besteht doch für den mittelalterlichen Leser eine ideale Möglichkeit, die Figuren der Komödie selber zu verifizieren: die Terenzstücke" (Bareiß 1982: 204).[34] The Terence commentators, like Evanthius and Donatus, point out that the characters used by the playwright tend to be stereotypes, stock figures. Among those stock characters are the foolish old man, young lovers, the clever slave/servant, courtesans and the braggart soldier (Williams 1973: 110f.; Suchomski 1975: 224; Bareiß 1982: 204f.; Schabert [3]1992: 54f.; Curtius [11]1993: 390; see also Hess 1965: 10, 15). Medieval writers, however, did not adhere strictly to the prescribed character schemes. John of Garland's personnel catalogue in his *Parisiana Poetria*, for instance, does not match any known

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31  '[...] the etymology of comedy in medieval works is by no means an end in itself, but must be interpreted functionally and as an essential reference to the other criteria of comedy' (my translation).

32  'Writers of comedies proclaim the deeds of private people, but tragedians, public matters and stories of kings' (Trans. Barney et al. 2006: 180).

33  'On no account can medieval definitions be distinguished by the simple equation of *comoedia* and low-status characters, or of *tragoedia* and high-status characters' (my translation).

34  'While most of the definitions and opinions sound quite abstract, there is an ideal method for the medieval reader to verify the typical characters of a comedy: the Terentian plays' (my translation).

theoretical sources (see Section b) below; see also Kendrick 2000: 93). Hence, the medieval educated may have gained precise – albeit sparse – ideas about typical themes and roles from (classical) comedy, which, however, does not prevent them to adapt their theoretical knowledge to medieval literary conventions (Suchomski 1975: 224).

b) Plot structure: *And afterward endeth in gladnes*

A distinct feature of Roman comedy is its almost invariable plot: a young man desires a woman whom he attains at the end by overcoming several obstacles (Williams 1973: 110). This plot development towards a happy end is the most common medieval distinction between *comoedia* and *tragoedia*. In the formulation of Donatus, the essential difference is that a *comoedia* begins ominously, turbulently or sadly and ends happily, whereas a *tragoedia* begins well but ends in disaster (*Aeli Donati Commentum Terenti* 4.2; see also Hardison 1980: 136; Kelly 1993: 12). The movement from misery to joy as the basic plot structure of the *comoedia* was supported by the works of Huguccio, John Balbus Januensis and other medieval grammarians (Kelly 1993: 155). Thus, a comedy can be almost any versified narrative that ends on a happier note than that on which it began (Kendrick 2000: 92). Both practitioners and theorists revive this rule between the fourteenth and sixteenth century. The best-known medieval vernacular comments come from Lydgate's fifteenth-century *Troy Book:*

> A comedie hath in his gynnyng,
> At prime face, a maner compleynyng
> And afterward endeth in gladnes;
> And it the dedis only doth expres
> Of swiche as ben in povert plounged lowe; (2.847–51)[35]

To the Middle Ages, the main character of a *tragoedia*, as Chaucer's Monk phrased it in the *Canterbury Tales, is yfallen / out of heigh degree In to myserie / and endeth wrecchedly* (3166-7; see Williams 1973: 109; Valdés Miyares 2010: 114). After the Monk has told his tale, the Knight in the "Nun's Priest's Prologue", contends that it is too distressing to hear about the sudden fall of great, wealthy men. He prefers the contrary of tragedy:

> As whan a man hath been in povre estaat,
> And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunaat,
> And there abideth in prosperitee. (2775–7)[36]

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35  I have decided to translate only those Middle English words, phrases and passages which are substantially different from their Present-Day English counterparts.
36  […] joy and great consolation, as when a man has been in a poor condition, and climbs up and becomes fortunate, and remains there in prosperity (my translation).

Although Chaucer never explicitly uses the term *comoedia* in his *Canterbury Tales*, the Knight gives here "the conventional happy-ending definition" (Kendrick 2000: 92). It seems that he was aware of the term and of its meaning as the reverse to tragedy (see Aristotle *Poet.* 1453a which compares the outcome of tragedy with the comic plot development). In fact, Chaucer contrasts the general notion of the *comoedia* to the tragic ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*, when at the end of that work he wishes to have the power to compose a *comoedia* before he dies:

> Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende mygght to make in som comedye! (5.1786–8)

The passages from the *Troy Book* and the *Canterbury Tales* imply that any narrative following this *tristia* ('sad') to *leta* ('merry') pattern is comic; there is no connection between *comoedia* and drama, or – how Clopper prefers to call it – comedy and "enacted script" (2001: 12, 13, 20, 22, 30, 33, 50, 160, 168). In fact, there was even some confusion in the Middle Ages as to what 'drama' or 'dramatic' entailed (Clopper 2001: 5f.). Common in Isidore's times and the subsequent period is the tripartite division of poetry in *narrativum*, *dramaticum* and *mixtum*:

> Apud poetas autem tres characteres esse dicendi: unum, in quo tantum poeta loquitur, ut est in libris Vergilii Georgicorum: alium dramaticum, in quo nusquam poeta loquitur, ut est in comoediis et tragoediis: tertium mixtum, ut est in Aeneide. Nam poeta illic et introductae personae loquuntur. (8.7.11)[37]

Isidore assigns both *tragoedia* and *comoedia* to the dramatic mode. His source is probably Servius' commentary on Virgil, which, in turn, draws on the teaching of the grammarian Diomedes. Both Servius and Diomedes illustrate the dramatic mode with the *tragoedia* and *comoedia*, but also with Virgil's *Georgics* which is composed entirely of the speech of herdsmen (see Kelly 1993: 40; Clopper 2001: 6; see also footnote 99). This implies that the term *dramaticus* was extended and used synonymously with 'dialogic'. There is no reference to dramatic performance or the theatrical nature of the genre in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Still, the application of the *dramaticum genus* to the *comoedia* seems to prove that medieval theorists are at least aware of dialogic exchange as a characteristic of the genre (Suchomski 1975: 226f.).

The terms *comoedia* and *tragoedia* were apparently used to distinguish two types of non-dramatic narrative in the Middle Ages (Clopper 2001: 5f.). Accordingly, the *MED* defines *comedīe* as "a narrative with a happy ending; also, any composition intended for amusement" (sense 1). For the medieval grammarian Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Horace's description of comedy (that was

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37 'Moreover, among the poets there are three modes of speaking: one, in which the poet alone speaks, as in Vergil's books of the *Georgics*; the second mode is dramatic, in which the poet never speaks, as in comedies and tragedies; the third is mixed, as in the *Aeneid*, for there both the poet and the characters who are represented speak' (Trans. Barney et al. 2006: 181).

performed in the Roman theatres) is obsolete. In his *Documentum de arte versificandi*, he states that he will omit what Horace has to say about comedy, for it is no longer in use; he will deal instead with humorous matter (*jocosa materia*; 2.3.163; see Kelly 1993: 98, 1997: 84; Kendrick 2000: 93).[38] In Chapter 3, Geoffrey exemplifies his recommendations for the treatment of *jocosa materia* in a short comic tale which is written in a low, colloquial style, with passages employing direct speech (2.3.164). Although the whole text is perfectly suited to physical representation, the brevity of the piece indicates that Geoffrey sought to illustrate a narrative rather than a dramatic genre.

In none of the medieval *artes poetriae* "is comedy ever associated with drama or performance on stage, as it had been in classical times; instead, it is understood to be versified narrative" (Kendrick 2000: 93). With the intention to illustrate the appropriate stylistic treatment of *humilis materia* for the reader, John of Garland in his *Parisiana Poetria* (4.422-458) cites a short narrative in prose in which an evil spirit called Ginnechochet tells a peasant that he is a cuckold, as two of his boys are from the village priest. The matter of the story adequately reflects the requirements of a *comoedia* outlined above. Most striking are the rural location of the action and the farmer as the main protagonist, representing the village etymology. The cuckold theme, which forms the background of the Ginnechochet tale, corresponds to the rule that a *comoedia* treats private matters, mostly *amores*. After the prose version, John gives the same story in 24 hexameters which represent the actual speech of the characters in dialogic form. John apparently uses the term *comoedia* for the same form of comic literature that Geoffrey of Vinsauf defines as *materia jocosa* or *res jocosa*. Following the story of Ginnechochet, John of Garland argues, with reference to Horace, that a *comoedia* should have five parts corresponding to its cast of five characters (4.463-7). This requirement of five parts is hardly compatible with the epic form and seems only explainable in relation to classical drama. In addition to the reference to Horace, the fact that John of Garland's own *comoedia* in the *Parisiana Poetria* consists almost entirely of dialogue implies that he recognised dramatic dialogue as a feature of the *comoedia*. For Faral, however, John of Garland's use of dialogue in his Ginnechochet story merely serves to demonstrate that simple, rustic characters should speak in an appropriately 'low' style: *Il est donc évident qu'il considérait la comédie comme une variété du genre narratif* (1924: 327; see also Geoffrey of Vinsauf *Documentum* 2.3.164).[39] Moreover, John adds: *Introducitur in comoedia perfecta maritus et eius uxor, et adulter et minister adulteri – uel eius castigator – et nutrix adultere uel seruus mariti* (4.468-70).[40] This catalogue of characters suggests that he did not have

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38  Geoffrey uses even broader designations such as *comica res, res jocosa* or *sermo jocosus* in his *Poetria Nova*.

39  'Thus, it is obvious that he considered comedy as an exponent of the narrative genre' (my translation).

40  'A correct comedy has the following cast: a husband and wife, an adulterer and the adulterer's accomplice – or his critic – and the adulteress's nurse, or the husband's servant' (Trans. Lawler 1974:

the subject of Terentian comedies in mind but rather the plot of numerous medieval French fabliaux (Suchomski 1975: 225). John's definitions apply to many of the comic tales that one finds in medieval collections and even to the more literary versions used by Boccaccio and Chaucer (Davenport 2004: 153). The Ginnechochet tale therefore exemplifies schoolish medieval Latin adaptations and imitations of classical comedy:

> These late twelfth- and thirteenth century Latin texts were versified narratives including some dialogue whose characters, plots and subject matter (usually adultery and the outwitting of a jealous husband by his wife and a younger man) were virtually the same as those of the thirteenth-century French fabliaux. (Kendrick 2000: 93)

John of Garland further remarks: *Non tamen semper introducuntur quinque persone in qualibet comoedia, quia quandoque materia iocose recitata comoedia nuncupatur* (4.470–2).[41] A few lines later, he gives the conventional etymological definition by deriving the term from *villanus cantus* and adds: *est differentia inter tragoediam et comoediam, quia comoedia est carmen iocosum incipiens a tristicia et terminans in gaudium* (4.477–9; see Kendrick 2000: 93; Davenport 2004: 153).[42]

The flexibility of the term in the medieval period is probably most evident in the title of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, since "sowohl das personelle als auch das stofflich-thematische Kriterium den Titel nicht rechtfertigen" (Bareiß 1982: 209).[43] Structurally, however, Dante's poem begins with a sad recitation and ends with a joyful one (Stott 2005: 21). This was the reason why, according to the author of the *Epistle to Cangrande*[44], Dante wished his poem to be called a *comoedia*:

> […] comoedia vero inchoat asperitatem alicuius rei, sed eius materia prospere terminatur, ut patet per Terentium in suis comediis. [...] Et per hoc patet quod comoedia dicitur presens opus. Nam si ad materiam respiciamus, a principio horribilis et fetida est, quia Infernus, in fine prospera, desiderabilis et grata, quia Paradisus. (13.10.29, 13.10.31; see also Hess 1965: 23; Bareiß 1982: 211f.; Valdés Miyares 2010: 114, footnote 4)[45]

This comment illustrates the progression of "a divine comedy" (McNeir 1951: 604) as opposed to the progression of a classical comedy. The divine comedy moves not only from misery towards a happy conclusion but out of ignorance to understanding, or in terms of the theological framework,

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81).

41 'Yet there are not always five characters in every kind of comedy, since sometimes any humorous treatment of a subject is called a comedy' (Trans. Lawler 1974: 81).

42 '[…] there is a difference between tragedy and comedy; for a comedy is a humorous poem beginning in sadness and ending in joy' (Trans. Lawler 1974: 81).

43 '[…] neither the personal nor the material-thematic criterion justify the title' (my translation).

44 Dante's authorship of the *Epistle to Cangrande* has been questioned (see Barański [2]2010: 181).

45 '[…] comedy introduces some harsh complication, but brings its matter to a prosperous end […] For if we have respect to its content, at the beginning it is horrible and fetid, for it is hell; and in the end it is prosperous, desirable, and gracious, for it is Paradise' (Trans. Ferrers Howell and Wicksteed 1904).

from despair "to a transcendent joy, involving salvation or union with God" (Jack 1989: 8). From the discussion in the *Epistle to Cangrande* arises the notion that the progressive structure is an essential generic feature in the Middle Ages:

> Dantes Argumentation macht auf jeden Fall deutlich, daß zur Klassifikation „Komödie" (bzw. auch „Tragödie") durchaus nicht alle Gattungsmerkmale immer notwendig sind, daß Handlungsverlauf und Ausgang als eigenständiges Differenzkriterium anzusehen sind [...]. (Bareiß 1982: 212)[46]

### c) Mixing jest and earnest

The use of *comoedia* and *tragoedia* in the Middle Ages suggests that the two terms were designated to any piece of literature (especially to the narrative genre) on the basis of its content, characters and plot structure: "To a degree this merely reflects the more flexible approach to literary kinds prevalent in the period [...]" (Jack 1989: 2). In his seminal study of Latin literature in the Middle Ages, Curtius ([11]1993: 161, 425) has convincingly argued that the crossing and mixture of stylistic genres became commonplace in medieval times. This tendency to cross forms "entspricht auf der inhaltlichen Seite die im Mittelalter beliebte Mischung von Scherz und Ernst, ja von Sakralem und Burleskem" ('corresponds to the mingling of jest and earnest, and indeed of the sacred and the burlesque on the side of content, which was so popular in the Middle Ages'; Curtius [11]1993: 162). He traces the medieval *ludicra/seria* theme back to at least Pliny the Younger ([11]1993: 419ff.). Contrary to Auerbach's opinion (e.g. [2]1959: 149), according to Curtius (1952: 68), the comic and tragic style were not strictly separated in ancient theory. Indeed, both Cicero and Horace developed a subtle, more context-sensitive understanding of both modes in their work and thus allowed for a certain flexibility. In fact, Horace permits an occasional deviation from the high style in tragedy and from the low style in comedy:

> versibus exponi tragicis res comica non volt; indignatur item privatis ac prope socco dignis carminibus narrari cena Thyestae: singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem. interdum tamen et vocem comoedia tollit iratusque Chremes tumido delitigat ore; et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri, Telephus et Peleus cum pauper et exsul uterque proiicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba, si curat cor spectantis tetigisse querela. (*Ars Poetica* 93-98)[47]

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46  'Dante's argumentation makes it clear that for the classification 'comedy' (or 'tragedy') not all generic features are always necessary; plot structure and outcome should be regarded as independent characteristics [...]' (my translation).

47  'A theme for Comedy refuses to be set forth in verses of Tragedy; likewise the feast of Thyestes scorns to be told in strains of daily life that well nigh befit the comic sock. Let each style keep the becoming place allotted it. Yet at times even Comedy raises her voice, and an angry Chremes storms in swelling tones; so, too, in Tragedy Telephus and Peleus often grieve in the language of prose, when, in poverty and exile, either hero throws aside his bombast and Brobdingnagian words, should he want his lament to touch the spectator's heart' (Trans. Fairclough [13]1991: 459).

In a similar way, Cicero had suggested that comic subjects may be associated with serious concerns: *Sed hoc mementote, quoscumque locos attingam, unde ridicula ducantur, ex eisdem locis fere etiam graves sententias posse duci* (*De Oratore* 2.61.248; see also Aristotle *Poet.* 1449a; Gilhus 1997: 48; Graf 1999: 35; Davis 2003: 206).[48] Donatus, according to Kelly (1993: 65), likewise admits that comedy does allow serious personages and tragic verses.

Several scholars have drawn attention to the typically medieval "comico-serious dialectic" (Burde 2010: 241; see also Kolve 1966: 19). Janicka (1962: 23f., 40, 41, 53) has stressed the predilection in medieval thought, art, and literature for antithetical contrasts, including the juxtaposition of the sublime and the low, the sacred and the comic-grotesque. In any case, as McNeir remarks, the Middle Ages "saw nothing incongruous in the use of *babewyiis* or grotesques in the decoration of cathedrals" (1951: 614). Curtius writes that the mixture of jest and earnest is "ein gedankliches und formales Schema [ist], das in der rhetorischen Theorie, in der Dichtung, in der Poetik, aber auch im Umkreis der durch den panegyrischen Stil fixierten Lebensideale erscheint" ([11]1993: 425).[49] He adds: "In der Tat finden wir *ludicra* im Mittelalter auch innerhalb der Bereiche und Gattungen, die für unser modernes, an der klassizistischen Ästhetik geschultes Empfinden eine solche Mischung grundsätzlich ausschließen" ([11]1993: 425; see also Classen 2010: 94).[50]

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48  'But remember this, that whatever subjects I may touch upon, as being sources of laughing-matters, may equally well, as a rule, be sources of serious thoughts' (Trans. Sutton 1942: 383).
49  '[…] a conceptual and formal schema which appears not only in rhetorical theory, in poetry, and in poetics, but also in the circle of the ideal of life established by the panegyric style' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 424).
50  'And in fact we find in the Middle Ages *ludicra* within domains and genres which, to our modern taste, schooled by classicistic aesthetics, absolutely exclude any such mixtures. This is also true of the literature of the church' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 424).

## 3.2 Medieval attitudes to laughter

Although both etymological definitions of the *comoedia* ('village/peasant song' and 'feast') may assume joy and high spirits (Kendrick 2000: 91), most medieval theorists never mention humour or laughter as one of its features or goals (see Kelly 1993: 13; Burde 2010: 217). Conversely, modern notions associate 'a comedy' primarily with a dramatised event, and the comic with any kind of discourse provoking laughter. In fact, the raising of laughter is seen as an essential element in its presentation. Explaining the phenomenon of laughter, however, has always been problematic: "Across the centuries, laughter has been variously understood as vice or cowardice, as delight caused by surprise, the product of defamiliarization, a means of averting antisocial conflict, or an extra-linguistic bark signalling the limits of understanding" (Stott 2005: 121). The problem is that the raising of laughter usually involves the violation of *decorum* ('propriety'), and what is considered decorous differs from one culture to another: "Depending on the society and period, attitudes to laughter, the ways in which it is practised, its objects and its forms are not constant but changing (Le Goff 1997: 40).

The raising of laughter in comedy and hence the violation of *decorum* furnishes even more problems in a religious context of production. After all, medieval drama had a close connection to the teachings of the Church: "Those who sought to introduce laughable situations into the Christian history had to assess their contribution against received teachings on laughter in a spiritual context" (Jack 1989: 67). If we claim that some of the cycle texts may be considered 'comedies' in the modern sense, we have to examine whether comic elements were compatible with the theological framework and serious religious message of medieval drama, or whether the raising of laughter interfered with the religious vocabulary and judgement. Several questions will be addressed in this section: Could laughter exist within the governing theological framework? Which types of laughter are tolerated or even encouraged? Why are certain kinds of laughter rejected by the Church? To find answers to these questions, it is necessary to relate the texts to a background of religious thought – "not necessarily the more abstruse religious thinking of the exegetes, for the drama was essentially aimed at a popular audience – but to the major beliefs prevalent at the time" (Jack 1989: 10).

Ancient classical writers like Aristotle considered laughter a distinctive feature of human beings: "That man alone is affected by tickling is due firstly to the delicacy of his skin, and secondly to his being the only animal that laughs" (*De Partibus Animalium* 3.10; see Kolve 1966: 126; Le Goff 1997: 43; Johnston 2002: 17; Burde 2010: 216; Classen 2010: 12). This view was passed on to early medieval thought by the works of Quintilian, Marcianus Capella, Boëthius,

Cassiodorus, and Alcuin of York, among others (see Kolve 1966: 127; Suchomski 1975: 10; Bareiß 1982: 122; Curtius [11]1993: 419ff.; Johnston 2002: 17; Goodrich 2010: 531).

*Ridiculum*, as seen above, is related to the principle of *delectatio* in ancient sources (see Aristotle *Poet.* 1449a). Horace, in his *Ars Poetria* (which was quoted by many medieval critics), defines *prodesse* and *delectare* as the central tasks of the poet (333) and a mixture of the instructive and the agreeable as the most desirable goal (343-4). In order to keep the audience listening, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* recommends the orator to employ devices that provoke laughter, such as a caricature, ambiguity, exaggeration, comparisons or unexpected turns (1.6.10.; see Gilhus 1997: 48; Davis 2003: 205; Crane 2007: 35; Mierke 2014: 202). Similarly, Cicero's *De Inventione* claims that the weary spirit can be refreshed by admiration or laughing: *Nam, ut cibi satietas et fastidium aut subamara aliqua re relevatur aut dulci mitigatur, sic animus defessus audiendo aut admiratione integratur aut risu novatur* (1.17.25).[51] In Book 6 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian stresses that laughter in forensic rhetoric diverts the attention from the factual level of argumentation and instead may refresh and revive the judge when he has begun to be bored or wearied by the case (6.3.1).[52] The effect of a jest, according to Quintilian, depends not on reason, but on an emotion (*Inst. Orat.* 6.3.6), which is why laughter may exercise a persuasive power over the audience: *cum videatur autem res levis et quae ab scurris, mimis, insipientibus denique saepe moveatur, tamen habet vim nescio an imperiosissimam et cui repugnari minime potest* (6.3.8).[53] Thus, for classical thinkers, *risus* can be an effective means of producing and performing a persuasive act of discourse. Cicero states in *De Oratore*: […] *vel quod ipsa hilaritas benevolentim conciliat ei, per quem excitata est* [...] (2.236).[54] Seeber phrases it in German: "Wer den Zuhörer zum Lachen bringt, hat ihn auf seiner Seite" (2012: 101; see also Graf 1999: 34).

The Christian evaluation of laughter is more ambivalent than the classical view: "Christianity in particular has been famously unable over the centuries to speak in one voice on

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51 'For just as loathing and distaste for food is relieved by some morsel with a bit of a tang, or appeased by a sweet, so a mind wearied by listening is strengthened by astonishment or refreshed by laughter' (Trans. Hubbell [5]1993: 51).

52 Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* are most thoroughly concerned with the use of humour, but these works were practically inaccessible until the end of the fifteenth century (Murphy 1967: 334ff.; see Crane 2007: 35, footnote 15). Only the passages about laughter's nature, source, appropriateness etc. in Cicero's *De Inventione* and pseudo-Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium* seem to have had an impact on medieval rhetorical theory (Crane 2007: 35).

53 'Now, though laughter may be regarded as a trivial matter, and an emotion frequently awakened by buffoons, actors or fools, it has a certain imperious force of its own which it is very hard to resist' (Trans. Butler [8]1995: 443).

54 'Merriment naturally wins goodwill for its author' (Trans. Sutton [6]1996: 373).

the topic of laughter" (Burde 2010: 215f.).[55] According to Curtius ([11]1993: 423), the Church exhibited a diversity of views – from acceptance and toleration to vehement rejection.

Early Christianity rigorously criticised and protested against laughter (Le Goff 1997: 43f.; Classen 2010: 13; Valdés Miyares 2010: 114). This view is closely connected with the *topos* of the never-laughing Christ (Bareiß 1982: 122; Diller 2002: 3; see also Suchomski 1975: 11; Jack 1989: 70). The *Cursor Mundi* says of Christ: *þat thris he wep we find i-nogh, / Bot we find neuer quar he logh* (18856–7; see Kolve 1966: 126).[56] Indeed, it is quite clear that the Bible predominantly teaches man to beware of laughter: *vae vobis qui saturati estis quia esurietis vae vobis qui ridetis nunc quia lugebitis et flebitis* (Luke 6:25 VUL; see Jack 1989: 69; Classen 2010: 10).[57] The criticism of worldly laughter reflected in the sayings from the Gospel of Luke found fruitful ground in the early Church, which equated levity and mirth with immorality, foolishness and ignorance:

> 3 melius est ire ad domum luctus quam ad domum convivii in illa enim finis cunctorum admonetur hominum et vivens cogitat quid futurum sit 4 melior est ira risu quia per tristitiam vultus corrigitur animus delinquentis 5 cor sapientium ubi tristitia est et cor stultorum ubi laetitia 6 melius est a sapiente corripi quam stultorum adulatione decipi (*Ecclesiastes* 7:3-6 VUL; see Jack 1989: 69)[58]

In the writings of the Church Fathers, a fundamentally critical attitude to laughter was common. The Apostle Paul forbids *stultiloquium* ('folly speech') and *scurrilitas* ('buffoonery'; *Ephesians* 5:4 VUL; see Curtius [11]1993: 421f.; Johnston 2002: 17). From this perspective, obscenity, foolish talking and coarse joking is equated with immorality, impurity and even idolatry. Thus, *stultiloquium* and *scurrilitas* are associated with spiritual error and the most serious of sins (Jack 1989: 69).

Early medieval criticism often interpreted the expression of laughter as a form of physical pleasure in opposition to pious abstinence. Clement of Alexandria, author of the earliest ascetic condemnation of laughter, contends that laughter is a carnal desire that Christians should control and restrain: "In the process of determining pious deportment, laughter became subject to the rules of appropriate behaviour and the rational ordinances of selfcontrol that kept base instincts in check" (Stott 2005: 123). Laughter was generally regarded as inappropriate and dishonourable, particularly among the monastic orders (Le Goff 1997: 45; Stott 2005: 123; Goodrich 2010: 531). Ephrem the Syrian, Basilius, Cassianus and St. Benedict regarded laughter as a danger to monastic

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55  In Chapter 6 (124–144) of *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (1966), V. A. Kolve draws attention to a number of normative texts in order to explore which kinds of laughter were tolerated or even encouraged in a medieval religious context. Further biblical references to laughter in the Bible are to be found in Curtius ([11]1993: 421ff.) and Jack (1989: 68ff.).

56  'We find that he wept thrice, but never that he laughed' (my translation).

57  'Wo to you that ben fulfillid, for ye schulen hungre. Wo to you that now leiyen, for ye schulen morne, and wepe' (Luke 6:25 WYC).

58  '3 Yre is betere than leiyyng; for the soule of a trespassour is amendid bi the heuynesse of cheer. 4 The herte of wise men is where sorewe is; and the herte of foolis is where gladnesse is. 5 It is betere to be repreued of a wijs man, than to be disseyued bi the flateryng of foolis. 6 for as the sown of thornes brennynge vndur a pot, so is the leiyyng of a fool. But also this is vanyte' (*Ecclesiastes* 7:3-6 WYC).

life (see Suchomski 1975: 23f.; Curtius [11]1993: 422, Johnston 2002: 17). Laughter as a sign of transgression and dissolution was believed to distract a Christian from contemplating the state of his soul: "[...] laughter and frivolity, the temporary abstention from involvement in all that is serious in the human condition, was an offense against God, a negation of the example of Christ, and a peril to men's souls" (Kolve 1966: 126). A common conviction was that "the more the body was closed against the world, the more the soul was opened up to God" (Gilhus 1997: 71). However, the precise monastic rules against laughter found everywhere in the Christian world indirectly reveal that there still must have been much merriment at the monasteries: "If no one had laughed, there would have been no need for rules against it" (Gilhus 1997: 73). In fact, it is likely that monastic culture enjoyed the same forms of entertainment that were enjoyed in the secular world. According to Bayless, "contrary to modern expectations of monastic seriousness, later English monasteries formed one of the three or four most important sources of employment for entertainers in later medieval England" (2007: 29f.; see also Suchomski 1975: 29). It seems that monastic entertainment had an esteemed tradition in Anglo-Saxon England, "however much it might have been deplored by the more austere elements in the Church" (Bayless 2007: 30).

Apart from the Bible, medieval religious drama was considerably influenced by the genre of hagiography, the narrative presentation of the lives, miracles (*vita*) and martyrdom (*passio*) of saints (Newhauser 2009: 37, 41ff.; Valdés Miyares 2010: 112). Curtius ([11]1993: 428) discusses how the use of grotesque humour (usually linked to the saint's torture) is part of the stock motifs of the early Christian *passio*. Prudentius reports how St. Laurentius who was burnt alive on a gridiron asked the torturers to turn him since one side is done (see Curtius [11]1993: 426). In addition, pagans, devils and villains are mocked, unmasked, and gulled by the saints in the *vita*. Curtius concludes that humorous elements were a generic convention of hagiography in the Middle Ages: "Sie waren im Stoff selbst gegeben, aber wir dürfen sicher sein, dass das Publikum sie auch erwartete" ([11]1993: 428; see also Newhauser 2009: 41).[59]

While the early Church intended to banish and condemn laughter, the later medieval period allows mirth in religious contexts, but only spiritual joy which is carefully distinguished in moral or penitential terms from worldly laughter (Jack 1989: 67; Le Goff 1997: 44; Stott 2005: 123). What was regarded as acceptable laughter was *gaudium spirituale*, as it was not related to the body in any way but considered a reflection of the Christian soul (Suchomski 1975: 17; Bareiß 1982: 123, 125; Gilhus 1997: 74). When the virtuous celebrate in the Bible, they are usually described as rejoicing spiritually rather than laughing. In the Bible, there is spiritual joy and pious laughter about the experienced mercy and greatness of God or the promised Paradise: "there is promise for true

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59 'They were present in the material itself, but we may be sure that the public expected them as well' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 428).

laughter, in Heaven" (Classen 2010: 10). The doctrinal basis for such progression was again provided by the Gospel of Luke: *beati qui nunc esuritis quia saturabimini beati qui nunc fletis quia ridebitis* (6:21 VUL; see also Luke 6:23).[60] Misery and mirth, evil and good co-existed within the deeply rooted faith of the Middle Ages; but the ultimate triumph of God's grace was assured. The security of this faith not only created a vision of life that made joy and laughter possible, but it also recognised laughter "as a means of moving a person's tripartite self – mind, emotions, and soul – nearer to the very joy that was its source" (Crane 2007: 60).

The religious leaders of the late Middle Ages were ready to accept laughter as long as decency was guaranteed. John of Salisbury, for instance, allows the wise man to indulge occasionally in *modesta hilaritas* ('reasonable mirth'), nor does he shun fables, stories, or spectacles in general, providing that they possess the requirements of virtue and honourable utility (*Policraticus* 1.8; see Suchomski 1975: 51; Curtius [11]1993: 422; Johnston 2002: 17).[61] The Benedictine Rule characterised moderate laughter "as one of the twelve degrees of humility" (Kolve 1966: 127). Such moderate laughter was intended to make doctrine memorable (Kolve 1966: 130). In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas reintroduces Aristotle's concept of *eutrapelia* which tolerates mild mirth and moderate laughter to avoid fastidiousness: *Huiusmodi autem dicta vel facta, in quibus non quaeritur nisi delectatio animalis, vocantur ludicra vel iocosa. Et ideo necesse est talibus interdum uti, quasi ad quandam animae quietem* (2.2.Q168; see Hess 1965: 154; Jack 1989: 67).[62] Bareiß notes: "In diesem Sinne gelingt es dann auch Thomas von Aquin im 13. Jahrhundert, eine Verschmelzung von christlichem und antikem *delectare* herbeizuführen, welcher sicherlich für die folgende Zeit große Bedeutung zukommt" (1982: 137; see also Suchomski 1975: 55ff.).[63]

The development of a rich sermon literature with the rise of the mendicant orders in the early thirteenth century prompted humour and laughter to enter public discourse on a broad level (Classen 2010: 94; see Section 3.4 below). Medieval preaching manuals state that the audience may better concentrate on serious spiritual topics if these are preceded by amusing and diverting

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60  'Blessid be ye, that now hungren, for ye schulen be fulfillid. Blessid be ye, that now wepen, for ye schulen leiye' (Luke 6:21 WYC).

61  In Greek and Roman works about laughter, it is generally emphasised "that wit is like salt, it flavours the food, but should be used sparingly" (Gilhus 1997: 48). Cicero, for example, warns that the orator should handle laughter and *ridiculo* with careful consideration, moderation and control. If jesting becomes too frequent, it may lapse into buffoonery. It should never be aimed at misfortune, as the joke might deliberately hurt anyone. Nor should the wit be inappropriate to the audience or the occasion; for all these points would come under the head of impropriety (*De Oratore* 2.237; 2.238; 2.247; *Orator* 26.88; see Davis 2003: 206).

62  'Now such like words or deeds wherein nothing further is sought than the soul's delight, are called playful or humorous. Hence it is necessary at times to make use of them, in order to give rest, as it were, to the soul' (Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province).

63  'In this sense, Thomas Aquinas succeeds in bringing about a fusion of Christian and ancient *delectare* in the thirteenth century, which is certainly of great importance to the following period' (my translation).

stories (Suchomski 1975: 79, 217ff.; Crane 2007: 36). In his fourteenth-century *De forma praedicandi*, Robert of Basevorn lists *jocatio* among the seven *ornamenta extrinseca* of the sermon. He recommends well-placed humour in a story, in order to delight the audience and to keep their attention. In accordance with classical rhetoric, Basevorn qualifies this advice with the condition that the humour in the stories should not be inappropriate (see Crane 2007: 36).

In the late medieval period, ecclesiastical authorities even incorporated events related to laughter and humour into the liturgical calendar (Wickham [3]1992: 43; Stott 2005: 123; Valdés Miyares 2010: 114). The enigmatic question of whether or not Jesus had laughed became so popular that the University of Paris organised an annual conference on the topic (Le Goff 1997: 43; Stott 2005: 124; Valdés Miyares 2010: 114). In addition, annual festive occasions celebrated by both clergy and laity – such as the boy-bishop ceremonies in England and the Feast of Fools on the continent – permitted the performance of elaborate parodies of the liturgy and an appreciation of a certain amount of burlesque and comedy: "By definition, these occasions were periods of transition, attempts to integrate novelty or to bridge difference, moments of expanded community" (Kendrick 2000: 91, see also Williams 1973: 113; Dentith 2000: 52).[64] As Wickham has pointed out, the inversion of hierarchical order and social status that is a common factor in these festivals reflects customs which are directly reminiscent of the Roman Saturnalia but given a Christian significance ([3]1992: 43; see also Dentith 2000: 51).[65]

In Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) popular theory of Carnival misrule, medieval parodic forms indicate the presence of carnival celebrations in medieval culture. Bakhtin's account understands laughter as an eruption of the carnivalesque, "an extra-linguistic challenge" (Stott 2005: 125) to systems of social order, political or religious authority (see Goodrich 2010: 532, 535). Bakhtin attributed to laughter the ability to overcome oppression: "festive folk laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, of the sacred over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts" (1984: 92). For Bakhtin, festive folk humour appears in three different forms: public ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions and various terms of abuse such as swearwords and curses (see Goodrich 2010: 532). The mystery plays – directly linked to the Corpus Christi Feast and the feast of Whitsuntide in some cities – can certainly be assigned to the group of public ritual spectacles, "much of which contains the performance of written parody, both of religious matter and political life" (Goodrich 2010: 532).

Bakhtin's culture of 'folk laughter' can – as the terms indicates – be described as a lay, non-clerical, plebeian counterculture (see Diller 2002: 5). However, following Bayless (1996), Dentith

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64   See Section 3.1 above on Isidore's derivation of comedy from *χῶμος*.
65   Cf. Janicka's comments (1962: 42ff.) on the medieval buffoon and the Feast of Fools.

(2000: 52f.) claims that parody should not be regarded as subversive of official culture, as it co-existed with the religious forms that it presumably mocked. Bahktin's account of the carnivalesque obscures the *religious* significance of the festive sphere. The inversionary levity derives from liturgical feasts and is therefore a confirmation of religious authority. In fact, clerics took part in the dramatic parodies of holy rituals such as the boy-bishop ceremonies or the Feast of the Ass (Wickham [3]1992: 4).

During such rituals, laughter served to emphasise human weaknesses and thus teaches humility and the necessity of spiritual intervention. That means that the moral equation of laughter with vice remained, and Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) passed a decree that condemned the Feast of Fools. Yet, the incorporation of laughter into worship was, in fact, a necessity, if the Church were to extend its authority over the areas of popular belief and practices (Stott 2005: 123f.). As Paul Strohm (1992: 46) has argued, the eruption of the carnivalesque during such celebrations can actually create stability, by expanding public norms and allowing limited transgressions. These ludic celebrations served as "a small act of defiance that functions as a relief valve to stresses that would become truly dangerous if left unalleviated or unchecked" (Goodrich 2010: 532; see also Johnston 2002: 18; Classen 2010: 114). Yet, the regulation of carnivalesque impulses and disruption through ritual spectacles cannot be taken for granted, as an account of the mystery cycle's performance in York suggests (Forest-Hill 2000: 51; Mazzon 2009: 166). In 1426, the York *Memorandum Book* refers to William Melton, a famous preacher and professor of scripture, who states that many people not only saw the play on Corpus Christi Day, but also participated in the copious ingestion of alcohol and food, revelling, clamours, and other wantonness surrounding the feast, "thus risking the loss of pardon which was promised for participation in the procession" (Diller 2002: 4; see also Owst 1933: 482f.; Forest-Hill 2000: 57; Clopper 2001: 204). As a consequence, the York City fathers decided upon staging the play on a different day (Diller 2002: 4f.).

To sum up this section, I would like to refer to V. A. Kolve (1966) who has drawn attention to a text which deals with "the hallowing of holidays, and in this connection with man's right to enjoy himself" (see also Diller 2002: 3f.). In the fifteenth-century prose dialogue *Dives et Pauper*, the mendicant friar Pauper separates mere *ribaudrye* from holy laughter which not only leads to heavenly bliss but is the 'token' of salvation. He defends the performance of devotional plays as sources of rejoicing and happiness. Kolve stresses Pauper's assertion "that mirth and recreation are among the major purposes of this drama, not merely by-products or incidental 'goods': he sees them as ends important in their own right" (1966: 134). Pauper argues (based on Scriptural authority) that to play *for* and *to* God is to please him. Delight in play and game are acceptable to heaven if the mirth on Sundays and high feast days is an expression of the devotional, humble joy

about the ultimate salvation: *the rest the mirth the ese and the welfare that god hath ordeyned in the halidayes is token of endlesse reste ioye and myrthe and welfare in heavenes blisse that we hope to have withouten ende* (see Kolve 1966: 131ff.; Jack 1989: 67; Clopper 2001: 78ff.). It is not easy to decide which of the two – pious, measured mirth or Bakhtin's unmeasured merrymaking – is the acceptable, intended, or accomplished reaction to medieval religious drama. The following sections will explore the, often surprising, liberties taken by the cycle dramatists in the representation of sacred matter.

## 3.3 Laughter and the comic in the mystery cycles

The foregoing discussion pointed out that *gaudium spirituale* was allowed in the Christian context. But was the raising of laughter, essential to modern comedy, intended by the mystery cycles? Did medieval playwrights employ comic elements? Scholars have not yet agreed on an unanimous definition of what is funny, what makes us smile or laugh.[66] As remarked in the previous section, what is perceived as funny often reflects the norms, values and world outlook of a culture (Goodrich 2010: 536). The further we are removed from the date of origin of earlier comic works, the more problematic it becomes to ascertain what the past audience considered comic or insulting, in contrast to the interpretations of a modern audience. Styan adds that this is especially true for the world of theatre:

> [...] that what is comic to one age is not to another: Shylock was a butt for the Elizabethans, but not for the Victorians; Richard III was played for comedy by Irving, but for pathos by Olivier. Fashions in laughter change too readily, and we are in some doubt today whether to laugh at or sympathize with a Falstaff or a Tartuffe or a Sir Peter Teazle. ([2]1968: 39)

Hence, it is difficult to bring back the 'comic' experiences of the past. We cannot be sure that what we regard as funny was perceived as funny in the fifteenth century. To obtain an exact picture of the comic in the cycles, it is useful to investigate those scenes in which the religious content is clearly furnished with a comic element.

### 3.3.1 *Humiles personae* – sympathetic laughter[67]

The first section sought to highlight the major features of the medieval *comoedia*: The *comoedia* as *cantus agrestica* is used and expressed in the material and personal sphere of the text. We have a number of plays featuring rustic or lowly settings, depicting the everyday fates of characters belonging to the lower social stratum and their private-domestic environment (Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 23). The representation of poor, humble characters in the plays is consistent with Christian doctrine: *qui autem se exaltaverit humiliabitur et qui se humiliaverit exaltabitur* (Matthew 23:12

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66  The phenomena of laughter and the comic have been widely studied by philosophers, theologians, literary critics, sociologists, and psychologists. One of the most common points of agreement is that laughter arises from the unexpected or (perceived) incongruity. It has also been held that a sense of superiority is an essential, if not the essential, factor. Finally, Freud, Bergson and others have suggested that laughter provides relief from restraint. For an admirable account of major theories of laughter, see Christoper Crane (2007), who surveys a number of the most prominent ideas on laughter from classical thinkers to Hobbes, Kant and Bergson and relates them to the cycle plays. Janicka (1962: 13ff.) and Styan ([2]1968: 38ff.) have also written concise accounts on laughter, humour and comic theory.

67  The titles of my sub-sections are based on Crane (2007) and Valdés Miyares (2010).

VUL).[68] The characters in these plays often display a striking lack of understanding about the situation or the events surrounding them. In this context, low-status characters like Noah's wife, Joseph and the shepherds are all cases in point. These biblical figures, although they are first introduced as sinful, become increasingly virtuous and perceptive in the course of the plays: "Very often the medieval dramatic sophistication lies in relating a simpler comic moment to the joyous progression from earthly blindness to spiritual joy" (Jack 1989: 71; see also Forest-Hill 2000: 66f.). The pattern of sympathetic comedy thus applies to characters with whom medieval spectators could share commonplace worries and coarse humour, but then receive divine insight and become moral guides (Crane 2007: 54).

One of the biblical characters who clearly evokes sympathetic laughter is Noah from the York, Towneley and Chester play collection. Crane (2007: 52) has identified two main sources of humour in the Noah plays: Noah's depiction as an old man unwilling to follow God's command, and Noah's struggle with his wife. First of all, there is comic potential in the Bible's description (Genesis 7:6) of Noah as a six hundred year old man. Accordingly, in the York play, Noah's first reaction on hearing God's command is that he is *full olde and oute of qwarte* ('too old and physically outfit'; l. 50) for such a task, while in the Towneley play, Noah complains about his hurting back and stiff bones when he is working on the ark: *All dold, / To begyn sich a wark! / My bonys ar so stark, / No wonder if thay wark, / Ffor I am full old*. ('Completely stupid to begin such work. My bones are so stiff. No wonder they are aching, for I am very old'; ll. 269–73). The sharp contrast between this earthly struggle and God's heavenly order to build the ark (largely adopted from the biblical source material, see Genesis 6–7) adds to the humour.

After Noah has fulfilled God's command, he tries to persuade his wife to come aboard, but she persists in spinning. All cycles portray Noah's wife as reluctant to boarding the ark. The Towneley Noah predicts her hostile reaction before she has even entered the scene. After God has left, Noah claims he is afraid of a fight with his wife because she is often crabby and short-tempered: *Ffor she is full tethee, / Ffor litill oft angre, / If any thyng wrang be, / Soyne is she wroth*. ('For she is very peevish, often angry for nothing. If anything is wrong, she is soon wrathful'; Towneley 3.182–9). As soon as his wife enters, they start a sustained argument which eventually even results in physical violence.

Noah's wife is hardly mentioned in the Bible. From the bare scriptural fact that Noah had a wife, "a comic character and a dramatic tradition were born, so familiar and loved in the English Middle Ages that she became a kind of paradigm of human character" (Kolve 1966: 146). As various scholars have demonstrated, the tradition of the shrewish Uxor is widespread in art and

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68 'For he that hieth himself, schal be mekid; and he that mekith hym silf, schal be enhaunsid' (Matthew 23:12 WYC).

folklore, as well as in literary sources (see Schless 1961: 233; Kolve 1966: 146; Mills 1969: 56). Rosemary Woolf (1980: 136ff.), Lynette R. Muir (²2003: 73) and Douglas Gray (2008: 624) trace the Noah plays to an Eastern legend in which Noah's wife hesitates to enter the ark; she is tempted by the devil who advises her to offer Noah a potion, whereby he will be induced to tell her about God's command. This plot appears in the Newcastle *Noah* play; the other dramatists simply elaborate the detail of her reluctance to board the ark, in the traditions of medieval anti-feminist writing and the fabliaux. Indeed, according to Woolf (1980: 138), the shrewish wife's obstinacy is presented in all misogynistic literature, Latin satire, sermons, comic poems and fabliaux. Nicholas in Chaucer's "Miller's Tale" mentions Noah's wife when he plays his trick on the old carpenter:

> "Hastou nat herd," quod Nicholas, "also
> The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe,
> Er that he myghte gete his wyf to shipe? [...]" (3538–40)

Happé states that it is likely that the mystery playwrights deliberately drew on the genre of farce in the dramatic representation of the Noah episode: "Her challenge to Noah is one of disobedience and the subversion of authority, a theme found in the trickery of many farces" (2002: 36). Instead of portraying Noah's wife as a mere caricature of an obstinate woman, there are many slight touches which link this character with real life. In the York play, for example, she tells her husband that she must go and pack her things first (ll. 112–3), and make sure her friends and relatives are saved with her (ll. 146–7).

The main elements of humour in the Noah plays have two effects: they help medieval spectators to empathise with Noah about his struggle to accomplish God's task, and they display a domestic strife the audience can connect with (Crane 2007: 52). It is worth noting that in the actual work on the ark, both the York and Towneley versions present Noah as a model of submission in doing God's work. His wife's resistance ends with the boarding of the ark (see Niebrzydowski 2006: 200). Once she is on board, the relationship with her husband becomes harmonious and respectful. The plays represent the restoration of order and peace which follows the flood and thus illustrate the characters' transition into virtue and their integration into Christian faith. At the end of the Towneley play, after the dove has returned, Noah prays that mankind be granted a place in heaven at God's side: "The weight of the play therefore lies in these two harmonious and symmetrically arranged set passages and in the liturgical conclusion" (Woolf 1980: 135).

The York *Joseph* employs a rhetoric of humour similar to that in the Noah plays. The play opens with a substantial monologue in which Joseph laments his old age and his failing body. It is not until after more than 40 lines of complaint that the audience is told that the reason for

Joseph's grumbling and self-pitying lamentations is that he has discovered that his wife is pregnant. The play presents Joseph as the foolish old man wed to a young wife. When he finds out that she is pregnant, he suspects he has been cuckolded (see Styan ²1968: 10; Williams 1973: 111; Happé 2002: 38; Jack 1989: 127; Valdés Miyares 2010: 120). The motif of the foolish old husband, which is also exemplified by the old carpenter John from Chaucer's "Miller's Tale", found expression in various traditions (Janicka 1962: 98; Kolve 1966: 139). Kolve has explained that Joseph is depicted in a similar way in the visual arts: "he is always shown bent with age and burdened with the special cares that God has given him" (1966: 248). As Kolve (1966: 248f.) further notes, the Church started to place emphasis on Joseph's sanctity not until the fifteenth century. For this reason, medieval art was allowed much greater freedom with his person than with either Mary or Christ.

Since there is little biblical material on which to rely, the main source of material used to depict Joseph's doubts comes from New Testament apocryphical sources: the Protoevangelium of James and the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (Anderson ²2016: 157).[69] The only detail in the gospels concerning Joseph's character is the fact that he was distressed because of Mary's pregnancy and considered leaving his wife (see e.g. Matthew 1:19). The York play dramatises the conflict and dwells on how Joseph might have reacted to discovering that his wife was pregnant. Initially unable to grasp the idea of a divine conception, he voices his doubts when suspiciously questioning Mary:

> **Joseph**. […] But who is the fader? Telle me his name.
> '[…] But who is the father? Tell me his name.'
> **Mary**. None but youreselfe.
> 'None but yourself.'
> **Joseph**. Late be, for shame. / I did it neuere; thou dotist dame, by bukes and belles! / Full sakles shulde I bere this blame aftir thou telles, / For I wroght neuere in worde nor dede / Thyng that shulde marre thy maydenhede, [...] Þarfore the fadir tell me, Marie.
> 'Let be, for shame! I did it never, you foolish dame, by book and bell! Blameless, I would bear this blame if once you tell. For I wrought never, in word or deed, a thing to mar your maidenhead. […] Therefore, the father tell me, Mary.'
> **Mary**. But God and yhow, I knawe right nane. [York 13.179-85, 190-1]
> 'But God and you, I know of none.'

What is especially comical in this scene is his disbelief and confusion about the virgin birth: "Denial of the Immaculate Conception would have seemed as absurd to a medieval audience as denial of the sun's centrality in the universe would be to a modern one" (Spivack 2002: 66; see

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69  Despite the efforts of Reformers to distinguish the teaching of the Bible from the teaching of apocryphal texts, expansions of the biblical narrative were often ascribed a similar authority as to strictly Scriptural material during the medieval period. Corrie (2009: 36) states that apocryphal New Testament material was sometimes incorporated into copies of the Vulgate itself. For example, scholars have discovered manuscripts in which the canonical gospels are followed by the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the source of the Harrowing of Hell episode.

also Valdés Miyares 2010: 120). Despite Joseph's misplaced suspicions and coarse language, the audience is not encouraged to laugh at him in contempt; medieval spectators are invited to laugh at him as they ought to laugh at "the earthly confusion, doubt, and unbelief they may find in themselves" (Crane 2007: 52; Valdés Miyares 2010: 121). The play tests Joseph's faith and ultimately brings him from doubt to firm belief, as a moral model to the audience. Overall, the York *Joseph* is characterised by a rapid change in tone: Joseph reacts with anger and bitterness to Mary's pregnancy; once he is enlightened by the angel, he begs forgiveness and cares affectionately for his wife's well-being.

Virtuous biblical characters usually arouse laughter when they fail to understand the miraculous events happening around them. In the Old Testament, Abraham finds it ridiculous that a man of one hundred years should have a child with a ninety-year-old woman (Genesis 17:17; see Jack 1989: 70; Classen 2010: 10). Similarly, in the New Testament, Jairus and his family laugh at Christ who claims that their daughter is not dead but asleep (Mark 5:39–40; see Jack 1989: 70). The mystery play texts, however, never invite the audience to laugh at God, Christ or the Virgin:

> They move in a mimetic world which includes the comic, the violent, the noisy, the grotesque, but though that world acts upon them, it never really touches their characters. They were reverently conceived and have about them a sanctity that defies circumstance. (Kolve 1966: 138f.)

This is especially apparent in the representation of Mary in the plays depicting Joseph's troubles over her pregnancy (see also Sections 4.2.1 and 4.3.1.).

The segments in the cycles which have been most often cited and evaluated for their comedy are the shepherds' plays, the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum* being of course the most famous of all. From the perspective of Christian allegory, the shepherds stand for those biblical shepherds from Luke 2:8-20. The Gospel only gives a brief account, namely that while the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks, an angel appeared to them announcing the birth of Christ; they seek the Christ Child in Bethlehem, and afterwards spread the news of the Nativity. There would seem to be "some idyllic quality inherent in Luke's narrative" (Woolf 1980: 182). The only shepherds that conform to it are those of the Nativity sequence in the N-Town play. The other cycles expand the shepherds' episodes with comic, folkloric material (Schless 1961: 240). Both Towneley shepherds' plays and the Chester *Play of the Shepherds* show the shepherds quarrelling among each other, revelling in a great feast, telling folk tales and singing – including the shepherds' comic attempts to understand the angel's *Gloria in excelsis Deo* in the Chester play (ll. 361–435). The shepherds' coarseness, their humanity, and their reactions to the heavenly

incidents invite "laughter of identification" among the medieval audience (Crane 2007: 53; Goodrich 2010: 538, 544).[70]

Medieval writings explained that the shepherds were the first to adore the Holy Child "because they too were poor, humble and innocent" (Woolf 1980: 182). The characters depicted are indeed drawn from the lowest rungs of the social ladder. The Towneley plays represent their life of hardship through complaint speeches. In the *Secunda Pastorum* from the Towneley collection, the three shepherds recount their various grievances – from the harsh winter weather, the burden of having many children, and nagging wives to taxation, the oppression and confiscation of the landlords (see Davidson 1892: 154; Williams 1973: 119; Meredith [2]2008: 173; Goodrich 2010: 533, 538). While the shepherds' narration of their sufferings is slightly comic, that they do indeed suffer from poverty and oppression is plain, and it "allows the play a critique of social inequity from a viewpoint the majority of the audience would find sympathetic" (Goodrich 2010: 537).

At the end of the plays, the shepherds' grievances are replaced by celestial harmony and a 'celebratory mode' as they receive the news of the Nativity from the heavenly choir (Goodrich 2010: 543). The shepherds' plays, as Warren Edminster (2005: 99) argues, are divided into two sections: initial festive parody and subsequent serious reverence. The shepherds' adoration of the Infant Jesus and their offering of gifts mark the climax of their transition into virtue and devotion (see also Kolve 1966: 240; Woolf 1980: 183, 190; Goodrich 2010: 543). This spiritual transformation is illustrated by their use of formal, reverential language in their worship of the Christ Child.

More than half of the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum* is taken up by the sheep-stealing plot of Mak and his wife who try to make a stolen lamb pass for their newborn child. The plot seems to be contrived as a secularised parody of the subsequent nativity (Kolve 1966: 173; Hines 1993: 213, Valdés Miyares 2010: 119; see also Styan [2]1968: 10; Beckwith 2009: 84). The story stands out from all non-biblical episodes since it has something like a formal plot, similar to French farces, that "creates suspense and leads towards a solution which is unknown and – theoretically at least – impossible to guess at" (Diller 1992: 246; see also Happé 2002: 34f.). The climax of the story is reached when Mak and his wife maintain that it is their child who lies in the cradle even after the shepherds have recognised their sheep:

> **Tercius Pastor.** […] Sagh I neuer in a credyll / A hornyd lad or now.
> '[…] Never have I seen in a cradle a horned lad before now.'
> **Mak**. Peasse byd I: what! / lett be youre fare; / I am he that hym gatt / and yond woman hym bare.
> 'Be silent, I bid you. Oh, stop your fuss. I am the one who begot him and yonder woman bore him.'

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70  In response to views that have seen the *Secunda Pastorum* as a threat of transgression and social upheaval in the medieval period, Goodrich states: "[...] laughter is here used to forge social ties, define social connections, express shared identities, and reintegrate the disenfranchised back into the community" (2010: 544).

**Primus Pastor**. What dewill shall he hatt? / Mak, lo god makys ayre.
'What the devil shall he be called? 'Mak'? Look, [by] God, Mak's heir!'
**Secundus Pastor**. Lett be all that. / now god gyf hym care, / I sagh.
'Stop all that! Now God give him sorrow, I saw (the sheep myself).'
**Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. A pratty child is he / As syttys on a waman's kne; / A dyllydowne, perde, / To gar a man laghe.
'He is a pretty child like (one who) sits on a woman's knee. A darling, by God, that makes a man laugh.'
**Tercius Pastor**. I know hym by the eere marke / that is a good tokyn.
'I know him by his ear-mark; that is a good proof.'
**Mak**. I tell you, syrs, hark! / hys noyse was brokyn. / Sythen told, me a clerk / that he was forspokyn.
'I tell you, sirs, listen! His nose was broken. Afterwards a priest told me that he was bewitched.'
**Primus Pastor.** This is a fals wark / I wold, fayn be wrokyn: / Gett wepyn.
'That is a lie! I will gladly be avenged. Get a weapon!'
**Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. He was takyn with an elfe, / I saw it myself. / When the clok stroke twelf / Was he forshapyn. [Towneley 13.605–24]
'He was caught by an elf, I saw it myself! When the clock struck twelve he was transformed.'

The Mak story, according to Daiches, is not a simple farce but a "realistic *fabliau*" ([2]1979: 213). Meredith ([2]2008: 174) has pointed out the Wakefield Master's skill in creating believable human beings: Mak is beset by everyday worries, like a cantankerous wife or money troubles arising from too many children: *Wo is hym has many barnes, / And therto lytyll brede!* ('Unhappy is he who has many children, and only little bread'; ll. 394–5). Working at home with a house full of children, Gill complains about having to work long into the night (see Happé 2002: 34f.; Goodrich 2010: 539). The sheep-stealing plot involves scenes, like the shepherds' suspicion of Mak, or the conflict between Mak and Gill, which establish a sense of 'reality' and 'humanity' presented parallelly to the spiritual world: "The second of the Shepherds pageants is remarkable because it is in this pageant alone that the individualised humanity and the presence of the spiritual world are integrated in a broader way" (Meredith [2]2008: 173).

In sum, the Noah, Joseph and shepherds' plays invite laughter at good characters in whom medieval spectators could see themselves: "It is a laughter of familiarity, of identification, of shared humanity" (Crane 2007: 46). Some scholars, like Woolf (1980), seem to have overstressed the heroic and typological side of characters like Noah or the shepherds. According to Meredith, there is "a sense of a concentration on human nature which gives the pageants homogeneity. All the cycles translate biblical into human" ([2]2008: 177). Though the details vary among the versions, we may assume that Noah, Joseph, the shepherds etc. stand as figures of Everyman:

The good men, like the evil, live in society, are self-engrossed and busy with affairs; they are troubled by their wives, their poverty, the oppression of their masters: they are fearful, sometimes cowardly, and prone to doubt; they all find life a dark and confusing experience. They too seek amusement and distraction; their performance of tasks assigned them is, at best, barely competent; they are troubled by youth or age or simplemindedness. [...] Humankind is a single estate, defined by the instincts and limitations of a fallen nature, and it is imitated in this drama with sympathy and inclusive detail. (Kolve 1966: 264)

### 3.3.2 Divine triumph over evil – *Schadenfreude*

The medieval belief held that one of the major requirements of the *comoedia* is a happy ending. In accordance with this principle, the Noah, Joseph and shepherds' plays represent a condition of ignorance prior to salvation. In essence, the mystery cycles trace a movement from misery to joy by presenting the whole divine history from the Fall of the Angels to the Last Judgement – "an essentially serious but ultimately 'comic' progression from misery to salvation" (Jack 1989: 16; see also Williams 1973: 109; Hardison 1980: 136). For Hess, every religious play is a 'comedy', a *comedia spirituale*, since in a world predestined by God, suffering will necessarily be resolved in a 'happy' ending, i.e. salvation:

> Diese Form des Dramas ist seit Christi Inkarnation möglich. Seit er der Menschheit als Erlöser erschienen ist, muß jedes Spiel, das die Heilsgeschichte oder von ihr inspirierte Themen zum Inhalt hat, notwendig als 'Komödie', kann es nie als 'Tragödie' enden. (1965: 25f.)[71]

In this sense, the cycles as a whole but also some individual plays could be called 'divine comedies', or, as Jack prefers to call them, "comic progressions" (1989: 4, 16, 53, 75; see also Valdés Miyares 2010: 114).

All four mystery cycles start with God making a declaration about himself before creating the orders of angels: *Ego sum Alpha et nouissimus. / I am gracyus and grete, God withoutyn begynnyng* ('I am alpha and last. I am gracious and great God without beginning'; York 1.1–2). The opening speech of the first York play stands as a kind of epigraph to the whole cycle. God's nature is omnipresent, which makes anyone who attempts to challenge this universal authority seem potentially ridiculous. In play texts asserting God's victory, the evil man or evil spirit naturally becomes the focus of laughter: "The staging of divine drama naturally involved also its opposite, a dramatization of evil" (Valdés Miyares 2010: 117). The playwrights had to ensure that evil's temporal laughter was effectively incorporated into the divine comedy without allowing diabolic characters to steal the show. After all, it is easier, as Jack has remarked, "to create interesting

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71 'This form of drama is possible since Christ's incarnation. Since he appeared as the redeemer of humanity, any game involving salvation history or themes inspired by it must end as a 'comedy', can never end as a 'tragedy'' (my translation).

characters out of the variety of evil rather than the unity of virtue" (1989: 13). The portrayal of evil figures is therefore of central importance, particularly when they are depicted with a vigour and vitality that looks almost blasphemous to us "or when the playwright seems to be using his craft to tempt his audience into sharing their worldliness" (Jack 1989: 14).

The most straightforward way of depicting evil characters in the divine comedy was to make them appear ridiculous and thereby encourage the audience to laugh at their expense. Both homiletic exempla and vernacular drama use comic representations of evil to provoke *Schadenfreude*. According to Valdés Miyares (2010: 116), it was the character of the devil who first permitted some comic dialogue in liturgical drama.[72] During the medieval period "hell remained a locus for hilarity" (Jacobson 1997: 151; see Stott 2005: 124). The most entertaining comic figures typically entered the stage through stage hell mouths: "[I]t was within the range of 'bad' or 'ridiculous' behaviour necessary to identify them that the germ of entertainment through laughter resided" (Wickham [3]1992: 50).

The cycle plays contain a number of evil figures whose downfall invites *Schadenfreude*. Hans-Jürgen Diller has observed that "[t]he religious literature of the Middle Ages especially is full of the terrible fate that awaits the damned but which apparently is not meant to call forth sympathy; on the contrary, *Schadenfreude*, even triumphant derision, seems to be the intended reaction (2002: 2). Jack (1989: 68, footnote 10) notes that the same triumphant laughter is attributed to God himself in Psalm 2:4 and Proverb 1:26. This laughter is based on his ability to anticipate what is bound to happen, and is usually closely related to his triumph over evil: He mocks rebellious kings and rulers by laughing at their vain attempts to resist divine will. This type of laughter was appropriate because "the best defense against the distracting illusion of evil was laughter" (Spivack 2002: 61; see also Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 21; Goodrich 2010: 531).

Triumphant laughter is particularly common in the cycle plays' devil scenes. For example, the audience would be amused by Lucifer's presumptuous vanity in his very first lines in the Chester *Fall of Lucifer*: *Aha, that I ame wounderous brighte*, […] *Of all heaven I beare the lighte / though God bymselfe and he were here.* ('Ah! That I am wondrous bright […] Of all heaven I bear the light even if God himself (and he) were here'; ll. 126, 128–9). Lucifer mistakes the light of God's creation for his own brightness, and it is this vanity and self-worship that eventually makes him fall. The humour comes from the futility of Satan's rebellion in the face of God's power: "Founded on disobedience, characterised by folly, sophistry and that pride which seeks to move above its proper station, this 'revolution' is clearly doomed to failure from the outset" (Jack 1989: 27). It is the Dominaciones, an order of the good angels, who explicitly point out to the audience that Lucifer's hubris must eventually lead to a tragic descent into desperation: *Ye shall well witt the*

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72  Cf. the courtly devil seducing Adam and Eve in the Anglo-Norman *Mystère d'Adam* (Schrott 1999: 354f.).

*subsequence̶ / this daunce will tome to teene and traye.* ('You shall well know the consequence – this dance will turn to sorrow and woe'; ll. 208–9). These devil figures, whom the audience may fear in everyday life as they struggle with temptation, guilt or grief, are portrayed as desperate, foolish and ultimately powerless against God's authority: "Just as the devil played this role in countless liturgical celebrations throughout the ritual year, so he plays it in the mystery cycles" (Cox 2000: 19).

The Passion plays are followed by the Harrowing of Hell episode which is included in the Chester, York and N-Town collections. Satan's first dialogues with his minions comically underscore his traditional characteristics of wrath and pride. Whereas the depiction of Satan occasionally develops into farce (particularly when he falls into hell's pit), it is the lesser devils who supply most of the lighter, comic moments in the York *Harrowing of Hell*. The contrasted roles of Ribald and Beelzebub as cowardly weakling and braggart soldier are probably derived from folkloric tradition and Terentian comedy (Jack 1989: 53; see also Section 3.1). Ribald is immediately alarmed by Christ's appearance and each further demonstration of Christ's power increases his weakness and despair. Beelzebub, by contrast, boasts about his position as *prince and principall* (l. 111), his power over the imprisoned souls and the indestructibility of the gates of hell:

> **Diabolus 1**. Helpe, Belsabub, to bynde ther boyes- / Such harrowe was neuer are herde in helle.
> 'Help, Beelzebub, to bind these boys! Such uproar was never heard in hell.'
> **Diabolus 2**. Why rooris thou soo, Rebalde? þou royis- / What is betidde, canne thou ought telle?
> 'Why roar you so, Ribald? You talk nonsense. What has happened, can you tell?'
> **Diabolus 1**. What, heris thou noyot this vggely noyse? / þes lurdans that in Lymbo dwelle, / þei make menyng of many joies / And musteres grete mirthe thame emell.
> 'Oh, hear you not this ugly noise? These wretches that in Limbo dwell, they make mention of many joys and make great mirth among themselves.'
> **Diabolus 2**. Mirthe? Nay, nay, that poynte is paste, / More hele schall thei neuer haue.
> 'Mirth? No, no, that point has passed. More health [happiness] they shall never have.'
> **Diabolus 1**. þei crie on Criste full faste / And sais he schal thame saue.
> 'They firmly call upon Christ, and say he shall save them.'
> **Belsabub**. 3a, if he saue thame noght, we schall, / For they are sperde in speciall space. / Whils I am prince and principall / Schall thei neuer passe oute of this place. [York 37.97–112]
> 'Yes, if he saves them not, we shall. For they are imprisoned in a special space. While I am prince and principal shall they never pass out of this place.'

The central dialogue between Satan and Christ in the York *Harrowing of Hell* bears resemblance to a disputation in court, with "Satan parodying the astute lawyer who looks for loopholes in the small print of his own covenant with God" (Valdés Miyares 2010: 126). He puts forth various accusations, quotes biblical authorities, utters threats and insults, but all of his flimsy arguments are successfully refuted by Jesus. As in the York *Temptation* (cf. Matthew 4:1–11), Christ is able to outwit Satan. When he summons Michael to chain the devil, Satan's last words are pathetically

comic: *Owt! Ay herrowe! Helpe, Mahounde! / Nowe wex I woode oute of my witte.* ('Out! Ah, help! Help, Mahound! Now I go mad; I lose my wit'; ll. 342–3). The playwrights invite the audience to see the evil characters in an amusing light while they follow their tragic progression from false delight to real desperation. Along with the defeat of evil goes the triumphant laughter of the virtuous. Therefore, the audience is allowed to laugh when the brutish and contemptible figures are punished, for their depravity is powerless against God's omnipotence.

The connection between evil figures and triumphant laughter is by no means restricted to the devil figures of the cycles. The characters most closely linked with Satan are the wicked rulers and torturers/soldiers (see Section 3.3.3). The Chester play of Balaam, Balaak and the Prophets presents the comic villain King Balaak who calls upon the priest Balaam to curse the Israelites. Though perhaps the comic episode of Balaam and the talking ass is the most popular segment, this is not the only kind of comedy at work in the play. When Balaam refuses for the third time to curse God's chosen people, the king's earlier dignified style disintegrates into these curses: *What the dyvell ayles thee, thow populart? / Thy speach is not worth a farte!* ('What the devil ails you, you fool? Your speech is not worth a fart!'; ll. 296–7). Just as the Chester *Moses* provokes laughter at the weakness of an evil ruler, the audience will experience *Schadenfreude* at the fall of one of the earliest biblical villains: Cain. In the Chester *Creation*, he receives *into the seaventh generation punishment for the whole* (ll. 659–60). At the end of the Towneley play, Cain feigns a proclamation of pardon, but his servant Pikeharnes, an "imitation of the impudent servant of the folk play" (Diller 2002: 11), denies his master's claim and even mischievously mocks his words (see Spivack 2002: 63).

It is typical of many cycle plays that the audience is initially invited to identify with the vicious characters and to enjoy their crude, preposterous behaviour in preference to the kindness and piety of the virtuous characters. While virtues can merely warn and instruct, vice can entertain, surprise and shock with its physical and verbal exuberance, thereby actively involving the spectators in their schemes (Walker [2]2008: 89). Meg Twycross has put it aptly: "Virtue is no fun: vice is" ([2]2008: 63). However, all characters whose laughter has tried to lure the audience into evil are eventually exposed and condemned. Despite all appearances to the contrary, "God or Christ can never be fooled; [...] He ultimately initiates all trickery, willing it as part of the regenerative plan" (Jack 1989: 14). These cycle plays are, in that sense, divine comedies – dramatic expressions of a belief in God's omnipresence and merciful, benevolent nature. Jack comments: "[T]hey were tacitly proclaiming that the truth about existence is triumphant and beneficent, the 'comic' vision more valid than the 'tragic' one at least in ultimate terms" (1989: 5).

### 3.3.3 Funny games of violence – grim irony

Although the cycle plays are in essence divine comedies, "in an artistic, dramatic sense [they] evoked for [their] spectator-auditors the pity and fear that belong to tragedy" (McNeir 1951: 604). The mixture of comic delight and grim seriousness is more than anything else characteristic of the humour in the Passion pieces (Kolve 1966: 124; Burde 2010: 217). Far from evoking modern laughter, these crucifixion plays seem to revel in excessive violence and carnivalesque dark humour. The terms 'realistic' and 'naturalistic' have been often assigned to them: "Die breit ausgespielte Realistik der Folter- und Hinrichtungsszenen wurde erst in der Spätphase des elisabethanischen Theaters übertroffen" (Schabert [3]1992: 45; see also Woolf 1980: 305; Beadle [2]2008: 116).[73] The Passion scenes are so essential to the cycles as a whole that, according to Diller, "any attempt at coming to grips with the cycles' humour must here find its touchstone" (1992: 232).

The episodes preceding the Passion plays resemble the farcical devil plays more than the gruesome torturing and crucifixion plays. Pilate's opening speech in the York *Conspiracy* (ll. 1–28) matches Lucifer's pompous entrances: "Like Satan and his followers, both Pilate and the soldiers raise themselves onto pedestals of false power, only to be sent toppling into confusion and ultimate impotence" (Jack 1989: 55). Tension increases, however, when Christ faces the Jewish priests in the next York play: *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas*. When Jesus refuses to give testimony, Annas suggests that Jesus be beaten straight away by the soldiers, but Caiaphas insists on continuing the interrogation: *Nay sir, none haste, we schall haue game or we goo*. ('No, sir, no haste, we shall have a game before we go'; l. 297). Caiaphas then orders his knights to teach *yone boy bettir to bende and bowe* ('this knave better to bend and bow'; l. 359), and the knights continue the game: the tormentors blindfold him and beat him with sticks. In order to make the game more effective, they ask Jesus to use his divine powers to declare which of them has hit him (ll. 373–84). This action is taken from the Bible (Matthew 26:67–68, Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63–64), but it is translated into a medieval children's game called *popse* (l. 366) in the York cycle and *a new play of yoyll* (l. 362) in the Towneley *Buffeting* (see Kolve 1966: 185; Hanks 1986: 120; Ishii 1993: 23; Sponsler 1997: 150; Happé 2002: 40; Edminster 2005: 181; Stevenson 2011: 100). Dark humour and cruel sarcasm predominate in these episodes, but Christ's calm answers to the priests' accusations and threats redress the spiritual balance.

Structurally, the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* parallels the preceding play. Most of it is devoted to the legal manoeuvrings of the two high priests and Pilate's genuine or affected exasperation with both of them. The two scenes laid in Pilate's court are linked with a third, the

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73　'The broadly represented realism of the torturing and execution scenes was only surpassed in the later stages of the Elizabethan theatre' (my translation).

dream of Pilate's wife. The character of Pilate's wife, called Percula or Procula, is an invention of the playwright(s), similar to Noah's wife. She appears only once in the Bible, in Matthew 27:19, where she advises her husband to have nothing to do with Jesus (whom she calls an innocent [or righteous] man) because of a bad dream she had about him. In the York play, she incorporates "the Eve-like dimension of the sensual temptress and the comic self-regarding vanity she shares with her husband Pilate and with Lucifer" (Valdés Miyares 2010: 123).

One of the most popular dramatic figures from the cycle plays is undoubtedly Herod from the York play *Christ Before Herod*: "Here the larger play seems to arrive at a degree of mockery and bizarre comedy unmatched elsewhere in its vast extent" (O'Connell 2002: 45). Similar to Pilate in the York *Conspiracy*, his first appearance on stage is followed by a speech where he prides himself on his power, wealth and beauty. Then the action is shaped most elaborately into a game. King Herod imagines Jesus to be something of a local jester who has come to entertain him, and his great pleasure at being sent such good game is instantly unveiled: *I leve we schall laugh and haue likyng / To se nowe this lidderon her he leggis oure lawis.* ('I believe we shall laugh and have liking, to see how this scoundrel alleges our laws'; ll. 175–6; cf. Luke 23:8). He has earlier remarked that the *presente fro Pilate* (l. 103) has to amuse him or both his courtly subjects, and Jesus will have to pay for it (ll. 117–8). The playwright(s) here refer to the traditional dramatic version of King Herod, the ridiculously pompous, vicious, ranting tyrant who, if his will is crossed or when he feels threatened, would go *woode* ('mad'; l. 256) in a similar way as Lucifer in the devil plays. Given this conception, the York dramatist adds contemporary touches to Herod's traits, among them a desire to be *full tendirly hydid* (l. 49), dramatically illustrated in the comic bedding scene (see McNeir 1951: 613). Further comedy is involved in the various attempts by Herod and the court to lure Jesus into performing miracles and playing the role of the court jester. Thereby Herod, who assumes that Jesus is mad or a fool, actually makes a fool of himself through shouting at him in nonsensical macaronic speeches[74]:

> **Rex.** [...] Howe likis tha, wele lorde? Saie. What, deuyll, neuere a dele? / I faute in my reuerant in otill moy, / I am of fauour, loo, fairer be ferre. / Kyte oute yugilment. Vta! Oy! Oy! / Be any witte that Y watte it will waxe werre. / Seruicia primet, / Such losellis and lurdaynes as thou, loo, / Respicias timet. / What the deuyll and his dame schall Y now doo? [York 31.246–54]
> '[...] How does this suit you? Well, lord? Say (something)! What, devil, not a word? I fault in my reverence [I am not honoured], he is useless to me; I am of appearance, lo, fairer by far. [unintelligible line] By any measure, as far as I can tell, things will get worse. Duty demands. Such louts and rascals as you, lo. Let him fear and be weary. What the devil and his dame shall I do now?'

74 During the late Middle English period, England can be described as a multilingually structured communicative space where three different languages (Latin, French, English) co-existed and served different functions (see Schaefer 2006, 2008: 450f.). Emmerson (1998) has examined how the Towneley cycle draws upon, modifies and inverts the established sociolinguistic value attached to Latin and French in order to depict evil characters on stage. Cf. Mazzon (2009: 183ff.) for a linguistically grounded consideration of language mixture in the N-Town collection.

Ironically, Herod puts his sceptre into Jesus' hand (ll. 266–7) and his men do mock-reverence to him (ll. 276–7). Finally, Jesus is mocked by being dressed in the white robes of a fool-king (cf. Luke 23:11; see also Kolve 1966: 184; Forest-Hill 2000: 82; Valdés Miyares 2010: 125).[75] The laughter that Herod intended to pull out of Christ comes instead from his own cheering and clamouring. Jesus is the "silent straightman" (O'Connell 2002: 48), whose refusal to respond provokes further verbal attacks by Herod and his court. As Jesus will not speak, they cannot find evidence to condemn him and have to declare him innocent: "The silent figure of Jesus wins the game – has, we might say, the last, but silent, laugh" (O'Connell 2002: 49). Herod acquits him as a fool asking why he should *flaye hym or fleme hym* ('flay him or condemn him'; l. 414), and Jesus triumphs by declining to play the game of his enemies.

Humour darkens significantly when it focuses on the torturing of Christ during the extensive crucifixion scenes. Again, Christ's persecutors perform "tortures as elaborate games" (Groves 2007a: 136). After the torturers have reported that Jesus has been condemned to death, they appear eager to execute the crucifixion as quick as possible. In the Towneley *Buffeting*, Caiaphas turns the buffeting into a competition by announcing to bless the one *That knokys hym the best* ('who knocks him best'; l. 360). In all mystery Passion scenes, the torturers seem determined to enjoy their work, taking pleasure in the prospect of torturing Jesus: *Bot more sorow thou hase / oure myrth is incresyng* ('The more sorrow you have, (the more) our mirth is increasing'; Towneley 22.74). Violence and torture as play and game also defines "what is dramatically the most difficult, and aesthetically the most precarious, action in these cycles: the actual stretching and nailing of Christ to the cross, and the raising of the cross on high" (Kolve 1966: 188). Drawing on popular non-gospel material, such as stories in which Christ's body is burned with torches and hot irons, the cycle plays add various graphic details of cruelty (Sponsler 1997: 147). The gospels (Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:33) only mention the fact that the soldiers crucified Christ. What was a mere mention of the crucifixion in the Bible becomes the main theme in the Passion plays. Both the York and Towneley versions substantially extend the cruelty of the scene, and "the verbal details of breaking, stretching, tearing and nailing Christ's body are further authenticated for us by partly clothing the descriptions in dialogue effectively imitating a matter-of-fact conversation between workmen making use of the skill of their profession" (Witalisz 1994: 11). The York play, in particular, represents the episode with a disturbing violence and ferocity. While the Jews from the Chester play simply announce (and put into practice) their intentions, the York torturers revel in meticulously pointing out the crucifixion's

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75  Whereas Christ's clothes in the gospel account (e.g. Mark 9:3) are white as snow, the traditional fool's coat at this date was motley. Beadle and King state that Christ's white fool's gown, "though contemporary nonsense as such" (1995: 175),  presents a visual contrast of purity and simplicity to the finery of Herod's court.

effects on Christ's body: *3aa, assoundir are bothe synnous and veynis / On ilke a side, so haue we soughte*. ('Yes, burst apart are bones and veins on every side, as we had sought'; ll. 148–9). The soldiers in the Towneley *Crucifixion* joke continuously and mock Christ's agony. In a parody of a tournament, they compare securing Christ on the cross with putting him into the saddle on horseback. They speak as if they were servants arming and horsing their lord before he rides to joust in battle (ll. 92–118; see Williams 1973: 121; Wickham ³1992: 91). When they finally raise the cross into place with a rope, they quarrel among themselves and vie with each other in pulling:

> **Secundus Tortor.** Yit efte, whils thi hande is in, / Pull therat with som kyn gyn.
> 'Yet again, while your hand is in, pull thereat with some skill [or some kind of contrivance].'
> **Tercius Tortor.** Yee, & bryng it to the marke.
> 'Yes, and bring it to the mark.'
> **Quartus Tortor.** Pull, pull!
> 'Pull, pull!'
> **Primus Tortor.** Haue now!
> 'Have [hold] now!'
> **Secundus Tortor.** Let se!
> 'Let's see!'
> **Tercius Tortor.** A ha!
> 'Ah, ha!'
> **Quartus Tortor.** Yit a draght!
> 'Yet a tug!'
> **Primus Tortor.** Therto with all my maght.
> 'Thereto with all my might.'
> **Secundus Tortor.** A, ha! hold still thore!
> 'Ah, ha! Hold still there!'
> **Tercius Tortor.** So felowse! looke now belyfe, / Which of you can best dryfe, / And I shall take the bore. [Towneley 23.187–99]
> 'So fellows, look now at once, who of you can drive [hammer] best. And I shall take the bore [hold the nail in place at the bore-hole].'

The soldiers in the York *Crucifixion* ask whether Jesus values the craftsmanship with which they have accomplished their task: *Say sir, howe likis you nowe, / þis werke that we haue wrought?* ('Say, sir, how do you like this work that we have wrought?'; ll. 260–1). Scripture itself (Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34) supplies another game that is played during the Passion: after the cross has been erected, the four Jews, the torturers of the Chester *Crucifixion*, start to cast lots for Jesus' garments (see Styan ²1968: 6). Only the furious shouting of Caiaphas makes them continue their work: *Men, for cockes face, howe longe shall pewee-ars stand naked in that place? Goe nayle him on the tree!* ('Men, for God's face, how long shall pissy-arse stand naked in that place? Go nail him on the tree!'; ll. 149–52). These scenes demonstrate how the stress is occasionally shifted in the mystery plays from the tragic event to the amusement shown by the cruel torturers. Their open sadism in causing pain is supposed to stand out in contrast to the

devout, quiet serenity of the sufferer: "Ignorant, mischievous evil is clearly set against the silence of Divine patience in Christ" (Witalisz 1994: 11).

The mockery of Christ's kingship reaches its climax when the torturers crown him with thorns (cf. Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:17). As they turn the high king of heaven into a mock king on earth, "they are paying tribute to Him, while displaying to the full their own sinfulness and spiritual folly" (Jack 1989: 99). In fact, there are several references which may be interpreted as dramatic irony, many of which derive from passages where the torturers unwittingly bear witness to Christ's divinity (see Diller 1992: 237; Forest-Hill 2000: 82):

> **Miles 1.** […] And sen he claymeth kyngdome with croune, / Even as a kyng here hange schall hee. [York 35.79-80]
> '[…] And since he claims a kingdom with crown, just like a king here shall he hang.'
>
> **Primus Tortor**. [...] The great warkys he has wroght / Shall serue hym of noght, [Towneley 22.58–9]
> '[…] The great works he has wrought shall serve him as nought.'
>
> **Secundus Tortor.** […] I shall spytt in his face / though it be fare shynyng; [Towneley 22.72]
> '[…] I shall spit in his face though it be fair shining;'
>
> **Secundus Tortor.** Hayll kyng! where was thou borne / sich worship for to wyn? [Towneley 22.236]
> 'Hail, king! Where were you born, such worship for to win?'

Studying laughter in medieval English drama, Diller points out that the word 'laugh' is used above all in the self-descriptions of devils and tyrants, where it is identified with "premature triumph and false security" (2002: 8). In the Towneley *Herod*, the news of the slaughter of the innocents puts Herod in a state of breathless laughter (*I lagh that I whese!* ('I laugh so hard that I wheeze!'; l. 475)), increasing further his foolishness in the eyes of the audience (Diller 2002: 8). In these cases, laughter marks the beginning of a tragic descent into damnation. In the Passion plays, it betrays the blindness of evil seemingly triumphing on earth. The best example of such blind derision is of course presented by the vicious mockery of the torturers (Bießenecker 2012: 221; see also Jack 1989: 70). However, the negative evaluation of laughter within the plays should not be confused with the laughter of the audience in response to the play's action (Kolve 1966: 137f.).

The mixture of violence and humour is not unique to the crucifixion plays. It is also evident in the Chester and Towneley play dealing with the *Slaughter of the Innocents* (cf. Matthew 2:16–18), where the tension results from the rapid juxtaposition of moments of comedy with moments of agony. During the 'flyting episode', the soldiers turn the slaughter of the infants into a cruel game: *Dame, thy sonne, in good faye, / hee must of me learne a playe: / hee must hopp, or I goe awaye, / upon my speare ende* ('Dame, your son, in good faith, he must of me learn a game; he

must hop, before I go away, upon my spear-end'; ll. 321–4). An exchange of insults follows, with the liveliest insults given to the mothers. The Second Mother answers the Second Knight with blows and abuse, exclaiming: *Saye, rotten hunter with thy gode, stytton stallon, styck-tode. / I reade that thou no wronge us bode / lest thou beaton bee*. ('Ah, wicked robber with your goad, lecherous stallion, toad-stabber! I advise that you offer us no wrong lest you be beaten'; ll. 313–6).

These scenes of violence between the mothers and the knights have been criticised for being too close to grotesque farce, or a detriment to the play as a whole. For Lumiansky and Mills, the effect of the Chester adaptation is too farcical and results in grotesque comedy: "The laments of the women are suggested by Matthew 2.17 and were a feature of the liturgical drama. Here, however, the sense of sorrow is subsumed under the vindictiveness and comic belligerence of the women" (1974: 154; see a similar criticism by Craik 1973: 195). It seems likely that these passages were also associated with diversion and amusement, since such scenes provided mirth for the audience, which may be an additional reason for the detailed, naturalistic depiction. Williams writes: "It seems likely that the attack of the women was sometimes played for laughs" (1973: 121).

Similarly, some members of the audience perhaps enjoyed the verbal and physical violence of the Passion scenes (see Valdés Miyares 2010: 126; Sponsler 1997: 150; Stevenson 2011: 100). Contemporary witnesses observed that the cycle plays sometimes provoked unseemly laughter rather than piety and compassion (Diller 1992: 232). This has prompted the theory that in the crucifixion plays "there is to be found an undercurrent of irreverence and even blasphemy which runs against the plays' official, religious purpose" (Diller 1992: 232).[76] The audience, who is supposed to focus on the pain and suffering of Christ, may instead be tempted to identify with the soldiers/torturers, "to delight in their puns and quibbles, and in the to and fro of their petty squabbles" (Burde 2010: 217; see also Beadle and King 1995: 211).[77]

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76  From this perspective, Kolve (1966: 130) and other scholars (Diller 1992: 296, footnote 192; Diller 2002: 4; Forest-Hill 2000: 79; Valdés Miyares 2010: 115) have discussed the complaint by the Masons in the York civic records. The craft guild informs the civic authorities that they are no longer willing to perform the Fergus episode from the (today lost) play *The Assumption of the Virgin*, where the dismembering of a Jew aroused amusement rather than devotion among the audience.

77  Referring to the crucifixion plays, A. P. Rossiter claims that the audience is encouraged to identify with the soldiers/torturers in their "negation of the faith" (1950: 70). He claims that the authority of Christian faith in the late medieval period did not suffice to maintain the emphasis on the agony and pain of Jesus in such scenes. By making game of it, "[t]he very values of martyrdom – of *any* suffering as significant – are implicitly denied" (1950: 70; see Kolve 1966: 134f.; Diller 1992: 232; Diller 1994; Janicka 1962: 109). A contrary view has been expressed by Forest-Hill (2000: 77): Laughter in the cycle plays was intended to condemn sinful behaviour and attitudes. Similar to the other diabolic figures, the soldiers/torturers are meant to exemplify and not to encourage malignity and irreverence, and they are exposed by the ignorant contempt for their victim and their abusive mocking language.

Still, the "exposition and minute recounting of the pain and the blood" (Witalisz 1994: 12) may have been dreadful and emotionally moving, at least for some members of the audience.[78] All the crucifixion plays allow the audience to *feel* and thus respond emotionally to Christ's death, which "is presented in so horrific and immediate a form that the audience cannot help but suffer passionately on his behalf" (Jack 1989: 50).[79] The author of the anti-theatrical fifteenth-century Wycliffite tract *Tretise of Myraclis Pleyinge* reports that *men and wymmen, seinge the passioun of Crist* […] *ben movyd to compassion and devocion, wepinge bitere teris* (ll. 191–4; see Davidson 1984: 9; Sponsler 1997: 151; Forest-Hill 2000: 78; King 2010: 628f.).[80]

The strategic placement of contemplative scenes and familiar iconography into comic dialogue is intended to control the pace and nature of the action's emotional impact (King 2010: 632; see also Forest-Hill 2000: 78). For example, when the cross has reached its iconographic position in the crucifixion plays, the violence, noise, and savagery subside for a moment. What follows is Christ's traditional reproachful speech to the people, in which he asks God to forgive those who are responsible for his death (see McNeir 1951: 614, 623; Kolve 1966: 5f.; Witalisz 1994: 11; Walker [2]2008: 93; Beckwith 2009: 83f.; King 2010: 632). The audience who has enjoyed the play for its comedy and horror will now realise "their sinful complicity with those soldiers when Jesus asks God to forgive them" (Forest-Hill 2000: 79f., 84; see also Kolve 1966: 4; Beadle [2]2008: 117).

What happens in the cycle plays is that the alteration between the tragic and the comic mood results in a blend of horror and fun, solemnity and mockery, creating grim humour, jesting seriousness (see Williams 1973: 123). This corroborates for the late medieval period what Curtius noted about earlier continental literature: The mixture of jest and earnest was common in medieval Latin poetry, and was also known and practised as a stylistic norm by the medieval poet, "auch

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78 Studying transgressive language in the biblical plays , Forest-Hill contends that "audience reaction would not have been consistent" (2000: 61) when confronted with disturbing, 'comico-serious' scenes. Assuming a uniformity in audience reactions would disregard the profound ambivalence of the dark sense of humour in some of the plays. Various factors, such as the physical position of the spectator in relation to the stage or the audience's familiarity with the actors, determine the impact of the plays (2000: 61; cf. Valdés Miyares 2010: 116). In a similar vein, Kathleen Ashley had argued in her article on the York cycle that such cultural productions would "elicit many kinds of responses" (1998: 9).

79 Hans-Jürgen Diller argues that the audience is not meant to feel Christ's wounds as if they were his own. Such feeling would have constituted the sin of pride. He states: "In contrast to the 'experiential' emotions induced in the Aristotelian theatre, we may here speak of 'contemplative' emotions" (1994: 29). The spectators are intended to merely observe the events on stage from a relatively distant position. Due to the separation of play-sphere and audience-sphere, spectators do not become 'participants' "in the Bakhtinian sense of the word" (Diller 2002: 9). V. A. Kolve (1966) stresses this distance between action and audience by defining medieval drama as play and game which exploits fully its non-earnest nature: "The horror of the Passion is controlled by constantly breaking the flow of its action. As the judges, scorners, tormentors, and executioners become totally absorbed in each new and limited game which they take up, so too is our attention diverted in turn" (1966: 200).

80 For a discussion of the affective style as a characteristic of late medieval religious literature, see Section 3.4.1 below.

wenn er sie vielleicht nirgends ausdrücklich formuliert fand" ('even if he perhaps nowhere found them expressly formulated'; [11]1993: 425; see also Kolve 1966: 19; Johnston 2002: 17; Classen 2010: 94). Reassessing the complex dialogue between the serious and the comic, the sacred and the profane, Valdés Miyares suggests that the comic elements in late medieval religious literature are "not simply a device to sugar the religious pill for secular audiences" (2010: 111; see also Happé 2002: 34; Goodrich 2010: 532). Kolve (1966) has highlighted their functionality within the plays:

> The one thing all these have in common is their formal seriousness: however funny, bumptious, coarse, or improvisatory these comic actions may seem, they have their roots in serious earth; they are intimately and intricately involved in their play's deepest meanings. (1966: 173)

## 3.4 The potential for 'communicative immediacy' in the mystery 'comedies'

Once we have identified the comic texts in the cycles, we need to determine their potential for linguistic mimesis, i.e. their potential for imitating or representing 'authentic' spoken discourse. As we have seen in previous sections, medieval theories of comedy are related to ancient conceptions, "auch wenn der Denkhorizont, was die intentionale Unterlegung betrifft, unterschiedlich ist" ('even if the horizon of thought is different, as far as the intentional basis is concerned'; Bareiß 1982: 231). The first thinker who deals extensively with mimesis is Plato, and it is he who first asserts the negative qualities of literary imitation in many of his philosophical writings, within the framework of his epistemological and ethical-pedagogical views (see Stott 2005: 18f.). On the basis of his doctrine of ideas, he points out that the world of experience is an imitation of the world of ideas, and that poetry, in turn, is a mere imitation of the world of experience. Poetry is thus distant from reality (from the world of ideas), and as an imitation of the imitation denies truthful expression of real nature (see Bareiß 1982: 37; Burke 2014: 13).

In discussions of poetry and rhetoric in the later classical period, "the explicitly ethical concerns of [...] Plato tend to give way to explanations of what makes for effective speech and presentation" (Davis 2003: 205). According to Aristotle, all forms of poetry, including comedy and tragedy, can be defined as representations of life (*Poet.* 1447a). Bareiß comments: "Die Nachahmung ist damit für die Dichtung konstituierend, und Aristoteles trägt dieser Erkenntnis Rechnung, indem die Mimesis als oberstes Prinzip der Poetik fungiert" (1982: 38).[81] Whereas tragedy is "a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude" (*Poet.* 1449b), comedy mirrors people who are 'low' by nature:

> Comedy, as we have said, is a representation of inferior people, not indeed in the full sense of the word bad, but the laughable is a species of the base or ugly. It consists in some blunder or ugliness that does not cause pain or disaster, an obvious example being the comic mask which is ugly and distorted but not painful. (*Poet.* 1449a)[82]

Mimesis is by no means to be equated with the mere representation of a particular object or event. In contrast to history which merely has to convey what has happened, poetry is "more scientific and serious" (*Poet.* 1451b) because it tends to give general truths: "By a 'general truth' I mean the sort of thing that a certain type of man will do or say either probably or necessarily" (*Poet.* 1451b). The principle of *verisimilitudo* as a category of *decorum* is effective here, which in fact regulates the correlation of the two elements: fictionality and realism. Aristotle also favours

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81   'Imitation is thus constitutive of poetry, and Aristotle takes account of this by having mimesis function as the supreme principle of poetics' (my translation).

82   See also *Inst. Orat.* 6.3.8; Hess 1965: 19; Bareiß 1982: 67; Jack 1989: 5; Gilhus 1997: 47; Kendrick 2000: 91; Stott 2005: 19.

*verisimilitudo* in the matter of diction. In his *Rhetoric,* he declares that language has to be suitable to the subject: "even in poetry, if fine language were used by a slave or a very young man, or about quite unimportant matters, it would be hardly becoming" (3.2.3). The dramatist must not make his characters say anything that is not either necessary or probable. Art is cleverly concealed when the poet employs a manner of speech close to daily life: "Wherefore those who practise this artifice must conceal it and avoid the appearance of speaking artificially instead of naturally" (*Rhet.* 3.2.4-5; see Davis 2003: 205).

From classical discussions of fictionality and realism (e.g. from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.8.3 or Quinitilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 2.4.2) derives the medieval classification of *narratio* according to the degree of truthfulness. Throughout medieval rhetorical treatises and poetics we find the tripartite division: *fabula–argumentum–historia. Fabula* is a story that contains no truth and no resemblance to truth; *argumentum* is a 'realistic' fiction dealing with events that are not true but have verisimilitude; and *historia* is an account of true events, usually of the remote past (see Hertog 1991: 185; Martinez [2]2010: 29). Although the designation of the narrative genres to the triad is not consistent, the terminus *argumentum* is mostly attributed to the *comoedia* (Faral (1924: 327) quotes John of Garland to illustrate the persistence of the tradition). Similar to Aristotle's definition of poetry in contrast to history (*Poet.* 1451b), its connection to *argumentum* reveals the *comoedia*'s close relation to reality based on the principle of *verisimilitudo*. This is most clearly expressed in the form of the ancient – but also well-known medieval – definition of comedy, ascribed to Cicero by Donatus: *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis* ('imitation of life, mirror of custom, image of truth'; *Commentum Terenti* 5.1.).[83]

Classical writers continually emphasise that "comedy is a sort of realism in disguise" (Jack 1989: 5). Cicero had noted that comic style could come close to *sermo cottidianus* (*Orator* 20.67; see Burton 2009: 59, footnote 19). For Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria*, the lively mimesis of character in comedies is primarily mirrored in speech which is close to real-life conversation:

> Quod faciunt actores comici, qui neque ita prorsus, ut nos vulgo loquimur, pronuntiant, quod esset sine arte, neque procul tamen a natura recedunt, quo vitio periret imitatio; sed morem communis huius sermonis decore quodam scenico exornant. (2.10.13)[84]

Quintilian echoes his statements about appropriate, natural representation of character speech in his emphasis on *decorum*: those words are best *quia sunt optima minime arcessita et simplicibus*

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83  See also Cicero *De Re Publica* 4.11; Hess 1965: 19; Bareiß 1982: 41, 241; Kelly 1993: 15, footnote 60; Kelly 1993: 34; Curtius [11]1993: 340, footnote 1; Crofts 2005: 55.

84  'In this connexion I may cite the practice of comic actors, whose delivery is not exactly that of common speech, since that would be inartistic, but is on the other hand not far removed from the accents of nature, for, if it were, their mimicry would be a failure: what they do therefore is to exalt the simplicity of ordinary speech by a touch of stage decoration' (Trans. Butler [9]1996: 277, 279).

*atque ab ipsa veritate profectis similia* ('which are least far-fetched and give the impression of simplicity and reality'; *Inst. Orat.* 8.1.23).

Classical thinkers imposed 'a great burden' on the genre of comedy, as their statements about mimesis and realism were exploited by Christian opponents of drama. Indeed, considering classical definitions of the term, it becomes clear why it would not be applied to the mystery play texts in the Middle Ages. First of all, according to classical theory, comedies are believed to mirror 'low' people and faulty behaviour. The presentation of evil on stage was then "one of the keystones of the attack on mediaeval religious drama" (Jack 1989: 5), as it was believed to lead to depravity and misconduct both among actors and audience. Tertullian has vividly illustrated this point of view in *De Spectaculis*:

> Quodsi sunt tragoediae et comoediae scelerum et libidinum auctrices cruentae et lascivae, impiae et prodigae, nullius rei aut atrocis aut vilis commemoratio melior est: quod in facto reicitur, etiam in dicto non est recipiendum. (17.7)[85]

The Christian author Lactantius criticises the corrupting influence of comedies, arguing that they hold up a mirror to nature in a bad, dangerous sense. He speaks of the actors as mimes who feign depraved actions and immodest gestures. The more 'lifelike' the subjects are represented, the more they are capable of instructing the audience in immoral behaviour. If any one is present at such spectacles, he has departed from the worship of God and good works. As Lactantius states, the truth should be represented through faith, not through the mimicry of dramatic spectacles (*Divine Institutes* 6.20).

It was specifically this mimetic effect that was cited as one of the dangerous aspects of medieval religious drama by the author of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*. Again, in a similar approach like Plato, the mystery cycles are regarded as deceptive, worldly plays rather than representations of the eternal spiritual truth resting in God: *the sight of hem is no verrey recreasion but fals and worldy* [...] *as this feinyd recreacioun of pleying of miraclis is fals equite* ('the sight of them is no truthful recreation but false and worldly [...] as this feigned recreation of playing miracles is false conceit'; ll. 415–6, 423–4; see Jack 1989: 6). The criticism seems to be that, in seeming to be true, the cycle plays contain *mengid leesingis* (l. 426) and *mengid trewthis* (l. 427). Similarly, as mentioned above, the author speaks of the spectators of the mystery plays *wepinge bitere teris* (ll. 193–4), but he does not see these tears as *werrey wepinge and medeful* ('true weeping and (spiritually) beneficial'; l. 357). These tears are not a sign of sincere penitence, but a sign of shallow sympathy for "a mere show of suffering" (Walker [2]2008: 77). Concern for physical representation also stood behind the refusal of the Reformers to allow even revised,

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85  'If these tragedies and comedies, bloody and lustful, impious and prodigal, teach outrage and lust, the study of what is cruel or vile is no better than itself. What in action is rejected, is not in word to be accepted' (Trans. Glover 1931: 277).

Protestantised versions of the mystery cycles: "In the realm of the sacred it was precisely the fact of impersonation that drew the mistrust of the Reformers and caused them to end the performances of the biblical plays" (O'Connell 2000: 82). Matthew Hutton, dean of York, offers this sort of objection in a 1576 order forbidding the performance of mystery plays: No play should be used or set forth wherein sacred matters are *counterfeyted or represented; or anythinge plaied which tende to the maintenaunce of superstition and idolatrie* (qtd. in Groves 2007b: 55). The sticking point was the belief that physical portrayal, impersonation of the sacred was transgressive, indeed that it was potentially blasphemous. The explanation for this argumentation lies in the connection with the medieval notion of reality: The truly real is the objective reality resting in God (Hess 1965: 18). But medieval drama was almost always categorised as worldly rather than spiritual drama: *for they ben don more to ben seen of the world and to plesyn to the world thanne to ben seen of God or to plesyn to him* ('for they are done [performed] more to be seen of the world, and to please the world, than to be seen of God, or to please him'; *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* ll. 222–4; see Jack 1989: 6). Summing up, while objecting to medieval drama, and in part objecting to the dramatic medium itself, it is obvious that critics of the cycle plays emphasised their mimetic qualities which may effectively encourage audience involvement and identification.

In Chapter 2 of *Drama, Play, and Game* (2001), Lawrence M. Clopper argues that the arguments of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* are not directed at vernacular religious drama. Instead, it condemns inappropriate, carnivalesque, ribald games (*miracula* and *ludi inhonesti*), where both the participants and spectators undermine the orthodoxy of sacred (ecclesiastical) practices and doctrine (see Johnston [2]2008: 2f.). I agree with Lerud, who believes that while it is indeed likely that the *Tretise*'s criticisms are not restricted to vernacular plays, it seems "unwise to *rule out* such drama as included in the argument" (2003: 485). More importantly, Clopper (2001: 59f.) has outlined the re-evaluation of classical comedy from the fifteenth century onward. Besides praising its rhetorical strengths, late medieval scholars begin to attach a positive value to its mimetic qualities. Following ancient grammarians like Donatus, they argue that comedy seeks to amend and not teach sinful behaviour by representing its true nature on stage (see Stott 2005: 5).

### 3.4.1 Context and sources

For decades, the medieval dramatic tradition had been conceived within a homogeneous, evolutionary model. In his famous work *The Medieval Stage* (1903), E. K. Chambers argued for a development from Latin liturgical tropes to liturgical drama, to a vernacular religious drama performed by the laity that became increasingly secularised until it eventually evolved into the

secular, commercial theatre of the English Renaissance (see Clopper 2001: 1, 19; Johnston [2]2008: 1).[86] The Latin tropes built upon an appropriate text from Scripture in dialogue form and formed an integral part of the liturgy surrounding the chief Church feasts at Christmas and more especially at Easter (Wickham [3]1992: 33; Happé 2004: 21). The earliest example of a liturgical trope was the *Quem quaeritis* dialogue between the angel and the Marys who seek the body of Christ at the empty tomb on Easter morning. The *Regularis Concordia*, a tenth-century manual on monastic rule and practice compiled by the Bishop of Winchester, records the mimetic nature of the *Quem quaeritis* trope: *Aguntur enim haec ad imitationem angeli sedentis in monumento atque mulierum cum aromatibus venientium ut ungerent corpus Jhesu* (see Kolve 1966: 12; Wickham [2]2002: 23; Johnston [2]2008: 3).[87] Though the earliest forms of drama within the Christian Church were "artifical, mystical and lyrical – in a word, operatic – rather than realistic and didactic" (Wickham [3]1992: 33), the Church seems to have conceived of dramatic action as something performed *ad imitationem* even at this early date (see Kolve 1966: 12).

According to the once-canonical evolutionary model, the liturgical tropes gradually evolved into liturgical drama, in which choirs performed elaborate dramatic celebrations of the key sacraments of the Christian year (Schabert [3]1992: 44; Clopper 2001: 1). As Wickham ([3]1992: 39f., 43, 51) explains, while the Easter tropes were conceived as *officium* in the tenth century, more extended, elaborate liturgical dramas, such as the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Ordo Representacionis Adam* (*Le Mystère d'Adam*), were referred to as *repraesentatio*, indicating certain mimetic qualities. Vernacular religious drama, by contrast, was commonly defined as *ludus*, which may be a reflection of the mystery plays' new, different form of representation. The reduction of the biblical actions to play and game equivalents, on the one hand, implies a considerable distance from reality. On the other hand, dramatic action can still "be used to imitate imaginatively something other that is both real and existential", and its content "made human-sized, and what may properly be called joyful" (Kolve 1966: 270).

Despite numerous monographs and articles on the evolution of the cycles, the process of transition from Latin liturgical drama to public vernacular drama is still "a scholarly conundrum" (Johnston [2]2008: 4; see also Happé 2004: 22). Apart from two Anglo-Norman plays, *Le Mystère d'Adam* and *La Seinte Resureccion,* representational drama from the twelfth century was written entirely in Latin and performed in front of a learned, chiefly monastic audience. Conversely, English Scriptural plays were written for the laity and served a wholly different purpose: "To understand

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86  Intense research over the last few decades (Woolf 1980; Clopper 2001, Wickham [3]1992, Stevens 1987: 12) has clarified that there was no linear evolution from liturgical to vernacular drama. According to the current state of research, vernacular drama developed entirely separately, while liturgical plays continued to be performed within the church.

87  'These things are done in imitation of the angel seated in the monument [i.e. sepulchre], and of the women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus' (Trans. Wickham [2]2002: 23).

this purpose we must look to the radical changes that were taking place within the western Church in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century" (Johnston [2]2008: 4). Alexandra F. Johnston ([2]2008: 4f.) has listed three major, intertwined developments, two of which are relevant for my discussion of 'realistic' tendencies:

a) the Fourth Lateran Council by Pope Innocent III in 1215
b) the founding of the orders of mendicant friars, separate from the secular clergy

### a) The Fourth Lateran Council and vernacular instruction

The didactic purpose of the Middle English mystery cycles is closely related to the implementation of the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) in England. The canons of the Council had the initial aim of educating the clergy itself, by raising the status of bishops, increasing diocesan activity, and placing greater attention upon the behaviour and education of the priesthood. These efforts eventually resulted in the growth of educational tools designed to facilitate the clergy's instruction of the laity (Watson 2000: 76; Happé 2004: 23f.; Newhauser 2009: 39, 49; Kohnen 2010: 532). As a result, a large variety of pieces of religious instruction that focused on the essential elements of Christian belief and practice were produced not only in Latin but also more and more in the vernacular, thus making them available to lay readership and devotion (Wickham [3]1992: 59; Johnston [2]2008: 5; see also Bergner 1994: 37).[88] Long vernacular poems largely devoted to the story of Christ's incarnation and passion were written and intended to be read aloud to the congregation, such as the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Northern Passion*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* (Johnston [2]2008: 6; see also Mills 1969: 55; Clopper 2001: 208; Happé 2004: 22; Mills [2]2008: 131f.). Kolve (1966), Mills (1969) and Happé (2004), in particular, have examined the emergence of the cycle plays in relation to the tradition of religious vernacular poetry.[89] The interaction of Scripture, liturgy and poetry had made certain themes familiar and popular among writers and their audience, which "made them obvious candidates in a sequence of Biblical subjects for vernacular treatment" (Mills 1969: 55). In any case, the cycle plays were

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88 From the early Middle Ages, certain parts of the Vulgate were translated into the vernacular by preachers, in order to ensure their accessibility and comprehension on the part of the lay audience. Sermons, however, were virtually always written down in Latin and "[e]ven the most rigorously English sermons have at least one quotation in Latin [...]" (Wenzel 1994: 6; see also Kehnel 2003: 310). Clerics switched from one language to the other not only to meet the needs of the audience, but out of respect for authoritative texts. As Wenzel (1994: 121) argues, preachers would often quote authoritative passages in Latin and then translate, expand and explain them in the vernacular. Whether or not they were preached in English, Latin, or a mixture of the two, "an appreciable number of sermons have been preserved in the vernacular" (Newhauser 2009: 50).

89 Happé (2004: 22) has even detected a performative aspect in some narrative poems. For example, the stage directions of the twelfth-century narrative poem *Passion des Jongleurs* indicate that the minstrel-like performers executed certain movements and actions. However, while there may have been performative embellishment, the purpose of these texts, according to Happé, was never theatrical: "The poem belongs primarily to the medieval traditions of oral poetry (2004: 22).

informative, instructive and didactic productions intended to educate and confirm the laity in their religion: "Audiences are encouraged to look upon the play[s] as a meditational aid and […] to acquaint themselves experientially with the important facts and historical events of Christianity" (Davidson 1975: 283). Clopper (2001: 159) has cited two cases where the instructive aim of the mystery plays becomes apparent: The preacher in the *Hundred Merry Tales* points out that if you wish to understand the articles of the creed, you should go to Coventry where you can see them enacted. Similarly, the Wycliffite preacher says that the articles of the Pater Noster are represented at York.

The didactic aims of the Church are also reflected in an increased need for visualising religious themes and ideas. Key episodes in the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary were taught visually, through the iconography of paintings, sculpture, tapestries, wood carvings and stained glass windows in churches and chapels, or through illustrations in books (Wickham [3]1992: 109; Johnston [2]2008: 6; Corrie 2009: 35; see also Clopper 2001: 159; Mazzon 2009: 6f.). According to Bergner (1994: 38), there is, among other characteristics, a tendency in these graphic representations towards drastic elements, emotionality, topical interest, individualism, portraits, and detail drawing.[90] The sufferings that Jesus encountered are well documented in iconography, with extended and affective contemplation on the most gruesome aspects of the scene (Ishii 1993: 21f.; Beadle and King 1995: 211). The vision of medieval theatre as "moving pictures" (Witalisz 1994: 10) or "speaking pictures" (Smith Vinter 1980: 135) certainly reflects some of its expository, visual techniques which it shared with art, in its attempt to clarify and instruct, delight and entertain:

> It must also be made clear that this 'vivification' of religious doctrine took place not only through the subtle use of verbal means, but also through the visual elements, with the most salient scenes (as reconstructed from stage directions and the occasional portraying of theatrical activity, e.g. in illustrated manuscripts) clearly modelled on standard iconography. (Mazzon 2009: 6f.)

Some scholars (e.g. Woolf 1980; Beadle and King 1995) deny the plays naturalism of any kind and emphasise their visual aspects as opposed to the verbal elements. According to them, the mystery cycles bring to life images known through biblical or liturgical texts, through sculpture and painting. Considered from this point of view, it is easy to understand why the mystery plays had to be defended against attacks by the Lollards who condemned their supposed idolatry (Beadle and King 1995: xxvi). However, despite the employment of symbolism and a similar devotional purpose, I believe that medieval drama appealed to the audience in a different and probably more profound way than the other (visual) art forms of the late Middle Ages. This view is confirmed by Kolve: "The Corpus Christi drama furnishes images too, but of a superior sort; the plays are 'quike

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90   See also Janicka (1962: 23ff.) on the blend of the comic/grotesque and the sublime in works of art.

bookis', living books that speak, move, and can imitate whole sequences of events and interactions. They image more vividly and more unforgettably than any other art form of their time, but they too seek to serve in these ways" (1966: 5). Witalisz agrees: "Even if contemporary records describe the plays as 'moving pictures', as does the Middle English *Treatise of Miraclis Playinge*, we should not understand that medieval theatre could have been totally deprived of this unique effect afforded by the immediacy of time and space actualization of the potential meanings of the written word through sound and movement of human actors" (1994: 9).

### b) The founding of the mendicant orders and affective piety

A number of scholars (e.g. Owst 1933: 23ff.; Janicka 1962: 21; Kolve 1966: 4; Johnston [2]2008: 4f.) have ascribed the tendency towards realism in late medieval literature to the founding of the mendicant orders.[91] The mendicant orders brought with them a new preaching style that revolutionised the spiritual life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (see Wickham [3]1992: 57ff.; Happé 2004: 23f.; Mazzon 2009: 6). This new preaching style is reflected in the movement of 'popular piety' or 'affective piety' that set out to engage the emotions of the listeners/readers (see Eshelman 2007: 27; Johnston [2]2008: 6; Twycross [2]2008: 45). Kolve comments: "Every detail had to be registered and responded to; sermons were preached, images painted, poems written and recited, all to this end, that these events might be felt as well as understood" (1966: 4). Late medieval depictions of Christ therefore do not focus on the majesty of the *Christus victor* reigning from the Tree of Life but on the physical sufferings of the human Jesus on the Cross of Shame (see Janicka 1962: 21f.; Sponsler 1997: 146f.; Watson 2000: 78; Happé 2004: 23; Newhauser 2009: 50). The mimetic representation of Christ's life sought to encourage the individual "to feel 'þere present in þi mynde' the Incarnate Christ as he taught, suffered, died and rose again" (Johnston [2]2008: 7; see also Twycross [2]2008: 45). This growing emphasis on the earthly life of Jesus encouraged also a growth in the role of the Virgin and a generally greater interest in the lives and feelings of the biblical characters (see Muir [2]2003: 4f.; see also Bergner 1994: 37; Eshelman 2007: 27). The movement of affective piety shaped the composition and style of literary works and sermons:

Various texts told the story of the life and passion of Christ with an emphasis on affective spirituality, "taking a more emotive approach than the purely narrative compositions" (Johnston [2]2008: 7; see also Happé 2004: 25). These meditative or visionary works drew on stories and legends from New Testament apocryphal sources and traditions, for instance on the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the source of the legend of Christ's Harrowing of Hell (see Spivack 2002:

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91 The contribution of the mendicant orders, in this case, the Franciscans, to the spread of vernacular literature has been examined by Kehnel (2003: Chapt. 2.9).

69; Muir [2]2003: 5; Corrie 2009: 36). In the course of the medieval period, devotional texts were increasingly rendered in the vernacular (Happé 2004: 25). For example, the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, a composite Franciscan work, was translated and adapted into English by Nicholas Love as *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*. The text recounted Christ's suffering during the crucifixion in all its horrifying detail, with the aim of exciting *many deuoute felynges and sterynges that he neuer supposed before* (qtd. in Davidson 1975: 112; see also Woolf 1980: 184; Witalisz 1994: 12; Happé 2004: 27; Beckwith 2009: 85; Newhauser 2009: 38). As a genre that combined art, literature and popular piety, the mystery plays are closely related to the revival of religious enthusiasm and the movement towards greater stress on the individual, on emotions and personal relationships, in order to catch the listener's attention and to make doctrine more real, understandable and familiar to man.

G. R. Owst, in his classic survey of *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (1933), argues that Middle English vernacular drama was constructed from actual sermon material. For him, the mystery play texts combine "the moral and religious teaching of the homily with the exciting movement of the drama" (1933: 471). Owst documents the colloquial, vernacular preaching of the friars, who incorporated realistic details along with familiar social types, phrases, proverbs, and images from popular culture (1933: 40ff.; see also Kindrick 1993: 216; Auksi 1995: 25). He concludes that it was the pulpit which was "the true parent of a revived literary Realism" (1933: 23), i.e. the growth of the realistic element originated in the wide field of sermon literature:

> Before ever the day of such literary realism and humanism, it was the homilist who first stooped them from the level of the dusty commonplace and set them on high amid the wider concerns of the human mind […] who clothed them for the first time with a deep spiritual and social significance for the ordinary man […]. (1933: 46; see also Owst 1933: 23, 40)

In addition, he illustrates the kinship of sermons and drama with the use of humour as a mode of instruction (see also Kolve 1966: 130). The Franciscan emphasis on the "vivid reflections of current life" (1933: 46), their merry satire and exempla led to the appearance and development of the comic element in the cycle plays (1933: 478). Owst finds "the fruits of that sermon realism" (1933: 488) in the characters of Cain, Noah's wife, Herod, Pilate, and the Nativity scenes from the cycles (1933: 491ff.). Apart from the common store of theological doctrine, he records similarities in the rendering of biblical matter, the carefully observed, more psychologically accurate manners of certain characters and topics, the very texture and language of the two classes of religious discourse (1933: 485f.).

Charlotte Steenbrugge has recently demonstrated in *Drama and Sermon in Late Medieval England* (2017) that Owst overestimated the influence of sermons on vernacular plays: "[…] his 'excess of zeal' to identify sermon themes and content in vernacular literary texts led him to

exaggerate the influence of preaching [...]" (2017: vii). Her work re-examines the relations between sermons and vernacular drama, and contrasts the relationship between the preacher and his congregation with patterns of interaction between medieval performers and their audience. Although Steenbrugge (2017: e.g. 39, 62) convincingly describes late Middle English drama as a distinct performance genre with a unique lay style of spiritual instruction and audience involvement, her findings do not argue against similarities between sermons and play texts in the representation of certain biblical characters, the use of humour and colloquial language.

### 3.4.2 Stylistic guidelines

The theological and moral issues that were connected with the Fourth Lateran Council and the movement of affective piety were also an issue of language and style. Popular preachers faced the challenge of bridging the gap between 'high' and 'low', which required opening new lines of communication to include both learned piety and popular devotion. This required the discovery of a lowly, earthy style – the *sermo humilis* – to make the Christian message available to diverse audiences without intimidating or discouraging the unlearned.

Erich Auerbach (1946 [²1959], 1958) has located the source of this low style and the concept of *humilitas* in classical practice. Ancient rhetoric was based on a graded series of levels of style.[92] The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* identifies three levels of elocution: *Sunt igitur tria genera, quae genera nos figuras appellamus, in quibus omnis oratio non vitiosa consumitur: unam gravem, alteram mediocrem, tertiam extenuatam vocamus* (4.8.11).[93] The styles are characterised as high or low by the level of verbal adornment (Moore 2016: 191; see also Curtius ¹¹1993: 80). The low style, *figura extenuata*, is largely unadorned (see e.g. Cicero *Orator* 23.78–80), or, more specifically, makes only spare use of rhetorical figures (see e.g. Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 4.11.16, 9.3.3; see also Suchomski 1975: 229; Bader 1994: 73). The choice of a particular style depends on its appropriateness to forensic occasion, with the three styles calling for corresponding levels of *res* (small, moderate, and great matter; see e.g. Cicero *De Oratore* 3.210-212; see also Dronke 1973:

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92 The distinction between high, middle, and low style seems to have been a commonplace to medieval scholars (Hertog 1991: 185; Ferri and Probert 2010: 13; see also Taavitsainen 1999b: 221). Barański (2010: 180) argues that stylistic distinctions were part of common school knowledge. A passage from the "The Clerk's Prologue" in the *Canterbury Tales* suggests that medieval writers and readers might have had at least a basic familiarity with the three categories. The Host requests the Clerk to avoid figures of speech and rhetorical devices associated with the high, courtly style and, instead, tell his story in 'plain', colloquial English: *Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures, / Keepe hem in stoor til so be ye endite / Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write. / Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye, / That we may understonde what ye seye* (16–20; see Arnovick 2012: 569; Moore 2016: 192). The theory of the three styles has been treated extensively by Curtius (1952, ¹¹1993: 201f., 232). For a full treatment of the subject, see the work of Quadlbauer (1962).

93 'There are, then, three kinds of style, called types, to which discourse, if faultless, confines itself: the first we call the Grand; the second, the Middle; the third, the Simple' (Trans. Caplan ⁶1989: 253).

320; Auksi 1995: 23; Burton 2009: 48). For classical writers, the low style implied "das scharf Realistische und kräftig Volkstümliche" ('sharp realism and homespun vigor'; Auerbach 1958: 37), reserving the seriousness of the grand or sublime style for great events among the ruling classes (Auksi 1995: 22).[94] In this sense, a particular *stilus* always represents a relative style, and is defined in opposition to the other *stili* (Bader 1994: 82; Oesterreicher 1997: 204; Barański [2]2010: 180).

As Bader (1994: 75ff.) notes, the evaluation of the low style is ambiguous in classical sources (see also Ferri and Probert 2010: 14, 21). It is characterised in the *Rhetorica aa Herennium* as *demissa usque ad usitatissimam puri consuetudinem sermonis* ('brought down to the most common practice of correct language'; 4.8.11) and, in a different passage, as a style to express that *quod ad infimum et cottidianum sermonem demissum est* ('which is brought down to the lowest, everyday language'; 4.10.14; see Auksi 1995: 53; Burton 2009: 48; Ferri and Probert 2010: 14, 16). The first description *purus...sermo* ('correct or pure language') implies a positive evaluation, while *infimus...sermo* ('lowest, everyday language') suggests a negative one (see Ferri and Probert 2010: 14). Cicero mirrors this ambivalent evaluation of the simple style in a passage of his *Orator*, where he distinguishes two classes of plain orators: *in eodemque genere alii callidi, sed impoliti et consulto rudium similes et imperitorum, alii in eadem ieiunitate concinniores, idem faceti, florentes etiam et leviter ornati* (6.20; see Bader 1994: 76; Auksi 1995: 55).[95] For Bader (1994: 76), this passage describes a plain style with two specific forms:

a)  *urbanitas* (a markedly natural and simple style in contrast to linguistic mannerism, or rhetorical bombast) and

b)  *rusticitas* (a deliberately formless, ordinary, negligent style)

In a similar vein, Quintilian suggests that, although figures of speech create a divergence from direct, simple language, they relieve the tedium of everyday speech and save us from *vulgari dicendi genere* ('a common manner of speaking'; *Inst. Orat.* 9.3.3). This passage implies that the low style may easily drift into unmediated, non-rhetorical, colloquial language which is inappropriate in oratory (Ferri and Probert 2010: 15). Thus, the plain style is not simply a transcription of actual spoken language. It is, in fact, a specific rhetorical effect which has to be

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94  Although there is a general tendency in the Middle Ages to assign the *stilus humilis* or the least adorned style to the *comoedia* (as postulated by Huguccio, Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, John of Garland and the *Epistle to Cangrande*), Placidus, Papias and Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* recommend the *stilus mediocris* (see Suchomski 1975: 245; Bareiß 1982: 224ff., 230; Curtius [11]1993: 362, 390, footnote 3; Kelly 1993: 7, 105, 144). Confusion between the two styles was far from uncommon, especially in light of the many different and competing descriptions of the *comoedia* that were in circulation (see Curtius 1952: 68; Barański [2]2010: 180).

95  'Within this class some were adroit but unpolished and intentionally resembled untrained and unskilful speakers; others had the same dryness of style, but were neater, elegant, even brilliant and to a slight degree ornate' (Trans. Hendrickson and Hubbell [5]1988: 319).

crafted carefully: "The effect of plainness is one that is fashioned by the writer through diction, sentence structure, and ornament" (Moore 2016: 191; see also Bader 1994: 74). Quintilian states that the majority of speakers think any uneducated man can speak in the *sermo cotidianus*, while it is the most difficult task in oratory to state a matter so simply that, once heard, all listeners think they would have said the same (*Inst. Orat.* 4.2.37–8; see Ferri and Probert 2014: 22). Hence, even the low style, according to classical theory, is rhetorical language, a poetic approximation to 'real' spoken discourse: "Wo wir 'Realismus' zu sehen glauben, liegt eine literarische Konvention vor: der 'niedere' Stil" (Curtius [11]1993: 390, footnote 3).[96]

In Christian use, the whole concept of the *stilus humilis* receives a new and positive evaluation (Burton 2009: 49). What lay behind this new evaluation was the language of Scripture itself; and the new demands and contents of Christian faith had to break through the classical hierarchy of styles. The first Christian rhetor to notice the contrast between classical and Christian notions was, as Auerbach has noted, St. Augustine: "[...] ihm, der ebenso in der klassisch-rhetorischen wie in der jüdisch-christlichen Welt zu Hause war, ist vielleicht als erstem das Problem des Stilgegensatzes beider Welten bewußt geworden" ([2]1959: 74).[97] In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine turns to both classical culture and Christian history in order to formulate the principles of a Christian rhetoric (Auksi 1995: 119). Although his conception of the levels of style is classical, his examples and arguments seek to demonstrate the completeness of Scripture as a guide to Christian discourse, both in wisdom and eloquence (Auksi 1995: 121). Augustine therefore clearly adapts the three *genera dicendi* of the classical rhetoricians to Christian *decorum*, by promoting the key principles of plainness and simplicity (see Auksi 1995: 123).

In his *Orator*, Cicero assigns the three styles to the three oratorical functions and writes: *Sed quot officia oratoris tot sunt genera dicendi: subtile in probando, modicum in delectando, vehemens in flectendo* [...] (21.69; see also Hess 1965: 153).[98] When Augustine describes the aims of discourse, he adopts Cicero's thoughts and writes: *Is erit igitur eloquens qui ut doceat, poterit parva submisse; ut delectet, modica temperate; ut flectat magna granditer dicere* (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.17.34; see Dronke 1973: 320; see also Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 12.10.59).[99] Classical rhetoric held that themes could be designated as 'high' or 'low' and that such a level in subject matter

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96  'Where we think we see 'realism,' we are dealing with a literary convention: the 'low' style' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 387, footnote 17).
97  'Equally at home in the world of classical rhetoric and in that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, he may well have been the first to become conscious of the problem of the stylistic contrast between the two worlds' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 72f.).
98  'For these three functions of the orator there are three styles, the plain style for proof, the middle style for pleasure, the vigorous style for persuasion [...]' (Trans. Hendrickson and Hubbell [5]1988: 357).
99  'The eloquent speaker will be one who can treat small matters in a restrained style in order to instruct, intermediate matters in a mixed style in order to delight, and important matters in a grand style in order to move an audience' (Trans. Green 1995: 241).

called for a corresponding level of style.[100] For Augustine, there is no gradation of themes, or correspondence between subject matter and expression (Bader 1994: 94; Auksi 1995: 23). In fact, he contends that gradations by subject matter are appropriate for forensic matters, but not for religious discourse (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.18.35; see Auerbach 1958: 31; Dronke 1973: 320). For Augustine, the only subject matter for a Christian rhetor is man's salvation which is never base or in-between, and questions of stylistic level should therefore be determined exclusively by the oratorical aim – to teach, to delight, or to move and convert (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.18.37; see Hess 1965: 51; Cox 1989: 46; Auksi 1995: 23; Krämer 2007: 39). Dronke, commenting on Augustine's example of *calix aguae frigidae* (cf. Matthew 10:42), phrases it in English:

> All that the Christian speaker or writer as Christian will want to express will relate to realities that are eternal and so cannot but be *grandia*. Even the 'cup of cold water' offered in Christ's name has a meaning that is great, because divine. (1973: 320)

This is not to say that Christian speakers or writers should always employ the high style or neglect the differences between stylistic levels (see Dronke 1973: 320f.). All three styles and all three oratorical functions, as Augustine demonstrates in detail, are essential to Christian discourse.[101] Unconvinced that any one stylistic level has been or is the best mode for religious discourse, Augustine opts for selecting alternately one of the three styles: *Nec quisquam praeter disciplinam esse existimet ista miscere; immo quantum congrue fieri potest, omnibus generibus dictio varianda est* (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.22.51).[102] This internal variation is not only a matter of achieving stylistic variety but a means of keeping the listener alert and attentive (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.22.51; see Auerbach 1958: 30; Hess 1965: 154; Bader 1994: 95). The best rhetor knows instinctively, as

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100 Many of these classical notions were mined by the writers of the Middle Ages and put to use in new contexts. When the division of the *genera dicendi* was transmitted to the *ars poetica* of the Middle Ages, the three levels came to be associated with three estates of society, or social classes (Spearing ²1990: 150; Suchomski 1975: 243ff.). The model for this system was the transfer of the three rhetorical styles to poetry, and in particular to the works of Virgil (Curtius 1952: 66). In Donatus' *Vita Virgiliana*, Virgil represents three stages of human society (shepherd, farmer, warrior) in the appropriate, i.e. similarly levelled, style in his three works *Bucolica, Georgica,* and *Aeneid* (Bareiß 1982: 49). The resulting scheme of three poetic styles is characterised by the fact that it emphasised to a great extent the dependence of the style on the subject matter, the social status of the characters and the quality of the ideas. In John of Garland's *rota Virgilii*, Virgil's works are used as the anchoring 'authorities' for differentiating literary character types, subject matters, settings, and levels of style (*Parisiana Poetria* 1.116; see also Quadlbauer 1962: 114, 124; Suchomski 1975: 244f., 320, footnote 725; Spearing ²1990: 150; Curtius ¹¹1993: 238). By combining the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (4.8.11) and the *Vita Virgiliana*, the distinction between stylistic levels was no longer based solely on style but also on the *materia* in the Middle Ages (see Quadlbauer 1962: 113ff.).

101 As Augustine explicitly illustrates all three styles with passages from Scripture (4.18.36f.), it is problematic to agree with Auerbach's statement on this point: "So ist der gesamte Stil der Heiligen Schrift *humilis*, niedrig oder demütig" ('Thus the style of the Scriptures throughout is *humilis*, lowly or humble'; 1958: 42).

102 'Nobody should think that it is against the rules of the art to combine these styles. On the contrary, our discourse should be varied by using all three, as far as is possible without impropriety' (Trans. Green 1995: 267)

Cicero (*Orator* 21.70) had already argued, that he must keep changing and combining styles *ut dictionis impetus sicut maris aestus alteret* ('so that the intensity of our speech ebbs and flows like the tides of the sea'; *De Doctr. Christ.* 4.22.51; see Hess 1965: 154; Auksi 1995: 125).

The stylistic variation suggested by Augustine in his theories of Christian eloquence, however, must not be interpreted as meaning that all three styles have the same value. Although the styles were equal in the sense that each had its well-defined area of application, the grand style was clearly favoured by classical theorists. To master it sovereignly was to reach the summit of virtue and eloquence (see e.g. Cicero *Orator* 21.69; see also Auksi 1995: 52). Augustine is most effective and forthcoming on the low and grand styles (see Bader 1994: 95; Auksi 1995: 124). For the low style, Augustine reserves his most vivid description: *Non enim quia neque incedit ornata neque armata, sed tamquam nuda congreditur, ideo non adversarium nervis lacertisque collidit et obsistentem subruit ac destruit membris fortissimis falsitatem* (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.26.56).[103]

Christ ordered the apostles to spread his teachings, thus addressing all Christian teachers whose task Augustine summarised in the programmatic sentence: *Debet igitur divinarum Scripturarum tractator et doctor, defensor rectae fidei ac debellator erroris, et bona docere, et mala dedocere* [...] (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.4.6; see Hess 1965: 51).[104] That means that Christian teachers should be rhetorically apostolic, i.e. responsible for communicating God's message to their fellow men. Therefore, Augustine's advice is relevant to all Christians, particularly Christian preachers: *Melius reprehendant nos grammatici quam non intellegant populi* (see Oesterreicher 1997: 204).[105] The explanation and clarification of doctrine, as Augustine explains, can best reach the understanding through an unadorned style calling minimal attention to its own manner. Even though the Christian teacher always speaks of high matter, *sumisse cum aliquid docetur* ('use the restrained style when teaching'; *De Doctr. Christ.* 4.19.38). Auerbach claims that teaching lies within the province of the low style because the heterogeneous character of the congregations makes a simple, accessible style necessary (1958: 44). "[E]ine radikalisierte "Allgemein-zugänglichkeit" ('a radicalised general accessibility') becomes, according to Bader (1994: 99), the most salient characteristic of the *sermo humilis*. Augustine explicitly argues for the avoidance of rhetorical ornament and, instead, asks for *simplicitas* and the use of the *stilus humilis* for the edification of the uneducated. If a word in correct Latin is obscure or ambiguous, good Christian teachers should instead employ colloquial speech in a way that avoids obscurity and ambiguity, so

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103 'Just because it marches to battle without embellishment or armour, and apparently defenceless, this does not prevent it from crushing the enemy with the strength of its sinewy hands and disabling its opponent and demolishing falsehood with its mighty limbs' (Trans. Green 1995: 275).

104 'So the interpreter and teacher of the divine sciptures, the defender of the true faith and vanquisher of error, must communicate what is good and eradicate what is bad [...]' (Trans. Green 1995: 201)

105 'It is better that the grammarians should find us at fault, than that the masses should fail to understand us' (Trans. Oesterreicher 1997: 204).

that the subject matter itself is communicated and learnt correctly (*De Doctr. Christ.* 4.10.24). Augustine asks*: Quid enim prodest locutionis integritas quam non sequitur intellectus audienties* […]?; *De Doctr. Christ.* 4.10.24).[106] Hence, a Christian rhetor may accept *rusticitas* as long as the purpose of his speech is fulfilled.

Compared with the classical-rhetorical assessment of the styles, the Christian simple style has thus gained considerable importance in general, but especially in relation to the high style. In the rhetorical and literary practice of the early Church, the weight clearly shifted in favour of the low style, because this style opened the door to Christian doctrine. Bader phrases it in German: "Weiterhin hat sich das 'Ansehen' des christlich-einfachen Stils im Zuge der neuen 'Lehre' und verstärkten Lehrtätigkeit beträchtlich 'verbessert'" (1994: 97).[107]

The discussion of the *sermo humilis* mainly originates from the seminal works of Erich Auerbach: *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der Abendländischen Literatur* (1946 [²1959]) and "Sermo Humilis" (1958). Auerbach's central insights in *Mimesis* derive from his responses to the distinct style of Scripture, which eventually inspires writers into "einen neuen hohen Stil, der das Alltägliche keineswegs verschmäht, und der das sinnlich Realistische, ja das Häßliche, Unwürdige, körperlich Niedrige in sich aufnimmt" (²1959: 74).[108] The 'new' style – the *sermo humilis* – transcends its original sphere into the lowest and the highest, into the sublime and eternal (²1959: 74). For Auerbach, the true and distinctive greatness of Holy Scripture was that "diese nämlich eine ganz neue Art des Erhabenen geschaffen habe, in welcher das Alltägliche und Niedrige nicht ausgeschlossen, sondern mitenthalten sei" (²1959: 148).[109] The Christian crossing and mixture of styles thus entails that there is a direct connection between *sublimitas* and *humilitas* in style and content (²1959: 237).

One result of this new understanding of style is that, according to Auerbach's "Sermo Humilis" (1958), Christian writings are characterised by a strong sense of realism in both form and content. He refers specifically to the *Passio S.S. Perpetuae et Felicititas* as exhibiting "die berichtende und realistische Kraft des *sermo humilis*" ('the realistic narrative force of the *sermo humilis*'; 1958: 49). The martyrs are themselves simple and ordinary people, the rhetoric of the text is equally plain and direct, and the events of the story are treated with unadorned realism. Auerbach defines its syntax as restricted, the vocabulary as limited, and discovers typically Christian locutions as well as many vulgarisms (1958: 51). Bader (1994: 101f.) asks whether such

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106 'What is the use of correct speech it if does not meet with the listener's understanding?' (Trans. Green 1995: 225).

107 'Furthermore, the 'prestige' of the Christian simple style has considerably improved as a result of the new 'doctrine' and increased teaching activity' (my translation).

108 '[…] a new elevated style, which does not scorn everyday life and which is ready to absorb the sensorily realistic, even the ugly, the undignified, the physically base' (Trans. Trask ³2013: 72).

109 '[…] it had created an entirely new kind of sublimity, in which the everyday and the low were included, not excluded' (Trans. Trask ³2013: 154).

'passages' still refer to a plain literary style or rather to a subliterary register. As noted above, the plain style can be equivalent to deliberately formless, ordinary language (*rusticitas*). Moreover, a Christian rhetor will sacrifice the *purus...sermo* (see *Rhet. Her.* 4.8.11 above) if the accessibility of his words is at stake. Bader (1994: 101) is therefore uncertain whether some texts in the *sermo humilis* are not already beyond the intentionally stylistic, i.e. whether these texts should not really be interpreted as instances of communicative immediacy. Indeed, Auerbach describes the language of the narrative as "spröd, ganz unliterarisch, etwa linkisch, fast noch wie bei einem Kind" ('brittle, quite unliterary, naïve, almost childlike'; 1958: 51; see Bader 1994: 101). The characters and events are treated with the full "Kraft der rohen Wirklichkeit" ('force of the crude reality'; 1958: 52). In any case, *humilitas* entails a wide range of characteristics, from simple diction and vulgarisms to a mixture of the "Tragische oder Erhabene innerhalb des gewöhnlichen und extrem realistisch dargestellten Lebens" ('tragic or sublime in a lowly existence depicted with the utmost realism'; 1958: 52).

According to Auerbach, the *sermo humilis* was best suited to representing Scripture's sacred contents through images and characters of daily life. In *Mimesis* (1946), his discussion focuses on the Anglo-Norman play *Le Mystère d'Adam.* He identifies (domestic) scenes to which he attributes the initiation of a particularly striking development of realism:

> Das Alltäglich-Realistische ist also ein wesentliches Element der mittelalterlich-christlichen Kunst und besonders des christlichen dramatischen Spiels; ganz im Gegensatz zu der feudalen Dichtung des höfischen Romans, der aus der Wirklichkeit der ständischen Lage heraus in die Sage und ins Abenteuer führt, geschieht hier eine umgekehrte Bewegung, aus der fernen Legende und ihrer figürlichen Ausdeutung in die alltäglich-zeitgenössische Wirklichkeit hinein. (Auerbach [2]1959: 153)[110]

For Auerbach, the scenes from the *Mystère d'Adam* vividly illustrate the way in which the universal truths of Scripture could be integrated with everyday life, with everyday details performing the highest function: *sublimitas in humilitate*, as Bernard of Clairvaux put it (see Schrott 1999: 352). The 'realism' and 'contemporaneity' is often reflected in anachronistic themes and language use, whose basic world is determinedly the familiar and the local:

> Auch das für unser Gefühl anachronistische Übertragen der Ereignisse in eine zeitgenössische Umwelt und in zeitgenössische Lebensverhältnisse ist durchaus in der Ordnung. Auch das ist im Adamsspiel nur insofern angedeutet, als Adam und Eva sprechen wie einfache Leute aus dem Frankreich des 12. Jahrhunderts […]; anderswo und später ist das viel auffälliger. (Auerbach [2]1959: 155)[111]

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110 'The everyday and real is thus an essential element of medieval Christian art and especially of the Christian drama. In contrast to the feudal literature of the courtly romance, which leads away from the reality of the life of its class into a world of heroic fable and adventure, here there is a movement in the opposite direction, from distant legend and its figural into everyday contemporary reality' (Trans. Trask [3]2013: 158f.).

What happens in the Bible is thereby transmuted into contemporary life – "as a perpetually relived and always present enactment" (Beckwith 2009: 84; see also Styan ²1968: 11; Hill 2002: 43f.; Stevenson 2011: 98). Obviously, this sort of anachronism gives great vividness and a sense of immediacy to the stories dramatised (Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 22; see also Arnovick 2012: 570).

The first scholars who have commented on anachronisms in medieval religious drama were Auerbach (1958), Hess (1965) and Kolve (1966). Examining Romance mystery plays, Rainer Hess (1965: 18f.) argues that the anachronisms function in a similar way as the prefiguring of New Testament characters by Old Testament history in religious drama: Adam is replaced by Christ, Eve is replaced by Mary, the Tree of Knowledge is replaced by the Cross on Calvary, etc. (see also Kahrl 1974: 126; Bergner 1992: 167; Wickham ³1992: 64f.). The essence of the religious play is the "Ewigkeitscharakter des Heilsgeschehens" ('eternal character of the sacred events'; Hess 1965: 19). Due to the transposition of the biblical material to the audience's time, merely the external appearance of the plot and action is changed but not the moral truth and substance of the tradition (see Hess: 1965: 19; see also Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 22f.). The representation of everyday situations in Middle English drama is therefore less important than the representation of eternal truth (see Kolve 1966: 122f.; see also Arnovick 2012: 572). Hence, the anachronism in both ancient and medieval comedy also has a pedagogic-didactic moment. The playwright(s)' aim was to furnish moral lessons from history, and the cycle drama achieved this by a pervasive anachronism that made those lessons immediately and directly relevant to English medieval life (see Kolve 1966: 104, 106, 109, 122).

With regard to medieval English drama, the shepherds' plays have most often been discussed in connection with their putative anachronism. All three shepherds' plays from the Chester and Towneley cycles have been said to supplement the gospel account with scenes "which are unmistakably taken from the everyday life of English medieval shepherds" (Diller 1992: 240).[112] Not only do the shepherds react to the news of the Nativity as if it had been announced in their own time, but their appearance is linked to some contemporary social comment. As pointed out in Section 3.3.1 above, the everyday environment in the *Prima* and *Secunda Pastorum* is filled with the prevalent poverty and oppression of the shepherds: "The scene is shifted to the English heath, where the shepherds complain about the bitter winter cold, as well as their grasping manorial lord, freely placing biblical events in the audience's time and place" (Colish ²2002: 209).[113] Needless to say, such contemporary references served to ground the biblical story in the present,

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111 'Then too the transfer – anachronistic to our way of feeling – of events into a contemporary setting and into contemporary forms of life is equally unexceptionable. This again is something which, in the Mystère d'Adam, is only indicated to the extent that Adam and Eve speak like simple people of twelfth-century France [...]. Elsewhere and later, this is much more striking' (Trans. Trask ³2013: 160f.).

112 See also Kolve 1966: 113, 114; Diller 1992: 223; Walker ²2008: 76.

113 See also Kolve 1966: 104; 167f.; Woolf 1980: 191; Walker ²2008: 85ff.

thereby making it more vivid and immediate. References to the local geography serve the same purpose (Kolve 1966: 110ff.; Williams 1973: 117; Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 22). To protect them from harsh weather, the First Shepherd from the Chester play has led his sheep from *comlye Conwaye unto Clyde* ('from comely Conway unto Clwyd'; l. 5). In the *Secunda Pastorum*, a unique series of regional/geographical references – *Horbery* (l. 657), *ayll of Hely* (l. 581), *the crokyd thorne* (l. 581) – place the story in the local world of the spectators.[114] Diller claims of these plays that "the world in which the action of the drama unfolds is not qualitatively different from that in which the audience lives" (1992: 76). Apart from the shepherds' plays, I shall list characters, scenes and plays where, according to a number of scholars, "[t]he past was played as an image of present time" (Kolve 1966: 110):

- Cain (Kolve 1966: 105; Diller 1992: 231)

- York *Crucifixion* (Kolve 1966: 114; Styan [2]1968: 11; Forest-Hill 2000: 78; Beckwith 2009: 84)

- Noah (Nelson 1964: 399; see also Kolve 1966: 104; Wickham [3]1992: 64f.)

- Joseph (Williams 1973: 116)

- Chester *Creation* (Jack 1989: 50)

- Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, Annas (McNeir 1951: 611, 617; Kolve 1966: 105; Williams 1973: 116; Wickham [3]1992: 64f.)

In order to summarise my findings thus far, I will look at Oesterreicher's (1997: 200ff.; see also Koch 1999: 403) study on types of orality in text. Instead of proposing a collection or classification of linguistic features and discourse traditions linked to communicative immediacy, he focuses on the description of the underlying communicative strategies and constellations that may trigger the production of orality in texts (Oesterreicher 1997: 200). His typology of writing characterised by linguistic immediacy comprises the following eight types:

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(1) Writing by semiliterate persons
(2) Writings by (semiliterate) bilingual persons in a di-/triglossic situation
(3) Sloppy writing (also by educated writers)
(4) "Documentation" of informal speech
(5) Writing adapted to the language competence of less educated recipients
(6) Writing subjected to 'simple' discourse traditions or genres
(7) Writing in the stilus humilis (as a rhetorical-poetic option)
(8) Mimetic or simulated orality in literature, parody and similar contexts
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Figure 5: Typology of writing characterised by linguistic immediacy (according to Oesterreicher 1997: 200ff.; my emphasis)

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114 For Normington (2009: 87), *Horbery* may be a reference to a village in the south of Wakefield. Healey is a hamlet beyond Horbury in Wakefield, while *the crokyd thorne* probably alludes to the Shepherds' thorn that may have once stood in Mapplewell, a village in South Yorkshire (see Meredith [2]2008: 163).

Type (6) and (8) are relevant to my data:

<u>Type (6): Writing subjected to 'simple' discourse traditions or genres: low style/*sermo humilis*</u>

Oesterreicher has argued: "Any particular utterance or text will necessarily conform with certain discourse traditions" (1997: 194). Discourse traditions encompass an inventory of communicative conditions and strategies that are necessary for discourse production and reception: "Discourse traditions, in this sense, have a distinctive conceptual profile" (1997: 195). According to Oesterreicher, employing features of communicative immediacy to reach less educated recipients can be an inherent feature of a discourse tradition (1997: 203).[115] In this case, simplicity of language and composition encourages and facilitates comprehension of the text. Oesterreicher (1997: 203f.) himself lists the *sermo piscatorius* of Christian authors as an example of type (6).

Auerbach gives three major reasons for the rise of the low, humble, or subdued style in Christian discourse (see Auksi 1995: 24). First, the *sermo humilis* enters the Christian imagination as the epithet for the life, suffering, and sublimely lowly person of Christ. A second application of lowness is "die *humilitas* des Stiles der heiligen Schrift" ('the *humilitas* of the style of the Holy Scriptures'; 1958: 38). Thirdly, the *sermo humilis* fittingly addresses "die soziale und geistige *humilitas* derjenigen, an die sich die Lehre wendet und denen sie zugänglich ist" (1958: 37).[116] Hence, the *sermo humilis* differs from the rhetorical plain style (type 7), which is "aesthetically motivated" (Oesterreicher 1997: 205) and not primarily intended to reach diverse audiences.[117] Bader writes that the difference between the classical *genus humile* and the Christian *sermo humilis* is that the latter: "[...] ist nicht mehr an niedere Gegenstände, sondern nur noch an eine vom Redner/Schriftsteller verfolgte Lehrabsicht gebunden" (1994: 97).[118]

As seen above, English scriptural plays appeared in the context of the didactic and affective campaigns by the Church which led to an increased emphasis on pastoral instruction. The plays were strongly affected by religious vernacular poetry aimed to instruct uneducated people in the fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine. At the same time, the plays were "deliberately designed to impress feelingly upon the people the spectacle of the Christian story" (Davidson 1975: 283),

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115 This is the reason why type (6) should not be confused with type (5), where the adjustment of the text to the lower language competence of the recipient(s) is the writer's individual choice (see Oesterreicher 1997: 203).

116 '[…] the social and cultural *humilitas* of those to whom the Christian doctrine is addressed and who are prepared to receive it' (Trans. Manheim 1993: 43).

117 Type (7) corresponds to the conception of the low style in ancient rhetorical sources and the medieval *artes poetriae*, where the *stilus humilis* is defined relative to the other *stili* (see the beginning of Section 3.4.2 above). A writer's motive for aiming at 'simplicity' or 'plainness' has here no didactic but merely a stylistic component, namely the deliberate avoidance of any "rhetorical bombast" or "excessive artificiality" (see Oesterreicher 1997: 204).

118 '[...] is no longer connected to 'low' subject matter, but solely to the didactic intent pursued by the speaker/writer' (my translation).

like the Franciscan meditative works on the life and passion of Christ. According to the *Regularis Concordia*, vernacular drama was intended to excite devotion – *ad fidem indocti vulgi ac neophytorum corroborandam* ('to strengthen the faith of the uneducated populace and of new converts'; see Woolf 1980: 80; Jack 1989: 7). This goal of reaching the lowest social strata may have promoted a tendency to use a simple style oriented towards communicative immediacy. Both consciously and by a process of continued unconscious assimilation, Christian writers may have been influenced by the *sermo humilis* of Scripture, apocryphal texts and sermon collections. It is difficult to prove that mystery playwrights intentionally modelled their 'dramatic style' on the *sermo humilis*, but that they were familiar with the conventions of medieval religious discourse seems likely. After all, when it comes to the presentation of Church teachings in the cycle plays, a low burlesque person often prepares the audience's understanding of high matter in a naïve-comical way. Even high religious matters seem to be dressed in simple, vernacular forms, perhaps in order to adapt the style to the receptive capacity of the 'simplest' members of the audience in the medieval city streets.

The mystery plays as a hybrid genre not only drew on religious but also on secular sources. Here, the invented scenes and characters usually parallelling the central biblical action of the play, such as Noah's wife, the sheep-stealing plot from the *Secunda Pastorum* or the Garcios, are of particular importance. These invented episodes are related to various secular genres such as farce, fabliau, folk plays and folk tales (see Blake 1981: 66). Kendrick has claimed that the medieval dramatists' practice of comedy depended on their familiarity with contemporary "comic texts in French, Flemish, Latin and Italian – that is, versified narratives featuring vulgar speech and subject matter, especially adultery; rustic or lowly settings and characters; and risible or 'happy' outcomes" (Kendrick 2000: 93f.). Characters like Joseph, Noah's wife and Mak, who introduce most of the burlesque in the plays, built on comic stereotypes from folk tales and fabliau. The genre of farce has also been associated with the depiction of everyday life: "[...] there is always the sense that farces are dealing closely with certain aspects of the reality of daily life" (2002: 32; see also Colish ²2002: 210). Happé (2002: 30) believes that several episodes in the mystery plays, for instance Herod's macaronic speeches, may have been inspired by French farce (see also Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 21). Some of these secular genres have been regarded as possible sources for the everyday language of the period. For example, Blake examines vulgar colloquialisms in fabliaux, and suggests that the characters' speeches need to be close to the spoken level of language in order to strengthen the "veneer of realism" (2001: 147) of the genre.[119]

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119 Hines (1993: 16), however, notes that the fabliau genre should not be associated exclusively with the low style of Latin rhetoric. Fabliau authors apparently chose from the whole range of styles – *humilis*, *medius* and *gravis* – depending on the intended rhetorical effect.

Summing up, we can say that the cycle plays were exposed to and drew on various discourse traditions and text types, some of them associated with the low style/*sermo humilis*. Rosemary Woolf (1980) has listed numerous religious and secular sources in her comparative study of biblical episodes across the cycles. Her study largely focuses on their impact on the content of the mystery plays. For our purposes, the influence of 'low-style genres' on language and style would be much more relevant than their influence on subject matter and themes.

Type (8): Mimesis of immediacy or simulated orality

The representation of both religious and secular elements in comedy plays may entail staged or simulated orality, type (8) of orality in text according to Oesterreicher (1997: 205). Simulated orality involves the incorporation of linguistic features from the language of immediacy: "Such imitations of casual speech function as literary devices, that is, in a novel or a stage play, and feature the characteristics of people and their affective dispositions and mark communicative and dramatic constellations" (1997: 205). As an example of type (8), Oesterreicher (1997: 205) names the classical comedies of Plautus.

Stephan Kohl (1988: 133) has stated that *fingierte Mündlichkeit* ('simulated orality') appears in the representation of dialogues from the beginnings of Middle English literature. However, after all that has been said, it is apparent that medieval religious drama allows only a restricted amount of originality and creativity (Bergner 1992: 168; see also Twycross 2012: 347). The medieval playwrights start out with a relatively fixed plot and select elements from an established narrative line: "The topics dealt with, of course, impose constraints on the words and phrases to be used, and this constitutes one major drawback of analyzing this type of text" (Mazzon 2009: 12). The cycles' primary source was, of course, the Bible – a source "that is authoritative and limiting in a way that secular sources are not" (Clopper 1980: 5; see also Wickham [3]1992: 75). The close relation to theological tradition is testified by the numerous lines taken over directly from Scripture (Smith Vinter 1980: 118; Wickham [3]1992: 64; Mazzon 2009: 6). Compare John 18:28–31 from the Vulgate (and the English translation from the late version of the Wycliffite Bible) with the corresponding lines from the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*:

> **28** adducunt ergo Iesum a Caiapha in praetorium erat autem mane et ipsi non introierunt in praetorium ut non contaminarentur sed manducarent pascha
> Thanne thei ledden Jhesu to Cayfas, in to the moot halle; and it was eerli, and thei entriden not in to the moot halle, that thei schulden not be defoulid, but that thei schulden ete pask.

**29** exivit ergo Pilatus ad eos foras et dixit <u>quam accusationem adfertis adversus hominem hunc</u>
Therfor Pilat wente out with outforth to hem, and seide, What accusyng brynge ye ayens this man?
**Pilate**. […] And sir prelatis, youre pontes bes prevyng. / <u>What cause can ye caste of accusyng?</u> / þis mater ye marke to be meving, / And hendly in haste late vs here. [York 30.414–7]
'[…] And sir prelates, your charges to prove: What cause can you produce to accuse (him)? This matter to me you must be undertaking, and quickly, in haste, let us hear.'

**30** responderunt et dixerunt ei <u>si non esset hic malefactor non tibi tradidissemus eum</u>
Thei answeriden, and seiden to hym, If this were not a mysdoere, we hadden not bitakun hym to thee.'
**Caiphas**. […] Sir Pilate o Pounce and prince of grete price, / We triste ye will trowe oure tales thei be trewe, / To deth for to deme hym with dewly device. / For cursidnesse yone knave hase in case, if ye knew, / In harte wolde ye hate hym in hye. / <u>For if it wer so</u> / We mente not to misdo; / Triste, ser, schall ye therto, / <u>We hadde not hym taken to the</u>. [York 30.418–26]
'[…] Sir Pilate of Pontus, prince of great price, we have good hope that you will trust our tales to be true, to doom him to death, with your lawful judgement. For cursedness this knave has in mind, if you knew, in heart you would hate him high (greatly). For if it were so – we mean not to offend, trust (agree), sir, shall you thereto – we had not him taken to you.'

**31** dixit ergo eis Pilatus <u>accipite eum vos et secundum legem vestram iudicate eum</u> dixerunt ergo ei Iudaei <u>nobis non licet interficere quemquam</u>
Thanne Pilat seith to hem, Take ye hym, and deme ye him, after youre lawe. And the Jewis seiden to hym, It is not leueful to vs to sle ony man;
**Pilate**. Ilke a lede for to louse for his lay is not lele. / Youre lawes is leffull, but to youre lawis longis it / þis faitoure to feese wele with flappes full fele, / And woo may ye wirke hym be lawe, for he wranges it. / <u>Therfore takes vnto you full tyte, / And like as youre lawes will you lede / Ye deme hym</u> to deth for his dede.
'A man to kill for his customs is not lawful. Your laws are lawful; but to your laws belongs it this deceiver to punish well with many blows. And woe you may work him by law, for he wrongs it. Therefore, take him unto you quickly. And if your laws will lead you [that way], you doom him to death for his deed.'
**Caiphas**. Nay, nay sir, that dome muste vs drede, / <u>It longes noyot till vs no lede for to lose</u>. [York 30.435–43]
'No, no, sir, that judgement must we dread. It belongs not to us a man to kill.'

As these passages illustrate, the cycle playwrights created dialogue by directly copying and translating the reported speech from the gospels, and then extending the biblical source material to a considerable degree (see also Jesus' interrogation by Caiaphas, the dialogue between Satan and Eve, or the temptation of Christ). These scenes are mostly in line with established categories, with transparent, clear dimensions, and a sense of purposefulness. The speech assigned to Christ, for instance, is almost entirely confined to what the gospels report he said. For example, the lines *Hely, hely, lamazabatany! / My god, my god, wherfor and why / Has thou forsakyn me?* ('Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani! My God, my God, wherefore and why have you forsaken me?') from the Towneley *Crucifixion* (ll. 582–4) are a direct quotation from the gospels (Matthew 27:46, Mark

15:34). But the playwrights may still vary patterns, create differences in emphasis and characterisation. In the case of Pilate, for example, there were two opposing conceptions of his character (proud, self-indulgent and ruthless vs. fair, humane and an unwilling party to the plans of Annas and Caiaphas; see McNeir 1951: 604; Clopper 1980: 5; see also Brawer 1972; Jobling 1989). These two traditions permitted greater freedom in the depiction of the historical personage; thus a study of Pilate's language use may reveal the range of characterisation that developed out of less fixed narrative sources and traditions.

Several comic scenes (e.g. the dialogue between Cain and Abel, the episode of Joseph's doubts, the slaughter of the innocents) stem from biblical descriptions without reported speech. Medieval dramatists were here less inhibited by religious tradition, and they could develop such scenes as they saw fit. They had to turn the often very short description (the slaughter of the innocents is represented in one verse) into elaborate dramatic dialogue. The motivation for expanding episodes when there were only bare hints of a story in the Bible "was less their theological importance than their psychological tension and dramatic possibilities" (Colish [2]2002: 209). The playwrights recognised the theatrical/dramatic potential in staging particular scenes and were therefore keen to fully exploit the material.

It should be noted that fleshing out biblical material is always a question of "balancing a known, complete pattern against an unknown, incomplete one" (Jack 1989: 12). The audience was largely familiar with the dramatic action, because of the theological tradition upon which the plays are based. Loss of interest as a result of knowing the characters, events and outcome of the story can destroy the force of the message. The mystery playwrights must therefore make the dramatic translation of well-known episodes and characters exciting and appealing through their invention while respecting the doctrinal framework: "This, in turn, means that the particular individual achievement of the unknown dramatist will naturally be found in the details, e.g. the specific organisation of address and response" (Bergner 1998: 77).

In contrast to the characters and scenes which the dramatists were able to lift directly from Scripture, there are several comic figures and scenes in the cycles not taken from the Bible. The playwrights' business was here to invent original dramatic action. In the creation of these scenes, medieval dramatists were even less troubled with the violation of *decorum*. As noted above, non-Scriptural scenes opened a channel into the incorporation of popular material, and provided an opportunity for a free manner of linguistic representation "that might approach formal comedy" (Williams 1973: 112).

In general, the dramatists' skill at handling biblical and non-biblical material for dramatic purposes may involve the imitation of concrete oral utterances. After all, the purpose of Middle English religious drama was first to make sacred events and their moral messages 'real', familiar

and accessible to medieval spectators who were – literally – 'in the streets'. For Auerbach, this means that the universal truths of Scripture were presented not as historical, biblical events but as contemporary action, conceived in terms of the audience's world: "Biblische Stoffe wurden mit der Wirklichkeit der Zeit vermischt, die Milieuschilderung aus der Welt der Zuschauer stand mitten im heilsgeschichtlichen Ablauf" (Schabert [3]1992: 45).[120] It is possible that attempts to depict 'human', everyday characters resulted in the use of vivid, contemporary speech that gives the impression of natural talk (see Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 22; Arnovick 2012: 572). In other words, comic texts or passages which deal with "everyday occurrences and the trappings of daily life" (Moore 2016: 193) may have been furnished with words and phrases that constituted the active vocabulary of spoken Middle English. The language of the comic mystery plays has traditionally been considered close to some real-life correlate. To conclude this section, a number of scholars have considered characters, scenes or whole cycle plays as representatives of or at least approximations to realism.[121] Yet, the terms 'colloquial' or 'realistic' have been used too uncritically in the past, in particular by the early critics. Langenfelt, for example, stated in 1933: "The ME [Middle English] dramas, however, acted by craftsmen and artisans (tailors, carpenters, masons, etc.), reveal so much vigour and vivacity that they must be relied on as specimens of colloquial language" (xvf.). It is important to keep in mind that there is never 'authentic' speech but only simulated orality in literary texts. Even if the play texts are speech-purposed, i.e. designed to be staged and overheard by an audience, they may only create the illusion of spontaneous spoken discourse. In fact, orality in text is always a component of an author's style of writing and often also of the author's conscious strategy of writing (cf. Goetsch (1985) on *fingierte Mündlichkeit* ('simulated orality') in modern prose fiction). My empirical chapter will determine whether the playwrights did – unintentionally or consciously – employ linguistic elements, forms, and structures which have been associated with communicative immediacy.

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120 'Biblical material was mingled with reality; the milieu depiction of the audience's world was placed in the midst of the sacred story' (my translation).

121 See Janicka 1962: 101f.; Davidson 1975: 271; Daiches [2]1979: 213; Hardison 1980: 137; Wickham 1981: 27; Norrick 1987: 256; Spearing [2]1990: 158; Schabert [3]1992: 44; Styan 1996: 32; Happé 2002: 39.

## 3.5 Conclusions

Whereas we tend to think of 'comedy' primarily as a dramatic genre and 'the comic' as virtually anything intended to provoke laughter, medieval definitions emphasise neither drama nor laughter. Classical comedy that conformed to Aristotle's formulae largely disappeared with the fall of the Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages, classical theatre was discredited, and the *comoedia* appeared as a versified narrative with specific roles, themes and, above all, a fixed plot structure, but the genre was never clearly delineated. This is the primary source of the problems of definition which inevitably emerge in discussions of the medieval *comoedia* – "when 'comedy' can describe at once a dramatic genre, a literary mode, or instances of humour real or fictional" (Stott 2005: 21). Some medieval writers use the terms 'comedy' and 'tragedy' to refer to ancient dramatic scripts, "texts that they associated with the past rather than the present" (Clopper 2001: 12). In other words, tragedy and comedy do continue to exist as designators of certain kinds of dramas for the ancient *theatrum*, but the terms would never have been used to define liturgical or vernacular drama (Clopper 2001: 9). Consequently, when the mystery cycles began to appear in the fourteenth century, it is unlikely that playwrights imagined themselves to be creating comedies or *comoediae*.

Modern comedies are always directed to some degree at laughter. In the medieval period, laughter "is variously associated with either the highest and most ethereal aspects of the spirit or the lowest bodily pulsions" (Burde 2010: 216). In fact, it was generally permitted or even encouraged, as long as it was neither worldly nor vicious and fulfilled a didactic purpose. Laughter was acceptable in the late Middle Ages partly because it could gain and maintain the attention of the audience and reinforce the importance of the message in the auditor's memory – the *gaudium spirituale* could teach. Laughter in the mystery plays appears in different forms and can be traced back to different sources (Williams 1973: 113). I assigned the mystery cycles' comic texts to three groups, according to the major characteristics of the medieval *comoedia*:

| The medieval sense of *comedia* | Mystery 'comedies' |
|---|---|
| a) Etymology, roles and themes: | *Personae humiles* ($\rightarrow$ sympathetic laughter)<br>　　　$\rightarrow$ Noah, Joseph, shepherds |
| b) Plot structure: | Divine triumph over evil ($\rightarrow$ *Schadenfreude*)<br>　　　$\rightarrow$ Devils, Cain and Abel, Balaam and Balaak |
| c) Mixing jest and earnest: | Funny games of violence ($\rightarrow$ grim irony)<br>　　　$\rightarrow$ Slaughter of the Innocents, Passion plays |

Table 1: Three groups of mystery 'comedies'[122]

a) The etymological definition of the term *comoedia* would imply that it represents characters from the low (rustic) social stratum. This definition of the *comoedia* would seem readily applicable to the mystery 'comedies' which deal with social and domestic life, although probably no medieval playwright made such a connection. For example, the low social status of the shepherds in vernacular drama is perfectly apt, for the low style was commonly assigned to the shepherds' speech (see footnote 99 above). The audience is expected to laugh at the domestic quarrels between Noah and his wife, and to relive the frustrations of the shepherds who are apparently suffering from oppression. The comic element is here used to depict characters from the low sphere whose transformation serves as a moral exemplum for the audience.

b) Chaucer and other writers of the fourteenth century assigned the term '*comoedia*' to both epic poetry and prose, mainly on the basis of plot structure. If the main requirement of comedy is the progression from misery to joy, the cycle plays are comedy: "The Miracle Cycles are very seldom referred to as comedies, a fact that becomes more troublesome when one considers that the progressive definition seems to fit them very well" (Jack 1989: 3). The mystery cycles trace the history of man's salvation from the Creation and the Fall to the life of Christ and the Last Judgement – a happy ending in which the vicious are banned and the virtuous saved. The perception and celebration of the ultimately comic vision of Christianity was established primarily by the images of God's enemies. Spectators are encouraged to laugh at the devils' and tyrants' rebellion and their subsequent fall, and share God's victory when he intervenes. The plays in *Group II* show a predominance of the triumphant laughter of *Schadenfreude*.

c) Style crossing is typical of the medieval period, and it is acknowledged in theoretical writings. This tendency to cross forms corresponds to the blend of jest and earnest in Middle English drama (see Curtius [11]1993: 162). Thus, serious, didactic religious plays can be infused with

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122 My mystery 'comedies' largely correspond to other scholars' perception of 'comedy' in the cycles. See Janicka's (1962) examples of comic realism, Williams' (1973) account of comic episodes and characters, Styan's (1996: 30f.) list of comic characters, Happé's (2002: 30) list of farcical elements, Crane's (2007) and Valdés Miyares' (2010) description of humorous episodes in the cycle plays.

"the confusion of ordinary men confronted by extraordinary events" (Jack 1989: 71), with grotesque villains, and with a thorough mixture of the comic and tragic mood. In the scourging and crucifixion plays, we see instances of a dark and theologically challenging kind of humour. The dramatic experience of the Passion scenes may have resulted in a distancing from moral values and a suppression of emotional involvement. At the same time, such comedy promotes in the audience a better understanding of their own sinfulness and a yearning for the victory of God's grace over evil. The theological context of laughter in the medieval drama, then, has many implications, not all of which are completely unambiguous. Overall, the English scriptural plays staged "an action that included the comic and the pathetic, the grotesque and the transcendental, all in one complex dramatic design" (Kolve 1966: 1).

It is unlikely that medieval dramatists considered themselves to be composing comedies, but the message of the mystery cycles is one of joy, and laughter has a vital role in transmitting that message: "In presenting this optimistic vision of life's purpose and in tracing a development from misery to joy, they obey the two most basic criteria for comedy in any age and in any time" (Jack 1989: 6). Hence, the term 'comedy' in the classical and modern sense – and even, with much hesitation, in the medieval sense – conceivably could have been applied to staged vernacular scripts in the medieval period.

An equally significant focus of this chapter concerned the insights into the sociocultural context and stylistic guidelines which may have encouraged the presence of communicative immediacy in the play texts: 1) the Fourth Lateran Council, oriented towards popularising instruction, 2) the movement of affective piety, aimed at drawing forth intense emotional reactions from the audience, 3) the *sermo humilis* as a communicative strategy of Christian writers to bring the sublime message of Scripture to the humble (connected with the extensive use of anachronism which allows the remoteness of the past to be transferred to the immediacy of the medieval present). Knowing that medieval writers were presumably familiar with a style that was intended to produce colloquial discourse "is very different from being able to isolate the features that make it seem colloquial" (Moore 2016: 192). Chapter 4 will examine specifically such linguistic features, in order to determine how much communicative immediacy is contained in the cycle plays and in which configuration it may appear. This will reveal whether the comic plays which blend religious purposes with secular elements do in fact represent instances of 'comic realism' in language use.

# 4 Speech-like features in the mystery 'comedies'

## 4.1 Methodological premises

### 4.1.1 The data

Chapter 3 has defined three different groups of mystery plays which might be classified as 'comedies' (see *Table 1* above). *Table 2* below lists the corresponding individual texts from the Chester, York and Towneley cycle. The plays from the N-Town collection will constitute *Control Groups I-III*. In contrast to the other play collections, N-Town seems to be an eclectic anthology, a "collage-like product" (Normington 2009: 106) based on several sources. The main markers of its heterogeneity are the choice of episodes, lexis, metrics and the high number of Latin stage directions (Mazzon 2009: 11f.). Significantly, didactic functions in the N-Town plays are mostly made explicit not by individual characters but by presenter figures, who introduce new actions, steer episodes and aim at capturing the audience's benevolence, or explicitly try to emphasise the implications of biblical scenes (Mazzon 2009: 17). The primary function of these presenter figures is to instruct the audience and "to enclose the action, whether natural or mythic, in a frame of commentary which puts the playing unmistakeably at a distance from reality" (Kolve 1966: 27). A number of scholars have highlighted N-Town's tendency towards 'communicative distance'.[123] Bergner, for example, has argued that the collection is characterised by "a superindividual point of view" (1994: 43), which is not only reflected in the respectful, distanced tone of the presenter figures:

> Generally speaking, "ritual distancing" seems to be a characteristic of the N-Town Cycle. This cycle has been associated with a marked preference for sermon-like formal speeches, for solemn prayers, intellectual debate and the display of wisdom and erudition and thus also for a tendency towards solemn gestures and decorative representations. (1994: 43; see also Bergner 1998: 79)

The only scholar who considers the N-Town dialogues to be relatively close to 'real' face-to-face conversation seems to be Gabriella Mazzon (2009: 12, 48, 120, 162). It will therefore be useful to confront the data from York, Chester and Towneley with the evidence from the corresponding N-Town plays of roughly the same period.

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123 See Bates 1893: 120f., 126; Swenson 1914: 33; McNeir 1951: 617; Spearing [2]1990: 150f.; Diller 1992: 226.

| Group I: *Personae humiles* – sympathetic laughter | | | | Control Group I | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words | Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words |
| Chester | Noah (3) | 328 | 2.013 | N-Town | Noah (4) | 253 | 1.979 |
| | Shepherds (7) | 696 | 4.276 | | Shepherds (16) | 155 | 903 |
| York | The Building of the Ark (8) | 152 | 1.063 | | | | |
| | Noah (9) | 325 | 2.052 | | | | |
| | Joseph (13) | 308 | 1.913 | | Joseph's Doubt (12)[124] | 224 | 1.452 |
| | Shepherds (15) | 135 | 845 | | | | |
| Towneley | Noah (3) | 569 | 3.918 | | | | |
| | *Prima Pastorum* (12) | 522 | 3.380 | | | | |
| | *Secunda Pastorum* (13) | 762 | 5.461 | | | | |
| **Group II: Divine triumph over evil – Schadenfreude** | | | | **Control Group II** | | | |
| Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words | Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words |
| Chester | Fall of Lucifer (1) | 301 | 2.005 | N-Town | Creation of Heaven, Fall of the Angels (1) | 82 | 529 |
| | Creation (2) | 704 | 4.312 | | | | |
| | Moses (5) | 455 | 2.744 | | Moses (6) | 194 | 1.329 |
| | Harrowing of Hell (18) | 336 | 2.005 | | Harrowing of Hell (33) | 48 | 290 |
| York | Creation (1) | 163 | 1.337 | | | | |
| | Fall of Man (5) | 180 | 1.080 | | Creation of World, Fall of Adam & Eve (2) | 334 | 2.188 |
| | Temptation (22) | 210 | 1.194 | | Temptation (23) | 222 | 1.586 |
| | Harrowing of Hell (37) | 407 | 2.582 | | | | |
| Towneley | Abel (2) | 475 | 3.206 | | Cain and Abel (3) | 195 | 1.323 |
| **Group III: Funny games of violence – grim irony** | | | | **Control Group III** | | | |
| Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words | Collection | Text (No.) | Lines | Words |
| Chester | Slaughter of Innocents (10) | 497 | 3.025 | N-Town | Slaughter of Innocents (20) | 284 | 1.818 |
| | Crucifixion (Passion) (17) | 479 | 2.720 | | Crucifixion (32) | 293 | 2.146 |
| York | Conspiracy (26) | 313 | 2.648 | | The First Passion Play (26) | 485 | 3.951 |
| | Jesus Examined by Caiaphas (29) | 405 | 3.402 | | Trial Before Annas & Caiaphas (29) | 224 | 1.867 |
| | Dream of Pilate's Wife (30) | 560 | 4.734 | | Pilate's Wife, Trial Before Pilate (31) | 212 | 1.590 |
| | Herod (31) | 438 | 3.589 | | Trials Before Pilate & Herod (30) | 261 | 1.935 |
| | Crucifixion (35) | 311 | 1.987 | | | | |
| | Resurrection (38) | 456 | 2.616 | | Christ's Appearance to Mary (35) | 304 | 1.805 |
| Towneley | Herod (16) | 516 | 3.614 | | | | |
| | Buffeting (21) | 478 | 3.333 | | | | |
| | Scourging (22) | 421 | 3.432 | | | | |
| | Crucifixion (23) | 670 | 4.404 | | | | |
| | | **TOTAL** | **84.890** | | | **TOTAL** | **26.691** |

Table 2: The Chester, York and Towneley 'comedies' (categorisation according to Chapter 3) and the corresponding N-Town play texts

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124 I have deliberately selected Play 12 and not Play 14 (*The Trial of Joseph and Mary*) for *Control Group I* from the N-Town collection, as *Joseph's Doubt* has been considered closer to the 'communicative distance' pole than *The Trial*, with its particularly 'humanised' style, social and comic elements (see Mazzon 2009: 23, footnote 7).

I have not drawn upon existing corpora for the present study; instead, the database was purpose-built, including the interlinear translation of 30 texts with 84.890 words.[125] Altogether, the sample comprises over 111.000 words, divided as shown in *Table 2.* For the present study, the texts have been collected from the online resources *Medievalit* and the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. The former contains the Chester, York and N-Town plays in plain text, which makes them easily accessible. As stated on the website, the play texts on *Medievalit* were prepared by comparing well-known editions, such as the Smith (1885) with the Beadle (1982) edition of the York plays, the Deimling and Matthews (1892) with the Lumiansky and Mills (1974) edition of the Chester plays, as well as the Meredith and Kahrl (1977) with the Stephen Spector (1991) edition of the N-Town plays. The Towneley plays were collected from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (*CMEPV*), a collection of searchable Middle English texts which forms part of the University of Michigan Library's *Middle English Compendium*. The Towneley play texts in the *CMEPV* were based on the Cawley and Stevens (1966) edition published by the Early English Text Society.

## 4.1.2 Speech-like characteristics and linguistic features

Chapter 2 explored Culpeper and Kytö's conceptualisation of speech-related genres in *Early Modern English Dialogues* (2010). Drawing on Koch and Oesterreicher's parameters of communicative immediacy (see Section 2.1), Culpeper and Kytö have compiled a list of speech-like and non-speech-like characteristics:

| Dimension | Speech-like characteristics | Non-speech-like characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| Production/Reception | Individual (diverse, private, personal, non-standard) | Institutional (uniform, public, impersonal, standard) |
| Function | Expressive, phatic | Non-expressive, non-phatic |
| Interactivity | Dialogue (rapid exchanges) | Monologue (no or slow exchanges) |
| Sharedness | Shared situation (dependent on shared physical and temporal context, shared knowledge) | Separate situations (independent of physical and temporal context, little shared knowledge) |
| Restrictions on format | Freely developed (spontaneous) | Pre-determined (non-spontaneous) |
| Transmission | Real-time processing (transient, linear, impromptu) | No real-time pressures (prepared) |

Table 3: Culpeper and Kytö's (2010: 63) speech-like and non-speech-like characteristics

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125 Stage directions and speech prefixes were excluded from the word count.

According to Culpeper and Kytö, Early Modern English comedy plays as "the speech-like text-type *par excellence*" (2010: 156) contain all speech-like aspects. Medieval dramatic dialogue differs from its Early Modern English counterpart. Hence, it is necessary to look at the Middle English mystery cycles' specific combination of medial and conceptional aspects. Let me now run through all speech-like dimensions:

a) Production/Reception

The setting of the mystery cycles' production and reception is institutional. The play texts "were 'published' through their public enactment" (Normington 2004: 8). The medieval play text was first available to the group of people who were directly involved with the staging of the play, while actual performance took place in public in front of an audience. Pfister refers to this phenomenon as the "Kollektivität von Produktion und Rezeption" ('collective nature of production and reception'; Pfister [8]1994: 29).

b) Function

Middle English vernacular drama emphasises the representation of feelings and attitudes, particularly with regard to the depiction of joy versus suffering, and the expression of various "sins of the tongue" (Beckwith 2009: 87). The emotive-expressive and phatic functions play an essential role in the process of moving, persuading and guiding the audience whose attention has to be captured and then maintained throughout the duration of the performance.

c) Restrictions on format

Play texts contain non-actual, i.e. fictional, dialogue which is previously planned, carefully constructed and organised and hence follows a predetermined course. Further, medieval drama presents themes, stories, constellations of and relations between characters which were widely known at the time and which had a fixed course of topical development and are thus not freely established or spontaneous (see Bergner 1998: 77).

d) Transmission

Spontaneous speech is usually unprepared and unscripted, and with no opportunity for editing and is hence characterised by non-fluency features like fillers, pauses, or unnecessary repetitions (see Section 2.2). The fact that dramatic dialogue is carefully planned, constructed and prepared distinguishes it from spontaneous everyday conversations: "Normal non-fluency [...] does not occur in dramatic dialogue, precisely because that dialogue is written (even though it is written to be spoken)" (Short 1996: 177).

e) <u>Interactivity</u>

(i) on the internal level of communication (character ↔ character)

It is the interaction between the characters on stage, and, above all, their dialogical speech, which constitutes "die sprachliche Grundform dramatischer Texte" ('the predominant verbal matrix used in dramatic texts'; Pfister [8]1994: 23). Indeed, I am considering texts in which the dramatic action is presented in the form of a network of direct utterances, where descriptive passages are generally minimised, i.e. transferred to stage directions or delivered by a presenter figure on stage (see Van Stapele 1990: 333; Tan 1993: 47). In fact, other than speaker (character) identifications, the flow of dialogue is generally only interrupted by stage directions in the sample (see Archer and Culpeper 2003: 43; Walker 2007: 18).

(ii) on the external level of communication (performers – audience)

The performer-audience communication usually does not take a 'direct', interactive form. Even though the audience may express their approval or dislike by verbal and non-verbal reactions, it cannot give immediate feedback at any time. Performers, on the other hand, may have taken into account the reactions of the audience, but they do not respond to the spectators' feedback.

f) <u>Sharedness</u>

(i) on the internal level of communication (character ↔ character)

Dramatic speech shares with real face-to-face interaction that it is embedded in the immediate context or situation (Pfister [8]1994: 149). In fact, the spoken word on the stage derives much of its significance from the context of the represented situation, "the here-and-now within the dramatic world on stage" (Van Stapele 1990: 333).

(ii) on the external level of communication (performers – audience)

The shape of the medieval stage allowed the actors to cross the boundary between the stage and the audience both physically and verbally. Those fragile boundaries, the fact that the actor and the audience shared the same space, might have produced performances in which the performers came into close contact with the spectators: "Die Grenze zwischen Spielraum und Zuschauerraum ist eine offene und wird gelegentlich von den Schauspielern durchbrochen" (Pfister [8]1994: 43).[126] Even though the actors may physically break the dividing line between stage and audience, performers and spectators do not share the spatio-temporal context. However close the contact with the audience may seem, when the mystery actors address their

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126 'The dividing line separating the audience from the stage was very flexible and occasionally broken by the actors' (Trans. Halliday [2]1991: 20f.)

audience, "they do so in the capacity of poor shepherds, henpecked husbands, raging tyrants, not as personal acquaintances or neighbours" (Diller 1992: 76). Thus, the performers never leave the spatio-temporal continuum of the action on stage; the physical and temporal context between performers and audience is not shared.

(iii) between the internal and external level of communication (characters – audience)

When the character shares his opinions, fears and distresses with the audience or when a presenter figure provides a commentary on the action and points out the significance of a particular incident or iconographic moment, the spectators are reminded of the tension in the relationship between the fictional spatio-temporal continuum and the real one. This "vermittelnde Kommunikationssystem" ('mediating communication system'; Pfister [8]1994: e.g. 21, 24, 186, 328) between the internal and external level of communication has an alienating effect and intensifies the audience's awareness of the fictionality, creating distance between the action on stage and the audience. That means that whenever the *dramatis personae* directly address the audience, the dramatic illusion will collapse.[127] For Diller, the presenter figures, the audience addresses and the staging modalities are essential characteristics of the "general principle of telling and showing which dominates the medieval theatre as a whole" (1992: 113).[128] To sum up, as far as sharedness is concerned, it seems to apply solely to the interaction on the internal level of communication, because only the characters on stage can refer "to themselves as speakers, to their interlocutors as listener-addressees and to the spatiotemporal coordinates of the utterance itself" (Elam 1980: 85).

Three of the above-mentioned parameters place play texts close to the conceptually oral pole of the immediacy-distance continuum: function, interactivity and sharedness (the latter two only with regard to the internal level of communication). Once we have defined our sample's speech-like characteristics, we need to collect linguistic features that characterise these speech-like characteristics in terms of their frequency of occurrence. Drawing on Leech's (2000) and Biber et al.'s (1999: Chapter 14) characteristics of spoken conversation, Culpeper and Kytö (2010) have related a number of speech-like linguistic features to their taxonomy:[129]

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127 Diller (1992: 113) has argued that the dramatic illusion is not broken by the audience addresses, as the creation of such an illusion is not intended by medieval drama in the first place.

128 The representational style of medieval drama has sometimes been compared to Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre (e.g. Diller 1992: 112; Smith Vinter 1993: 134f.; Normington 2009: 73).

129 While previous approaches (cf. Biber's synchronic corpus-based study of the relation of spoken and written discourse in *Variation across Speech and Writing* (1988)) were generally concerned with an 'oral' versus 'literate' dimension, Culpeper and Kytö stress that the most important aim of *Early Modern English Dialogues* (2010) is to investigate spoken face-to-face interaction in the historical context: "The

| Dimension | Speech-like characteristics | Characteristic speech-like linguistic features |
|---|---|---|
| Interactivity | Dialogue (rapid exchanges) | *more*: second-person pronouns, questions, imperatives, negation, (certain) discourse markers, inserts, (certain) greetings |
| Function | Expressive, phatic | *more*: politeness formulae, familiarising vocatives, interjections, expletives, exclamations |
| Sharedness | Shared situation (dependent on shared physical and temporal context, shared knowledge) | *more*: pro-forms (e.g. personal pronouns, DO as a pro-verb), grammatical ellipsis, non-clausal material, inserts |

Table 4: Prototypical characteristics of spoken conversation and characteristic linguistic features (adapted from Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 92; see also Leech 2000 and Biber et al. 1999: Chapter 14)

Recent research which tries to account for specific dialogic features in the history of English has come to similar choices of speech-like features. Wårvik (2003), for example, looks at paratactic links, repetition, first- and second-person pronouns, private verbs and discourse markers for investigating the linguistic manifestations of orality in Old English texts. Suhr, in her study on orality and literacy in Early Modern English texts (2002), analysed four 'oral' features (first- and second-person pronouns, questions and discourse markers) all of which are contained in Culpeper and Kytö's list. A very recent study by Moore (2016) names eleven syntactical features that have been suggested to characterise everyday language in late medieval England, including nine of the features in *Table 4*.[130] Such forms can thus be found among those confirmed as typical of oral discourse. Rissanen (1986: 98), for instance, has argued that features which consistently occur with a higher frequency in written representations of spoken language as compared to other types of written language may safely be assumed to appear with an even higher frequency in the spoken language of that period. However, we certainly cannot ignore the fact that Culpeper and Kytö's features are primarily formulated for direct application to Early Modern English genres. Therefore, I did not want to simply adopt their list of fixed features and then relate them to the comic mystery plays. It has rather been the aim of the present study to detect salient features with a) careful reading of the materials and b) counting occurrences, taking the corroborated findings of Culpeper

programme of research we have been conducting over the last ten years has been oriented to the question: *what was the spoken face-to-face interaction of past periods like?*" (2010: 2). They are identifying particular features through examining particular text-types and taking into account contextual factors: "Note that this is also contrary to the methods of earlier generations of history of English scholars who seem to think that we should first 'define' what spoken language is and then proceed to investigate it in historical texts" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 14).

130 Apart from second-person pronouns, questions, imperatives, discourse markers (e.g. *well*), inserts (e.g. *nay*), lexical chunks or formulae, negation, ellipsis and pro-forms, Moore (2016: 197) lists the following speech-like features: regional or local grammar, dysfluencies and reductions (contractions, missing auxiliaries, dislocations).

and Kytö's framework as a starting point. By scrutinising of the texts and subsequent frequency counts of the detected items, I discovered the following speech-like features as most common and therefore as most promising to characterise speech-like language in my sample texts:

a) Features of interactivity: second-person pronouns, questions, imperatives, repetition, discourse markers

Second-person pronouns directly refer to the interlocutors in the conversational scenario and therefore "contribute significantly to the interactive dimension of the communicative act" (Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 184). Biber et al. (1999: 333) have demonstrated that personal pronouns are more frequent in conversation than the other pronoun types. The same seems true of speech situations depicted in the mystery cycles. The high frequency of second-person pronoun forms may signal interpersonal immediacy, responsiveness, and reciprocity in some episodes. In addition, the study of second-person pronouns can provide indirect evidence of the way social relations are encoded within the speech community, including the strategies of (im)politeness employed in that community (see Mazzon 2009: 14): In the Middle English period, the use of the singular or plural form of the second-person pronoun (*you/thou*) is influenced by sociolinguistic factors (Rissanen 2008: 56). Pronoun choice may depend on the situational context, the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee, or the politeness or deference that the speaker wants to extend to the addressee. The first section of my empirical study is therefore concerned primarily with the examination of the choice of second-person pronouns in the play texts conditioned by extra-linguistic matters.

My sample texts cover many cases of well-known conversational structures. Chapter 4.3 concentrates on interactive sequences, especially cooperative and conflict talk in pair structures (comparable to Mazzon's analysis (2009) of the N-Town plays). Question-answer adjacency pairs are fundamental to dialogue dynamics: "Naturally enough, interrogative clauses tend to occur in dialogue situations. [...] they are frequent only in conversation and (to a lesser extent) in fiction" (Biber et al. 1999: 203). Imperative-compliance sequences constitute the second major feature of interactivity in our sample. Although repetition is not listed among Culpeper and Kytö's (2010) linguistic features of interactivity, I have chosen to investigate repetition in Section 4.3.[131] Dialogic repetition may serve as an example of what Watts (1987) has termed "text sharing", a form of cooperative verbal behaviour similar to echoes in spoken discourse: "Speakers often repeat partially or exactly what has just been said in conversation" (Biber et al. 1999: 1049). The focus of this section will therefore be on the interactional function of dialogic repetition. Discourse markers

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131 Instead, repetition is featured on Culpeper and Kytö's Restrictions on format dimension (2010: 92). In addition, their 2000 paper on Early Modern English spoken interaction investigates lexical repetition as a speech-like feature.

(otherwise referred to as 'pragmatic markers' or 'pragmatic particles') are another "indicator of interactivity" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 395). According to Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 370ff.), the frequent attestation of discourse markers not only pertains to the speech-like nature of drama but primarily to the interactivity of this text type. Sikorska states that Middle English discourse markers are evidence of the oral nature of composition: "[...] in a way, they can be treated as a transition between oral and literate discourse" (2000: 401). This is because "many (indeed, presumably most) markers occur first in the spoken language and only gradually make their way into written texts" (Mosegaard Hansen and Rossari 2005: 181). In my sample, just as in Present-Day English, turn-initial discourse markers seem to signal both a transition in the evolving progress of the conversation, and an interactive relationship between speaker, hearer, and message (Fung and Carter 2007: 411; see also Biber et al. 1999: 1086).

b) Features of sharedness and function: interjections, attitudinal vocatives, demonstrative pronouns

Spoken discourse is associated with what Biber et al. call "an exclamatory function, expressive of the speaker's emotion" (1999: 1083). The expressive function is closely related to features of personal affect which represent subjective feelings and attitudes in interaction (Caffi and Janney 1994; Taavitsainen 1997c). At least part of this complex set of features will be visible in our 'fictional dialogue' sample. Interjections, for example, typically belong to the spoken mode, and yet they occur frequently in the highly organised, written language of Middle English drama. The emotive-expressive uses of interjections are discussed in Section 4.4.1 in particular.

It is generally acknowledged that swearing constitutes one of the principal categories for an investigation of everyday communication, and it seems likely that many of these rude or offensive words were first developed in spontaneous oral language use and then represented in written texts (see Moore 2016: 195). Accordingly, my investigation of the ways in which taboo expletives have been used in drama can provide indications about historical perceptions of the meaning and function of expressive language. Personal affect in the form of emotional charge between interlocutors may also be found in the use of attitudinal vocatives (see Section 4.4.2). Terms of abuse and endearment, in particular, are also important exponents of strategies of (im)politeness (see Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 220). In the same way as medieval spectators are encouraged to feel the emotions indicated by expressive features like interjections, swearing and attitudinal vocatives, they are guided by indexical features of proximity. In fact, dialogue in spoken and written discourse "gains its significance within a given context partly from the deictic references which connect it to that context" (Cairns 1991: 19). What we find in the sample includes not only a collection of descriptions and declarations but also references by the speakers to the immediate spatio-

temporal context by means of such deictic elements as demonstrative pronouns, which will be the focus of Section 4.4.3.

The markers of communicative immediacy found in our texts are underlined in *Table 5*. The identified features have all been fairly uncontroversially suggested to correlate with orality and speech. These elements, however, have not been fully investigated with respect to my Middle English sample texts. It is also their combined value that deserves attention. Note that greetings, politeness formulae and exclamations (see *Table 5*), while not constituting the main subject of individual sections, will form part of the empirical analysis especially as regards their relation to other speech-like linguistic features.

| Dimension | Speech-like characteristics | Characteristic speech-like linguistic features |
|---|---|---|
| Interactivity | Dialogue (rapid exchanges) | *more*: second-person pronouns, questions, imperatives, negation, (certain) discourse markers, inserts, (certain) greetings, repetition |
| Function | Expressive, phatic | *more*: politeness formulae, familiarising vocatives, interjections, expletives, exclamations |
| Sharedness | Shared situation (dependent on shared physical and temporal context, shared knowledge) | *more*: pro-forms (e.g. personal pronouns, DO as a pro-verb), grammatical ellipsis, non-clausal material, inserts |

Table 5: Prototypical characteristics of spoken conversation and characteristic linguistic features (adapted from Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 92; see also Leech 2000 and Biber et al. 1999: Chapter 14; my selection is underlined; 'repetition' was added)

My empirical analysis will rely on heterogeneous theoretical frameworks, such as Brown and Gilman's power and solidarity semantics (1960), Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), dialogue analysis, Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and speech act theory. Even if my study is not guided by a present-day perspective, the observations about second-person pronouns, interrogative structures etc. are "inevitably shaped by a present-day reading of the past" (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 14). The question arises in how far the linguist analysing Middle English can make use of his intuition about Present-Day English.

### 4.1.3 Challenges and obstacles

It will be assumed in the present study that the features identified in the written sources had their origin in speech. The elements in question would probably not have been used in play texts if they were not comprehensible or recognisable to the audience. However, if we attempt to relate these features to speech-related genres, we hit several serious problems: We have to be aware of the specific characteristics of historical texts and their conditions of production and transmission, "the many filters of conservation and interpretation the 'authentic' language use had to pass through" (Schrott 1999: 352). Medieval manuscripts typically lack clear structuring, ordered orthography and punctuation. It has been assumed that, for example, some instances of short pragmatic markers, such as interjections or discourse markers, were deemed irrelevant and therefore omitted in editions (Traugott and Dasher 2005: 46).

But this, which is to a certain extent a problem of all medieval text analysis, is not the only problem with this approach. The "openness of medieval texts" (Bergner 1995) goes even further. As noted above in Chapter 2, examining medieval drama with its carefully constructed speeches may merely help us detect the literary conventions that indicated spoken language to the audience (Moore 2016: 192). Mazzon has pointed out: "[...] literariness can been accused of leading to either 'biased' choices, due to the desire to 'hyper-mark' some dialogues for formality or informality, or to lack of consistency" (2010: 358). Speech-like linguistic features can be deliberately employed by playwrights for stylistic effect, and thus genuinely oral uses have to be distinguished from cases of conscious stylistic choices (see Wårvik 2003: 45). For example, if interjections were stereotypical markers of personal affect, they may be part of the playwrights' literary strategy of signalling the characters' emotions and attitudes to the audience.

Secondly, the features of 'communicative immediacy' are always placed within a generic and stylistic context with distinct communicative functions. Speech-like elements are polyfunctional in texts and perform different structural roles of organisation and narration as well as representation. Hence, the specific functions of such features in written material cannot necessarily be equated with the communicative goals they fulfil in spoken discourse (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 146). It is not always possible "to tease apart the multiple discursive functionalities of words; often, we must accompany suggestions about colloquial usage with qualifications about other possible functions" (Moore 2016: 196).

Another essential factor of the cycle plays complicates the search for traces of communicative immediacy. It must be noted that the mystery cycles employ versification, "with precise patterns of beats, residues of alliteration, and rhyme" (Mazzon 2009: 12; see also Mazzon 2009: 122). Versification has an impact on the chosen language forms and therefore contributes to the overall style of the text. For example, the Chester play texts generally appear in a uniform four-

stress, eight-line stanza with tail-rhyme: *aaabaaab* or *aaabcccb*. Purdie defines the tail-rhyme as follows: "The defining characteristic of any tail-rhyme stanza [...] is that it is built up from *aa(a)b*-rhymed units in which the *b*-lines, or tail-lines, retain the same rhyme throughout the stanza and thereby hold it together" (2008: 14). Here is Eve suggesting Adam to cover themselves with fig leaves in the Chester *Creation*:[132]

> **EVA**. Adam, husbande, I reade we take
> 'Adam, husband, I suggest we take
> this figge-leaves for shames sake,
> these fig leaves for shame's sake,
> and to our members an hillinge make
> and to our members a covering make
> of them for thee and <u>mee</u>.
> of them for you and me.'
>
> **ADAM**. And therwith my members I will hide,
> 'And therewith my members I will hide,
> and under this tree I will abyde;
> and under this tree I will abide;
> for surely come God us besyde,
> for surely, if God should come,
> owt of this place shall <u>wee</u>. [Chester 2.273–80]
> out of this place shall we go.'

Tail-rhyme was especially popular in Middle English romances. The verse form's origin can be traced to pious works, particularly to liturgical performance (see Purdie 2008: 14; Brantley 2013: 425).[133] As Gibbs notes, the tail-rhyme stanza was designed for a listening audience: "It is easy enough to see the suitability of the tail-rhyme stanza for public recitation: the simple and strongly-marked rhythm would aid reciter and listener alike to retain the thread of the narrative [...]" (1966: 25). Accordingly, Brantley observed in both Chaucerian and drama manuscripts with a consistent use of tail-rhyme "a common performative mode, a sensitivity to the significance of the spoken word as it is performed in the act of reading" (2013: 435). This 'performance mode' becomes apparent in the manuscript layout of several mystery plays.

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132 The *b*-lines, or tail-lines, from the following quotes are underlined.
133 The source of Chester's tail-rhyme passages was probably the sacred and legendary material of the vernacular poem *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* (Stevens 1987: 262, footnote 8).
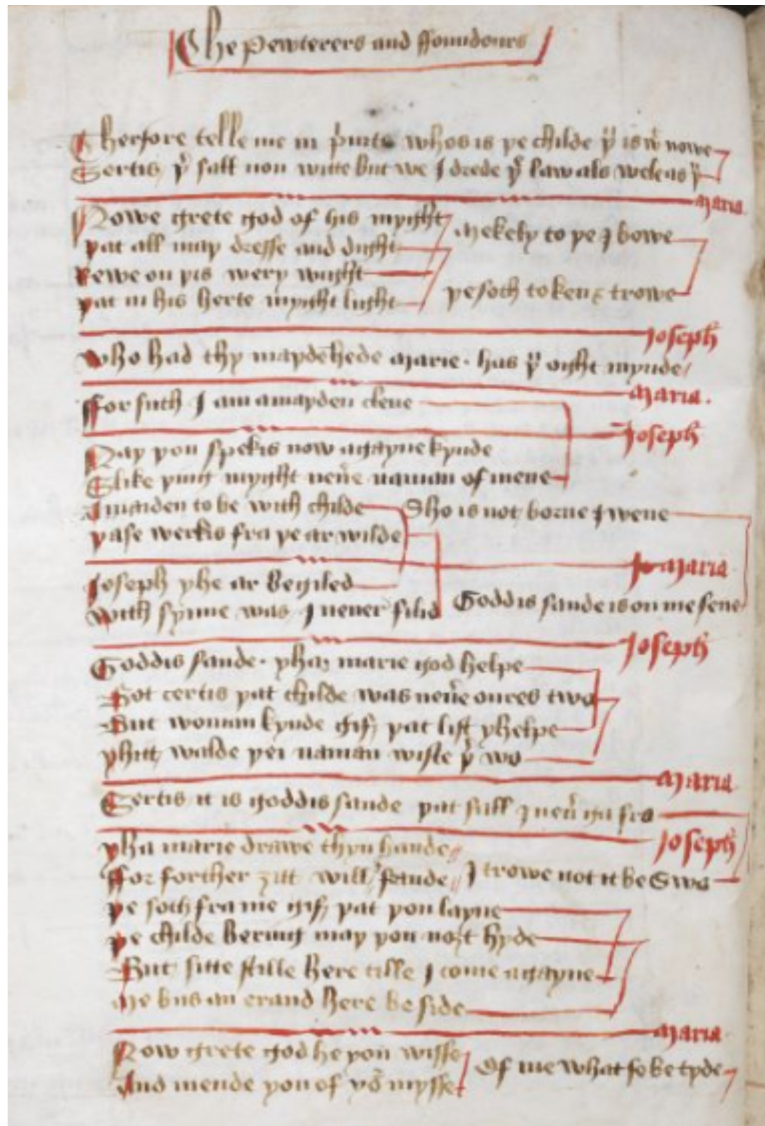
Figure 6: London, British Library Additional MS 35290 (York Plays), fol. 50v. © British Library

The manuscript of the York *Joseph* (see *Figure 6* above), for example, displays tail-lines which are placed on the right side of the page and linked by a bracket. The second stanza from folio 50v, which is modelled on the regular tail-rhyme form *aabaab*, is represented as follows:

**Mary**. Nowe grete God of his myght
'Now great God of his might,
Þat all may dresse and dight,                    Mekely to the I <u>bowe</u>.
Who guides and directs all,                       Meekly to you I bow.'
Rewe on this wery wight,
'Have compassion for this unhappy man
Þat in his herte myght light                       Þe soth to ken and <u>trowe</u>.
That in his heart might light                      The truth to know and trust.'
[York 13.204–9]

As Joseph's anger with his wife increases, the stanza layout becomes more complex and more flexible. The following portion of the play includes a ten-line stanza rhyming *ababccbccb* which is not found elsewhere in the cycle:

> **Joseph**. Who had thy maydenhede Marie? Has thou oght mynde?
> 'Who had your maidenhead, Mary? Can you bring it to mind?'
>
> **Mary**. Forsuth, I am a mayden <u>clene</u>.
> 'Forsooth, I am a maiden pure.'
>
> **Joseph**. Nay, thou spekis now agayne kynde,
> 'No, you're speaking now against nature.'
> Slike thing myght neuere na man of <u>mene</u>.
> 'Such a thing could never a man mean.'
> A maiden to be with childe?                    Sho is not borne I <u>wene</u>.
> 'A maiden to be with child?'                   'She is not born, I think!'
> Þase werkis fra the ar wilde,
> 'These words from you are mad!'
>
> **Mary**. Joseph, yhe ar begiled,
> 'Joseph, you are beguiled.'
> With synne was I neuer filid,                  Goddis sande is on me <u>sene</u>.
> 'With sin was I never defiled.'                'God's message in me is seen.'
> [York 13.210–9]

I believe that such passages where the *b*-lines are distributed more flexibly create even higher communicative immediacy than the regular tail-rhyme structure, and thus contribute to the pace of the dialogue. Similar unusual layouts appear in San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 1, the manuscript of the Towneley plays. The Wakefield Master (believed to be the author of the *Noah* play, the two shepherds' plays, *Herod the Great* and the *Buffetting of Christ* in the Towneley collection) usually writes in a pair of two-stress phrases separated by a pause, which produces lines with no fixed number of syllables. McNeir (1951: 615) and Spearing (²1990: 155), in particular, have praised his great rhythmic variety, which often involves fitting rapid conversational exchanges into the compressed nine-line stanza (sometimes with up to three different speakers contributing to a single line). In the following passage from the *Secunda Pastorum*, the dialogue can freely break in upon the regular sequence of complete stanzas:

**Primus Pastor**. Yee, on a ley land
'Yes, on a pasture-land
Hard I hym blaw
Heard I him blow.
he commys here at hand,
He comes nearer,
Not far;
Not far.
Stand styll.
Stand quiet.'
**Secundus Pastor**. Qwhy?
'Why?'
**Primus Pastor.** Ffor he commys, hope I.
'Because he is coming, I hope.'
**Secundus Pastor**. He wyll make vs both a ly
'He will us tell a lie
Bot if we war. [Towneley 13.109-116]
If we don't take care.'

A number of York plays in the Passion sequence, such as the *Conspiracy* (26), *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* (29), *The Dream of Pilate's Wife* (30) or *Christ before Herod* (31), are written in the long alliterative line (though the stanza forms vary widely), which consists of four stressed syllables commonly reinforced by alliteration, a a || a a:

**Caiphas**. <u>D</u>o on <u>d</u>ayntely and <u>d</u>resse me on <u>d</u>ees [York 29.81]
'Now graciously draw me to dream on my dais'

**Pilate**. Yhe <u>c</u>ursed <u>c</u>reatures that <u>c</u>ruelly are <u>c</u>ryand, [York 30.1]
'You cursed creatures that cruelly are crying,'

But even in the alliterative high style of the York Realist, not every line contains four stressed syllables or the same versification throughout. For Beadle, the poetic metres employed by the York Realist are assimilated to "colloquial speech rhythms" ([2]2008: 121) in some plays, while Bergner (1988: 178, 180) emphasises that his verse structure encourages elaboration and refinement in accordance with the principles of medieval rhetoric rather than 'naturalness', colloquialism or informality (see also Mazzon 2009: 122, footnote 3). Since it is problematic to infer Middle English pronunciation from Middle English spelling, we cannot be certain which sounds or syllables were fully pronounced and which were not: "When the pronunciation of sounds and syllables cannot be exactly established, one cannot say whether the verse system was rigorously adopted or allowed for flexibility" (Støle 2012: 54, footnote 62).

In conclusion, the examination of Middle English play texts involves "significant hand-wringing and apologizing for our evidence" (Moore 2016: 206). An awareness of the methodological problems is necessary as a prerequisite for determining the most appropriate way

to analysing the material. In order to attain results as comprehensive as possible, I will apply both qualitative and quantitative methods. Firstly, frequency counts were necessary to isolate the most common elements. The instances had to be sought manually, mainly because of the non-standardised spelling in the Middle English period. Before the highlighting of relevant cases, I had to translate each text word-for-word (translations of the mystery cycles do exist, but they mostly provide literary renderings of the lines). Close readings of the play texts were necessary not only to detect and count occurrences, but also to distinguish between some features. For example, when I located demonstrative pronouns by looking at all occurrences of *this*, all examples had to be double-checked to ensure that *this* was effectively used as a pronoun rather than as a determiner. Counting occurrences and observing distributions will pull together the different cycles for cross-comparison. Such a comparative study seeks to be more representative, i.e. to examine larger amounts of data to regulate variations in usage. Yet, I do not consider quantitative investigation as a goal in itself but rather as a basis for the qualitative analysis. Ultimately, only a qualitative study will be able to unveil the precise function of a particular grammatical feature within the texts.

## 4.2 Interactivity in pronominal address – (im)politeness, power and dominance

A key characteristic of conversation is interactivity: "Conversation is co-constructed by two or more interlocutors, dynamically adapting their expression to the ongoing exchange" (Biber et. al 1999: 1045). Features associated with immediacy, responsiveness and reciprocity of communication can be examined in order to measure the level of interactivity (Taavitsainen 1999a: 244). One particular feature which reflects patterns of social interaction and the perception of social roles are the address forms used in a society (Jucker 2000a: 40).

Second-person pronouns illustrate the basic social and interactional relationship between speakers in both dramatic dialogue and real face-to-face interaction. According to Leech (2000: 696), first- and second-person pronouns are the most common forms in spoken discourse compared with other personal pronouns. Second-person pronouns appear frequently in conversation since the interlocutors are in immediate contact, and the interaction focuses on responding to one another's contributions (Biber et al. 1999: 333; see also Biber et al. 1999: 15, 1042). Culpeper and Kytö, in their paper "Data in Historical Pragmatics" (2000a), include them among their "'conversational' diagnostics", justifying their choice as follows: "Second-person pronouns make direct reference to the interlocutors in the conversational scenery and thus contribute significantly to the interactive dimension of the communicative act" (2000a: 184).

Medieval manuscripts have generally been considered unreliable guides to actual pronoun usage (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 8). Busse, examining forms of address in Shakespeare's plays, emphasises the fact that the literary genre affects pronoun use to a significant degree: "[...] it must be emphasised that some of the pronoun choices may have been made for the sake of rhyme and metre, the requirements of genre, plot or a particular scene, to achieve a certain dramatic effect, etc." (2003: 216). Walker finds that in drama the choice between the two pronouns appears to be determined more by literary purposes than contemporary usage: "Moreover, the language in drama texts may often be manipulated or exaggerated for artistic purposes" (2003: 316). Pronouns are among those features that show scribal variation due to copying processes (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 8; Mazzon 2009: 48). Referring to the *Canterbury Tales*, Burnley notes: "Comparison of different manuscripts of the same texts shows, moreover, that personal pronouns are among the word classes most susceptible to variation by scribal copying" (2003: 30). Scribes may have normalised usage according to a more recent system. Therefore, it is likely that the textual evidence is more systematic than the playwright's original usage (see Jucker 2006b).

Although pronominal forms may be imprecise due to scribal copying, various studies (Burnley 2003; Busse 2003; Hunt 2003; Mazzon 2009, 2010) have emphasised the fact that pronoun choices are significant pragmatically. Writers would use pronouns in a way that the social

and interactional relations between characters become detectable by their audiences (Mazzon 2010: 358f.). The plays in our sample portray various types of social hierarchies; second-person pronouns contribute to encoding these dynamics in written form. It should be remembered that Jucker and Taavitsainen have cited drama as one of the most valuable sources for historical pragmatics "not because it is a fairly good representation of the speech itself, but because it depicts interactions between different speakers of different social classes and different role relationships towards each other" (2003: 8f.).

## 4.2.1 Second-person pronouns

Prior to an analysis of the central theoretical approaches to the study of address forms, a brief overview of the historical development of pronoun usage is in order. In Old English, the personal pronoun *þū* and its associated forms *þē* (acc./dat.) and *þīn* (gen.) were used as the second-person singular while *gē, ēow* (acc./dat.) and *ēower* (gen.) were used as the second-person plural (Hogg ²2012: 22). In early Middle English, the plural pronoun *ye* extended its use as the polite form in singular contexts (see e.g. Blake 1992a: 536; Jucker 2000c: 153; Nevalainen 2006: 78). The gradual spread of the 'plural-as-singular' address was presumably influenced by French, which is believed to have played a significant role due to its prestige in medieval England (the common abbreviation used in the specialised literature, *T/V*, reflects the Latin usage and the French opposition *tu*/*vous*) (Jucker 2000c: 153; Mazzon 2010: 354).[134] Cases of singular *ye*/*you* increase continuously in number from the twelfth century onwards. Strang has described a sociolinguistic mechanism which might have triggered the spread of the 'plural-as-singular' form: "in all cases of doubt one would rather be polite than risk giving offence, and every precedent widens the range of cases of doubt" (1970: 139; see Mazzon 2009: 20, 2010: 357). By the end of the sixteenth century, English *T*-forms were declining, while the old subject form *ye* was replaced by the object form *you* (Nevalainen 2006: 80).[135] This decline of *T* pertains to the standard language; *T*-forms survived longer in dialects and still remain alive to some extent, for instance in Northern English dialects (Mazzon 2009: 20, 2010: 357).

Brown and Gilman, in their seminal 1960 study, attempt to explain the development of *T* and *V* in terms of the dimensions power and solidarity. They have argued for a direct connection between pronoun usage and the social power relationship between speaker and addressee.[136]

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134 To simplify matters, *T* and *V* may stand for the singular pronouns of address *thou* and *you* in all of their inflected forms in the next sections.

135 For a detailed account of research on formal and sociolinguistic hypotheses about the decline of *T*, consult Mazzon (2010: 356f.).

136 See Wales (1983), Jucker (2000c: 154f.) and Nevala (2010: 425ff.) for a discussion of Brown and Gilman's system of nonreciprocal power semantics.

From the time of the Middle English period "the nonreciprocal power semantic" (Brown and Gilman 1960: 256) produced a system in which a socially superior person addresses a socially inferior one with *T* and receives respectful *V* in return (Brown and Gilman 1960: 255). Assymetrical superiority/inferiority relationships could be based on caste and rank but also on physical strength, age, sex and institutionalised roles (e.g. parents using *T* to their children). For individuals of approximately equal power or social status, pronominal address was reciprocal: "During the medieval period, and for varying times beyond, equals of the upper classes exchanged the mutual *V* and equals of the lower classes exchanged *T*" (Brown and Gilman 1960: 256).

For Brown and Gilman, variation in the choice of pronoun within group normativity governed by power or solidarity can be ascribed to "transient attitudes" (1960: 276), i.e. momentary shifts of mood. Switching between *T* and *V* thus results from the individual attitude of the speaker towards the hearer. Such affective usages have traditionally been examined and assessed as stylistic 'deviations' from the default system predicted by the 'norms' of power and solidarity.[137] But not all individual cases of pronoun usage in Middle or Early Modern English can be classified in a systematic way, either as unmarked variants following the norm, or marked variants deviating from the norm in a particular way (see Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 13).[138]

Wales has criticised Brown and Gilman's model for its strong "correspondence between the power semantic and a hierarchical social structure" (1983: 109). While they note the significance of 'expressive meanings', they interpret them entirely in terms of the two dimensions of power and solidarity. Such pronoun shifts are therefore only associated with the wish to express feelings of admiration, respect, contempt or anger, i.e. feelings of superiority or inferiority.[139] Wales

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137 Brown and Gilman's theory has been extended by a later study (Brown and Gilman 1989), which specifies the role of social and affective factors for the use of address pronouns and indirect requests in four Shakespearean tragedies. According to their findings, the "expressive corollary" (1989: 177) may account for the uses of *T* and *V* that the power semantic cannot explain: "If *thou* is used where *you* is expected, the speaker is emotionally aroused. This amounts to making *you* the unmarked or default form and *thou* a form marked for affect" (1989: 177). The use of expressive *T*, as Brown and Gilman emphasise, is not permanent as in French or German but a mere reflection of the "emotional moment" (1989: 178). As a result, speakers will resort to *V* again after the emotional moment has passed: "The identifying feature of an *expressively* affectionate pronominal shift, as opposed to a relational shift to intimacy, is easy *retractability*" (1989: 178). However, Brown and Gilman concede that their status and expressive rules cannot account for all instances of *thou* and *you* (1989: 178).

138 For Elizabethan English and Shakespeare's works, in particular, several analyses have applied the concept of markedness to account for pronoun choice (e.g. Quirk 1971: 70; Salmon 1975: 58f.). These studies labelled *thou* as the unmarked and *you* as the marked form carrying emotive meaning. This approach has increasingly been criticised as too static or insufficient, since both variants may be used to express a range of social relations and emotions and thus be referred to as 'marked' in certain contexts (Walker 2007: 48). Hence, research based on the norm/deviant approach often failed to cover all extant examples and, particularly, to account for all cases of pronoun switching (Walker 2007: 48).

139 Several studies emphasise Brown and Gilman's 'affective factor', i.e. changes in the emotional stance of the speaker. Burnley uses Brown and Gilman's terminology when he draws attention to stylistic variation governed by "transient emotions and attitudes" (1983: 19). Salmon likewise says that switches in Shakespeare's works generally signal "moments of strong emotion, pleasant or otherwise" (1987: 59). For Hope (1993: 141), emotionally expressive pronoun uses, beyond socially conditioned ones, can

(1983: 115) claims that at the end of the fourteenth and into the fifteenth century, the use of *thou* by the upper class is not simply confined to address those socially inferior in status. Its use became mainly reserved for private, informal contexts, which is why *thou* was increasingly associated with the expression of emotion and intimacy. The main uses of *T* and *V* as summarised by Wales are represented in *Figure 6*. She stresses that *T* and *V* in her model stand not "in opposition in each of these broad functions, but [...] on a sliding-scale" (Wales 1983: 116).
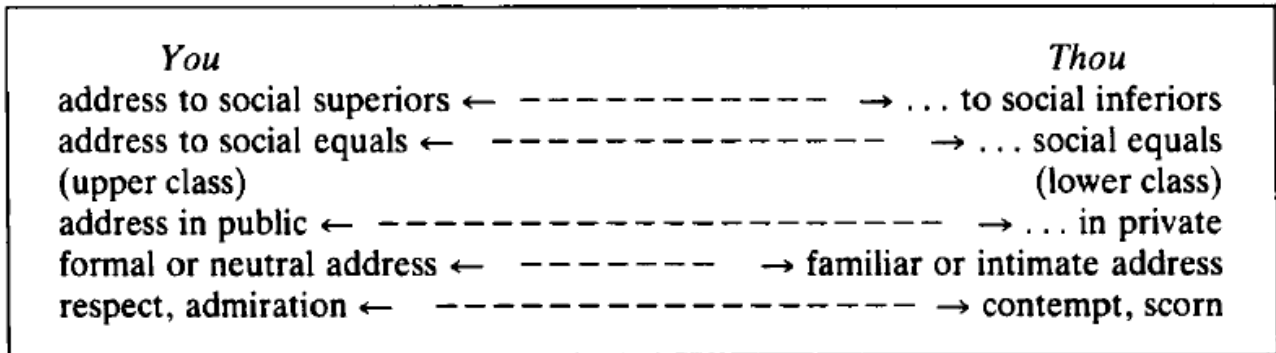


Figure 7: The main uses of *T* and *V* during the medieval period (source: Wales 1983: 116)

Another socio-pragmatic notion which is pertinent to the study of address forms are theories of politeness and impoliteness. Frameworks of linguistic (im)politeness which bring together sociological variables, such as power and social distance, with face, face-wants and face work have been related to address term usage. In their 1989 paper, Brown and Gilman analyse four Shakespearean tragedies on the basis of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987).[140] Available address forms are assessed by speakers in terms of how polite they are in any given situation or, alternatively, a given address form signals a certain level of politeness and therefore establishes the politeness or formality of the exchange (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 10). Culpeper points out that for the study of drama, strategies of impoliteness that cause offence and social disruption are especially relevant, since "key 'dramatic' points often occur at times of interactional conflict" (1998: 84). *V*-forms can attack positive face, signalling coldness and distance, and may also be used to indicate sarcasm and mock politeness. *T*-pronouns, on the other hand,

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produce switches in addresses to the same person.

140 Brown and Levinson's concepts of positive and negative politeness strategies (1987: 101ff.) have been criticised in the past. One of the shortcomings of their theory is the fact that it only distinguishes between polite and impolite behaviour. Such an approach disregards neutral utterances that are neither polite nor impolite in a given conversation (see Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 11). Watts (1989: 135) has proposed the term 'politic behaviour' for this unmarked middle ground. Above all, we should bear in mind that all descriptions and evaluations of past politeness mechanisms with the help of approaches designed for Present-Day English, like Brown and Levinson's model, tend to be biased: "Thus, extreme caution is in order, especially since the notion of politeness has been subject to change in Britain over the ages" (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 236). For an overview of critical research on Brown and Levinson, see Nevala (2010: 421f.).

can be used to threaten negative face, expressing condescension and contempt (Walker 2007: 45). That means that a switch from *T* to *V* can be prompted by the speaker's attempt to express distance, or to stress (seriously or ironically) the formality of the interaction; conversely, a switch from *V* to *T* can mirror a reduction of distance, particularly in contexts involving conflict or intimacy between the interlocutors. In her paper on terms of address, Mazzon concludes that "mostly, switching is connected with face work, especially micro-switching of a rather transitional character" (2010: 363). Thus, pronoun usage reflects not only the social dynamics of interaction, the expression of feelings and emotions but also the face work going on in dialogues between characters:

> […] it seems clear that the choice between *T* and *Y* [*V*] forms is certainly not connected only to the social relationship between the interlocutors, nor to the state of mind of a character or to the affective overtones of an utterance: it is also a perfectly viable additional politeness strategy, exactly as it was shown to be in Shakespeare's works, and it should be studied in further depth from this perspective. (Mazzon 2000: 165)

What makes English personal pronouns especially suitable for linguistic analysis is their "intriguing semantic-pragmatic history" (Fitzmaurice 2010: 683). There is an abundance of research into pronominal address in Middle and Early Modern English drama. A number of studies focus on the *ye*/*thou*-distinction in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (Nathan 1959; Wilcockson 1980; Mazzon 2000; Burnley 2003; Honegger 2003; Jucker 2006b). Three scholars (Mullini 2005; Fernández-Conde 2007; Mazzon 2009) have devoted their studies specifically to the cycle plays. Shakespeare remains the most popular object of analysis (e.g. Brown and Gilman 1989; Kopytko 1993; Bruti 2000; Busse 2003; Mazzon 2003; Stein 2003). Only few scholars, such as Hope (1993) and Walker (2000, 2003, 2007), have analysed the use of *thou* and *you* by comparing fictional and non-fictional sources.

**4.2.1.1 Overall distribution**

The frequencies of second-person pronouns in the Chester, York, Towneley and N-Town comic play texts are shown in *Table 6-10* below. First, it turns out that the sample contains slightly lower densities than the plays from the N-Town collection (average relative frequency: 44.11 vs. 50.16). The second-person pronouns in the N-Town *Moses*, however, do not signal a high degree of interactivity or immediacy. Moses employs a huge number of *T*-forms while announcing the ten commandments to the audience. The highest densities of usage in our core sample can be found in the Chester cycle, with the Chester *Fall of Lucifer* displaying the highest relative frequency. Overall, the York *Crucifixion* contains the lowest density which is, in this case, no indicator for a

lack of interaction or explicit conversation. The small number of second-person pronouns is simply due to the common employment of *we* and *us* instead of *V* and *T*. Conversely, the York *Creation*, the play with the second lowest density, only rarely includes explicit interactional dialogue but relies heavily on the monologues of God and Lucifer.

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPP | 51.66 (104) | 32.04 (137) | 43.27 (46) | 39.47 (81) | 39.73 (76) | 29.59 (25) | 32.92 (129) | 36.98 (125) | 30.21 (165) |

Table 6: The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPP | 60.35 (121) | 58.67 (253) | 52.48 (144) | 36.41 (73) | 28.42 (38) | 49.07 (53) | 56.11 (67) | 39.89 (103) | 52.40 (168) |

Table 7: The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPP | 49.92 (151) | 55.88 (152) | 49.09 (130) | 38.51 (131) | 57.67 (273) | 52.10 (187) | 19.12 (38) | 33.64 (88) | 45.10 (163) | 53.41 (178) | 48.95 (168) | 50.18 (221) |

Table 8: The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPP | 23.24 (46) | 17.91 (26) | 91.92 (83) | 34.03 (18) | 82.01 (109) | 34.48 (10) | 57.59 (126) | 60.53 (96) | 55.18 (73) |

Table 9: The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPP | 24.75 (45) | 58.71 (126) | 45.56 (180) | 53.03 (99) | 57.86 (92) | 54.78 (106) | 50.97 (92) |

Table 10: The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)
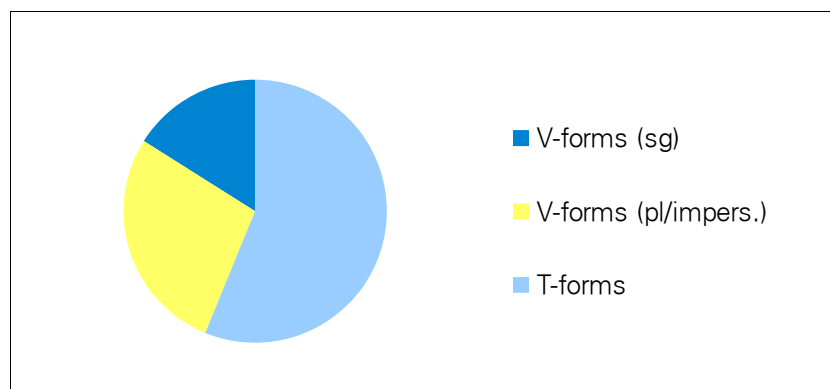


Figure 8: Overall distribution of second-person pronouns in *Group I–III*

Mazzon has claimed that *V* is already heavily present at the end of the fifteenth century, "increasingly confining T to the extremes of the social and pragmatic scales" (2009: 194). My quantitative analysis, however, indicates a clear trend towards *T* in the choice of singular pronoun. In 28 out of 30 texts under investigation, the characters employ *T* in singular address more often than *V.* Out of the 2.735 uses of singular address pronouns in the 30 play texts of this study, 78% are *T* while only 22% are *V* (see *Figure 7* above). It must be emphasised here that I have only included unambiguous instances of *V*-forms.

The choice between address forms is not necessarily regulated by pre-established sociolinguistic parameters, and may be "regulated by immediate, local rhetoric and pragmatic (i.e. perlocutionary) management needs and by the interlocutors' interpretation of the context" (Mazzon 2009: 21, with reference to Kopytko 1993: 47f.). That means that situational changes during interaction, such as the inversion of the power relation between interactants, have a strong impact on which pronoun of address is chosen (Burnley 2003: 29; Jucker 2006b; Mazzon 2010: 354). Jucker (2006b: 62) suggests a model that includes the relatively stable social identities of the speakers as well as their social roles in relation to each other, but also temporary (and fluctuating) shifts in intentionality and power in response to the individual situational context:

$$
\text{interactional status} \begin{cases} \text{social status} \\ \text{relation between interactants (interpersonal status)} \\ \text{situational status} \end{cases}
$$

Jucker and Taavitsainen therefore argue that both in Middle English and in Early Modern English the *V/T*-distinction should be studied on the micro-level of individual interactions: "Attention to the close context is important in order to detect the underlying principles of pronoun shifts" (2003: 14). A micro-analysis is indispensable to integrate those aspects which are not quantifiable, and to examine how a number of complex and subtle factors work together. First, I will analyse the domain of interaction and the kind of relationship between the characters involved in the interaction (family, peers, superordinate-subordinate) (cf. Mazzon 2003, 2009). Categories such as power, solidarity, familiarity, distance and affection are involved in dramatic dialogue, and will be taken into consideration in order to characterise usage more generally. Jucker has suggested that affection or familiarity is not an essential criterion for the choice between *V* and *T:* "The choice is rather governed by considerations of deference, i.e. respect and politeness" (2006b: 70; see also Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 78). This is one of the statements which will be assessed in the following section. Special attention will be devoted to the 'switch' from *V* to *T* and vice versa while addressing the same interlocutor. For example, a correlation between pronoun switching and specific speech acts has been detected in other texts and will be tested on my sample.

I have stated above that my analysis considers second-person pronouns as the category that establishes the basic interactional relationship between speakers. Yet, pronouns are not the only features which illustrate social relations, emotional attitudes and strategies of (im)politeness. The choice between *T/V*-pronouns is not made in linguistic isolation, and combinations of different elements allow a speaker to express finer nuances of meaning. That is why other sources of information have to be considered, for instance nominal forms of address, which will be mentioned in this section mainly in terms of their correlations with pronoun uses. Vocatives undoubtedly represent an intriguing speech-like feature in their own right, and two categories, endearment and abuse, are therefore briefly reviewed in Section 4.4.2 below.

### 4.2.1.2 Family relationships

a) Husband–wife

Dialogue depends for its effect on the polarised relationship of the figures or speakers depicted. Dialogues between family members are often a particularly transparent arena for conflict. The most frequently depicted family relationship in the mystery cycles is husband–wife. This is often considered a typical asymmetric relationship, with husbands addressing their wives with *T* due to their superior social status, while wives employ *V* towards their husbands (cf. Mazzon 2000; Busse 2003). In all cycle versions, by contrast, the Uxores tend to switch their pronouns a great deal, and the ratio of pronouns is clearly in favour of *T* in almost all exchanges (see *Table 11*).

The popular image and literary presentation of women was naturally influenced by medieval culture. Nevala has stated that husbands as "rulers over their wives and children" (2003: 149) usually decided all matters concerning family morals, finance or social relations. This power and authority originated from the Bible and was reinforced by the common law of England. Fries names two influential figures of the Church, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, whose writings propagated women's obedient and submissive status: "Such learned teachings were reinforced by ancient and medieval science, and canon and civil law, and found their way into such popular writings as the standard sermon collections, marriage manuals, penitentials, instructions for wives and children […]" (Fries 1986: 49).

The doctrine of women's subjection was linked with the belief in her inherent inferiority. As descendants of Eve, women were said to tend naturally to disobedience, vanity, in fact, to all sin. In fact, it is Eve's role in the fall of mankind which became the doctrinal foundation for the medieval misogynist tradition (see Hughes 2006: 498). Note that Chaucer's Wife of Bath in her "Prologue" refers to a collection of stories about the most deceitful wives in history, including Eve, Delilah and Clytemnestra. She recounts that her fifth husband would read from "this book of

wikked wyves" (l. 685) to anger her. The misogynistic beliefs of medieval writers were supported by popular images of women represented in the medieval fabliaux, many of which portray the struggle between the sexes. Women in the fabliaux are quick-thinking, sensual and materialistic; they provide the perfect model of the garrulous, shrewish wife (Normington 2004: 122). Such character traits, as Fries (1986: 53f.) has pointed out, are used to align them with the sinfulness of Eve.

However, it was also the Church who developed the counter-doctrine of woman's superiority mirrored in the adoration of another archetype of Christian thought: the Virgin Mary (Power [6]2012: 1). The cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary spread rapidly in the Middle Ages and soon affected every manifestation of popular creed: "Her miracles were on every lip, were enshrined in innumerable images and recorded in manuscripts and books" (Power [6]2012: 11). To sum up, the medieval convention granted women 'a dualistic status': revered as the Blessed Virgin, wholly above feminine weakness, but considered inferior as Eve, who represents precisely this feminine weakness (Fries 1986: 48f.; see also Woolf 1980: 122).

The Noah plays view Noah's wife as "the traditional Eve-like obstacle in the way of God's plan" (Jack 1989: 113). The various verbal and physical struggles for *maistrie* between Noah and his wife have been called "the most stereotyped of medieval domestic scenes" (Fries 1986: 52). For Jack, "they present the finest examples of farcical marital conflict in English mediaeval drama" (1989: 108). Comic incongruity is created through the portrayal of Noah as the devout servant of God in one scene, and as the desperate husband incapable of controlling his own wife in another. In all plays, Noah's wife is shrewish, disobedient and cantankerous, and her relationship with Noah is one of domestic discord, at least until they enter the ark. Despite her inferior social rank, she has power over her husband in some scenes because she betters him in their verbal disputes and he is unable to refute her arguments. This is what Jucker means when interactionally defined "temporary balances of power" (2000c: 158) may overrule the 'original' social hierarchy between the interactants. We will see that these situations of conflict are particularly prone to pronoun switching and strategic use of address terms, as Mullini (2005: 166f.) has demonstrated.

| Play | Speakers/Addressees | husband to wife | | wife to husband | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *V* | *T* | *V* | *T* |
| **Chester *Noah*** | Noah – Noah's wife | - | 7 | 1 | 10 |
| **York *Noah*** | Noah – Uxor | 2 | 11 | 2 | 13 |
| **York *Joseph*** | Joseph – Mary | - | 32 | 13 | - |
| **Towneley *Noah*** | Noah – Uxor | 3 | 14 | 7 | 34 |
| **Towneley *SP*** | Mak – Uxor (Gill) | 1 | 9 | - | 9 |
| **Chester *Creation*** | Adam – Eve | - | 6 | - | 2 |
| **York *Fall of Man*** | Adam – Eve | - | 12 | - | 2 |
| **Chester *Innocents*** | Joseph – Mary | - | 8 | 3 | - |
| **York *Dream*** | Pilate – Uxor/Domina | 18 | 1 | 16 | - |
| **TOTAL** | | **24 (19%)** | **100 (81%)** | **42 (38%)** | **70 (62%)** |

Table 11: Domain: family; relationship: husband–wife

In the Chester *Noah*, the verbal exchange between husband and wife represents a consciously fought battle of wits. Noah mainly exchanges *T* with his wife, and he employs kinship terms such as *wyffe/wife* (ll. 97, 193, 219, 245) and more affectionate *good wiffe* (ll. 102, 109) in his desperate attempts to make her board the ark. Interesting is his wife's switch from *V* to *T* in her first speech addressed specifically to her husband. She initially uses *V* 'of distance', along with the respectful nominal *sir*, but then switches to *T* 'of disrespect and abuse' at the end of her tirade and sticks to this form of address until the end of the play. The only *V*-address, however, seems to be already delivered in a mocking tone as part of her rebellion against Noah's authority, since it is immediately followed by a curse:

(1)     **Noes Wyffe**. Yea, *syr*, sett up <u>your</u> seale / and *rowe forthe with eve!! hayle*; [...] But <u>thou</u> wilte lett them into <u>thy</u> chiste, elles rowe forthe, Noe, when <u>thy</u> liste and gett <u>thee</u> a newe wyfe. [Chester 3.197–8; 206–8][141]
'Yes, sir, set up your sail and row forth with evil hail [bad luck to you]! [...] Unless you will let them into your ark, row forth, Noah, when you wish, and get yourself a new wife.'

Similar to the Chester version, Noah and his wife in the York play address each other with *T*. Uxor addresses her husband mainly by name, while Noah's vocatives vary between the polite *dame* (ll. 78, 87, 120, 124, 134, 274) and the plainer *woman* (ll. 95, 114) in moments of anger.[142] When his wife refuses to board the ark and suggests she and her children should go to town, Noah switches to *V*, perhaps to tell her the blatant truth in a more distant and determinant manner:

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141 Throughout Sections 4.2.1–4.4.2 of my empirical chapter, the speech-like features under investigation are underlined; words or phrases that are specifically referred to in the analysis are given in italics.

142 I do not believe that the vocative triggers the form of pronoun or vice versa. For example, Mazzon (2000: 149) notes in her study on the *Canterbury Tales* that the forms *sire*, *dame* and *madame* co-occur with *V*-forms. In the Noah plays and the Chester *Innocents*, however, *dame* is frequently combined with *thou*. Honegger (2003: 65) has observed that nominal forms may reinforce or complement but also modify or contrast with pronominal forms of address for specific reasons.

(2)    **Noe**. Nay, certis, sothly than mon <u>ye</u> drowne. [York 9.84]
       'No, surely, then you will drown!'

Fraught with the prospect of being *saffyd as <u>ye</u> saye here* (l. 145) together with her gossips, Noah's wife finally gives in to her husband's command, employing respectful *V*, only to be informed by Noah that she is not allowed to take her *commodrys* ('gossips'; l. 146) and *cosynes* (l. 146) on board. Once dragged aboard the ark, the York Uxor briefly laments the loss of her friends, but quickly seems to accept her subservient role, sticking to *V* and employing the respectful *sir* towards her husband. At the end of the play, she raises concerns over the universal destruction of fire to follow the flood. Noah answers with polite *ye*, telling her not be afraid, as she shall not live long enough to experience another disaster:

(3)    **Uxor**. A, *syre*, owre hertis are soore / For thes sawes that <u>yoe</u> saye here, / That myscheffe mon be more.
       'Oh, sir, our hearts are sore for these words that you say here, that mischief must be more?'
       **Noe**. Beis noyot aferde therfore, / <u>3e</u> sall noght lyffe than yore [York 9.306–10]
       'Be not afraid therefore; you shall not live then.'

The Towneley *Noah* undoubtedly contains the most expanded, vigorous, and farcical of all the medieval scenes between Noah and his disobedient wife. In this Noah version, the husband–wife relationship is central to the play, which is why pronoun choice is more complex, to illustrate the characters' spectrum of emotions. In the other cycles, Noah is depicted as the relatively passive victim of a shrewish wife. The Towneley Noah, in contrast, not only beats his wife but also offers the first blow. Upon hearing the divine plan, Noah first addresses his wife with a warm greeting, employing *V* and *dere wife* (l. 190) as nominal address, only to be mercilessly undercut with a snippy remark employing a *T*-form: *Now, as euer myght I thryfe / the wars I <u>thee</u> see* ('Now, as I hope to prosper, the worse (now) I see you!'; ll. 191–2). She is angered about his absence from home, perceives Noah's claim that he fulfilled God's command as a feeble excuse, and within moments they start an exchange of physical and verbal blows. Her rage causes Noah to switch to *T* himself in his addresses to her. When Noah orders his wife to board the completed ark, she accuses him of some malady and asks him ironically about the reason behind his haste. To mock her husband even more, she resorts to the honorific *sir* in her address:

(4)    **Uxor**. Whi, *syr*, what alis <u>you</u>? / Who is that asalis <u>you</u>? / To fle it avalis <u>you</u>, / And <u>ye</u> be agast. [Towneley 3.297–300]
       'Oh, sir, what ails you? Who is assailing you? To flee it avails you, if you are terrified.'

In her next remark, again by employing *V*, she forces her husband to a complete explanation of the divine plan (l. 302). To coerce his wife into the ark, Noah again uses physical means. He threatens

to whip her, accompanying this intention by using *V*-pronouns. The beating does not impress or tame her. One of her responses shows an interesting instance of unexpected pronoun choice in quarrelling: Uxor uses *V* together with a mock-nickname (*Nicholl nedy*) ('Nicholas Needy'; l. 412) as part of her strategy of humiliating her husband. Noah's last attempt to both end the fight and force her into the ark is also a distant *V*-address. When his wife finally rushes into the ship, he announces further beatings twice with *V*-forms. More threats are again exchanged in *T*-form. The nominal address terms they choose range from affectionate *dere wife* (l. 190), polite *(my) dame* (e.g. ll. 301, 337, 366) and *sir* (ll. 297, 339, 508) on the one side to disparaging *begynnar of blunder* (l. 413) and *ram-skyt* ('sheep-shit'; l. 217) on the other.

Similar to Noah and his wife, Mak and Gill from the *Secunda Pastorum* do not fulfil the ideal of a Christian marriage. When Mak bids his *Good wyff* (l. 305) to open the door in their first shared scene, Gill addresses him with *my swetyng* ('my beloved'; l. 306). But when her husband complains about her not having opened the door soon enough, she responds with a curse. In their second scene together, Mak again addresses his wife with polite *V* and *good wyff* (l. 406), but instantly receives a curse accompanied by a mock-nickname (*syr gyle*; l. 408) in return. However, when alone with his wife to debate their plan as accomplices, they exchange *T*, which they maintain as their reciprocal form of address for the rest of the play. Nominal addresses are mostly confined to the use of the name, which may be considered 'neutral', following Brown and Gilman (1989: 175).

The contrary image to these women is that of the benign and aloof Mary. In fact, she is the only wife in my sample who consistently addresses her husband with *V*. In his opening monologue and subsequent questioning of Mary, the York Joseph continually attacks and provokes his young wife, whose honest, concise but ambiguous answers only agitate him further. Mary carefully calls Joseph *sir* and uses *V*-pronouns in replying to his unwarranted accusations, while Joseph uses *T* throughout the whole play. Fernández-Conde has claimed that the reason for this may be that Joseph is much older than his wife: "Indeed, certain fragments show him treating Mary as his daughter" (2007: 90). I do not believe that this is the reason for the non-reciprocal pronominal exchange between Joseph and Mary. In fact, no explanation is needed. The play represents the expected pattern of pronominal usage between husband and wife, expressing the asymmetric relationship, as Fernández-Conde herself has noted (2007: 90). Moreover, while Joseph is presented by turns as pathetic, comic, and aggressive in his farcical role, his moods are not allowed to touch Mary herself in a "theologically exact" (Beadle and King 1995: 48) depiction of the Blessed Virgin of the Bible. Hence, she has to remain humble and submissive in her responses towards her husband and thus stick to polite, respectful *V*-forms, leaving her the chaste, untarnished woman in accordance with the popular image.

Adam and Eve in the Chester *Creation* address each other using *T*-pronouns. Their addresses involve calling each other's name or using nominal terms of endearment (*husbande life and deare* ('dear, beloved husband'; l. 249)*, my leeffe* ('my dear'; l. 251)) at the beginning of their dialogue. After having been convinced by Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, Adam accuses and curses his wife in a short dramatic speech, employing *T* and *woman* as nominal address (l. 259), which he explains in the next stretch of dialogue as meaning *mans woe* (l. 271). Similar to the Chester *Creation*, Adam and Eve in the York *Fall of Man* exchange reciprocal *T* before and after Eve's 'seduction'.

As Jucker has pointed out, couples from the higher social classes "address each other with respect and politeness, that is to say with deference and therefore with the pronoun *ye*" (2000c: 159; see also Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 78). In my sample, Pilate and Procula of the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* represent the only couple from the aristocracy. Here, we witness a symmetric relationship between husband and wife. At the beginning of the play, Procula and her husband exchange lengthy compliments, and worship themselves and each other over more than fifty lines (ll. 1–54). When Pilate asks his wife for a kiss, she readily grants him this favour: *To fulfille youre forward my fayre lorde I am fayne* ('To fulfill your promise, my fair lord, I am glad'; l. 50). Just as Procula is *fayne* towards her *fayre lorde*, so too is Pilate courteous and obliging towards her. What makes reciprocal use of *V*-pronouns even more likely in this play is the fact that the scenes between the couple have been identified as a parody of courtly language in "a tiny comedy of manners developed for its own sake" (Woolf 1980: 245). Yet, there is one case of switching. The Beadle urgently asks Procula to leave, as Pilate needs to attend to the court to fulfil his legal duties. Procula is reluctant to return to their private quarters without her husband until Pilate insists: *Nowe wiffe, than ye blythely be buskand* ('Now, wife, then you should readily be going'; l. 86). To cheer her up as she goes home, or perhaps simply to appease her, Pilate shares some wine with his wife. He then briefly becomes impatient with her, switching once to *T*, but quickly changes his tone after Procula has followed his request, employing polite *V* again:

(5)   **Pilate**. Ye schall wende forthe with wynne whenne that yoe haue wette yowe. / Gete
      drinke! What dose thou? Haue done! / Come *semely*, beside me, and sette yowe. [York
      30.94–6]
      'You shall go forth with joy when you have wet yourself (with wine). Get a drink! What are you
      doing? Have done! Come, seemly one, beside me, and sit yourself.'

b) Parent–child

Mazzon (2003: 229) has noted that the parent–child relationship is usually more asymmetric than the husband–wife relationship, as it concerns the parameters of power vs. solidarity and of distance vs. intimacy to a higher degree. Byrne notes for the fifteenth century a "continued and strengthened use of *you* by children to parents, with the corresponding *thou* from parents to

children" (1936: xxvii). These results are corroborated by the ratios given in *Table 12*. Exceptions to this 'rule' include addresses where the affective factor plays a role, i.e. where emotional and affective attitudes change. This is illustrated in the Chester *Noah* and Chester *Creation*, where the children's switches are due to their affective involvement.

| Play | Speakers/Addressees | parent to child | | child to parent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | V | T | V | T |
| Chester *Noah* | Noah/Noah's wife – Sem, Cam, Jafett + wives | - | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| York *Noah* | Noah/Uxor – Filius/Filia 1,2,3 | - | 2 | 18 | - |
| Towneley *Noah* | Noah/Uxor – 1,2,3 Filius/Mulier | - | 1 | 2 | - |
| Chester *Creation* | Adam/Eve – Cain/Abel | - | 6 | - | 3 |
| York *Dream* | Pilate/Uxor – Filius | 4 | 3 | 4 | - |
| York *Herod* | Rex – Filius 1,2,3 | - | - | 12 | - |
| Towneley *Scourg* | Mary – Jesus | - | 13 | - | 5 |
| Towneley *Cruci* | Mary – Jesus | - | 24 | - | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 4 (7%) | 50 (93%) | 39 (67%) | 19 (33%) |

Table 12: Domain: family; relationship: parent–child

The York and Towneley *Noah* exhibit the expected pattern of child–parent pronoun usage. All children address their parents with *V*. In the Chester *Noah*, *T* dominates in the rare instances of parent–child address. Noah's children use *T*, except Japhet, who employs *V* in his sincere appeal to his mother to board the ark (6). As seen in (6), the nominal addresses *mother, father* and *sir* tend to collocate with *V*, but in the Chester play, they frequently occur with *T*.

(6)     **Japhett**. *Mother*, wee praye <u>you</u> all together- / for we are here, <u>your</u> owne childer- / come into the shippe for feare of the wedder, / for his love that [<u>you</u>] bought. [Chester 3.237–40]
        'Mother, we pray you all together – for we are here, your own children – come into the ship for fear of the weather, for his love that you bought.'

In the Chester *Creation*, Adam addresses his *leefe children fayre and free* (l. 493), Cain and Abel, with *T* when explaining to them what they shall sacrifice to God and which kind of life they shall lead. As in the Chester *Noah*, Cain employs *mother* (l. 513) and both Cain and Abel use *T* to Eve, who addresses her sons with *my sweete children, darlinges deare* (l. 497). Cain and Abel seem to have a very intimate relationship with their parents, which is also alluded to at the end of the play when Cain returns to his parents before going into exile. Eve laments that the slaying of Abel may be *verye vengeance* (l. 693) for her doing *amysse* (l. 694) in the Garden of Eden, thus linking her original sin to Cain's fratricide of Abel. An even more intimate relationship appears to exist between Mary and Jesus in both the Towneley *Scourging* and *Crucifixion*. They invariably exchange reciprocal *T*, conveying their anxiety, mutual tenderness and affection.

We would expect the parent–child relationships to be particularly formal in the scenes at Herod's and Pilate's court. Indeed, Herod's sons in the York play address their father with *V*-pronouns. When Herod tells his first son to curse Jesus for his *falsed* ('falsehood') and *foule fraye* ('foul riots'; l. 321), he obeys only reluctantly, but keeps formal *yoe*. Similarly, in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Pilate's son employs *V* and exaggerated terms of praise to his father, such as *semelieste seeg vndir sonne* ('the seemliest man under the sun'; l. 286) and *derrest duke and doughtiest in dede* ('dearest duke and boldest in deed'; l. 287), which contribute to the above-mentioned parody of the high style. Surprisingly, Pilate initially reciprocates with *sir* and distant *V*, requesting him to take care of his wife. Immediately after his son's positive reply, he switches to more intimate *T*. When his son greets him after Procula's dream, Pilate still uses *T*, but adds the formal *beuscher* ('good sir'; l. 288). Pilate's wife addresses her son with distant *V*-pronouns. After her dream, in an emotionally aroused state, she suddenly switches to *T* and the more familiar, intimate *child* (l. 179), requesting him to report to Pilate immediately. As he is reluctant to leave, she again uses *T* and *boy* (l. 186) as nominal address to persuade him to inform Pilate about her dream.

c) Siblings

Apart from husband–wife and parent–child, the sample hardly contains any material pertaining to other family relationships. The most prominent horizontal family relationship depicted in the cycle plays is the interaction between the brothers Cain and Abel, who predominantly exchange *T* (70 occurrences vs. 2 occurrences of *V* in the Towneley *Abel*; only *T* (18 occurrences) in the Chester *Creation*). In the Towneley *Abel*, Cain's speech texture is strongly emotional, even violent. Abel's language use conveys similar signs of affective involvement. In both plays, he attempts to soothe his brother. The contrast between the two characters matches the range of nominal address. The Towneley Abel addresses his brother with *Cam* (ll. 222, 233, 245, 257, 285), *brother* (l. 171), *good brother* (l. 132), *leif brother* (l. 68) or *dere brother* (l. 154), while Cain calls him *theyf* (l. 317), *old shrew* (l. 330) or, ironically, *leif brothere* (l. 108) in a pretence of affection. We find a similar contrastive usage (*(my) brother* (ll. 553, 597) vs. <u>thou</u> *caytiffe* (l. 601), <u>thou</u> *congeon* (l. 601)) in the short dialogue between the brothers in the Chester *Creation*. In the Towneley *Abel*, Cain's brief switch from *T*-forms to *V* may be explained by its use in a proverb:

(7)     **Cain**. How! let furth <u>youre</u> geyse, the fox will preche; / How long wilt <u>thou</u> me appech / With <u>thi</u> sermonyng? [Towneley 2.84–6].
        'How! Let forth your geese, the fox will preach (When the fox preaches, beware the geese). How long will you accuse me with your sermonising?'

Similarly, the *V*-form in the second case of switching forms part of a formulaic expression. In response to Abel's repeated injunctions to sacrifice the correct tithe of his goods, Cain asks Abel

to cover his eyes, in order to prevent him from choosing the best sheaves for himself and the worst for God. He switches from *T*-pronouns to *ye* as he curses his brother:

(8)   **Cain**. We! com nar, and hide myne een; / In the wenyand wist <u>ye</u> now at last, / Or els will <u>thou</u> that I wynk? [Towneley 2.225–7]
'Ah! Come near and cover my eyes! In the waning (moon) [a mild curse], know you now at last! Or do you want me to close my eyes?'

The analysis of family relationships seems to confirm what Jucker (2006b) has stated about the criteria for the decision between *V* and *T* (see Section 4.2.1.1 above). According to Jucker, the choice is determined by considerations of deference, i.e. respect and politeness: "The choice of *ye* as a pronoun of address for a single addressee thus expresses the speaker's deference, the use of *thou* in the same situation indicates that deference in this situation is not necessary" (2006b: 63). Accordingly, Noah and his wife, Mak and Gill, Adam and Eve, parents and children, and siblings address each other with *T* in the play texts, as politeness and deference are not necessary in these intimate, private settings, while the courtly surrounding requires Pilate and Procula to employ deferential *V*-forms. However, Mary persistently uses *V*-forms to Joseph even if expressing deference seems superfluous. This may be explained by her special status as a sacred, 'untouchable' character whose behaviour towards her husband can be described as calm and polite yet distant and aloof. Hence, deference and affective involvement rather than familiarity and intimacy seem indeed to be the main criteria for the choice between *ye* and *thou*. This becomes even more evident in the analysis of 'official' relationships in the next section.

### 4.2.1.3 'Official' relationships

Following Mazzon (2003: 232), I use the term 'official relationships' as a cover term for two sub-categories: 'superordinate–subordinate' and 'peer' relationships; within the latter, different patterns emerge according to the interlocutors' social rank.

a) Superordinate–subordinate relationships

Coxon, in his work about laughter and narrative in medieval comic tales, writes that "[c]onfigurations of speakers which bring notions of authority and subordination into play have greater potential for outright hostility, and the more blatant the polarisation becomes on a verbal level, the more striking its comic effect" (2008: 115). There is thus plenty of scope for comedy in the 'power struggles' between masters and their servants in the mystery plays. As determined by the parameters of power, status and social hierarchy, there is a strong tendency towards the use of *T* with servants (see *Table 6*), but in some exchanges, pre-established social roles and status

may be overruled as a result of the temporary inversion of the basic power relation between the interlocutors.

| Play | Speakers/Addressees | master to servant | | servant to master | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *V* | *T* | *V* | *T* |
| **Chester *Shep*** | 1,2,3 Pastor – Garcius | - | 13 | - | 13 |
| **Towneley *PP*** | 1,2,3 Pastor – Iak Garcio | - | 1 | - | - |
| **Towneley *SP*** | 1,2 Pastor – 3 Pastor | - | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| **Towneley *Abel*** | Abel – Garcio | 4 | 22 | - | 15 |
| **Towneley *Buff*** | 1,2 Tortor – Froward | - | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **4 (7%)** | **54 (93%)** | **4 (11%)** | **31 (89%)** |

Table 13: Domain: official; relationship: master–servant in the low-class milieu

Fernández-Conde (2007: 84ff.) has commented on the special status of Cain's servant Brewbarret in relation to his master in the York *Cain and Abel*. The same holds true for Cain's servant Garcio, nicknamed Pikeharnes, of the Towneley cycle. Woolf has traced a direct lineage from Cain's Garcio to "the stock figure of the witty, intriguing slave of Roman comedy, who in turn was adopted in the twelfth-century Latin *comoediae*, [...], and who re-appeared in French farces [...]" (1980: 128; see also Section 3.1 above). Pikeharnes, who sticks to *T*-pronouns towards his master throughout the play, counters Cain's curses and threats from the beginning, forcing his superior to give in and end the fight. Cain becomes an increasingly ridiculous figure as he fails to exercise his authority. Just like the York Cain, the Towneley Cain is forced to change his tone after the murder of his brother. When Cain announces a king's pardon both for Pikeharnes and himself, using the appropriate legal formulae, he switches to deferential *V*:

(9)     **Cain**. A, sir, I cry you mercy; seasse! And I shall make you a releasse. [Towneley 3.407–8]
        'Ah, sir, I cry to you for mercy, stop! And I shall produce a pardon for you.'

Pikeharnes has gained temporary power over Cain because he needs his help in hiding Abel's corpse.[143] As Fernández-Conde aptly points out:

> By doing this, Cain's address appears less an order than a request. And, as with any requester, in order to achieve his object he has to adopt the most appropriate communication strategy, in this case dignifying his servant by means of *V*. (2007: 85)

Cain's deference is here a strategically chosen negative politeness strategy, as requests threaten negative face; notice also the parallel change from the neutral *boy* (l. 387) and *man* (l. 394) to

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143 See Section 4.2.2.2 (husband–wife) on temporary changes to the balance of power in the course of an interaction.

honorific *sir* (l. 407) and affectionate *(my) good boy* (ll. 413, 417) and back to *lad* (ll. 457, 462) after Garcio's refusal to comply with his will.

In fact, Brewbarret's and Pikeharnes' position in relation to their masters is not uncommon in the mystery cycles. The character Garcio is the traditional impudent, comic servant whom we also encounter in the Towneley and Chester shepherds' plays as well as in the character of the torturers' servant Froward in the Towneley *Buffeting*. The two instances of *V* Froward employs towards the First Torturer may simply be a case of ironic over-politeness, reinforced by the honorific *sir* and the polite conditional *if I durst*:

(10)   **Froward**. *Sir*, I myght say the same / to <u>you</u> *if I durst*; Yit my hyer may I clame / no penny I purst; I haue had mekyll shame / hunger and thurst, In <u>youre</u> seruyce. [Towneley 21.404–7]
'Sir, I might say the same to you if I may. Yet my hire may I claim, no penny I put away; I have had great shame, hunger and thirst in your service.'

Trowle, the Garcio in the Chester *Play of the Shepherds*, exchanges reciprocal *T* with his masters. Garcio is here the ingenious manipulator who denies the shepherds the deferential *V*-forms they deserve as his masters. The shepherds are, in fact, benevolent to their servant and praise his ability to take care of the sheep, and they kindly invite him to take part in the common meal. Trowle, however, repeatedly curses and swears at his elders in long, sullen speeches, complaining bitterly of the harsh treatment he receives from his masters and employing impolite nominal address forms, such as *yee lades* (l. 195) and <u>*thow*</u> *fowle filth* (l. 197). After the altercation over the meal, he provokes a wrestling match to demonstrate his physical superiority. He throws all three of his masters and goes his way rejoicing as they lie groaning. The change from kind to outraged in the tone of the shepherds can be witnessed in their range of vocatives; they switch from *Trowle* (e.g. l. 198), *good knave* (l. 211) and *boy* (l. 226) to *false lad* (l. 250).

The shepherd boy in the *Secunda Pastorum* has a similar relation to his masters. He is startled for a moment when he comes across the other shepherds unexpectedly. Although Garcio is relieved to find that they are a couple of rascals well known to him, he impudently decides that they look monstrous enough to warrant his turning the sheep away from them. For thinking ill of them, he imposes a light penance upon himself by stubbing his toes. Subsequently, Garcio greets the two shepherds politely, employing a deferential *V*-form and the honorific *sir* (l. 144). However, if we take into account the impudence of his previous monologue, his deference might be a mere strategy of politeness. This can be substantiated by the fact that his respectful address is followed by a request. He later promises to be an obedient servant and behave accordingly, using *master* (l. 162) and *ye* (l. 162), but, at the same time, points out that he may always run away if he is not provided with the food and drink he deserves for his work:

(11)  **Tercius Pastor.** Bot here my trouth, *master* / for the fayr that <u>ye</u> make, I shall do therafter / wyrk as I take; [Towneley 13.162–3]
'But hear my truth, master; for the fortune that you provide, I shall behave thereafter – work as I'm paid.'

In contrast to the humble setting of the shepherds' plays, the whole milieu around Pilate and Herod belongs to the realm of courtly society. Honegger describes pronoun usage in such surroundings as follows:

> The general 'courtly' pronoun of address is *ye*, irrespective of the fine or not so fine distinctions of power and hierarchy. Thus, a knight addresses the king with *ye* and, in return, is also addressed as *ye*. The singular pronoun *thou* is only used on special occasions, e.g. when two related courtly persons talk to each other and want to express their closeness […]; or, when the king is rebuking one of his knights, he may switch to the unidirectional *thou*, thus stressing his higher hierarchical status […]. Thus, every deviation from the pronominal *ye*-norm within courtly society has an expressive function. (2003: 64)

I argue that the use of *T* from king and governor to their courtly subordinates is related more to dramatic and stylistic rather than emotive-affective factors in the mystery plays. It should be noted that the messenger (Chester *Innocents*, albeit with one exception l. 74), counsellors, knights (Towneley *Herod*) and even dukes (York *Herod*) say *V* to Herod. The king, however, does not return respectful *V* but generally employs *T*, thus illustrating the huge gap in the social hierarchy which separates him from his interlocutors. In the case of Herod, it was a necessity to stress the distance between the crowned king and his subordinates at court for the sakes of parody. He is portrayed as a despotic oppressor who is "inordinately proud, wishing to be treated like a God, raging intemperately and using ludicrously inflated language to present a bloated image of himself" (Jack 1989: 82). Hence, the more hopelessly this tyrant is committed to (stylistic) hubris, the more preposterous he appears to the audience.

Similar to the Herod plays, Pilate employs *T* to his subordinates, but is addressed with *V* and lofty, (over-)polite vocatives by the members of his court:

(12)  **Bedellus**. *My liberall lorde, o leder of lawis, O schynyng schawe that all schames escheues*, I beseke <u>you</u> *my souerayne*, assente to my sawes, As <u>ye</u> are gentill juger and justice of Jewes. [York 30.55–8]
'My liberal lord, oh expositor of laws, oh shining appearance that all shame shuns, I beseech you, my sovereign, hear me speak, as you are a gentle judge and justice of Jews.'

Fernández-Conde has observed that the Beadle's *V*-forms are not an expression of Pilate's social superiority but a communication strategy of flattery with the aim to persuade the Beadle's superior towards his request:

> He tries to ingratiate himself with Pilate and incline him towards accepting his request. This is why he uses *V*-forms and, in spite of his high social status, receives *T*-forms in return. In this fragment, the Beadle is clearly depicting himself as inferior in power by means of gratuitous flattery. (2007: 86)

Similarly, Mazzon notes that "requests often entail an elevation of the interlocutor, which sometimes borders on flattery and therefore can trigger switching to *Y* [*V*]" (2010: 363). The Beadle's pronoun usage seems, indeed, to be a sign of deference and flattery, employed as a strategy to make Pilate aware of his duties at court. But I do not find it remarkable that he uses respectful *V*-forms to address his sovereign. Pilate 'deserves' *V* for his higher rank, and, as we have just noted, as a social superior in a courtly surrounding would receive deferential address forms. For similar reasons, the knights address king Balaack in the Chester *Moses* with *V*-pronouns.

What Fernández-Conde has neglected is that the Beadle's address closely mirrors the parody of courtly dialogue between Procula and her husband and should therefore be seen in a stylistic framework. As highlighted above, Pilate's dialogue with his wife in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* is treated as a burlesque of exaggerated *gentillesse*. When the Beadle comes to suggest that Procula should go home because night is falling, the atmosphere of overly elaborate courtesy starts to affect the Beadle's language use. The theatrics and grandiloquence of his speech contribute to the comedy of the scene. Consider the following parody of the *circumlocutio* of courtly rhetoric:

(13)   **Bedellus**. <u>My seniour</u>, will <u>ye</u> see nowe the sonne in <u>youre</u> sight, For his stately strengh he stemmys in his stremys? Behalde ovir <u>youre</u> hede how he heldis fro hight And glydis to the grounde with his glitterand glemys. [York 30.73–6]
'My lord, will you see now the sun in your sight, for his stately strength he reduces in his rays? Behold over your head how he descends from his height, and glides to the ground, with his glittering gleams.'

Fernández-Conde finds it remarkable that "in spite of his high social status" (2007: 86), the Beadle receives *T*-forms from his *souerayne*. As the *MED* notes, a *bidel* in medieval England was "one who makes announcements or carries messages and performs other services on the authority of a lord, court, guild, etc." (sense 1). Thus, in terms of power, he is clearly inferior to Pilate. Note that Pilate's wife likewise addresses the Beadle with *T* and even condescending terms of abuse: *horosonne boy* (l. 60) and *carle* (l. 63). For the sakes of comedy, the Beadle is later even commanded by Pilate to carry him across to the couch to prepare him for sleep. In the bedding scene, while maintaining the traditional address pattern, the dialogue depicts a comic intimacy between servant and master:

(14)    **Pilate**. [...] Haue in <u>thy</u> handes hendely and heue me fro hyne, / But loke that <u>thou</u> tene me not with <u>thi</u> tastyng, but tendirly me touche.
'[…] Have me in your hands, graciously, and heave me from hence. But look that you anger me not with your handling, but touch me tenderly.'
**Bedellus**. A, sir, <u>yhe</u> whe wele. [York 30.133–5]
'Ah, sir, you weigh well [you are heavy].'

An interesting exception to the superordinate–subordinate address system of the mystery cycles is the Centurion from the York *Resurrection*. Caiaphas and Annas use *T* towards him throughout the whole play, while Pilate employs respectful *V*-forms. Given his role as the upright messenger, the playwright may have granted him a special, 'on the same level' relationship with Pilate based on mutual respect and recognition. Pilate warmly welcomes him and calls him *oure comely knyght* (l. 54) and *oure frende full lang* (l. 57), while remarking that he has been missed among them (ll. 53–8). But when the Centurion calls Jesus *þe rightwise mane […] þat yoe haue slayne* (ll. 65–6), Pilate switches to *T*, enraged by this accusation (l. 68). As the Centurion emotionally describes the wonders caused by the death of Jesus, Pilate switches back to *V* and calmly ascribes the related marvels to natural causes (l. 99). The character's special status is also reflected in his powerful, poetic, 'out-of-character' language use, which stands in contrast and, to some extent, above the narrow-minded, political schemes of Pilate and the high priests (Woolf 1980: 277).

A more complicated address pattern is the messenger's use of *T* to the king in the Towneley *Herod*. Nominal terms (*luf lord* (l. 73)) and general decorum fit the traditional servant–master hierarchy. The reason for the intimate pronoun in this address may be the parallelism to the adoration scene in the Towneley *Prima Pastorum*. The messenger uses the same words (*the worthyest of all* (l. 13)) as the First Shepherd in addressing the Infant Christ. Byrne has remarked that "in so-called solemn speech, an inferior will use *thou* to a superior in reverent wise" (1936: xxvii). However, this does not explain why it is not until his third address to Herod that the Nuncius switches back to respectful *V*.

<u>b) Peer relationships</u>
Following Mazzon's categorisation (2003: 235), characters regarded as 'peers' are on the same or a very similar hierarchical level with regard to social role, status or function. 'High' peer relationships, such as the relationship between the Jewish priests, are characterised in the sample by their invariable power structure and use of formal address terms. 'Middle' peers are mainly represented by the knights. The 'low' level of peer interaction is illustrated, for instance, by the torturers, shepherds, Jews, the Marys, Judas and Jesus. Mazzon has noted about Present-Day English peer relationships:

> Between friends and peers, address pronouns are quite variable from the early stages of the two-term system, as this is the area of highest tentativeness, where issues of class, age and gender interact with the micro-context and the type of speech activity involved, not to mention the fact that pronouns can be argued to convey in- or out-group identity rather than status as such. (2010: 360f.)

English Scriptural plays seem to represent a different address system. The mystery playwrights based peer relationships primarily on status; other variables play only a marginalised role in determining the selected pronoun. Between 'high' and 'middle' peers, in particular, the employed pronouns are generally very stable.

The 'high peer' relationship between Caiaphas and Annas is characterised by consistent interaction with *V* throughout the cycles. The two priests are mentioned in the gospels (e.g. Matthew 26:3, 26:57–66, John 18:13–14), Caiaphas being the chief or even the only examiner of Jesus. In fact, there is no biblical warrant for Annas' and Caiaphas' joint examination of Christ. In terms of power, there is no differentiation between the two in the the cycle plays. In the Towneley *Buffeting*, however, their personalities and behaviour are sharply and effectively contrasted: Caiaphas is furious and impatient while Annas is calm and constantly tries to restrain his companion. From the beginning of the examination, Caiaphas is irrationally insistent on killing Christ without even going through the mockery of a trial. Annas insists they must follow the letter of the law in condemning him. When Caiaphas bids Annas to set aside the legal boundaries and kill Jesus (*I pray you, and sloes hym* (l. 205)), he says *you* to him. Apart from this one address, Caiaphas is entirely preoccupied with his tirade of rage and abuse, and therefore hardly interacts with his companion. With *V*-forms and patiently repeated *sirs*, Annas tries to calm him down, and suggests an interrogation of Jesus prior to the use of physical torture or punishment. It is only through Annas' strong persuasion that Caiaphas is stopped both from killing Christ himself and from imposing a sentence of death. Yet, in spite of his gentle words, Annas is actually the one who commands the torturers to buffet Christ before sending him to Pilate.

Amongst 'low' peers, as expected, pronoun use is reciprocal *T* in the majority of the mystery plays. Accordingly, the Towneley *Prima Pastorum* shows a clear predominance of *T* and the use of a variety of nominal address terms such as, plainly, the name (l. 84), *(good) sir* (e.g. l. 105) but also more intimate *good pen* (l. 195), *my breder* (l. 228) and degrading *tord* (l. 405) or *knave* (l. 124). A notable exception to the *T*-rule is the episode of the mock-feast. In order to reconcile after a quarrel, the three shepherds take out of their bags a perhaps largely imaginary meal, which includes a number of aristocratic dishes. The luxurious feast has been identified as a common theme in courtly romance: "the delicacies themselves, rare yet plentiful, and elaborately evoked, and the abundance and elaboration of words used to describe them are equally markers of social elevation" (Spearing [2]1990: 151f.). The Third Shepherd "enters thoroughly into the spirit of

the occasion" (Spearing [2]1990: 152), employing learned and almost 'aureate', French-derived terms such as *restorete* (l. 248) and *appete* (l. 249). The First Shepherd is quick to mock this pretentious use of learned words by using *V*-pronouns and similarly elevated lexis:

(15)     **Primus Pastor**. <u>Yee</u> speke all by clerge[te], I here by <u>your</u> *clause*;. Cowth <u>ye</u> by <u>youre</u> *gramery* / reche vs a drynk, I shuld be more mery / <u>ye</u> wote What I thynk. [Towneley 12.250–2]
'You speak like the clergy, I hear by your statement. Could you with your grammar [learning] reach us a drink, I should be more merry, you know what I think.'

Later in the *Prima Pastorum*, the shepherds cite a number of Jewish and pagan prophecies of the coming of Christ. The First Shepherd mentions the *gramere* (l. 402) of Virgil and quotes (not quite accurately) two lines from his fourth Eclogue in Latin (ll. 403–4). The Second Shepherd instantly makes fun of his companion for this boastful display of learning. For him the First Shepherd is preaching hypocritically like a friar, and his Virgil quotation shows that he is excessively proud of his knowledge of Cato[144]:

(16)     **Secundus Pastor**. Weme! <u>tord</u>! what speke <u>ye</u> / here in myn eeres? Tell vs no clerge / I hold <u>you</u> of the freres, <u>ye</u> preche; It semys by <u>youre</u> laton <u>Ye</u> haue lerd, <u>youre</u> caton. [Towneley 13.405–8]
'Ah! Turd! What speak you here in my ears? Tell us no doctrine, I count you with the friars, you preach. It seems by your Latin you have learnt your Cato.'

After this mock-address, the Second Shepherd quickly switches back to *T*-forms. In fact, there are several scenes in the *Prima Pastorum* where one of the shepherds deliberately employs *V*-pronouns to mock one of his peers by imitating the high style. The artificial formal style is underscored by titles (*sir/syr* (ll.128, 292)) and learned terms of French origin (*gowne* (l. 89), *aray* (l. 90), *grace* (l. 128)). The insertion of high-style vocabulary into low-style dialogues exemplifies the Wakefield Master's comic play with different stylistic levels.

　　Even though they occupy the same social status, the shepherds in the *Secunda Pastorum* constantly switch between *V* and *T* in their addresses to Mak. During their first encounter, the Second Shepherd addresses him by name (l. 198) and uses intimate *thou*, signalling that they know each other. However, in his endeavour to impress the three shepherds with his superiority, Mak pretends to be a yeoman of the king and attempts to speak the dialect of the south. They know him too well to be taken in and perhaps switch to distant *V* as a reaction to Mak's impudence (ll. 216–7). The Second Shepherd then switches back to *T*, signalling his contempt and impatience. The shepherds then reprove him in emotional rhetorical questions (ll. 208, 223), calling him *shrew* (l. 221) and telling him that they have to be suspicious when they encounter him during

144 According to Spearing ([2]1990: 153), this is a reference to the *Disticha Catonis*, an elementary school textbook of Latin.

the night, as he has *an yll noys Of stelyng of shepe* (ll. 221f.). After they are all on friendly terms again, the shepherds use *T* towards Mak. But when they discover his theft of the *fat wedir* (l. 451), they switch back to cool, distant *V*-forms. The fraud is discovered through the Third Shepherd's kindly wish to give the child a present. In this scene, he switches to the respectful plural form and polite *with youre leyfe* in his address to Mak:

(17)   **Tercius Pastor**. The child will it not grefe / that *lytyll day starne*. / Mak, *with youre leyfe* / let me gyf youre barne. Bot sex pence.
'The child will not be grieved by it, that little morning-star. Mak, with your permission, let me give your child but a six-pence.'
**Mak**. When he wakyns he wepys. / I pray you go hence. [Towneley 13.582–3; 586–7]
'When he awakens, he'll weep. I pray you, go away.'

The affectionate term *lytyll day starne* is later used to worship the Infant Christ (l. 1049). The link to a solemn and celebratory scene about to follow may here explain the switch to formal pronouns of address.

### 4.2.1.4 A special case: address in funny games of violence

a) The massacre of the innocents

In the Chester *Innocents*, the merriment displayed by Herod and the soldiers is clearly "mockery associated with cruelty" (Jack 1989: 83). Brutal slaughter and lament is overlaid with the energetic and comic battle of the sexes in which the women's belligerence allows them to get the better of the knights. Uses of *T* naturally prevail over those of *V* (43 vs. 2), but there are two interesting instances of switching. When the First Woman begins attacking and cursing the First Soldier, she employs abuse terms as well as an accumulation of eight informal *thou*. When she tells him to prepare for a law-proceeding, she switches to the distant plural form, which correlates with the formality of a judicial proceeding she threatens him with:

(18)   **Prima Mulier**. […] Have thou this, thou *fowle harlott* / and thou knight, to make a knott! / And on buffett with this bote / thou shalt have to boote. / And thow this and thou this, / though thou both shyte and pisse! / And if thou thinke we doe amysse, goe buskes you to moote [Chester 10.353–60]
'[…] Have this, you foul scoundrel! And you, knight, to make a knot! And one buffet with this bundle of cloth you shall have as a reward. And you this! And you this! Though you both shit and piss (with fear)! And if you think we do amiss, go prepare yourself for a law-proceeding.'

Another case of switching can be found a few lines later in the speech of the Second Woman:

(19)   **Secunda Mulier**. […] For all thy speech and thy goade, / I read yee do but good [Chester 10.371–2]
'[…] For all your speech and your goad, I advise you do only good.'

In both cases, we may refer to Wales (1983: 116) who has argued that switching itself is characteristic of informal speech, often correlating with points at which dramatic intensity is high.

Similar to the Chester *Innocents*, the knights in the Towneley *Herod* turn the slaughtering of the children into a cruel game; they attack and are attacked by *T*-addresses, suitable to the dramatic scene. However, the knights in the Towneley play differ from the Chester version in their manipulative, coaxing manner towards the women. In deferential *V*-form, which is unexpected here, the Third Knight tries to persuade the woman with her child to approach him, telling her that there is no reason to flee (20). The use of the polite plural pronoun in his address to the Third Woman indicates his strategic use of negative politeness. "Coaxing, promising, threatening, accusing are all possible loci for pronoun switching", as Mazzon (2003: 161) has remarked. Accordingly, pronoun choices in the scene are adjusted to the individual speech act the characters are performing. In reciprocal *V*-form, the Third Woman asks him whether he would do any harm to her child or herself. The Knight's response *he shall dy* (l. 376) is then transmitted in expected *T*-form, in order to stress his spite and contempt. The Third Knight's threat is then followed by a curse and an abuse term by the Third Woman.

(20) **Tercius Miles**. This is well wroght gere / that euer may be; / Comys hederward here! / <u>ye</u> nede not to fle!
'This is a well-wrought trick that may continue for ever. Come hither! You need not flee.'
**Tercia Mulier**. wyll <u>ye</u> do any dere / to my chyld, and me?
'Will you do any harm to my child and me?'
**Tercius Miles**. he shall dy, I <u>the</u> swere / his hart blood shall <u>thou</u> se.
'He shall die, I swear you. His heart's blood shall you see.'
**Tercia Mulier**. God for-bede! / *Thefe*! <u>thou</u> shedys my chyldys blood! [Towneley 16.373–8]
'God forbid! Thief! You shed my child's blood!'

b) Torturing Jesus

There are a number of mystery plays in which Jesus is mocked and physically tormented. I have already mentioned in Section 3.3.3 that the cycle dramatists drew on gospel material in the scenes where the torturers blindfold Jesus and then strike him in turns. While the Vulgate merely mentions a single question to Jesus: *quis est qui te percussit* ('who is he that smote thee'; Matthew 26:68 VUL; cf. Mark 14:65, Luke 22:64), the buffeting is turned into an elaborate game in the cycle plays, with extended dialogue between the torturers rivalling one another in the shrewdness of the blows and mocking Jesus in the process. As is to be expected, we find a clear predominance of *T* in this scene, but there are a small number of interesting exceptions. When the torturers set Jesus on a foot-stool in the Towneley *Buffeting*, the Second Torturer sarcastically calls him *sir* and compares him to *a lord of renowne*, whose seat he has to *aray* (from Old French *arrai-*):

(21)   **Secundus Tortor**. Com, *sir*, and syt downe / must <u>ye</u> be prayde? / Lyke *a lord of renowne* /
<u>youre</u> sete is arayde. [Towneley 21.382–3]
'Come, sir, and sit down, must you be prayed? Like a lord of renown, your seat is prepared.'

Another example of this type of pronoun switching from *T* to *V* occurs in the York *Crucifixion*. In
pretence of sympathetic concern, they deridingly ask Jesus how he feels, mocking his agony, and
whether he values the skill with which they have accomplished their job:

(22)   **Miles 1**. Say sir, howe likis <u>you</u> nowe, / þis werke that we haue wrought?
'Say, sir, how do you like this work that we have wrought?'
**Miles 4**. We praye <u>youe</u> sais vs howe / <u>ȝe</u> fele, or faynte <u>yoe</u> ought. [York 35.260–3]
'We pray you, tell us how you feel, before you need to faint?'

The Towneley *Crucifixion* ends in a parody of a tournament (see Section 3.3.3 above). The
tournament metaphor used here in a very effective, theatrical way is directed at Christ's boast of
kingship. The torturers goad and mock Christ by pretending to see their task of nailing him to the
cross as that of serving men horsing a knight before the tournament. The pronouns *ye* and *you*,
after addressing him as *sir*, are used sarcastically by the First Torturer (23); the Second Torturer
returns to the normal *thou* at line 95. The First Torturer again employs *sir* and polite plural forms *ye*
and *your* in his subsequent speech, pretending that the cross is the *palfray* on which Jesus will
ride and to which he has to fasten him securely (ll. 113–8).

(23)   **Primus Tortor**. In fayth, *syr*, sen <u>ye</u> callyd <u>you</u> a kyng, / <u>You</u> must prufe a worthy thyng / That
falles vnto the were; / <u>Ye</u> must lust in tornamente; / Bot <u>ye</u> sytt fast els be ye shentt, / Els
downe I shall <u>you</u> bere. [Towneley 23.89–94]
'In faith, sir, since you call yourself a king, you must prove a worthy thing that befits the defender.
You must joust in tournament. But sit fast, else you will be harmed, else I shall bear you down.'

In the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, the First Knight uses sarcastic *ye* twice in addressing Jesus,
both combined with the mocking vocative *sir coward(e)*:

(24)   **Miles 1.** Come forthe *sir coward*, why cowre <u>ye</u> behynde? [York 30.237]
'Come forth, sir coward; why cower you behind?'

(25)   **Miles 1.** *Sir cowarde*, to courte muste <u>yhe</u> care- [York 30.396]
'Sir coward, to court must you proceed.'

There are further examples of the switching between *V* and *T* in the torture scenes: When the Third
Torturer in the Towneley *Scourging* addresses Pilate, he immediately switches to *V*-forms (ll. 80–6).
This can also be observed in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, where the First Knight addresses
Caiaphas with formal *youre* and *sir* (l. 218) and instantly switches to intimate *thy* and *felawe* in his
address to the Second Knight (l. 219).

The episodes in which various plebeian and nameless men torture Jesus are amplified by the questioning scenes, where powerful secular and religious aristocrats try to exercise their authority. In the trial sequences of all cycles, though to varying degrees, Christ's silence contributes to a comic tension centred on the frustration of his opponents as they fail to arouse any reaction from him. Christ's appearance before the high priests in the York *Caiaphas* sets the pattern for the plays which follow: the calm and largely silent figure of Jesus providing a stark contrast to Annas' and Caiaphas' violent verbosity. In the York *Herod*, Christ's intransigence prompts Herod and his sons to engage in the usual verbal assaults. There is, however, one interesting instance of pronoun usage when Herod addresses Jesus with *yoe* and the mock-vocative *kyng:*

(26)    **Rex.** […] Comes nerre, *kyng*, into courte. Saie, can <u>yoe</u> not knele? We schalle haue gaudis full goode and games or we goo. [York 31.244–5].
'[…] Come near, king, to court. Say, can you not kneel? We shall have some good sport and (some) games before you go.'

Herod is here presented as a figure with an anarchic "appetite for diversion" (Ishii 1993: 22), so that when Christ fails to provide him with sport, he determines to have it at his expense. There is a brief account in the Bible (Luke 23:9–11) of Herod's interrogation of Jesus, describing that he steadfastly accused, despised and scorned him, while Christ remained silent. In the mystery plays, similarly, the silent Christ dominates the scene: "virtually silent, beaten and abused – a visual icon of suffering" (Johnston 2000: 185). In this way, Christ assumes a presence upon which the effect of speech would be pathetic. Herod's claims to maintain power are depicted in their ironic futility and function as a moral warning against the sins of anger, envy and pride.

There is one question to which Jesus does reply on the very few occasions when it is specifically directed at him. Caiaphas in the York *Caiaphas* (ll. 300–1), Pilate in the *Dream of Pilate's Wife* (ll. 485–7) and Annas in the Towneley *Buffeting* (ll. 262–3) ask him about his true nature (cf. Matthew 27:11, Mark 14:61, Luke 23:3). The answers they receive are powerful reflections on Christ's divine origin and the impotence of his aristocratic and clerical opponents. It is his supreme status that allows him to withhold *V* as a deference marker and other signals of politeness towards Pilate and the Jewish priests. In the Towneley *Scourging*, Jesus openly tells Pilate he will not acknowledge his temporal judicial power that cannot *wyrk <u>thi</u> will thus with me, / Bot from my fader that is broght / oone-fold god in persons thre* (ll. 116–7). In the York *Caiaphas*, he adds that he preached openly to the *pepull* in the temple, where the priests could easily have arrested him (l. 327). To the people, Jesus teaches openly, but in the hands of his enemies who base their words on lies, condescension and deceit, he falls silent. The court interrogations thus serve to set off the true power of Christ against the merely assumed majesty of Pilate and Herod.

God is traditionally addressed with *thou* in Middle English literature (Honegger 2003: 69; Mazzon 2003: 225; see also Mazzon 2010: 361). Accordingly, in all cycles, like God, Jesus is worshipped with 'high' *T* by his intimates and followers, i.e. by the shepherds, Marys, the Second Thief, etc.[145] Fernández-Conde has remarked that in some exceptional cases, Peter and Mark address Jesus with the honorific *V*-form "to reinforce his role as their master, teacher and prophet" (2007: 96). However, it seems doubtful that God is usually addressed with traditional *T*-forms in the mystery plays since the relationship is similar to the "feeling of closeness" (Fernández-Conde 2007: 95f.) in an intimate family relationship. Byrne writes that *thou* was retained as the address of reverence to God in the fifteenth century (1936: xxvi). Hence, the *T* of reverence in invocations expresses high social distance (God as a distant superior) and is therefore exactly contrary to the *T* of intimacy in family relationships.

## 4.2.2 Summary

When using drama as a source providing material for sociolinguistic analysis, it is necessary to consider both its literary quality and consequently to be aware of the differences between this framework and that of a natural conversation. "Of course, genre and text-type, as well as regional provenance and the training of individual scribes, can play a role in the choice of forms of address, as in all other aspects of language use" (Mazzon 2009: 48; see also Burnley 2003: 30; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 8). My quantitative analysis has revealed that the sample contains high frequencies of *T*, while the examination of other text types yielded different data: Studying Middle English pronouns in the late Middle English *Paston Letters*, Bergs (2005: 130f.) counts only a few cases of *thou*. Similarly, Hope (1993), in his investigation of address in Early Modern English trial records, found a low density of *T*-forms in comparison to Shakespeare's dramatic usage. Nevalainen (2006: 78) has noted that while *thou* gradually disappeared around 1600, it is still found in fiction, drama, poetry and religious contexts of all kinds. Such findings strongly imply that medieval religious drama may have preserved modes of usage which had long disappeared from everyday speech (see Hope 1993: 148).

The question remains whether pronoun choice in dramatic dialogue mirrors (at least earlier) sociolinguistic structures and conventions. Brown and Gilman claim that Shakespeare's usage of *thou* and *you* in his plays surely "mirrored general usage" (1989: 179), while Hope asserts that "*thou* and *you* lead separate lives in the written and spoken mediums" (1993: 148). My conclusion

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145 Honegger (2003: 69f.) has noted that Middle English usage diverges from French with regard to addressing God, as the French language started to shift to *vous* in the thirteenth century. The "seemingly arbitrary switching between *thou* and *ye*" (2003: 70ff.) in the addressing of God that Honegger observed in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" can only be found in the Chester *Noah*, where God similarly switches from *thou/thy* to *ye* in his address to Noah (ll. 113–38).

from this brief survey is that the choice between *V* and *T* in my sample was first and foremost based on the linguistic conventions of the speech community to which playwrights and audience belong. The fact that children address their parents with *T* and receive *V* may reflect (earlier) general custom rather than the playwright(s)' conscious choice for dramatic purposes. 'Conventional' pronoun usage seems to be visible in other, mostly asymmetrical, character relations. For example, husbands use *T* to their wives, masters use *T* to their servants, the upper ranks use mostly *V* and all characters employ 'religious *T*' towards God. The audience of the cycles would probably not have perceived these to be inappropriate pronoun choices, even though the spoken language of the period might already have progressed towards other patterns (cf. Mazzon 2009: 49).

In contrast to the *T/V* distinction in modern European languages such as German or French, the address pronoun system in Middle English and Early Modern English was more negotiable (see Jucker 2000c: 158). Thus, the choices of the two pronouns for any given dyad of interlocutors are not fixed, but show the property of retractability, "the possibility to switch from *V* to *T* and back with the same interlocutor, even within the same exchange" (Mazzon 2000: 135). Accordingly, pronoun switching commonly appears in Late Middle English and Early Modern English documents, where it is affected chiefly by pragmatic rather than social factors (Mazzon 2010: 362). In our sample, too, the social hierarchy between interlocutors may be determined by fixed sociolinguistic parameters, but the pragmatic dynamics of the exchange can easily induce a shift in the power structure (cf. Jucker 2006b; Mazzon 2010: 354), as in the case of the Uxores' use of *V* and *T* towards their husbands. Hunt describes similar dynamics of switching in the dialogues between Joseph and Pilate in the Middle French play *Seinte Resureccion*, noting that the choice and switching of pronouns is not sporadic but properly motivated, corresponding to "the dramatic and psychological requirements of characterisation" (2003: 56).

Pronoun switching is prompted by several aspects in my sample: First, I found affective switching that expresses tenderness between family members, as in the case of Adam who employs *T* towards his children in the Chester *Creation* when explaining to them their purpose in life. But, mostly, switching is governed by face work, especially considerations of deference, i.e. respect and politeness. Pronoun switching as an expression of mock politeness occurs most prominently in the Passion plays, where the torturers perform face-threatening acts towards Jesus by addressing him with *V* and honorific vocatives. Conflict triggers switching in the Noah plays between husband and wife, and in the *Secunda Pastorum* between Mak and the shepherds (cf. Mullini 2005). Switching as a characteristic of both conflict talk and informal speech can be found in the Chester *Innocents*, while in the Towneley *Herod*, the strategic use of address forms is illustrated even more clearly in the scenes where the soldiers' switching occurs in the context of

their coaxing and threatening of the mothers. With reference to threats, insults, promises and expressions of gratitude, Mazzon has observed that pronoun switching reinforces the effect of these interactional attitudes and speech acts. That means that pronoun use and switching "is manipulated in quite subtle ways in the sample according to precise discourse strategies, or responding to specific discourse modes" (2000: 161).

As Hope has claimed, the micro-pragmatic plane of meaning, may be "much more evident in writing (either drama or letters) than they ever were in speech" (1993: 148). He found that strategic pronoun switching occurs in Early Modern English trial records, but much less frequently than in literature (1993: 144). Mazzon argues that pronoun switches with the same interlocutor are most common in literary discourse "because it contributes to portraying interaction between characters" (2003: 225). Hence, many instances of pronoun switching in the mystery play texts may indeed be dramatically motivated, contributing to the depiction of the changing dynamics in character interactions, as well as to the purposes of 'comedy' and entertainment. In fact, such cases seem to correlate with dramatically intense sections of dialogue, which function as critical turning-points in the plot (see Jucker 2006b: 63; Mazzon 2010: 361f.). Several studies have investigated this strategic use of switching in literary texts. For example, Mazzon (2000: 161ff.), Honegger (2003: 65ff.) and Jucker (2006b: 63ff.) detected (strategic) pronoun switching in the *Canterbury Tales*.

In a nutshell, the analysis shows that pronoun usage in the comic mystery plays is conventional but at the same time explicit, conscious, and properly motivated in view of the didactic purpose of the cycles. By studying pronominal address in the play texts, we may gain information about past perceptions and conventions of sociolinguistic structures. Address forms can illustrate the dynamic negotiation of social power and status between discourse participants, which commonly involves the use (im)politeness strategies. Second-person pronouns are, however, only one factor in the study of the dynamics of interaction; the next chapter will examine further elements that illustrate and regulate conversational structures.

## 4.3 Interactivity in pair structures – cooperation and conflict

The interactive nature of conversation discussed in Section 4.2 above extends from pronominal address to certain conversational structures. The interaction between interlocutors is naturally most evident in utterances which elicit a response. Thus, it is not at all surprising that question-answer and imperative-reaction, i.e. compliance or refusal, sequences which will be examined first in this section are more common in face-to-face interaction than in written language (Biber et al. 1999: 1045). The forms and functions of these adjacency pairs in dramatic dialogue can be imagined to be close to their real-life correlate, precisely because of their high level of reciprocity and interactive potential (Schrott 1999: 335). The conversational sequences we are subsequently going to deal with in this chapter are echoic structures (self-repetition and dialogic repetition) because it has been stated that conversation is more repetitive than written texts (Biber et al. 1999: 1049f.; Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 179f.; Leech 2000: 697). In order to reveal interpersonal uses, the focus will be on dialogic repetition, the re-iterating or re-wording/re-evaluating of an utterance by another speaker. Section 4.3.4 is, then, devoted to the exploration of another field that is specifically interactive: the analysis of discourse markers in Middle English. The presence and multi-functionality of discourse markers in the play texts under discussion argue for their crucial role in both structuring dramatic dialogue and signalling interactivity.

I will try to clarify which linguistic structures represent compliance and acceptance on the one hand as against disobedience and transgression on the other. This involves reassessing some established categories, such as the adjacency pair. Even though the adjacency pair forms the basis of various studies (Schegloff 2007: 13ff.), what I call a pair structure in this chapter can actually comprise more than two turns (cf. Mazzon 2009: 123f.). In fact, I will be seeking to analyse the progression of dialogue with a more flexible, dynamic approach, as is done for Present-Day English.

### 4.3.1 Questions

According to Stenström, "[t]he question–response pair reflects the inner nature of conversation, that of (generally) cooperative verbal interaction, and constitutes perhaps the most closely tied interactive unit" (1988: 304). The question-answer sequence seems to be the most 'typical' adjacency pair. However, previous research on the topic suggests that both terms, 'question' and 'answer', remain vague and ill-defined: "[...], it is far from obvious that 'questions' are in any way a homogeneous category, and this applies even more so to answers" (Mazzon 2009: 138, see also Tsui 1994: 65).

First, we should distinguish between grammatical form and communicative function (cf. Walton 1988: 196). A study of questions entails, on the one hand, a particular formal type of interrogative sentences, marked (in English) by word order, intonation, question mark and interrogative pronouns (Groenendijk and Stokhof 1997: 1057). Grammars of the English language have typically adopted a formal approach and primarily sought to differentiate different types of interrogative clauses based on surface form (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985: 81, 806ff.; Biber et al. 1999: 204ff.). On the other hand, the study of questions encompasses the interrogative's illocutionary force of asking a question. More functionally oriented analysts have distinguished interrogative acts according to their informational content, the form of information elicited, and/or the kinds of answers they evoke (e.g. Freed 1994: 623ff.; Tsui 1994: 65ff.).

Speech act theorists sought to analyse questions on the level of their propositional content, i.e. as propositions pointing out a knowledge deficit, a piece of information which is requested from the addressee.[146] In other words, a question calls for an answer that delivers some kind of (previously unknown or unshared) information. Consequently, speech act theorists (e.g. Searle 1969) have traced back the interrogative speech act to the directive speech act, on the grounds that a directive invites the addressee to perform something, and questions invite the addressee to make a verbal performance (Tsui 1994: 79).[147] In fact, a question, in speech act theory, may be considered a request for action, even when this action is solely verbal. Yet, the interpretation of the question as a directive neglects types of interrogative acts that do not call for an answer, such as rhetorical questions (Schrott 1999: 335; see also Frank 1990: 723f.).

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146 Some scholars (e.g. Stetter 1991: 74, 79) have argued that a synchronic category like speech acts has no historical application. Jucker categorises speech acts as "fuzzy concepts that show both diachronic and synchronic variation" (2000a: 28; see also Culpeper and Archer 2008: 47), and lists four major methodological problems common to historical speech act theory (2000: 28ff.). Indeed, the interrogative act itself may change over time because of altered genres, text types and communicative needs. In addition, the illocutionary force of interrogatives can be obscure or even ambiguous – especially because of the multiple discourse levels in drama. In fact, speech acts in play texts are directed not only at other fictional characters but also at the audience (Jucker 2000a: 29). Several studies (Arnovick 1999; Schrott 1999; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000; Doty and Hiltunen 2009; Kryk-Kastovsky 2009), however, have demonstrated that speech act theory may function as a valuable framework for historical pragmatics, if we are aware of the methodological difficulties and the contexts of past discourses. Moreover, Schrott argues that "elementary dialogue acts such as interrogative acts are less exposed to historical change, whereas norms and patterns of action as well as topics of talks and communicative principles are more strongly rooted in historical circumstances" (1999: 353). For further discussion of diachronic speech act theory, see Schrott (1999), Kryk-Kastovsky (2009), Archer (2010), Doty (2010) and Moessner (2010).

147 A number of scholars (e.g. Fries 1975; Stenström 1988; Freed 1994; Tsui 1994; Schrott 1999; Moeschler 2001; Archer 2010) have pointed out that questions should not be classified as requests (for information). In fact, interrogatives and requests have different pragmatic potentials and will therefore provoke different responses from the interlocutor. A question mainly elicits verbal responses, while requests primarily elicit non-verbal responses, and the interaction is also completed at the non-verbal level. Furthermore, the use of a question by a speaker "should not be taken as an automatic request for either a verbal reply or a non-verbal action by a hearer/addressee" (Freed 1994: 640).

Due to their vital role in communication, questions and answers have attracted sustained attention in linguistics (Freed 1994: 621). Several studies have investigated interrogatives in early drama. Wikberg (1975), for instance, examined question-answer sequences in Shakespearean plays, with a focus on *yes-no* questions. She provides a functional classification of both question types and replies, "both from the point of view of sentence grammar and with hints at solutions within text grammar" (1975: 194). Her final chapter explores how the distribution of questions–answer patterns within individual plays may have stylistic implications. Another noteworthy investigation of dramatic texts is Schrott's study of the *Mystère d'Adam* (1999), where the initiative part of the adjacency pair is accentuated. Among the main types of interrogative acts, Schrott (1999: 338ff.) analyses: interrogative acts containing orientation, loaded interrogative acts, rhetorical questions, echo questions and focusing interrogative acts. She illustrates the verbal realisations of these illocutionary acts with examples taken from her text, concentrating on the contextual function of the interrogative act. Finally, Mazzon (2009: Chapt. 5) explores some cases of question-answer sequences in the Middle English N-Town collection through the use of frameworks from conversation analysis and discourse analysis.[148]

Apart from drama, pamphlets and language textbooks have been widely studied in relation to interrogatives. Claridge (2005) analyses the distribution and functions of questions in pamphlets, based on the *Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts*. The two most relevant functions, according to Claridge, are argumentation/persuasion and reader involvement (2005: 163). In her study on Early Modern English orality and literacy, Suhr (2002) includes two pamphlets, in whose 'oral sections' she finds high frequencies of questions on a par with the plays under investigation. Di Martino's 1993 paper examines some question-answer sequences in didactic dialogues from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century textbooks used mainly for the teaching of grammar rules. In these language textbooks, where verbatim learning was demanded, dialogic structures were applied as stylistic devices for didactic purposes. Some textbooks show an effort to reproduce dialogues from everyday language: they mix *wh*-interrogatives with polar interrogatives, or represent the affirmative reply implicitly in the comment rather than express it with *yes* (1993: 174).

It has been claimed that the recorded data from trial proceedings can be assimilated to the spoken mode of that period (Biber and Finegan 1992: 689; Kryk-Kastovsky 2006a: 168). In fact, the bulk of diachronic studies relating to question-answer sequences focus on Early Modern English courtroom discourse (e.g. Hiltunen 1996; Kryk-Kastovsky 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2009; Doty and Hiltunen 2002, 2009; Archer 2005, 2007). These studies have provided comprehensive accounts of

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148 Conversation analysis and discourse analysis, the two major approaches to the analysis of question-answer sequences in real-life conversation, have been reviewed by Stenström (1988: 304ff.) and Archer (2005: 45ff.).

different questioning strategies employed by lawyers, witnesses or defendants, as well as power asymmetries and social relations that are revealed in linguistic forms.[149]

Kiefer has argued that questions should be analysed along with their answers (or responses): "In studying questions and answers one may concentrate either on questions or on answers but the two are mutually interdependent" (1988: 255; see also Fries 1975: 63). However, when examining the question data from my core sample, it appeared difficult to find a common pragmatic denominator for answers: While the most prototypical answer is certainly a verbal response, other responses are possible.[150] Answers can be direct or indirect; they may give more information than has been asked for, request further information, or modify presuppositions expressed by the question (see Di Martino 1993: 172; Mazzon 2009: 139). In other cases, answers can only be deduced or inferred; some questions elicit vacuous or evasive responses and others are followed by no answers at all (Freed 1994: 640). This indicates that the interrogative act is "the more narrowly determined part" (Schrott 1999: 334) of the question-answer adjacency pair. Even though the different kinds of responses may help to identify the function of a question, answers only rarely modify the type of interrogative act: "Questions are asked, and have informational content or expressive significance, regardless of the presence or absence of a response" (Freed 1994: 641; see also Mazzon 2009: 138f.).

My study will characterise question-answer sequences by taking account of both the questions and the kinds of answers elicited within the particular context (cf. Freed 1994; Mazzon 2009). Before turning to the functional categorisation of interrogative acts, I will start with a formal analysis of the interrogative sentences in our text. Schrott asserts: "Talking of question types, we must therefore methodically operate a strict separation between the *signifiant* of interrogative sentences and the *signifié*, i.e., the types of interrogative acts" (1999: 337). Otherwise, the result could be that "the category of question becomes a half-way house between a syntactic category and a discourse category" (Tsui 1994: 79).

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149 A paper by Doty (2010) discusses seminal monographs and articles that examine key aspects of courtroom discourse from a historical pragmatic point of view.

150 Answers have been defined in various ways (e.g. Wikberg 1975: 87ff., 152ff; Joshi 1983; Kiefer 1988; Di Martino 1993: 169). Wikberg (1975: 92) lists the following categories of answers to *yes-no* questions in drama: ± evasive, ± direct, ± categorical and ± vacuous. Responses which are cohesively linked to the question, but do not add any information are termed vacuous responses. The addressee gives an evasive response when he or she avoids answering the question. Responses are categorical when they do not contain or consist of epistemic qualifiers expressing doubt or uncertainty. A direct answer gives precisely the information sought by the question, while an indirect answer "gives some of the information asked for, but not necessarily all of it" (Walton 1988: 196). For an overview of past approaches to answers, see Archer (2005: 53ff.).

### 4.3.1.1 Overall distribution

The term 'question' may indicate a syntactic, semantic or pragmatic category and as such can have fairly wide application. By following primarily a form-to-function approach (see Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 13ff.), my starting point is to identify the individual question with its syntactic form, and then to consider the interrogative acts associated with them in my sample. The presence of interrogative pronouns, a question mark and/or verb–subject inversion (1) were taken as the defining criteria for identifying a structure as a question (cf. Fries 1975: 71ff.; Claridge 2005: 133ff.):

(1)    **Domina**. Loo lorde, this ladde with his lawes! / Howe, <u>thynke ye it prophitis wele his prechyng to prayse?</u>
       'Lo, lord, this lad with his laws! Do you think it pays well to praise his preaching?
       **Pilate**. Yha luffe, he knawis all oure custome, [York 30.69–71]
       'Yes, love, he knows all our custom.'

Question marks were not employed consistently in medieval manuscripts, but it can still be assumed that they were inserted intentionally to indicate interrogative form (cf. Claridge 2005: 135). Interrogative sentences which do not include the syntactic question marker are often difficult to trace. It seems nonetheless justified to classify some sentences as interrogatives which are clearly marked by interrogative pronouns and/or inversion even when there is no question mark:

(2)    **Maria 1**. […] Allas, <u>what schall nowe worthe on me</u>. / Mi kaytiffe herte will breke in three [York 38.271–2]
       '[…] Alas, what will now happen to me? My wretched heart will break in three.'

The interjections *what* and *why* primarily express emotion (see Section 4.4.1), but they are clearly associated with questions (see *MED*, *what*: sense 1b; *wī*: sense 1a) and can thus be interpreted as indicators for interrogative sentences in our play texts:

(3)    **Uxor**. *Whi*, syr, <u>what alis you?</u> / <u>Who is that asalis you?</u> [Towneley 3.297–8]
       'Oh, sir, what ails you? Who is assailing you?'

*Tables 14-18* list the frequencies of interrogative forms in the sample. The core sample contains slightly more interrogative structures than the control groups (average relative frequency: 6.89 vs. 4.41). The highest density of questions appears in the York *Joseph* and York *Fall of Man*. Both plays display a higher percentage of *wh*-questions compared to polar interrogatives (79% vs. 21% and 88% vs. 12%). This comes as no surprise, since both plays rely heavily on the intricate dialogues between Joseph and Mary and between Satan and Eve, respectively, which resemble courtroom interrogations in some passages. The York *Herod* comes third in relative frequency, where the density of *wh*- and polar forms is fairly even (43% vs. 57%). The reason for this are not only the

discussions about Jesus' fate at Herod's court, but the king's emotional outbursts which result in a high number of rhetorical questions.

Question-answer units are not distributed evenly within the individual plays, but cluster in certain scenes or in clearly marked patterns, apparently for stylistic purposes (cf. Wikberg 1975: 11). Not surprisingly, questions are more frequent in dialogic stretches with relatively brief utterances than in passages where long speeches predominate. The Towneley *Noah*, for example, starts out in a serious, formal tone with God and Noah introducing themselves and then discussing God's command to build the ark. But as soon as his wife enters, Noah and Uxor start to bicker in quick comic exchanges. In a similar way, the shepherds' plays display a remarkable contrast of episodes. The first scenes present the shepherds as typical pastoral characters of the low social stratum, complaining about the weather, their wives, exploitation, etc. The question-answer pairs in the subsequent scenes reflect the lively interaction between the quarrelling and feasting companions. The tone changes with the visitation of the angels, after which the shepherds turn to Bethlehem to worship the new-born Christ Child. These are highly formal ceremonies mainly made up of the shepherds' uncharacteristic eloquent monologic speeches and the obligatory greetings and farewells.

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QU | 0.99 (2) | 3.74 (16) | - | 7.31 (15) | 15.16 (29) | 5.92 (5) | 4.34 (17) | 6.21 (21) | 10.80 (59) |

Table 14: The frequency of questions per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QU | 7.98 (16) | 4.87 (21) | 2.55 (7) | 2.66 (8) | 0.75 (1) | 15.74 (17) | 2.51 (3) | 6.58 (17) | 12.16 (39) |

Table 15: The frequency of questions per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QU | 5.95 (18) | 6.62 (18) | 8.31 (22) | 8.52 (29) | 6.76 (32) | 13.65 (49) | 5.03 (10) | 10.70 (28) | 5.81 (21) | 12.00 (40) | 4.95 (15) | 8.17 (36) |

Table 16: The frequency of questions per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QU | 3.54 (7) | - | 12.40 (18) | 1.89 (1) | 1.50 (2) | - | 2.29 (5) | - | 6.05 (8) |

Table 17: The frequency of questions per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QU | 0.55 (1) | 9.79 (21) | 1.27 (5) | 10.71 (20) | 9.43 (15) | 6.72 (13) | 4.43 (8) |

Table 18: The frequency of questions per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)
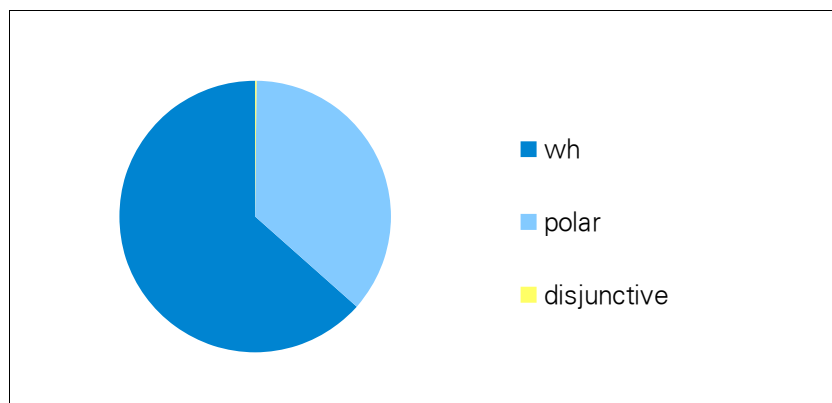


Figure 9: Overall distribution of questions in *Group I–III*

In Present-Day English grammar, there are three major types of interrogative clauses: *wh*-interrogatives (4), *yes-no* or polar interrogatives (5) and alternative (Levinson 1983; Quirk et al. 1985; Tsui 1994; Biber et al. 1999) or disjunctive (Archer 2005) interrogatives. The latter form can be found only once in the sample (6).

(4)    **Lucifer deiabolus in inferno**. Owte! Owte! Harrowe! Helples, slyke hote at es here; / This es a dongon of dole that I am to dyghte. / <u>Whare es my kynde become, so cumly and clere?</u> [York 1.98–100]
'Out! Out! Help! (I'm) helpless! So hot is it here! This is a dungeon of suffering that I am condemned to! Where is my body, (once) so comely and fair?'

(5)    **Cam**. <u>Shall we all fetch hir in?</u>
'Shall we all fetch her in?'
**Noe**. Yea, sonne, in Cbmystcs blessinge and myne, [Chester 3.221–2]
'Yes, son, in Christ's blessing and mine!'

(6)    **Cain.** […] How that I tend, rek the neuer a deill, / Bot tend thi skabbid shepe wele; / Ffor if thou to my teynd tent take, / It bese the wars for thi sake. / <u>Thou wold I gaf hym this shefe, or this sheyfe;</u> / Na, nawder of thise [two] wil I leife; [Towneley 2.247–52]
'[…] How I pay my tithe, worry you not at all, but give him your scabby sheep correctly. For if you pay attention to my tithe, it will be the worse (ones) for you sake. You think I should give him this sheaf or this sheaf? No, neither of these (two) will I give away.'

The most common question form in the play texts is the *wh*-interrogative (see *Figure 8* above). Of the 613 questions, 389 or 63% are of this type. Biber et al. note a relatively low percentage of *wh*-interrogatives in spoken discourse, which "indicates that questions in conversation are used less to seek information than to maintain and reinforce the common ground among the participants" (1999: 212). The high frequency of *wh*-questions in the sample as a whole can be attributed to the strong focus on content in English Scriptural plays. *Wh*-questions are less constraining than polar interrogatives as regards the range of possible replies, which makes them more suitable for moving the discourse forward. Biber et al. (1999: 211) find a high number of questions expressed by declarative interrogative sentences in conversation and fiction. Yet, there is only a single instance in the sample which can be interpreted as a declarative form (6). Intonation as a marker is restricted to the spoken mode and, therefore, the intonation-marked declarative interrogative sentence is difficult to identify in written sources (see Schrott 1999: 338f.).

Echo-questions were subsumed among polar interrogatives and treated in Section 4.3.3 on lexical repetition. While tags and fragments are highly frequent in spoken discourse, no cases were found in the play texts. However, we do find some types of interrogative sentences which are typical of question-answer sequences in spontaneous conversation. In quote (7), for instance, the question suggests an answer in the form of an elliptic polar interrogative. These complex structures which combine *wh*- and polar interrogatives are common in face-to-face interaction (Biber et al. 1999: 205).

(7)　　**Pilate.** […] <u>But what taught he that tyme, swilk tales as thou telles?</u>
　　　　'[…] But what taught he that time, such tales as you tell?'
　　　　**Miles 1**. Sir, that oure tempill is the toure of his troned sire, [York 26.87–8]
　　　　'Sir, that our temple is the dwelling of his enthroned lord.'

According to Biber et al. (1999: 205), *wh*-questions are frequently elliptic in spoken discourse and may consist of an interrogative pronoun only. (8)–(9) represent such fragmentary structures, which are employed to ask for clarification in the respective dialogue.

(8)　　**Primus Pastor**. Bot I will go before, let vs mete.
　　　　'But I will go ahead (and leave). Let us meet.'
　　　　**Secundus Pastor**. <u>Whore?</u>
　　　　'Where?'
　　　　**Tercius Pastor**. At the crokyd thorne. [Towneley 13.401–3]
　　　　'At the crooked thorn-tree.'

(9)　　**Eue**. Nay Adam, wite me nought.
　　　　'No, Adam! Blame me not!'
　　　　**Adam**. Do wey, lefe Eue, <u>whame than?</u>
　　　　'Enough, dear Eve! Whom then?'
　　　　**Eue**. The worme to wite wele worthy were, [York 5.122–4]
　　　　'The serpent surely deserves the blame.'

## 4.3.1.2 Functional analysis

The various functions of interrogative forms were determined by carefully analysing what information, if any, was sought by the interrogative, who utters it, and to whom. By this contextual approach, the pragmatic potential of different question types can be determined, which helps to construct their profiles as illocutionary acts (cf. Schrott 1999; Di Martino 2003; Archer 2005; Mazzon 2009).

<u>a) Asking for information</u>

The first class of interrogative acts calls upon the addressee to provide a piece of information (see Tsui 1994: 81f.). This function arises from the incompleteness or openness of questions: "Because questions leave an open, unresolved slot, they serve as ideal launch-pads for bringing new information into the discourse" (Claridge 2005: 145). Givón, however, stresses that *wh*-interrogatives involve a proposition which is almost entirely presupposed, apart from one element: "In *wh*-questions, that element is queried, and is automatically under the information scope, analogous – in this case – to the scope of interrogation" (1993: 191). If we consider (10)–(11), these interrogatives can indeed be categorised as what Culpeper and Kytö call "relatively closed questions" (2000b: 66), which seek a very specific piece of missing information, for instance the name or identity of a person. However, in this particular drama context, its function is apparently

not only to seek information, but to introduce the particular character to the audience. Claridge calls this function "introducing new information" (2005: 145ff.), which might be a more adequate name for this class of questions in drama. In this category, we find a prevalence of *wh-* over polar interrogatives, which one would expect, when much importance is given to substantial content in responses.

(10)    **Pilate**. <u>What hytist thou?</u>
          'What is your name?'
          **Judas**. Judas Scariott. [York 26.235–6]
          'Judas Iscariot.'

(11)    **Adam**. <u>And who ys this that comes here, / that lives with you in this manere?</u>
          'And who is this that comes here, that lives with you in this way?'
          **Latro**. I am that theeffe, my father dere, / that honge on roode-tree. [Chester 18.253–6]
          'I am the thief, my father dear, that hung on the rood-tree [the cross].'

Similar to Freed's functional category "deictic information" (1994: 627), the texts contain questions which seek to obtain information about the immediate physical environment. Such interrogatives are often employed in contexts where the interlocutors cannot see each other, for instance when one party is off-stage or hidden behind an object. The quote below from the York *Herod* occurs in a similar situation. When the soldiers turn up at Herod's hall with Jesus, they call to each other as they cannot see anything (12). In the Towneley *Abel*, God never appears to Cain on stage. It is his voice alone which calls Cain (13). Such questions or attentional calls are commonly accompanied by deictic elements (*here, there, yonder*) or the interjection *lo*.

(12)    **Miles 1**. <u>Who is *here*?</u>
          'Who is here?'
          **Dux 1**. <u>Who is *there*?</u>
          'Who is there?'
          **Miles 1**. Sir, we are knyghtis kende [York 31.60–2]
          'Sir, we are knights of this land.'

(13)    **God**. Caym, Caym!
          'Cain, Cain!'
          **Cain**. <u>Who is that that callis me?</u> / I am *yonder*, <u>may thou not se?</u>
          'Who is it? Who calls me? I am yonder, can you not see?'
          **God**. Caym, <u>where is thi brother abell?</u> [Towneley 2.342–5]
          'Cain, where is your brother Abel?'

The following examples are *wh-*interrogatives merely pretending to seek information. Satan's questioning in the York *Fall of Man* is directed towards a specific end (14). Disguised as a serpent, he approaches Eve and pretends that he is *a frende* (l. 27) and is acting *for thy gude* (l. 28). He coaxes her into acknowledging the existence of the forbidden fruit and then persuades her to taste it so that she can equal God. Here, Satan's interrogative sentences – of the *wh-*type – are not

'real' information-seeking questions; the serpent merely pretends to be ignorant, in order to achieve a number of perlocutionary effects, like persuading Eve of his words. Note that Satan's temptation of Eve is treated in Genesis 3:1–5, where the serpent asks Eve why she is not allowed to eat from every tree in the garden. The rest of the brief account depicts Eve's answer and the serpent's argument for eating the fruit. The dialogue in the York (and Chester *Creation*) play, as very often in the cycles, is a considerable extension and elaboration of the Scriptural base material. In fact, the quoted sequence subtly and effectively illustrates Satan's 'seduction strategy' which involves the use of persuasive questions (cf. Schrott 1999: 355).

(14)    **Eva**. <u>What es thare?</u>
        'Who is there?'
        **Satanas**. I, a frende. / And for thy gude es the comynge / I hydir sought. / Of all the fruyt that ye se hynge / In paradise, <u>why ete yoe noght?</u>
        'I, a friend. And for your good is the encounter I hither sought. Of all the fruit that you see hang in paradise, why eat you not?
        **Eua**. We may of tham ilkane / Take al that vs goode thought, / Save a tree outt is tane, / Wolde do harme to neyghe it ought.
        'We may of each one take all that seems good to us, except one tree that is forbidden, it would be harmful to go anywhere near it.'
        **Satanas**. <u>And why that tree, that wolde I witte, / Any more than all othir by?</u>
        'And why that tree – that I would like to know – any more than all the others nearby?'
        **Eua**. For oure lord God forbeedis vs itt, [York 5.26–38]
        'Because our lord forbids it.'

The strategic use of questions is also fundamental to Mak's interaction with the shepherds in the *Secunda Pastorum.* When the shepherds realise that one of their lambs is missing, they suspect Mak, and decide to pay him a visit. Upon hearing their knocking at his door, Mak tries to delay the entering of the shepherds: *Who is that spak, / as it were noyne, / On loft? / Who is that I say?* ('Who was it that spoke, as though it were noon [broad day], so loud? Who is that, I say?'; ll. 482–3). Then, he pretends to be surprised to see the shepherds and attempts to distract them by employing a number of polite formulae: *Bot ar ye in this towne to day? Now how fare ye?* ('Oh, are you in this town today? How are you?'; ll. 494–5). He reminds them of the dream he had, claiming that it was a prophetic dream since Gill has now given birth. He pretends to be concerned about their wet clothes and offers food and drink (ll. 496–505). Mak is apparently capable of coming up with a variety of questions aimed at dispelling the shepherds' already awakened suspicion. As Diller points out, "Mak represents not only natural man's sinfulness and need of redemption, but also his vitality and wealth of ideas" (1992: 249). Acting the part of the exciting parent, Mak keeps changing the topic and effectively underlines his charade with another question which conveys (feigned) wonder and concern (15). His questions, however, cannot deceive the other shepherds, who answer in a cool and distant tone.

(15)   **Mak**. Why, sir, <u>alys you oght bot goode?</u> /
'Oh, sirs, does anything other than what is good trouble you?'
**Tercius Pastor**. Yee, oure shepe that we gett, / Ar stollyn as thay yode / oure los is grette. [Towneley 13.507–9]
'Yes, our sheep that we tend were stolen when they were grazing. Our loss is great.'

Interrogatives seeking information are not exclusively an instrument of persuasion but can also be employed for didactic purposes, particularly for the introduction of certain topics or to emphasise the message. Such an instructive aim can be attributed to the question that Satan addresses to David in the York *Harrowing of Hell* (16). The question establishes the topic of Christ's powerful nature, while at the same time extending the theme of the devil's failure to understand specifically this superior status of Jesus. David's answer bears witness to Christ's power, asserts his sovereignty and the futility of fighting with him. Butler (2000: 121f.) has observed nearly identical question-answer sequences between Satan and David in the other cycles. The impetus of David's response is thus not to satisfy Satan's deficit of knowledge but rather to utter a defiant proclamation of Christ's might.

(16)   **Satan**. <u>What page is there that makes prees / And callis hym kyng of vs in fere?</u>
'What knave is there that makes press [commotion] and calls himself king of us all?'
**David**. I lered leuand, withouten lees, / He is a kyng of vertues clere, / A lorde mekill of myght / And stronge in ilke a stoure, / In batailes ferse to fight / And worthy to wynne honnoure. [York 37.125–31]
'I learned (while) living, without doubt, he is a king of virtues clear, a lord great in might and strong in every strife, in battles fierce to fight, and worthy to win honour.'

Similarly, the purpose of questions and answers in the York *Caiaphas* is to focus the attention on specific details regarding content rather than form. We find here a number of what Culpeper and Kytö call "relatively open questions" (2000b: 65), which typically seek explanation of some specific issue and therefore require an expansive response. Annas' *wh*-question is open in that it asks for elaboration on Christ's *wondirfull werkis* (17). Caiaphas' reply provides detailed information: He accuses him of healing the lame and the blind, violating the law, breaking the Sabbath and calling himself God's son. Such comprehensive answers "show that the message itself, rather than the form of the relationship between the speakers, is stressed" (Di Martino 1993: 178). Here, the priests' anger and scepticism seem to trigger their dialogue about Christ's miracles, teachings and the prophecies of his coming. In fact, it is the text's didactic purpose which prompts their discussion. Annas' question initiates a stretch of discourse which is of special importance to the play's instructive aims and therefore needs to be emphasised (see Biber et al. 1999: 213; Claridge 2005: 149).

(17)  **Anna**. <u>What wondirfull werkis workis that wighte?</u>
'What wonderful works does that man?'
**Caiphas**. Seke men and sori he sendis siker helyng- / And to lame men-and blynde he sendis ther sight. / Of croked crepillis that we knawe / Itt is to here grete wondering, / How that he helis thame all on rawe, / And all thurgh his false happenyng. / I am sorie of a sight / þat egges me to ire, / Oure lawe he brekis with all his myght, / þat is moste his desire. / Oure Sabott day he will not safe / But is aboute to bringe it downe, / And therfore sorowe muste hym haue / May he be kacched in felde or towne, / For his false stevyn, / He defamys fowly the Godhed / And callis hymselffe God sone of hevene. [York 29.34–51]
'Sick men and unhappy (ones) he gives healing. And to lame men and to the blind he sends sight. Of crooked cripples that we know – it is (to hear) a great wonder how he heals them all in order; and all through false happenstance. I am sorry at the sight that urges me to anger. Our law he breaks with all his might; that is most his desire. Our Sabbath day he will not observe but is about to bring it down. And therefore sorrows he must have. May he be caught in field or town for his false speaking. He foully defames the Godhead and calls himself God's son of heaven!'

Kryk-Kastovsky (2006b: 223), in her study on Early Modern English courtroom discourse, has claimed that speakers have least control over their interlocutor's answers with 'open' questions and maximal control with polar interrogatives. She argues that polar interrogatives may result in the asking of 'leading' questions, which presuppose the desired answer (2006b: 223).[151] Our texts contain several dialogues which bear resemblance to interrogations. The York Herod's question to the Second Duke, for example, is ambiguous, because it gives the impression of an information-seeking question, but it is formulated in such a way as to elicit an answer in the negative (18) (cf. Hiltunen 1996: 24). An affirmative answer would be compromising, as such a response would imply Jesus to be more powerful than Herod. But if the Duke declines to answer the king's question, he appears as an interlocutor who violates the Cooperative Principle. Herod's question technique hence serves to exert control over his subjects: "The loaded interrogative act as functional element is supposed to leave the interlocutor with his back to the wall" (Schrott 1999: 343). Considering the 'diabolic' mechanism of this question strategy, it is not surprising that it appears commonly in the speeches of bad, authority figures and is, in fact, one of Herod's favourites. In the York dialogue, the Duke counters elegantly by giving in to Herod's presupposition, but still insisting upon Jesus' great powers. With hedges such as *nay, but*, he is presenting his response as though it is not contrary to Herod's expectations, hence making his reply less face-threatening and more socially acceptable.

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151 'Leading' or 'loaded' questions constitute the most coercive question types in courtroom discourse. Even though they clearly represent "maximal-control questions" (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 223), the leading questions in our sample do not conform to the common definition of leading questions in the narrow sense, as the presuppositions inherent in the interrogatives are usually not directed at damaging the addressee's self-image (cf. Walton 1988: 197ff.; Schrott 1999: 343).

(18)    **Dux 2.** My lorde, and this gedlyng go thus it will greue werre, / For he gares growe on this
        grounde grete velanye.
        'My lord, if you let this wretch continue thus, it will bring grief. For he is prepared to cause great
        villainy on this ground.'
        **Rex**. Why, <u>menys thou that that myghtyng schulde my myghtes marre?</u>
        'What? You mean that this little nothing would my might mar?'
        **Dux 1**. *Nay* lorde, *but* he makis on this molde mekill maystrie. [York 31.113–6]
        'No, lord, but he makes great mastery in this world.'

Not only the evil characters from the cycle plays occasionally behave like questioners in a trial. Joseph's *wh*-questions in the York play, for example, aim at accusing his wife and presupposing her guilt rather than eliciting a response (19). Even though *wh*-questions do not restrict the number of possible replies, as is the case with *yes*/*no*-questions, they may constitute a FTA by forcing the interrogated person to supply the relevant information (cf. Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 228). Indeed, Mary speaks exactly to the point, to which her husband responds with longer speeches and the reiteration of his queries. These repetitions are covert impoliteness strategies threatening Mary's positive face, with the purpose of intimidating her so as to make her lose confidence in her own words. This does not trouble Mary, who is in control of her emotions and, despite Joseph's questioning, continues to give short, honest answers. Instead of conciliating him, these answers further reinforce Joseph's suspicions. The scene's humour is created by the contrast between Mary's concise answers and Joseph's increasing anger: "Both the repetition and the escalation of his temper make the already comical even more so" (Crane 2007: 51).

(19)    **Joseph**. […] Allas, <u>why wroght thou swa / Marie, my weddid wiffe?</u>
        '[…] Alas, why wrought thou so, Mary, my wedded wife?'
        **Mary**. To my witnesse grete God I call, / Þat in mynde wroght neuere na mysse.
        'To my witness, great God I call, that I never thought to do anything wrong.'
        **Joseph**. <u>Whose is the childe thou arte withall?</u>
        'Whose is the child you are with now?'
        **Mary**. Youres sir, and the kyngis of blisse.
        'Yours, sir, and the king's of bliss.'
        **Joseph**. Ye, <u>and hoo than?</u> / Na, selcouthe tythandis than is this, / Excuse tham wele there
        women can. / But Marie, all that sese the / May witte thi werkis ere wan, / Thy wombe
        allway it wreyes the / Þat thou has mette with man.
        'Yes, and how then? No, wondrous tidings then are these! Excuse themselves well, these women
        can! But Mary, all who see you will know your works are worthless. Your womb will always betray
        you, that you have met with man.'
        **Joseph**. <u>Whose is it, als faire mot the befall?</u>
        'Whose is it, as you hope to prosper?'
        **Mary**. Sir, it is youres and Goddis will.
        'Sir, it is yours, and God's will.'
        **Joseph**. Nay, I ne haue noght ado withall- / Neme it na more to me, be still! / Þou wate als
        wele as I, / Þat we two same flesshly / Wroght neuer swilk werkis with ill. / Loke thou dide
        no folye / Before me preuely / Thy faire maydenhede to spill.
        'No, I have nothing to do with this! Name it no more to me, be still! You know as well as I that we
        never practised such sinful deeds of the flesh. Look you did no folly before me, your fair maidenhead
        to spill.'

> **Joseph**. <u>But who is the fader?</u> Telle me his name.
> 'But who is the father? Tell me his name!'
> **Mary**. None but youreselfe. [York 13.156–80]
> 'None but yourself.'

In the following dialogue excerpt from the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Pilate calls on the Jews to state their case against Jesus (20). The playwrights directly adopted the Bible text by creating dialogue out of reported speech and description from John 18:29–38, including Pilate's opening question: *quam accusationem adfertis adversus hominem hunc* ('What accusing bring ye against this man?'; see Section 3.4.2). The same question can be found in the scene below. Caiaphas' request in reply to Pilate's opening question, though it includes mitigation elements, is very firm: *To deth for to deme hym* (l. 420). Unconvinced by his statement, Pilate reiterates his question. Annas now lists various accusations, and demands, once again, that Jesus be sentenced to death.

(20)  **Pilate**. [...]<u>What cause can ye caste of accusyng?</u> / þis mater ye marke to be meving, / And hendly in haste late vs here.
'[…] What cause can you produce to accuse (him)? This matter you must be undertaking, and quickly, in haste, let us hear.'
**Caiphas**. Sir Pilate o Pounce and prince of grete price, / We triste ye will trowe oure tales thei be trewe, / To deth for to deme hym with dewly device. / For cursidnesse yone knave hase in case, if ye knew, / In harte wolde ye hate hym in hye. / For if it wer so / We mente not to misdo; / Triste, ser, schall ye therto, / We hadde not hym taken to the.
'[…] Sir Pilate of Pontus, prince of great price, we have good hope that you will trust our tales to be true, to doom him to death, with your lawful judgement. For cursedness this knave has in mind, if you knew, in heart you would hate him high (greatly). For if it were so – we mean not to offend, trust (agree), sir, shall you thereto – we had not him taken to you.'
**Pilate**. Sir, youre tales wolde I trowe but thei touche none entente. / <u>What cause can ye fynde now this freke for to felle?</u>
'Sir, your tales would I trust, but they touch not to the point. What cause can you find now, this man for to condemn?'
**Anna**. Our Sabbotte he saues not, but sadly assente / To wirke full vnwisely, this wote I riyot wele, / He werkis whane he will, wele I wote, / And therfore in herte we hym hate. / Itt sittis you to strenghe youre estate / Yone losell to louse for his lay. [York 30.415–34]
'Our Sabbath he keeps not; he does freely assent to work, unwisely, and thus I know well. He works when he wants; I know well, and therefore, in heart, we hate him. It befits you, to preserve your estate, this wretch to kill for his practices.'

As the conversation goes on, Pilate shows growing anger and impatience with the priests. Insults are also employed: *<u>What wolde ye I did thanne?</u> þe deuyll motte you drawe!* ('What would you want me to do then? May the Devil you draw!'; l. 444). What is remarkable in this dialogue is "the authentic sense of psychological movement captured in the texture of the verse" (Beadle [2]2008: 121). The York Pilate is conceived, at least to some extent, as a human being rather than a caricature. His resentment against the importunate manipulations of Annas and Caiaphas is most clearly represented in his rhetorical questions. *Yha, for he dose wele his deth for to deme?* ('Yes, for he does good things he deserves death?'). He insists that none of Jesus' actions amounts to

treason, and his queries become increasingly exasperated. Pilate's high social position allows him to utter direct, brusque or even sarcastic interrogatives which are clear instances of overt impoliteness. Still, the Jews remain obstinate in their intention to kill Jesus. After questioning Jesus (ll. 481–91), Pilate maintains that there is no reason to convict him: *Loo busshoppis, why blame ye this boye?* ('Lo, bishops? Why blame you this boy?'; l. 492). Pilate's reiterating of the same question indicates that his desire to gain information is less relevant to him than another illocutionary strategy: "By his aloof, ironic posture towards his subordinates, Pilate seeks to affirm his authority over them" (Brawer 1972: 291). In fact, one of the main issues during most of this dialogue is the question of power within the secular hierarchy (cf. Kryk-Kastovsky's 2006a, 2006b remarks on the power structure in the Early Modern English courtroom). Only when he hears Jesus' claims to the *high kyngdome* (l. 477) does Pilate see him as a potential threat to his earthly power and authority. According to Brawer, the internal conflict between Pilate and the high priests serves a larger purpose: "it is part of an all-encompassing satire in which he holds the earthly kingdom up to ridicule […] and that provides an external dramatic projection of its moral and spiritual bankruptcy" (1972: 301f.).

b) Asking for advice/opinion

One of the most common uses of interrogative forms is to ask for information, but there are other crucial functions such as asking for advice or somebody's opinion (cf. Freed 1994: 641). These forms are mainly realised by *wh*-interrogatives which often include vocatives, sometimes as a signal of politeness.

The Chester Herod, for instance, conceives the plan of killing all male infants himself, but he stills seeks the advice of his counsellors (21). Noah's son asks his father in the York play how his family shall lead their life after the flood (22). After Jesus has risen in the York *Resurrection*, the soldiers are forced to accept that they must eventually inform Pilate about Christ's disappearance from the tomb. In a comic scene, they try to work out consistent lies to conceal the resurrection and to preserve them from Pilate's wrath (23). Finally, the torturers in the York *Crucifixion* give each other advice as to how Christ should be stretched and nailed to the cross (24).

(21)   **Herode**. [...] For wee knowe not that child well, / though wee therfore should goe to hell, / all the children of Israel / wee deeme them to be slayne. / *Counselour*, what is thy reade?
'[…] For we know not that child well, though we therefore should go to hell, all children of Israel we condemn them to be slain. Counsellor, what is your advice?'
**Doctor**. Deeme them, lord, for to be dead; [Chester 10.121–6]
'Condemn them, lord, to death.'

(22)   **Filius 1.** *Fadir*, <u>howe sall this lyffe be ledde / Sen non are in this worlde but we?</u>
'Father, how shall our lives be led since no-one is in this world but we?'
**Noe**. Sones, with youre wiffes yoe sall be stedde, / And multyplye youre seede sall yoe. [York 9.312–5]
'Sons, with your wives you shall be living together, and you shall multiply your seed.'

(23)   **Miles 1**. Allas, <u>what schall we do this day, / þat thus this warlowe is wente his waye?</u> / And sauely sirs I dare wele saie / He rose allone.
'Alas, what shall we do this day, (now) that thus this warlock has gone his way? And safely, sirs, I dare well say, he rose alone.'
**Miles 2**. Witte sir Pilate of this affraye / We mon be slone.
'If Pilate hears of this outrage, we will be slain.'
**Miles 3**. Why, <u>canne none of vs no bettir rede?</u>
'What? Can none of us advise better?'
**Miles 4.** þer is not ellis but we be dede. [York 38.307–14]
'There's nothing else; we will (all) be dead.'

(24)   **Miles 1**. *Sir knyghtis*, saie, <u>howe wirke we nowe?</u>
'Say, sir knights, how shall we work now?'
**Miles 2**. 3is, certis, I hope I holde this hande, / And to the boore I haue it brought / Full boxumly withouten bande. [York 35.97–100]
'Well, surely, I think I've got this hand; and to the hole I have it brought, eagerly, without a band.'

<u>c) Asking for confirmation</u>

The next subclass consists of interrogative acts which ask the addressee to confirm the speaker's statement, often in connection with seeking agreement or disagreement from the interlocutor. This subclass is mainly realised by positive and, most commonly, by negative polar interrogatives. The prospected response to this question type usually starts with 'yes' or 'no' (cf. Tsui 1994: 82ff.).

According to Quirk et al. (1985: 809), negative questions in spoken discourse are similar to assertions and therefore always rely on 'heavy' presuppositions, i.e. they indicate the speaker's expectation of and preference for a given answer (see also Wikberg 1975: 124ff.). Studying Early Modern English pamphlets, Claridge states that negated interrogatives are "clearly biased towards a positive answer, 'forcing' the reader to agree with the author on the 'obvious' conclusion" (2005: 155). This is also true for our play texts: The Second Sheperd's utterance prospects a positive response from his companions, who are invited to confirm his statement that the sack of meal is empty (25). The Second Shepherd of the *Secunda Pastorum*, impressed by the musical complexity of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, asks his companions for confirmation. The Third Shepherd reassures him eagerly that the angel *crakyd it* (26). Such exchanges stress the new peaceful tone of solemnity and harmony between the shepherds after the Angel's appearance. In such cases, answers are commonly reinforced by the use of oaths and other adverbial confirmations apart from 'yes' (e.g. *certes*, *forsoth*).

(25) **Tercius Pastor**. [...] Whylst I, with my hand, / Lawse the sek band; / Com nar and, by stand / Both gyg and lak; / <u>Is *not* all shakyn owte / and no meyll is therin?</u>
'[…] Whilst I with my hand loose the sack's band, come and stand nearby, both Gib and Jack. Is not all shaken out and no meal left in there?'
**Primus Pastor**. *Yey, that is no dowte.* [Towneley 12.172–7]
'Yes there is no doubt.'

(26) **Secundus Pastor**. Say, what was his song? / <u>hard ye *not* how he crakyd it?</u> / Thre brefes to a long.
'Say, what was his song? Heard you not how loudly he sang it? Three short notes to the long one.'
**Tercius Pastor**. *Yee, mary,* he hakt it. / Was no crochett wrong / nor no thyng that lakt it. [Towneley 13.662–5]
'Yes, by Mary, he trilled it. No (half-/quarter-)note was wrong, nor did it lack anything.'

In the above examples, the expected response to the question is confirmation. The addressee can, of course, reply by a disconfirmation, but such an answer would be contrary to the speaker's expectation. In the Towneley *Abel*, we do find a disconfirmation in response to a request for confirmation (27). Abel repeatedly urges Cain to bear in mind that his sacrifice is meant for God, then reminds Cain that they are brothers and hopes for a positive response. Quirk et al. remark that negatively orientated questions in Present-Day English conversation often express disappointment, because "the speaker had actually hoped for a positive response, but new evidence suggests that the response will be negative" (1985: 808). According to them, Abel's question would mean: 'I would have thought that we are brothers'. Such interrogatives may also suggest that the speaker strongly wants the addressee to agree with his opinion (Wikberg 1975: 126). The Towneley Cain, however, carries on being resentful and refuses to answer Abel's question in the affirmative. Despite resembling conversational structures, such question-answer sequences can also serve dramatic purposes, as they reveal something about the relations between characters.

(27) **Abel**. […] <u>Ar we *not* brether, thou & I?</u>
'[…] Are we not brothers, you and I?'
**Cain**. *No,* bot cry on, cry, whyls the thynk good; [Towneley 2.157–8]
'No, but cry on, cry while it seems good to you!'

d) Requests

Questions in spoken discourse often convey requests or commands, in order to elicit the physical participation of the addressee in the same way as imperatives (see Biber et al. 1999: 220f.; Busse 2002: 20; Mazzon 2009: 130, footnote 9). Requests constitute a potential threat to what Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) call the addressee's negative face by violating their freedom of action and freedom from imposition (see also Kohnen 2002: 165, 2008: 27; Archer 2010: 383). To assure compliance with a request, it is hence necessary to express it in a socially and culturally

appropriate way (cf. Ogiermann 2009: 190). In a modern communicative context, a request in form of a question, especially if accompanied by other mitigating devices, is felt as "less direct, less forceful, less authoritarian, more polite"(Givón 1993: 268) and therefore less manipulative (see also Busse 2002: 20).[152]

The present sample shows that interrogative requests can be realised with different degrees of directness, and their illocutionary force may vary in force from invitations and polite suggestions as in (28)–(29) to orders and commands as in (30)–(32). First, we find questions that embody an invitation (cf. Bolinger 1978: 88). In quote (28), the request conveys Annas' offer to rest and enjoy some wine. Offers or invitations can be categorised as cases of positive politeness, in showing the speaker's concern for the interests, wants and needs of the addressee. At the same time, these requests call upon or acknowledge willingness on the part of the hearer (Busse 2008: 95). As Brown and Gilman state, "willingness on the part of the hearer is a felicity condition for the direct imperative and asking about such willingness is a way of saying *Do X* indirectly" (1989: 182). Thus, the construction *wolde yoe* licenses the possibility that Caiaphas may turn the request down, simply because he chooses to do so.

(28)    **Anna**. *Wolde* yoe, *sir*, take youre reste- / This day is comen on hande- / And with wyne slake youre thirste?
       'Would you (now), sir, take your rest – this evening is near at hand – and with wine slake your thirst?'
       [...]
       **Caiphas**. I will do as yoe saie, / Do gette vs wyne of the best. [York 29.64–6, 74–5]
       'I will do as you say. Go get us wine of the best.'

In Present-Day English, interrogative requests are the most common type of conventional indirectness (see Busse 2008: 94f.). Kohnen claims that such structures have developed fairly recently in the English language: "clear cases of interrogative manifestations of directives are

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152 For Givón (1993: 244, 264ff.), both interrogatives and imperatives can be considered manipulative speech-acts, used primarily to manipulate the interlocutor towards supplying a verbal and/or non-verbal response. He provides a scale of examples from Present-Day English, arranged from a bald-on-record imperative (a) to a polite indirect question (f), which varies from strong to weak manipulative force (see Busse 2002: 18, 2008: 89; Huang 2014: 142, footnote 18):

   a. Pass the salt.
   b. Please pass the salt.
   c. Pass the salt, would you please?
   d. Would you please pass the salt?
   e. Could you please pass the salt?
   f. Can you pass the salt?
   g. Do you see the salt?
   h. Is there any salt around?
   i. Was there any salt there?

In formal terms, interrogative requests or directives can be classified as indirect speech acts, as there is no direct match between sentence type (interrogative) and illocutionary force (directive) in these cases (see Herman 1995: 170; Busse 2002: 18).

difficult to find before the Early Modern English period" (2008: 27; see also Archer 2010: 384). In an earlier paper on English directives, Kohnen (2002: 170) reports that only 36 examples of what he calls "hearer-based directives" (*Can you open the door?/Will you open the door?*) can be found in the *Helsinki Corpus* (see also Culpeper and Archer 2008: 60). Kohnen further notes that such structures reflect spoken interaction: "[...] the interrogative hearer-based directives require an immediate reaction by the hearer, maybe even some kind of negotiating. Thus they involve an interactive setting, [...]" (2002: 184). Drawing on Millward (1966, personal communication), Brown and Gilman state that forms with *Could you* and *Would you* "most often heard today" were not invented until the nineteenth century (1989: 181). My results (7 fairly unambiguous instances with *willen/cönnen*, 9 other interrogative requests in *Group I–III*) imply that these forms existed in the Middle English period, but the playwrights did not resort to these indirect strategies very frequently.

The shepherds who come to pay homage in the Chester play ask Joseph to *worne* ('teach') them (29). Joseph eventually complies with the request, even though it is Mary who answers first. The addition of items like *witt would wee nowe* makes the interrogative structure more indirect and complex, which is considered a typical indication of politeness. In Present-Day English imperative structures, the addressee, i.e. the person who is to reply to the command or request, can be indicated by means of a personal pronoun, an indefinite pronoun, or by a vocative: "Whether the addition of pronouns or vocatives is meant to single out the individual or to soften or to emphasize the command depends upon the circumstances" (Busse 2002: 19; see also Biber et al. 1999: 220). In quote (28) above and quote (29) below, the imperative force is mitigated by means of the polite terms of address *sir, worthye wight* and *worthye in weedes.* Requests with a modal verb such as *will/would* or *can/could* differ in their level of tactfulness, "in that the past tense forms of the modals are usually considered to be more tactful than their present tense counterparts" (Busse 2002: 20). Accordingly, Annas' use of *wolde* in quote (28) above redresses the FTA even more than the Third Shepherd's use of the present tense form *wyll*.

(29)    **Tertius Pastor**. Why, with his berde though hit be rough, / right well to her hee hydes. /
         *Worthye wight, witt would wee nowe*; / <u>*wyll* ye worne us, *worthye in weedes*</u>?
         'But with his beard – though it be rough – right well to her he attends. Worthy sir, we want to
         know: Will you teach us, worthy one (in your array)?'
         **Maria**. Sheppardes, sothlye I see / that my sonne you hyther sent, / through Godes might
         in majestye / that in mee light and here is lent. / This man maryed was to mee / for noe
         sinne in such assent; / but to keepe my virginitee, / and truly in non other intent. [Chester
         7.504–15]
         'Shepherds, truly I see that my son sent you hither through God's might in majesty that in me
         alighted and here remains. This man married was to me for no sin by such agreement, but to protect
         my virginity and truly for no other purpose.'

Negative as well as positive interrogatives can be used to implement requesting, as Heinemann (2006: 1082) points out in her study of interrogative requests in modern conversation. In the plays leading up to the crucifixion, the soldiers and Pilate's son reprimand Jesus for refusing to kneel before Pilate and Herod. Instead, Jesus is poker-faced and literally unbending as he declines to bow his knee to Herod or even to incline his head. Brown and Levinson (1978: 135f.) claim that a request framed as a negative interrogative is less polite than its positive equivalent. The negative interrogative, according to their argumentation, assumes that the addressee is unwilling to do the acts requested of him. For the negative interrogatives below (30)–(32), this would imply that Herod, his son and Annas request Jesus to show deference, but he willingly neglects to do so (cf. Heinemann 2006: 1096). Because of their negative framing, these interrogatives leave no choice apart from complete refusal to comply and can therefore be categorised as commands expressing the imposition of an obligation. The impoliteness of the orders is further emphasised by the mock-term *kyng* and deprecative *ladde*. It seems that Jesus does indeed willingly refuse to act courteous in these scenes and by being uncooperative, he clearly challenges the authority of his prosecutors – indicating his "divine unwillingness to acknowledge worldly powers" (O'Connell 2002: 47).

(30)  **Rex**. […] Comes nerre, *kyng*, into courte. Saie, <u>can yoe *not* knele?</u> [York 31.244]
      '[…] Come near, king, to court. Say, can you not kneel?'

(31)  **Anna**. Say *ladde*, <u>liste the *noght* lowte to a lorde?</u> [York 29.248]
      'Say, lad, do you not wish to bow to a lord?'

(32)  **Filius**. [...] <u>Why falles thou *noyot* flatte here, foule falle the, / For ferde of my fadir so free?</u>
      [York 30.403–4]
      '[…] Why fall you not flat here – bad luck befall you! – for fear of my father so noble?'

<u>e) Asking for clarification/repetition</u>

There is a subclass of interrogative acts which refers to the discourse itself. Such structures which can be realised by polar or *wh*-interrogatives ask for additional information concerning the content of a preceding utterance (see Freed 1994: 627; Tsui 1994: 88f.). Cooperative behaviour in such question-answer sequences consists of giving a truthful and informative response (e.g. providing the requested information) and clearing up any confusion discerned during the interaction.

Asking for clarification may be illustrated by a scene from the York *Joseph*. After Joseph has wandered alone in the wilderness, an angel tells him that his child is both his and God's and thus validates Mary's story. Yet, this explanation is initially met with disbelief (33). Note that the York *Herod* and *Dream of Pilate's Wife* contain similar truth-value questions by Herod (l. 223) and Pilate (l. 265).

(33)  **Angel**. [...] It is Goddis sande of heuen. / The childe that sall be borne of her, / Itt is consayued of the haly gast. [...] His pepull saffe he sall / Of euyllis and angris all, / Þat thei ar nowe enbraste.

'[...] It is God's message from heaven. The child that shall be born of her, it is conceived of the Holy Ghost. [...] His people he shall save from evils and afflictions which confine them now.'

**Joseph**. <u>And is this soth, aungell, thou saise?</u>

'And is this true, angel, (what) you say?'

**Angel**. Yha, and this to taken right: / Wende forthe to Marie thy wiffe alwayse, / Brynge hir to Bedlem this ilke nyght. [York 13.268–70, 276–82]

'Yes, and to take this rightly: Go forth to Mary, your wife always. Bring her to Bethlehem this same night.'

In the York play, Noah sends his son to fetch his wife, who expresses both surprise and a request for additional information (34). Pilate in the York *Conspiracy* asks Caiaphas to specify the punishment he wants for Jesus (35). The role of Judas in Christ's conviction becomes evident when Pilate questions him in the York *Conspiracy*. After Judas has worked out the details of the plan to take Jesus, Pilate reassures himself before concluding the deal (36). As noted above, fragmentary structures like <u>*And may thou soo?*</u> have been considered typical of modern conversation.

(34)  **1 Filius**. [...] Come to my fadir sone.

'[...] Come to my father soon!'

**Uxor**. <u>What sais thou sone?</u>

'What say you, son?'

**1 Filius**. Moder, certeyne / My fadir thynkis to flitte full ferre. [York 9.56–9]

'Mother, surely, my father intends to flee far from here.'

(35)  **Caiphas**. Loo sir, this is a periurye to prente vndir penne, / Wherfore make yoe that appostita, we praye yoou, to plye.

'Look, sir, this is a perjury to print with the pen; therefore, make that apostate – we pray you – to comply.'

**Pilate**. <u>Howe mene yoe?</u>

'How do you mean?'

**Caiphas**. Sir, to mort hym for mouyng of men. [York 26.76–9]

'Sir, to kill him for subverting men.'

(36)  **Judas**. Of werke sir that hath wretthid yoou I wotte what I meene, / But I wolde make a marchaundyse youre myscheffe to marre.

'Of a work, sir, that has angered you, I know what I mean. But I would make an agreement to end your mischief.'

**Pilate**. <u>And may thou soo?</u>

'And may you so?'

**Judas**. Els madde I such maistries to mene. [York 26.222–5]

'Mad I would seem, to assert such works otherwise.'

In the York *Caiaphas*, it is not Jesus but the soldiers who actually tell Caiaphas about Jesus' miracles. Caiaphas encourages the Fourth Soldier to tell him more (37). The inferential adverb *then*

is common in both Middle English and Early Modern English *wh*-questions (see Claridge 2005: 156). In the scene below, it seems to convey a certain insistence but also impatience.

(37)   **Miles 4**. No sir, in the same feste als we the sotte soughte / He salued thame of sikenesse on many sidis seere.
'No, sir, in that same feast, when we sought the rascal, he cured them of sickness on all sides!'
**Caiphas**. What *than*, <u>makes he thame grathely to gange?</u>
'What then, makes he them truly go?'
**Miles 3**. 3a lorde, even forthe in euery-ilke a toune / He thame lechis to liffe aftir lange. [York 29.269–73]
'Yes, lord, they go forth from every town; he heals them to life who have languished so long.'

<u>f) Greetings</u>

Speakers of Middle English must have had multiple ways to exchange greetings, and it is likely that these were exploited in dramatic dialogue. Due to their high degree of recognisability and fixity, greetings are usually regarded as one of the strongest examples of adjacency pairs, "where the occurrence of the first part leads to the near-obligatory choice of one specific type of second-pair part" (Mazzon 2009: 160; see also Schegloff 2007: 16). The familiarity of these prefabricated structures establishes a connection between play and audience, aiming at familiar effects, sympathetic attention and memorability (Brewer 1988: 87). For example, the characteristic quarrelling, or 'flyting', of the shepherds in the *Prima Pastorum* is characterised by greeting formulae in the shape of succinct questions (38). Such passages indicate that the Towneley playwright(s) incorporated some lively, everyday language into their dialogue: "Obwohl dieses Reden in die kunstvolle Strophe des Wakefield Master gekleidet wird, scheint es am Alltäglichen und Umgangssprachlichen ausgerichtet zu sein" (Bergner 1988: 181; see also Spearing [2]1990: 157; Mazzon 2009: 153).[153]

(38)   **Secundus Pastor**. […] How, gyb, goode morne / wheder goys thou? / Thou goys ouer the corne / gyb, I say, how!
'[…] How, Gib, good morning, where are you going? You go over the grain, Gib, I say, how!'
**Primus Pastor**. Who is that? John horne / I make god a vowe! / I say not in skorne / thom, <u>how farys thou?</u>
'Who is that? John Horn, I make a vow to God! I say not in scorn, then, how are you?'
**Secundus Pastor**. Hay, ha! / <u>Ar ye in this towne?</u>
'Hay, ha! Are you in this town?'
**Primus Pastor**. Yey, by my crowne. [Towneley 12.82–8]
'Yes, by my crown.'

The Wakefield Master seems to play with conventional greetings in the Towneley *Noah*. As soon as Noah greets his wife with a phatic phrase, she attacks him, answers with a counter-question and thus reveals their domestic struggle from the beginning (39). As Richard Daniels has pointed

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153 'Although this speech is dressed in the elaborate stanza of the Wakefield Master, it seems to be oriented towards everyday and colloquial language' (my translation).

out, "their strife seems simply the common state of affairs in their marriage" (1979: 26). Therefore, Noah deals with nothing unusual when his wife scolds or quarrels with him; it is part of their everyday life together. I have already remarked in the Section 4.2.1 on pronominal address that the Towneley Noah addresses his wife with polite *V* and affectionate *dere wife*, while she employs a familiar *T*-form. Such dialogues illustrate that the mystery playwrights did, in fact, succeed in portraying some more individualised characters and showing the relationships between them through linguistic means. This stands in contrast to Wikberg's opinion who states that this "was a much later development made possible by the simultaneous growth of the dramatic form" (1975: 14).

(39)    **Noah**. […] God spede, *dere wife* / how fayre *ye*?
        '[…] God speed you, dear wife! How are you?'
        **Uxor**. Now, as euer myght I thryfe / *the* wars / I *thee* see; /Do tell me belife / where has *thou* thus long be? / To dede may we dryfe / or lif for the, ffor want. [Towneley 3.190–4]
        'Now, as I hope to prosper, the worse (now) I see you! Do tell me at once where you have been such a long time? We may die, or live, because of you, for lack (of food).'

g) Rhetorical

Rhetorical questions are distinct from other interrogative acts for various reasons: As regards propositional content, rhetorical questions seem to display a deficit of knowledge, "but the speaker disposes of all the information necessary to fill the gap and presupposes that this is also the case on the side of the addressee" (Schrott 1999: 345).[154] Similar to interrogative requests, this question type has traditionally been classified as indirect speech acts, as they are interrogative in form but have the illocutionary force of a strong assertion rather than of a question (Quirk et al. 1985: 825; Claridge 2005: 153; see also Wang 2014: 42). Thus, their main function is to express the speaker's stance and provide information rather than ask for it (see Freed 1994: 631). As the propositional content of the answer is presupposed by the rhetorical question and the context, answers rarely follow this type of interrogative (Schrott 1999: 345; see also Rehbock 1984: 158, 169f.; Grésillon 1980: 276).

A rhetorical question is formally indistinguishable from the *wh-* or polar interrogative (see Grésillon 1980: 275; Quirk et al. 1985: 825; Claridge 2005: 153). In conversation, the interpretation of a rhetorical question depends on contextual factors, such as the norms and knowledge shared by the interlocutors: "[...] the indicators for rhetoricity expressing the particular propositional attitude of the speaker or contextual (shared background) information [...] are conventional signals for the hearer to understand the utterance as a rhetorically intended one" (Schmidt-Radefeldt

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154 See, for instance, Schmidt-Radefeldt (1977), Frank (1990) and Wang (2014) for more detailed discussions of the rhetorical question.

1977: 391). Accordingly, the contextual analysis of the identified interrogatives from the sample required taking into account the utterances that preceded and followed each question token.

Consider the following passage in which God reacts to Lucifer's attempt to usurp his throne (40). The interrogative considered in isolation would appear to realise the function of seeking information. From the context, however, it becomes clear that, as God's position as the prime leader in the divine hierarchy must be clear to all angels, he merely asks rhetorical questions with no expectation of an answer. We may interpret his question as rhetorical for another reason: God continues his turn immediately after the interrogative, thereby preventing any response from Lucifer.

(40)     **Deus**. Saye, what araye doe ye make here? / <u>Who is your prince and principall?</u> / I made thee angell and Lucifer, / and here thou woulde be lorde over all. [Chester 1.214–7]
'Say, what show of force do you make here? Who is your prince and leader? I made you, angel, [Lightborne] and Lucifer, and here you would be lord over all?'

As Frank (1990: 724) has shown, rhetorical questions can be problematic to define in spontaneous spoken discourse, not least because they appear to be multifunctional. Brown and Levinson (1978: 228), for example, suggest that they enable speakers to do FTAs, such as irony or criticism, indirectly, and therefore interpret them as a kind of politeness strategy. The distribution of examples supports the view that the primary function of rhetorical questions in my sample is to express emotions. Since antiquity, this question type has been used stylistically "to convey a variety of emotions and attitudes, usually in scenes where an important character delivers a soliloquy or otherwise reveals his state of mind" (Wikberg 1975: 11). In the mystery play texts, rhetorical interrogatives commonly lead to or represent an emotional climax. This emotive function resembles the expressive value of exclamatives: "As rhetorical questions and exclamative acts share the strong expressive component of speaker attitude in their functional profile, the transition between the two illocutions is often fluid" (Schrott 1999: 347).

It is unsurprising that rhetorical questions should be found mainly in monologues, but also in exchanges where the speaker is emotionally involved (cf. Wikberg 1975: 44f.). The expression of the speaker's personal stance appears to overlap with the interactional function of indicating either acceptance or disapproval with the addressee's view. Therefore, it does seem justifiable to incorporate a brief account on expressive rhetorical questions in this chapter on interactivity.

*(i) Expression of awe, admiration and joy*

Apart from quotes (41)–(42), we hardly find any examples of this category in the play texts. In the York *Resurrection*, the Centurion expounds the miracles at the death of Christ:

(41)     **Centurio**. A, blissid lorde Adonay, / <u>What may thes meruayles signifie</u> / þat her was schewed so oppinly / Vnto oure sight, / þis day whanne that the man gune dye / þat Jesus highte? / Itt is a misty thyng to mene, / So selcouth a sight was neuere sene, [York 38.37–44]
'Ah, blessed lord, Adonai, what may these marvels mean, that here were seen so openly before our sight, this day when that man did die that was named Jesus? It is a portent to mention, such wondrous sight was never seen.'

Due to his narrow range of knowledge as a dramatic character, the marvels seem a mystery to Centurio. Considering the scene from the perspective of the omnipresent history of salvation which was of central importance to the cycle plays, his interrogative sentences fulfil a didactic aim, namely to encourage the audience to embrace the wisdom of salvation which Centurio acknowledges in his lines. Once again, the interpretation of certain linguistic structures depends on the two levels of discourse characterising dramatic dialogue: "the fictional situation of the dramatic figures and the external communicative situation of the representation of the play that includes the audience" (Schrott 1999: 347; see also Section 2.2). A more 'harmless' form of joy is depicted in the voluptuous meal of the shepherds in the fields. In that scene, (imaginary) food appears in plenty; and the Third Shepherd enters thoroughly into the spirit of the occasion:

(42)     **Tercius Pastor**. Here is to recorde / the leg of a goys, / With chekyns endorde / pork, partryk, to roys; / A tart for a lorde / <u>how thynk ye this doys?</u> / A calf lyuer skorde / with the veryose; / Good sawse, / This is a restorete / To make a good appete. [Towneley 12.243–9]
'Here is, to remind you, the leg of a goose, with chickens covered with a glaze made from egg yolks, pork, partridge to praise a tart for a lord. How do you think this does? A calf's liver sliced and served with verjuice: Good sauce! This is a restorative [an appetiser] to make a good appetite.'

*(ii) Expression of grief, pity and despair*

This expressive subtype of rhetorical questions is found in the Towneley Passion play where Jesus mourns his fate in the speech from the cross. The crucified Christ seems to speak out directly to the audience. Terms of address, imperatives, oaths and interjections illustrate his disconsolate feelings. The cluster of four questions marks the emotional climax of this rhetorically refined speech:

(43) **Jesus**. […] My folk, <u>what haue I done to the,</u> / That thou all thus shall tormente me? / Thy syn by I full sore. / <u>What haue I greuyd the?</u> answere me, / That thou thus nalys me to a tre, / And all for thyn erroure; / <u>Where shall thou seke socoure?</u> / <u>This mys how shall thou amende?</u> / When that thou thy saveoure / Dryfes to this dyshonoure, / And nalys thrugh feete and hende! / All creatoures that kynde may kest, / Beestys, byrdys, all haue thay rest, / When thay ar wo begon; / Bot godys son, that shuld, be best, / Hase not where apon his hede to rest, / Bot on his shuder bone. [Towneley 23.249–65]

'[…] My folk, what have I done to you, that you all thus shall torment me? Your sin I paid for bitterly. How have I grieved you? Answer me! That you thus nail me to a tree, and all for your error! Where shall you seek succour? This mistake how shall you mend? When that you your saviour drives to this dishonour, and nails through feet and hand! All creatures that nature knows, beasts and birds, all have their rest, when they are beset with woe; but God's son that should be best has nothing whereupon to rest his head but on his shoulder bone.'

The cycle plays' speeches from the cross draw specifically on non-gospel sources. Christ's long monologue in the York and Towneley *Crucifixion* is derived from the Good Friday *Improperia* and the Holy Saturday liturgy (Lamentations 1:12). The first is particularly relevant to the above extract. The *Improperia* or Reproaches are a series of antiphons and responses sung as part of the Catholic liturgy of the Passion on Good Friday. The first couplet begins as follows: *Popule meus, quid feci tibi? Aut in quo constristavi te? Responde mihi.* ('My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!'). If we compare these lines with the quote above, it becomes clear that part of the play text is taken over directly from the liturgical source. I believe that, by invoking associations with medieval liturgy, the plays sought to bring the spectators into affective proximity with 'remote' biblical figures and scenes.

Emotional involvement in the mystery cycles is achieved by meditating on the sufferings of Christ, the Marys and other sympathetic characters (King 2010: 630; see Section 3.4.1 above). Just as the Marys suffer as they witness Jesus' crucifixion, so the mothers of the Towneley *Herod* grieve as they helplessly watch the massacre of their children. In the following example, the tone is desperate when the First Woman looks at her torn child. Her lament is underscored by other features, such as the interjections *out* and *alas* (see Section 4.4.1):

(44) **Prima Mulier**. *Outt*, *alas*, my chyldys bloode! / *Outt*, for reprefe! / *Alas* for shame and syn / *alas* that I was borne! / <u>Of wepyng who may blyn / to se hir chylde forlorne?</u> [Towneley 16.343–6]

'Oh, alas, my child's blood! Oh, for shame! Alas, for shame and sin! Alas that I was born! From weeping who may cease, to see her child forlorn?'

The slaughter of the infants in the Chester play becomes Herod's own punishment by including his son among the victims. In (45), the sequence of five questions, which were surely intended as rhetorical questions by the playwright(s), heightens the dramatic effect of the scene. Clusters of rhetorical questions "enable speakers to make stronger statements, with greater implications, than would be possible if they had made straightforward assertions" (Anzilotti 1982: 290f. qtd. in

Frank 1990: 726). Note that the question type 'wh-word reinforced by expletives' as in *what the divell* is this to meane? is used mainly in informal language in Present-Day English conversation (see Biber et al. 1999: 204).

(45)  **Herodes**. Hec was right sycker in silke araye, / in gould and pyrrie that was so gaye. / They might well knowe by this daye / he was a kinges sonne. What the divell is this to saye? / Whye weare thy wyttes soe farre awaye? / Could thow not speake? Could thou not praye / and say yt was my sonne? / Alas, *what the divell* is this to meane? / Alas, my dayes binne now donne! [Chester 10.409–18]
'He was most secure in silk array, in gold and precious stones that were so gay. They might well know by this day: he was a king's son. What the devil is this to say? Why were your wits so far away? Could you not speak? Could you not pray and say it was my son? Alas, what the devil is this to mean? Alas, my days are now done!'

*(iii) Expression of contradiction, anger and contempt*

Satan's long speech in the Chester *Creation* tells the story of his own fall and reveals his envy of man's *masterye* (l. 172) of earthly paradise. His malevolence and explicit desire to destroy Adam and Eve seems mainly a reaction to their privileged position which the Demon once enjoyed himself before his fall. Rhetorical questions may emphasise important parts in a line of argumentation and thereby structure more monological sections in a drama (cf. Schrott 1999: 346). The rhetorical question below, which Satan answers himself, makes his argumentation more forceful and vivid, while simultaneously reflecting his expressive, persuasive style of speech.

(46)  **Demon**. […] Should such a caytiffe made of claye have such blisse? Nay, by my laye! [Chester 2.177–8]
'[…] Should such a wretch made of clay have such bliss? No, by my law!'

The four Jews from the Chester *Passion* neglect their orders when dicing for Christ's garments, and Caiaphas interrupts their gaming and orders them to continue with nailing him to the cross. Caiaphas's demeaning rhetorical question is accompanied by taboo expletives:

(47)  **Cayphas**. Men, *for cockes face*, / howe longe shall pewee-ars / stand naked in that place? / Goe nayle him on the tree! [Chester 17.149–52]
'Men, for God's face, how long shall pissy-arse stand naked in that place? Go nail him on the tree!'

In the same way, Balak, the Moabite king who wished Balaam to curse his enemies, is turned into an embodiment of bitterness and rage, which is expressed in his abusive language. Like Caiaphas, he swears continuously, and each time that Balaam, in accordance with God's will, blesses the Israelites, he turns upon him with abusive colloquialisms:

(48) **Balaack**. <u>What the dyvell ayles thee, thow populart?</u> / Thy speach is not worth a farte [Chester 5.296–7]
'What the devil ails you, you fool? Your speech is not worth a fart!'

## (iv) Expression of surprise/disbelief

In most cases, surprise and disbelief are signalled by echo questions (see Section 4.3.3), but *wh*-questions occasionally serve the same function. In the Towneley *Buffeting*, Caiaphas expresses his disbelief at the Second Torturer's report which indicates that Jesus may be able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days:

(49) **Secundus Tortor**. Sir, I hard hym say he cowthe dystroew / oure tempyll so gay, / And sithen beld a new / on the thrid, day.
'Sir, I heard him say he could destroy our temple so noble, and then build a new (one) on the third day.'
**Cayphas**. <u>How myght that be trew?</u> / it toke more aray; [Towneley 21.77–9]
'How might that be true? It took more preparation.'

## (v) Expression of mockery

Rhetorical questions may also convey irony and sarcasm. In the Chester *Creation*, God's questions to Cain are an expression of indignation at the treachery of Cain's act. Cain's disobedience to God becomes concrete in his rhetorical counter-questions (50). For Early Modern English trial records, it has been remarked that counter-questions are only regarded as appropriate when employed by a speaker with greater social power than the addressee: "When speakers with less social power than their hearers respond to a question with a question, it is more likely to be interpreted as a challenge to the authority of the latter" (Hiltunen 1996: 31). This is why Cain's counter-question in the example below can be considered an insolent challenge to divine authority, which intensifies the farcical element of the scene.

(50) **God**. Caym, where is thi brother abell?
'Cain, where is your brother Abel?'
**Cain**. <u>What askis thou me?</u> I trow at hell: / At hell I trow he be- / Who so were ther then myght he se- / Or somwhere fallen on slepyng; / <u>When was he in my kepyng?</u> [Towneley 2.345–50]
'Why do you ask me? I believe in hell: In hell I believe he is – whoever was there could see him – or somewhere fallen asleep. (Since) when was he in my care?'

The folly of the shepherds in the *Prima Pastorum* is represented by the re-enaction of the Fools of Gotham, the first story in a popular collection of humorous tales, first printed around 1565 (see Fitzgerald and Sebastian 2013: 151). The First and Second Shepherd quarrel over grazing rights for a flock of sheep. The Third Shepherd exposes their folly in pointing out that the First Shepherd's sheep are imaginary and their argument is therefore about nothing (A few lines later, the Third

Shepherd will also make a fool of himself since he spoils his grain in showing his companions their lack of wit):

(51)     **Tercius Pastor**. Yey, bot tell me, good / <u>where ar youre shepe, lo?</u> [Towneley 12.140]
         'Yes, but tell me, good (sirs), where are your sheep, lo?'

As we have already seen, the buffeting and crucifixion of Jesus is treated as a game in all cycles. As the torturers situate and prepare Christ for the beating, they mock him with over-exaggerated politeness and courtesy as in (52)–(53). Christ is addressed like a king, and the mockery is specifically tied to polite terms of address, particles and formulae such as *[w]e praye youe* (York 35.262). The Second Torturer's question in (52), however, also constitutes a threat. After the torturers have blindfolded Jesus, they strike him by turn, urging him each time to *prophecy* who has struck him (54)–(56). The torturers in the Towneley *Scourging* ask him why he does not try and free himself by performing a miracle, if he is God's son (56). Their accusations and insults are countered by silence and composure, which serve to undermine the torturers' (stage) credibility: "Jesus has successfully destroyed the soldiers' game world, with his calm, silent and patient endurance, revealing himself to be the ultimate leader of the game" (Ishii 1993: 24). The tormentors demand that Christ speak and entertain them, but he does not respond to their mocking and the torturers eventually give up their game. Jesus seems to withdraw into himself, "deliberately setting aside the power of speech and letting his enemies condemn themselves out of their own mouths" (Johnston 2000: 191).

(52)     **Secundus Tortor**. Com, *sir*, and syt downe / <u>must ye be prayde?</u>/ Lyke a lord of renowne / *youre sete is arayde*. [Towneley 21.382–3]
         'Come, sir, and sit down, must you be prayed? Like a lord of renown; your seat is prepared.'

(53)     **Secundus Tortor**. Hayll *kyng*! <u>where was thou borne / sich worship for to wyn?</u> [Towneley 22.236]
         'Hail, king! Where were you born, such worship for to win?'

(54)     **Miles 3**. Prophete, Y saie, to be oute of debate, / <u>Quis te percussit, man?</u> Rede, giffe thou may. [York 29.383–4]
         'Prophet, I say, to end this debate: Who smote you, man? Advise (Answer), if you may.'

(55)     **Primus Tortor.** […] Sit vp and prophecy.
         '[…] Sit up and prophesy.'
         **Froward**. Bot make vs no ly.
         'But tell us no lie.'
         **Secundus Tortor**. <u>Who smote the last?</u>
         'Who stroke you last?'
         **Primus Tortor**. <u>Was it I?</u>
         'Was it I?'
         **Froward**. He wote not, I traw. [Towneley 21.436–40]
         'He does not knows, I believe.'

(56)  **Tercius Tortor**. <u>Where on seruys thi prophecy / thou tell vs in this case, / And all thi warkys of greatt mastry / thou shewed in dyuers place?</u> [Towneley 22.143–4]
'Where serves your prophecy now you tell us in this case, and all your works of great mastery you showed in diverse places?'

### 4.3.1.3 Discussion of results

Based on the interrogative structures in the sample, I have developed a functional classification (see *Table 19*). No *a priori* collection of question types was adopted or applied; each question token was categorised according to its purpose in the particular context. Although an interrogative form may be multifunctional, a primary function was determined on the basis of the surrounding discourse. When a response was given by the addressee, it helped identify the functional interpretation of that question. Freed (1994: 626) developed a taxonomy of sixteen functions from twelve conversations, which were subsequently sorted into four major classes. In the same way, I arranged my seven interrogative functions into four major categories, largely following Freed's distinction:

- interrogatives which seek information EXTERNAL to the dialogue
- interrogatives which refer to the dialogue itself: META-DIALOGICAL
- interrogatives which serve a social function: RELATIONAL/PHATIC
- interrogatives which have an exclamatory function: RHETORICAL

| Category | Function | Form | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|---|---|
| *EXTERNAL* | asking for information | • *wh*<br>• polar | 235 |
| | asking for advice/opinion | • *wh*<br>• polar<br>• disjunctive | |
| | asking for confirmation | • polar | |
| | requests | • *wh*<br>• polar | |
| *META-DIALOGICAL* | asking for clarification/repetition | • *wh*<br>• polar | 28 |
| *RELATIONAL/PHATIC* | greetings | • *wh*<br>• polar | 15 |
| *RHETORICAL* | expressive<br>(i) awe, admiration and joy<br>(ii) contradiction, anger and contempt<br>(iii) grief, pity and despair<br>(iv) surprise/disbelief<br>(v) mockery | • *wh*<br>• polar | 335 |
| **TOTAL** | | | **613** |

Table 19: Functional classification of interrogatives in *Group I–III* (categories adapted from Freed 1994: 626; category "TALK" changed to "META-DIALOGICAL")
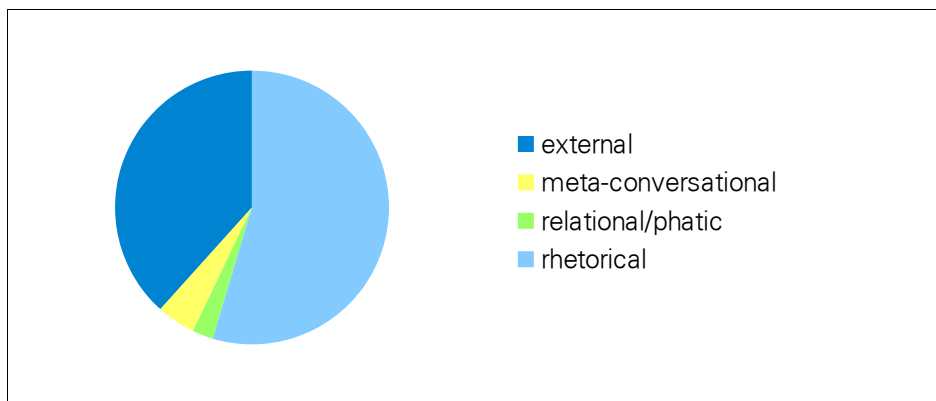


Figure 10: Overall distribution of interrogative functional categories in *Group I–III*

When interrogative forms are furnished with a functional profile, a relation between form and function becomes evident: "polars and tagged declaratives primarily seek confirmation/denial, and *wh*-interrogatives primarily seek information" (Archer 2005: 25). However, it is interesting to note that there is no direct mapping of the functions on the form of questions. As noted above, *wh*-questions are often used for purposes other than asking for information. This proves that the function of interrogatives is context-dependent and "cannot be correlated to a pre-determined *signifiant*" (Schrott 1999: 348). If we consider the individual plays, the Towneley *Crucifixion*

contains most rhetorical questions compared to information-seeking ones, which are, in turn, common in plays with interrogations, such as the York *Conspiracy*. In the case of the Towneley *Crucifixion*, it is the Marys' laments which result in such a high number of rhetorical interrogatives. Hence, unlike in face-to-face conversation (see Biber et al. 1999: 211f.), the external and rhetorical function type are dominant in the current data, while relational and meta-dialogical questions are relatively rare (see *Figure 9*).

A number of taxonomic classifications of question types have been presented by scholars. Functions that questions (and answers) can fulfil in modern spoken or written texts are listed by Fries (1975: 100ff.), Goody (1978: 27), Quirk et al. (1985: 1476ff.), Tsui (1994: 80ff.), Freed (1994: 623ff.), Biber et al. (1999: 211ff.) and finally Hyland (2002: 11ff.) for academic texts. Classifications for Early Modern English texts have been proposed by Claridge (2005: 145) and Wikberg (1975: 15). A number of functions detected by these scholars can also be found in my sample. Similar to Freed's questions in Present-Day English conversation (1994), interrogative acts in the mystery cycles can be arranged along a continuum from information-seeking to rhetorical questions which reflect the interlocutor's expressive style. I have also found resemblances to Early Modern English courtroom discourse. In sum, Middle English interrogatives seem to share some similarities with their Early Modern English but also Present-Day English counterparts.

However, next to the functions given in *Table 19* above, questions may serve dramatic purposes by provoking audience involvement, focusing attention on particular details in the plot and marking authorial emphasis. Further, it is important to remember that the sample generally displays low frequencies of questions, which, apart from some forms such as greetings, often seem consciously and strategically selected by the playwrights. What Wikberg has observed for Shakespeare's works may therefore also hold true for the mystery cycles: "the question-answer patterns [...] were moulded out of the language of the time, but their functions and distribution within the plays were the outcome of the dramatic necessities and, to some extent, the dramatic tradition" (Wikberg 1975: 15).

## 4.3.2 Imperatives

Imperatives are features of interactivity that "are many times more common in conversation than in writing" (Biber et al. 1999: 221; see also Rissanen 1999: 277; Mazzon 2009: 129). They tend to be closely associated with the group of directive speech acts: "Imperatives [...] have been presented as exponents of a directive speech act par excellence" (Aikhenvald 2010: 234). In opposition to other speech acts, directives require the interaction between the speaker and the hearer, as they are intended to provoke an action from the addressee: "The frequent use of

imperatives in conversation is due to the fact that the situation is interactive, with participants often involved in some sort of non-linguistic activity at the moment of speaking" (Biber et al. 1999: 221). Compliance to directives can be implicit (gestural) or explicit (verbal), "and in the latter case with or without overt mention of the intention to comply" (Mazzon 2009: 131). The same holds for the refusal to comply, which may open the way to conflict. As a result, both the directive and the addressee's reaction to it, i.e. compliance or refusal, are to be taken into account when studying such speech acts.

With the notable exception of Davies (1986), the number of comprehensive studies on the English imperative seems to be fairly limited. There are a number of useful treatments of the imperative based on cross-linguistic evidence. Aikhenvald's *Imperatives and Commands* (2010), for example, is a comprehensive study of cross-linguistic patterns of imperatives. Jary and Kissine (2014) provide an introduction to imperatives, focusing on their meaning and directive force, their use as conditionals, and their perception as a distinct semantic type. They stress that syntactic form should be distinguished from illocutionary force: "In fact, one of our leitmotivs will be to urge the methodological and theoretical distinction between imperative forms (and their semantics) and directive forces (and their pragmatics)" (2014: 14).

Apart from brief sections, usually in the 'syntax' part, in various histories of the English language, the study of imperatives in past stages has been largely neglected. By contrast, surveys that focus on directive speech acts in the history of English have been gathering momentum in recent years (e.g. Busse 2002, 2008; Kohnen 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008; Martínez-Flor 2005; Culpeper and Archer 2008; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008; Moessner 2010). Kohnen, in his 2002 paper, investigates the evolution of indirect directives in the Middle English and Early Modern English period. In his article on directives in Old English homilies (2007), he arranges forms of directives into four different classes: performatives, imperatives, modal expressions and indirect manifestations. Kohnen proposes a slightly different categorisation of directive speech acts in his 2008 study, where he suggests that considerations of politeness and face work did not necessarily determine the choice of directive speech acts in Anglo-Saxon England. Kohnen concludes that "more straightforward manifestations of directives, which would often appear as inappropriate or impolite today, seem to have been quite common in previous periods in the history of English" (2008: 27). It is the aim of Moessner's study "Directive Speech Acts" (2010) to identify and analyse instances of directive speech acts in a corpus of Early Modern English and Present-Day English written texts from religious, legal and scientific discourse. For her analysis of the three text

categories, she draws on Blum-Kulka's model, which classifies spoken realisations of requests according to different degrees of directness.[155]

Scholarly contributions to the analysis of imperatives or directive speech acts in drama seem to be focused mainly on Shakespeare. Brown and Gilman (1989) analyse, among other aspects, indirect requests as politeness strategies, which often involve phrases such as *I beseech/entreat/pray you* in Shakespeare's tragedies. Busse (2002), who compares requests with *pray* to those with *please* on the basis of the *OED* and Shakespearean drama, attempts to explain the disappearance of *pray* and subsequent rise of *please* in polite requests. He concludes: "[...] at least in colloquial speech a shift in polite requests has taken place from requests that assert the sincerity of the speaker (*I pray you*, *beseech you*, etc.) to those that question the willingness of the listener to perform the request (*please*)" (2002: 25). In a later study (2008), with a focus on *King Lear,* he tries to determine the relationships that hold between imperatives as a grammatical sentence type and their communicative functions as directive speech acts. Finally, Culpeper and Archer's (2008) investigation of Early Modern English directives draws, like Moessner's (2010) study, on Blum-Kulka's model and applies it to the analysis of directives in two text types: plays (specifically, comedies) and court records between 1640 and 1760.

Once again, my study is primarily a form-to-function study (see Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 13ff.), that is to say, my starting point is to identify imperative forms and then to consider the pragmalinguistic functions associated with them. The illocutionary force of a given construction will be assessed by looking at the context in which it occurs (see Quirk et al. 1985: 831). Moreover, I will take into account various linguistic forms indicating interpersonal relations, such as second-person pronouns, vocatives, interjections, etc. (cf. Busse 2008).

### 4.3.2.1 Overall distribution

Givón has pointed out that "[t]he traditional generic label *imperative* covers a wide range of functionally-related speech-acts and grammatical constructions" (1993: 264). Thus, it seems indispensable to identify the grammatical forms which could be used as imperatives in the texts. Before proceeding, I should mention that punctuation was not helpful in elucidating imperative forms, since exclamation marks are commonly attached to exclamative clauses in the play text editions.

Imperative clauses in Present-Day English are characterised by the use of the base form of the verb, the absence of modals as well as the lack of tense distinction (Quirk et al. 1985: 827;

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155 The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) collected native-speaker data that was gathered from written questionnaires. For further details, see Taavitsainen and Jucker (2008) and Moessner (2010).

Biber et al. 1999: 219; see also Givón 1993: 266). In our Middle English data, imperative verb forms are still morphologically marked, by *-(e)/-(e)th* for the singular and *-(e)s/-(e)th* for the plural. Verbs in the progressive and perfect aspect are much less frequent in Present-Day English conversation than simple aspect verbs (Biber et al. 1999: 461). A Middle English perfect imperative exists only in the form of *have done* (see Fischer 1992: 249):

(57)    **Annas**. <u>Have donne!</u> Bringe forth those theeves two! [Chester 17.41]
        'Have done! Bring forth those two thieves!'

A number of sentences incorporate more than one imperative form. In general, I treated these forms separately. However, items that were strongly connected, i.e. items that can be interpreted as one semantic unit, were regarded as one form (cf. Culpeper and Archer 2008: 49, footnote 3). These include some coordinated verb phrases/clauses (58), as well as items functioning as what Culpeper and Archer call "support moves" (2008: 49) to the following imperative (59).

(58)    **Cain.** […] <u>Go to the dwill, and say I bad</u>! [Towneley 2.94]
        '[…] Go to the devil, and tell him I sent you!'

(59)    **Tertius Pastor**. Trowle, boy, for Godes tree, / <u>come eate</u> a morsell with me; [Chester 7.226–7]
        'Trowle, boy, for God's cross, come eat a morsel with me.'

In Present-Day English, imperatives can be modified by the addition of the tag *will you*, less commonly *would you*, the politeness marker *please*, the auxiliary *do* or the adverb *just* (Biber et al. 1999: 220; see also Quirk et al. 1985: 832). Constructions involving *Do (not)* also existed in Middle English. *Do*-periphrasis combined with an imperative seems to be more emphatic, making a positive imperative more persuasive or insistent (60)–(61). In an investigation of dramatic language in verse, we have to bear in mind that a *do-form* may have been inserted for metrical purposes, in order to add an extra syllable to the line (see Busse 2002: 94).

(60)    **Deus**. Nooe, *as I byd the*, <u>*doo* fulfill</u>: [York 8.45]
        'Noah, as I bid you, do fulfil.'

(61)    **Anna**. <u>*Do* sir bidde tham</u> bring in that boy that is bune. [York 29.207]
        'Sir, do ask them to bring in that knave that is bound.'

Apart from the complexities of some cases, the setting up of an inventory of imperatives required the careful consideration about what to include and what to exclude. Difficulties that I came across, often leading to exclusion, involved the following: Grammatically elliptical forms are usually categorised as verbless imperatives (e.g. Culpeper and Archer 2008: 59; Busse 2008: 87). However, I took the verb form as the most salient surface feature for my imperative clauses.

Moreover, items like *out* and *harrow* seem to have a predominantly expressive-emotive function in the sample, similar to "a self-contained, exclamatory expression" (Fischer 1992: 249). Consequently, I assigned cases as (62)–(63) to the category of 'interjections' which will be dealt with in Section 4.4.1.

*(62)   **Sathanas**. <u>Owt</u>, alas, I am shent! [Chester 18.177][156]
          'Out! Alas! I am damned!'

*(63)   **Secundus Demon**. <u>Out</u>, harrowe! Where is our mighte / that we were wonte to shewe,
          [Chester 1.266-7]
          'Ah, help! Where is our might that we were accustomed to show?'

The main function of *lo* in my material is to draw attention to a physical object on stage (see Støle 2012: 308; see also *MED*, sense 2). In these cases, *lo* is equivalent to the imperative 'look' (64) (see Taavitsainen 1997b: 591). Yet, *lo* was not included if it appeared to function as a discourse marker or mere line-filler (65). For the same rationale, *say* was excluded in many cases (66).

(64)    **Primus Tortor**. […] <u>Lo</u>, *here* I haue a bande, / If nede be to bynd his hande; / This thowng, I
          trow, will last. [Towneley 23.65–7]
          '[…] Look, here I have a cord, if we need to bind his hands. This thong, I believe, will last.'

*(65)   **Rex**. <u>Lo</u> sirs, we lede you no lenger a lite, / Mi sone has saide sadly how that it schuld be-
          [York 31.352–3]
          'Lo, sirs, we shall keep you no longer tonight. My son has firmly said how it should be.'

*(66)   **Judas**. Sir, I mene of no malice but mirthe meve I moste.
          'Sir, I intend no malice; it is mirth I move most!'
          **Janitor**. <u>Say</u>, on-hanged harlott, I holde the vnhende, / Thou lokist like a lurdayne his liffelod
          hadde loste. / Woo schall I wirke the away but thou wende. [York 26.178–81]
          'Look, unhanged scoundrel, I think you are rude. You look like a wretch who has lost his property. Unless you leave, I shall harm you.'

The imperative clause is usually subjectless, which can be attributed to the fact that imperatives are mostly used in contexts where the addressee is apparent. Thus, the subject is usually omitted but understood to refer to the interlocutor (Givón 1993: 266; Biber et al. 1999: 219; Aikhenvald 2010: 66). Specification of the addressee and the use of softening devices are generally rare in modern spoken or written discourse: "less than 20% of all imperatives in conversation and fiction have such features" (Biber et al. 1999: 221). Overt second-person subjects and final vocatives are the most common modifications of imperative clauses in Biber et al.'s Present-Day English data (1999: 221). In the play texts, the addressee is sometimes specified in the form of a second-person pronoun (67) but, more commonly, in the form of a vocative (68) (cf. Busse 2002: 19;

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156 Quotes which are marked by an asterisk contain imperative clauses which were not included in the quantitative survey.

Kohnen 2007: 145; Fischer 1992: 249).[157] When added, the pronoun usually points out the person addressed more distinctly (Fischer 1992: 249) and provides a mildly emphatic tone to the imperative as in example (67) below (Davies 1986: 7). The addition of the pronoun can also serve metrical purposes in the play texts. Similar to modern spoken discourse, the effect of adding a vocative may be to soften or sharpen the command, or just to single out the addressee (Biber et al. 1999: 220). An additional purpose of the "socially rich system of vocatives" (Culpeper and Archer 2008: 74) in the play texts is to mark a particular social relationship in the exchange.

(67) **Caiphas**. <u>Gose dresse *you*</u> and <u>dyng *yoe* hym doune</u>, [York 29.344]
'Get armed and strike him down.'

(68) **Prima Mulier**. *Good moder*, <u>com in</u> sone / ffor all is ouer cast, / Both the son and the mone. [Towneley 3.357–8]
'Good mother, come in soon, for all is overcast, both the sun and the moon.'

A special type of imperative clause is found with the verb *let*, used with a first- or third-person singular or plural pronoun (69)–(71) (see Quirk et al. 1985: 829ff.; Givón 1993: 267; Biber et al. 1999: 219).[158] According to Quirk et al. (1985: 830), imperatives with *let us/let's* and *let me* are common in Present-Day English. In our Middle English data, such constructions appear in fairly low frequency, as the ratios of *Figure 10* below illustrate.[159] According to *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, the plural construction with *let* evolved during the second half of the fourteenth century, gradually replacing the inverted pattern with the subjunctive (72) (Fischer 1992: 248; Rissanen 1999: 279f.; see also Kohnen 2007: 145; Busse 2008: 92). The subjunctive is still common in my sample. In (73), both forms are used next to each other.

(69) **Arckeangelis**. Here for to byde God grante us grace / to please this prince withouten peare; im for to thanke with some solace / a songe now <u>let us singe</u> here. [Chester 1.82–5]
'Here for to remain God grant us grace, to please this prince without equal; to thank him with some rejoicing, a song now let us sing here.'

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157 The verb is usually followed by the pronoun, but preposing of the pronoun is also found in the texts:

**Herodes**. […] No kyng ye on call / Bot on herode the ryall, [Towneley 16.504–5]
'Call on no king but on Herod the royal,'

**Jesus**. My moder mylde, thou chaunge thi chere! [Towneley 23.452]
'My mother mild, change thy cheer!'

158 'Hortative' (or 'adhortative' (Busse 2008)) is a common label for first-person imperatives, while 'jussive' (Givón 1993; Busse 2008) often refers to imperatives directed at a third person (see Aikhenvald 2010: 4).

159 *Let*-constructions are incorporated into the general class of 'imperatives' by Collins' 2004 study based on a Present-Day English spoken and written corpus. Quirk et al. (1985: 830) and Kohnen (2007: 144; 2008b: 298f.) list *let*-constructions together with second-person imperatives under the heading of 'directives'. For Culpeper and Archer (2008: 64, 66), they form a special type of conventional indirect directives. In Blum-Kulka's model (1989), they do not figure at all, but Moessner suggests the "inclusion of *let*-constructions in the type 'imperatives'" (2010: 245) to make Blum-Kulka's model "more powerful" (2010: 245) for further studies on directives.

(70)  **Joseph**. A, I am full werie, lefe, <u>late me slepe</u>, [York 13.251]
'Ah, I am so weary, leave, let me sleep.'

(71)  **Miles 2**. […] <u>Late no man spare</u> for speciall speede / Tille that we haue made endyng. [York 35.91-2]
'[…] Let no man refrain from (using) utmost speed till we have finished (our work).'

*(72)  **Maria 2**. *Goo we* same my sisteres free, / Full faire vs longis his corse to see. [York 38.217–8]
'Let us go together, my kind sisters. We all desire to see his corpse.'

*(73)  **Secundus Pastor**. *Go we now*, <u>let vs fare</u> / the place is vs nere. [Towneley 13.710]
'Let's go now, let's leave; the place is nearby.'

*Tables 20–22* display the overall relative frequencies of imperatives in *Group I–III*. From the tables, one can detect that imperatives are common in the play texts, particularly in *Group III*. The sample contains slightly higher densities than the N-Town plays (average relative frequency: 20.35 vs. 19.07) (see *Tables 23–24*). The York *Crucifixion*, *Herod* and *Dream of Pilate's Wife* show the highest relative frequencies. With fewer than 10 imperatives per 1000 words, the score for the York and Chester *Creation* as well as the Chester *Harrowing* is much lower. This, one might suppose, is a consequence of the goals being pursued within the exchanges (re)presented in the texts. The business of bad, authority characters like Pilate and Herod is largely to utter orders and commands to Jesus, their courtly subjects, soldiers, torturers, etc. This is a communicative strategy which is absent from the texts from *Group II*, where the use of imperatives is mainly restricted to God's exhortations. Within *Group I* and *II*, the York *Shepherds* play and the Towneley *Abel* share a preference for imperatives. The former depicts the shepherds in a range of activities, whose imperatives regularly shape the physical world on stage (e.g. a request that somebody comes or goes, drawing attention to objects on stage). Cain, in contrast, uses a number of derogatory formulae, commands and threats in his exchanges with Abel.

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP | 21.36 (43) | 16.37 (70) | 18.81 (20) | 20.96 (43) | 19.86 (38) | 23.67 (20) | 16.33 (64) | 17.75 (60) | 19.04 (104) |

Table 20: The frequency of imperatives per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP | 17.96 (36) | 6.49 (28) | 21.50 (59) | 8.48 (17) | 5.98 (8) | 15.74 (17) | 15.91 (19) | 18.59 (48) | 29.94 (96) |

Table 21: The frequency of imperatives per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP | 20.17 (61) | 26.47 (72) | 16.24 (43) | 29.39 (100) | 31.26 (148) | 31.21 (112) | 34.22 (68) | 15.67 (41) | 21.31 (77) | 21.30 (71) | 22.14 (76) | 26.34 (116) |

Table 22: The frequency of imperatives per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP | 14.15 (28) | 7.75 (7) | 24.10 (35) | 3.78 (2) | 48.91 (65) | 6.90 (2) | 21.02 (46) | 20.18 (32) | 12.09 (16) |

Table 23: The frequency of imperatives per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP | 22.00 (40) | 32.62 (70) | 23.29 (92) | 15.53 (29) | 14.47 (23) | 21.71 (42) | 16.62 (30) |

Table 24: The frequency of imperatives per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)
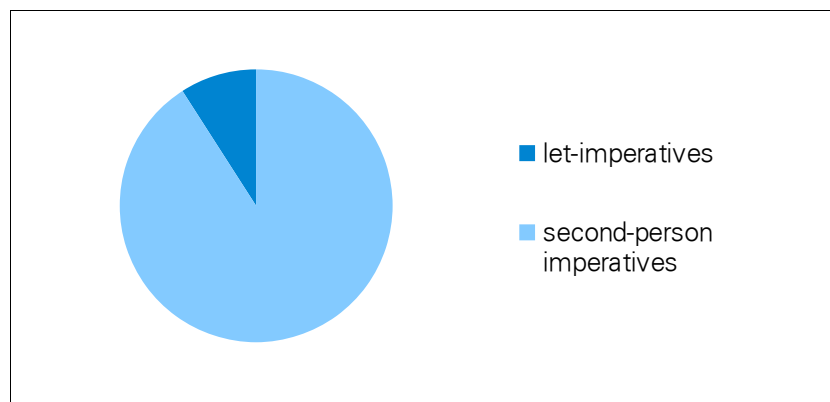


Figure 11: Overall distribution of imperative forms in *Group I–III*

### 4.3.2.2 Functional analysis

<u>a) Directives</u>

Imperatives can be used to issue commands, orders and requests. Such impositive speech acts are performed by the speaker "to influence the intentional behavior of the hearer in such a way that he/she performs, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, the action directly specified or indirectly suggested by the proposition" (Haverkate 1984: 18).[160] As noted in Section 4.3.1 above, requests are usually seen as potentially FTAs: "The attempt of the speaker to make the world fit the words via the hearer collides with the negative face wants of the addressee" (Busse 2008: 88; see also Kohnen 2002: 165, 2008: 27; Busse 2008: 90). For a socially superior speaker, considerations of the addressee's face are superfluous. In the example below from the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Pilate's supreme social position, the formal setting at his court, and the expectation that his will be executed without exception, do not require him to pay any attention to other people's face-wants. His commands are short, unequivocal and regularly appear in clusters, which is typical of the speeches of bad, authority figures in the cycles (see Caiaphas' orders to the knights in the York *Caiaphas* (ll. 396–401)).

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160 Haverkate (1984: 18f.) distinguishes between two sub-classes: impositive and non-impositive directives. The former class refers to more FTAs, such as ordering and requesting, whereas non-impositive directives include advice, recommendations and invitations. The main difference between these two classes lies in the fact that the result of the impositive speech act benefits exclusively the speaker, whereas the result of carrying out a non-impositive speech act is the benefit of the hearer (see also Martínez-Flor 2005: 168). Oddly, Mazzon (2009: 130) applies this distinction between impositive or non-impositive imperatives to her Middle English data by considering whether an appeal to a divine authority is present or not.

(74)  **Pilate**. […] But <u>steppe furth</u> and <u>stonde vppe</u> on hight / And <u>buske</u> to my bidding, thou boy, / And for the nones that thou neven vs a noy.
'[...] But step forth and stand up on height and listen to my bidding, you boy. And for the record give us an "oy".'
**Bedellus**. I am here at youre hande to halow a hoy, / <u>Do move</u> of youre maistir for I shall melle it with myyot.
'I am here at your hand to shout "oy". Do proclaim all your order; for I shall announce it with might.'
**Pilate**. <u>Cry</u> 'Oyas'.
'Cry "Oyez".'
**Bedellus**. Oyas.
'Oyez.'
**Pilate**. Yit efte, be thi feithe.
'Yet again, by your faith.'
**Bedellus**. Oyas!
'Oyez!'
**Pilate**. Yit lowdar, that ilke lede may lithe- / <u>Crye</u> pece in this prese, vppon payne thervppon, / <u>Bidde</u> them swage of ther sweying bothe swiftely and swithe / And <u>stynte</u> of ther stryuyng and <u>stande</u> still as a stone. / <u>Calle</u> Jesu the gentill of Jacob, the Jewe. / <u>Come</u> preste and <u>appere</u>, / To the barre <u>drawe</u> the nere, / To thi jugement here, / To be demed for his dedis vndewe.
'Yet louder, that every man may hear. Cry peace in this crowd, upon pain thereupon. Bid them cease all their noise both swiftly and quickly, and stop their arguing and stand still as a stone. Call Jesus, the descendent of Jacob the Jew. Come quickly and appear. To the bar draw near. To your judgement here, to be judged for his wrongful deeds.'
**Miles 1**. Whe, <u>harke</u> how this harlott he heldis oute of harre, / This lotterelle liste noght my lorde to lowte. [York 30.373–92]
'Oh! Hark how this scoundrel fails to pay homage. This knave does not care to bow to my lord.'

Herod employs a different strategy when he calls on his knights, Sir Grymball and Sir Lancherdeepe, to murder all new-born males (75). He could certainly have issued his commands in a simple and straightforward fashion, reminding the soldiers that disobedience is likely to incur his wrath. Due to his self-importance and elevated social status, we would expect politeness and face work be of small importance to him. Instead, Herod stresses the virility of the task ahead of them in a lengthy speech, and softens his orders through the use of disarming vocatives like *my knightes good and keene* (l. 137) and *my batchleres* (l. 147). The knights express strong disapproval in response to what they believe is an inappropriate request. They complain that killing a boy is beneath their dignity: *But for to kyll such a conjoyne / mee shames sore, by saynct Mahound, / to goe in any place* ('But for to kill such a brat I'm sorely ashamed, by Saint Mahound, to go in any place'; ll. 166–8). Non-compliance is usually considered a sign of disobedience, which would be expected to raise the interlocutor's anger. But in this case, non-compliance is not sanctioned by punishment. Herod neither punishes them for their disobedience nor rants about their reluctance. He assures them that they have to kill *neyther on nor two* (l. 169) but *a thousand and yett moo* (l. 171), and is eventually able to coax them into doing his bidding. Thus, Herod uses deferential strategies as an instrument of power over his subjects while maintaining social distance at the same time (cf. Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 236).

(75) **Herode**. […] Therfore, *my knightes good and keene*, / <u>have done</u> belyve; <u>goe wreake</u> my teene. / <u>Goe slaye</u> that shrewe; <u>lett yt be scene</u> / and you be men of mayne. / Preeves manfully what they binne, / that non awaye from you fleene. / Dryve downe the dyrtie-arses all bydeene, / and soone that there were slayne! / So shall I keepe that vyle [congeon] / that this would reave mee of my crowne. / Therfore, *my batchleres*, <u>make you bowne</u> / and found to save my righte. / You must hye you out of this towne / to Bethlem as fast as you mon. / All knave-children, by my crowne, / you must sley this nighte.
'[…] Therefore, my knights good and keen, have done at once; go avenge my suffering! Go slay that wretch; let it be seen if you are men of might. Test valiantly what sex they are so that no-one flees away from you. Drive down the dirty-arses immediately and soon they should be slain! That's how I shall take care of that vile brat that thus would deprive me of my crown. Therefore, my knights, get ready and attempt to save my right. You must hasten out of this town to Bethlehem as fast you may. All male children, by my crown, you must slay this night.

**Primus Miles**. Alas, *lord and kinge of blys*, / send you after us for this? [Chester 10.137–54]
'Alas, (my) lord and king of bliss, sent you after us for this?'

Apart from expressing commands and requests, imperative clauses in the play texts can be used to express prohibitions and threats. In modern spoken interaction, imperative clauses which are joined by *and* or *or* to the following clause, typically a declarative, may give rise to a conditional implication (see Quirk et al. 1985: 832; Jary and Kissine 2014: 111). In the below cases, the clauses following the imperative represent a threat to the addressee. For example, when the Towneley Noah arrives at home to inform his wife about God's command, Uxor bitterly complains about the ill treatment she has received from him (76). Upon realising that his wife will not obey his orders, Noah tells her to hold her tongue and threatens to make her silent if she does not listen to him. Uxor retorts by threatening Noah in the form of a conditional. When Christ comes to the gates of hell in the Chester *Harrowing*, he is not well received either (77). The Second Demon directly attacks and repudiates Jesus, who does not even bother to react to such words. In both scenes, the vocatives *ram-skyt* and *poplard* serve to aggravate the threat.

(76) **Noah**. We! <u>hold</u>, thi tong, *ram-skyt* / *or I shall the still*.
'Ah! Hold your tongue, ram-shit, or I shall make you still.'
**Uxor**. By my thryft, if thou smyte / I shal turne the vntill. [Towneley 3.217–8]
'As I hope to thrive, if you smite, I shall pay you back.'

(77) **Secundus Daemon**. <u>Go</u> hense, *poplard*, owt of thys place / *or thou shalt have a sorye grace*. / For all thy boaste and thy manace / theise men thou shalt amys. [Chester 18.157–60]
'Go hence, fool, out of this place or you shall have a miserable fate. Despite all your boast and your menace, these men shall you miss.'

The social-personal relations between the interlocutors play a major role in exchanges involving requests and commands. Givón (1993: 265) argues that, on the one hand, questions of status, power, obligation or entitlement between the discourse participants determine the formulation of the impositive. On the other hand, questions of politeness, propriety, respect and fear – or

potential social consequences of inappropriate usage – determine the reaction to impositive acts. If the speaker's power or status is higher than the addressee's, the greater the addressee's obligation to comply, and the speaker's need to be deferent is less pronounced. If, vice versa, the addressee has more power or a higher status, their obligation to comply is lower, and the speaker has to be more deferent (see also Busse 2008: 88).

We find an interesting exception to Givón's rule in the Towneley *Scourging* (78). The dialogue between Pilate and his Third Torturer shows that subjects may sometimes take liberties with their masters. In the scene, Pilate does not attach much importance to the accusations brought against Jesus. As a reaction, the Third Torturer threatens Pilate's positive face by pointing out that Caesar is their *chefe lordyng* (l. 210). Though mitigated by respectful *sir* (l. 210), he then takes the licence of threatening to report the outrages to Caesar, whereupon Pilate capitulates and orders Jesus to be scourged and crucified:

(78)     **Pilate**. […] Bot say, why make ye none obeyng / to hym that all has wroght?
         '[...] But say, why are you not obedient to him who all has wrought?'
         **Tercius Tortor.** Sir, he is oure chefe lordyng / sir Cesar so worthyly wroght / On mold. / Pylate, <u>do after vs</u>, / And <u>dam to deth</u> ihesus / *Or to sir Cesar we trus, / And make thy frenship cold.*
         'Sir, he is our chief lording, Sir Caesar, so powerfully ruling the world. Pilate, do after us, and damn Jesus to death, or to sir Caesar we go, and make your friendship cold.'
         **Pilate**. Now that I am sakles / of this bloode shall ye see; / Both my handys in expres / weshen sall be; / This bloode bees dere boght I ges / that ye spill so frele. [Towneley 22.209–18]
         'That I am blameless of this blood shall you see. Both my hands expressly washed shall be. This blood is dearly bought, I guess, that you spill so freely.'

In Present-Day English, direct commands, or what Brown and Levinson would call "bald-on-record strategies" (e.g. 1978: 94ff.), sound blunt and harsh and are therefore frequently regarded as impolite (Busse 2002: 17ff.). To tone down the directness or abruptness of orders, speakers commonly employ mitigating elements in imperative utterances (Busse 2002: 18f., 2008: 86). Givón states: "With the use of such devices, the imperative may gradually shade into request, plea, begging, suggestion, or a weak expression of preference" (1993: 268). The interrogative as a mitigating element that softens the impositive force has already been addressed in Section 4.3.1 above. Another means to convey greater overt politeness are performatives added to imperative sentences: "In Present-Day English *suggest/advise* performatives are typically used as strategies of negative politeness to mitigate the face threats of speech acts" (Kohnen 2008: 40). This kind of conventionalised indirectness seems to have been a typical feature of Middle English interaction as well.[161]

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161 I only included performatives preceded or followed by an imperative. Compare the two examples from the York *Noah*:

Yet, it should not be overlooked that the speech act verbs contained in a performative construction may differ with regard to the level of obligation expressed with it, ranging from suggestions and polite requests to direct commands.[162] As Kohnen notes, "[...] performatives can be seen among the more face-threatening manifestations of directives (unless the speech act verb is one of begging, suggesting etc.)" (2007: 151). The directives in examples (79)–(80) are uttered by speakers in a powerful, superior position, and the addressees have basically no choice but to obey. Jesus tells his archangel Michael to chain the devil to a cell and then commands Satan to sink (79). Caiaphas orders his soldiers to go out and arrest Christ (80).

(79)     **Jesus**. Mighill myne aungell, <u>make the boune</u> / And <u>feste</u> yone fende that he noght flitte. / And, Deuyll, *I comaunde the* <u>go doune</u> / Into thy selle where thou schalte sitte.
'Michael, my angel, make him bound, and tie down that fiend that he shall not flee. And, devil, I command you, go down into your cell where you shall sit.'
**Satan**. Owt! Ay herrowe! Helpe, Mahounde! [York 37.338–42]
'Out! Ah, help! Help, Mahound!'

(80)     **Caiphas.** *I charge you* <u>chalange</u> youre rightis, / To wayte both be day and by nyghtis / Of the bringyng of a boy into bayle.
'I charge you, challenge [be alive to] your rights, to keep watch both by day and by night for bringing the knave into misery.'
**Miles 1.** Yis lorde, we schall wayte if any wonderes walke, / And freyne howe youre folkis fare that are furth ronne. [York 29.24–8]
'Yes, lord, we shall keep watch if any unusual things are happening, and enquire how your folk fares that are gone out.'

Quote (81) from the York *Building of the Ark* represents an instruction in a more mitigated tone. The context tells us that Noah's first reaction upon hearing God's request to build the ark is that he is not able to fulfil this task. With polite expressions, Noah cautiously draws God's attention to

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**Noe**. […] <u>Wende</u> forthe thi course *I comaunde the*, / And werly watte, and yther the wynd [York 9.217–8]
'Go forth your way, I command you, and carefully know, and hither make your way.'

*****Noe**. […] þou doufe, *I comaunde the*, / Owre comforte to encresse. [York 9.240–1]
'[…] Dove, I command you to increase our comfort.'

162 Kohnen notes that those performatives which make "the tentativeness of the addressor's intention explicit (*suggest*, *advise*)" (2008: 40) could not be found in his Old English data. The mystery playwright(s) did use such face-saving performatives fairly often. However, the performative verb *rede* sometimes does not denote advice, that is to say, it does not mitigate the request. In fact, $r\bar{e}den$ in the following examples rather implies a warning or threat.

**Joseph**. […] Tels me the sothe, *rede I*; / And but yoe do, iwisse, / Þe bargayne sall yoe aby. [York 13.111–3]
'Tell me the truth, I advise. Unless you do, you shall surely pay the price!'

**Uxor**. [...] Yit *reede I* no man let me, / Ffor drede of a knok. [Towneley 3.344–5]
'Still I advise no man to stop me, for fear of a knock.'

Here, it is helpful not to consider the illocutionary force of the performative in isolation but together with the following or preceding imperative, in order to interpret the directive as a whole.

his extreme old age and infirmity. But in this case, the refusal to comply is temporary. When God insists, and reiterates his offer to help in the building with a polite performative, Noah finally complies. *I byd the hartely* can possibly be classified as a 'hedged performative', where "the requestive force [is] semantically modified through the choice of performative verb" (Culpeper and Archer 2008: 72; see also Culpeper and Kytö 1999: 297). Culpeper and Archer remark: "Verbs such as *beg, plead, crave* and *beseech* do not conventionally express the same power dynamics as verbs such as *demand*, *order*, *command* or *ask*" (2008: 72). According to them, polite performatives have in common that the speaker uttering the request is in a less powerful position than the addressee (2008: 72), which is clearly not true for the example from the York play:

(81)    **Deus**. Noe, *I byd the hartely* <u>haue</u> no thought, / I sall the wysshe in all thi werke, / And even to itt till ende be wroght; / Therfore to me <u>take hede</u> and <u>herke</u>. / <u>Take</u> high trees and <u>hewe</u> thame cleyne, / All be sware and noght of skwyn,
'Noah, I bid you heartily, distress you not. I shall guide you in all your work, and even to the end I shall see it brought. Therefore to me take heed and listen. Take high trees and cut them clean, with square and not slanted ends.'
[...]
**Noe**. A, blistfull lord, that al may beylde, / I thanke the hartely both euer and ay; [York 8.69–74,89–90]
'Ah, blissful Lord, that all may defend, I thank you heartily, ever and always!'

However, the performatives *praye* and *beseke* in quote (82)–(83), indeed, suggest a reversed power situation. Here, the performatives with the meaning of beseeching, of asking humbly, clearly have a softening effect. In dialogue excerpt (82), Noah sends his sons to help subdue their mother. Despite Japhet's polite request, his mother will not board the ship unless she has her gossips with her. The construction *wee praye you* gives Japhet's imperative the force of an appeal. In example (83), the knight's use of a polite performative fails to impress the Beadle, who is guarding the threshold of Pilate's residence.

(82)    **Japhett**. Mother, *wee praye you all together-* / for we are here, your owne childer- / <u>come</u> into the shippe for feare of the wedder, / for his love that [you] bought.
'Mother, we pray you all together – for we are here, your own children – come into the ship for fear of the weather, for his love that you bought.'
**Noes Wyffe**. That will I not for all your call / but I have my gosseppes all. [Chester 3.237–42]
'That will I not for all your call, unless I have my gossips all.'

(83)    **Bedellus**. O, what javellis are ye that jappis with gollyng?
'Oh, what rogues are you, that play tricks with shouting?'
**Miles 1**. A, goode sir, <u>be noyot wroth</u>, for wordis are as the wynde.
'Ah, good sir, be not angry, for words are like the wind.'
**Bedellus**. I saye, gedlynges, <u>gose bakke</u> with youre gawdes.
'I say, troublemakers, go back with your jests.'
**Miles 2**. <u>Be sufferand</u> *I beseke you*, / And more of this matere yhe meke yowe.
'Be patient with us, I beseech you, and to this matter pay attention.'

> **Bedellus**. Why, vnconand knaves, an I cleke yowe, / I schall felle yowe, be my faith, for all youre false frawdes. [York 30.238–44]
> 'Ah, ignorant knaves, if I catch you, I shall strike you, by my faith, for all your (false) frauds.'

Herman has claimed that conflict talk has high dramatic value as it produces tension and suspense, and provokes the involvement of the audience: "Inter-personal intensity, affectivity and degrees of mutuality can be manipulated within the give and take of speech" (1995: 137). Conflict talk is especially marked in the confrontation between Jesus and the high priest in the York *Caiaphas* (84). When Caiaphas tries to persuade Jesus to reply to his queries and even begs and prays him, he seems outwardly polite and lends his wording additional force by invoking *grete God that is liffand* (l. 300). This gives rise to the idea that "overt politeness expressed by hollow honorific expressions and true, genuinely felt concern for other persons and its linguistic expression are two different things" (Busse 2008: 112). Interestingly, the tone of the hedged performative *I coniure the kyndely and comaunde the also* (l. 299) is polite but determined at the same time. Jesus calmly confirms that he is God's son. Caiaphas does not recognise this plain, honest answer, but feels deeply insulted by the disobedience of this *boy* (l. 349) and reacts with an outbreak of rage, changing his idiom to direct, blunt address. The elaborate rhetoric of his seemingly respectful interrogation turns into unmannerly diction when he openly accuses him of *fowly defam[ing]* (l. 306) his father and addresses him contemptuously with the abusive vocative *faitoure* (l. 305). In this scene, it is not the refusal to comply to an imperative which opens the way to conflict. In contrast to the York *Herod*, for example, Jesus gives answers to all the accusations. In fact, Caiaphas' requestive strategies fail because his personal power is not recognised and/or is considered to be meaningless by Jesus. Note that both interlocutors use informal *T*-pronouns towards each other.

(84)　**Caiphas**. [...] Boy, <u>be not agaste</u> if we seme gaye. *I coniure the kyndely and comaunde the also*, / By grete God that is liffand and laste schall ay, / Yf thou be Criste, Goddis sonne, <u>telle</u> till vs two.
　　'[…] Boy, be not fearful if we seem impressive (in dress). I engage you kindly and command you also – by great God that is living and last shall forever – if you are Christ and God's son, tell us.'
　　**Jesus**. Sir, thou says it thiselffe, and sothly I saye / þat I schall go to my fadir that I come froo / And dwelle with hym wynly in welthe allway.
　　'Sir, you say it yourself, and truly I say that I shall go to my father that I come from, a nd dwell with him worthily in bliss always.'
　　**Caiphas**. Why, fie on the faitoure vntrewe, / Thy fadir haste thou fowly defamed. [York 29.298–306]
　　'Ah, fie on you, trickster untrue! Your father have you foully defamed!'

As could expected in religious drama, the imperative is very frequently used for appeals to divine authorities. At the end of the prayer which opens the Towneley play, Noah uses *I pray the* in his appeal to God. Traugott and Dasher have noted that such parenthetical uses of *I pray thee/you* as in

(85) might be used not primarily with a force of an explicit performative, but rather as a polite request formulae expressing deference, i.e. intersubjective attitude: "This seems especially likely when the addressee is God and is named, and in particular when something of direct benefit to SP/W [speaker/writer] is being asked for" (2005: 254). For them, the combination of parenthetical *I pray you* with an imperative is a first step in the development towards the pragmatic marker *pray*.

(85)   **Noah**. […] Noe thi seruant, am I / lord ouer all! / Therfor me and my fry / shal with me fall; / Saue from velany / and bryng to thi hall / In heuen; / And kepe me from syn, / This warld, within; / Comly kyng of mankyn, / *I pray the* here my stevyn! [Towneley 3.65–72]
'[…] Noah, your servant am I, lord over all! Therefore, me and my children who fall with me, save from evil, and bring to your hall in heaven, and keep me from sin within this world. Noble king of mankind, I pray you, hear my voice!'

Directive performatives and the canonical imperative, which explicitly state an obligation, have been deemed to be rather direct and impolite. *Let*-constructions, by contrast, are generally regarded as less coercive, less intruding (Givón 1993: 267; Busse 2008: 93). In fact, they have been classified as strategies of positive politeness redressing FTAs. The use of an inclusive form like *let's* involving both the speaker and the addressee is subsumed under strategy 12 in Brown and Levinson's inventory of positive politeness tactics: "Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity" (1987: 127f.; see also Busse 2008: 93).

First-person inclusive *let*-imperatives prototypically involve a suggestion for shared action by the speaker and addressee. Kallia draws attention to the fact that although suggestions concern the interests of the addressee, some form of face threat is still involved. Like requests, the speech act 'suggestion' can threaten the hearer's negative face "since a hearer may feel obliged to comply with a suggestion in order not to hurt the feelings of the speaker, who thinks favourably of the act" (2005: 218). Martínez-Flor agrees: "the speaker is in some way intruding into the hearer's world by performing an act that concerns what the latter should do" (2005: 169). To avoid comparing politeness out of context, Moessner prefers to use the parameter strength of illocutionary force to describe the difference to second-person imperatives: "The directiveness of *let*-constructions is less strong than that of ordinary imperatives" (2010: 239).

In Section 4.2.1, I have already remarked on the sharp, effective distinction between Annas and Caiaphas in the Wakefield Master's play of the *Buffeting.* In dialogue excerpt (86), Annas counsels patience and tries to convey to Caiaphas that killing Jesus would be a rash decision violating juridical boundaries. He sees another, legal way of achieving their objectives. Annas expresses his advice in respectful, cooperative *let*-imperatives, but is instantly rebuked with *Nay, I myself shall hym kyll* (l. 216) which illustrates that Caiaphas is impatient and not only willing, but irrationally eager to set aside Judaic law in Jesus' case. Their discussion continues throughout the entire play, as Annas keeps reminding Caiaphas that they are forbidden to sentence a man to

death in their positions, while Caiaphas argues that Jesus' claim of divine authority represents treason and therefore justifies his verdict. He would like to thrust out Christ's eyes, strike off his head, hang him and, when restrained, urges on the torturers. Annas carries on in deferential style, addressing Caiaphas by the honorific appellations *sir* (e.g. l. 305) and *good sir* (e.g. l. 301), while opposing and controlling his companion at the same time. If we consider the imperatives, we may note that Annas loses his patience with Caiaphas in the course of the dialogue, visible in the switch from *let*-constructions to increasingly succinct imperatives: *take tent to my sawes*; (l. 292), *do as ye hett me* ('do as you promised me'; l. 301), *let be* (l. 315), *abate* (l. 320), *here* (l. 321), *hark!* (l. 327). Annas eventually succeeds in persuading him. Compliance is signalled in Caiaphas' first and only *let*-construction at the end of the exchange: *Let vs make hym agast / and set hym in awe* ('let's make him afraid and set him in awe'; l. 335).

(86)  **Anna**. Sir, speke soft and styll, / <u>Let vs do as the law will.</u>
'Sir, speak soft and still. Let us do as the law will.'
**Cayphas**. Nay, I myself shall hym kyll, / And murder with knokys.
'No, I myself shall kill him and murder with knocks.'
[...]
**Anna**. Abyde, sir, / <u>Let vs lawfully redres</u>.
'Wait, sir, let us lawfully redress.'
**Cayphas**. We nede no wytnes, / Hys self says expres; / Whi shuld I not chyde, sir [Towneley 21.214–17, 271–4]
'We need no witness. He himself says thus. Why should I not scold, sir?'

According to Culpeper and Archer, the example above would be typical in that it involves an exchange between powerful people of high status: "It is this social context – discourse between friends of high status – that is a distinctive feature of *let*-requests" (2008: 68). In their Early Modern English *Sociopragmatic Corpus* (*SPC*), conventional indirect requests (of the types: *will you* VERB, *[If] [you/he] [will] please [to]* [VERB/*that*], or *you may* VERB) and *let*-requests are commonly used by relatively powerful people as regards status, role or both, or intimates of high status (2008: 77; see also Archer 2010: 387). If the power relation is reversed, as in their example of a servant addressing her mistress in the *SPC* drama data, they look for case-specific explanations, namely that "mistresses often had a special, private and intimate relationship with a female servant, in which the normal power asymmetries were suspended" (2008: 68). In fact, we do find a similar case in the dialogue between Pilate and the Beadle, where the servant addresses his master twice with *let*. The overall pattern in my Middle English data, however, differs from Culpeper and Archer's results. The evidence from my sample suggests that, at least in Middle English, *let*-requests are (still) promoted by speakers with less power. In fact, *let*-constructions in the cycle texts are used most commonly by intimates of low social status.

The dialogue below (87), for example, covers an exchange between the brothers Cain and Abel. In this scene, Cain responds to Abel's friendly greeting with a sequence of insults: *Com kis myne ars, me list not ban* ('Come kiss my ass! I don't want to swear/curse you'; l. 59), *And kys the dwillis toute* ('And kiss the devil's ass!'; l. 63), *Go grese thi shepe vnder the toute* ('Go grease your sheep's ass!'; l. 64). Abel refers to him tenderly with terms of positive politeness, such as *brother* (e.g. l. 66) and *good brother* (l. 132). His imperatives have the illocutionary force of pleas and suggestions. Abel invites Cain to come along with him and pay their tithes together: <u>*Com furth, brothere, and let vs gang*</u> / *To worship god; we dwell full lang;* / *Gif we hym parte of oure fee* (ll. 74–6). A speaker who uses the first-person plural pronoun includes himself in the directive addressed to the interlocutor. Abel thus asserts that the obligation to God applies to himself as well. He receives much colder replies from Cain, in the form of plain, bald-on-record commands, threats and curses, which all reinforce the intense aggression in his words. Abel's *let*-requests, by contrast, are generally intended to convey his desire to establish a harmonious, cooperative relationship between himself and his brother. As his disappointment grows, however, he switches from *let*-constructions to impositives: *Brother,* <u>*com furth*</u>, *in godis name*, (l. 144). Later, he resorts to performatives (*I reyde thou*) ('I advise you'; ll. 257, 270) to reinforce his requests. These represent more direct appeals to Cain to comply with his directives. Remarkably, there is only one instance of a polite *let*-request (l. 301) in Cain's speech. This particular request seems part of a perfidious strategy to lure his brother into a false sense of security, as it occurs shortly before the murder. The final rude, unredressed imperatives mirror again Cain's typical mode of speech: *Yei,* <u>*ly ther old shrew, ly ther, ly*</u>*!* ('Yes, lie there, old scoundrel, lie down, lie!'; l. 330).

(87)    **Abel**. *Leif brother*, <u>let vs be walkand</u>; / I wold oure tend were profyrd.
'Dear brother, let us go. I wish our tithe were offered.'
**Cain**. We! wherof shuld I tend, leif brothere? / Ffor I am ich yere wars then othere,
'Ah! Whereof shall I pay tithe, dear brother? For each year, I fare worse than others.'
[...]
**Abel**. *Leif brother*, <u>say not</u> so, / Bot <u>let vs furth togeder go</u>; / *Good brother*, <u>let vs weynd</u> sone, / No longer here I rede we hone.
'Dear brother, don't say so, but let us go forth together. Good brother, let us go soon. I advise that we delay here no longer.'
**Cain**. Yei, yei, thou langyls waste; / The dwill me spede if I haue hast,
'Yes, yes, you chatter in vain! The devil help me if I hurry.'
[...]
**Abel**. *Brother*, <u>com furth</u>, in godis name, / I am full ferd, that we get blame; [Towneley 2.106–9, 130–5, 144–5]
'Brother, come forth, in God's name. I am afraid that we'll get blamed.'

The examples (88) and (89) represent cooperative exchanges between speakers of low social status. *Let*-constructions are particularly common in the shepherds' plays, where they convey invitations rather than straightforward commands. In the Chester play, four hitherto silent

shepherd boys, who do not appear elsewhere in the play, emulate their masters in offering gifts to the Infant Christ. The First Boy proposes, with the use of *lett us*, that they all should pray *unto yonder chyld* (l. 599). Again, the plural *let*-imperatives signal solidarity and a good, cooperative relationship between the discourse participants. The boys' plural *let*-constructions may also be interpreted in terms of positive politeness strategies, as they not only include themselves as participants in the activity (strategy 12), but also claim common ground by indicating that they share specific interests, goals and values (strategy 7) with their companions (Brown and Levinson 1987). All of this can be considered a further display of order and harmony, typical of the final exchanges in the shepherds' plays of all cycles.

(88)  **The First Boye**. Nowe to you, my fellowes, this doe I saye, / for in this place, or that I wynde awaye: / unto yonder chyld <u>lett us goe praye</u>, / as our masters have donne us beforne.
'Now to you, my companions, this do I say in this place, before I go away: unto yonder child let us go pray, as our masters have done before us.'
**The Second Boye**. And of such goodes as wee have here, / <u>lett us offer</u> to this prince so dere, / and to his mother, that mayden clere, / that of her body hasse [him] borne. [Chester 7.597–604]
'And of such goods as we have here, let us offer to this prince so dear, and to his mother, that maiden pure, that of her body has him borne.'

Similarly, in all mystery play collections, the torturers from the Passion plays make frequent use of first-person imperatives. Prior to placing Christ on the cross, the four soldiers from the York *Crucifixion* briefly discuss the task at hand. From the very beginning, it becomes clear that the prisoner not only has to be killed, but that the execution has to take place quickly: *Sir knyghtis, take heede hydir in hye, / This dede on dergh we may noght drawe*. ('Sir knights! Take heed hither in haste! We must not delay to do this deed'; ll. 1–2). The soldiers' main focus in the subsequent lines is that the group needs to be working and that time is of the essence: *He muste be dede nedelyngis by none* ('He must be dead by noon'; l. 15). Thus, the task that the men embark upon requires the cooperativeness of the interlocutors, and the *let*-requests, again, illustrate their joint course of action. Accordingly, the soldiers decide to divide the work of fixing each part of Christ's body on the cross, hoping to complete the task in a shorter amount of time:

(89)  **Miles 1**. Thanne to this werke vs muste take heede, / So that oure wirkyng be noght wronge.
'Then to this task we must take heed, so that our work be not wrong.'
**Miles 2**. None othir noote to neven is nede, / But <u>latte vs haste</u> hym for to hange.
'No need to mention any other matter. But let us haste to make him hang.'
**Miles 3**. And I haue gone for gere goode speede, / Bothe hammeres and nayles large and lange.
'And I have gone for good gear, with speed: both hammers and nails large and strong.'

> **Miles 4**. þanne may we boldely do this dede. / Commes on, <u>late kille</u> this traitoure strange. [York 35.25–32]
> 'Then we may boldly do this deed. Come on, let's kill this impudent traitor!'

Constructions with *let me* are traditionally analysed as so-called 'periphrastic imperatives' (see e.g. Kohnen 2007: 144), where *let* serves only as an introductory (imperative) marker of the following verb. Jary and Kissine have analysed such forms as "self-addressed injunctions" (2014: 29) rather than directives: "First-person imperative verbal forms [...] are typically used to express an intention of the speaker's, or the thought that she is about to perform an action" (2014: 29; see also Aikhenvald 2010: 74). This is exactly what we observe in the following examples from the Chester *Shepherds* (90) and Towneley *Abel* (91). Both the Third Shepherd and Cain express their will/intention to do something.[163]

(90)   **Tertius Pastor**. Owt, alas, hee lyes on his loynes! / But <u>lett mee goe</u> now to that lad. / Sheppardes he shames and shendes, / for last now am I owt shad. [Chester 7.266–9]
'Ah, alas! He lies on his limbs. But let me go now to that lad. Shepherds he shames and harms, for last now am I isolated [singled out].'

(91)   **Cain**. We! com nar, and hide myne een; / In the wenyand wist ye now at last, / Or els will thou that I wynk? / Then shall I doy no wrong, me thynk. / <u>Let me se</u> now how it is- / Lo, yit I hold me paide; / I teyndyd wonder well bi ges, / And so euen I laide. [Towneley 2.225–32]
'Ah! Come near and cover my eyes! In the waning (moon) [a mild curse], know you now at last! Or do you want me to close my eyes? Then shall I do no wrong, I think. Let me see now how it is – Look, I am pleased; I paid my tithe extremely well by guess-work, and so I laid down (the sheaves) exactly.'

Kohnen (2004) has claimed that in the vast majority of *let*-constructions in Middle and Early Modern English, *let* had the status of a full verb with the sense of 'allow', 'permit' or 'cause'. In quotes (92)–(93), *let* is the main verb (in the imperative) and equivalent in meaning to 'allow'. What is expressed with the *let*-construction would be 'allow me to go my way' in (92) and 'allow me to see some consolation' in (93). In other words, these constructions would not be first-person imperatives or hortatives but simply second-person imperatives. Kohnen states: "While these constructions are still imperatives and in most cases directives, they are different in that they are focused on the addressee and – apparently – on the addressee's approval" (2004: 159). He adds that *let* is similar to other hearer-based directives like *can you/would you/could I* because it "invokes a strategy of approval (involving the ability or volition of the addressee)" (2004: 172). Similarly, Aijmer lists *let me* under "requests in the form of permission questions" (1996: 161, 163), and attributes the illocutionary force of a suggestion to the construction (see also Culpeper and Archer 2008: 64; Moessner 2010: 239). Studies of modern languages, like Aikhenvald's (2010:

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163 The examples where *let* functions as a "self-addressed injunction" were not counted as directives but placed in the non-directive category (see *Table 25* below).

73), equally state that first-person singular imperatives have permissive meaning and are often used for mild requests.

(92)  **Secundus Tortor**. […] This dede must nedys be done, / And this carll be dede or noyn, / And now is nere myd day; / And therfor help vs at this nede / and make vs here no more delay.
'[…] This deed must be done, and this churl dead before noon; and now is near midday. And therefore help us in our need and make no more delay.'
**Symon**. I pray you do youre dede / and <u>let me go</u> my way; / And I shall com full soyn agane, / To help this man with all my mayn, / At youre awne wyll. [Towneley 22.384–91]
'I pray you, do your deed and let me go my way; and I shall come full soon again to help this man with all my might, at your own will.'

(93)  **Luciffer**. […] What saye ye, angels all that bene here? / Some comforte soone now <u>let me see</u>.
'[…] What say you, all angels that are here? Some consolation soon now let me see.'
**Vertutes**. Wee will not assente unto your pride / nor in our hartes take such a thoughte; [Chester 1.132–5]
'We will not assent unto your pride, nor in our hearts take such a thought.'

The permissive meaning, which is equivalent in meaning to 'allow', plays an even larger role for third-person imperatives. Jary and Kissine define them as follows: "Third-person imperatives are used in order to issue directive speech acts where the performer of the desired action is a third party, i.e. neither the speaker nor the addressee" (2014: 30). In our texts, however, the forms rarely make a third person take action. The construction either involves the addressee(s) (94), or asks the addressee to allow the third person to take action (95)–(96).[164]

(94)  **Miles**. […] Sen we are comen to Caluarie / <u>Latte ilke man helpe</u> nowe as hym awe.
'[…] Since we have come to Calvary, let each man help now as he should.'
**Miles**. We are alle redy, loo, / þat forward to fulfille. [York 35.7–10]
'We are all ready, lo, that duty to fulfil.'

(95)  **Jesus**. þis steede schall stonde no lenger stoken: / Opynne vppe, and <u>latte my pepul passe</u>.
'This place shall no longer be locked up. Open up, and let my people pass!'
**Diabolus 1**. Owte! Beholdes, oure baill is brokynne, / And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras- [York 37.192–5]
'Out! Behold, our wall is broken, and burst are all our bands of brass.'

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164 Modern-day uses of third-person imperatives often seem to be an expression of wishes, preference, or resignation towards states or events: "This is clear from the fact that there may be no hearer present, or that the hearer may have no control over the third-person subject of the exhortative clause" (Givón 1993: 268). For Jary and Kissine (2014: 38), such *let*-cases are therefore best characterised as 'optatives', that is, mere expressions of desire (cf. Aikhenvald 2010: 75). They name the following examples:

(a) Let it rain tonight.
(b) Let the team not lose this time.

(96)     **Marye**. […] Alas, theeves, why doe ye soe? / Slayes ye mee and <u>lett my sonne goe</u>. / For him suffer I would this woe / and <u>lett him wend awaye</u>. [Chester 17.261–4]
'[…] Alas, thieves, why do you so? Slay me, and let my son go – for him I would suffer this woe – and let him go away.'

Non-impositive speech acts like advice or warnings and, even more so, offers or permissions may be classified as instances of positive politeness. From the speaker's point of view, they show the speaker's care for the interests of the hearer: "Sentences which tell somebody to do something for their own good are not impolite at all, and should hence rather be considered as offers or invitations" (Busse 2002: 19). In Chester's *Fall of Lucifer*, God creates the orders of angels, advises them to remain humble, reminds them of the *dongion of darkenes which never shall have endinge* (l. 74) and departs warning no one to touch his throne (97). In quote (98), Herod calls his messenger Preco and sends him to his *doughtie and comely knightes* (l. 45) to summon them. For his help, the king offers him a fine garment. In the Towneley *Crucifixion* play, Joseph respectfully asks Pilate for the body of Jesus. Provided that Christ is really dead, Pilate permits him to take the body (99). In all examples, compliance to the warning, offer, or permission, respectively, is openly signalled, with vocatives and the insertion of adverbs and other reinforcers as declarations of subservience.

(97)     **Deus**. Nowe seeinge I have formed you soe fayer / and exalted you so exelente- / and here I set you nexte my cheare, / my love to you is soe fervente- / <u>loke</u> you fall not in noe dispaier. / <u>Touche not</u> my throne by non assente. / All your beautie I shall appaier, / and pride fall oughte in your intente.
'Now, seeing I have formed you so fair and exalted you so (excellent) – and here I set you next to my throne, my love to you is so fervent – look you fall not in despair. Touch not my throne by no agreement. All your beauty I shall destroy, if pride fall at all in your will.'
**Luciffer**. Ney, *lorde*, that will we not in deed, / for nothinge tresspasse unto thee. / Thy greate godhead we ever dreade, / and never exsaulte ourselves soe hie. [Chester 1.86–97]
'No, Lord, that will we not in deed, for nothing trespass unto you. Your great Godhead we will always dread, and never exalt ourselves so high.'

(98)     **Herod**. Messingere, for thy good deede / right well shall I quite thy meede: / <u>have</u> here of mee to doe thee speede / right a gaye garmente.
'Messenger, for your good deed I shall right now pay you a reward. Have here of me, to make you prosper, a fine garment.'
**Preco**. *Grantmercye*, *lord regent*; / well am I pleased to myne intent. / Mightye Mahound that I have ment / keepe you in this steede! [Chester 10.77–84]
'Thank you, (reigning) lord. Well am I pleased to my intent. May mighty Mahound that I have meant keep you in this place!'

(99)   **Josephus**. Ffor my long seruyce I the pray / Graunte me the body-say me not nay- / Of ihesu, dede on rud.
'For my long service I pray you, grant me the body – say me not nay – of Jesus, dead on the cross.'
**Pilate**. I graunte well if he ded be, / Good leyfe shall thou haue of me, / <u>Do</u> with hym what thou thynk gud.
'I grant (this) gladly if he is dead. Good leave shall you have of me. Do with him what you think good.'
**Josephus**. *Grammercy, syr*, of youre good grace, / That ye haue graunte me in this place; [Towneley 23.641–8]
'Thank you, sir, for your good grace that you have granted in this place.'

<u>b) Non-directives</u>

Imperatives do not necessarily signal directive illocutionary force:

> Discussions of the meaning and force of imperatives typically start by pointing out that these are morphosyntactic forms geared towards expressing requests and commands, quickly noticing in a second step that there are several uses that go beyond this alleged core function. (Siemund 2015: 936)

It can be difficult to draw the line between directive and non-directive speech acts. Apart from *let me* as "self-addressed injunction" (see above), greetings and farewells are amongst the more challenging examples, since these have not the illocutionary force of a command. Greetings and farewells are not linked to an action under the addressee's control, and therefore cannot be categorised as attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something (Jary and Kissine 2014: 65ff.; see also Aikhenvald 2010: 234, 241). Examples (100)–(101) are evidently formulaic expressions, idiomatic tokens of 'speech etiquette' with a phatic function (Aikhenvald 2010: 235; see also Davies 1986: 57).

(100)   **Maria 3**. As we haue herde so schall we saie. / Marie oure sistir, <u>haue goode daye</u>. [York 38.265–6]
'As we have heard, so shall we say. Mary, our sister, have good day.'

(101)   **Doctor**. […] The byrth of Christe, feare and honest, / here shall yee see; and <u>fare yee well</u>. [Chester 5.454–5]
'[…] The birth of Christ, fair and honest, here shall you see; and fare (you) well.'

Similar considerations apply to imprecations: "Here, too, it is difficult to see how the addressee is put under an obligation" (Siemund 2015: 936). It has therefore been claimed that curses are emotive-expressive rather than directive in their underlying motivation (see Jary and Kissine 2014: 69; Aikhenvald 2010: 244). Apart from Cain (see above), Noah's wife and the Chester shepherds' Garcio show a predilection for cursing and swearing:

(102)   **Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. Who makys sich a bere? / now <u>walk in the Wenyand</u>. [Towneley 3.405]
'Who makes such a noise? Now walk in the waning moon [bad luck to you]!'

(103)  **Garcius**. <u>Gole thee to groyns and grownes</u>! [Chester 7.262]
       'Howl on with grimaces and groans!'

As Archer (2010: 394) has pointed out, insults (past and present) can be remarkably ritualised and conventional, or original, innovative and thus dependent on the context (see also Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000: 74, 2013: 105f.). The Towneley plays frequently employ sayings, proverbs and proverb-like utterances, traditional stories and folk tales, which were probably familiar to the audience, as they are often merely alluded to in the texts and not spelled out in full. Meredith has commented on the Wakefield Master's use of proverbs: "Not only does he use them as a typical part of human language, but he uses them naturally; they are character-creating, not merely decorative [...]" ([2]2008: 171; see also Spearing [2]1990: 155). In the following quote from the Towneley *Abel*, Cain's bitterness and repugnance finds expression in the sharpness of a proverb. To him, "the priest calling for tithe from the peasants […] is no better than the fox leering hungrily at geese (Edminster 2005: 65f.).

(104)  **Cain**. How! <u>let furth youre geyse, the fox will preche</u>; [Towneley 2.84]
       'How! Let forth your geese, the fox will preach (When the fox preaches, beware the geese).'

Finally, physical violence, which is a regular feature of the comic action in medieval religious drama, may be expressed by imperatives which can clearly not be interpreted as performing directive speech acts:

(105)  **Prima Mulier**. […] <u>Have thou this</u>, thou fowle harlott [Chester 10.353]
       '[…] Have you this, you foul scoundrel!'

(106)  **Noe**. Welcome, wyffe, into this boote.
       'Welcome, wife, into this boat.'
       **Noes Wyffe**. <u>Have thou that</u> for thy note! [Chester 3.245-6]
       'Have (you) that for you reward!'

### 4.3.2.3 Discussion of results

Overall, the result of my analysis is that almost all imperative forms from the Chester, York and Towneley collection can be classified as directives according to speech act theory. The category "non-directive" entails only 62 (i.e. 3.49%) of the imperatives in the play texts:

| Category | Function | Form | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|---|---|
| DIRECTIVES | • prohibitions/threats<br>• orders/commands<br>• pleas/requests (of permission)<br>• suggestions<br>• invitations/offers/permissions<br>• advice/recommendations<br>• warnings | • *let*-imperatives<br>• second-person imperatives | 1713 |
| NON-DIRECTIVES (greetings, farewells, curses…) | | • *let*-imperatives<br>• second-person imperatives | 62 |
| **TOTAL** | | | **1.775** |

Table 25: Functional classification of imperatives in *Group I–III*

The illocutionary force of the directives from my sample varies; they may realise a number of illocutionary acts, ranging from orders and commands to pleas, offers and suggestions (see *Table 25* above), as is the case in Early Modern English (Busse 2008: 88, 94) and Present-Day English (Quirk et al. 1985: 831). The main function of the imperatives in the cycles is clearly to perform impositive speech acts. In order to soften the impositive force of the directives, the characters from the play texts sometimes employ deferential strategies to tentatively phrase orders and requests, including the addition of mitigating elements such as (hedged) performatives. 161 occurrences of the type 'imperative' in the sample are constructions with *let* which seemed to have already developed uses similar to the modern ones. There are examples of *let*-requests in the dialogues between intimates of both high and low social status, but the overall figures are low. Indirect directives such as interrogative structures with directive force are even less common. In Present-Day English, such indirect speech acts are frequently employed to minimise the imposition on the addressee. Culpeper and Archer, however, suggest that Middle and Early Modern English were still oriented towards a 'positive politeness culture', where "the lack of distance associated with impositives, particularly imperatives, has neutral or even positive value" (2008: 77). Their evidence implies that up to the Early Modern English period "indirectness and politeness cannot be taken as necessary correlates" (2008: 76). They report an "overwhelming dominance of impositive strategies" (2008: 76) which were employed by all speakers regardless of their social power and status. Archer states that requests may be less subject to cultural and historical variation than other speech acts, "[b]ut this does not prevent them from displaying an interesting direct-to-(more)-indirect evolution, which appears to be linked with the change from a positively oriented politeness culture (historically) to a negatively oriented politeness culture

(today)" (2010: 384; see Culpeper and Archer 2008: 77). Hence, the high frequency in the sample of the most direct request strategy – the mood derivable (*come into the shippe*) – does not necessarily place the play texts closer to the pole of 'communicative distance'. Of course, we should be careful to classify certain linguistic structures from the past as impolite, face-threatening or the opposite: "not even for contemporary language is there any certainty about whether politeness formulae are always uttered with the intention of being polite" (Mazzon 2009: 133).

## 4.3.3 Lexical repetition

Repetition in discourse is "a ubiquitous phenomenon" (Stati 1996: 167) that is "fundamental to language" (Norrick 1996: 129). In fact, all discourse is structured by repetition, in the sense that "any utterance echoes prior utterances" (Tannen 1987: 216; see also Johnstone et al. 1994: 13). For Bazzanella, "[t]he constitutive ambiguity of repetition arises from its unstable balance between variance and invariance" (1996: ix). Different elements are juxtaposed, and automatic reproduction is combined with creative variation of the original theme (Norrick 1996: 129). For Svennevig (2003: 287), repetition always involves a process of interpretation. As a result, the speech act performed by the previous utterance is not necessarily echoed by the repeated one (Bazzanella 1996: ix).

The "universality and pervasiveness" (Bazzanella 1996: vii) of repetition has been highlighted by research across different disciplines, from rhetoric to phonology, psycholinguistics, literary studies, discourse and conversation analysis (see Shimojima et al. 1998; Straniero Sergio 2012: 28). Scholars have distinguished between two kinds of repetition: self-repetition[165] (see Stati 1996; Culpeper and Kytö 2010; Straniero Sergio 2012) and dialogic repetition[166] (see Johnstone1994; Bazzanella 1996; Merlini Barbaresi 1996). Self-repetition, the type that has been traditionally studied as a rhetorical device since antiquity, is characteristic of monologues and horizontal relations in dialogues, while in dialogic repetition, speakers reproduce items uttered by their interlocutors.

Self- and dialogic repetition have been investigated in various interactional contexts (among others, Norrick 1987; Bazzanella 1993; Johnstone 1994; Perrin et al. 2003; Tannen 2007). Many scholars (e.g. Chafe 1982; Ong 1982; Gumperz 1982; Tannen 1984, 2007) have described how repetition creates interpersonal involvement in spoken discourse. Norrick (1996) analyses the interactional role of repetition in conversational joking. Bazzanella (1993), Norrick (1987) and Perrin et al. (2003) have attempted to categorise the functions of dialogic repetition. As for repetition in

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165 Also called "auto-repetition" (Frédéric 1985), "same-speaker repetition" (Norrick 1987), or "monological repetition" (Bazzanella 1996).

166 Also referred to as "other-repetition" (Shimojima et al. 1998; Svennevig 2004), "second-speaker repetition" (Norrick 1987), "allo-repetition" (Herman 1995) or "diaphonic repetition" (Perrin et al. 2003; Mazzon 2009).

dramatic dialogue, Culpeper and Kytö (2010) have investigated the forms and functions of lexical self-repetition in the Early Modern English drama texts of their corpus. Seven chapters in Johnstone's (1994) two-volume anthology *Repetition in Discourse* investigate echoic structures in literary, planned discourse, albeit focusing on modern drama. Another study on modern drama dialogues is Stati's investigation of automatic and argumentative functions, such as "active moves" (1996: 171f.) designed to persuade the interlocutor. Most valuable to the present purpose has been Mazzon's (2009: Chapt. 5.2) concise analysis of dialogic repetition in her study of dialogue sequences in the N-Town collection.

Research on repetition has traditionally placed emphasis on oral exchanges. For Norrick, repetition "is endemic in everyday conversation" (1987: 245), and predominantly reflects "the exigencies of face-to-face conversation" (1987: 248). Bazzanella confirms that "[r]epetition, as can be easily seen, is pervasive in oral exchanges" (1993: 287). Utterances in spoken face-to-face conversation are produced online, often (and especially in informal situations) without pre-planning. This imposes online-processing demands on speakers, who can only modify their utterances through self-correction. In conversational interaction, lexical repetitions tend to appear as non-fluency features, including so-called 'needless repetitions' and 'restarts' (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 143). According to Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), performance-level repetitions might be said to be a violation of the Maxim of Manner, since on the surface they create 'unnecessary' redundancy.[167] However, Herman claims that in spoken discourse, even 'unintentional' repetitions have some functionality and "perform some operation on a previous utterance" (1995: 155; see also Norrick 1987: 246). Many cases that appear to be 'needless' or unintentional may in fact serve a conversational purpose, such as holding the floor as a filler (Bazzanella 1993: 291).

It is clear that written text types in contrast with spoken texts contain only few repetitions which can be classified as performance 'errors'. Prescriptive stylistic conventions, present in many literary traditions, result in a tendency to reject repetition of words and phrases, and thus to avoid redundancy (Bazzanella 1996: xvi; Stati 1996: 127). Still, in Culpeper and Kytö's analysis of Early Modern English dialogues (2010), drama emerges as the text type with the highest density of lexical repetition. Culpeper and Kytö suggest that instances of self-repetition should not be classified as "unconscious non-strategic items" (2010: 146), since they are employed by the dramatists for particular reasons. Short notes: "if features normally associated with normal non-fluency do occur, they are perceived by readers and audience as having a meaningful function precisely because we know that the dramatist must have included them on purpose" (1996: 177). Herman stresses that the use of repetition in drama may be "equally prolific, if not more copious"

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167 See Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 143) for a discussion of repetition in the light of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986).

(1995: 156) than in spoken interaction, "since all sorts and conditions of persons in fictional situations, different dramaturgies and historical conventions of language use further complicate dramatic uses" (1995: 156). He adds that repetition in both oral and written exchanges focuses attention on interactivity and cooperation (1995: 156). Such interactional functions are, of course, more evident in the plays which deliberately imitate spontaneous face-to-face interaction (see Stati 1996: 172).

### 4.3.3.1 Overall distribution

It can be seen from *Tables 26–28* that repetition is rare in my core sample (197 occurrences, average relative frequency: 3.38), and slightly more common in the N-Town control groups (average relative frequency: 5.03) (see *Tables 29–30*). Only two of the plays under investigation contain more than twenty cases; in two plays, we find no instances of repetition at all. Dialogic repetition is more common than self-repetition in my play texts, but the figures are still very low. The York *Fall of Man* from *Group II* displays the highest relative frequency. The beginning of this short play is characterised by the subtly realised, carefully interwoven dialogue between Eve and Satan. Both echo the wording of their interlocutor several times and thus display their mutual involvement in the interaction, which is much more distinct than in Adam and Eve's subsequent dialogue when both have been seduced. The second largest proportion of dialogic repetitions can be found in the York *Harrowing*, followed by the Chester *Crucifixion*.

The identified cases reiterate previous utterances, but most of them are no verbatim reports but re-wordings and re-elaborations of the propositional content.[168] Re-elaboration, in particular, as Diani explains, signals much more cooperation than repetition "as it functions as a powerful feedback for the progression of the communicative interaction" (2000: 377; see also Mazzon 2009: 125). In some cases, it was problematic to detect whether a particular repetition actually constituted a response or reaction to a preceding utterance. I decided to omit structures which were not unambiguous echoes of the prior speaker's speech. When the same expression(s) recurred in more than two turns, I counted this as one instance of dialogic repetition. Overall, my quantitative analysis did not yield statistically significant results because of the limited number of cases. Even more importantly than in previous sections, the quantitative method therefore needs to be supplemented by a qualitative analysis.

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168 Such re-wordings or reformulations are sometimes referred to as 'repeats' (e.g. Jefferson 1972: 303; Svennevig 2003: 286f.).

| TEXT REP | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| self | - | 0.47 (2) | - | - | 1.05 (2) | - | 0.26 (1) | 1.18 (4) | - |
| dialogic | 0.50 (1) | 5.14 (22) | - | 0.49 (1) | 2.61 (5) | 5.92 (5) | 1.28 (5) | 1.48 (5) | 0.37 (2) |
| TOTAL | 0.50 (1) | 5.61 (24) | - | 0.49 (1) | 3.66 (7) | 5.92 (5) | 1.53 (6) | 2.66 (9) | 0.37 (2) |

Table 26: The frequency of repetition per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT REP | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| self | - | 1.16 (5) | - | 1.50 (3) | 2.24 (3) | 1.85 (2) | - | 0.77 (2) | 3.74 (12) |
| dialogic | 4.49 (9) | 3.71 (16) | 2.19 (6) | 0.50 (1) | 1.50 (2) | 6.48 (7) | - | 6.20 (16) | 2.60 (6) |
| TOTAL | 4.49 (9) | 4.87 (21) | 2.19 (6) | 2.00 (4) | 3.74 (5) | 8.33 (9) | - | 6.97 (18) | 5.61 (18) |

Table 27: The frequency of repetition per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT REP | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| self | 3.31 (10) | 2.21 (6) | 0.78 (2) | 0.88 (3) | 0.84 (4) | 1.67 (2) | 0.50 (1) | - | 0.83 (3) | - | 0.58 (2) | 1.36 (6) |
| dialogic | 2.64 (8) | 4.41 (12) | - | 3.82 (13) | 2.53 (12) | 1.67 (6) | 2.01 (4) | 4.97 (13) | 0.83 (3) | 0.60 (2) | 1.46 (5) | 2.27 (10) |
| TOTAL | 5.95 (18) | 6.62 (18) | 0.78 (2) | 4.70 (16) | 3.38 (16) | 2.23 (8) | 2.52 (5) | 4.97 (13) | 1.66 (6) | 0.60 (2) | 2.04 (7) | 3.63 (16) |

Table 28: The frequency of repetition per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT REP | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| self | 0.51 (1) | 2.21 (2) | 6.20 (9) | - | - | - | 0.91 (2) | 1.26 (2) | 0.76 (1) |
| dialogic | 6.06 (12) | 8.86 (8) | 4.82 (7) | 7.56 (4) | 0.75 (1) | - | 5.94 (13) | 3.78 (6) | 2.27 (3) |
| TOTAL | 6.57 (13) | 11.07 (10) | 11.02 (16) | 7.56 (4) | 0.75 (1) | - | 6.86 (15) | 5.04 (8) | 3.02 (4) |

Table 29: The frequency of repetition per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT REP | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| self | 0.55 (1) | 3.73 (8) | 0.25 (1) | 4.28 (8) | 2.52 (4) | 0.52 (1) | 1.66 (3) |
| dialogic | - | 0.93 (2) | 1.27 (5) | 3.21 (6) | 0.63 (1) | 6.20 (12) | 2.77 (5) |
| TOTAL | 0.55 (1) | 4.66 (10) | 1.52 (6) | 7.50 (14) | 3.14 (5) | 6.72 (13) | 4.43 (8) |

Table 30: The frequency of repetition per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

### 4.3.3.2 Functional Analysis

Repetition has various functions to perform: cognitive, textual, stylistic, interactional, ritualistic, stylistic or didactic (see e.g. Norrick 1987; Tannen 1987; Bazzanella 1993, 1996).[169] These functional categories are not mutually exclusive; in fact, multiple functionality is common: "For a large class of cases, if not for repetition generally, several potential or actual motivations for recycling preceding speech coexist simultaneously" (Norrick 1987: 247; see also Straniero Sergio 2012: 28). Hence, when I assign a function to an echoic structure in my sample, I am citing the predominant property in the given context.

<u>a) Self-repetition</u>

The aim of this study is to investigate lexical repetition as an interactional resource. Therefore, I will only briefly discuss exact repetitions of words or phrases that are immediately adjacent and produced by the same speaker.[170] One-word repetitions are most frequent in the present sample. There are only a few instances of two-, three- or four-word repetitions. Similar to Culpeper and Kytö's (2010: 152) results for Early Modern English dialogues, personal pronouns, determiners and conjunctions, which are the most common items for repetitions in Present-Day English, hardly occur in my play text data. Instead, the words *nay, out* and *alas* dominate throughout the play cycles; with the latter two marking expressive outcries and the former marking a speaker's reaction to the addressee's discourse. As for their position, most self-repetitions occur turn-initially as reactions to the preceding conversation or action, but there are cases which are found within or at the end of turns.

The most common function of self-repetitions in my sample is the expressive or emotive one. Expressive repetitions tend to indicate the speaker's emotional involvement. In the Chester *Harrowing*, the Second Demon asks if Jesus is the man who raised Lazarus out of the fire and thus already removed one soul from hell. When Satan confirms *this ys hee that would conspire anonne to reave us all* ('this is he who would conspire anon to rob us all'; ll. 139–40), the Third Demon cries out, quaking with fear, and begs Satan not to allow Jesus to enter hell (107). The repetition of *out* and *alas* colourfully displays the alarm of the lesser demons. At the same time, these outcries contribute to the characterisation of the devils' weakness and inferiority that will eventually eliminate any chance of demonic victory at the harrowing.

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169 For an overview of the functions of repetition, see Bazzanella (1993: 290f.), who provides a list of functional categories (cognitive, textual, stylistic, argumentative, conversational, interactional, and ethnic) with different micro-functions, in order to construct a general taxonomy for both self- and dialogic repetition.

170 Following Culpeper and Kytö (2000a: 179, 2010: 142, footnote 2), a word is here orthographically defined as a string of letters bounded by spaces, which means that examples like *ha* are included in the analysis.

(107) **Tertius Daemon.** <u>Owt, owt</u>! <u>Alas, alas</u>! / Here I conjure thee, Sathanas, / thou suffer him not come in thys place / for ought that may befall. [Chester 18.141–4]
'Out, out! Alas, alas! Here I charge you, Satan, you allow him not to come to this place for all that may happen.'

Self-repetitions are frequently used as responses to a previous speaker's utterance in adjacency pairs, which is the dominant function in Culpeper and Kytö's (2010: 147) Early Modern English material. Such repetitions may signal attention, involvement and agreement, or contradiction and opposition. In my sample, disagreement clearly predominates over agreement and confirmation (12 vs. 2 occurrences). In quote (108), Simon of Cyrene (cf. Matthew 17:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26) refuses to carry the heavy cross to Calvary and alleges his haste, whereupon the First Torturer protests with *Nay, nay!* (l. 373) and tries to press him for pity's sake.

(108) **Symon**. Good syrs, that wold I fayn / bot for to tary were full loth.
'Good sirs, I would gladly remain, but to tarry I am reluctant.'
**Primus Tortor**. <u>Nay, nay</u>! thou shall full soyn be sped; / Lo here a lad, that must be led, / Ffor his yll dedys to dy, / And he is bressed and all for bled, / That makys vs here thus stratly sted; / We pray the, sir, for-thi, / That thou will take this tre / bere it to caluary. [Towneley 22.372–9]
'No, no! You shall full soon be ready. Look, here's a lad that must be led to die for his ill deeds. And he is bruised and bleeding all over. That makes us here sorely beset. We pray you, sir, therefore, that you will take this cross and bear it to Calvary.'

Self-repetitions in directives occur only in four texts. In the Towneley *Crucifixion*, the torturers urge each other to pull harder as they try to attach Jesus' arms to the cross. The imperatives and ellipses contribute here to the lively and seemingly effortless dialogue that accompanies the lively stage action of the scene:

(109) **Tercius Tortor.** Yee, & bryng it to the marke.
'Yes, and bring it to the mark.'
**Quartus Tortor**. <u>Pull, pull</u>!
'Pull, pull!'
**Primus Tortor**. Haue now! [Towneley 23.189–91]
'Have [hold] now!'

Self-repetitions as possible performance 'errors' can be found only in plays from the Chester cycle. The presence of a comma in all of these instances indicates that these are not typographical errors (Culpeper and Kytö 2000a: 180). Nevertheless, these cases convey the spontaneity characteristic of spoken language only to a very limited degree, as all of these performance 'errors' should be interpreted as "authorial pragmatic devices" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 145) with certain purposes and meanings. Accordingly, in the case of (110), Herod's 'unintentional' repetition of *yett* may reflect his nervous, agitated state of mind right after he has sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to find

and kill the potential rival king, i.e. the newborn Christ. The audience witnesses a king whose *witt is in a were* (l. 253) not because of his cruel, unscrupulous command to his soldiers but because of the threat to his powers and rights as a monarch, a position which will eventually bring down divine wrath upon him.

(110)   **Herode**. [...] But <u>yett, yett</u> my witt is in a were / whether you shall fynd that losingere. / But speedes you fast for my prayer, / and hye you fast agayne. [Chester 10.253–6]
'[...] But yet, yet my mind is in confusion whether you shall find that deceiver. But hurry to fulfil my request, and hasten back again.'

*Table 31* adapts Culpeper and Kytö's functional categorisation of lexical self-repetitions; I added the group of 'openings/greetings'. The unclassified group includes counts (e.g. *sevyn, sevyn* (Towneley 2.210)) as well as indeterminate cries and noises such as *sym, sym* (Chester 7.480).

| Function | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|
| Expressive | 23 |
| Response | 16 |
| Vocative | 12 |
| Directive | 5 |
| Performance 'errors' | 5 |
| Intensifying | 4 |
| Openings/Greetings | 3 |
| Laughter | 1 |
| Unclassified | 6 |
| **TOTAL** | **75** |

Table 31: Functional classification of self-repetitions in *Group I–III* (adapted from Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 147; category 'openings/greetings' added)

b) Dialogic repetition

Even though the focus of this section will be on the interactional uses of dialogic repetition, the widely studied structural and stylistic functions (e.g. Norrick 1987; Bazzanella 1993; Tannen 2007; Straniero Sergio 2012) will also be taken into account. Bazzanella has pointed out that the function of a dialogic repetition has to be interpreted with consideration of the interactional context: "it is only in the context of the conversational exchange and in the global speech act that the complex phenomenon of repetition can be studied, exactly in the same way as it is understood in everyday discourse" (1993: 289). Thus, similar to the previous section, my functional analysis will incorporate references not only to the utterance of the previous speaker that conditions the repetition but sometimes to the whole episode where the dialogue takes place.

I have decided not to distinguish between dialogic repetitions signalling agreement, and those with an acknowledging, taking into account function. For Perrin et al., the difference between a positive reply and acknowledgement is the position of the speaker who "not only reproduces the other's assertion, but also assumes responsibility for the assertion" (2003: 1851) when he seeks to convey agreement. Examples such as (111) from the York *Shepherds* probably come closest to the neutral taking into account function in my data. But the First and Second Shepherd not only acknowledge what their friend has said but also expand and confirm his statement. In these cases, I found it impossible to draw the line between a receipt of information and a marker of emotional stance (see Svennevig 2004). In the light of my findings, it makes more sense to list the taking into account function under 'positive reply' or 'agreement' (see Norrick's (1987) classification).[171] Bazzanella's categorisation (1993) is marked by a functional scale which emphasises the "double polarity" (1995: viii) of repetition by passing from complete agreement to complete opposition through different levels. In her taxonomy, 'information receipts' are also not categorised separately, but integrated into the agreement-disagreement scale.

(111)    **Pastor.** [...] And in <u>Bedlem</u> hereby / Sall that same barne <u>by borne</u>.
'[…] And in Bethlehem hereby shall that same boy be born.'
**Pastor 2**. Or he <u>be borne</u> in burgh hereby, / <u>Balaham</u>, brothir, me haue herde say, / A sterne shulde schyne and signifie / With lightfull lemes like any day.
'Before he will be born in the town hereby, Bethlehem, brother, I have heard say, a star would shine and signify delightful gleams as bright as day.'
[...]

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171 Mazzon interprets two quotes (1)–(2) from the N-Town collection as examples of Perrin et al.'s taking into account function:

*Cleophas*: ȝe *wold haue thought* on hym <u>many a day</u>.
*Lucas*: <u>Many a day</u> ȝa ȝa iwys… [38.200–1]

'– You would have thought about him many a day – Many a day, yes, yes, indeed'

*Christ's Soul*: Fals devil, I here þe <u>bynde</u> / in <u>endless sorwe</u> I þe <u>wynde</u> / þerin <u>evyrmore to dwelle</u> / Now þu <u>art bownde</u> þu mayst not fle / For þin envious cruelté / in endless dampnacyon xalt þu be / and <u>nevyr comyn out of helle</u>
*Belial*: Alas Herrow Now I <u>am bownde</u> / in helle gonge to ly on grounde / in <u>hendles sorwe</u> now am <u>Iwounde</u> / in care <u>evyrmore to dwelle</u> / In helle logge I ly alone / Now is my joye awey al gone / For all fendys xul be my fone / I <u>xal nevyr com from helle</u> [35.50–64]

'– False devil, I here bind you! I entangled you in endless pain, to dwell there forever. Now you are bound, you cannot flee! For your envious cruelty you will be in endless damnation, and never come out of hell again! – Alas! Harrow! Now I am bound, in hell's pit to lie on the ground, in endless pain now I am plunged, in sorrow evermore to dwell! In hell's lodge I lie alone, now my joy is all gone away, for all devils will be by foes, I will never come out of hell!' (2009: 125, 129)

I believe that both Lucas' and Belial's echoes also express agreement, or at least a reinforcement of the original statement. Perrin et al.'s themselves conclude that in their corpus of spoken dialogues, "[n]one of the repetitions were identified as solely fulfilling the taking into account function" (2003: 1858).

> **Pastor 3.** *3a forsothe*, this is the same, / Loo whare that lorde is layde / Betwyxe two bestis tame, / Right als <u>the aungell saide</u>.
> 'Yes, indeed, this is the same. Look where that lord is laid: between two beasts so tame, right as the angel said.'
> **Pastor 1**. <u>The aungell saide</u> that he shulde saue / This worlde and all that wonnes therin, [York 15.11–6, 96–101]
> 'The angel said that he should save the world, and all that live therein.'

Similar to quote (111), the three affirmative echoic responses quoted below (112)–(114) spotlight and expand the original utterance in order to signal acknowledgement but also agreement and rapport. When Pilate asks Procula for a kiss, she expresses her obedience (112). After kissing her, Pilate reiterates some of her words, conveying their mutual affection in this parody of courtly love (see Section 4.2.1.2). His joy and admiration for his wife are reinforced by the repetition of the "emotionally loaded" (Støle 2012: 274) interjection *howe* and the affectionate vocative *felawys* which may be an address to the audience.

(112) **Uxor**. To fulfille youre forward my fayre lorde <u>I am fayne.</u>
    'To fulfil your command, my fair lord, I am happy.'
    **Pilate**. *Howe*, *howe*, *felawys*! Nowe *in faith* <u>I am fayne</u> / Of theis lippis so loffely are lappid In bedde is full buxhome and bayne. [York 30.49–52]
    'Ho, ho, fellows! Now, in faith, I am eager to be kissed by these lips so lovely. In bed she is very gentle and willing.'

The beginning of the Chester *Innocents* depicts a parody of chivalry and worldly authority in the corrupt court of king Herod. Right before the dialogue quoted below (113), Herod had given his messenger a precious garment for his services. Seeing Herod's apparent generosity, the knights hasten to flatter and pay tribute to him; they call Herod *the fayrest* (l. 86)*, non soe seemely* (l. 88) and *comely kinge* (l. 89). Their parodic adoration demonstrates that, compared to the Infant Christ, Herod, *crowned in gould* (l. 89), is only a king in costume. The theme of 'divine kingship' but also the abuse of sovereignty recur in various Chester, York and Towneley plays, keeping the circulation of power in focus throughout the cycles. The repetition of key words and phrases is used for emphasis and may indicate the author's conscious intention to highlight key points in the play.

(113) **Primus Miles**. Sir Lancherdeepe, what saye ye? / This is <u>the fayrest king</u> that ever I see.
    'Sir Lancherdeep, what do you say? This is the fairest king that ever I saw.'
    **Secundus Miles**. This daye under the sunne shininge / is there <u>non soe seemely a kinge</u>.
    'This day under the sun shining is there none so seemly a king.'
    **Primus Miles**. Hayle, <u>comely kinge</u> crowned in gould! / <u>Eche kinge</u> and [kesar] kennes not your bett. [Chester 10.85–90]
    'Hail, comely king crowned in gold! Each king and emperor knows none better than you.'

Annas' echoing of Caiaphas' words in quote (114) primarily reflects shared dispositions, attitudes and intentions. Both of them are determined to draw as much amusement as they can from

Jesus' interrogation. As in the crucifixion scenes, the iterative use of the word *game* emphasises that the villains of the cycle plays refashion torture as an amusing pastime.

(114)   **Caiphas**. Pese now sir Anna, be stille and late hym stande, / And late vs grope yf <u>this gome be grathly begune</u>.
'Silence now, sir Annas, be still and let him stand. And let us interrogate if this game is correctly begun.'
**Anna**. Sir, <u>this game is begune of the best</u>, / Nowe hadde he no force for to flee thame. [York 29.208–11]
'Sir, this game is begun of the best. Now had he no force to flee from them.'

Apart from the function of agreement and involvement, the dialogue where Nicodemus offers to accompany Joseph to petition Pilate for Jesus' body may fulfil an additional purpose (115). In this case, the 'redundancy' was probably triggered by the interruption of the dialogue sequence. The stage direction *They go to Pilate* perhaps indicates that there was a short break when Pilate's court had to be set up on stage, and Nicodemus' repetition of Joseph's words would open up the action again. Thus, the material circumstances of the performance may sometimes have made repetition inevitable (cf. Mazzon 2009: 125).

(115)   **Josephus.** [...] Nychodeme, I wold we yede / To sir pilate, if we myght spede, / <u>His body for to craue</u>; / I will fownde with all my myght, / Ffor my seruyce to aske that knyght <u>His body for to graue</u>.
'[…] Nicodemus, I suggest we go to sir Pilate, if we hurry, to demand his body. I will attempt with all my might, for my service to ask that knight his body to bury.'

*[They go to Pilate.]*

**Nichodemus**. Ioseph, I will weynde with the / Ffor to do that is in me, / <u>Ffor that body to pray</u>; [Towneley 23.623–31]
'Joseph, I will go with you to do whatever I can for that body to request.'

All these affirmative echoes may serve as an example of what Watts (1987) has termed 'text sharing', a form of cooperative verbal behaviour, in which speakers align their position with that of their interlocutors.[172] In Perrin et al.'s words, these positive replies "express agreement with the interlocutor's discourse and thereby make it one's own by reproducing it"(2003: 1855). Dialogic repetition may be one way of establishing or confirming common ground with the co-interactant and therefore might be classified as a positive politeness strategy, i.e. a form of linguistic behaviour intended to emphasise closeness and cooperation in the interpersonal relationship (see

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172 My examples are not typical representatives of Watts' concept of "text sharing" which usually involves "intervention and consequent overlap" (1989: 141). In none of my quotes does the second speaker interrupt the previous speaker. However, the speakers actively display common ground with the co-interactant. These dialogic repetitions are thus not merely supportive expressions of the type known as 'back-channel behaviour', merely indicating to the interlocutor that the listener is still attending (Watts 1987: 43).

Brown and Levinson 1987: 101ff.; see also Bazzanella 1993: 288). At the same time, the repetitions and re-elaborations in the responses of Pilate, Annas and Nicodemus display their active listenership and make their participation in the interaction tangible (Herman 1995: 154; see also Bazzanella 1993: 291).

When repetition is used in positive replies, agreement is often expressed through additional markers. The affirmative particle *yes* (116), oaths (117) and adverbs (118) can all reinforce degrees of supportive ratification of another's utterance. Positive replies sometimes allow a reduction of forms in the form of ellipsis. Very rare are echoic responses with pro-forms; we only find a few examples in our text (119)–(120).

(116)  **Josephe**. [...] <u>Have we companye of thee</u>, / we will hye one our waye.
'[…] If we have the company of you, we will hasten on our way.'
**Angelus**. *Yea*, <u>companyc we shall you beare</u> / tyll that you be commen there. [Chester 10.267–70]
'Yes, company we shall you bear until you have arrived there.'

(117)  **Caiphas**. Bewschere, thou sais the beste and so schall it be- / But <u>lerne yone boy</u> bettir to bende and bowe.
'Good sir, you say well, and so it shall be – But teach this knave better to bend and to bow.'
**Miles 1**. We schall <u>lerne yone ladde</u>, *be my lewté* / For to loute vnto ilke lorde like vnto yowe. [York 29.358–61]
'We shall teach this knave, by my faith, how to honour a lord like you.'

(118)  **Domina**. Mi lorde, he tolde nevir tale that to me was tendand, / But with wrynkis and with wiles <u>to wend me my weys</u>.
'My lord, he has never told news that to me was tending [were about me], but [is always trying] with legal deceits and tricks to get me to go my way.'
**Bedellus**. *Gwisse*, of <u>youre wayes to be wendand</u> itt langis to oure lawes. [York 30.66–8]
'Indeed, for you to go your way, it belongs to [is in accord with] our laws.'

(119)  **Adam.** [...] <u>For I am naked</u> as methynke.
'[…] For I am naked, it seems to me.'
**Eue**. Allas Adam, <u>right so am I</u>. [York 5.113–4]
'Alas, Adam, so am I!'

(120)  **Secundus Pastor**. <u>God</u> graunt vs that grace. /
'God grant us that grace.'
**Tercius Pastor**. <u>God so do</u>. [Towneley 12.468–9]
'God so do.'

According to Stati (1996: 169), repetition in answers to requests show close attention to what the co-interactant is saying, and so often indicate interest and deference. This is clearly reflected in Pilate's son's response to his father's command (121). Pilate wants him to take care of Procula and report to him *if any tythyngis betyde* (l. 118). Pilate's son is, of course, obliged to be deferential towards his parents. The formal address term *sir* and the polite plural pronoun *you* emphasise the expression of compliance and respect.

(121) **Pilate**. Take tente to my tale thou turne on no trayse, / Come tyte and telle me <u>yf any tythyngis betyde</u>.
'Pay attention to my order; deviate in no way. Come quickly and tell me if anything happens (to her).'
**Filius**. <u>Yf any tythyngis</u> my lady <u>betyde</u>, / I schall full sone <u>sir</u> witte <u>you</u> to say. [York 30.117–20]
'If anything happens to my lady I shall at once, sir, let you know.'

Commands and directives, in general, are frequently followed by echoic responses. In the Chester play, Moses is instructed to carve the tablets of God's law anew (122). The repetition of core phrases in this dialogue strongly imply that these lines were chosen for emphasis. The presenter figure had announced to the audience at the beginning of the play that only the *moste fruitefull* (l. 47) episodes will be performed. The scene's importance is further enhanced by an explicit Latin stage direction following God's speech. Apparently, the actor was directed to mime carving the tablets on stage: *Tunc Moyses faciet signum quasi effoderet tabulas de monte et, super ipsas scribens, dicat populo* ('Then Moses shall make a sign as if he were carving out the tables from the mountain and, writing upon them, shall say to the people:'). Dialogic repetition in the Chester *Moses* therefore occurs at a pivotal point in the narrative and contributes to making its nature and importance recognisable by the audience. At the same time, such positive replies to commands and directives contribute "to the closing of the exchange by signalling the success of the current negotiation" (Perrin et al. 2003: 1855).

(122) **Deus**. Moyses, my servant, goe anon / and <u>kerve owt of the rocke of stone</u> / <u>tables</u> to wryte <u>my byddinge</u> upon, / such as thou had before.
'Moses, my servant, go at once and carve out of the rock stone tables to write my bidding upon, such as you had before.'
[...]
**Moyses**. Lord, <u>thy byddinge</u> shalbe donne / and <u>tables kerved owt full soonne</u>. / But tell mee--I praye thee this boone-- / what wordes <u>I shall wryte</u>. /
'Lord, your bidding shall be done and tables carved out immediately. But tell me – I ask you this favour – what words I shall write.'
**Deus**. <u>Thou shalt wryte</u> the same lore / that in the tables was before. [Chester 5.65–8, 73–8]
'You shall write the same law that on the tables was before.'

Norrick (1987: 255), in his study of repetition in conversation, lists closed sets, such as exchanges of greetings, under functions of interactivity inside adjacency pairs. Openings and closings commonly involve repetition, since speakers often use the same forms reciprocally. Mazzon (2009: 125), however, excludes repetition in opening and closing sequences from her analysis of the N-Town collection dialogues. I believe that in spoken discourse, repetitions in greetings and farewells are, indeed, standardised, automatically produced reactions (see Tannen 1987: 236) and therefore do not necessarily signal interactivity. Yet, as mentioned above, all repetitions in written drama dialogue can be interpreted as carefully constructed authorial pragmatic devices. For example, the

farewell sequence in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* further develops the comic potential of the couple's dialogue (123). As part of the parody of courtly language, Pilate extensively repeats and amplifies his wife's farewell wishes, so that it takes 70 lines for Procula to finally leave the stage.

(123)   **Pilate**. <u>Nowe fares-wele</u>, and walke on youre way.
          'Now farewell, and walk on your way.'
          **Domina**. <u>Now farewele the frendlyest</u>, youre fomen to fende.
          'Now farewell, the friendliest, your foes to fend (off).'
          **Pilate**. <u>Nowe farewele the fayrest figure</u> that euere did fode fede, [York 30.107–9]
          'Now farewell, the fairest figure that ever food did feed.'

In the *Secunda Pastorum*, when the shepherds enter Mak's cottage seeking their lost lamb, the First Shepherd greets Mak, who civilly echoes his words (124). As in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Mak's polite response serves a dramatic purpose. Mak pretends to be friendly and obliging in order to deceive the shepherds and allay their suspicions. The repetition of the First Shepherd's greeting reflects his playful audacity and feigned cooperation in the interaction and therefore contributes to the dialogue's comedy. In fact, greetings in the mystery plays are rarely random instances which can be neglected in an analysis of interactivity in dialogue sequences.

(124)   **Primus Pastor**. Tell vs, mak, if ye may, / <u>How fare ye</u>, I say?
          'Tell us, Mak, if you can, how are you, I ask?'
          **Mak**. Bot ar ye in this towne to day? / Now <u>how fare ye</u>? [Towneley 13.492–5]
          'Oh, are you in this town today? How are you?'

Questions, as Herman notes, "can be answered merely by repeating what was asked in reply" (1995: 154). Such question-answer pairs signal either agreement or contradiction in my sample. 'Echo answers', either positive or negative, perform the textual function of cohesion (Stati 1996: 196), since they stabilise "both reference and topic across a stretch of discourse" (Herman 1995: 153). Svennevig has stressed the speaker's "strengthened commitment" (2003: 305) to the answer conveyed by these adjacency pairs. The 'echo answer' to the question in quote (125), indeed, seems to display the Third Torturer's alignment or agreement with the Second Torturer. Abel's response in example (126) also repeats elements of his interlocutor's question. When Cain and Abel both light their sacrifices, Cain's produces only a choking smoke and he asks why his brother's offering burns freely. Abel's echo answer clearly does not convey agreement. Several scholars have noted the Towneley Abel's unconventional characterisation in comparison with the other cycles (e.g. Carey 1930: 43; Diller 1992: 230). His complacent reply to Cain's question about his sacrifice is rather untypical of a virtuous biblical character. This has led Schaefer Carroll to assert: "There is also, as it were, almost a sense of relief that the whining, self-righteous answers Abel offers [...] will cease at last" (1989: 60). What is, indeed, likely is that Abel's attitude invited

less pity than in the other plays. Simultaneously, his echoing of Cain's words reflects the strong interactional character of their dialogue. At this point, we should bear in mind that the biblical base text devotes only one verse to the fratricide (Genesis 4:8), recounting simply that Cain demanded Abel to walk with him and then killed him in the field. Both aspects, the original characterisation and the seemingly natural interaction conveyed by the repetition, probably helped to sustain audience involvement and participation while building the spectators' anticipation of the play's climax.

(125)   **Secundus Tortor.** [...] Sen thou will so haue, here for me! / <u>How draw I</u>, as myght thou the?
        '[…] Since you will have it so, here for me! How did I draw, as you might thrive?'
        **Tercius Tortor.** <u>Thou drew right wele</u>. / Haue here for me half a foyte! [Towneley 23.178–81]
        'You drew right well. Have here for me half a foot!'

(126)   **Cain**. We! theyf, whi <u>brend thi tend so shyre</u>? / Ther <u>myne did bot smoked</u> / Right as it wold vs both haue choked.
        'Oh! Thief, why did your tithe burn so clearly, whereas my tithe did but smoke, right as if it would have choked both of us?'
        **Abel**. Godis will I trow it were / That <u>myn brened so clere</u>; / If <u>thyne smoked</u> am I to wite? [Towneley 2.317–22]
        'God's will, I believe, it was that my tithe burned so clearly. If yours smoked, am I to blame?'

The common form of repetition in Present-Day English exchanges involving an interrogative structure are not 'echo answers' but so-called 'echo questions', i.e. questions which repeat as a whole or in part a prior statement by another speaker (hence the term 'echo'). According to Perrin et al. (2003), Jefferson (1972) first identified this type. She distinguished between different kinds of 'questioning repeats', such as those with a surprise and an information request function. Similarly, Quirk et al. distinguish between two categories: recapitulatory echo questions which ask for repetition/confirmation (1985: 835f.) and explicatory echo questions which ask for clarification (1985: 837). Quirk et al. add:

> Although recapitulatory echo questions are ostensibly requests for the repetition of information, they frequently have other functions, such as to express irony, incredulity, or merely to fill in a conversational gap. They are familiar, or even impolite, in implication unless accompanied by an apology. (1985: 836)

A more general definition of 'echo questions' is offered by Schrott: "In most cases, the echo-question signals an implicit speaker-comment that refers to the topic, the presuppositions or to the performed illocution of the previous enunciation" (1999: 349). More importantly, she remarks: "Echo-questions, which are most closely linked to their context, reflect everyday spoken language and the dynamics of orality in general" (1999: 349).

In my material, such questions mainly mark disbelief, opposition and requests for correction, challenging the utterance of the previous speaker. Artstein states that 'echo questions'

may "inform the interlocutor that the speaker has misperceived part of the previous utterance or refuses to accept it" (2002: 98). The example from the York *Resurrection* expresses Caiaphas' incredulity and anger when he hears about Jesus' disappearance from the grave (127), while in the Chester *Innocents* quote, the First Woman refuses to accept Herod's command (128).

(127) **Miles 1**. Oure wakyng, lorde, withouten wene, / Is worthed <u>to noyot</u>.
   'Our watch, lord, undoubtedly, has come to naught.'
   **Caiphas**. <u>To noght</u>? Allas, sesse of such sawe. [York 38.359–61]
   'To naught? Alas, cease such speech!'

(128) **Primus Miles.** [...] The kinge hase commanded me / all such for to <u>areste</u>.
   '[...] The king has commanded me to capture all such (children).'
   **Prima Mulier**. <u>Arest</u>? Ribott, for-thee / thou lyes, by my lewtye. [Chester 10.307–10]
   'Capture? Rogue, you lie, by my faith.'

In dialogue (129), the 'echo question' becomes a device of foregrounding. The repetition of a particular element, as Herman emphasises, "can [...] foreground it as an unfinished topic or concern among the participants on-stage which awaits closure or outcome, which may or may not ensue" (1995: 156). The Cherubim guards in the Chester play point out that Lucifer's pride which corrupts his divine nature and defies God's command will *torne to greate distresse* (l. 141). It becomes clear at this point that the devil's proud declaration of beauty and power will eventually cause the destruction of his position in heaven.

(129) **Cherubyn**. Our lorde comaunded all that bene here / to keepe there seates, bouth more
   and lesse. / Therfore I warne the, Lucifer, / this pride will torne to greate <u>distresse</u>.
   'Our lord commanded all that are here to keep their seats, both more and less. Therefore I warn you,
   Lucifer, this pride will turn to great distress.'
   **Luciffer**. <u>Destresse</u>? I commaunde you for to / cease and see the beautie that I beare.
   [Chester 1.138–43]
   'Distress? I command you to stop and see the beauty that I bear.'

The linguistic function of 'echo questions' is mainly to provide semantic focus on certain repeated elements (Artstein 2002). As Straniero Sergio confirms, the reduplication or recycling of items is a powerful rhetorical device "for producing emphasis, intensity, clarity, exaggeration and/or making a deeper impression on the audience" (2012: 28). This is particularly evident when the 'echo question' does not represent protest or objection, but merely signals surprise, incredulity and a request for confirmation. In contrast to the 'protest echo questions', these interrogatives may be reacted at by means of an answer. In the York *Herod*, for instance, the king receives a confirmative reply when he shows his incredulity at the miracle of the loaves and fishes through a request for repetition (130). At the end of the Towneley play, Noah speaks of how men are in eternal pain after the flood. His wife asks if their are ways in which they could win salvation. Her husband echoes

her question and replies that humans have no hope of redemption but through God's great mercy and eventual sacrifice of Christ (131). Perrin et al. note: "All confirmation requests [...] open up a secondary exchange that [...] temporarily interrupts the current exchange by requiring the interlocutor to confirm or specify what he or she has said" (2003: 1851). Herod's line is not particularly in keeping with his character and Noah's question seems superfluous in the dialogue. I believe that these confirmation requests operate mainly as rhetorical devices, strengthening the message that follows.

(130)   **Dux 2**. V ml. <u>folke</u> faire gon he <u>feede</u> / With fyve looffis and two fisshis to fange.
        'Five thousand fair folk, all at once he did feed, with five loaves and two fishes to catch.'
        **Rex**. Howe fele <u>folke</u> sais thou he <u>fedde</u>?
        'How many folk did you say that he fed?'
        **Dux 2**. V ml. lorde, that come to his call. [York 31.209–12]
        'Five thousand, my lord, that came to his call.'

(131)   **Noah**. To dede ar thai dyght / prowdist of pryde, / Euer ich a wyght / that euer was spyde, / With syn, / All ar thai slayn, / And put vnto payn.
        'They have died their death, the proudest in their pride, each man that ever was caught in sin: They are all slain and exposed to pain.'
        **Uxor**. Ffrom thens agayn / May thai neuer <u>wyn</u>?
        'From there may they never escape?'
        **Noah**. <u>Wyn</u>? no, I-wis / bot he that myght hase / Wold myn of thare mys / & admytte thaym to grace; / As he in bayll is blis / I pray hym in this space, / In heven hye with his / to purvaye vs a place, [Towneley 3.554–64]
        'Escape? No, certainly not, unless he that has might would remember their wrongdoings, and offer mercy to them. As he is consolation in misery, I pray to him from this place here, by his side high in heaven to provide us with a place.'

In the York *Joseph*, Mary tells her husband that her pregnancy is *Goddis sande* (l. 219). When Joseph refuses to accept this explanation by ironically echoing her words, she insists and reaffirms that it is God's will. The repetitive structure of the dialogue has a persuasive effect and reminds the audience that they are supposed to place their trust in God's word:

(132)   **Mary**. Joseph, yhe ar begiled, / With synne was I neuer filid, / <u>Goddis sande</u> is on me sene.
        'Joseph, you are beguiled. With sin was I never defiled. God's message in me is seen.'
        **Joseph**. <u>Goddis sande</u>? Yha Marie, God helpe!
        'God's message? Oh, Mary, God help (us)!'
        [...]
        **Mary**. Sertis it is <u>Goddis sande</u>. [...] Þat sall I neuer ga fra. [York 13.217–20, 224–5]
        'Truly, it is God's message. From that I shall never refrain.'

Intent upon confining the prophets in hell, Satan in the York *Harrowing* utters a number of denunciations. First, he dismisses Christ's claim that he has come at the behest of his father, who *was a write his mene to wynne* ('was a carpenter his food to earn'; l. 229). Jesus explains his true father is God. Satan, who proves himself a fairly sophisticated debater in this scene, expresses his

disbelief in the echo question *God sonne?* and asks why he has hidden his divinity and lived like *a symple knave* ('a simple man'; l. 243). Satan's allegation that Jesus' humble parentage invalidates his claims to divinity really points up his own malice and ignorance in the scene:

(133) **Jesus**. þou wikid feende, latte be thy dynne. / Mi fadir wonnys in heuen on hight, / With blisse that schall neuere blynne. / <u>I am his awne sone</u>,
'You wicked fiend, let be your din. My father dwells in heaven on height, with bliss that shall never dim. I am his own son.'
[...]
**Satan**. <u>God sonne?</u> þanne schulde thou be ful gladde, / Aftir no catel neyd thowe crave! / But thou has leued ay like a ladde, / And in sorowe as a symple knave.
'God's son? Then you should be very glad. No property need you to crave! But you have lived like any lad, and in sorrow, like a simple knave.'
**Jesus**. þat was for hartely loue I hadde [York 37.233–6, 240–4]
'That was for heartfelt love I had.'

All of these scenes demonstrate how carefully the discourse is constructed in these plays. The varied effects cited above are not accidental. The confirmation or specification by the second speaker following the 'echo question' enhances the textual coherence and strengthens the topical focus of the dialogues. In these cases, the repetition in the 'echo question' is a rhetorical device which performs a crucial structural, stylistic and didactic function.

A final class of dialogic repetition includes those cases that convey disagreement with a previous interlocutor's utterance. Merlini Barbaresi asserts that "the use of repetition on the expression level is a very effective means of emphasizing a conflict on the content level" (1989: 460). Bazzanella, however, stresses that even in disagreement dialogues, repetition emphasises the interpersonal level of the dialogue and the message is constructed as a "joint, negotiated enterprise" (1993: 289) through cooperation of the interlocutors:

> Even if the utterance which starts with repetition expresses disagreement subsequently, the initial occurrence of a repetition marks two positive aspects of repetition: first, uptake, and hence attention to and comprehension of what the preceding speaker has said, which is often lacking in conflict situations; second, resort to the same linguistic thesaurus, thus underlining the relationship with the interlocutor. (1993: 289)

This is reflected in all of the following quotes. A mild form of disagreement is manifested in the following dialogue from the Towneley *Crucifixion* (134). Mary claims that her heart has lost the capacity to feel as a result of Christ's impending fate. John contradicts her statement by a counter-claim: He reminds Mary that her heart is *full of care* in order to comfort her and relieve her pain:

(134) **Mary.** [...] <u>My harte is styf as stone</u> / That for no bayll will brest.
'[…] My heart is stiff as stone, that despite the agony will not break.'
**John the Apostle**. A, lady, well wote I / <u>thi hart is full of care</u> [Towneley 23.404–5]
'Ah, lady, well know I, your heart is full of care.'

Disagreement and contradiction may be enhanced by the use of different devices: by oaths (135), the negation particles *nay* or *noght* (136), or the opposition marker *yes* (137). Perrin et al. point out that a "negative reply postpones the closing of the exchange either by extending it, by cutting it short or by introducing an element of controversy" (2003: 1854). In the dialogue from the Chester *Passion* (135), where Pilate orders the Jews to nail the inscription *Jesu of Nazareth Kynge of Jewes* (ll. 221–2) under Christ's cross, such an element of controversy is added by the protest of the Jews. But Pilate does not allow his writing to be altered and eventually closes the exchange.

(135) **Pilate**. <u>That that ys wrytten I have wrytten</u>.
   'That what is written I have written.'
   **Tertius Judeus**. And *in good fayth* <u>that ys fowle wrytten</u>, [Chester 17.233–4]
   'And, in good faith, that is badly written.'

In example (136) from the *Prima Pastorum*, an argument is effectively composed by the First Shepherd's correction of the previous speaker. Their earlier tendency to quarrel and dominate over each other gives way to an acknowledgement of their collective lowliness and brothership.

(136) **Tercius Pastor**. I shrew the handys it drogh! / <u>Ye be both knafys</u>.
   'I curse the hands it drew! You are both knaves!'
   **Primus Pastor**. *Nay*! <u>we knaues all</u> / thus thynk me best, / So, sir, shuld, ye call. / [Towneley 12.289–92]
   'No! We are all knaves, thus I think it best. So, sir, should you call (us).'

When Christ asks God to forgive the torturers in the Towneley *Crucifixion*, for they know not what they do, the First Torturer retorts that they know quite well what they are doing (137). Note that Jesus' line is a direct quotation from Luke 23:34 which continues with the torturers parting Christ's clothes. The mocking response is the playwright(s)' invention and has, next to its comic effect, a clear didactic intent, revealing the torturers' guilt to be conscious intent rather than mere lack of perception.

(137) **Jesus**. [...] <u>Thay wote not what thay doyn</u>, / Nor whom thay haue thus spylt.
   '[…] They know not what they do, nor whose blood they have spilt.'
   **Primus Tortor**. *Yis*, <u>what we do full well we knaw</u>. [Towneley 23.298–300]
   'Yes, what we do full well we know.'

The creation of humour and play through mocking imitation, as Norrick's (1987: 255) functional taxonomy of dialogic repetition demonstrates, may also count as a kind of disagreement repetition (see also Stati 1996: 171; Perrin et al. 2003: 1855).[173] Apart from quote (137) above, mocking imitation is apparent in a dialogue from the Towneley *Noah*. After their quarrel, Noah asks his wife to *pray for me* (l. 243). *Euen as thou prays for me* (l. 245), answers Gill readily. In his verbal battle

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173 See Norrick (1996) on the mechanisms of conversational joking.

with his brother in the Towneley *Abel*, Cain mocks Abel's use of the affectionate vocative *leif brothere* (34) by repeating it ironically. In the mouth of Noah's wife and Cain, the repetition appears as a "caricature or sarcastic comment" (Norrick 1996: 130) on their interlocutor's utterance: "Repetition not only facilitates the production of a response in conversation, clever variation can also skew the frame introduced by the original speaker" (Norrick 1996: 130).

In the next excerpt from the York *Harrowing* (138), Ribald tells the devilish entourage of Satan that the souls are speaking of Christ, saying that he will save them. Trusting that his position is much stronger than the power of Christ, Beelzebub shows no concern over this information. He reproduces the First Devil's phrase to poke fun at his fears, and assures him that the souls will never pass from hell. The irony is evident and the audience anticipates that Christ will *thame saue* (l. 108) in the course of the play.

(138)   **Diabolus 1**. þei crie on Criste full faste / And sais he schal <u>thame saue</u>.
'They firmly call upon Christ, and say he shall save them.'
**Belsabub**. 3a, if he <u>saue thame</u> noght, we schal, / For they are sperde in speciall space. [York 37.107–10]
'Yes, if he saves them not, we shall. For they are imprisoned in a special space.'

## 4.3.3.3 Discussion of results

Norrick (1987), Bazzanella (1993) and Perrin et al. (2003) have all proposed taxonomies for the functional distinction of dialogic repetitions in spoken discourse. *Table 32* below is based on the functional analysis of my drama sample, and lists three major types with some sub-types. This taxonomy (strongly) resembles research on colloquial English, containing almost all functions from the above studies. The dialogues in my sample seem to mirror spoken discourse to some extent "by giving reactions to previous turns, repeating parts of them, as if they were hard to believe, etc." (Taavitsainen 1999a: 257). This is the way dialogic repetition commonly functions in natural speech, and this can be imitated by written texts. However, dialogic repetition sometimes appears at essential points in the narrative, where it clearly serves the dramatic purpose of pointing up the (negative or positive) traits of certain characters, or, more importantly, reinforcing the plays' contents and messages. On the one hand, this may be attributed to the need to facilitate comprehension on the part of the audience. It is to be kept in mind that the 'communicative' noise could be high during performances, which might have required a constant repetition of the message. On the other hand, the high textual density may be attributed to the playwright(s)' attempt to mimic authentic spoken interaction, for instance when formulaic utterances like greetings or farewells appear in the texts (cf. Mazzon 2009: 15).

| Category with micro-functions | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|
| Positive reply<br>  – acknowledgement<br>  – attention/involvement<br>  – reinforcement/expansion<br>  – compliance<br>  – agreement<br>  – ... | 105 |
| 'Echo questions' and 'echo answers' in question-answer adjacency pairs<br>  – agreement<br>  – surprise/incredulity<br>  – disagreement/contradiction<br>  – request for confirmation<br>  – request for clarification<br>  – request for correction<br>  – ... | 48 |
| Negative reply<br>  – disagreement/contradiction<br>  – irony/mock imitation (parody)<br>  – ... | 44 |
| **TOTAL** | **197** |

Table 32: Interactional functions of dialogic repetition in *Group /–///*

## 4.3.4 Turn-initial discourse markers

Although there were a few surveys on discourse markers in the 1980s, their study since then has flourished in various domains of linguistics, with regard to a variety of languages, genres and interactive contexts (Schiffrin 2001: 54), causing Fraser to consider discourse marker analysis "a growth market in linguistics" (1998: 301). Scholars have stated that discourse markers predominantly occur in spoken rather than written discourse (Östman 1982: 147ff.; Quirk et al. 1985: 1113; Brinton 1995: 377, 1996: 33, 2010: 285f; Kryk-Kastovsky 1998: 48; Biber et al. 1999: 1086ff.; Schourup 1999: 234; Jucker 2002: 213; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2003: 1123; Defour 2008: 63; Gregori-Signes et al. 2016: 112). Watts considers pragmatic markers "one of the most perceptually salient features of oral style" (1989: 208), and Östman (1982: 170) finds that the occurrence of discourse markers (labelled 'discourse particles' in his paper) implies that this discourse should be considered 'impromptu', i.e. spontaneous, everyday face-to-face interaction. Indeed, a glance at a sample of Present-Day English conversation is likely to find it interspersed

with forms such as *well, I mean, I see, okay, so, in fact, right, anyway, actually*. While primarily a phenomenon of oral discourse, it has been pointed out that discourse markers are not restricted to the spoken medium (e.g. Schourup 1999: 234; Lewis 2006: 43; Lutzky 2006: 18, 2012a: 23). In his analysis of the Early Modern English section of the *Helsinki Corpus*, Jucker (2002: 210) demonstrates that many discourse markers are regularly attested in speech-related text types like plays, fiction or trial records (see also Lutzky 2012a: 42, 2012b:178). He therefore concludes that "the frequency of discourse markers is a direct correlate of the amount of (representations of) spoken language that is likely to occur in any particular genre" (2002: 213). Suhr (2002) equally found higher frequencies of discourse markers in Early Modern English plays, in comparison to academic treatises and pamphlets, and remarked on the correlation between dialogue format and high discourse marker density. Culpeper and Kytö therefore believe that there is a correlation between discourse markers and the representation of spoken language, but, contrary to Östman's view, they state that they "cannot in any simple way be assumed to indicate the speech-like nature of the text" (2010: 371, 395), as the forms used in written discourse may differ from those in conversation, and the reasons for employing them may be different (see also Brinton 1996: 33; Traugott and Dasher 2005: 154).

A unified definition and terminology for the phenomenon 'discourse markers' have yet to be established. There is no generally accepted term to define this group of "mystery particles" (Longarce 1976). In fact, they have received a variety of labels, including 'discourse markers' (e.g. Schiffrin 1987, 2001; Hansen 1998b; Schourup 1999; Aijmer 2002; Bazzanella 2006; Brinton 2010; Lutzky 2012a, 2012b), 'text relation markers' (Roulet 2006), 'discourse particles' (Östman 1982; Hansen 1998a; Bazzanella 1990; Aijmer 2002; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2003; Fischer 2006; Diewald 2006), 'discourse operators' (Redeker 1991) or 'pragmatic markers' (e.g. Brinton 1996; Palander-Collin 1999; Defour 2007, 2008; Culpeper and Kytö 2010).[174] The diverging terminology is linked to different research domains and analytical methods. As Lutzky states, "this terminological maze reflects diverse theoretical approaches which may not only differ with regard to labelling a phenomenon or a class of items but also with regard to the linguistic units forming part of this group and the functions they serve" (2012a: 10).

There seems, however, to be general agreement that discourse markers do not share morphosyntactic features and thus do not constitute a homogeneous grammatical class (Brinton 2010: 285). In fact, various grammatical categories (such as adverbs, clauses, phrasal elements, interjections) can be used as discourse markers (e.g. Hansen 1998a: 236; Brinton 2010: 286;

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174 I adopted the label 'discourse marker' as a cover term, as it indicates best that the expressions under investigation operate on the level of discourse without delimiting their functional scope, like the labels 'connectives' or 'particles'. For further terms and related references, see Brinton (1996: 29), Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 361) and Lutzky (2012a: 9f.).

Lutzky 2012a: 29).[175] Bazzanella speaks of discourse marker's "transverseness" (2006: 451) with regard to other grammatical categories. According to Hansen, they constitute "a function class which does not form a category [...], but which [...] cuts across the classes of conjunctions and sentence adverbials, and which furthermore shows certain affinities with both interjections and modal particles" (1998b: 357f.).

In fact, there is no commonly acknowledged way of classifying discourse markers: "Formally and structurally there seems to be no single property or set of properties univocally defining this class" (Aijmer 2002: 27f.). Although there is little agreement concerning their terminology and inventory, some basic formal features have been identified in previous studies.[176] Discourse markers are frequently described as syntactically optional forms with little or no propositional content that are parenthetical to their host clause (e.g. Schourup 1999: 234; Brinton 2010: 286; see also Östman 1982: 138; Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 231; Lutzky 2012a: 10f.). In addition, discourse markers are considered positionally variable, even though they often occur in initial position with respect to the main clause (e.g. Brinton 1996: 33; Mazzon 2012: 67). They serve multiple pragmatic functions: they implicitly convey the speaker's subjective stance and emotions, modify the speech act and illustrate the relations between speaker and message, and, more importantly, between speaker and addressee, etc. (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 231).

Historical approaches to the development of discourse markers have generally acknowledged that discourse markers derive from full lexemes with semantic content: "Given the relative lack of semantic or propositional content in pragmatic markers, they generally fall outside the propositional component, though [...] they derive diachronically from it" (Brinton 1996: 38; see also Jucker 2002: 216; Traugott and Dasher 2005: 153). Many of the items that today appear as discourse markers appear to have undergone a process from grammaticalisation to pragmaticalisation, involving a loss of the original semantic content ('bleaching') and an increase in pragmatic meanings, conversational implicatures, etc. ('pragmatic strengthening') (Brinton 2003; Mazzon 2012: 67; Defour 2007: 18, 2008: 64).[177] The relationship between semantic source

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175 Unlike discourse markers, interjections fulfil primarily emotive functions, as spontaneous emotional reactions to a situation. However, cognitive, conative and phatic functions similar to those performed by discourse markers have been attributed to interjections (see Ameka 1992: 113f.). For a discussion of interjections in the present sample, see Section 4.4.1.

176 Lutzky provides a comprehensive list of the basic features of discourse markers which were first collected by Brinton (1996: 33ff.) and later arranged in a more systematic way by Jucker and Ziv (1998: 3). Discourse marker do not necessarily incorporate all features that have been assigned to them. Therefore, the whole class has been regarded as a scale, which can include both more or less prototypical members (Jucker and Ziv 1998; Jucker 2002, Brinton 2008; Lutzky 2006, 2012a).

177 Studies have related the emergence and development of individual discourse markers to the theories of grammaticalisation, pragmaticalisation and lexicalisation (see e.g. Aijmer 2002; Brinton 1996, 2008; Palander-Collin 1999; Defour 2008; Frank-Job 2006; Fischer 2007; Traugott and Dasher 2005; Mazzon 2012; Waltereit 2006; Lewis 2006).

meanings and later pragmatic properties, however, does not seem to evolve "according to a straight-forward cline" (Defour 2008: 64).

Even if discourse markers are still neglected in most traditional histories of the English language, their use in written data from past periods has emerged as an area of particular interest in the last decades. Thus, several forms (e.g. *now, well, and, methinks*) have been studied in the context of Old, Middle and Early Modern English (e.g. Blake 1992b; Brinton 1996; López-Couso 1996; Palander-Collin 1999; Defour 2007, 2008; Alonso-Almeida 2008; Culpeper and Kytö 2010; Mazzon 2012).[178] Such studies have shown that discourse markers may preserve traces of their original propositional meanings in later stages of their semantic-pragmatic evolution (e.g. Defour 2008: 64; Brinton 2010: 286). In fact, some scholars have assumed that, as a result of grammaticalisation, relatively stable (or 'core') meaning(s) for individual markers can be identified (Schourup 1999: 249ff.; Aijmer 2002: 23; Fung and Carter 2007: 412).

### 4.3.4.1 Overall distribution

My analysis will account for the quantitative distribution of the discourse markers, i.e. their frequency of attestation, as well as their interpersonal/interactional functions in my Middle English sample. Unlike other grammatical categories, discourse markers are primarily identified on functional grounds: "If discourse markers are not a formal grammatical class, they must be understood as constituting a functional class" (Brinton 2010: 286; see also Bazzanella 2006: 451; Diewald 2006: 406; Waltereit 2006: 64; Lutzky 2012a: 29). According to Schiffrin's (1987: 315ff., 2001: 62) coherence model, discourse markers may operate on various planes (exchange, action, ideational structure, participation framework, information state) at the same time. However, it can be difficult to identify a primary plane or function for a particular token. Therefore, the functions of the identified discourse markers which will be discussed in my qualitative analysis are derived from a close analysis of the respective token attestations and their contextual use in the given texts (Brinton 1996: 35; Lutzky 2012a: 21).

In the previous section, I discussed some basic formal features that were suggested for this class. These features operated as indicators in the identification process, involving the distinction of discourse markers from formally identical parts of speech (see Lutzky 2012a: 11). While for some forms it is not problematic to differentiate uses as discourse markers from other uses (for instance the discourse marker *so* as opposed to the adverb), the identification process was more difficult for other forms. For example, *yea* was counted as a discourse marker for the

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178 For recent overviews of influential discourse marker research, see Schiffrin (2001: 55ff.), Aijmer (2002: 6ff.), Fung and Carter (2007: 411f.) and Defour (2007: 15ff.). For a description of discourse markers and related research for past periods of the English language, see Brinton (2010: 287ff.).

present analysis when it did not mean 'yes', i.e. *yea* as an affirmative response to a question.[179] Compare the two examples from the Chester *Harrowing* for the pragmatic (139) and non-pragmatic use (140) of *yea*:

(139) **Sathanas**. […] My masterdome fares amys, / for yonder a stubberne fellowe ys, / right as wholye hell were his, / to reave me of my power.
'[…] My supremacy goes wrong, for yonder a stubborn fellow is, just as if the entire hell were his, to rob me of my power.'
**Tertius Daemon**. Yea, Sathanas, thy soverayntie / fayles cleane. Therfore thou flee, / for no longer in this see / here shalt thou not sytt. [Chester 18.165–72]
'Yes, Satan, your royal power fails completely. Therefore you flee, for no longer in this seat here shall you sit.'

*(140) **Secundus Daemon**. Syr Sathanas, ys not this that syre / that raysed Lazour out of the fyre?
'Sir Satan, is not this the fellow who raised Lazarus out of the fire?'
**Sathanas**. Yea, this ys hee that would conspire / anonne to reave us all. [Chester 18.137–40]
'Yes, this is he that would plot at once to rob us all.'

As I concentrate on interactional functions in my qualitative analysis, I only counted discourse markers in turn-initial position. Moreover, it would be difficult to identify unambiguous instances in the middle of stanzas. However, I did include forms which followed directly after vocatives, oaths, taboo expletives, response forms, greetings or echo questions. Consider the following examples from the Towneley *Noah* and the York *Joseph*, where the discourse markers are preceded by an expletive (141) and an echo question (142), respectively:

(141) **Uxor.** Wheder I lose or I wyn / In fayth, thi felowship, / Set I not a pyn / this spyndill will I slip / Apon this hill, / Or I styr oone fote.
'Whether I lose or win, in faith, your fellowship is worthless. This spindle will I empty upon this hill, before I move a foot.'
**Noah**. Peter! I traw we dote; / Without any more note / Come in if ye will. [Towneley 3.367–73]
'By Saint Peter, I think we act foolishly. Without any more ado, come in if you will (obey).'

(142) **Mary**. Joseph, yhe ar begiled, / With synne was I neuer filid, / Goddis sande is on me sene.
'Joseph, you are beguiled. With sin was I never defiled. God's message in me is seen.'
**Joseph**. Goddis sande? Yha Marie, God helpe! [York 13.217–20]
'God's message? Oh, Mary, God help (us)!'

The whole sample is not particularly rich in discourse markers (average relative frequency: 6.09; see *Tables 33–35*). This is also true for the control groups (average relative frequency: 2.44; see *Tables 36–37*). The York plays generally display higher relative frequencies than the other two

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179 The same holds true for the notional contrary of yea: Examples of *nay* which constitute a response to a prior speech act (e.g. an information-seeking *yes*/*no*-question, request, or command) were excluded from the analysis, since the focus of this study are expressions which operate primarily on a non-propositional level (cf. Lee-Goldman 2011: 5).

cycles. The text with the highest frequency of discourse markers is clearly the York *Herod* play. The boasting, ranting king, who mainly employs discourse markers in their expressive function, seems to show the highest density of usage. The York *Crucifixion* and *Conspiracy* are the texts with the next highest rates of discourse markers. In these plays, the discourse markers are used in their cooperative or contrastive function, denoting mainly solidarity or disagreement in negotiations. Entirely against expectations, texts like the Towneley *Abel* or the Chester *Innocents*, which have so far displayed high frequencies of speech-like features, contain only few discourse markers. The absence may be explained by the fact that most turns start with (clusters of) interjections as expressions of 'personal affect' (see Section 4.4.1).

The identified forms include, for instance, adverbials and connectives such as *so, and, but, then, now*; feedback acknowledgements or response forms such as *yea* and *nay*; as well as first-person epistemic parentheticals (referred to as 'comment clauses' by Brinton (2008) and Quirk et al. 1985: 1112ff.) such as *I trow, I woot* and *methynks*.[180] In my analysis, the latter did not feature particularly prominently. Only the forms of *now, and, yea* and *nay* seem to appear in a considerable number in all three groups. In sum, 150 attestations of *now*, 117 attestations of *and* and 114 attestations of *yea* function as discourse markers in the current data.[181] It should be noted that all of the eight most frequent items of my analysis (see *Figure 11*) appear in Brinton's (1996: 32) inventory of forms gathered from a compilation of studies on Present-Day English discourse markers.

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180 I consider them to be a discourse-marker subclass because they display the typical characteristics: They are multifunctional items which are parenthetical to the main clause and do not contribute significantly to the truth-value of the proposition in which they occur (see Brinton 1996, 2008, 2010; Palander-Collin 1999; Fung and Carter 2007).

181 In Mazzon's study of discourse markers, *now* is highly frequent in the whole Middle English sample, "and particularly in dramatic texts and in reported dialogue where *now* is often introduced in initial position to increase the liveliness of the dialogue itself" (2012: 69).

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DM | 4.47 (9) | 7.95 (34) | - | 6.34 (13) | 8.36 (16) | 5.92 (5) | 4.08 (16) | 6.21 (21) | 6.23 (34) |

Table 33: The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DM | 3.99 (8) | 3.01 (13) | 1.82 (5) | 4.49 (9) | - | 7.41 (8) | - | 5.03 (13) | 6.55 (21) |

Table 34: The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DM | 3.97 (12) | 6.99 (19) | 12.08 (32) | 8.82 (30) | 8.66 (41) | 17.00 (61) | 14.09 (28) | 6.50 (17) | 3.32 (12) | 7.50 (25) | 2.33 (8) | 9.54 (42) |

Table 35: The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DM | - | 1.11 (1) | 1.38 (2) | - | - | - | - | 3.15 (5) | 4.54 (6) |

Table 36: The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DM | 1.10 (2) | 8.85 (19) | 1.01 (4) | 3.21 (6) | 5.66 (9) | 4.65 (9) | 4.43 (8) |

Table 37: The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)
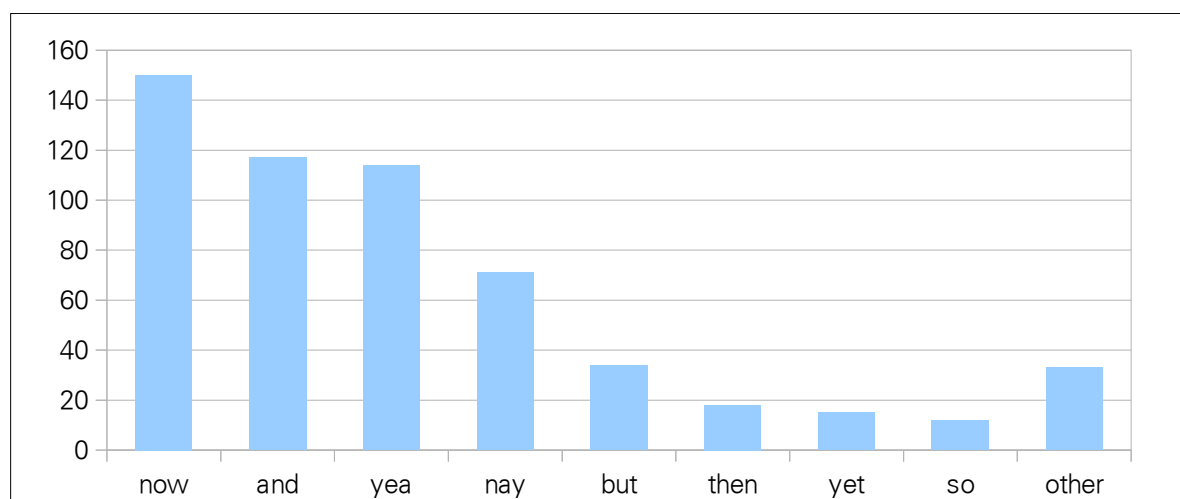


Figure 12: Overall distribution of discourse markers from *Group I–III* in order of frequency

**4.3.4.2 Interactional uses**

Even though they do not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance they are associated with, discourse markers perform significant pragmatic functions on the level of discourse. Drawing up a finite set of functions seems to be impossible. Lutzky regards discourse markers as multifunctional not only "with regard to the different functions they may serve on different occasions of use but also with regard to individual token attestations which may serve several discourse marker functions simultaneously" (2012a: 41; see also Hansen 1998a: 238; Aijmer 2002: 25f.; Jucker 2002: 213; Bazzanella 2006: 456, Ler 2006: 154, Lutzky 2006: 15; Brinton 2010: 286).

Following Brinton (1996: 35ff., 2010), I differentiate between two principal categories of discourse marker functions: the interpersonal and text-structuring (or text-connective) domain (see also Bazzanella 2006: 450; Barron 2012: 241; Lutzky 2012a). Early definitions of discourse markers mainly focused on the latter. For example, Schiffrin characterises discourse markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (1987: 31), while Schourup comes to the conclusion that discourse markers are "used to relate [an] utterance to the immediately preceding utterance" (1999: 234; see also Fraser 1988: 21f.; Günther and Mutz 2004: 83). Additionally, a discourse marker may structure a 'real' spoken interaction but also the constructed dialogue in a play by initiating or closing discourse, organising textual progression, marking turn-boundaries, announcing topic shifts, drawing attention to a topic, etc. More recent definitions expand the notion of relation from text to context, including reference to the speaker, or to the relation between speaker and hearer. Waltereit claims that discourse markers "situate their host unit with respect to the surrounding discourse and with respect to the speaker–hearer relationship" (2006: 64). Yang also attempts to capture both functions:

> We also feel that the interactive and communicative nature of the item should be part of the definition, as we view the function of discourse markers as a running commentary on the underlying text that helps to make the text coherent in the context of the particular conversation, i.e., a context which takes into account the knowledge states and reactions of the participants in that specific conversation. (2006: 268)[182]

The text-structuring and interactional domains should not be seen as completely detached categories: "This is, for instance, because some of the structural functions may also have interactional implications" (Lutzky 2012a: 38; see also Aijmer 2002: 39). Thus, the discourse

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182 Several recent taxonomies encompass both text-structuring and interpersonal functions of discourse markers. Bazzanella (2006), for example, lists three main functions for spoken discourse: cognitive, interactional and metatextual, while Fung and Carter (2007) identify four different categories: interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive.

marker *now* may indicate a speaker-change, i.e. serve a text-structuring function, but at the same time illustrate specific attitudes.

a) Opening/conclusive use

The opening/conclusive function seems to belong more to the text-structuring than the interpersonal category. The examples below (143)–(152) represent dialogues in which discourse markers initiate a new part of discourse, mark a transition between two topics or the conclusion of a preceding topic.

Statements with initial *now* and *well* often involve giving orders or making formal announcements to social inferiors. Precisely because of these connotations, it has been found that this function, which predominates in the speech of bad, authority characters, involves an interactional element. In the Towneley *Herod*, with initial *now*, the king concludes his orders by declaring to his soldiers that he will reward them with women to wed, material goods as well as honour and prestige, in payment for their willingness to kill all male children:

(143) **Primus Miles.** Sett me before ay / good enogh for a skore; / hayll heyndly! / we shall for youre sake / make a dulfull lake.
'Put me in front, I am good enough for a score. Hail, noble one! We shall, for your sake, make a doleful game.'
**Herodes**. Now if ye me well wrake / ye shall fynd me freyndly. [Towneley 16.321–6]
'Now, if you avenge me well, you shall find me a friend.'

In the York *Herod*, after a brief discussion with the soldiers who have approached with Jesus, the dukes promise them to inform Herod about the bound prisoner at the palace gate (144). The inherently positive meaning of the manner adverb *well* indicates interpersonal acceptance and agreement in this example (see Defour 2008: 79). The scene between the First Duke and the Second Soldier foregrounds the following episode, where Jesus will be interrogated by Herod. In fact, orders or announcements with the discourse markers *now* and *well* often finish one episode and, at the same time, lead over to upcoming scenes.

(144) **Dux 1**. Sirs, but youre message may myrthis amende, / Stalkis furthe be yone stretis or stande stone still.
'Sirs, if your message may not mirth amend, stalk forth in the street, or stand here stone still.'
**Miles 2**. Yis certis ser, of myrthis we mene, […] We brynge here a boy vs betwene, / Wherefore to haue worschippe we wene.
'Yes, certainly, sir, of mirth we do mean […] We bring a boy here between us who will bring us worship, we believe.'
**Dux 1**. Wele sirs, so that it turne to no tene, / Tentis hym and we schall go telle hym. [York 31.64–6, 69–72]
'Well, sirs, so that it will turn to no mischief (for you), attend to him, and we shall go tell him.'

When Jesus comes before the king's court in the York play, Herod is soon frustrated because Christ refuses to reply to his questions. One of the dukes finally interrupts the interrogation, tells the king that it is useless *to feght with a fonned foode* ('to fight a silly fool'; l. 306) and proposes to engage Herod's three sons in the council (145). In this passage, *now* has a recapitulating function: the duke recapitulates a state of affairs that has previously been building up before giving his comment on the subject. The element of recapitulation is part of the meaning of *now*, despite the fact that the pragmatic use of *now* has mainly prospective meaning, emphasising an upcoming (sub)topic or theme. Thus, Lutzky's statement about the retrospective/prospective roles of *well* also applies to *now* with regard to my sample: "The discourse marker *well* has got retrospective and prospective qualities in so far as it reaches both backwards and forwards simultaneously and anchors an utterance to both prior and upcoming discourse" (2012a: 183; see also Schiffrin 1987: 323; Defour 2008: 69f.).

(145)  **Dux 1**. Nay, nedelyngis he neuyns you with none.
'No, forcibly, he will speak nothing to you.'
**Rex**. þat schalle he bye or he blynne-
'That shall he pay for before he is done.'
**Dux 2**. A, leves lorde.
'Oh, leave him [enough of this], my lord.'
**Rex**. Lattis me allone.
'Leave me alone!'
**Dux 1**. <u>Nowe</u> goode lorde, and ye may, meue you no more, / Itt is not faire to feght with a fonned foode, / But gose to youre counsaille and comforte you there. [York 31.301–7]
'Now, good lord, if you may, be troubled no more. It is not fair to fight a silly fool. But go to your council and find comfort there.'

In the Towneley *Buffeting*, Caiaphas states that the soldiers may lead Jesus back to Pilate, now that they have abused and beaten him (146). The use of the discourse marker in this example illustrates that *now* can occasionally be interpreted either as a discourse marker or a temporal adverbial. At this point, it is useful to remember Defour's (2008: 71) finding that the Present-Day English uses of *now* preserve traces of the original propositional meaning. The quote below demonstrates that it is not always clear "whether a particular form serves pragmatic functions or carries propositional meaning" (Lutzky 2006: 16).

(146)  **Secundus Tortor**. Sir, for his great boost, / With knokys he is indoost.
'Sir, for his great boast, with knocks he is punished.'
**Froward**. In fayth, sir, we had almost / Knokyd hym on slepe.
'In faith, sir, we had almost knocked him to sleep.'
**Cayphas**. <u>Now</u> sen he is well bett / weynd on youre gate, / And tell ye the forfett / vnto sir pylate; [Towneley 21.446–51]
'Now, since he is well beaten, go on your way, and tell sir Pilate of this crime.'

*Well* in collocation with *then* can have a conclusive function. This is illustrated by quote (147), where Herod concludes the York play by ordering his knights to take Jesus to Pilate. His use of *wele thanne* indicates that he has taken into account the preceding part of discourse, and, at the same time, has come to the resolution to resume the dialogue. A few lines later, the soldiers express their acquiescence to Herod's plans and announce their departure with *now* (148). The use of *now* here indicates that the speaker acknowledges or agrees with the utterance of the previous speaker, "[granting] what is (though not necessarily approving of it)" (Schourup 2001: 1049).

(147)  **Dux 1.** […] For my lorde, be my lewté will not be deland lang. / My lorde, here apperes none to appeyre his estate.
'[…] For my lord, by my faith, will not delay long. My lord, here appears no-one who would impair his estate.'
**Rex**. <u>Wele</u> <u>thanne</u>, fallis hym goo free. / Sir knyghtis, thanne grathis you goodly to gange, [York 31.392–5]
'Well then, he ought to go free. Sir knights, then prepare yourself to goodly be going.'

(148)  **Miles 2**. Mi lorde, we schall wage hym an ill way.
'My lord, we shall reward him in an unpleasant way.'
**Rex**. <u>Nay</u> bewscheris, be not so bryme. / Fare softely, for so will it seme.
'No, good sirs, be not so impatient. Fare softly, for so it will seem.'
**Miles 1**. <u>Nowe</u> sen we schall do as ye deme, / Adewe sir. [York 31.433–7]
'Now, since we shall do as you deem, adieu, sir.'

The conclusive function could be identified in a number of token attestations of *so*, mostly as a signal that a particular dialogue has come to an end. We find two such instances in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*. In the comic bedding scene, the Beadle assures Pilate that *what warlowe yow wakens with wordis full wilde, / Þat boy for his brawling were bettir be vnborne* ('whatever warlock awakens you with riotous words, that boy, for his brawling, were better be unborn'; ll. 141–2). Then he requests that his master may sleep now and introduces his turn with *so*, following the interjection *whe* (149). At the end of the play, Pilate sends Jesus on to appear before Herod, and concludes the respective orders to his soldiers with initial *so* (150).

(149)  **Pilate**. […] I schall mete with that myron tomorne / And for his ledir lewdenes hym lerne to be lorne.
'[…] I shall meet with that good-for-nothing tomorrow. And for his deceitful misconduct teach him to be forsaken [damned].'
**Bedellus**. *Whe*! <u>So</u> sir, slepe ye, and saies no more. [York 30.147–9]
'Ah! So, sir, sleep and say no more.'

(150)  **Miles 2**. Mi lorde, we schall hye this beheste for to halde / And wirke it full wisely in wille and in witte.
'My lord, we shall hurry along, this behest to hold, and perform it all wisely, with will and with wit.'
**Pilate**. <u>So</u> sirs me semys itt is sittand. [York 30.554–6]
'So, sirs, I think it is fitting [legally appropriate].'

In the Towneley *Crucifixion*, the Third Torturer uses the phrase *so, that is well* to express his satisfaction with their work, after he and his fellow soldiers have stretched and nailed Jesus to the cross (151). Here, following a similar functional pattern as *now* and *well* in the quotes above, *so* initiates a new (sub)topic or foregrounds a piece of new information, in the form of an elaboration or justification.

(151)   **Primus Tortor**. Hald, it now fast thor, / And oone of you take the bore, / And then may it not fayll.
'Hold it now fast there! And one of you take the bore, and then it may not fail.'
**Secundus Tortor**. That shall I do withoutten drede, / As euer myght I well spede, / Hym to mekyll bayll.
'That shall I do with good heed, as ever I hope to prosper, to cause him bitter bale.'
**Tercius Tortor**. <u>So</u>, that is well, it will not brest, / Bot let now se who dos the best / With any slegthe of hande. [Towneley 23.149–56]
'So, that is well, it will not break. But now let's see who does the best with his skill of hand.'

As pointed out above, the opening/conclusive use of discourse markers is rare in the speech of good, Christian characters. An exception is quote (152) from the Chester *Shepherds*. As the shepherds meet, the First Shepherd opens their feast with *now* and a praise of God's grace. In this example, *now* appears to have a prospective function, introducing the next scene.

(152)   **Tertius Pastor**. […] Hankeyn, hold up thy hand and have mee, / that I were on height there by thee.
'[…] Hankin, hold up your hand and grip me, that I were on the hill there beside you.'
**Primus Pastor**. Gladly, syr, and thow would bee by me, / for loth me is to denye thee.
'Gladly, sir, if you would be by me. For I would hate to deny you.'
**Secundus Pastor**. <u>Nowe</u> sythen God bath gathered us together, / with good harte I thanke him of his grace. [Chester 7.93–8]
'Now, since God has gathered us together, with good heart I thank him for his grace.'

<u>b) Acknowledging/cooperative use</u>

Similar to modern spoken discourse, the discourse marker *yea* in the mystery plays functions primarily in the structural and interpersonal domains to mark continuation, acceptance, and agreement. In the Chester *Harrowing*, the patriarchs and prophets await the coming of Christ. Adam first discovers a great light shining in the darkness of hell. Isaias acknowledges and confirms this discovery which he feels sure is a sign from the saviour indicating his imminent coming (153). The discourse marker *yea* here precedes information which is already known and consequently part of the common ground. Thus, *yea* functions as a positive politeness strategy, namely as a means to express involvement, solidarity and shared knowledge. The acknowledging function is enhanced by the modal adverb *secerlye*.

(153)  **Adam**. […] <u>Nowe</u>, by this light that I nowe see, / joye ys come, lord, through thee, / and one thy people hast pittye […] Sycker, yt may non other bee / but nowe thow hast mercye on mee, / and my kynd through thy postye / thou wilt restore agayne.
'[…] Now, by this light that I see, joy is come, lord, through you […]. Surely, it may none other be, but now you have mercy on me, and my lineage through your power you will restore again.'
**Esayus**. <u>Yea</u>, *secerlye*, this ilke light / comys from Goddes Sonne almight, / for so I prophecyed aright / whyle that I was livinge. [Chester 18.17–8, 21–8]
'Yes, surely, this same light comes from God's son almighty, for so I prophesied rightly while I was alive.'

In the Chester *Noah*, the entire family contributes to the building and stocking of the ark, even Noah's rebellious wife (154). The speakers open their turns with *and* which has mainly a structural function in this passage, denoting the transition from one turn to the next and signalling that new information is about to be added to the shared topic. Hence, the uses of *and* support the finding that this discourse marker is frequently being employed to create conversational coherence, as described by Schiffrin (1987). According to her, *and* signals "speaker-continuation" in modern spoken interaction, and the discourse marker functions as a device to "fit their [the speaker's] talk into an interactional slot" (1987: 141; see also Alonso-Almeida 2008: 172). Within Relevance Theory, *and, but* and *or* are considered 'discourse connectives' orientated towards the sequencing of discourse: "expressions that constrain the interpretation of the utterances that contain them by virtue of the inferential connections they express" (Mazzon 2012: 67; see also Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 365). At the same time, the use of *and* in the Chester Noah emphasises familial harmony, the successful cooperation in building the ark. Just like "the production of coherent discourse is an interactive process that requires speakers" (Schiffrin 2001: 54), the building of the ark is here an interactive process that requires the whole family.

(154)  **Cam**. I have an hatchett wonder keene / to bytte well, as may bee seene; / a better growndc, as I weene, / is not in all this towne.
'I have a hatchet wonder keen to bite well, as may be seen; a better ground, as I believe, is not in all this town.'
**Jafett**. <u>And</u> I can well make a pynne / and with this hammer knocke yt in. / Goe wee womch bowte more dynne, / and I am ready bowne.
'And I can well make a pin and with this hammer knock it in. Let us go to work without more din, and I am ready (prepared).'
**Noes Wife**. <u>And</u> wee shall bringe tymber to, / for wee mon nothinge ells doe- [Chester 3.57–66]
'And we shall bring timber to (this place), for we may nothing else do.'

In the Towneley *Crucifixion*, the torturers show a similar cooperative effort to overcome the difficulties of their task. They call to one another as they lift the cross and set it in the mortice (155). The Passion sequence as a whole relies upon several examples of such interactions between the soldiers/torturers. *Yea* in these scenes indicates that the speaker acknowledges what has been said and, in collocation with *and*, that they are going to elaborate on it. At the same time,

the discourse markers *and* and *yea* may serve as signals of solidarity and intimacy. The same elaboration of previous statements with initial *and* as an expression of commonality can be found in the dialogues between the shepherds and angels throughout the cycles. That means, such highly involved interactions appear predominantly in dialogues between social equals.

(155)   **Primus Tortor**. Lyft vs this tre emanges vs all
        'Lift up this tree among us all.'
        **Secundus Tortor**. Yee, and let it into the mortase fall, / And that shall gar hym brest.
        'Yes, and let it in the mortice fall; that shall make him break.'
        **Tercius Tortor**. Yee, and all to-ryfe hym lym from lym.
        'Yes, and (this will) tear him limb from limb.'
        **Quartus Tortor**. And it will breke ilk ionte in hym. / Let se now who dos best. [Towneley 23.308–13]
        'And it will break each joint in him. Now let's see who does best.'

While *no/nay* may primarily help in expressing disagreement, it does not always show this function. The torturers in the Towneley *Buffeting* bring Christ before the priests and tell Caiaphas of the accusations brought against Jesus. The Third Soldier claims that he breaks the Sabbath. The Fourth Soldier adds that Jesus cured the sick on the Sabbath, opening his turn with *no sir* (156). The topic has been addressed before, and the answer with *no* gives here an expansion of the previous statement.

(156)   **Miles 3**. Oure Sabott day we saye saves he right noght, / That he schulde halowe and holde full dingne and full dere.
        'Our Sabbath, we say, he observes not, which he ought to keep holy and hold very worthy and dear.'
        **Miles 4**. No sir, in the same feste als we the sotte soughte / He salued thame of sikenesse on many sidis seere. [York 29.267–70]
        'No, sir, in that same feast, when we the rascal sought, he cured them of sickness on all sides!'

The shepherds from the York play, following their conversation about the prophecies of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, observe and are awed by the star in the east. The First Shepherd confirms his companion's statement despite his reaction with *we, no Colle* (157). But we should no doubt bear in mind that multiple negation with a reinforcing rather than cancelling function (also illustrated by the Third Shepherd's *So selcouth a sight was neuere non sene)* commonly occurs in Middle English.

(157)   **Pastor 3**. Als lange as we haue herde-men bene / And kepid this catell in this cloghe, / So selcouth a sight was neuere non sene.
        'As long as we have herdsman been and kept this livestock in this valley, so wondrous a sight was never seen.'
        **Pastor 1**. *We*, no Colle. Nowe comes it newe inowe, / þat mon we fynde. [York 15.54–8]
        'Ah, no, Colle, it comes new [suddenly] enough; that can we find!'

In both the Chester *Innocents* and the York *Herod*, the courtiers are encouraged by the sovereign to flatter and echo his thoughts and moods. Herod's subjects react with <u>*Yes*</u>*, my lord of great renowne* (l. 49) or <u>*3a*</u>*, certis lorde* (l. 406) to their king's commands (158)–(159). The discourse marker, combined with honorific vocatives and/or modal adverbs, is used to exhibit agreement as well as to express acknowledgement but also flattery and obedience to a social superior:

(158)   **Herodes.** […] For thou must goe with hastye bere / into Judee this daye / after my doughtie and comely knightes, / and bydd them hye with all there myghtes / and that the lett for noe feightes. / Bringe them withouten delaye.
'[…] For you must go with noisy haste into Judea this day to my sturdy and noble knights, and bid them hasten with all their might, and that they stop for no fights. Bring them without delay.'
**Preco**. <u>Yes</u>, *my lord of great renowne*, / to doe your hest I am bowne, / lightly to leape over dale and downe / and speede if I were there. [Chester 10.43–52]
'Yes, my lord of great renown, to do your command I am ready, quickly to leap over hill and dale and be of help when I am there.'

(159)   **Rex**. […] Oure leue will we take at this tyde / And rathely araye vs to reste, / For such notis has noyed vs or nowe.
'[…] Our leave we shall take at this time, and quickly array us for rest. For these matters have annoyed us (before now).'
**Dux 1**. <u>3a</u>, *certis lorde*, so holde Y beste, / For this gedlyng vngoodly has greued you. [York 31.402–7]
'Yes, certainly, lord, this I hold best, for this wicked scoundrel has grieved you.'

The discourse marker *yea* may also serve a mitigating function, saving the face of either the speaker or the addressee (Lutzky 2012a: 83). This is exemplified in the excerpt below from the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*. Prior to the dialogue below, Satan appears in Procula's dream and persuades her that if Pilate dooms Jesus, he will face divine vengeance. For fear of this prophecy, she sends her son to ask Pilate to free Jesus, but the priests assure him that Jesus has evoked Procula's dream with his witchcraft. Unconvinced by this argument, Pilate finds no reason to punish Jesus whom he believes innocent of the priests' charges. Annas challenges Pilate's verdict by reiterating their accusation (161). *Yea* as a face threat mitigator makes his contradicting statement seem less direct, less impulsive or interfering and may therefore also be considered a politeness strategy. In other words, when *yea* is used in contexts where speaker and addressee have contrasting views, the discourse marker may initiate a subjective perspective without risking the face-loss of the addressee. In this sense, the evaluative use of *yea* can mediate diverging points of view of speaker and hearer (see Defour 2008: 78 for *now*).

(160)  **Pilate**. Yowe! þat schalke shuld not shamely be shente, / þis is sikir in certayne, and soth schulde be sought.
'Enough! That rogue should not unjustly be destroyed; that is true and certain, and the truth should be sought.'
**Anna**. <u>Yha</u>, thurgh his fantome and falshed and fendes-craft / He has wroght many wondir where he walked full wyde, / Wherfore, my lorde, it wer leeffull his liffe were hym rafte. [York 30.302–6]
'Yes, through deceit and falsehoods and fiendish crafts he has made many wonders where he walked far and wide. Therefore, my lord, it is lawful his life were taken away.'

In the example from the York *Caiaphas*, the Woman warns the soldiers that Peter is not as harmless as he may seem, since his master Jesus performs miracles through evil powers (162). Whereas *ya, but* conveys hesitant disagreement in the exchange, it also implicitly takes the interlocutor and his argumentation into account and therefore mitigates the possible face loss for the addressee.[183] Hence, the Woman's statement would appear more impolite without initial *ya* which seems to acknowledge the soldier's statement. Surprisingly, it is king Herod who uses the mitigating collocation *yea, but* most frequently in my sample, but he employs it only towards the dukes or his sons, not when addressing his soldiers or Jesus.

(161)  **Miles 3**. It semes by his sembland he had leuere be sette / By the feruent fire to fleme hym fro colde.
'It seems by his appearance that he'd rather be seated by the fervent fire to escape from the cold.'
**Mulier**. <u>Ya</u>, <u>but</u> and yoe wiste as wele as I / What wonders that this wight has wrought, / And thurgh his maistir sorssery, / Full derfely schulde his deth be bought. [York 29.93–8]
'Yes, but if you knew as well as me what wonders this man has wrought all through his master sorcery, full cruelly should his death be bought.'

<u>c) Challenging/contrastive use</u>

The discourse markers *nay, but* and *yet* are often used to express disagreement or an opposing view, challenging a previous speaker's words. For example, in the York *Noah*, his wife's response to Noah's invitation to enter the ark is rejection and scorn for what she perceives to be an absurd command. Instead, she suggests to her children that they *trusse to towne*, but Noah protests with initial *nay* (163). When Noah tells her about the coming of the flood in the Towneley version (164), she is similarly unimpressed, objects with the discourse marker *but* and offers her *alway adred* husband a beating "that will leave him the color of the famous blue cloth from Stafford" (Kolve 1966: 112).

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183 Diani, referring to modern British drama, interprets *yes* in collocations like 'yes but; yes well' as a type of "disagreement preface" (2000: 366), meaning something like 'I see your point, but'.

(162) **Uxor.** […] Nay Noye, I am nouyot bowne / To fonde nowe ouer there fellis. / Doo barnes, goo we and trusse to towne.
'[…] No, Noah, I am not prepared [ready] to set out now over the hills. Come, children; let's go to town.'
**Noe**. <u>Nay</u>, *certis*, sothly than mon ye drowne. [York 9.81–4]
'No, surely, then you will drown!'

(163) **Noah**. Wife, we ar hard, sted / with tythyngis new.
'Wife, we are severely afflicted by these tidings.'
**Uxor**. <u>Bot</u> thou were worthi be cled / In stafford blew; / Ffor thou art alway adred / be it fals or trew; [Towneley 3.199–201]
'But you were worthy to be clad [beaten black and blue]; for you are always afraid, be it false or true.'

In the Chester *Moses*, God requests Balaam to reject king Balak's command to curse the Israelites. Balaam complies, is forgiven and allowed to ride away by God, who conveys his opposition towards Balak and his orders with *yett*:

(164) **Balaham**. Lorde, I must doe thy byddinge / though yt to mee be unlikynge, / for therby mych wynninge / I might have had todaye.
'Lord, I must do your bidding though it were unpleasant to me, for thereby much winning I might have had today.'
**Deus**. <u>Yett</u> though Balack bee my foe / thou shalt have leave thyther to goe. [Chester 5.188–93]
'Yet, though Balaack be my foe, you shall have leave thither to go.'

On an interpersonal level, the discourse marker *now* may also serve as a means to reinforce ironic or sarcastic comments. In the York *Caiaphas*, a soldier tells Annas after Christ's arrest that Judas has successfully deceived Jesus by the kiss. Annas sarcastically suggests that the disloyal Judas who has spitefully betrayed his master must feel *a faynte frende*, initiating his statement with *now*:

(165) **Miles 4.** […] He taughte vs to take hym the tyme aftir tenne.
'[…] He taught [told] us to take him sometime after ten.'
**Anna**. <u>Nowe</u> *be my feith* a faynte frende myght he ther fele. [York 29.234–5]
'Now, by my faith, a weak (poor) friend must he feel!'

The Towneley *Abel* is another play which works by irony. Cain's opposition to Abel's suggestions is pointed up in his angry, insulting replies, where the discourse marker *yei* expresses contradiction and is combined with swearing (167). In a similar way, the relationship between Cain and his comic servant Garcio is characterised by verbal attacks, threats and mockery, "and the devices which make it plain are expressed with irony or even sarcasm" (Happé 2007: 127). A special case are the instances of comic stichomythia in the final dialogue of the play (168). In the line-by-line exchanges, Garcio's speech is peppered with the discourse marker *yey*. By sarcastically commenting on Cain's statements, he places himself in disagreement with his master. It is Garcio

who is clearly in power to control the exchange; he may therefore employ various impoliteness strategies with impunity (cf. Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 230).

(166)   **Abel**. If thou teynd right thou mon it fynde.
'If you pay your tithe correctly, you will find it out.'
**Cain**. Yei, *kys the dwills ars behynde*; [Towneley 2.265–6]
'Yes, kiss the devil's arse!'

(167)   **Cain.** The kyng will that thay be safe,
'The king wants them to be safe.'
**Garcio**. Yey, a draght of drynke fayne wold I hayfe.
'Yes, I would like to have a good drink.'
[...]
**Cain**. Byd euery man thaym luf and lowt,
'Bid every man to praise and reverence them.'
**Garcio**. Yey, ill spon weft ay comes foule out.
'Yes, badly-spun wool always comes out badly [badly-spun wool will result in poorly woven cloth].'
**Cain**. Long or thou get thi hoyse and thou go thus aboute. / Byd euery man theym pleasse to pay.
'It will be long before you are old enough to wear hose [before you prosper] if you go thus about (your work)! Bid every man be pleased to pay them.'
**Garcio**. Yey, gif don, thyne hors, a wisp of hay. [Towneley 2.430–1,436–40]
'Yes, give Don, your horse, a wisp of hay!'

d) Subjective/expressive use

Discourse markers may function as a means to convey speaker-attitudes or introduce a subjective opinion. The expression of the speaker's personal stance does, however, often co-occur with the interactional function of conveying personal evaluations, impressions and opinions (to an addressee), and signalling either acceptance or disapproval with the interlocutor's view.[184] Defour notes for the discourse marker *now*:

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[184] Some studies incorporate a separate functional category referring to the speaker, distinguishing it from categories pertaining to the speaker–hearer relationship. I do not differentiate speaker- from hearer-oriented discourse marker properties, as I focus on examples which display both subjective and interactional values in my subjective/expressive category, i.e. examples that do not relate to the speaker alone but also pertain to the hearer. The following quote from the Chester *Passion* may serve as a counter-example. Mary's lament with the interjection *alas* and the discourse marker *and* constitutes no reaction to a previous speaker:

**Primus Judeus**. Take them here, bound fast, / while this whippecorde may last, / for the pryme of the daye is past. / How longe shall we be here?
'Take them here, bound fast, while this whipcord may stay intact, for the prime of the day is past. How long shall we be here?'

*[Then they shall lead out Jesus and the two thieves, and the women shall come, the first of whom shall speak.]*

**Prima Maria**. *Alas*, *alas*, and woe is mee! [Chester 17.45–49]
'Alas, alas, and woe is me!'

> When *now* fulfils a pragmatic function as an introduction to a personal evaluation, the marker can introduce a subjective point of view which places the speaker's stance either in agreement or in disagreement with an alternative opinion or with the perspective of an addressee. (2007: 258f.)

Subjectification is thus related to intersubjectification, "through which meanings become more centered on the addressee" (Defour 2008: 64). The expressive function of the discourse marker *now* was pointed out by Mazzon (2012: 73f.) with regard to her Middle English data, and it could also be detected in the data of the present study. In the current sample, it is attested as a marker of both positive and negative emotions and attitudes. *Now* as a signal of the latter is represented in example (169) from the Towneley *Noah*, where Noah's wife introduces her turn with *now*, in order to signal her negative attitude towards her husband's greeting.

(168)   **Noah**. […] God spede, dere wife / how fayre ye?
        '[…] God speed you, dear wife! How are you?'
        **Uxor**. <u>Now</u>, as euer myght I thryfe / the wars / I thee see; [Towneley 3.190–2]
        'Now, as I hope to prosper, the worse (now) I see you!'

In *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, the messenger angel Gabriel awakens Joseph to chastise him for mistrusting Mary's purity. Joseph, grumbling about his inability to get sleep, sullenly expresses his exhaustion (170). Although the main function of the discourse marker is here to express a personal attitude, the use of *now* also marks Joseph's disapproval of the angel's statement.

(169)   **Angel**. Rise vppe, and slepe na mare, / Þou makist her herte full sare / Þat loues the alther best.
        'Rise up and sleep no more! You make her heart full sore, who loves you best of all.'
        **Joseph**. *We*, <u>now</u> es this a farly fare / For to be cached bathe here and thare, [York 13.253–7]
        'Ah, now, is this a wondrous matter! For I am caught both here and there.'

The expressive functions in such scenes are very often reinforced by interjections or oaths. Combined with swearing, the discourse marker characterises the speaker negatively, as in the York *Caiaphas*, where Annas suggests "to beat Jesus into speech" (O'Connell 2000: 82), as Christ refuses to reply to their questions during the bishops' interrogation: *Nowe by Beliall bloode and his bonys, / I holde it beste to go bete hym* ('Now, by Belial's blood and his bones, I hold it best to go beat him'; ll. 295–6). Further, the expressive use of *now* as a marker of negative feelings or attitudes is often connected with curses, as in the Towneley Buffeting, where the First Torturer loses his patience with Froward: *Now ill myght thou the!* ('Now ill might thou thrive [bad luck to you]!'; l. 402). In these cases, the function of the discourse marker is mainly that of an emphasiser.

*Now* may also signal surprise and disbelief felt on the part of the speaker at their interlocutor's previous words. In the York *Herod*, the king is surprised to be told how Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread:

(170)  **Rex**. [...] Howe mekill brede he them bedde?
'[...] How much bread he gave to them?'
**Dux 1**. But v looffis dare I wele wedde.
'Just five loaves, I dare well wager.'
**Rex**. Nowe *be the bloode that Mahounde bledde*, / *What*, this was a wondir at all. [York 31.213–6]
'Now, by the blood that Mahound bled, this was a wonder after all.'

In the two Towneley shepherds' plays, we find *now* as a signal of positive emotions. The Second Shepherd from the *Prima Pastorum* praises the angel's song and suggests he can sing as well as the angel (172), while the Third Shepherd expresses his affection towards his companion with initial *now* (173). Once again, the discourse marker *now* is situated both on a subjective and interactional level in these scenes, by helping to convey personal stance and form interpersonal ties with the addressee(s) (see Defour 2008: 62). As in the quotes above, the discourse markers in the shepherds' plays are often accompanied by oaths. In the *Secunda Pastorum*, Gill proposes to conceal the stolen lamb from the other shepherds by pretending it is a newborn baby. When Mak accepts this scheme against the shepherds, she introduces her turn with *now* to emphasise her joy and satisfaction (174).

(171)  **Secundus Pastor**. [...] I wold, that we knew / of this song so fre / Of the angell; / I hard by hys steuen, / He was send downe ffro heuen.
'[...] I wish that we knew of this song so noble of the angel. I heard by his voice, he was sent down from heaven.'
**Primus Pastor**. It is trouth that ye neuen, / I hard hym well spell.
'It is the truth what you say, I heard him well speak.'
**Secundus Pastor**. Now, *by god that me boght* / it was a mery song; [Towneley 12.422–9]
'Now, by God that saved me, it was a merry song:'

(172)  **Primus Pastor**. Trus! go we to mete, / It is best that we trete, / I lyst not to plete / To stand in thi dangere; / Thou has euer bene curst / syn we met togeder.
'Pack up! Let's go to our meal. It is best that we keep peace [settle our dispute]. I do not want to argue or stand in your debt. You have been cursed since we met together.'
**Tercius Pastor**. Now *in fayth*, if I durst / ye ar euen my broder. [Towneley 12.212–7]
'Now, in faith, if I dare, you are indeed my brother.'

(173)  **Mak**. Thou red; / And, I shall say thou was lyght / Of a knaue childe this nyght.
'[Get ready!] And I shall say that you came down with a boy this night.'
**Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. Now well is me day bright, / That euer was I bred. [Towneley 13.337–41]
'Now, happy to me is the day when I was born!'

In contrast to the variety of curses and insults initiated by *now* are a small number of blessings, such as in the quotes by Mak (175) and Herod (176):

(174)  **Secundus Pastor**. Ryse, mak, for shame! / thou lygys right lang.
    'Rise, Mak, for shame! You lie very long.'
    **Mak**. <u>Now</u> crystys holy name / be vs emang! [Towneley 13.378–9]
    'Now, Christ's holy name be among us!'

(175)  **Tercius Miles**. […] hayll heyndly! / hayll lord! hayll kyng! / we ar furth foundyng!
    '[…] Hail, gracious one! Hail, lord! Hail, king! We are hurrying forth.'
    **Herodes**. <u>Now</u> mahowne he you bryng / where he is lord freyndly; [Towneley 16.457–2]
    'Now, Mahound may take you to where he is the friendly lord [where he reigns in friendly manner]!'

The discourse marker *now*, as could be seen in some of the above quotes, may enhance diverse emotions. The same holds true for *and*, which conveys both positive and negative emotions in my sample. In the scene below from the York *Herod*, the king, who has already gone to bed, is disturbed by the First Duke announcing the arrival of Pilate's soldiers with the prisoner Christ. Herod does not want to be called upon to settle a dispute among strangers, and at first refuses to *stighill* with Pilate's men (177). Here, the discourse marker *and* in combination with the interjection *what* and the taboo expletive *in the deuyllis name* indicates very strong feelings, ranging from annoyance and resentment to exasperation and rage.

(176)  **Dux 1**. […] My lorde, yondir is a boy boune that brought is in blame, / Haste you in hye, thei houe at youre yoate.
    '[…] My lord, yonder is a bound boy that is brought in blame. Hasten quickly; they are waiting at your gate.'
    **Rex**. *What*, <u>and</u> schall I rise nowe, *in the deuyllis name*, / To stighill amang straungeres in stales of astate? [York 31.73–6]
    'What? And I must rise now, in the devil's name, to stickle with strangers in the stalls of estate [court]?'

First-person epistemic parentheticals are said to be "attached to propositions expressing matters about which the speaker, for a variety of reasons, cannot be entirely certain, such as personal evaluations, opinions said to be generally held, deductions based on appearances, and so on" (Brinton 1996: 217; Traugott and Dasher 2005: 155; Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 393). Wierzbicka states: "A major question addressed through such phrases is whether or to what extent the speaker is claiming knowledge" (2006: 204). When the torturers in the York *Crucifixion* have erected the cross, the Third Torturer believes that the mortice has been dug too wide and communicates this impression to his companions with initial *methynkith* (177). Similarly, the shepherds in the *Secunda Pastorum* are searching desperately for their lost lamb, which has been stolen and hidden by Mak. The Second Shepherd first believes that the sheep *be slayn* (178). His use of *I trow* suggests that he is uncertain and anxious to know what his two companions think. *Methynkith* and *I trow* in these examples have "the subjective function of indicating the speaker's epistemic uncertainty (hedging)" and may thus mitigate the possible face loss for the speaker (see Brinton 1995: 381). In the Towneley *Noah*, Noah's wife conveys more conviction when she

suggests to her family that the sun is shining in the east after the end of the flood without awaiting a reply (179). According to Defour (2007: 261), the speaker's personal stance can be reinforced by expressions that indicate the speaker's level of certainty. Among these expressions are epistemic phrases like oaths or modal adverbs. In Uxor's case, the combination of *now* and *bi my wit* provides additional validity to her assertion.

(177)  **Miles 3**. <u>Methynkith</u> this crosse will noght abide / Ne stande stille in this morteyse yoitt.
'I think this cross will not abide [be secure] nor stand still in this mortice yet.'
**Miles 4**. Att the firste tyme was it made ouere-wyde; / þat makis it wave, thou may wele witte. [York 35.239–42]
'At the first time it [the mortice-hole] was made too wide. That makes it wave, as you may well know.'

(178)  **Secundus Pastor**. <u>I trow</u> oure shepe be slayn / what finde ye two?
'I believe our sheep has been slain. What do you two think?'
**Tercius Pastor**. All wyrk we in vayn / as well may we go. [Towneley 13.544–6]
'All we do is in vain; we may as well go.'

(179)  **Uxor**. <u>Me thynk</u>, *bi my wit*, / The son shynes in the eest / lo is not yond it? / We shuld haue a good feest / were thise floodis flyt / So spytus.
'I think, by my wit, the sun shines in the east. Lo, is it not over there? We shall have a big feast, were these cruel floods away. '
**Noah**. We haue been here, all we, / Thre hundreth dayes and fyfty. [Towneley 3.461–6]
'We have all been here three hundred and fifty days.'

As seen in the examples above, hedges like first-person epistemic parentheticals primarily signal a desire to maintain the speaker's face. Accordingly, by using *Y trowe*, the Second Duke from the York *Herod* communicates his personal evaluations or impressions, but is not taking full responsibility for the truth of what he is going to say (180). Contrary to quotes (177)–(179), the social relationship between the interlocutors is here asymmetric. When talking to social superiors, first-person epistemic parentheticals may at the same time express a particular concern for the addressee's negative face, "since in their indirectness and tentativeness they serve the purposes of deference and politeness" (Brinton 1996: 212). *I trow*, *I wene* and *methynk* are frequently used as a negative politeness strategy in asymmetric relationships (Palander-Collin 1999: 43f.). This ties in with an observation made by Givón who states for certain present-day conversations: "[I]n facing an interlocutor of higher status, speakers tend to scale down their expressed certainty, by using hedges that place assertations in a lower epistemic range" (1993: 278). He calls this phenomenon "epistemic deference" (1993: 278). The main function of the discourse marker *Y trowe* in combination with *my lorde* is that of making the opinion presented more acceptable and accessible to the king. The discourse marker conveys "how the following information should be received by the addressee" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2003: 1138). Östman adds: "And in this sense the pragmatic particles can make sure that the utterance is interpreted (or at least

interpretable) in the way the speaker intended it to be" (1982: 169). By inserting the discourse marker, the duke is able to convey the interpersonal relation he aspires to establish or maintain with the king. Hence, the use of first-person epistemic parentheticals ranges from the expression of personal stance to the regulation of social relationships.

(180)  **Rex**. And whedir the boy be abasshid of Herrowde byg blure / That were a bourde of the beste, be Mahoundes bloode.
'And if the boy is abashed by Herod's big bluster; that would be the best kind of game, by Mahound's blood.'
**Dux 2**. *My lorde*, Y trowe youre fauchone hym flaies / And lettis hym. [York 31.261–4]
'My lord, I believe your falchion frightens him and and hinders him (from speaking).'

Discourse markers in my sample seem to have a tendency to occur in direct or rhetorical questions which express emotion, ranging from anxiety, whether pretend or not, to joy and elatedness.[185] The discourse markers *and* and *bot* appear fairly frequently in questions, sometimes accompanied by a vocative. In the York *Harrowing*, in the manner of "a shrewd attorney who jealously defends his property claims through sophistry" (Schreyer 2014: 148), the devil confronts Jesus with a number of eager questions, asking him amongst other things, with initial *and* as well as an abuse term, why he did not pursue the liberation of the souls earlier (181). The relevance of such constructions with discourse markers lies in the expression of stance, with the additional aims of emphasising particular topics and "lending a more 'true' ring to the dialogue" (Mazzon 2009: 89).

(181)  **Jesus**. I make no maistries but for myne, / þame wolle I saue I telle the nowe. […] Here haue thei soiorned, noght as thyne, / But in thy warde-thou wote wele howe.
'I exercise no mastery but for mine. Them will I save, I tell you now. […] They have here sojourned, not as yours but in your custody, as you well know.'
**Satan**. And *what deuel* haste thou done ay syne / þat neuer wolde negh thame nere or nowe?
'And what the devil have you ever done? You never came near them till now?'
**Jesus**. Nowe is the tyme certayne / Mi fadir ordand before, / þat they schulde passe fro payne / And wonne in mirthe euer more. [York 37.216–7, 220–7]
'Now is the time certain. My father ordained before that they should pass from pain, and dwell in mirth evermore.'

Related to its function of signalling contrast and disagreement (see above), the discourse marker *but* frequently reinforces the expression of impatience and anger in questions. When Mak approaches the other shepherds out in the fields in the *Secunda Pastorum*, he has his cloak over him and, because of his reputation as a sheep-stealer, puts on dialect forms suitable to the London area to conceal his identity. He uses *ich* for the pronoun *I* and the verb ending *-th* instead of *-s* in

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185 In Mazzon's study (2012) on the discourse marker *now* in a Middle English corpus, the expressive and questioning function are kept apart. I did not employ two separate categories as the discourse marker use in questions seems to emphasise expressive functions in my sample.

the third person singular of the present indicative. London English was firmly established as the prestige dialect at the end of the Middle English period. Accordingly, Mak pretends to be one of the *gentlery men* (l. 18), an important messenger from the king and thus presumably socially superior to the shepherds (see Blake 1981: 65).[186] Mak's shepherd companions, however, recognise him long before he speaks and react with scorn. Coll asks him why he is behaving so proudly and suggests he replace the fake southern accent in his mouth with a *torde* (l. 215). The surprise, anger and contradiction in his rhetorical question is <u>Bot</u>*, Mak, is that sothe?* emphasised with the discourse marker.

(182)   **Mak**. Ich shall make complaynt / and make you all to thwang / At a worde, / And tell euyn how ye doth.
'I shall make a complaint, and have you all flogged at a word, and tell exactly what you do.'
**Primus Pastor**. <u>Bot</u>, Mak, is that sothe? / Now take outt that sothren tothe, / And sett in a torde! [Towneley 13.210–5]
'But, Mak, is that true? Now take out that southern tooth and set in a turd [hold your tongue]!'

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186 Blake has commented on this passage in *Non-Standard Language in English Literature* (1981). He argues that Mak's southernisms appear only in a few lines, and therefore hardly constitute more than a brief play on dialectal features: "The passage just gives a southern flavour and is not so convincing as Chaucer's representation of the northern dialect in The Reeve's Tale" (1981: 65).

## 4.3.4.3 Discussion of results

My analysis indicates that there are mainly four different uses in the sample that we could classify as having interpersonal functions (cf. Mazzon's (2012: 73) taxonomy for *now*):

| Interactional/interpersonal use | Related discourse markers |
|---|---|
| a) <u>Opening/conclusive</u><br>– foregrounding<br>  (introducing a new topic)<br>– backgrounding<br>– marking topic shifts<br>– acceptance/acknowledgement | *now*<br>*so*<br>*then*<br>*well* |
| b) <u>Acknowledging/cooperative</u><br>– acceptance/acknowledgement<br>– attention/involvement<br>– reinforcement/expansion<br>– compliance<br>– agreement<br>– intimacy/solidarity<br>  (positive politeness)<br>– hedging, face threat mitigation,<br>  deference (negative politeness) | *yea*<br>*now*<br>*and*<br>*nay*<br>*first-person parentheticals* |
| c) <u>Challenging/contrastive</u><br>– disagreement/contradiction<br>– irony/sarcasm | *nay*<br>*but*<br>*yet*<br>*now*<br>*yea* |
| d) <u>Subjective/expressive</u><br>– positive/negative emotions<br>– personal evaluations/opinions<br>– agreement/disagreement<br>– hedging, face threat mitigation<br>– questioning | *now*<br>*and*<br>*but*<br>*first-person parentheticals* |

Table 38: Interactional uses of discourse markers in *Group /–///*

The examples demonstrate that discourse markers are a universal phenomenon in the sample, in the sense that they function to construct the highly involved interactions of human/supernatural, male/female characters. Additionally, discourse markers may be used on an interpersonal level in dialogues between social equals, or in asymmetric relationships with an upward or downward direction of use. I have not found that turn-initial discourse markers were primarily employed by Middle English playwrights to fill in the metre. As turn-initial discourse markers are found at the beginning of the verse, they were certainly not inserted in order to maintain the end rhyme. More importantly, their use seems not random but properly motivated, linked, for example, to politeness strategies. Even if such features could have been used to fill in the metre, they cannot be substituted or ignored without slightly changing the meaning of the lines (see Støle 2012: 85). The

discourse marker functions also appear to be quite varied and subtly manipulated in the sample. It is, however, important to note that discourse marker attestations do not appear in considerable numbers and therefore cannot be considered indicators of 'real' spoken interaction (Lutzky 2012a: 24). They may instead reflect the playwrights' strategic scattering of speech-like features into the texts to make them sound more like natural talk. In general, they seem consciously and strategically selected, with the purpose of conveying specific functions. I have discovered some examples of the functional continuity of particular discourse markers over time, confirming what Brinton has claimed: "[...] while the inventory of discourse markers in a particular language (such as English) may change extensively over time, some discourse markers have quite long histories, and the textual and interpersonal functions embodied by discourse markers seem to have great continuity" (2010: 306).

## 4.3.5 Summary

As has been seen in the previous sections, the sample yields a wide typology of exchanges, among which are many cases of well-known conversational structures. Evidence from studies on Present-Day English was included to comment on the continuity or discontinuity of certain interactive sequences, and to help creating taxonomies, for instance for the functional categories of interrogatives in Section 4.3.1. Imperative sequences were substantially more common in the sample than interrogative structures. As in Present-Day English, the illocutionary force of directive speech acts varies from prohibitions and commands to invitations and advice. Discourse markers, which are employed primarily as a means to signal agreement or disagreement, were also deemed a significant interactive tool. The low density of lexical repetition can be explained by the nature of the texts. Repetition is normally considered among the strongest characteristics of conversation, but the mystery plays' characteristic stanza forms demanded a high degree of verbal ingenuity. Therefore, the speakers in the cycles rarely reproduce previous utterances. Lexical repetition should nonetheless not be neglected in the analysis of the cycle plays, as some of the investigated exchanges (e.g. echo questions and answers) structurally resemble modern face-to-face communication.

It was intriguing to consider longer stretches of dialogue, so as to investigate the careful construction of dialogue dynamics which can be attributed to the 'dramatisation process' leading from the biblical account to the individual play. In these longer sequences, the "pragmatics of interaction" (Mazzon 2009: 197) and the correlation between different speech-like features emerges more clearly. The text contains more cases of conflict talk than harmonic dialogue. Mazzon noted the same in her study on the N-Town collection, although she states that complying

to imperatives is frequent in the texts (2009: 179). Interestingly, this is what Koch observed in his study on 'communicative immediacy' in Early Romance Texts:

> In all the examples analysed here, the writing characterised by dialogic$_{2/3}$ immediacy projects – either implicitly or even explicitly – a negative image of the protagonists. Quarrels and conflicts are the order of the day, whether they are set within the framework of a lawsuit or of persuasive fiction. (1999: 420)

Dialogic repetition expressing positive replies, which align the speaker with the interlocutor's preceding utterance, are frequent in my sample. Still, non-compliance to directives, and conflict talk in general, is highly common, particularly when more formalised dialogues were represented, as for example in the mimicry of courtroom discourse. This comes as no surprise, since the mystery 'comedies' are made up of the conflict between characters representing (human) vice and folly. The intent is didactic: The change from conflict to harmonic dialogue usually symbolises a progression towards increasing virtue in the spiritual status of a character (Forest-Hill 2000: 46). Note that after the struggle with his wife, Noah expresses his obedience to God. Similarly, Joseph's conversion from outright rejection of his wife to complete acceptance of the miracle of the virgin birth powerfully dramatises the power of God to transform a man's life. Their initial quarrels and their suspicions contribute to making the characters and situations appear more 'lifelike' and familiar to medieval spectators: "his [Joseph's] coarse asides, his very human doubts and the uniqueness of his situation also serve to link him with that audience" (Jack 1989: 125). Moreover, the conflicts between unfaithful characters, for instance between the devils or Annas and Caiaphas, allowed the use of strong interactive elements in depicting the negotiations of power, and sometimes seem to indicate an effort to stage actual conversational structures. As Woolf observed, "heightening of vice leads to a more realistic effect than heightening of virtue" (1980: 144), though both were equally achieved by conscious selection and the application of well-defined conventions.

## 4.4 Features of sharedness and function – emotion and emphasis

Irma Taavitsainen's (e.g. 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c) concept of 'personal affect' is of special relevance to the present section. Even though she primarily applies it to narrative fiction, it can easily be transferred to drama. Personal affect, as Taavitsainen explains, is an integral dimension of interpersonal relations and may be defined as the emotional charge in texts, i.e. "the expression of subjective emotions, feelings, moods and attitudes" (1997c: 193; see also Taavitsainen 1995b: 191; 1997a: 825, note 1).

One of the major aspects of personal affect is the 'surge' of emotions and attitudes. Taavitsainen understands 'surge' as "an outburst of emotion, an expression that conveys intensified personal charge between the participants of communication, whether text-internal or exophoric in reference" (1997c: 194). Amplification or 'surge' contributes to involvement, thus demanding a response from the audience (e.g. 1997a: 825, note 1). Explicit devices of emotional involvement are direct comments or emotive asides, which may request the audience to pay special attention or give advice on how to interpret the text. More indirect ways of involvement, as Taavitsainen explains, include "the creation of a mock reality in which the readers are supposed to live with the depicted characters, feel their emotions and imagine themselves in their situations" (1997c: 193; see also Taavitsainen 1997c: 195). Accordingly, the mechanisms of involvement vary from subtle invitations to share the feelings of the protagonists to direct appeals to the audience. Such emotive sharing, as I have pointed out in previous sections, is an important part of the religious instruction intended by the cycle plays and strengthens the devotional purpose of the genre. In any case, affective features are a powerful means of controlling audience reactions.

Personal affect is created by a combination of distinct linguistic features, and such features can function as "formatting factors in text production and reception" (Taavitsainen 1997c: 194). According to Taavitsainen's theory, the "repertoires of features of emotional loading" (1997c: 193, 265) and thus the degree of audience involvement in the form of personal affect differs significantly from text to text. She lists a number of linguistic devices that may reflect personal affect: interjections and exclamations, first- and second-person pronouns, direct questions, proximal deictic expressions, elliptical sentences made up of imperative forms, vocative use of proper names, private verbs that express subjective states of mind, and evaluative adjectives and adverbs (Taavitsainen 1998: 196; see also Taavitsainen 1997c).[187] Together they "form a matrix of involved and affected style" (Taavitsainen 1997b: 573). Among the 'surge' features, interjections

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187 Focusing on emotive communication from a pragmatic point of view, Caffi and Janney (1994: 355) list morphological choices, lexical substitutions, terms of address, along with tense/aspect choice, choices of pronouns and determiners, lexical repetition, among emotive linguistic phenomena.

and exclamations are described as "most important" in marking styles of personal affect (Taavitsainen 1997b: 573, 1997c: 256).

## 4.4.1 Interjections

Although interjections have regularly been mentioned in historical grammars, such as Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, Isidore's *Etymologiae* or Aelfric's *Grammar*, they have often been marginalised or entirely neglected in linguistic analyses (Sauer 2008: 390f.; Sauer 2012, Gehweiler 2010: 315). Quirk et al.'s *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* treats interjections as a "marginal and anomalous class" (1985: 67), which is "peripheral to the language system itself" (1985: 74). For Leech et al., interjections are "linguistically somewhat primitive expressions of feeling, only loosely integrated into the linguistic system" (1982: 53). Recently, however, the study of interjections has gained new impetus, both from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. Ameka, in his 1992 article on the definition, typology and functions of interjections, considers them as "those seemingly irrational devices that constitute the essence of communication" (1992: 101). Biber et al. stress the importance of interjections, which, as they claim, "make an important contribution to the interactive character of speech, because they signal relations between speaker, hearer(s) and discourse" (2002: 449). A short survey of Middle English interjections is provided by Mustanoja's *Middle English Syntax* (1960: 620ff.). In addition, there are several studies on Middle English interjections in Chaucer's works (e.g. Kerkhof 1982: 440ff.; Taavitsainen 1995b; Sauer 2012). There have also been a number of articles on Late Middle English or Early Modern English interjections with reference to individual genres, for instance by Brinton (1996) and Taavitsainen (1997b, 1998). Taavitsainen's 1997b paper includes a short analysis of the *Helsinki Corpus*' drama section. But the most comprehensive study of Middle English interjections in drama is without doubt Hildegunn Støle's dissertation (2012). Her work provides an in-depth discussion of the function and distribution of interjections in the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*LALME*) corpus.

Interjections have traditionally been regarded as one of the eight word classes or parts of speech. In modern pragmatics, they are described as a subset of items that primarily express "a speaker's mental state, action or attitude" (Ameka 1992: 106). Biber et al. identify interjections as typical features of what they call "the grammar of conversation" (1999: 1083ff.). Referring to Taavitsainen's study on interjections in prose romances (1998), Fitzmaurice calls them "a linguistic feature that is considered to be quintessentially characteristic of spoken language" (2010: 686). The primary interjections *a* and *lo,* in particular, have been related to the inventory of 'communicative immediacy' in Middle English texts (Sikorska 2000: 398). They are used particularly in those types

of literature which imitate spoken discourse or are intended to be recited, such as epic and narrative texts which include dialogue, and, of course, drama.

As is the case with most parts of speech, it is difficult to define 'interjections' in absolute terms. In modern discussions, they have been categorised under various names and with reference to different criteria by different scholars. Consequently, they have sometimes been subsumed under inserts, exclamatives, discourse markers, routines, formula, onomatopoeia, particles or pragmatic noise (see the "definitions" sections in Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 55ff. and Gehweiler 2010: 315). In his analysis of Chaucer's "Reeve's Tale", Sauer (2012) identifies interjections functioning as greeting and farewell formulae, attention getters, response forms, commands, expletives and swear words. Wilkins (1992: 132) argues that interjections should be classified alongside other deictic elements, such as pronouns and demonstratives, as their interpretation is based on the actual speech moment.

The variety of definitions and classifications partly results from the fact that interjections have different degrees of affinity with other categories, i.e. they display a number of similarities to and overlaps with other word classes. It has therefore been suggested that interjections constitute a word class with a prototypical structure (see Nübling (2004) who differentiates between *prototypische* and *idealtypische Interjektionen*). Core members display all obligatory properties of their class whereas peripheral members only fulfil certain minimum criteria, which makes them likely to overlap with other items.

Traditional as well as modern grammars often list three to four prototypical features of interjections, and these comprise syntactic, morphological, phonological and semantic criteria: Interjections are usually not syntactically integrated into the sentence (the term *interjectio* literally means 'thrown or placed between') in which they occur or which they precede (Sauer 2012: 158; see also Moore 2016: 194). They commonly appear at the beginning of a sentence, and in spoken discourse there is often a pause in intonation (Ameka 1992: 108). As far as their form and origin are concerned, a useful distinction can be made between primary and secondary interjections. Primary interjections do not have homonyms in other word classes and are often onomatopoeic or sound-symbolic in origin, while secondary interjections "do have homonyms, namely the lexemes they are originally derived from" (Gehweiler 2010: 317). According to Ameka, secondary interjections are "forms that belong to other word classes based on their semantics and are interjections only because they can occur by themselves non-elliptically as one-word utterances" (1992:105). Further, interjections exhibit different degrees of formal complexity. Multi-morphemic interjections are occasionally called 'interjectional phrases' (Ameka 1992: 104 with reference to Hill 1992), 'complex expressions' (Wierzbicka 1992: 161) or 'exclamatory phrases' (Taavitsainen 1997b:

574). The field of secondary interjections is particularly complicated because they may merge with (taboo) expletives, oaths, greeting formulae and expressions of politeness:

> Secondary interjections are found in passages in which the language is loaded with personal affect and the emotional charge is strong with frequent use of other exclamations like primary interjections, *What!* and *How!*, direct questions, direct addresses, second person pronouns and verbs expressing private states of mind. Together they convey heightened emotions. (Taavitsainen 1997a: 824; see also Taavitsainen 1997a: 825, note 2)

It is often also problematic to identify the exact meaning of an interjection; many interjections have multiple functions, which sometimes even stand in opposition to each other (Sauer 2012: 158). In contrast to earlier grammars, who assigned this word class to the "purely emotive" level of language (Quirk et al. 1985: 853), broader functions have been attributed to them in modern studies: "interjections in written texts are far removed from purely emotive cries recorded as reactions to situations in conversation" (Taavitsainen 1995a: 463). Ameka (1992: 113f.) defines three main categories of communicative functions. Taavitsainen (e.g. 1997b, 1998) and Støle (2012) have effectively applied this functional categorisation, which is based on present-day spoken language, to their Middle English studies. Their analyses reveal that in spite of the fact that the form of interjections may change, "their general range of functions seems to remain largely stable over time, although some functions may at a given time be more important than others" (Gehweiler 2010: 318). Ameka's three basic functions can be summarised as follows:

1) <u>Expressive</u>

   The first function comprises expressive-cognitive uses which focus on the speaker's mental state, and are further subdivided into (a) emotive interjections, which "express the speaker's state with respect to the emotions and sensations they have at the time" (Ameka 1992: 113), and (b) cognitive interjections, which "pertain to the state of knowledge and thoughts at the time of utterance" (Ameka 1992: 113).

2) <u>Conative</u>

   The second function distinguished by Ameka is conative. The conative function is related to the interpersonal relations between the participants of the discourse. Such interjections are directed at an addressee (or addressees), and "they are either aimed at getting someone's attention or they demand an action or response from someone of a speaker's wants" (Ameka 1992: 113). Interjections with a conative function can be detected in a variety of historical texts, where they directly relate to another character, or call upon the audience to be especially attentive (see Taavitsainen 1997c: 234).

3) Phatic

In some cases, interjections serve a purely phatic function. Phatic interjections "are used in the establishment and maintenance of communicative contact" (Ameka 1992: 114).

The phatic function essentially belongs to oral discourse, which indicates the close relation between interjections and spoken language (Støle 2012: 4). In fact, interjections are commonly produced as spontaneous, emotional reactions to the linguistic or extralinguistic context and can only be decoded in terms of the context in which they are produced (Ameka 1992: 108; see also Taavitsainen 1997b: 574). In spoken language, paralinguistic features like intonation, stress pattern and accompanying gestures "add to the expressiveness and convey specific nuances of meaning" (Taavitsainen 1997c: 232f.). Written material lacks all this prosodic information; in historical texts, the meaning of interjections has to be determined without extralinguistic help. However, the co-text can provide various cues to detect the textual function (Gehweiler 2010: 319; Taavitsainen 1995a: 440, 1997c: 233, 1997a: 816). Hence, interjections are primarily a phenomenon of spoken language, but, as Jucker and Taavitsainen point out, "their conventionalisation in written genres in the history of English is intriguing" (2013: 58).

## 4.4.1.1 Overall distribution

For my analysis, I have, again, approached the study of interjections from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, in order to investigate their frequency of attestation as well as their functions in individual scenes. Four of the interjections in my analysis are primary (a(h)[188], o(h),

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188 *Aha* and *a ha* differ functionally from the related forms *a* and *ah* and thus seem to form classes of their own. They occur only six times in the present material, which is why they have not been included among the most frequent primary interjections in my analysis. Two cases of <aha> appear in the Chester cycle, and one is found in the York *Temptation*. For the *MED* it denotes "lively interest, surprise, a critical attitude, etc." (sense 1). Støle (2012: 368) has remarked that it may imitate laughter or express a expressive-cognitive reaction in greetings. She adds that *aha* is characteristic of bad characters, who employ the interjection in expressions of triumph. The *MED* interpretation seems fairly accurate with regard to the Chester *Noah* episode, where Noah reacts with a combination of surprise and anger to his wife's blows: *Aha, marye, this ys hotte;* ('Ah, marry, this is violent!'; l. 247). Similarly, the interjection in the devil's aside in the York *Temptation* performs cognitive and expressive-emotive functions. Realising that he has failed in his attempt to entice Jesus to satisfy his hunger, Diabolus plans to tempt Jesus to wantonly throw himself upon God's protection by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple: *Aha, nowe go we wele therby; / I schall assaye in vayne-glorie / To garre hym falle*, ('Ah, now let us go over there, I shall test him in vainglory to make him fall'; ll. 92–4). The expression of triumph which Støle has observed is evident in the Chester *Fall of Lucifer:* Swelling with pride, Lucifer sits down on God's throne of heaven: *Aha, that I ame wounderous brighte,* (l. 126). <A, ha> has a specialised meaning that distinguishes it from <aha>. For Taavitsainen, *a ha* expresses "insight, or recovery from a lapse of memory" (1997b: 581). Støle, by contrast, has classified the examples with *a ha* under *ha*, which she defines as an interjection expressing "physical strain and aggression" (2012: 367, footnote 393) Indeed, this is the distinguishing quality of *a ha* in my material. Støle has observed that these forms mainly occur in the speeches of the torturers as natural outbursts caused by physical strain: In the Towneley

*alas, we*), whereas three are secondary (*out, what, why*).[189] I also included the most common expletives in the form of prepositional phrases: *by, for, in* + NP.[190] In *Tables 39–41*, the relative frequencies are given according to their coverage in my data.[191] Comparing these numbers with *Tables 42–43* reveals that the N-Town control groups (average relative frequency: 7.85) feature slightly fewer interjections than the Chester, York and Towneley sample (average relative frequency: 7.00). The Chester *Crucifixion* from *Group III* shows the highest figures; the York *Creation* and the Towneley *Abel* from *Group II* also display high densities.

Some interjections, such as *out* and *what*, are restricted to a small number of texts only, while others are broader in scope. *A(h)* occurs most frequently (112 instances), followed by *alas* (110 instances) and *by* + NP (106 instances) (see *Figure 12*). Note that my texts contain only 25 occurrences of *o(h)*, while in Early Modern and Present-Day English conversation, according to Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 276), *o(h)* is much more frequent than *a(h)*. In fact, *o(h)* is the most frequent pragmatic noise element in their Early Modern English play text data.

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*Crucifixion*, the torturers draw out Jesus' arms before nailing them on the cross (*A, ha! hold still thore!*; l. 196) and in the Towneley *Scourging*, they lift the weight of the cross onto Simon's back (*A, ha! now ar we right arayde*; l. 408). The instance of <a, ha> from the Towneley *Abel*, where Cain rails at his horse which *will [...] no forther* (l. 28), may also express physical strain and rage: *A, ha! god gif the soro & care!* (l. 33).

189  The classification is not quite as unambiguous as this distribution implies. For example, originally complex interjections may have developed into simple interjections. Thus, *alas* was originally (i.e. in French) a complex phrase. Accordingly, Støle lists *alas* as a phrasal interjection "perhaps on its way [in] [*sic*.] of becoming a prototypical (or primary) interjection" (2012: 366). She argues that *alas* is not syntactically independent, as it frequently appears in constructions with *for* and *that*. The phrasal status, as Støle further points out, is frequently apparent in spelling. Sauer, in contrast, assumes that the phrasal origin of *alas* "was probably no longer recognized in ME [Middle English], where it was likely to be felt as a simple interjection" (2012: 164). Judging from my sample, syntactically independent usage of *alas* is much more common than constructions with 'for' or 'that', which is why I have categorised *alas* as a primary interjection.

190  Although mild swearing in the form of <for sooth> appears in the present material (e.g. in Chester 2.513, Towneley 22.329), I have not included these cases among my *for* + NP instances, as sōth may be a noun or adjective in these phrases.

191  In Støle's and my material, the most common function of *lo* is to draw attention, for instance to a physical object on stage, or to vocalise physical effort (see Støle 2012: 308; see also *MED*, sense 2; Section 4.3.2 above), while "the expressive emotive and/or cognitive functions are scarce or non-existent" (Støle 2012: 308). On these grounds, I have decided to exclude *lo* from my study of interjections as 'surge' features, even though it would have been the fourth most frequent item according to absolute numbers (87 occurrences).

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 6.95 (14) | 5.61 (24) | 5.64 (6) | 6.82 (14) | 7.32 (14) | 9.47 (8) | 6.64 (26) | 5.03 (17) | 6.41 (35) |

Table 39: The frequency of interjections per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 6.48 (13) | 7.88 (34) | 1.82 (5) | 7.98 (16) | 14.96 (20) | 11.11 (12) | 4.19 (5) | 6.20 (16) | 12.16 (39) |

Table 40: The frequency of interjections per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 10.25 (31) | 15.07 (41) | 5.29 (14) | 7.35 (25) | 7.39 (35) | 11.98 (43) | 5.54 (11) | 7.26 (19) | 13.84 (50) | 4.80 (16) | 5.54 (19) | 8.40 (37) |

Table 41: The frequency of interjections per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 10.11 (20) | 2.21 (2) | 21.35 (31) | - | 3.01 (4) | 13.79 (4) | 5.94 (13) | 3.78 (6) | 13.23 (10) |

Table 42: The frequency of interjections per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 2.75 (5) | 13.51 (29) | 0.51 (2) | 10.71 (20) | 1.89 (3) | 2.58 (5) | 6.65 (12) |

Table 43: The frequency of interjections per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)
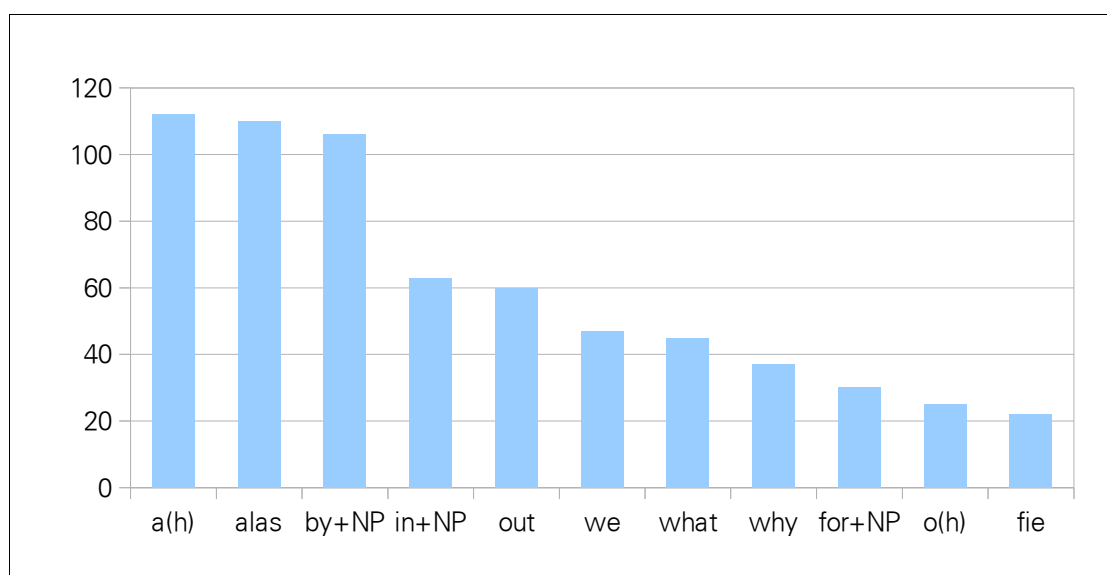


Figure 13: Overall distribution of interjections in *Group I–III* in order of frequency

In the following analysis, I shall concentrate on cases in which interjections express 'emotional loading', i.e. (extreme) positive and negative feelings: joy, distress and rage. The aim of this section is to outline how interjections function as affective or 'surge' devices, and how these features contribute to audience involvement in particular scenes. Once again, special emphasis will be put on comical effects. The basis and starting point of my analysis below are Støle's functional definitions of individual interjections, but the contexts will be assessed in greater detail, in order to detect more specific meanings. The subsequent section focuses on swearing in the forms of oaths and taboo expletives.

### 4.4.1.2 Emotive-expressive uses

<u>a) Awe, admiration and joy</u>

The interjections *a(h)* and *o(h)* can be used to express awe in vocative constructions.[192] When *o* occurs in our sample, it is primarily in the collocational pattern *o* + VOC. The rhetorical device that is of importance here is the apostrophe, an address to an absent but powerful being (cf. Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 280). Some of these expressions of admiration may be 'spontaneous' emotive reactions in the play texts, but the majority are used in a conative function to directly appeal to the addressee, usually a deity of some kind.[193] Most cases in the sample are either solemn invocations or more emotional, joyful prayers:

(1)     **Adam**. <u>O</u> lord and soveraigne saviour, our comfort and our counselour, of this light thou art author as I see well in sight. [Chester 18.1–4]
        'O lord and sovereign saviour, our comfort and our counsellor, of this light you are creator as I see well in sight.'

(2)     **Balaack**. <u>O</u> mightye Mars, one thee I call! [Chester 5.133]
        'O mighty Mars, on you I call!'

(3)     **Primus angelus seraphyn**. <u>A</u>, mercyfull maker, full mekill es thi mighte, / That all this warke at a worde worthely has wroghte. [York 1.42–3]
        'Ah, merciful maker, great is your might, that all this work at a word worthily has wrought.'

Both *a(h)* and *o(h)* may also be used to express feelings of joy and happiness in greetings, where the interjections are often accompanied by a noun of address and a greeting formula (4)–(6). The expressive-emotive and cognitive functions are apparent in these passages. In the Towneley

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192 See Støle (2012: 259ff.) for a short diachronic study from Middle to Present-Day English of the frequency and function of the interjection *a* compared to *o*.

193 Taavitsainen (1995a: 462f.) has pointed out that, in contrast to contemporary language use in conversation, interjections in written discourse of past periods may directly appeal to addressees. Ameka seems to confirm this view, stating that modern interjections that "the conative and phatic ones may be directed at people, but they are not addressed to people" (1992: 109).

*Secunda Pastorum*, for instance, the Third Shepherd uses the interjection to joyfully greet his friend (emotion) while at the same time conveying surprise and (re)cognition of him:

(4)     **Tercius Pastor**. <u>A</u>, *coll, goode morne* / why slepys thou nott? [Towneley 13.449]
        'Ah, Coll, good morning! Why do you not sleep?'

(5)     **Noah**. <u>A</u>! *benedicite*! what art thou that thus / Tellys afore that shall be? / thou art full mervelus! [Towneley 3.163–4]
        'Ah! Bless us! Who are you that thus foretells what shall be? You are a true marvel!'

(6)     **Balack**. <u>Ah</u>, *wellcome, Balaham my frende*, for all my anger thow shalt ende [Chester 5.256–7]
        'Ah, welcome, Balaam, my friend, for all my anger you shall end.'

In some cases, the expression of joy is parodied effectively with the employment of interjections. In the York *Creation*, when the first of the good angels turns to God, Lucifer turns away and begins to admire his own body (7). Carried away by the contemplation of his beauty and power, he continues to boast of his brightness. In his next speech, Lucifer can only exclaim the primacy of his own beauty and rank "in ever-more grandiose gestures" (Bishop 1996: 51). However, just when he is confident that he *sall be lyke vnto hym that es hyeste on heghte* ('shall be like him who is highest on height'; l. 92), he is cast into hell along with the Second Devil.[194]

(7)     **Primus angelus deficiens**. <u>O</u>, what I am fetys and fayre and fygured full fytt!
        'Oh, how I am handsome and fair, with figure well fit!'
        [...]
        **Primus angelus deficiens Lucifere**. <u>Owe</u>, certes, what I am worthely wroghte with wyrschip, iwys! [York 1.66, 82]
        'Oh, how I am worthily wrought with worship, indeed!'

A similar ironic twist as in the devil scene is apparent in the York *Herod*. When the soldiers announce the arrival of the bound Jesus as a *presente fro Pilate* (l. 103), Herod can barely contain his enthusiastic anticipation (8). When, however, Christ fails to provide the expected entertainment, refusing to speak or even move, it is Herod himself who adopts the role of an entertaining fool: "For in the face of Christ's deafening silence it is Herod and his henchmen who are themselves finally reduced to the level of the court's unwitting fools" (Simpson 2011: 28). The humorous effect of the king's line is reinforced by the use of the interjection, and the audience is

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194 There are two key chapters in the Old Testament that have been said to discuss the fall of Lucifer, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 (Kelly ²1974: 134). Isaiah 14:13 describes how God explains that his vanity led to his fall reporting what Lucifer said: *qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis* (You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north). Ezekiel 28 likewise recounts what Lucifer said and did which is why God made him fall from heaven. These words are then put into the mouth of Lucifer in the cycles.

encouraged to laugh at the portrayal of vanity and impatience which will inevitably lead to Herod's fall.

(8)     **Rex**. […] <u>O</u>, my harte hoppis for joie [York 31.171]
        '[…] Oh, my heart hops for joy.'

<u>b) Grief, pity and despair</u>

Three of the most frequent interjections in my material may denote grief, sadness and distress: *a(h), alas,* and *o(h)*. Passages with intense emotional loading often contain interjections in co-occurrence with other personal affect features, placing emphasis on the speaker's subjective feelings. In the Chester *Crucifixion*, Longinus, the blind centurion, who has to thrust Christ's side on the cross with a spear, calls out in an emotionally heightened address which contains – next to the interjections *alas* and *wellawaye* – repetition, vocatives and rhetorical questions:

(9)     **Longyus**. […] *High kinge of heavon*, I thee here. / What I have donne well wott I neere, / but on my hand and on my speare / owt water runneth throwe; / and on my eyes some can fall / that I may see both one and all. / <u>A</u>, *lord*, wherever be this wall / that this water came froe. / <u>Alas</u>, <u>alas</u>, and <u>wellawaye</u>! *What deede have I donne todaye?* [Chester 17.384–93]
        '[…] High king of heaven, I hear you. What I have done I do not know, but on my hand and on my spear water flows out; and on my eyes some has fallen that I may see both one and all. Ah, lord, wherever be this well where this water came from! Alas, alas, alas! What deed have I done today?'

The crucifixion is the moment in all cycles which most directly affects the audience and which most requires audience involvement and identification: "The citizens of York and Chester who watched their biblical cycle plays shared specific images of and likely similar emotional responses to Christ's crucifixion" (Dickson and Romanets 2014: 40). In the crucifixion plays, the Apostle John, the Marys, and Simon of Cyrene are witnesses of the crucifixion, just like the audience of the mystery plays (Eshelman 2007: 24f.). All of these spectator-characters illustrate their emotions by emphatic language, in order to encourage the audience to respond to their suffering by sharing the situation and the feelings of the lamenters. In this way, the cycle plays seek to evoke a compassionate response to Jesus' physical pain and anguish.

In the crucifixion plays, the Marys are portrayed as the highest examples of human compassion and grief. They serve as strong models "for affective contemplation" (Eshelman: 2007: 28), and the plays are designed to heighten the spectacle of their distress. They are burdened with sadness and the memory of Christ's suffering. This makes their grief intense but altogether human. The pain of the lamenters is frequently articulated in interjections (10)–(11) which are accompanied by epithets like *sorrowe*, *paynes* and *deth*, conveying shades of sadness and mourning. *Alas* is here some sort of sigh initiating long monologues dwelling on the feeling of despair: "There is little doubt that *ALAS* consistently expresses feeling in the material, and

therefore it functions as an effective signal to the audience in the Middle English drama" (Støle 2012: 366).

(10)   **Maria Jacobi**. <u>Alas</u>, *sorrowe* syttys me sore! / Myrth of thee I gett no more. [Chester 17.273–4]
'Alas, sorrow lies sorely upon me! Joy of you I get no more.'

(11)   **Mary Magdalene**. <u>Alas</u>! what shall we say! / ihesus that is so leyfe, / To *deth* thise lues this day / thay lede with *paynes* full grefe. [Towneley 22.337–8]
'Alas! What shall we say! Jesus that is so dear (to us), to death these Jews this day they lead him with grievous pains.'

Both sorrow and empathy with others can be expressed by the interjections *a* and *alas*. John the Apostle expresses his sympathetic concern with Mary in the Towneley *Scourging* and *Crucifixion*. When interjections are used to denote empathy with others, they usually cover two main functions: an emotive-expressive and a conative, addressee-oriented function, which, again, illustrates Ameka's (1992: 114) point that interjections may be multifunctional. When John commiserates with Mary on the loss of Jesus, the interjection co-occurs with terms of address like *lady, my lady dere*, emphasising both politeness and affection, and lexis, such as *doyll, care* and *wo*, expressing distress:

(12)   **John the Apostle**. <u>Alas</u>, for *doyll, my lady dere*! [Towneley 23.344]
'Alas, for woe, my lady dear!'

(13)   **John the Apostle**. <u>A</u>, *lady*, well wote I / thi hart is full of *care* [Towneley 23.405]
'Ah, lady, well know I, your heart is full of care.'

(14)   **John the Apostle**. [...] <u>Alas</u>! for his modere and othere moo, [...] Thay Wote nothyng of all this *wo* [Towneley 22.269, 272]
'[...] Alas! For his mother and others more [...] They knew nothing of all this woe.'

The Virgin Mary is the central figure of the spectator-characters. In the Chester *Crucifixion*, Mary enters with "an impassioned wail" (Goodland 2007: 64) that employs the interjection *alas* three times (15). Later, she will even invoke death to end her grief. The passage from the Towneley *Crucifixion* where Mary names the visual tortures that have been inflicted on her son is one of the most intense descriptions of grief in the cycle plays (16). Note the frequent employment of terms of endearment in the passages below.

(15)   **Marye**. <u>Alas</u>, my love, my life, my leere! <u>Alas</u>, nowe mourninge, woe ys mee! <u>Alas</u>, *sonne*, my boote thou bee, [Chester 17.241–3]
'Alas, my love, my life, my dearest! Alas, now mourning, woe is me! Alas, son, (you) be my remedy!'

(16)    **Mary**. <u>Alas</u>! the doyll I dre / I drowpe, I dare in drede! [...] <u>Alas</u>, my childe, for care! / Ffor all rent is thi hyde; / I se on aythere syde / Teres of blode downe glide / Ouer all thi body bare. / <u>Alas</u>! that euer I shuld byde And se my feyr thus fare! [Towneley 23.314, 337–43]
'Alas! The sorrow I suffer, I cower, I tremble with fear! [...] Alas, my child, for care! For all torn is your flesh. I see on either side tears of blood down glide over all your body bare. Alas! That ever I should stay and see my companion thus die!'

It is not surprising that these episodes contain highly emotional passages. The audience was expected to empathise with Mary's grief:

> By focusing attention on the Virgin, her spectatorship is marked as a kind of ideal spectatorship: she becomes a focus for audience identification, enabling her to teach through her actions how a medieval audience ought to respond to the crucifixion. (Eshelman 2007: 27)

Christ's passion is central to medieval affective theology. The portrayal of Mary can be associated with the tradition of 'popular piety', which medieval spectators were encouraged to embrace through the crucifixion plays. In fact, audiences are not only expected to identify with Mary's mourning, but are taught by her example to sympathise with Jesus' suffering in such a way that he becomes a devotional object.[195]

The emotive aspect of interjections is particularly prominent in the Chester *Innocents*. Herod is usually characterised as an enemy of God, "as an incarnation of the evil principle" (Diller 1992: 45). In the Chester play, however, the tyrant delivers a remarkably emotional final speech (17). Herod has just learnt that his command to slay *neyther on nor two [...] but a thousand and yett moo* (ll. 169, 171) children also led to the killing of his own son, whom the Second Woman was powerless to protect from Herod's soldiers. The moment he hears the news of his son's death, despair comes over him. The king damns himself and repents, in a limited way, by realising that his son's death is divine retribution for his wickedness (ll. 424–7). His speech in this state of mind is so dreadful in its agony, anguish and fear of being haunted that "it is sure to get to the marrow of even the most hardened sinners among the audience" (Bock 2010: 80). The above-mentioned involvement features, interjections, rhetorical questions, repetition, contribute to the immediate experience of the audience. It can be assumed that *alas* as "the very stereotype" of feelings of misery and repentance (Taavitsainen 1997c: 235) may have been exploited here to achieve comic effect or even parody of the tragic. I believe, however, that Herod's emotional outburst does not aim at inciting laughter. Rather, the audience is supposed to interpret his fate as a cautionary tale. The spectators witness Herod's violent and sudden fall as a direct result of his own wickedness. Thus, the exemplary effect of such characters need not be destroyed and can even be heightened by such emotionalisation.

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195 See Section 3.4.1 for a detailed account of the medieval movement of 'affective piety'.

(17)   **Herodes**. […] <u>Alas</u>, what the divell is this to meane? / <u>Alas</u>, my dayes binne now donne! / I wott I must dye soone. / Booteles is me to make mone, / for dampned I must bee. [...] I have donne so many harmes- / from hell comminge after mee. / I have donne so much woo / and never good syth I might goo; / therfore I se nowe comminge my foe / to fetch me to hell. / I bequeath here in this place / my soule to be with Sathanas. / I dye now; <u>alas</u>, <u>alas</u>! [Chester 10.417–21,424–32]
'[…] Alas, what the devil is this to mean? Alas, my days are now done! I know I must die soon. Useless for me to complain, for damned I must be. [...] I have done so many harmful deeds – from hell coming after me. I have done so much woe and never good since I can go; therefore I see now coming my foe to fetch me to hell. I bequeath here in this place my soul to be with Satan. I die now. Alas, alas!'

As we have seen, feelings of despair, sorrow, and loss can be conveyed by interjections. In some cases, their meanings are modified and coloured with shades of irony. Normally the sorrow expressed by the interjection *a(h)* is genuine, but in the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum*, it is used to express feigned pain. When the shepherds approach the cradle, Gill orders them away, and in her pointed show of distress pretends to be suffering from childhood pains and claims she will eat the child in the cradle if she is deceived the shepherds (18). Since the body of Christ is indeed eaten as part of the Eucharist, the parody is obvious here, especially in a play cycle designed to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi. In the whole scene, Mak's wife "enacts the part of the newly delivered mother who has been in labour all night until daybreak, bemoaning the pain" (Niebrzydowski 2006: 161). Similarly, when Mak re-awakes among the shepherds and complains about a sore neck, these words seems like a comic allusion to the penalty Mak is afraid of suffering if he is caught with the stolen sheep (19). Thus, the interjection *a(h)* clearly has ironical connotations in these scenes.

(18)   **Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. <u>A</u>, my medyll! / I pray to god so mylde, / If euer I you begyld, / That I ete this chylde / That lygys in this credyll. [Towneley 13.537–41]
'Ah, my waist! I pray to God so mild, if ever I deceived you, I will eat this child that lies in this cradle.'

(19)   **Mak**. […] <u>A</u>! my nek has lygen wrang Enoghe; [Towneley 13.381–2]
'[…] Ah! My neck has lain wrong enough.'

In the same way, *alas* can serve as a stereotypical expression of distress and sorrow in the play texts, as illustrated in quote (20) from the Towneley *Buffeting*. It seems that the interjection could be used for mock distress, precisely because its use was so stereotypical. When Caiaphas states that he should have slain Jesus instead of taking him to Pilate who might be persuaded to acquit him by bribery, as *gyftys marres many man* ('gifts corrupt many men'; l. 467), the audience does not take this lament seriously. The meaning of *alas* seems to be so specific that medieval spectators needed hardly any context to grasp the foul play of such deceiver figures. As Støle confirms, ironic use of *alas* "partly relies on the recognition by the audience that *alas* is a

stereotypical expression, and partly it relies on the recognition of stereotypical good and bad characters" (2012: 362).

(20)    **Cayphas**. <u>Alas</u>, now take I hede! /
'Alas, now I take heed!'
**Anna**. Why mowrne ye so?
'Why mourn you so?'
**Cayphas**. Ffor I am euer in drede / wandreth, and wo, Lest pylate for mede / let ihesus go [Towneley 21.460–3]
'For I am ever in dread, misery and woe, lest Pilate by bribery, lets Jesus go.'

The mystery cycles' characters mainly employ interjections in isolation, but sometimes also in pairs or even in clusters. For example, *out*, which is uttered in fear, pain, despair and anger, frequently appears in collocation with other interjections expressing the same emotions: "Such groups often occur when the action gets very hectic and dramatic, and when the characters are excited or agitated" (Sauer 2012: 163).[196] The combination of different interjections is most probably used for emphasis in such passages. The repetitions and collocations often occur in the speeches of evil figures, such as Satan (21)–(22), Cain (23) and Herod (24), "when they fall dramatically from power" (Støle 2012: 265). The effect is often comical, particularly in the scenes where the villains cry out in alarm, pain or despair. For example, Satan in the Chester *Harrowing of Hell* anticipates the loss of his *masterdome* (l. 165) in hell when he learns who is threatening to crash his gates. He instantly realises that Jesus has defeated him and that the faithful will be taken from his domain (21). The York Lucifer is also subjected to a fall, but in this case the descent seems to be more dramatic. When he reports on the conditions in hell, his outbursts are accompanied by interjections (22). Although such speeches contain 'surge' features, they do not encourage the audience to become involved in the emotions of pain and misery, but instead express stereotypical reactions and attitudes. These episodes all contain an element of *Schadenfreude*, meaning that the audience may safely laugh when the brutish and contemptible figures receive their due punishment (see Section 3.3.2). Here, the spectator is faced with ridiculous characters in comic scenes where "he can feel separate from and superior to them, he can laugh at them and thus apply that laughter which met with the approval of the Church and which was meant for the enemies of God" (Diller 1992: 227).

(21)    **Sathanas**. <u>Owt</u>, <u>alas</u>, I am shent! [Chester 18.177]
'Out! Alas! I am damned!'

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196 In passages with an intense emotive tone, an interjection sometimes appears in the middle of a speech turn, where it serves to reinforce the represented emotions:

**Primus angelus deficiens Lucifere**. […] <u>Owe</u>, what I am derworth and defte-<u>Owe</u>! Dewes! All goes downe! [York 1.93]
'[…] Oh, how I am worthy and deft! Oh God! All goes down!'

(22)  **Lucifer deiabolus in inferno**. <u>Owte</u>! <u>Owte</u>! <u>Harrowe</u>! Helples, slyke hote at es here;   This es a dongon of dole that I am to dyghte [...] <u>Owte</u>! <u>Ay</u>[197] <u>walaway</u>! I well euen in wo nowe. [York 1.98–9, 105]
'Out! Out! Help! (I'm) helpless! So hot is it here! This is a dungeon of suffering that I am condemned to! [...] Out! Ah! Alas! I boil in woe now!'

(23)  **Cayne**. <u>Owt</u>, <u>owt</u>, <u>alas</u>, <u>alas</u>! I am dampned without grace. [Chester 2.665–6]
'Out, out! Alas, alas! I am damned without grace.'

(24)  **Herod**. […] <u>Out</u>, <u>alas</u>, what may this bee? [Chester 10.117]
'[…] Out, alas! What may this be?'

It should be noted that these collocations as well as the suspense and excitement they create are characteristics of the fabliau genre: "In Chaucer's fabliaux the collocations of interjections are a regular feature in highlighting the stories and bringing turning-points of the plot to the audience's attention" (Taavitsainen 1997c: 260, note 15). The interjection *harrow*, which appears in the devil's speech in (22), is usually restricted to fabliau style (Taavitsainen 1997b: 587). According to the fabliau tradition, the characters represent the lower or middle layers of society (Taavitsainen 1997c: 235). As the devils are supernatural figures, two examples with *harrow* from human characters may better illustrate this style in the mystery plays. When Cain tries to set fire to his offering and blows the kindled corn into a flame, the smoke is so heavy that it nearly chokes him: *<u>We</u>! <u>out</u>! <u>haro</u> help to blaw!* (l. 275). In the York *Noah*, Noah's wife cries out: *<u>We</u>! <u>Owte</u>! <u>Herrowe</u>!* ('Ah! Out! Help!'; l. 101), as she looks down at the rising water. Despite her fear, she plans to go home a few moments later, in order to gather her household tools.

As the above scenes imply, interjections with comical connotations may incite the audience to laugh when others fall from power, to laugh at their reversals of fortune or their silly misunderstandings. But this extensive mockery of others is not necessarily detrimental to the didactic messages of the texts.

<u>c) Contradiction, anger and contempt</u>
*A(h)*, *we*, *o(h)*, *fie* and *out* may all convey feelings of contradiction, anger or contempt. They typically occur turn-initially, as to be expected of natural emotional outbursts. The interjections *out* and *fie* sometimes occur in prepositional constructions: '*fie*/*out on*/*apon thee*/NP'. The choice of the informal pronoun form in these expressions reflects the strong negative emotions towards the addressee. The constructions with direct addressees usually denote anger with someone, i.e. they

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197 It is uncertain whether *ay* should be categorised as a spelling variant of *a*, *ah*, *ei* or the adverb *ay*. The *MED* lists *ai* as a spelling variant of *ei*, an "exclamation of surprise, challenge, or inquiry, usually associated with some emotion" (sense 1). When the Second Shepherd recognises the stolen sheep in Mak's cradle, he exclaims *<u>Ay</u>, so!* (l. 592), which, indeed, denotes surprise and anger in this case. Taavitsainen (1997b: 578), however, defines the instances of *ay* as Northern forms of *a*. These ambiguities are the reason why the three cases of *ay* in my material were not included in the *a(h)* class.

serve both expressive-emotive and conative functions as in (25). I share this view with Støle (2012: 303), who notes the contradictory interpretation by Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 251), who believe that *fie-* constructions with *on/upon* serve phatic functions instead.

(25)    **Primus Pastor**. False lad, <u>fye on thy face</u>! [Chester 7.250]
'False lad, fie on your face!'

Next to functioning as adverbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and conjunctions (see *MED*), both *why* (26) and *what* (27) can operate as interjections. In these cases, they signal turn-taking and thus perform a textual function. At the same time, they may convey emotions and attitudes. *Why* is used with considerable frequency in my sample to express surprise or contradiction, challenging a previous speaker's words. *What* mainly indicates indignation, dismay, contempt or anger at the addressee's (verbal) behaviour. Consequently, one may conclude that both *why* and *what* serve textual (phatic), conative and expressive-emotive functions.

(26)    **Mak**. Wyll ye here what fare she makys / to gett hir a glose, / And dos noght bot lakys / and clowse hir toose.
'Do you hear what a fuss she makes to get a comment? And she does nothing but play around and scratch her toes.'
**Uxor Ejus (Gill)**. <u>Why</u>, who wanders, who wakys / who commys, who gose? / Who brewys, who bakys? / what makys me thus hose? [Towneley 13.413-6]
'What, who goes here and there, who stays awake? Who comes, who goes? Who brews, who bakes? What makes me thus hoarse?'

(27)    **Miles 1**. <u>What</u>, <u>fye on the</u>, beggar, who made the so bolde [York 29.336]
'What? Fie on you, beggar! Who made you so bold?'

Expressive-emotive uses of interjections are exploited to reinforce comical exaggeration and parody in the devil's dialogues. After they have been consigned to hell, the devils in the York *Creation* accuse each other of responsibility for their plight (28). As they fight in the turmoil of hell, their debasement and deformity are revealed to the audience: "The York playwright underlines this linguistically by making them forsake their earlier dignified style for fits of mindless rage with ranting colloquialisms" (Jack 1989: 29). Their speeches are blasphemous and obscene, but also informal and vigorous. The interjections *out* and *we* are typical expressions of anger and animosity in the cycle plays. At the same time, they create a swift narrative pace and hence contribute to the impression of noise and agitation of the hell scenes, which stand in marked contrast to the tranquillity and dignity in heaven. As the Second Devil exclaims in the York play: *We that ware beelded in blys, in bale are we brent nowe* ('We that were dwelling in bliss, in bale are we burned now!'; l. 108).

(28)    **Secundus Diabolus**. <u>We</u>, lurdane, thou lost vs.
'Ah, wretch, you ruined us!'
**Lucifer in inferno**. 3he ly! <u>Owte</u>, <u>allas</u>! / I wyste noghte this wo sculde be wroghte. / <u>Owte</u> on yohow, lurdans, yohe smore me in smoke.
'You lie! Oh, alas! I knew not this woe should be wrought! Curse on you, wretches, you choke me with smoke!
**Secundus Diabolus**. This wo has thou wroghte vs.
'This woe has you wrought on us!'
**Lucifer in inferno**. 3he ly, yohe ly! [York 1.114-21]
'You lie! You lie!'

Herod's vicious determination to retain power, the devils' vanity and folly, and Caiaphas' uncontrolled rage are all expressed through their verbal style. The interjections *fie* and *out* are especially prominent as markers of evil in speeches by bad characters. Herod's characterisation as a vicious, ranting and menacing ruler can be illustrated by a passage from the Towneley *Herod* play (29). Besides interjections, his speech includes imperative forms spoken in elliptical sentences, questions, repetition, taboo expletives and curses. The intense emotional tone of such passages is created specifically by this accumulation of features.

(29)    **Herodes**. <u>why</u>, and shuld I to hym cowre? Nay, ther thou lyys lyghtly! <u>ffy</u>! the dewill the spede / and me, bot I drynk onys! This has thou done in dede / to anger me for the nonys: And thou, knafe, thou thy mede / shall haue, <u>by cokys dere bonys!</u> Thou can not half thi crede! / <u>outt</u>, thefys, fro my wonys! <u>ffy</u>, knafys! <u>fy</u>, dotty-pols, with youre bookys! [Towneley 16.225–32]
'What? And I should cower to him? No, there you readily tell lies! Fie! The devil help you and me, unless I drink once [something]! This have you done to anger me on purpose. And you, rascal, you shall have your reward, by God's dear bones! You do not know half your creed! Get out, thieves, of my dwelling. Fie, rascals! Fie, blockheads, with your books!'

Interjections may even be used to express anger by God. In cases as (30) and (31), the emotional colouring is explicit. In the Chester *Fall of Lucifer*, God curses pride because he knows that this sin has caused the fallen angels to turn away from him to their own self and the pride in their physical being (30). Once again, the interjection is repeated for emphasis, stressing to the audience that a similar fate awaits them if they submit to pride and disobedience. In the *Fall of Man*, God employs another curse after he hears how Satan as a serpent has flattered and seduced Eve into eating the forbidden fruit (31). The interjection *a* underlines God's heightened feelings at the despicable deed of the devil. Other devices used for the same purpose include repetition and and terms of address.

(30)    **Deus**. <u>A</u>, *wicked pryde*! <u>A</u>, woo worth thee, woo! [...] <u>A</u>, *pryde*! Why mighte thou not braste in two? [Chester 1.274, 278]
'Ah, wicked pride! Ah, woe befall you, woe! [...] Ah, pride! Why might you not burst in two?'

(31)    **Dominus**. <u>A</u>, *wikkid worme*, woo worthe the ay [York 5.154]
'Ah, wicked snake, woe befall you forever!'

Physical comedy is combined with tragedy in the Chester and Towneley versions of Herod's massacre of the innocents. In both plays, the mothers cry about their children in laments with *alas* which sound very similar to Mary's expressions of grief. However, unlike Mary, they also resort to physical violence against the soldiers, seeing that mercy will not be granted (32)–(33). Battles of words as well as physical fights between male and female characters were a source of comedy in the Noah episodes, but the spirit in the Noah plays never becomes as severe as in the fighting between the soldiers and the mothers. Neither Noah nor his wife exclaims *fie* or employs clusters of interjections. Støle notes: "*FIE* interjections are especially associated with bad human male characters in the subgenre of biblical plays. When *FIE* is used by good or by female characters it denotes extreme circumstances" (2012: 304). The same holds true for *out* in my sample. Thus, in these episodes the interjections are used to express intense emotional excitement. Together with swearing, short imperative forms with direct address, and repetition, they contribute to an effect which certainly triggered the intended audience reaction. Like Mary, the mothers of the innocents invite audience identification. Medieval spectators are expected to share the grief and despair conveyed by their emotional outbursts of sorrow and anger.

(32) **Secunda Mulier**. <u>ffy</u>, <u>fy</u>, <u>for reprefe</u>! <u>fy</u>, full of frawde! No man! haue at thy tabard, harlot and holard! Thou shall not be sparde! I cry and I ban! <u>Outt</u>! morder! man, I say / strang tratoure & thefe! <u>Out</u>! <u>alas</u>! and <u>waloway</u>! / my child that was me lefe! My luf, my blood, my play / that neuer dyd man grefe! <u>Alas</u>, <u>alas</u>, this day! / I wold, my hart shuld, clefe / In sonder! [Towneley 16.359–68]
'Fie, fie, for shame! Fie, full of fraud! No human! Have at your tabard, scoundrel and whoremonger: You shall not be spared! I cry and I curse! Out! Murderer! Man, I say, flagrant traitor and thief! Out, alas, alas! My child that was dear to me! My love, my blood, my joy, that never did anyone grief! Alas, alas, this day! I wish my heart should split apart!'

(33) **Secunda Mulier**. <u>Owt</u>, <u>owt</u> on thee, theife! / My love, my lord, my life, my leife, / did never man or woman greiffe / to suffer such torment! / But yet wroken I will bee. / Have here on, two, or three. [...] <u>Owt</u>, <u>owt</u>, <u>owt</u>, <u>owt</u>! [Chester 10.329–34, 377]
'Ah, fie on you, thief! My love, my lord, my life, my beloved, did never man or woman grief to suffer such torment! But yet avenged I will be. Have here one, two or three. [...] Out, out, out, out!'

The previous examples revealed that interjections are mainly used in emotionally loaded scenes. Therefore, it is remarkable that the crucifixion scenes hardly contain any interjections. In the Towneley *Crucifixion*, the interjection *a* is simply a warning against a possible stage mishap. As Garrett (2015: 124) has pointed out, the First Torturer's remark: *A felow, war thi crowne!* (l. 231), may best be translated as '<u>A</u>, fellow, watch your crown', as Christ's crown of thorns might have slipped when the cross was erected during the scene. In the York *Crucifixion*, a theme that runs like a common thread through the play is the diligence and determination that the soldiers exhibit at their work. Kraft describes them as "a group of workmen who are very careful and concerned about performing their duties to their utmost abilities" (2010: 83). Christ's emotional speeches are

met with callous contempt by the soldiers. When Jesus asks God to forgive his torturers, they make fun of his response:

(34)     **Miles 1**. <u>We</u>, harke, he jangelis like a jay.
          'Oh, hark, he chatters like a jay.'
          **Miles 2**. Methynke he patris like a py.
          'I think he patters like a pie.'
          **Miles 3**. He has ben doand all this day, [York 35.276-8]
          'He has been doing this all day.'

The co-text of *we* clarifies the function of the interjection in this episode; here it merely expresses mockery and disbelief. The soldiers are unaware of the message that Christ proclaims. In fact, it is not Christ who has been *jangelis like a jay* (l. 276); it is the soldiers who indulge in their "incessant banter" (Kraft 2010: 87). Mocking Christ for what they themselves are guilty of further serves to heighten the comic presentation but, at the same time, disrupts audience involvement in these gruesome episodes. The soldiers' failure to respond emotionally to Christ's message is typical of all crucifixion plays, and the continued lack of feeling or emotional involvement of the characters becomes also apparent through the lack of interjections in these episodes.

In sum, the use of interjections "to express subjective, affective, personal attitudes to what is being talked about and to one's addressee make them useful tools in the written representation of spoken language" (Fitzmaurice 2010: 685). But they are also used to mark turn-taking in the performance, or form part of a rhetorical figure, as in the collocational pattern of *o* + vocative. Additional functions in the play texts include foregrounding, characterising protagonists, manipulating audience involvement, signalling turning-points in the plot, creating suspense, and indicating irony or parody (see Taavitsainen 1997b, 1997c). All these functions point to the 'writtenness' of the play texts and, more importantly, reveal the didactic, instructive and theatrical nature of medieval religious drama. In fact, primary interjections are a distinct characteristic of literary genres. Taavitsainen (1997a: 817) notes a considerable difference between their occurrence in fiction and other text types both in the Late Middle English and Early Modern English period. For secondary interjections, particularly oaths and swearing for intensifying purposes, the discrepancy is even more apparent according to her findings (1997a: 817). Bearing these results in mind, the following section will assess the the frequency and distribution of oaths and taboo expletives in the cycle plays.

### 4.4.1.3 A special case: swearing

Abuse has always been considered one of the primary categories for colloquial language: "Maligning and belittling one another is apparently a long-standing pragmatic use for language" (Moore 2016: 195).[198] Swearing in our sample often displays both face-damaging and ludic qualities: Similar to cursing, it is associated with the expression of anger and frustration, and with humour and jest (see Archer 2010: 398). As pointed out in the introductory section, Taavitsainen believes that 'surge' features of personal affect effectively contribute to audience involvement. For her, swearing and oaths belong to this category, as they reveal language use in its most emotionally charged state.

Middle English swearing, in particular, was most heavily influenced by religion. According to Hughes, a surprising number of religious asseverations, ejaculations, blasphemies, and curses, appeared in the course of the Middle Ages: "The word of God, so signally absent from the older heroic asseverations, was used and abused, elevated, debased and distorted as never before" (1991: 55; see also Hughes 2006: 202). Through the medieval period, the range and intensity of religious swearing changes:

> In the early stages it tends to consist of the mildest invocations of spiritual qualities, such as *by my faith!*, through appeals to the Virgin Mary and the saints, ascending to the godhead in its various serene aspects, as in *by God that sits above!*, but reaching its most potent expressions in the intimate references to the person and sufferings of Christ, already alluded to, as in *by Goddes corpus! Cristes passioun!* and the various gruesomely explicit evocations of the Crucifixion. (Hughes 1991: 56; see also Taavitsainen 1997a: 816, 820)[199]

Utterances associated with religious matter are often ambiguous; the same expression can, dependent on the context, denote either a pious oath or a taboo expletive (Taavitsainen 1997a: 816; see also Gehweiler 2010: 320).[200] Following Gehweiler (2010: 321), secondary interjections which are used in swearing will be termed 'taboo expletives' in this section, while 'oath' refers to the original meaning of swearing, i.e. to "a solemn or formal declaration or statement invoking God" (Gehweiler 2010: 321).

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198 Gehweiler (2010) provides an overview on the treatments of 'bad language' from a historical pragmatic perspective, with frequent reference to Hughes' (1991) comprehensive work on the social history of swearing.

199 Taavitsainen (1997a: 822) and Hughes (1991: 71) have shown that different genres employ oaths and expletives in different ways. In religious treatises or courtly romance, for example, they appear as serious, pious invocations, whereas in fabliaux or drama, they may be used as taboo expletives.

200 For an adequate interpretation of these expressions, Taavitsainen notes that attitudes of other characters, comments in the text and genre conventions should be taken into account, as they are believed to reflect "speaker intentions" in this period (1997a: 824).

| | Number of occurrences | | | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Group I* | *Group II* | *Group III* | |
| **Taboo expletives with reference to...** | God | 23 | 6 | 27 | *by Christe* (Noes Wiffe – Chester 3.103)<br>*by Goddis dere myght* (Puella 1 – York 13.76)<br>*for Mars* (Janitor – York 26.168)<br>*by the grete God* (Rex – York 31.298)<br>*in godis name* (Abel – Towneley 2.144)<br>*by hym that me dere boght* ('by him that dearly redeemed me'; Cain – Towneley 2.463)<br>*by the heuen's kyng* (Secundus Pastor – Towneley 13.174)<br>*by god that syttys in trone* (Herodes – Towneley 16.138) |
| | • Crucifixion | 7 | 2 | 3 | *for Godes tree* (Tertius Pastor – Chester 7.226)<br>*bi godis pyne* (Uxor – Towneley 3.228)<br>*by the roode* (Primus Pastor – Towneley 13.181)<br>*bi Godis sydis* (Cain – Towneley 2.460)<br>*by gottys dere nalys* (Herodes – Towneley 16.116)<br>*by cokys dere bonys* (Herodes – Towneley 16.229)<br>*for cockes face* (Cayphas – Chester 17.149) |
| | • Mahound | - | - | 16 | *by saynct Mahound* (Secundus Miles – Chester 10.167)<br>*by the bloode that Mahounde bledde* (Rex – York 31.9)<br>*for Mahounde* (Miles 1 – York 35.129) |
| | Saints | 5 | - | - | *by sayncte John* (Noe – Chester 3.112)<br>*for sant Iame* ('for Saint James'; Mak – Towneley 13.380)<br>*by sant strevyn* ('by Saint Stephen'; Mak – Towneley 13.384)<br>*by sant thomas of kent* (Tercius Pastor – Towneley 13.459) |
| | Devil | 1 | 7 | 6 | *by Belsabubb* (Demon – Chester 2.173)<br>*in twentye devylles waye* (Noe – Chester 3.219)<br>*by Beliall bloode and his bonys* (Anna – York 29.295) |
| **Oaths/ Asseverations** | | 35 | 14 | 57 | *in fayth* (SEM – Chester 3.243)<br>*by my panne* ('by my head'; Cayne – Chester 2.537)<br>*be my wytte* (Primus angelus deficiens – York 1.68)<br>*be this light* (Caiphas – York 30.359)<br>*by my hode* (Secundus Pastor – Towneley 12.141)<br>*be my dam saull* ('by my mother's soul'; Tercius Pastor – Towneley 12.270)<br>*by bukes and belles* ('by book and bell'; Joseph – York 13.182) |

Table 44: Illustrative examples of oaths and taboo expletives with *by, for, in* + NP in *Group I–III*

In spite of the fact that my play texts belong to the religious genre, they contain taboo expletives with reference to God, Christ and the saints in abundance (see *Table 44*): "Early drama is known for its strange combination of piety and blasphemy, and this controversy is well attested in oaths and swearing" (Taavitsainen 1997a: 819). Once again, the mystery cycles create dramatic effect through the contrast between sacred/religious and secular/profane (see e.g. Section 3.3.3). As Sauer has shown in his short study on Middle English interjections, expletives provide a good index to a figure's piety and their degree of submission to God's will. He states: "the narrator [or, in our case, the playwright] occasionally uses language in general and interjections in particular to characterize his figures and to give them a kind of idiolect" (2012: 163). That means that features with an emotive loading, such as interjections and expletives, may function as a device of character description. In the play texts from *Group I*, for instance, they create specific low-status

characterisations. The speeches of the shepherds, Joseph, Noah and his wife are full of asseverations and mild, somehow good-natured forms of profane swearing by God and the saints. Saints' names were used as intensifiers and swearwords in late Middle English, and they were apparently still in general use in Early Modern English (Taavitsainen 1997a: 816). Remarkably, the pilgrims from the *Canterbury Tales* invoke almost exactly the same saints as the characters from the mystery cycles: St. John, St. James and St. Thomas of Kent (see Hughes 2006: 407f.). References to the Virgin Mary also appear in *Group I* (1 instance of *bi mary* and 6 instances of the moderated expletive *mary*). It is worth remembering that characters from *Group I* do not misuse language blasphemously. Neither Noah nor the shepherds or Joseph swear in the name of Mahound and only once in the name of the devil.[201] In these passages, the biblical figures are comical and the frequent use of mild forms of swearing and their coarse sense of humour illustrate that they are worldly, not divine, creatures with human weaknesses.

Oaths, in particular, have been discussed in connection with anachronism in the cycle plays. In fact, the numerous oaths and greetings 'by Christ' in the Old Testament scenes or by one of the saints have been interpreted as part of the playwrights' "wish to write vivid, colloquial dialogue" (Kolve 1966: 104; see also Williams 1973: 116; Hüsken and Schoell 2002: 22). Mild swearing in the form of asseverations and oaths, such as *in fayth, bi my wytt, by my panne*, *be my dam saull* occur abundantly in all plays from my sample (see *Table 44*). Taavitsainen (1997a: 817f.) found a number of such expressions in the religious genres of the Late Middle English section of the *Helsinki Corpus*. Some of these asseverations might indeed have been popular in the medieval period and not only common in written discourse. For Forest-Hill (2000: 44), oaths and mild swearwords used by low-status characters are entertaining through their relation to 'real' Middle English usage. It is, of course, not easy to say whether some of the words were part of the colloquial language "since insufficient material survives against which to judge the forms" (Blake 1981: 65).

Profanities with reference to the dismembered Jesus also originate in the Middle English period (Hughes 1991: 61, 2006: 205ff., 312). For Hughes, the central act of the redemption, the sufferings of Christ at the crucifixion became "the principal focus of religious swearing" (2006: 205). Swearing by Christ's face, bones and the like was particularly common in literary genres. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the crucifixion is a central topic and parts of Christ's body, the cross and the nails are sworn by (Taavitsainen 1997a: 820f.). Swearing by Christ's wounds prompted sustained criticism from both medieval poets and preachers. Friar John Waldeby complains that this most blasphemous form of swearing is common amongst the greater part of the medieval people: "one will find Christ's blood held at so small a price and in such little reverence among them that scarcely a single word will escape their lips [...] without mention by name of the blood of Christ in

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201 The Chester Noah uses the expletive *in twentye devylles waye* (l. 219) in a speech directed at his wife.

an oath along with it (qtd. in Owst 1933: 417; see also Hughes 2006: 206, 388). There were some early euphemistic variants including the corruption of *God's* to *cockes* in such formulae as *for cockes face* and *by cokys dere bonys* (see *Table 44*; see also Blake 1981: 64). In the mystery play texts, taboo expletives referring to Christ's pain and the cross are employed by Joseph, Noah and the shepherds, but the majority of these are restricted to mild forms, such as *for Godes tree*, *bi godis pyne* and *by the roode*. In the Towneley *Abel* and the plays from *Group III*, where the crucifixion is the key theme, the profanities have a different quality. Here, the characters swear by Christ's face, nails and bones. These expletives can serve as a foregrounding device (as a reference to the crucifixion), a quality which Taavitsainen (e.g. 1997c: 234) assigns to some interjections in Chaucer's fiction, or they may have mere emotive-expressive functions, such as denoting violence and scorn. As Arnovick (1999: 87) has observed, the sacred increasingly comes to function in emotive rather than literal use in the Middle Ages.

The Towneley Cain is characterised through his frequent use of abusive, transgressive speech, reflecting "his rejection of the social and religious norms which were familiar to medieval audiences" (Forest-Hill 2000: 63). Cain's abusive language, which is interspersed with curses and profanity, dramatises his faithlessness. Even when directly confronted by God, Cain continues to curse, and replies impudently: *Whi, who is that hob-ouer-the-wall? | We! who was that that piped so small?* ('Ah, who is that hob over/behind the wall? Oh! Who was it that squeaked so feebly?'; ll. 297–8). Cain's secondary interjections come close to the blasphemous. This is especially clear in cases where he invokes God in threats and insults: *Ffor, bi Godis sydis, if thou do, | I shall hang the apon this plo, | With this rope, lo, lad, lo!* ('For, by God's sides, if you do, I shall hang you upon this plough with this rope, look, lad, look!'; ll. 460–2). His defiance of God is additionally expressed in his repeated swearing by the devil: He swears *in twenty dwill way* (l. 441), twice *in the dwill/dwillis way* (ll. 89, 451) and twice *in the dwills/dwillys nayme* (ll. 147, 278). Note that the name of the devil was very common in medieval oaths (see Hughes 2006: 118).

Unsurprisingly, the most striking cases of swearing are found in Herod's speech. His cruel, merciless nature is attested from the beginning of the York *Herod*. The threatening, boisterous tone continues in his abusive language applied to Christ and the recurrent swearing by Mahound and the devil. The anachronistic appeal to Mahound is a recurring exclamation of devils and villains in the mystery cycles. Hughes (2006: 304) notes that various corruptions of the name of the prophet Mahomet were used throughout the Middle Ages. Most common was the form *Mahound*, employed in oaths and asseverations (see *MED*, sense 1b), denoting in abusive fashion, variously, a representation of a pagan god, a false god (see *MED*, sense 1a, 1c), the devil (see *MED*, sense 1d) or a monster (see *MED*, sense 1e). Expletives employing Mahound or the devil are often reversals of the phrases in the name of God or Christ: *be Mahoundes bloode* (l. 262), *in*

*the deuyllis name* (l. 75) (see Taavitsainen 1997a: 821). When Herod swears *by god that syttys in trone* (l. 138) in the Towneley *Herod*, he probably refers to Mahound, whom he has invoked a few lines before (*by mahowne in heuen* (l. 127)). Hence, the number of taboo expletives with reference to God given in *Table 44* for *Group III* are deceptive. Most of these items are imprecations in the name of Mahound or pagan deities. Just as invocations of God or one of the saints establish the virtue and religion of the character, swearing by Mahound establishes the opposite – the audience will recognise such forms as non-Christian, as heathen, and hence as indicative of utter villainy. Thus, evil personages like Cain, Herod, Pilate, even the Jewish high priests swear by Mahound.

Summing up, swearing is a "powerful means of conveying the emotional loading in texts and in participant relations, involving both text-internal characters and the audience" (Taavitsainen 1997a: 815). If we follow Hughes' assessment from the indented quote above, the play texts cover the full range of common medieval swearing, from pious religious invocations through appeals to God, Mary and the saints to the blasphemous references to the crucifixion, the devil and *Mahound*. Furthermore, oaths and taboo expletives in the sample are sometimes difficult to interpret, and may best be illuminated when assessed within character descriptions.

## 4.4.2 Vocatives: Terms of endearment and abuse

Vocatives are considered to be one of the distinctive features of natural speech (Biber et al. 1999: 1108ff.; Leech 2000: 696, 697). Vivian Salmon (1975), for example, lists family terms (*sŏne, doughter, wīf, fāder,* etc.) in the *Canterbury Tales* as elements of colloquial speech. Previous research (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985: 773ff.) has demonstrated that the use of vocatives, although apparently non-essential for the achievement of particular communicative goals, serves an important social role in face-to-face interactions. One of the main discourse functions of address forms is to identify participants' roles, thereby establishing and maintaining social relations between speaker and addressee, with regard to the parameters of power and solidarity, distance and intimacy (e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 1108).

In Section 4.2.1, I have already commented on terms of address in correlation with pronoun use. In a similar vein, a number of scholars have complemented their studies on pronoun usage in Chaucer (Honegger 2003) or Shakespeare (Busse 2003; Mazzon 2003) with an analysis of nominal address forms. Only a small number of papers are concerned exclusively with vocatives in Middle or Early Modern English texts. Kopytko (1993), for instance, analyses the use of address titles and politeness formulae in eight Shakespearean plays. Jucker's paper (2000b) on the various forms of verbal aggression in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* finds name-calling to be a particularly common stylistic means in the context of insulting and slanderous utterances. In a section of her

paper on Early Modern English courtroom discourse, Kryk-Kastovsky (2006b: 220ff.; see also Kryk-Kastovsky 2006a) investigates the interplay between power and solidarity in court trial records where the interrogated receive a variety of forms of address, from very polite ones to examples of overt impoliteness. Another noteworthy study is Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg's (1995) investigation of address forms in Early Modern English letter writing.

Terms of address have not only an appellative but also an attitudinal function which is particularly relevant for the expression of personal affect (Leech 2000: 697). For this section, I have chosen to investigate two categories of attitudinal vocatives which are situated at opposites end of the politeness scale: terms of abuse/mocking and terms of endearment/praise. According to Mazzon (2009), the N-Town plays, while very rich in terms of address like most medieval and Renaissance dramatic texts, do not display a wide variety of vocatives. As the social range of characters is more restricted in the cycles, "and the element of humour, though present, is not allotted such a large place – therefore, these texts are are not so interesting as others for the study of insults, for instance, or of courting language" (2009: 489). This hypothesis will be tested on the present sample.

## 4.4.2.1 Overall distribution

Before I comment on the distribution of attitudinal vocatives across the play cycles, I will give a brief overview of the overall numbers. As appellative vocatives are also commonly regarded as a speech-like feature (e.g. Leech 2000: 696), it seems justified that, in order to receive more representative numbers, my total count includes all nominal forms of address. According to *Tables 45-49*, the sample features slightly more vocatives than the selected N-Town plays (average relative frequency: 17.57 vs. 16.48). The plays in *Group III* display higher relative frequencies of vocatives than the other texts. The York *Herod* shows the highest density of usage and the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* comes in second before the York *Caiaphas*, which, however, contains only few attitudinal nominal forms. A reason for this is the play's focus on the relations between Annas, Caiaphas and the soldiers who mostly address each other respectfully with *sir* and *my lord*. Terms denoting endearment and praise are fairly infrequent in *Group II*, with the exception of the York *Fall of Man*, where Adam and Eve repeatedly refer to each other by personal name. For *Group I*, the data reveal that the York *Noah*'s number of vocatives is notably higher than the numbers of the rest of the group. This is largely due to the high frequency of kinship terms in the dialogues, such as *modir* (e.g. l. 68)*, fadir* (e.g. l. 51)*, sones* (e.g. l. 314) and *barnes* (e.g. l. 256), stressing the closeness and solidarity in Noah's family.

| TEXT VOC | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| attitudinal | 3.97 (8) | 7.25 (31) | 3.76 (4) | 5.36 (11) | 3.14 (6) | 11.83 (10) | 4.08 (16) | 7.69 (26) | 3.48 (19) |
| other | 13.41 (27) | 7.95 (34) | 6.59 (7) | 20.47 (42) | 14.11 (27) | 8.28 (7) | 8.68 (34) | 4.73 (16) | 9.16 (50) |
| **TOTAL** | **17.39 (35)** | **15.20 (65)** | **10.35 (11)** | **25.83 (53)** | **17.25 (33)** | **20.12 (17)** | **12.76 (50)** | **12.43 (42)** | **12.64 (69)** |

Table 45: The frequency of vocatives per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT VOC | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| attitudinal | 1.00 (2) | 2.09 (9) | 4.74 (13) | 2.99 (6) | 5.24 (7) | 3.70 (4) | 5.03 (6) | 5.03 (13) | 6.24 (20) |
| other | 9.48 (19) | 9.28 (40) | 11.30 (31) | 9.48 (19) | 3.74 (5) | 21.30 (23) | 2.51 (3) | 9.68 (25) | 12.16 (39) |
| **TOTAL** | **10.47 (21)** | **11.36 (49)** | **16.03 (44)** | **12.47 (25)** | **8.98 (12)** | **25.00 (27)** | **7.54 (9)** | **14.72 (38)** | **18.40 (59)** |

Table 46: The frequency of vocatives per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT VOC | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| attitudinal | 14.21 (43) | 4.04 (11) | 4.53 (12) | 3.82 (13) | 10.98 (52) | 6.69 (24) | 4.03 (8) | 4.97 (13) | 10.51 (38) | 5.40 (18) | 6.41 (22) | 6.36 (28) |
| other | 7.93 (24) | 19.85 (54) | 15.86 (42) | 22.63 (77) | 19.43 (92) | 26.75 (96) | 8.05 (16) | 15.29 (40) | 8.02 (29) | 14.70 (49) | 7.28 (25) | 10.67 (47) |
| **TOTAL** | **22.15 (67)** | **23.90 (65)** | **20.39 (54)** | **26.46 (90)** | **30.42 (144)** | **33.44 (120)** | **12.08 (24)** | **20.26 (53)** | **18.54 (67)** | **20.10 (67)** | **13.69 (47)** | **17.03 (75)** |

Table 47: The frequency of vocatives per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT VOC | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| attitudinal | 5.05 (10) | 34.33 (31) | 14.46 (21) | - | 3.76 (5) | - | 4.11 (9) | 3.78 (6) | 6.05 (8) |
| other | 7.07 (14) | 8.86 (8) | 11.71 (17) | 1.89 (1) | 9.03 (12) | 3.45 (1) | 7.31 (16) | 3.78 (6) | 9.83 (13) |
| **TOTAL** | **12.13 (24)** | **43.19 (39)** | **26.17 (38)** | **1.89 (1)** | **12.79 (17)** | **3.45 (1)** | **11.43 (25)** | **7.57 (12)** | **15.87 (21)** |

Table 48: The frequency of vocatives per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT VOC | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| attitudinal | 4.95 (9) | 17.24 (37) | 4.05 (16) | 6.96 (13) | 2.52 (4) | 7.24 (14) | 14.40 (26) |
| other | 5.50 (10) | 9.79 (21) | 6.07 (24) | 7.50 (14) | 16.98 (27) | 17.05 (33) | 8.86 (16) |
| **TOTAL** | **10.45 (19)** | **27.03 (58)** | **10.12 (40)** | **14.46 (27)** | **19.50 (31)** | **24.29 (47)** | **23.27 (42)** |

Table 49: The frequency of vocatives per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

All in all, 32% (492 out of 1.531) of the vocatives in the sample can be classified as terms of endearment/praise or terms of abuse/mocking. In the N-Town plays, by contrast, 47% (209 out of 442) of the nominal address forms are attitudinal ones. Note that personal names, terms of family relationship and honorifics have only been included among terms of endearment/praise if they are marked with adorning adjectives (e.g. *dēre lādī, gōd children*), highlighting closeness and affection between the interlocutors (see *Table 50*). Terms of abuse include mocking, disparaging or belittling forms of address (Biber et al. 1999: 1110). I have decided not to exclude plural vocatives, as these lead to interesting observations. For the Towneley *Herod*, for instance, the results demonstrate that more than half of Herod's terms of insult are not directed at a particular interlocutor. His power is evidently subverted in the cycle play by his inability to restrain his abusive, mocking language (see Forest-Hill 2000: 82).

In contrast to the terms of endearment, abusive vocatives are much less frequent. There are, in fact, only three texts, the Towneley *Buffeting* as well as the York and Towneley *Herod*, which display more terms of insult than terms of endearment and praise. What both types of nominal address share is that the majority of them co-occur with *T*-pronouns.[202]

| Terms of abuse/mocking | Terms of endearment/praise |
|---|---|
| • *knāve* ('knave, rogue, villain') <br> • *thēf* ('thief') <br> • *harlot* ('scoundrel, knave, rogue') <br> • *lōsel* ('rogue, rascal') <br> • *fēlau(e)* ('knave') <br> • *ladde* ('scoundrel, rogue') | • *beaushers* ('good sirs') <br> • *brēthren* ('brothers') <br> • *goode, leve...sir* ('good, dear sir') <br> • *dere, sweete...lady* ('dear, sweet...lady') <br> • *good, fare...lorde* ('good, fair...lord') <br> • *dere, gode...children/suster/sons/moder/fadir* ('dear, good...children, sister, sons, mother, father') |

Table 50: The most frequent terms of abuse/mocking and terms of endearment/praise in *Group I–III*

Careful reading of the texts was indispensable for assigning the vocatives to the appropriate category. As Jucker (2000c; see also Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003; Section 4.2.1 above) has demanded, the minutiae of the interaction, including the interactional status of the discourse participants, must be taken into account in the assessment of address forms. *Fēlau(e)* is frequently used in the shepherds' plays for a "close and intimate companion" (see *MED*, sense 2), while in *Group III* it is used in "condescending or contemptuous address to an inferior or to one so treated" (see *MED*, sense 5). The same holds true for *lad*, which functions both as a fairly neutral form to address a young servant and as a term of contempt. Similarly, *boy* is simply 'a male child' when

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202 Most exceptions to the *T*-rule have already been discussed in the Section 4.2.1, with reference to hierarchical family or 'official' relationships, or irony in the trial and execution scenes. For example, I have examined why the abuse term *tord* (l. 405) is accompanied by *V*-pronouns in the Second Shepherd's address to his companion in the Towneley *Prima Pastorum*, and why the mock-term *sir coward(e)* (ll. 237, 396) co-occurs with *V* in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*.

Pilate's wife speaks to her son (York 30.186). In contrast, if she addresses the Beadle with *boy*, the vocative develops a disparaging tone (e.g. York 30.60). Culpeper distinguishes between inherent impoliteness, which "cannot be completely mitigated by any surface realisation of politeness" (Culpeper 1996: 351), and mock impoliteness (banter, irony, and sarcasm). The vocatives *sir, king, lord* and even learned, French-derived *beausher,* though invariably used with deferential *V*-forms, are repeatedly employed as mocking, pejorative vocatives in the trial and crucifixion scenes. Only a close look at the context allows the identification of these address forms as terms of mocking instead of honorifics.

The same ambiguity can be observed in the case of vocatives for females, for instance in the case of *dame* (35)–(36). Its functions of mocking/abuse or praise/endearment are signalled by either negative or positive adjectives and by the use of *T-* or *V*-pronouns (abuse terms regularly appear as exclamatory vocatives *V/T* + VOC as in (36) below). In general, the data reveal that abusive vocatives for females are rare in the play texts.

(35) **Joseph**. [...] But who is the fader? Telle me his name.
'[…] But who is the father? Tell me his name.'
**Mary**. None but youreselfe.
'None but yourself.'
**Joseph**. Late be, for shame. / I did it neuere; <u>thou dotist dame</u>, by bukes and belles! [York 13.179–82]
'Let be, for shame! I did it never, you foolish dame, by book and bell!'

(36) **Maria**. <u>Syr</u>, evermore lowd and still / your talent I shall fulfill. / I wott yt is my lordes will; / I doe as you me read.
'Sir, evermore, loud and still, your wish I shall fulfil. I know it is my lord's will; I [will] do as you advise me.'
**Angelus**. Come nowe forth in Godes name. / I shall *you* shcild from all shame; / and *you* shall see, <u>my leeffe dame</u>, / a thinge to your likinge. [Chester 10.277–84]
'Come now forth in God's name. I shall shield you from all shame; and you shall see, my dear lady, a thing to your liking.'

### 4.4.2.2 Analysis

Courtesy or mock-courtesy is vital in the courtly surroundings of *Group III*. The satire of courtship and courtly manners in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, of course, requires expressing deference with *V*-forms and matching nominal address, in this case, however, deference seems to be connected with a certain intimacy (see Mazzon 2000: 140). Pilate is called *myne awne lorde* (l. 102), *my duke doughty* ('my noble sovereign'; l. 30), *gracious lorde* (l. 47) and *the frendlyest* (l. 108) by his wife; he reciprocates, and calls her *madame* (l. 48), *luffe* (l. 71), *semely* ('fair one'; l. 96) and *the fayrest figure that euere did fode fede* ('the fairest figure that ever did food feed'; l. 109). Central to this play is the relationship between Pilate and his wife but also between Pilate

and the high priests. The relationship between Pilate and the latter seems to be a partnership based on political expediency and mutual benefit. In all plays under scrutiny, the Jewish priests and the prefect address each other with the respectful plural pronoun. Despite this consistency, their relationship is not without tensions, as noted in previous sections. In the *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Pilate is at first by no means obedient to the vindictiveness of Annas and Caiaphas. In fact, he exhibits anger at their ill-founded accusations of Jesus. But the priests nonetheless continue their manipulations and demand that Christ be sentenced to death (ll. 444–519). Gradually, both priests acquire a sinister control over Pilate, which is not mirrored in their usage of pronouns but in their choice of nominal terms of address. In the *Conspiracy*, Caiaphas refers to Pilate mainly with respectful *sir*, while in the *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Pilate is granted a high number of flattering, honorific terms of praise: *prince that is pereles in price* ('prince that is peerless in price'; l. 270), *my souerayne* (l. 278), *good sir* (l. 282), *goode lorde* (l. 284), *prince withouten pere* ('prince without peer'; l. 470), etc. With this strategy of negative politeness, i.e. giving deference and expressing submission, the Jewish priests strategically manipulate Pilate into confirming their verdict against Jesus.

A similar manipulation through flattery can be seen in the scene between Judas and the Janitor in the York *Conspiracy*. In her analysis of status-marked situations in the mystery plays, Fernández-Conde (2007: 87) has shown that Judas, who occupies the same social status as the Janitor, uses polite *V* to incline him towards accepting his request of a hearing before Pilate, and receives *T* in return. I would like to add that there is a complementary contrast between the Janitor's abuse terms (*glorand gedlyng* ('glowering rascal'; l. 161), *bittilbrowed bribour* ('beetle-browed impostor'; l. 174), *on-hanged harlott* ('unhanged scoundrel'; l. 179), *brethell* ('wretch'; l. 184)) and Judas' submissive, polite vocatives (*goode sir* (ll. 163, 182), *sir* (ll. 172, 178, 186)). While the audience may enjoy "some righteous mirth" when the Janitor attacks Judas, "humour turns acid" (Valdés Miyares 2010: 123) when Jesus becomes the target of low-style terminology. In the York *Herod*, Christ is variously termed a *carle* ('churl'; l. 255), a *knave* (l. 334), a *felawe* (ll. 195, 324) and a *ladde* (l. 332). Intended jocularly to demean Jesus' status, such vocatives effectively highlight his humility and draw the audience's attention to his innocence.

The use of offensive forms of address is one of Caiaphas' most prominent verbal characteristics in the Towneley *Buffeting*. While appealing to Annas, he delivers an intricate accusatory speech intended to downgrade Jesus. Once again, the well-known verbal cruelty of Caiaphas and his predilection for sarcasm, invective, and other FTAs aim at threatening Jesus and forcing him to speak and plead guilty. His speech in (37) is "a goldmine of exponents of impoliteness" (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006b: 221) in that, apart from conventional terms of abuse (*harlott, vile fature, lad*), it contains other unquestionably derogatory devices directed at Jesus.

These include a combination of curses and a series of accusatory questions, a strategy which Caiaphas can pursue freely due to his social superiority over Jesus, i.e. what Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg call "social superiors downwards" (1995: 578) in their paper on Early English Correspondence. After sarcastically questioning Jesus regarding his parentage (*Where was thi syre at bord / when he met with thi dame?* (l. 151)), he goes on to refer to him as a *fundlyng* (l. 157), adding to his repertoire of verbal cruelty attempting to demean Christ's birth and status. Further, the use of the offensive vocative *sir sybre* (l. 154) may relate to the term *sibred*, which refers to one of the banns of marriage (see *MED*, *sibrēde*: sense 1d). In addition, Caiaphas declares Jesus a literal outlaw, one who is to be placed outside the judicial order: *Now wols-hede and out-horne / on the be tane!* (l. 144). *Out-horne* refers here to the horn that signals the raising of a public hue and cry against an outlaw, while *wols-hede* indicates the sentence of outlawry itself: "it places Jesus outside the legal system – even outside the boundary that separates human from animal – and declares that he might now be hunted down and killed like a wolf" (Sturges 2006: 93). The Latin phrase *Et omnis qui tacet / Hic consentire videtur* (ll. 148–9) represents the culmination of his preposterous argumentation and simultaneously serves two functions: It is an excellent illustration of Caiaphas' vanity and his desire to impress the audience with his knowledge of Latin. In reality, this diction aligns the audience with Christ whose powerful silence in this scene contrasts effectively with Caiaphas' rage. Note that Caiaphas' speech is a further example of the mimicry of courtroom discourse in the cycle plays (cf. Kryk-Kastovsky's (2006b) remarks on impoliteness in Early Modern English court trial records).

(37)    **Cayphas**. [...] Ffor, certys, I my self shall / make examynyng. / Harstow, <u>harlott</u>, of all? / of care may thou syng! / How durst thou the call / aythere emperoure or kyng? / I do fy the! / What the dwill doyst thou here? / Thi dedys will do the dere; / Com nar and rowne in myn eeyr, / Or I shall ascry the. / Illa-hayll was thou borne! / harke! says he oght agane? / Thou shall onys or to-morne / to speke be full fayne. / This is a great skorne / and a fals trane; / *Now wols-hede and out-horne / on the be tane*! / <u>Vile fature</u>! / Oone worde myght thou speke ethe, / Yit myght it do the som letht, / *Et omnis qui tacet / Hic consentire videtur.* / Speke on oone word / right in the dwyllys name! / *Where was thi syre at bord / when he met with thi dame?* / What, nawder bowted ne spurd / and a lord of name! / Speke on in a torde / the dwill gif the shame, / <u>Sir sybre</u>! / Perde, if thou were a kyng, / Yit myght thou be ridyng; / Ffy on the, <u>fundlyng</u>! / Thou lyfys bot bi brybre. / <u>Lad</u>, I am a prelate / a lord in degre, / Syttys in myn astate / as thou may se, / Knyghtys on me to wate / in dyuerse degre; / I myght thole the abate / and knele on thi kne / In my present; [Towneley 21.132–63]

'[...] For, surely, I myself shall make an examining. Hear you, scoundrel? Of care may you sing! How dare you call yourself either emperor or king? I defy you! What the devil are you doing here? Your deeds will cost you dearly. Come near and whisper in my ear, or I shall denounce you. Cursed were you born! Hark! Says he anything again? You shall right away or tomorrow be glad to speak. This is a great insult and a false trick. Now wolf's-head and outhorn we have you taken! Vile deceiver! One word might you speak easily; yet it might do you some ease. And all who are silent, thereby agree to appearances. Speak but one word, right in the devil's name! Where was your sire living when he met with your dame? What? Neither booted nor spurred and a lord of name! Speak on in a turd, the devil give you shame, sir bastard! By God, if you were a king, yet might you be riding. Fie on you, foundling! You live only by thievery. Lad, I am a prelate, a lord of degree, who sits in great estate as you may see, knights on me to wait in diverse degree. I will make you bow humbly, and kneel on your knee in my presence.'

In the Chester *Innocents*, the intensity of the women's agony and torment is reinforced to a considerable degree through the choice of address terms. The soldiers mainly employ the mock-polite *dame* (ll. 305, 321, 361) to the women. The mothers, on the other hand, revile them through a wide range of offensive forms of address. Besides the 'conventional' insults *ribott* ('scoundrel'; l. 309), *theife* (l. 329), *stronge theiffe* (l. 341) and *fowle harlott* ('foul scoundrel'; l. 353), others are unique to this play: *scabde dogge* ('wretched/scabbed dog'; l. 297), *daystard* ('coward'; l. 298), *syr John*[203] ('Sir John'; l. 390), *rotten hunter with thy gode* ('wicked robber with your goad'; l. 313), *stytton stallon*[204] ('lecherous stallion'; l. 314) and styck-tode ('toad-stabber'; l. 314). These latter may well be literary in origin.

The overall numbers show, as seen above, that the often much more elaborate praising terms prevail over abusive ones, even in *Group III* (156 vs. 127 instances). In the Chester *Innocents*, for example, the insulting vocatives are, in fact, balanced out by endearing address forms. Mingled with the tyrant and slaughter scenes are the episodes of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt and their return after Herod's death. Mary is called *sustcr* (ll. 273, 474, 480), *my leeffe dame* ('my dear lady'; l. 283), *my owne deare sweete* (l. 477) and *deare hart-roote* ('dear heart-root/darling'; l. 486) by her husband, while the angel and Joseph's invocations (*lord* (l. 265), *lord*

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203 *Syr John* was "a contemptuous name for a person of mean station" (see *MED*, sense 1b).
204 *Stytton* is an abusive epithet of uncertain meaning (see *MED stitton*), but the combination with *stallon* suggests that the vocative as a whole expresses lascivious male conduct (see Crespo García 2004: 58).

*that madest all of nought* (l. 466)) provide further 'divine relief' after the rhetoric of violence of the preceding sections. A similar contrastive effect is realised in the shepherds' plays. The shepherds' wrestling, quarrelling or 'flyting' ends when they enter "the sphere of religious reality, that of the birth of Christ" (Bergner 1998: 81). The majority of the endearment terms are addressed to God, Jesus or, to the Infant Christ, as in quote (38) below from the *Secunda Pastorum*. In the hailing speeches, the shepherds' language transforms into a solemn, literate style full of imaginative vocatives, conveying their admiration and adoration but also their Christian fellowship after Christ's birth.

(38)  **Secundus Pastor.** Hayll, <u>sufferan sauyoure</u>! / ffor thou has vs soght: / Hayll, <u>frely foyde and floure</u> / that all thyng has wroght! / Hayll, <u>full of fauoure</u> / that made all of noght! / Hayll! I kneyll and I cowre. / A byrd haue I broght / To my barne. / Hayll, <u>lytyll tyne' mop</u>! / Of oure crede thou art crop: / I wold drynk on thy cop, / <u>Lytyll day</u> <u>starne</u>. [Towneley 13.726–34]
'Hail, sovereign saviour, for you have sought us! Hail, noble child and flower, that has made all! Hail, full of favour that made all out of nothing! Hail! I kneel and I cower. A bird have I brought to my child. Hail, tiny little baby! Of our creed you are the head; I want to drink from your cup, little day star.'

Apart from some exceptions, such as *luffe* (York 30.71) or *hart-roote* ('dear heart-root/darling'; Chester 10.486), distinct terms of endearment/praise are only found in the adoration scenes of the shepherds' plays. Instead, we find a huge number of honorifics with adorning adjectives, and a frequency of kinship terms of address (e.g. *br$\bar{e}$thren, suster*) which are often not used literally but as terms of endearment/praise – a sign of the religious basis of the texts, according to Mazzon (2009: 48). As far as the male terms of abuse are concerned, we have already seen that, when Herod's soldiers massacre the innocents in the Chester play, the mothers threaten vengeance and attack them with a wide variety of insults which are unique to this play. By contrast, the most frequent address terms from the sample, such as *th$\bar{e}$f* and *knave*, were perhaps part of the vocabulary of everyday Middle English. In general, the texts indicate that the writers of the mystery plays exploited (at least some) common address forms of the period for dramatic purposes.

## 4.4.3 Demonstrative pronouns and deictic reference

Several scholars have emphasised the importance of deixis in drama (Bühler 1934: 139f.; Elam 1980: 17, 44f., 85ff.; Herman 1995: 26ff.; Short 1996: 269ff.; McIntyre 2004, 2006). For Elam, it is the 'incompleteness', the need for physical contextualisation, a performability, and a potential gesturality which distinguishes dramatic discourse from narrative language, where "the context is described rather than 'pragmatically' pointed to" (1980: 87). What allows the dialogue to create "an

interpersonal dialectic" (Elam 1980: 85) within the time and location of discourse is deixis.[205] Proximal deictic expressions help to bring the characters and events to the immediate experience of the audience, which is why they also reinforce audience involvement (Taavitsainen 1997c: 257f.). In fact, the dramatic world is mainly created by the characters' use of verbal indices in their discourse:

> Deixis defines the dramatic world; not only the realities which the characters experience, but also the characters themselves. Deixis defines life in drama. It indicates everything which occurs in the dramatic world: the characters and their subworlds; their relations to one another, to people about whom they speak, and to the context in which they live; the action and activities; the dramatic situations and events; and the dramatic time and space, the here and now, the dramatic present. (Van Stapele 1990: 335)

The term 'deixis' (< Gr. *δείκνυμι* 'pointing', 'indicating', or 'showing') refers to "a class of linguistic expressions that are used to indicate elements of the situational and/or discourse context" (Diessel 2012: 2408). Devices which encode deictic information include linguistic expressions from as diverse grammatical categories as first- and second-person pronouns, prepositions, adverbs of time and space, tense markers, motion verbs and demonstratives (Cummings 2005: 22; see also Fillmore 1971: 39f.; Cairns 1991: 20; Taavitsainen 1997c: 252; Huang 2014: 169).

Deixis has been largely neglected with regard to medieval drama. There is an early article by Novelli (1957) about narrative and dramatic effects of the demonstrative determiner *this* in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. According to him, *this* is a "colloquial device" (1957: 248) which helps to create a rather informal story-telling situation (1957: 246). A paper by Fries (1994) investigates instances of Early Modern English text deixis, such as *here, now, before* and *above*, in the preliminary version of the *Helsinki Corpus*. Using the same corpus, Taavitsainen (1997c) includes indexical features of proximity in her statistical analysis of linguistic elements marking personal affect, in order to investigate whether there are any distinctive traits in Early Modern English prose fiction. Kryk-Kastovsky (1995) addresses the use of English demonstratives in selected Early Modern English private letters. She draws parallels between the pragmatic meanings of *this* and *that* in Present-Day English and their ancestors in Early Modern English times.

The use of demonstrative pronouns, in particular, has been discussed in the context of the spoken and written form of texts. In Biber's study on Present-Day English, demonstrative pronouns indicate "affective, interactional, and generalised content" (1988: 89) characterised by online production and lack of editing (see also Taavitsainen 1997c: 199). The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* states: "[...] demonstrative pronouns are far more common in conversation than in the written registers" (Biber et al. 1999: 349). For Culpeper and Kytö (2000a:

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205 Deictic expressions are commonly called 'indexicals' in the philosophy of language literature. For further discussion of deixis and indexicality, see e.g. Levinson (2006) and Hanks (2011).

177), demonstrative pronouns belong amongst their features of interactivity which are strongly associated with spoken face-to-face interaction. For Diessel (2012: 2417), demonstratives provide a foundation for the structuring of discourse by holding interlocutors to a specific point in time and space. Without the use of deictic expressions, as Cairns claims, "every dialogue would appear to be a loose connection of disconnected utterances" (1991: 19).

### 4.4.3.1 Overall distribution

The present section will be limited to the study of the demonstrative pronouns *this/these/that/those* and the functions they fulfil in their respective context in the sample.[206] The analysis will be further enriched by the inclusion of deictic elements which refer to time or space, such as the adverbs of proximity *now* and *here*.

All demonstrative pronouns present in the sample had to be identified manually, in order to distinguish them from demonstrative determiners and other parts of speech. Compare for example the use of *thise* as a demonstrative pronoun in (39) and as a demonstrative determiner in (40). Many instances of *that* in my sample are either relative pronouns (41) or conjunctions (42).

(39)  **Noah**. I see toppys of hyllys he / many at a syght, / No thyng to let me / the wedir is so bright.
'I see the tops of high hills, many at a glance; nothing to hinder me, the weather is so clear.'
**Uxor**. Thise ar of mercy / tokyns full right. [Towneley 3.478–80]
'These are true signs of mercy.'

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206 For Modern English demonstratives, a distinction can be drawn between 'near' and 'distant' reference: *this* is a proximal marker and implies 'near the speaker', while *that* is distal and means 'remote from the speaker (but possibly near the hearer)' (see Quirk et al. 1985: 372; Herman 1995: 27; Biber et al. 1999: 347). Markus asserts that, compared to Old English, near and distant things were already kept apart in (later) Middle English (1995: 170). Deixis, as he claims, "was of course not unknown in Old English, but its Middle English grammaticalization within the system of the demonstratives seems to correspond to a new awareness of things to be identifiable in space and time [...]" (1995: 169). The system of reference in terms of near and remote was even enlarged during Middle English with the addition of *yonder* as a new feature of distance, which indicates 'remote from both speaker and hearer' (Markus 1995: 170). The proximal/distal difference is clearly more evident in the use of demonstrative determiners, as illustrated by the quotes below. Even in these examples, it is problematic to determine exactly whether the noun phrases' referents were, in fact, near or distant from the speaker on stage. In general, it is not even possible to determine for our texts which referents existed as objects of the universe of discourse only, and which referents existed as real objects in the dramatic world on stage (cf. Van Stapele 1990: 333).

**Miles 1**. Lokis that the ladde on lenghe be layde / And made me thane vnto this tree. [York 35.41–2]
'Look the lad on length be laid, And fastened then upon this tree.'

**Miles 1**. Haue done, dryue in that nayle, / So that no faute be foune. [York 35.142–3]
'All right, drive in that nail, so that no fault may be found.'

**Miles 1**. [...] Therfore nowe makis you boune, / Late bere hym to yoone hill. [York 35.178–9]
'Therefore to work we bend, and bear him to that hill.'

*(40)  **Uxor**. Spare me not, I pray the / bot euen as thou thynk, / <u>Thise grete wordis</u> shall not flay me. [Towneley 3.384–5]
'Spare me not, I pray you, but do just as you think (fit). These great words shall not scare me.'

*(41)  **Jesus.** […] My frendis <u>that</u> in me faith affies, / Nowe fro ther fois I schall thame fende, [York 37.29–30]
'[…] My friends that in me have faith, now from their foes I shall defend them.'

*(42)  **Miles.** […] 3ee wootte youreselffe als wele as I / Howe lordis and leders of owre lawe / Has geven dome <u>that</u> this doote schall dye. [York 35.3–5]
'[…] You know yourselves, as well as I, how lords and leaders of our law have judged that this fool shall die.'

*Tables 51–55* indicate that my sample contains only few demonstrative pronouns (average relative frequency: 4.24), and only insignificantly more than the control groups (average relative frequency: 3.87).[207] A comparison of the proximal and distal pair of pronouns shows a difference: *this/these* is more common (57%) than *that/those* (43%) in the three groups.[208] The Towneley *Abel* contains most demonstrative pronouns, while the Chester *Noah* shows the second highest relative frequency, leaving the Chester *Crucifixion* and *Innocents* narrowly behind. The feature seems generally more common in the Chester plays than in the other cycles. The York *Crucifixion*, in comparison, contains only one demonstrative pronoun and therefore shows the lowest relative frequency. Overall, the study of demonstrative pronouns through a quantitative analysis did not provide statistically relevant results. The overall figures are so low that it is vital to add a qualitative study to the frequency counts.

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207 In Taavitsainen's statistical analysis, demonstrative pronouns "did not load on any factor" (1997c: 252), but their use in Early Modern English fiction proved significant from a stylistic point of view. According to her, demonstrative pronouns "help to bring the events maximally close to the time of narration, and create a 'proximal' style" (1997c: 253).

208 The same holds true for the adverbs of space in the sample; the proximal adverb *here* is more frequent than its distal counterpart *there*.

| TEXT | Chest Noah | Chest Shep | York Build | York Noah | York Joseph | York Shep | Town Noah | Town PP | Town SP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DP | 6.95 (14) | 5.38 (23) | 1.88 (2) | 2.92 (6) | 5.23 (10) | 3.55 (3) | 5.62 (22) | 6.21 (21) | 4.39 (24) |

Table 51: The frequency of demonstrative pronouns per 1000 words in *Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Fall Luc | Chest Creation | Chest Moses | Chest Harrow | York Creation | York Fall Man | York Tempt | York Harrow | Town Abel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DP | 1.50 (3) | 4.87 (21) | 4.74 (13) | 3.49 (7) | 4.49 (6) | 4.63 (5) | 3.35 (4) | 5.81 (15) | 8.73 (28) |

Table 52: The frequency of demonstrative pronouns per 1000 words in *Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | Chest Inno | Chest Cruci | York Consp | York Caia | York Drea | York Herod | York Cruci | York Resurr | Town Herod | Town Buff | Town Scour | Town Cruci |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DP | 6.61 (20) | 6.62 (18) | 2.64 (7) | 4.12 (14) | 2.11 (10) | 1.67 (6) | 0.50 (1) | 3.44 (9) | 3.32 (12) | 3.30 (11) | 3.79 (13) | 5.22 (23) |

Table 53: The frequency of demonstrative pronouns per 1000 words in *Group III* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Noah | N-Town Shepherds | N-Town Joseph | N-Town Creat/Ang | N-Town Moses | N-Town Harrow | N-Town Creat/Ad | N-Town Tempt | N-Town Cain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DP | 2.02 (4) | 1.11 (1) | 5.51 (8) | 1.89 (1) | 5.27 (7) | 3.45 (1) | 1.37 (3) | 8.20 (13) | 2.27 (3) |

Table 54: The frequency of demonstrative pronouns per 1000 words in *Control Group I* (raw figures are in parentheses)

| TEXT | N-Town Innocents | N-Town Crucifixion | N-Town First Passio | N-Town AnnCaia | N-Town PilWife | N-Town PilHer | N-Town Christ App |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DP | - | 6.06 (13) | 2.78 (11) | 5.36 (10) | 3.77 (6) | 7.24 (14) | 5.54 (10) |

Table 55: The frequency of demonstrative pronouns per 1000 words in *Control Group II* (raw figures are in parentheses)

Taxonomies of present-day demonstratives (e.g. Bühler 1934; Fillmore 1971; Levinson 2006: 108) usually concentrate on distinctive uses of demonstrative determiners. My study, however, shall exclusively handle demonstrative pronouns, as these forms have been categorised as typical of the spoken mode. Scholars have defined *this/that* as an interactive and expressive feature. In view of this, it might be useful to incorporate monologic as well as dialogic passages into my analysis. Unlike previous studies (Biber 1988; Culpeper and Kytö 2000a), the pronouns from my play texts will be organised along an endophoric-exophoric continuum (see *Figures 13–15*). I will not make a clear-cut distinction between the dramatic world and the universe of discourse, since it is difficult to define which pronouns point to the extralinguistic context, and which serve solely text-internal functions (see Van Stapele 1990: 333).

## 4.4.3.2 Analysis

Deictic expressions have traditionally been grouped into three basic categories: person, place and time deixis (see Lyons 1977: 636ff.; Herman 1995: 26; Levinson 2006: 111; Hanks 2011: 315; Diessel 2012: 2414; Huang 2014: 174).[209] In addition to person, place and time, some studies include two or three further deictic categories: discourse deixis, social deixis and sometimes emotional or empathetic deixis (see Levinson 2006: 118ff.; Fillmore 1971: 40). These basic categories automatically intersect with their main uses. Bühler's (1934: 121ff.) triad distinguishes three kinds of deictic pointing: *demonstratio ad oculos* means direct pointing to extralinguistic items by means of gestures; *anaphora* is a more indirect way of deictical reference by verbal means; and *deixis am Phantasma* which involves 'symbolic' pointing to items remembered or created from imagination (see also Bátori 1982: 156; Kryk 1986: 1290).

a) Situational reference

The core of my study is concerned with interaction 'within the text', involving primarily the interpersonal relationships between the plays' characters. This section, however, is concerned with a text-external dimension. In their 'basic' exophoric use, demonstrative pronouns refer to concrete entities in the surrounding situation: "It is the focusing of attention on the physical context that is the special character of demonstratives in their basic use" (Levinson 2006: 111; see also Diessel

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209 For a detailed description of the three basic categories, see e.g. Cummings (2005: 22ff.), Levinson (2006: 112ff.) and Huang (2014: 174ff.). As the traditional classification emphasises semantic distinctions, Diessel (2012: 2414ff.) concentrates on the pragmatic function of deictic expressions and distinguishes between two types: participant deixis and object deixis. The former, which is concerned with deictic phenomena pertaining to social identity or social status relations between the interlocutors, has been the focus of Chapter 4.2.

2006: 470). Similarly, in the mystery cycles, the demonstrative pronouns may focus the attention on the physical world on stage.

When demonstratives refer to the extralinguistic situation, they typically occur along with pointing to an object (Quirk et al.1985: 372, 374f.; cf. Bühler's *demonstratio ad oculos*). Diessel states for present-day demonstratives: "One of the most striking features of demonstratives is that they are commonly accompanied by a pointing gesture" (2012: 2418; see also Diessel 2006: 469). When the Third Pastor asks: *Gyf me lefe hym to kys / and lyft vp the clowtt. What the dewill is this? he has a long snowte* ('Allow me to kiss him and lift up the swaddling clothes. What the devil is this? He has a long snout!'; ll. 588–9) in the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum*, the accompanying action and pointing gesture are inscribed in his words, and we may infer that *this* refers to the lamb hidden in Mak's cradle. The pronoun does not, in itself, specify its object but points to the contextual element.

Several scenes in the mystery cycles call for action and gestures in the completion of its meanings. When the Towneley Cain counts the corn for the sacrifice, he selects that which is blighted, and comments on every sheaf which he lays on (43). In the process of counting, Cain expresses verbally what he is doing physically. Not only the demonstratives but also such references as *now* and *here* acquire specific deictic values in this scene. The same is true of the use of the interjection *lo*, which often has the function of pointing to a physical object on stage in our texts (see Støle 2012: 308; see also *MED*, sense 2; Section 4.3.2 and Section 4.4.1; footnote 188).

(43)     **Cain.** […] Oone shefe, oone, and <u>this</u> makys two, / Bot nawder of <u>thise</u> may I forgo: / Two, two, now <u>this</u> is thre, / Yei, <u>this</u> also shall leif with me: Ffor I will chose and best haue, / <u>This</u> hold I thrift of all this thrafe; / Wemo, wemo, foure, <u>lo</u>, <u>here</u>! […] Ffoure shefis, foure, lo, <u>this</u> makis fyfe- / Deyll I fast thus long or I thrife- / Ffyfe and sex, now <u>this</u> is sevyn, / Bot <u>this</u> gettis neuer god of heuen; / Nor none of thise foure, at my myght, / Shall neuer com in godis sight. / Sevyn, sevyn, now <u>this</u> is aght, [Towneley 2.192–8, 204–10]
'[…] One sheaf, one, and this make two; but none of these will I give away. Two, two, now this is three: Yes, this one will also stay with me. For I will choose and have the best – That I think to be of value – of all this corn. Alas, alas, four, look, here! [...] Four sheaves, four, look, this makes five: If I'm in a hurry thus to share, it may be long before I prosper! Five and six, now this makes seven. But God of heaven will never get this one. Nor none of these four, if it is in my might, shall ever come into God's sight. Seven, seven, now this is eight.'

Some dialogues demonstrate states of mutual knowledge holding between discourse participants. In the Chester *Crucifixion*, the use of demonstratives signals an overall cooperative attitude with a shared focus (44). The scene with the four Jews dicing over Jesus' seamless coat relies on stage directions and verbal cues. Jesus' garments – *coate*, *kyrtle*, *pawlle* – are all studiedly displayed to the audience but only implicit reference is made to them in the dialogue. The four Jews describe most of their actions as they execute them. The Third Jew, for instance, even boasts of his win

(*thou fayles*) as soon as he speaks and before he has cast the dice (*for <u>here</u> is cator-traye*).[210] The implicitness, typical of cooperative dialogue based on shared knowledge, is visible in the use of demonstrative pronouns but also in the use of deictic expressions like *now, here* or *this halle* that affirm immediacy and presence. The dynamic deixis of the dialogue, i.e. the way in which what is referred to is 'pointed at', operates as a counterpart to the visual arrangement of the scene. Some referents of *this* may be problematic to identify for modern readers, unless the context of the scene is taken into account.

(44)   **Secundus Judeus**. His other clothes all / to us fowre can fall. / First parte them I shall, / and after playe for <u>this</u>. / This kyrtle myne I call. / Take thow this pawlle. / Iche man in <u>this halle</u> / wottes I doe not amysse.
'All his other clothes to us four can fall. First part I share them out, and afterwards play for this. This tunic I call mine. Take you this cloak. Each man in this hall knows I do not amiss.'

*[Ad Tertium:]*
*To the Third:*

This kyrtle take to thee-
'This tunic take to you -

*[Ad Quartum:]*
*To the Fourth:*

and thou <u>this</u> to thy fee. / Iche man <u>nowe</u> maye see / that all wee be served.
and you this for your wage. Each man now may see that we are all served.'

**Tertius Judeus**. Yea, <u>nowe</u> I read that wee / sytt downe, as mote I thee, / and looke whose <u>thys</u> shalbe / that ys <u>here</u> reserved.
'Yes, now I advise that we sit down, so may I thrive, and look whose this shall be that is here set aside.'

*[Tunc omnes seaent et clicat Primus Judeus Jactans decios]*
*'Then all shall sit down and the First Jew shall speak, throwing the dice.'*

[...]

**Tertius Judeus**. Thou fayles, fellowe, by my faye, / to have <u>this</u> to thy fee, / for <u>here</u> is cator-traye. [Chester 17.105–20, 131–3]
'You fail, fellow, by my faith, to have this for your wage, for here is quatre-trais [three fours].'

Narration of performance, or deictic comment, is a frequent technique of medieval drama. In the highly physical fight scenes from the Chester and Towneley plays below (45)–(46), the action on stage seems more important than the action carried on verbally (see *Figure 13*). In the Towneley *Noah*, for example, *mary, <u>that</u> is myne* remains ambiguous unless "an accompanying and specifying kinesic indicator" (Elam 1980: 87) allows the object of the deixis to be clarified (45). In a

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210 Sergi has pointed out the need for this kind of narration in outdoor theatre "when engaging with small props that are difficult to see, like nails (or dice)" (2011: 45).

similar way, the combat scene in the Chester *Slaying of the Innocents* calls for the women to fight the soldiers verbally but also physically. Their physical resistance is indicated by phrases like *Have thou this* (46). Establishing the referent of such pronouns again requires that we look at the context of the scene.

(45)　　**Noah**. A! wilt thou so? / mary, <u>that</u> is myne.
　　　　'Ah! You want it that way? Mary, that is mine!'
　　　　**Uxor**. Thou shal thre for two / I swere bi godis pyne.
　　　　'You shall get three for two, I swear, by God's pain!'
　　　　**Noah**. And I shall qwyte the <u>tho</u> / In fayth or syne.
　　　　'And I shall pay those back, in faith or sin!'
　　　　**Uxor**. Out apon the, ho! / [Towneley 3.227–30]
　　　　'Fie on you, ho!'

(46)　　**Prima Mulier**. [...] Have thou <u>this</u>, thou fowle harlott / and thou knight, to make a knott! / And on buffett with this bote / thou shalt have to boote. / And thow <u>this</u> and thou <u>this</u>, [Chester 10.353–7]
　　　　'[…] Have this, you foul scoundrel! And you, knight, to make a knot! And one buffet with this bundle of cloth you shall have as a reward. And you this! And you this!'
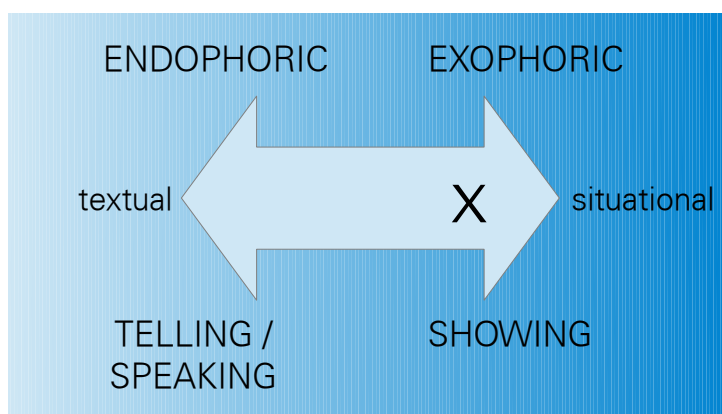


Figure 14: The position of demonstrative pronouns with mainly situational reference along the endophoric-exophoric continuum between telling and showing

The visual violence on stage in the crucifixion scenes has been interpreted as part of the cycles' affective strategies: "The intense emotion that the lurid scenes of torture and crucifixion are meant to evoke require bodily enactment" (O'Connell 2000: 86). Hans-Jürgen Diller, in particular, has drawn attention to the "interlocking of linguistic and non-linguistic action" (1994: 24ff.) to enhance the effect of stage cruelty in the cycles. Unlike the Chester *Crucifixion*, the Towneley plays are particularly short on stage directions and show a well-ordered, close relationship between speech and action (47)–(48). The torturers practically 'narrate' all that they do to Jesus: "[...] their logical, interlocking dialogues are full of expository language meant to draw the audience's attention to their sadistic skills or directly to the suffering of Christ" (Witalisz 1994: 11). In the Towneley *Buffeting* and *Scourging,* they not only vie with one another, they command, ask for help and also

give each other advice, thus weaving a tight net of cooperation and interaction between them. Moreover, the scenes leading to the crucifixion contain long passages in stichomythia: "This, together with the increased length of the passages, is likely to make the scenes faster and more brutal than in Chester" (Diller 1994: 25). On the other hand, enough time is left to comment on the effect of the soldiers' violence on Jesus (*Thar start vp a cowll* ('There starts up a swelling')). As Diller remarks, "[t]he soldiers would hardly have described these effects if they had not had the means to create them" (1994: 25). The visual presentation plays a major role in amplifying the didactic message of these scenes. Accordingly, as in quotes (43)–(46) above, the deictic expressions refer directly to some physical action on stage.

(47)    **Froward**. I stode and beheld, / thou towchid, not the skyn, / Bot fowll.
        'I stood and beheld, you touched not the skin, but poorly.'
        **Primus Tortor**. How will thou I do?
        'How do you want me to do?'
        **Secundus Tortor**. On this manere, <u>lo</u>!
        'In this manner, lo!'
        **Froward**. Yei, <u>that</u> was well gone to, / Thar start vp a cowll. [Towneley 21.425–30]
        'Yes, that was well gone to. There starts up a swelling.'

(48)    **Tercius Tortor**. Haue att!
        'Have that!'
        **Primus Tortor**. Take thou <u>that</u>!
        'Take (you) that!'
        **Secundus Tortor**. I shall lene the a flap, / My strengthe for to kythe. [Towneley 22.139–42]
        'I shall knock you flat, to show my strength.'

<u>b) Text deixis and anaphoric/cataphoric reference</u>

Dialogue in drama, as Elam points out, has not only a 'world-creating', outward-looking (exophoric) function but also an internal co-textual structure: "The fundamental dialogic dynamic, whereby one utterance provokes or generates another, are strictly dependent on inward-looking (endophoric) factors" (1980: 94). That means, demonstratives are not only used to point to concrete items in the surrounding situation, they may also refer to linguistic elements in the ongoing discourse (see Diessel 2006: 475). In modern drama, the events are primarily shown instead of told, while language in medieval plays is mainly referentially self-sufficient. King states: "Medieval theatre is often described […] as 'show-and-tell', but it is more properly and fundamentally 'tell-and-show'" (2000: 156). Hence, most deictics in my sample do not refer to the extralinguistic context but to previous or prospective segments of the discourse (see *Figure 14*; see also Becher 2010: 1310).
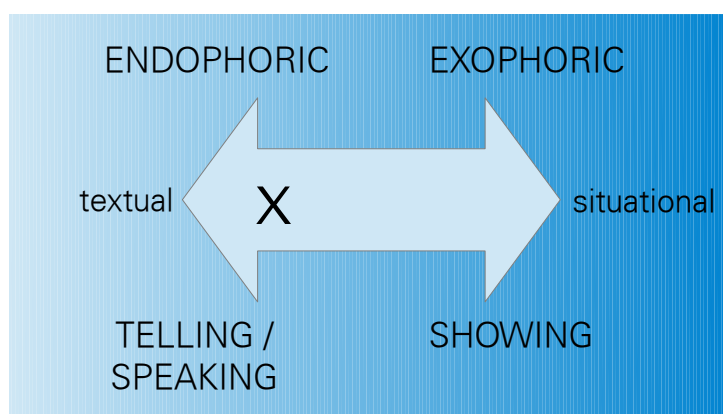
Figure 15: The position of demonstrative pronouns with mainly textual reference along the endophoric-exophoric continuum between telling and showing

A distinction is often made between between anaphora (< Gr. ἀναφορά 'a carrying back') and text deixis[211] (see Lyons 1977: 657ff.; Ehlich 1982: 318ff.; Levinson 2006: 119). Van Stapele defines anaphora as follows: "Anaphoric references are references by characters to antecedent words or expressions which occur in the dramatic discourse" (1990: 336). In other words, anaphora presupposes the existence of an antecedent, i.e. "an expression in the preceding discourse with the same referent, with which they can thus be said to be coreferential" (Becher 2010: 1311). The Third Shepherd in the York play offers a horn spoon as a gift to Jesus. The third-person pronoun *it* is here co-referential with the antecedent noun phrase *horne spone*:

*(49)   **Pastor 3**. […] But <u>lo</u>, an *horne spone* that haue I here- / And <u>it</u> will herbar fourty pese-  [York 15.128–9]
        '[…] But look, a horn spoon I have here, and it will harbour forty peas.'

This example of anaphoric reference contrasts with the text deixis of the passages below (50)–(51), where the pronoun *this* refers not to a specific antecedent expression but to a larger portion of discourse. When the shepherds uncover the cradle in Mak's cottage, they see much to their surprise a sheep (50). Mak explains that his son's nose was broken in delivery and that he was bewitched. But the shepherds recognise their own sheep by the earmark and react with: *This is a fals wark* (l. 619), which seems to refer to the whole preceding utterance by Mak. In quote (51), in the same way, the deictic appears to have the whole of the Angel's preceding propositions about Mary's conception as its antecedent. As these examples illustrate, deictics "work better in coreferring with complex antecedents than anaphorics" (Becher 2010: 1312). This is why the substitution of an anaphoric (*it*) for the deictic element would have a confusing effect in such cases.

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211 Other common terms are 'textual deixis' or 'discourse deixis'.

(50) **Mak**. I tell you, syrs, hark! / *hys noyse was brokyn. / Sythen told, me a clerk / that he was forspokyn.*
'I tell you, sirs, listen! His nose was broken. Afterwards a priest told me that he was bewitched.'
**Primus Pastor.** <u>This</u> is a fals wark / I wold, fayn be wrokyn: / Gett wepyn. [Towneley 13.617–20]
'That is a lie! I will gladly be avenged. Get a weapon!'[212]

(51) **Angel**. [...] *The childe that sall be borne of her, / Itt is consayued of the haly gast. / Alle joie and blisse than sall be aftir, / And to al mankynde nowe althir mast. / Jesus his name thou calle, / For slike happe sall hym fall / Als thou sall se in haste. / His pepull saffe he sall / Of euyllis and angris all, / Þat thei ar nowe enbraste.*
'The child that shall be born of her, it is conceived of the Holy Ghost. Joy and bliss then shall be forever, and to mankind of all the most. Jesus, his name, you (will) call, for such will him befall as you shall see soon. His people he shall save from evils and afflictions which confine them now.'
**Joseph**. And is <u>this</u> soth, aungell, thou saise? [York 13.269–79]
'And is this true, angel, what you say?'

Both anaphora and text deixis point directly to the co-text rather than the situational context. Levinson has commented on the deictic component of anaphora: "These expressions, with their directional specification from the current point in the text, demonstrate the underlyingly deictic nature of anaphora" (2006: 119). In addition, text deixis and anaphora share the capacity of functioning as a text cohesion device (Cummings 2005: 29), as they serve to establish internal relations within the discourse itself and thus reinforce the creation of a coherent linguistic context or co-text. Van Stapele points out: "Anaphoric strategy is also deictic in character and has the function of giving continuity in the process of making the dramatic world" (1990: 336).

In the Chester cycle, demonstrative pronouns frequently form part of God's commenting or summarising words.[213] The final monologue in the Chester *Fall of Lucifer* shows God pondering the effects of pride (52). He mourns the loss of Lucifer, warns the angels that *pride is your foe* (l. 280), and, filled with sorrow, turns nonetheless to the next step of creation. The play ends with <u>*That*</u> *is my will* (l. 297). In the same way, he comments on his creation with *This is donne* (l. 97) in the Chester *Creation*. The Chester *Moses* opens with God reciting the Ten Commandments and calling upon the people (and the audience) to keep his bidding in all these (53). The demonstrative pronouns in such passages refer back to and therefore emphasise a previous portion of discourse: "In picking up and pointing to a word, phrase, sentence or larger unit of discourse in the linguistic co-text, the speaker may come to comment on it as a phenomenon of interest" (Elam 1980: 93).

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212 Throughout the remaining section, deictic forms are underlined and their referents within the text are given in italics.

213 The commenting or summarising of important content is a mechanism which is typical of the Chester cycle. Its presenter figures, the Expositor, Doctor and Nuntius, remark on the plays' action and interpret the theological or dogmatic significance of a particular scene for the audience's benefit (Walker ²2008: 79f.).

(52)  **Deus**. […] In my blessinge here I begyne / the first that shalbe to my paye. / Lightenes and darkenes, I byde you twene: / the darke to the nighte, the lighte to the day. *Keepe your course for more or myne / and suffer not, to you I saye; / but save yourselfe, bouth out and in.* / That is my will, and will allwaye. [Chester 1.290–7]
'[…] With my blessing I begin here the first (of a series of acts) which shall be to my pleasure. Lightness and darkness, I bid you twin: the dark to the night, the light to the day. Keep your course, for more or min, and suffer not, to you I say; but save yourself, both out and in. That is my will, and will always.'

(53)  **Deus (ad Moysen)**. […] *Your neighbours wyefe desyre you nought, / servante nee goodes that bee bath bought, / oxe nor asse, in deede nor thought, / nor nothinge that is his, / nor wrongefullye to have his thinge / agaynst his love and his likinge.* / In all these keepe my byddinge, / that yee doe not amysse. [Chester 5.17–24]
'[…] Your neighbour's wife desire you not, servant, nor goods that he has bought, ox nor ass, in deed nor thought, nor nothing that is his, nor wrongfully to desire his possessions against his love and his liking. In all these keep my bidding, that you do not amiss.'

Another structure that tends to increase the authority of a statement in the mystery play texts can be found in examples (54)–(56). Jesus emphasises his reaction to Satan's statement with *that schal thow witte* in the York *Harrowing* (54). The devil uses a similar construction in the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife*, where he attempts to abort the divine plan of salvation by convincing Pilate's wife that Jesus is innocent, so she will persuade her husband to acquit him (55). He threatens her and Pilate's status and wealth, and closes his speech with *that dare I auowe*. Such structures may be employed for the purpose of emphasis but also merely as a strategy to maintain the metrical pattern. When Joseph urges Mary to flee to Egypt with him in the Chester *Innocents*, we get the impression that the playwright(s) inserted the phrase *that I thee behett* simply to fill out the lines and retain the rhyme (56).

(54)  **Satan.** [...] And thyselfe, day and nyght, / Has taught al men emang / To do resoune and right, / And here werkis thou all wrang.
'[…] And yourself, day and night, have taught, all people among to do reason and right. And here you work all wrong.'
**Jesus**. *I wirke noght wrang*, that schal thow witte, [York 37.260–4]
'I work no wrong, that shall you know!'

(55)  **Diabolus**. […] *And that doughty today to deth thus be dyghted, / Sir Pilate, for his prechyng, and thou, / With nede schalle ye namely be noyed. / Youre striffe and youre strenghe schal be stroyed, Youre richesse schal be refte you that is rude, / With vengeaunce*, and that dare I auowe. [York 30.172–7]
'[…] If that good man today to death be condemned for his preaching, Sir Pilate, and you should be especially annoyed: Your striving and your strengths shall be destroyed; your riches shall be taken from you that is great, with vengeance, and that dare I avow.'

(56)   **Josephe**. […] Marye, sister, we must goe / to our land that we came froe. / The angell base bydden us soe, / my owne deare sweete. / *On my asse thou shalt bee / and my mantell under thee, / full easylie, sister, leeve thou mee* / and <u>that</u> I thee behett. [Chester 10.474–81]
'[…] Mary, sister, we must go to our land that we came from. The angel has bidden us so, my own dear sweetheart. On my ass you shall be, and my mantle under you, quite comfortably, dearest, believe (you) me and that I promise you.'

Similar to Present-Day English conversation, the demonstratives *this/these* and *that/those* can be used with reference to preceding portions of discourse; but while *that/those* may only point to previous discourse elements, *this/these* can also function as cataphora anticipating a prospective discourse unit (see Quirk et al. 1985: 375; Kryk-Kastovsky 1995: 331f.; Biber at al. 1999: 348). Consider the closing scene of the Chester *Shepherds*, where the shepherds dedicate their earthly lives to their relationship with Christ. The First Boy proposes to his companions preaching and praying *unto yonder chyld* with the words <u>*this*</u> *doe I saye* (57). Note that he introduces his announcement with the discourse marker *now*, whose prospective function has already been highlighted in Section 4.3.4.[214]

(57)   **The First Boye**. <u>Nowe</u> to you, my fellowes, <u>this</u> doe I saye, / for in this place, or that I wynde awaye: / *unto yonder chyld lett us goe praye, / as our masters have donne us beforne*. [Chester 7.597–600]
'Now to you, my companions, this do I say in this place, before I go away: unto yonder child let us go pray, as our masters have done before us.'

In the Chester *Fall of Lucifer*, God speaks about the power of creation and his role as creator of humankind (58). The cataphoric demonstrative preceding his statement stresses the binding value of God's authority and man's absolute obligation to submit to God's will. The characters sometimes deliver meta-statements in their audience addresses, often cataphorically, to create anticipation or to mark their speech as particularly authoritative (cf. Mazzon 2009: 181). For example, the Chester Moses pledges obedience to the lord, then turns to the people, shows them the tablets of the law, and formally announces the Sabbath commandment with <u>*this*</u> *that I shall saye* (59). Then he anaphorically refers back to his words (*Whoe doth not <u>this</u>*) and thus, twice, emphasises the significance of honouring God's rule.

(58)   **Deus**. […] <u>This</u> is your health in every case: / *to behoulde your creator*. [Chester 1.118–9]
'[…] This is your happiness in every case: to behold your creator.'

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214 Discourse markers and interjections have both been classified as deictic elements for the following reasons: The interpretation of interjections is strongly determined by the immediate context (see Taavitsainen 1997c: 252; see also Section 4.4.2), while discourse markers may organise textual progression by connecting one turn to the prior or following utterance (Levinson 2006: 119; see also Section 4.3.5).

(59) **Moyses**. Godes folke of Israell, / herkens you all to my spell. / God bade ye should keepe well / <u>this</u> that I shall saye. / *Syxe dayes bodely worke all; / the seaventh sabboath ye shall call. / That daye for ought that maye befall / hallowed shalbe aye*. / Whoe doth not <u>this</u>, dye shall hee. [Chester 5.81–9]
'God's folk of Israel, listen you all to my words. God bade you should keep this well that I shall say: Six days bodily work (you) all; the seventh 'Sabbath' you shall call. That day, whatever happens, shall be kept holy always. Who does this not, shall die.'

The forward reference in the speeches of bad characters is usually to formal announcements or emphatic statements. When Herod summons his soldiers in the Towneley play, he announces his instruction to kill all infant boys with *this* as a kind of cataphoric 'focusser' (60). Satan in the *York Fall of Man* closes his seduction speech with <u>*this was his skylle*</u> preceding his final argument: God has selfishly denied them the fruit from the tree of knowledge because he wants to keep humanity from enjoying the great powers that it bestows (61). The Second Counsellor in the Towneley *Scourging* calls on Pilate to crucify Jesus (62). The phrase *this is my red* is here used to refer formally and emphatically to the following piece of advice. In the same play as well as in the Towneley Herod, we find instances of the similar construction *this is my counsell*.

(60) **Herodes**. welcom, lordyngys, Iwys / both greatt and small! / The cause now is <u>this</u> / that I send for you all: / *A lad, a knafe, borne is / that shuld, be kyng ryall; / Bot I kyll hym and his / I wote I brast my gall; / Therfor, Syrs, / Veniance shall ye take*, [Towneley 16.300–5]
'Welcome, lords, both great and small! The reason why I sent for you all is this: A lad, a rascal, is born, who is said to become (royal) king. Unless I kill him and his (folk), I know it would burst my gall-bladder. Therefore, sirs, vengeance shall you take.'

(61) **Satanas**. […] I knawe it wele, <u>this</u> was his skylle: / *Bycause he wolde non othir kende / Thes grete vertues that longes thertill*. [York 5.48–50]
'[…] I know it well, this was his reason: Because he wished no one to know of the great powers that belong to it.'

(62) **Secundus Consultus**. Syr pilate, prynce peerles / <u>this</u> is my red, / *That he skap not harmeles / bot do hym to ded*: [Towneley 22.198–9]
'Sir Pilate, prince peerless, this is my advice: That he escape not without punishment, but you doom him to death.'

There are a small number of cases, where the demonstrative pronouns refer, either anaphorically or cataphorically, to some portion of the ongoing discourse, which, in turn, entails some (physical) action on stage. I would place such occurrences between textual and situational reference on my continuum (see *Figure 15*). For example, the scene below from the Towneley *Crucifixion* contains a condensed network of demonstrative pronouns referring back to the interlocutor's statement. The dialogue in this play "does not merely accompany the action, it reacts to events and discoveries. Inferences are drawn and call forth new actions" (Diller 1992: 240). For example, the First Torturer in quote (63) orders the Second Torturer to hold down Jesus' knees, who then complies with *That shall I do* (l. 140) and probably also performs the respective action on stage. Directives and the

immediately following compliance (and performance) by the interlocutor is the predominant pattern in the Towneley *Crucifixion*. At the same time, the dense co-textual structure mirrors the cooperative effort to be witnessed in the scene. The timing and rhythm of their speeches is managed in such a way as to make the action reasonably clear to the audience, "since it is possible at all important points to infer where each speaker is and what he is doing" (Beadle [2]2008: 117). The strong deictic element in the language of the torturers reflects the difficult stage actions that the actors are called upon to perform, but also highlights the "nascent symbolic nature" (Beadle [2]2008: 118) of the (invisible) stage properties.[215]

(63)     **Primus Tortor**. *Hald downe his knees*.
'Hold down his knees.'
**Secundus Tortor.** <u>That</u> shall I do / His norysh yede neuer better to; / Lay on all your hende.
'That shall I do. His nurse did no better. Lay on all your hands.'
[...]
**Primus Tortor**. *Hald, it now fast thor*, / And oone of you *take the bore*, / And then may it not fayll.
'Hold it now fast there! And one of you take the bore, and then it may not fail.'
**Secundus Tortor.** <u>That</u> shall I do withoutten drede, / As euer myght I well spede, / Hym to mekyll bayll. [Towneley 23.139–42,149–54]
'That shall I do with good heed, as ever I hope to prosper, to cause him bitter bale.'

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215 The paralleling of speech and action, characteristic especially of early drama, usually adds still further to the patterned representation in our sample (see Witalisz 1994: 13). The aim of 'steering' and instructing the audience results in the recurring explication of performative elements, in comparison to spontaneous oral discourse where the interactants share a physical surrounding. That means that "a number of temporal and spatial pieces of information were conveyed within the dialogue, so that the contextualisation of the action is given verbally rather than visually, and effectively incorporated within character speech" (Mazzon 2009: 122). The Towneley Noah, for instance, recounts how he checks the measurements of the ark and how he constructs the fighting-top and the sail:

**Noah.** [...] The top and the sayll / both will I make, / The helme and the castell / also will I take, / To drife ich a nayll / will I not forsake, [Towneley 3.274–6]
'I will make both the fighting-top and the sail, I will also make the helm and the tower; I will not neglect to drive in each nail.'

This line is supposed to help the audience imagining the building process of the ark's individual elements. The same of course holds for the next lines which also form a type of authorial remark on what is conveyed:

**Noah.** [...] Wyndow and doore / euen as he saide, / Thre ches chambre / thay ar well maide, / Pyk & tar full sure / ther apon laide, [Towneley 3.283–5]
'Window and door, exactly as he said; Three tiers of rooms, they are well-made, Pitch and tar surely laid on it.'

Mazzon (2009: 122, footnote 2) has compared such lines to *Macbeth* (III.iii.4) and *King Lear* (III.ii.1) where the context of the scene, the weather or time of day, is conveyed through monologue.
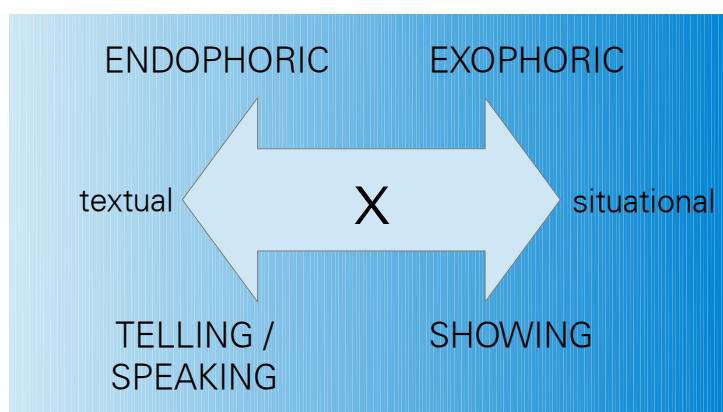
Figure 16: The position of demonstrative pronouns with both situational and textual reference along the endophoric-exophoric continuum between telling and showing

<u>c) Involving emotion</u>

Caffi and Janney (1994: 355f.) include demonstrative pronouns among their emotive categories. Taavitsainen, too, lists deictic features as markers of personal affect contributing, at least indirectly, to involvement, which may concern the characters within the text or function text-externally involving the readership or audience (1997c: 256ff.). The use of demonstratives to signal a speaker's emotional attitude with respect to a given entity was first observed by Lakoff (1974) (see Kryk-Kastovsky 1995: 332). Emotional deixis was re-evaluated by Lyons, who proposed using the label 'empathetic deixis' "when the speaker is personally involved with the entity, situation or place to which he is referring or is identifying himself with the attitude or viewpoint of the addressee" (1977: 677). Other scholars either neglect this use of demonstratives altogether or, like Levinson (2006: 108), list it under 'non-deictic'.

Emotional deixis is sometimes considered to be characteristic of colloquial discourse (Kryk-Kastovsky 1995: 333). Smith's (2012: 599) analysis of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*, however, implies that *this(e)* as a demonstrative determiner may be accounted for mainly as a marker of emphasis and not as a marker of colloquial style. He argues that this type of use was inherited from Old English.[216] A typical instance of empathetic deixis from our play texts would be the following quote from the York *Crucifixion*:

(64)    **Miles 4**. [...] Commes on, late kille <u>this traitoure strange</u>. [York 35.32]
        '[…] Come on, let's kill this impudent traitor!'

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216 In Old English, *se* was mainly used as a definite article, while emphatic deixis was predominantly referred to by the emphatic demonstrative *þes*. Middle English *this* developed from the Old English emphatic demonstrative (see Wischer 2002: 464; Algeo 2010: 132).

As I focus solely on demonstrative pronouns, I have followed a different functional categorisation.[217] I have classified cases under the heading 'emotional' or 'expressive' if they are accompanied by interjections. On our continuum, these cases would be placed between textual and situational reference (see *Figure 15* above), as the pronouns refer back or forward to a portion of the co-text while the expressive component is clearly extralinguistic.

When the Third Soldier tells Caiaphas that Jesus cures the sick on the Sabbath day, he exclaims that *this* is a deceptive magic trick brought about *by the myghtis of Mahounde* (65). A frustrated and angry Adam rebukes Eve for taking the forbidden fruit in the scene from the York *Fall of Man*, where the proximal demonstrative pronoun refers to the apple from the tree of knowledge (66). When the clerks inform Herod that *a gracyus lord* will usurp his throne, Herod rages at them and accuses his counsellor of intentionally provoking him (67).

(65)    **Miles 3**. 3a lorde, *even forthe in euery-ilke a toune / He thame lechis to liffe aftir lange*.
'Yes, lord, they go forth from every town; he heals them to life who have languished so long.'
**Caiphas**. <u>A</u>, <u>this</u> makes he by the myghtis of Mahounde. [York 29.272–4]
'Ah, this he makes by the might of Mahound!'

(66)    **Eua**. Adam, have <u>here</u> of *frute* full goode.
'Adam, have here some very good fruit.'
**Adam**. <u>Alas</u> woman, why toke thou <u>this</u>? [York 5.85–6]
'Alas, woman, why took you this?'

(67)    **Secundus Consultus**. *And othere says thus / tryst me ye may: / "[Of bedlem a gracyus / lord shall spray, / That of Iury myghtyus / kyng shalbe ay, / lord myghty; / And hym shall honoure / both kyng and emperoure."]*
'And other people say thus, you may trust me: In Bethlehem a gracious lord shall be born, who shall be mighty king of Jewry, mighty lord. And him shall honour both king and emperor.'
**Herodes**. why, and shuld I to hym cowre? / Nay, ther thou lyys lyghtly! / <u>ffy</u>! the dewill the spede / and me, bot I drynk onys! / <u>This</u> has thou done in dede / to anger me for the nonys: [Towneley 16.219–28]
'What? And I should cower to him? No, there you readily tell lies! Fie! The devil help you and me, unless I drink once [something]! This have you done to anger me on purpose.'

The devil from the York *Creation* cries out in terror as he falls into hell's pit. The pronoun points forward to the referent: a *dongon of dole* (68). In the Chester *Harrowing*, Satan cries out as Jesus

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217 Classifications of the distinctive uses of demonstratives usually include the category of symbolic deixis (cf. Bühler's *deixis am Phantasma*). Symbolic deixis involves "an entity not present at the moment of the utterance" (Kryk-Kastovsky 1995: 331) as referent and locates "objects not in the physical space in which the speech event occurs, but in the mind or imagination of the speaker" (Herman 1995: 28). Symbolic deixis therefore requires knowledge of the spatio-temporal frame on the part of the addressee or audience. Similar to empathetic deixis, demonstrative pronouns usually do not function as symbolic deixis. Accordingly, Bühler's *deixis am Phantasma* can only be found in the form of demonstrative determiners in our sample:

**Secundus Pastor**. I wote so forwakyd / is none in <u>this shyre</u>: / I wold slepe if I takyd / les to my hyere. [Towneley 13.253–4]
'I know so weary with watching is no-one in this shire: I would (go to) sleep if I payed less attention to my wages.'

demands admission, as illustrated in the preceding stage direction (69). The demonstrative may refer back to Jesus' appearance or words at the gates. Both outbursts contain interjections as well as the adverb *here*, which, again, points to aspects of the shared situation of use.

(68)  **Lucifer deiabolus in inferno**. <u>Owte</u>! <u>Owte</u>! <u>Harrowe</u>! Helples, slyke hote at es <u>here</u>; / <u>This</u> es *a dongon of dole* that I am to dyghte. [York 1.98–9]
'Out! Out! Help! (I'm) helpless! So hot is it here! This is a dungeon of suffering that I am condemned to!'

(69)  *[Tunc venit Jesus et fiat clamor, vel sonitus magnus materialis, et dicat Jesus 'Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portas aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae']*
*Then Jesus shall come, and there shall be a cry, or a great physical din, and Jesus shall say: 'Lift up your heads, you gates, and lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in.*

**Sathanas**. *Owt*, *alas*, what ys <u>thys</u>? / Seghe I never so mych blys / towardses hell come, iwys, / sythen I was warden <u>here</u>. [Chester 18.161–4]
'Out, alas! What is this? Saw I never so much joy towards hell come, truly, since I was keeper here.'

To sum up, demonstrative pronouns are variously deployed to enhance textual cohesion, to create the impression of interaction and cooperation, or for purposes of emphasis. The identified overall functions (situational or gestural, textual and expressive) are remarkably similar to Modern English categories and therefore form part of recent taxonomies of present-day demonstratives (e.g. Levinson 2006). Yet, it is worth reiterating that the overall frequencies obtained for demonstrative pronouns in the play texts are not statistically significant, which, once again, indicates the play texts' distance from the 'real' spoken language of the past.

## 4.4.4 Summary

In the first two sections of this chapter, I have explored categories of the lexicon that express subjectivity or affective response. The playwrights may have used these words to invoke stylistically the affective immediacy of expressions of awe, admiration, grief, distress, anger, etc. Interjections, for example, are usually not syntactically integrated into the surrounding stretch of discourse, so they can be easily slotted into the text to signal linguistic immediacy. This feature belongs to the group of speech-internal "perspective shifters" which also comprise vocatives, demonstrative pronouns and spatio-temporal deictics (Moore 2016: 196). Apart from marking speech-like passages and strengthening audience involvement, these elements perform various structural functions in the organisation of the text. Accordingly, the frequent use of particular attitudinal vocatives in the play texts may indicate (and probably does) that these terms were more readily used in everyday Middle English, but their occurrence can also be a product of the need to clarify the relations between speakers. Hence, the features of sharedness and function of this

chapter are always embedded in a generic and stylistic context with differing functional goals. The overall figures for demonstrative pronouns are very low, but when we do find cases they mostly represent examples of text deixis rather than situational reference pointing to the extralinguistic context. This has to do with the overall purpose of the cycle plays, namely their informative, didactic aims, noted in Section 3.4.1. The way in which the narrative is conducted therefore often resembles storytelling rather than what we would regard as drama (see Diller 1992: 122).

## 4.5. Discussion: Speech-like features in the Middle English mystery plays

In the introductory chapter, I stated the guiding interest of my thesis: the investigation of 30 Middle English play texts in terms of how linguistically close they are to authentic spoken discourse. The study has verified my initial hypothesis that the comic mystery plays contain some traces of communicative immediacy, whose complexity can be fully comprehended only by a combination of linguistic enquiry and literary analysis. Let us start by reviewing the quantitative evidence yielded by the sample:

My analysis has shown that no collection is consistently higher or lower in the total relative frequencies of the speech-like features investigated here. Of all play texts, the York *Herod* scores the highest (163.28), followed by the Chester *Crucifixion* (148.17), the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* (147.65) and the Towneley *Abel* (145.95). The York *Herod* displays the highest density of both demonstrative pronouns and vocatives throughout the three collections. It is only in the figures obtained for second-person pronouns and interjections that the Chester *Crucifixion* emerges as the winner.

Writers such as the York Realist or the Wakefield Master have been praised for their seemingly authentic representation of the spoken mode. Three out of four plays attributed to the York Realist placed in the top nine (overall relative frequency ≥ 120.00). *Group III*, containing the works attributed to the York Realist, displayed higher densities of speech-like features than the other groups (see *Figure 16*). In contrast, only the Wakefield Master's *Buffeting* can be assigned to the top nine list. The *Prima* and *Secunda Pastorum*, for example, show comparatively low frequencies of speech-like linguistic features. This can be attributed to the long monologues of the individual shepherds at the beginning of these plays. On the basis of the quantitative evidence, the Towneley plays, then, cannot be considered more speech-like than the York or Chester plays (see *Figure 17*). Overall, the York *Creation* shows the lowest overall relative frequency (67.32), followed by the Chester *Harrowing* (77.98) and the York *Building of the Ark* (79.95). The latter is remarkable in its complete lack of three (questions, repetitions, demonstrative pronouns) out of eight features of communicative immediacy.

The supposedly "severe and reserved" (Woolf 1980: 183) N-Town plays are, in fact, not distinctly different from their Chester, York and Towneley counterparts. Five plays (*Joseph*, *Moses*, *Temptation*, *Crucifixion*, *Christ's Appearance*) contain higher relative frequencies of speech-like features than the plays from the Chester, York and Towneley collections (see *Figure 18–21*). It turns out that the N-Town control groups feature more second-person pronouns and more repetition than the core sample (see *Figure 22*). But we have to be careful when evaluating *Figures 18–22*. First, almost all of the selected N-Town plays are generally much shorter than their counterparts in

the other cycles. A few instances quickly result in huge relative frequencies. The high densities of speech-like features in the N-Town *Joseph* come as no surprise. Mazzon (2009: 23, footnote 7) has argued that the relationship between Joseph and Mary is especially 'humanised' in the N-Town collection. Moreover, the N-Town plays contain relatively high frequencies of imperatives and vocatives in comparison to the other cycles. Hence, the N-Town collection as a whole is not necessarily less 'oral' in nature, which confirms Mazzon's results (2009). In fact, there are strong resemblances among the cycles in the overall design of the matter chosen for presentation, perhaps due to "the effect of cross-fertilization" (Blake 2008: 12) between different mystery play collections as they were rewritten over the years.

| | Ch No | Ch Sh | Y Bui | Y No | Y Jos | Y Sh | T No | T Sh | T Sh | Ch Luc | Ch Crea | Ch Mos | Ch Harr | Y Crea | Y Fall | Y Tem | Y Harr | T Abel | Ch Inno | Ch Cru | Y Con | Y Caia | Y Drea | Y Her | Y Cru | Y Res | T Her | T Buff | T Sco | T Cruc |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SPP** | 51.66 (104) | 32.04 (137) | 43.27 (46) | 39.47 (81) | 39.73 (76) | 29.59 (25) | 32.92 (129) | 36.98 (125) | 30.21 (165) | 60.35 (121) | 58.67 (253) | 52.48 (144) | 36.41 (73) | 28.42 (38) | 49.07 (53) | 56.11 (67) | 39.89 (103) | 52.40 (168) | 49.92 (151) | 55.88 (152) | 49.09 (130) | 38.51 (131) | 57.67 (273) | 52.10 (187) | 19.12 (38) | 33.64 (88) | 45.10 (163) | 53.41 (178) | 48.95 (168) | 50.18 (221) |
| **QU** | 0.99 (2) | 3.74 (16) | - | 7.31 (15) | 15.16 (29) | 5.92 (5) | 4.34 (17) | 6.21 (21) | 10.80 (59) | 7.98 (16) | 4.87 (21) | 2.55 (7) | 2.66 (8) | 0.75 (1) | 15.74 (17) | 2.51 (3) | 6.58 (17) | 12.16 (39) | 5.95 (18) | 6.62 (18) | 8.31 (22) | 8.52 (29) | 6.76 (32) | 13.65 (49) | 5.03 (10) | 10.70 (28) | 5.81 (21) | 12.00 (40) | 4.95 (15) | 8.17 (36) |
| **IMP** | 21.36 (43) | 16.37 (70) | 18.81 (20) | 20.96 (43) | 19.86 (38) | 23.67 (20) | 16.33 (64) | 17.75 (60) | 19.04 (104) | 17.96 (36) | 6.49 (28) | 21.50 (59) | 8.48 (17) | 5.98 (8) | 15.74 (17) | 15.91 (19) | 18.59 (48) | 29.94 (96) | 20.17 (61) | 26.47 (72) | 16.24 (43) | 29.39 (100) | 31.26 (148) | 31.21 (112) | 34.22 (68) | 15.67 (41) | 21.31 (77) | 21.30 (71) | 22.14 (76) | 26.34 (116) |
| **REP** | 0.50 (1) | 5.61 (24) | - | 0.49 (1) | 3.66 (7) | 5.92 (5) | 1.53 (6) | 2.66 (9) | 0.37 (2) | 4.49 (9) | 4.87 (21) | 2.19 (6) | 2.00 (4) | 3.74 (5) | 8.33 (9) | - | 6.97 (18) | 5.61 (18) | 5.95 (18) | 6.62 (18) | 0.78 (2) | 4.70 (16) | 3.38 (16) | 2.23 (8) | 2.52 (5) | 4.97 (13) | 1.66 (6) | 0.60 (2) | 2.04 (7) | 3.63 (16) |
| **DM** | 4.47 (9) | 7.95 (34) | - | 6.34 (13) | 8.36 (16) | 5.92 (5) | 4.08 (16) | 6.21 (21) | 6.23 (34) | 3.99 (8) | 3.01 (13) | 1.82 (5) | 4.49 (9) | - | 7.41 (8) | - | 5.03 (13) | 6.55 (21) | 3.97 (12) | 6.99 (19) | 12.08 (32) | 8.82 (30) | 8.66 (41) | 17.00 (61) | 14.09 (28) | 6.50 (17) | 3.32 (12) | 7.50 (25) | 2.33 (8) | 9.54 (42) |
| **INT** | 6.95 (14) | 5.61 (24) | 5.64 (6) | 6.82 (14) | 7.32 (14) | 9.47 (8) | 6.64 (26) | 5.03 (17) | 6.41 (35) | 6.48 (13) | 7.88 (34) | 1.82 (5) | 7.98 (16) | 14.96 (20) | 11.11 (12) | 4.19 (5) | 6.20 (16) | 12.16 (39) | 10.25 (31) | 15.07 (41) | 5.29 (14) | 7.35 (25) | 7.39 (35) | 11.98 (43) | 5.54 (11) | 7.26 (19) | 13.84 (50) | 4.80 (16) | 5.54 (19) | 8.40 (37) |
| **VOC** | 17.39 (35) | 15.20 (65) | 10.35 (11) | 25.83 (53) | 17.25 (33) | 20.12 (17) | 12.76 (50) | 12.43 (42) | 12.64 (69) | 10.47 (21) | 11.36 (49) | 16.03 (44) | 12.47 (25) | 8.98 (12) | 25.00 (27) | 7.54 (9) | 14.72 (38) | 18.40 (59) | 22.15 (67) | 23.90 (65) | 20.39 (54) | 26.46 (90) | 30.42 (144) | 33.44 (120) | 12.08 (24) | 20.26 (53) | 18.54 (67) | 20.10 (67) | 13.69 (47) | 17.03 (75) |
| **DP** | 6.95 (14) | 5.38 (23) | 1.88 (2) | 2.92 (6) | 5.23 (10) | 3.55 (3) | 5.62 (22) | 6.21 (21) | 4.39 (24) | 1.50 (3) | 4.87 (21) | 4.74 (13) | 3.49 (7) | 4.49 (6) | 4.63 (5) | 3.35 (4) | 5.81 (15) | 8.73 (28) | 6.61 (20) | 6.62 (18) | 2.64 (7) | 4.12 (14) | 2.11 (10) | 1.67 (6) | 0.50 (1) | 3.44 (9) | 3.32 (12) | 3.30 (11) | 3.79 (13) | 5.22 (23) |

Table 56: The frequency of speech-like linguistic features in *Group I–III* per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses)

| | NT No | NT Sh | NT Jos | NT CAn | NT Mos | NT Harr | NT CAd | NT Tem | NT Cain | NT Inno | NT Cru | NT Pas | NT AC | NT PiWi | NT PiHe | NT Chri |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SPP** | 23.24 (46) | 17.91 (26) | 91.92 (83) | 34.03 (18) | 82.01 (109) | 34.48 (10) | 57.59 (126) | 60.53 (96) | 55.18 (73) | 24.75 (45) | 58.71 (126) | 45.56 (180) | 53.03 (99) | 57.86 (92) | 54.78 (106) | 50.97 (92) |
| **QU** | 3.54 (7) | - | 12.40 (18) | 1.89 (1) | 1.50 (2) | - | 2.29 (5) | - | 6.05 (8) | 0.55 (1) | 9.79 (21) | 1.27 (5) | 10.71 (20) | 9.43 (15) | 6.72 (13) | 4.43 (8) |
| **IMP** | 14.15 (28) | 7.75 (7) | 24.10 (35) | 3.78 (2) | 48.91 (65) | 6.90 (2) | 21.02 (46) | 20.18 (32) | 12.09 (16) | 22.00 (40) | 32.62 (70) | 23.29 (92) | 15.53 (29) | 14.47 (23) | 21.71 (42) | 16.62 (30) |
| **REP** | 6.57 (13) | 11.07 (10) | 11.02 (16) | 7.56 (4) | 0.75 (1) | - | 6.86 (15) | 5.04 (8) | 3.02 (4) | 0.55 (1) | 4.66 (10) | 1.52 (6) | 7.50 (14) | 3.14 (5) | 6.72 (13) | 4.43 (8) |
| **DM** | - | 1.11 (1) | 1.38 (2) | - | - | - | - | 3.15 (5) | 4.54 (6) | 1.10 (2) | 8.85 (19) | 1.01 (4) | 3.21 (6) | 5.66 (9) | 4.65 (9) | 4.43 (8) |
| **INT** | 10.11 (20) | 2.21 (2) | 21.35 (31) | - | 3.01 (4) | 13.79 (4) | 5.94 (13) | 3.78 (6) | 13.23 (10) | 2.75 (5) | 13.51 (29) | 0.51 (2) | 10.71 (20) | 1.89 (3) | 2.58 (5) | 6.65 (12) |
| **VOC** | 12.13 (24) | 43.19 (39) | 26.17 (38) | 1.89 (1) | 12.79 (17) | 3.45 (1) | 11.43 (25) | 7.57 (12) | 15.87 (21) | 10.45 (19) | 27.03 (58) | 10.12 (31) | 14.46 (27) | 19.50 (31) | 24.29 (47) | 23.27 (42) |
| **DP** | 2.02 (4) | 1.11 (1) | 5.51 (8) | 1.89 (1) | 5.27 (7) | 3.45 (1) | 1.37 (3) | 8.20 (13) | 2.27 (3) | - | 6.06 (13) | 2.78 (11) | 5.36 (10) | 3.77 (6) | 7.24 (14) | 5.54 (10) |

Table 57: The frequency of speech-like linguistic features in *Control Group I–II* per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses)
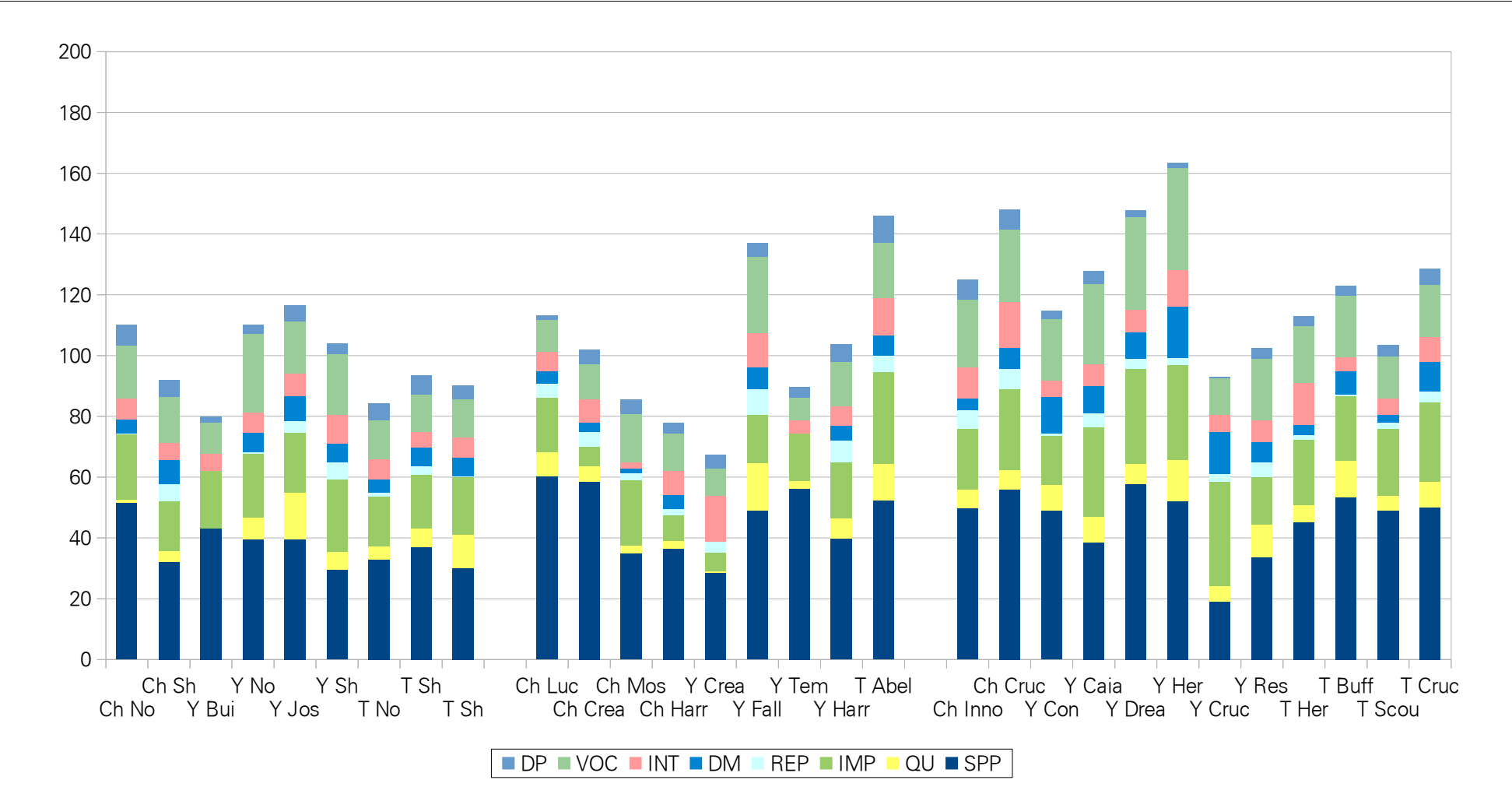
Figure 17: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in the whole sample, sorted by group
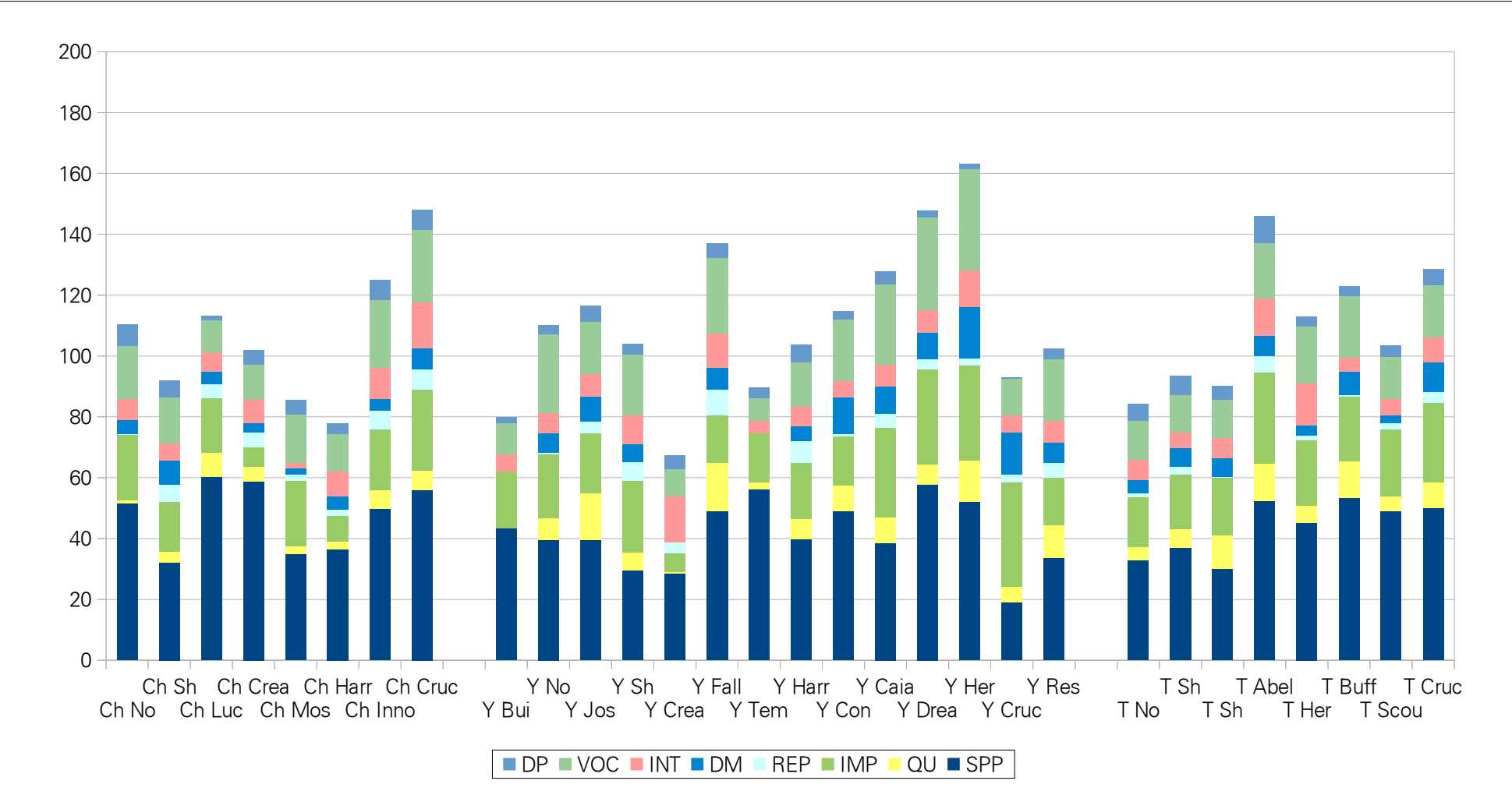
Figure 18: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in the whole sample, sorted by cycle
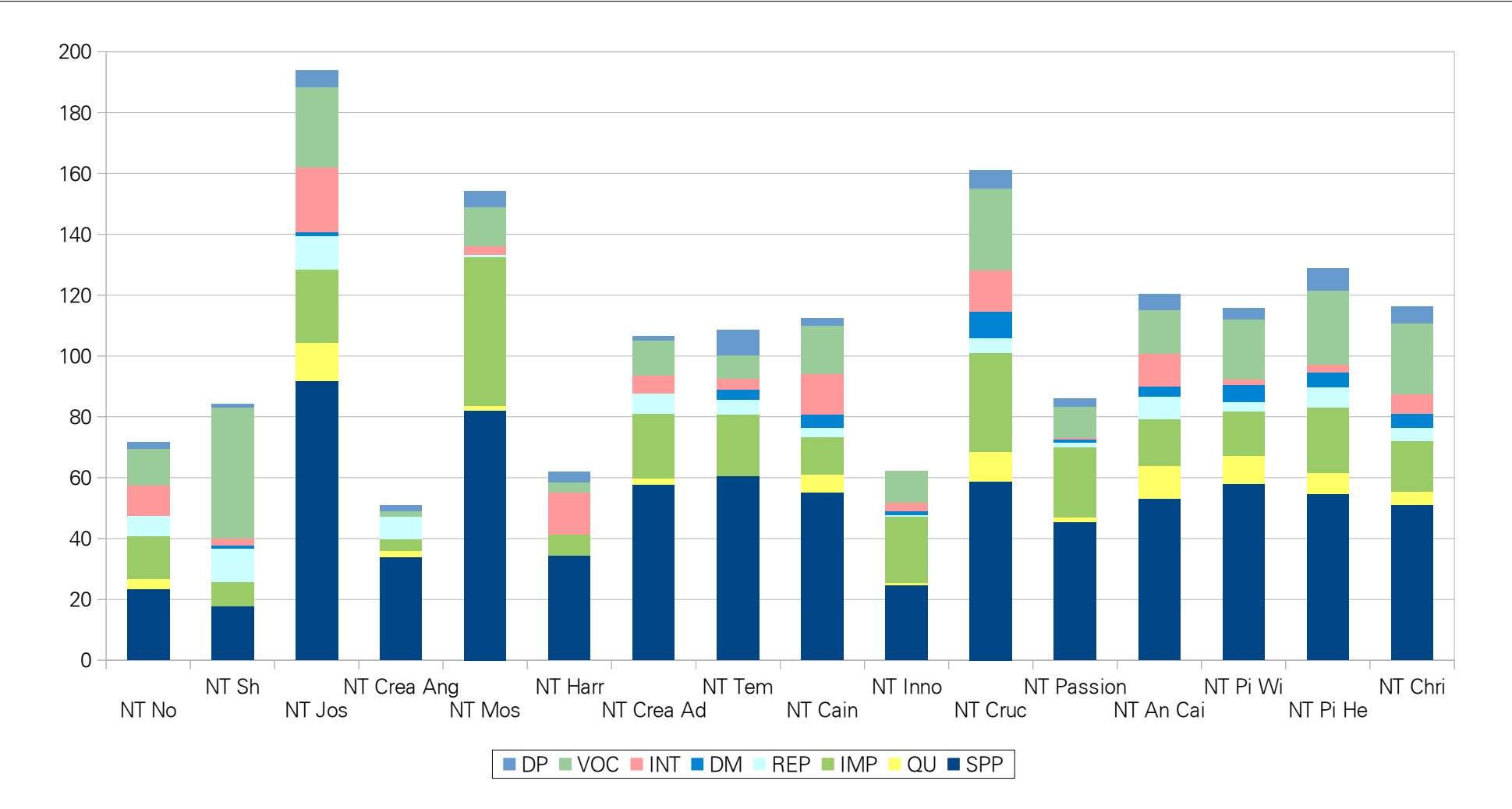
Figure 19: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in the N-Town control groups
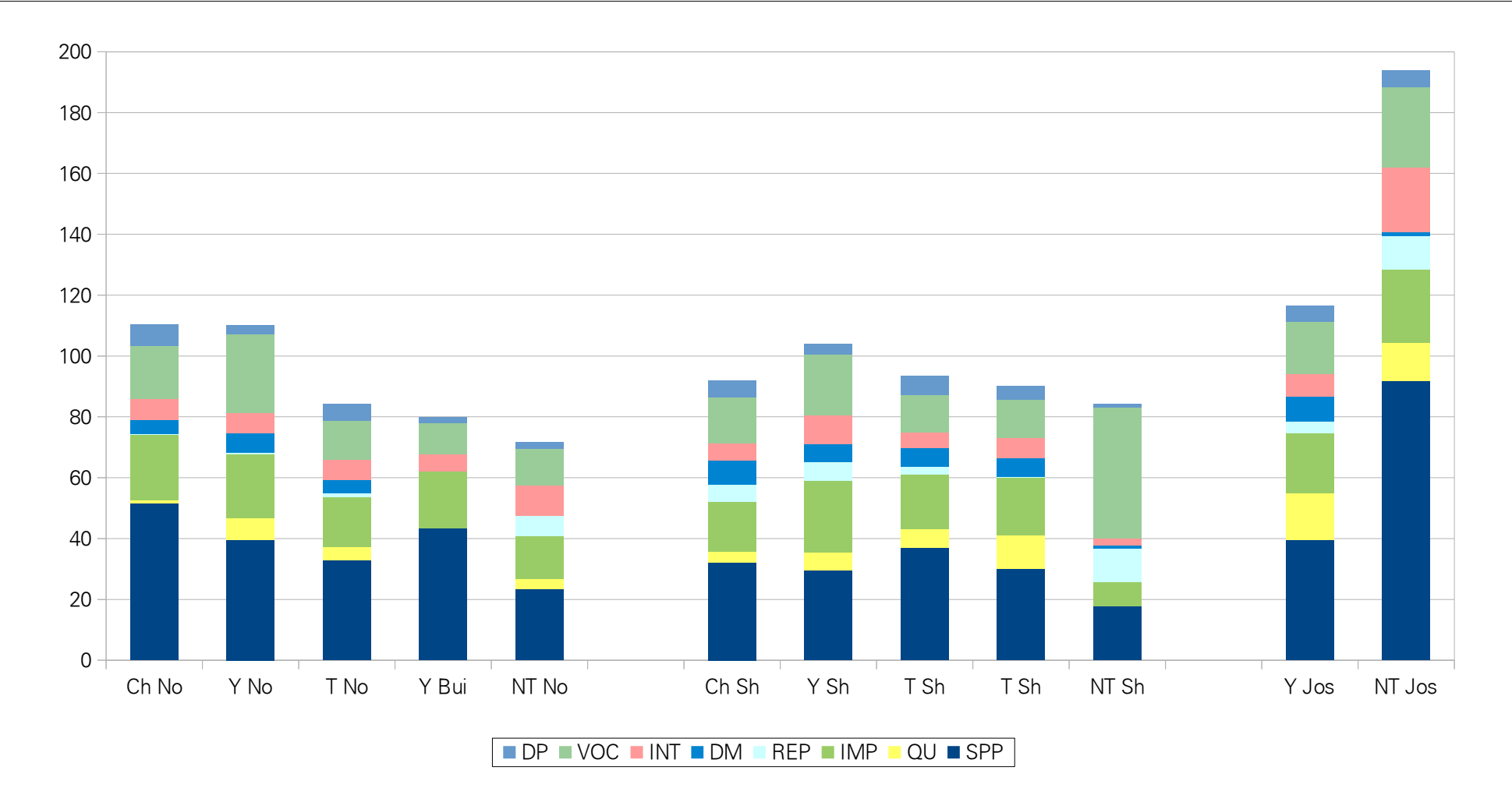
Figure 20: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in *Group I*, compared with the corresponding N-Town play texts
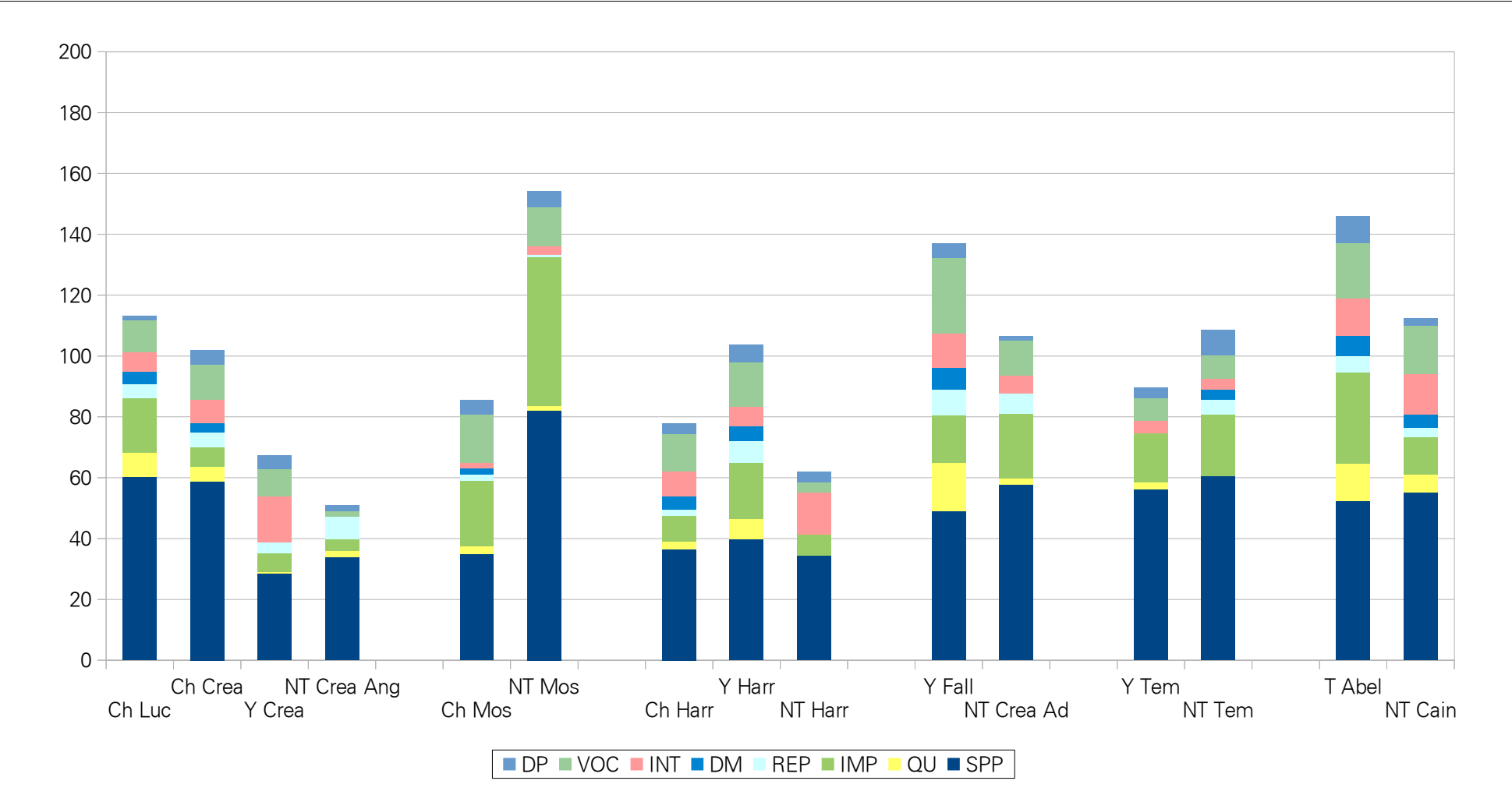
Figure 21: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in *Group II*, compared with the corresponding N-Town play texts
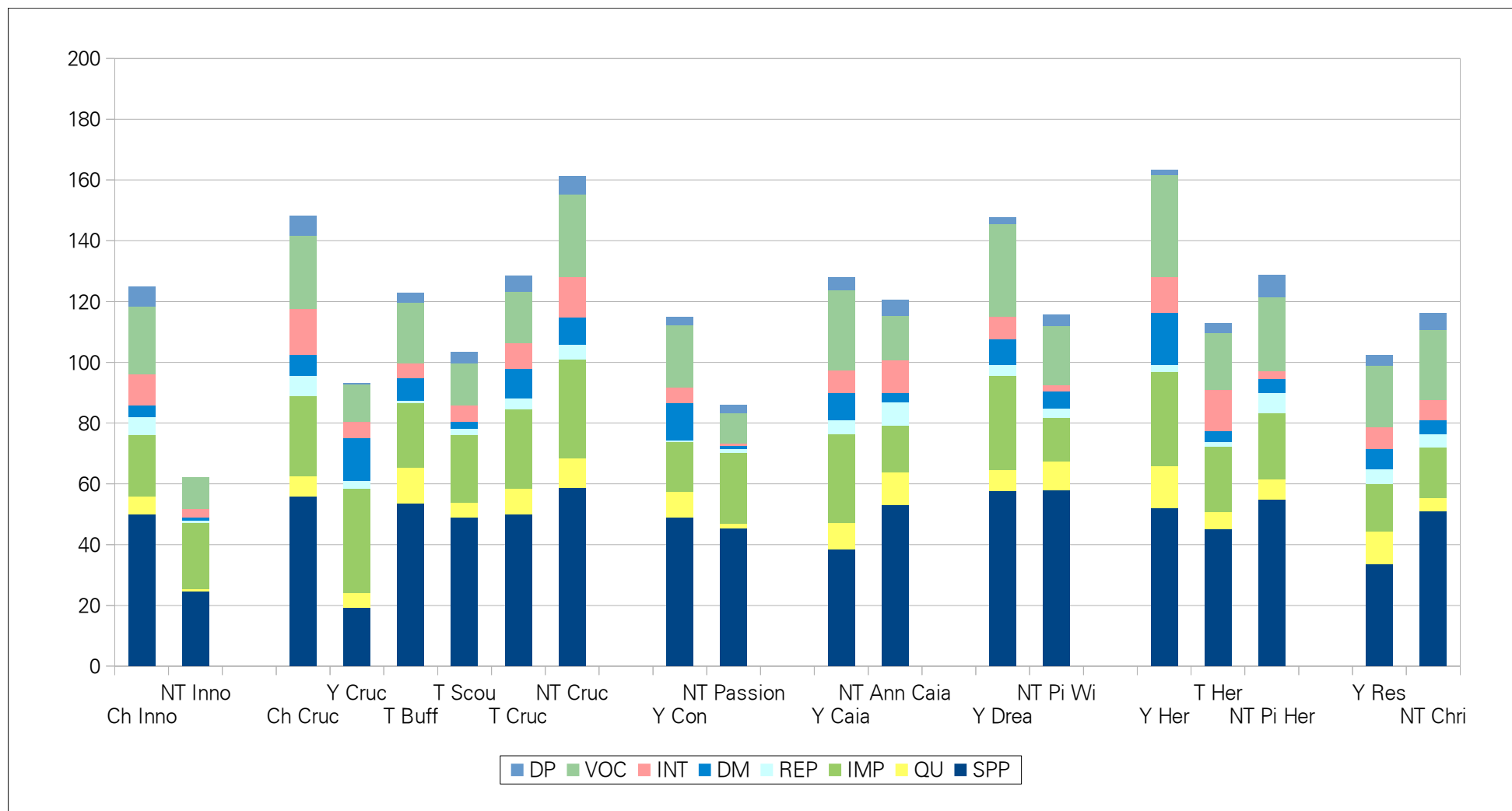
Figure 22: The relative frequency of speech-like linguistic features in *Group III*, compared with the corresponding N-Town play texts
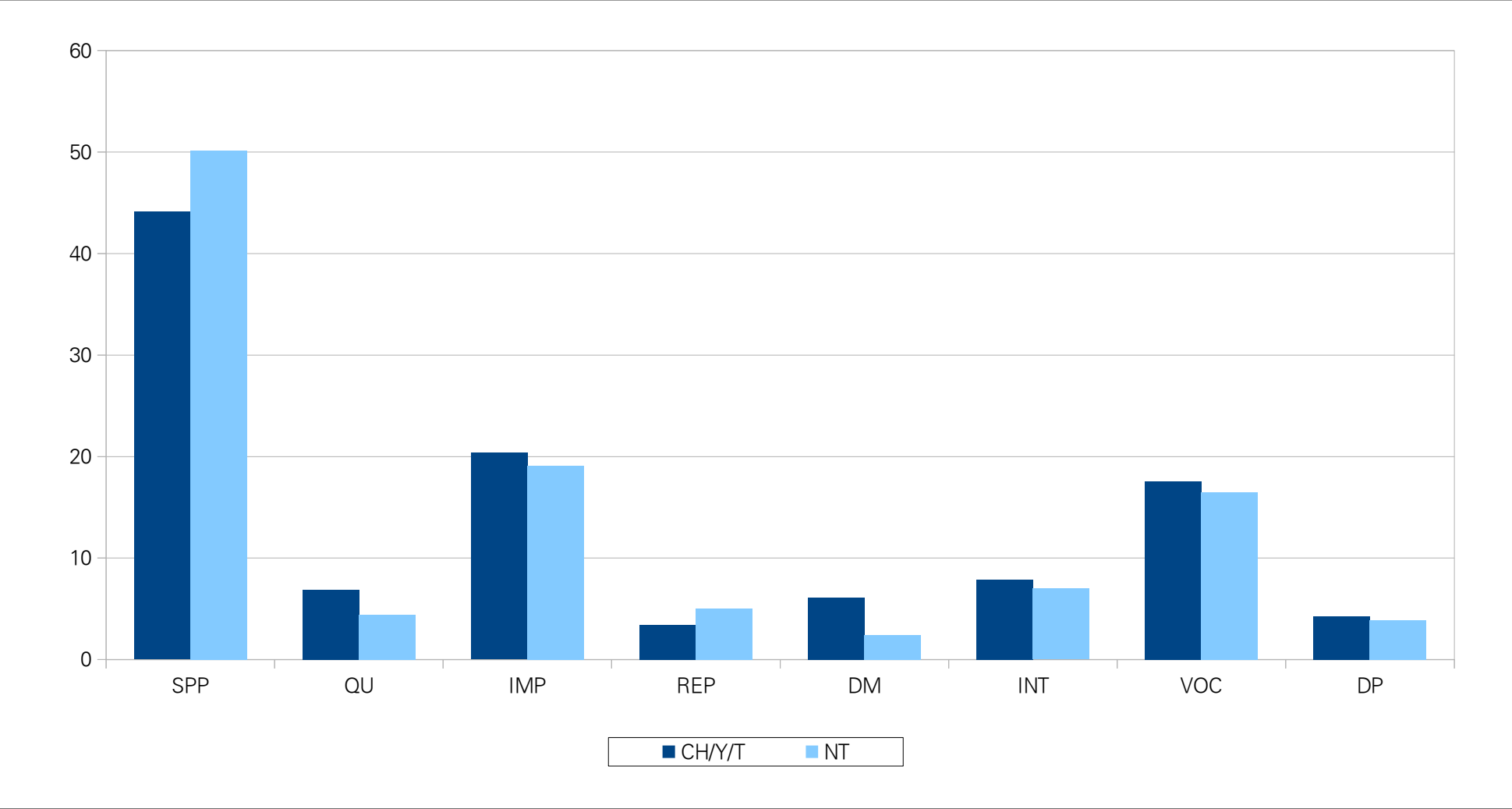
Figure 23: The average relative frequency of individual speech-like linguistic features in *Group I-III*, compared with the N-Town play texts

My investigation clearly shows that in a sample of comparatively restricted size and from such a distant period, the 'orality' of the material is not quantifiable, i.e. can be counted on the basis of certain linguistic parameters. Accordingly, if a play text on the whole appears to contain fewer speech-like characteristics than other texts from the sample (see *Figure 16–21* above), this does not automatically suggest that it lacks passages in which speech-like features co-occur in significant proportion. The mixture of jest and earnest in our play texts entails that comic, more conceptually oral parts are contrasted against more formal, conceptually written passages. For example, the *Prima Pastorum* seems to divide into two halves: the comedy of the argument over the imaginary sheep and the grotesque feast of the 'secular' half of the play is followed by the more serious playing-out of the gospel account of the annunciation of the shepherds and their adoration of the Infant Christ. Hence, it does not suffice to examine the frequencies of 'speech-like' linguistic features. The quantitative evidence has to be supplemented by a qualitative account which focuses on a pragmatic, discourse-analytic analysis. I will here briefly recapitulate the results for the investigated elements.

My numbers for second-person pronouns (average relative frequency: 44.12) correspond almost exactly to Culpeper and Kytö's 2000a findings on Early Modern English comedies (average relative frequency: 44.30). Particularly interesting was the analysis of $T/V$ forms, reflecting the dynamics of personal relationships in the texts. The playwrights seem to have drawn on sociolinguistic principles and rules that are well known to the members of the audience. For example, conforming to the theory of power semantics, social subordinates address their superiors with $V$ and receive $T$, and vice versa. In some passages, the relationship balance changes in that the relatively fixed element of social status becomes less significant; conversely, the more flexible interactional relations gain importance. In fact, it was at this level of specificity that some of the most noteworthy results of the analysis came to the fore, for instance, the switching between $V$ and $T$ of the wives towards their husbands in the Noah plays. Such switches in pronoun usage regularly correlate with critical points in the plot, and may therefore reveal the 'plannedness' of the pieces. Further, the ratio of pronouns in our sample is clearly in favour of $T$ which, according to evidence from non-literary sources, testifies to their distance from contemporary usage which already showed a clear tendency towards $V$.

Structurally, the questions from the sample are typical of spoken discourse. Functionally, they also resemble their real-life correlates in that they fall along a continuum from external information-seeking to rhetorical questions. But the number of questions in the play texts is not only lower than in Culpeper and Kytö's Early Modern English study (2000a) (average relative frequency: 6.89 vs. 13.19) but also notably lower than in modern conversation (see Biber et al. 1999: 211f.). Further, I have observed a remarkably different distribution of questions than in

'authentic' spoken interaction, with the rhetorical question as the quantitatively predominant form. The sample contains hardly any questions of the meta-dialogical or relational type, while a number of external questions which would be redundant in 'real' conversation are included in the play texts to mark authorial emphasis, focus on essential points in the plot or enhance audience involvement. The external type is particularly interesting in connection with the legal and religious registers, which are essential to the didactic, instructive aims of the play texts. Some dialogues bear a close resemblance to Early Modern English courtroom discourse, for instance the legal manoeuvrings of Annas and Caiaphas in their discussions with Pilate, where a structure of alternating accusations and denials seems intended to create the maximum conflict.

The speech-like category more abundantly displayed in the core sample were directive speech acts, conveying different degrees of illocutionary force. Most of the imperative sentences denote impositive speech acts like commands, orders and requests which are generally felt to threaten the addressee's negative face in modern conversation. In present-day spoken interaction, more indirect, less face-threatening forms (e.g. interrogative requests) are employed to minimise impositions on the addressee. Although such indirect speech acts are possible in the sample, depending on the power relations between the interlocutors, direct requests (also in combination with explicit and hedged performatives) are clearly in the majority. As it is likely that Middle English can still be regarded as a 'positively oriented politeness culture' (see also Archer 2010: 386), a high frequency of direct requests does not necessarily militate against a 'realistic' representation of spoken language use. Moreover, the *let*-constructions in medieval drama seem similar to their present-day equivalents, and both intimates of high and low status employ them so as to emphasise cooperation.

Lexical repetition was very poorly represented in the sample (see *Figure 22* above). After some remarks about self-repetition, I focused on dialogic repetition where previous utterances are at least partially repeated or re-elaborated. The most frequent function of dialogic repetition, accounting for 105 instances (53% of the total), involves a positive reply to the addressee's statement (acknowledgement, speaker involvement, agreement, etc.). The few other cases that we find in the sample convey surprise/incredulity, disagreement/contradiction, requests for confirmation, irony or mock imitation. Their functional distribution resembles taxonomies of dialogic repetition in present-day colloquial English (Norrick 1987, Bazzanella 1993 and Perrin et al. 2003). Similar to modern conversation, the texts contain some recapitulatory echo questions which repeat what has just been said as a way of expressing surprise/disbelief or having its content confirmed. But whereas dialogic repetition in face-to-face conversation is primarily a means to interact and align oneself with the interlocutor, the cases in the sample (also) serve dramatic purposes, especially when speakers repeat parts of previous turns to highlight particular

messages or plot-points. In that sense, play texts tend to be "focused on message-oriented discourse rather than listener-oriented functions" (see Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 7).

Discourse markers were the only speech-like feature that was substantially more frequent in the sample than in the control groups from the N-Town collection (see *Figure 22* above). However, one should note that the number of items found in the data is still small. The rich array of their interactional functions in our texts (acceptance/acknowledgement, positive and negative politeness, disagreement, etc.) are not very different from present-day uses. Not unlike today's discourse markers, some of the identified cases showed ambiguity between different functions. Their assignment to one functional category depended on the immediate context, and therefore much remains ambiguous, revealing that it is impossible to reach definitive results. In contrast to spoken interaction, the phatic function of discourse markers, reflected in markers such as *yea* as a backchannelling device, is very rare in Middle English drama, "as the dialogue simply does not imitate real speech at this level" (Støle 2012: 408f.). Neither are there any hesitators in Middle English play texts. When studying discourse markers in historical texts, it is also important to consider that they may not be indicators of actual spoken language. It is possible that discourse markers were deliberately inserted in the texts to make them sound more speech-like.

Similar remarks can be made about interjections; they are short, often monosyllabic, and can thus be quite easily integrated as a speech-imitative device. In Section 4.4.1, hundreds of items were sampled that fulfilled primarily an emotive-expressive function, which is one of the primary functions of this word class in spoken interaction. Some forms, however, are overt signals of the texts' written origin as they are used primarily to point up character traits and to enhance the comic potential of a scene. In many cases, they structure discourse and mark turn-taking, create suspense, signal turning-points in the plot or indicate irony and parody. Christian values and their reversal are especially marked in the oaths and taboo expletives from the sample. Forms of swearing in the cycle plays range from pious religious invocations to blasphemous references to the crucifixion, the devil and *Mahound*. Swearwords, in general, provide a good index to the piety of the characters. In sum, the cycles cover a number of formulaic wordings which carry great affective load and may have been part of everyday Middle English lexis.

A small number of attitudinal vocatives, particularly abusive forms of address, such as *thēf, fēlau(e), ladde* and *knāve*, seem to have been prototypical in the medieval period and are still in use today, even if some of them underwent semantic changes. Their primary function was the clarification of character relations; for instance, the huge number of honorifics in *Group III* are mostly linked to politeness strategies.

The low frequency of demonstrative pronouns (average relative frequency: 4.24) corresponds to Culpeper and Kytö's 2000a results (average relative frequency: 5.43). Deictic

markers "indicate gesturally the objects of the simultaneous verbal discourse" (Elam 1980: 45), and there is a marked referential immediacy in a few scenes, where references to objects in the form of demonstrative pronouns can only be understood by considering the context of the situation shared by speaker and audience. Characteristic of these scenes is the interaction and cooperation of the characters. The majority of demonstrative pronouns does, however, primarily enhance textual cohesion, supplying reference back and forward within a piece of discourse.

The investigated speech-like dimensions, interactivity, sharedness and function, are intertwined in several ways. *Figure 23* integrates the speech-like linguistic features into the three dimensions according to the results of my empirical study. Most poignant in my play texts is the expressive function, which has been shown to be crucial in Middle English drama because of their emotional appeal to the audience – in accordance with the movement of affective piety. The interactive function is especially relevant to question-answer adjacency pairs and imperative-compliance sequences, but the sample contains a particularly high number of rhetorical questions indicating chiefly the speaker's stance. Features of personal affect, on the other hand, occasionally involve the consideration of interpersonal relationships (Diller 1992: 216). (Attitudinal) vocatives, for instance, undoubtedly have an expressive function, but they also provide insights into the relations between interlocutors. Demonstrative pronouns and other deictic expressions contribute to conveying a 'point of view' or 'personal affect', but they have also proved relevant to the depiction of interpersonal relations. The empirical analysis has revealed that the dimensions 'interactivity' and 'function', in particular, overlap considerably in the play texts, as illustrated in *Figure 23*.
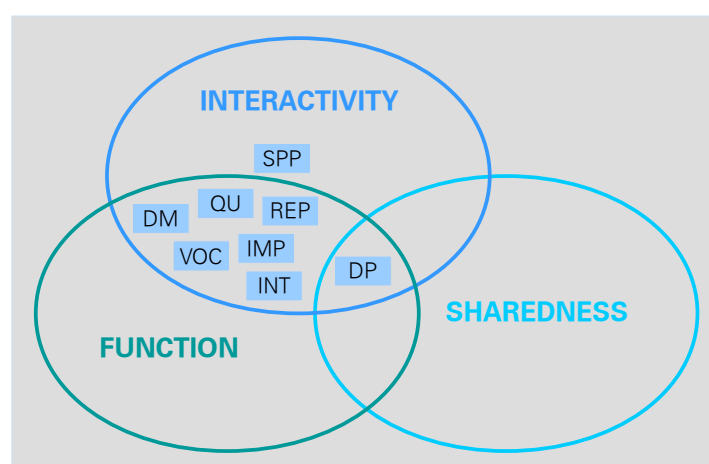


Figure 24: The mystery plays' speech-like dimensions and associated speech-like linguistic features (cf. Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 92)

The extent to which various elements of 'communicative immediacy' combine to represent a certain communicative effect, i.e. to construct power dynamics and speaker stance (cf. Mazzon 2009: 198), can be observed in the three extracts from the Introduction which will be briefly recalled here:

(1)  **Secundus Pastor**. […] How, gyb, goode morne / wheder goys thou? / Thou goys ouer the corne / gyb, I say, how!
'[…] How, Gib, good morning, where are you going? You go over the grain, Gib, I say, how!'

**Primus Pastor**. Who is that? John horne / I make god a vowe! / I say not in skorne / thom, how farys thou? [Towneley 12.82-5]
'Who is that? John Horn, I make a vow to God! I say not in scorn, then, how are you?'

(2)  **Primus Miles**. Dame, abyde, and lett mee see / a knave-child if that yt bee. / The kinge hase commanded me / all such for to areste.
'Dame, wait, and let me see a male child if that it be. The king has commanded me to capture all such (children).'

**Prima Mulier**. Arest? Ribott, for-thee / thou lyes, by my lewtye. / Therfore I read fast that thou flee / and lett mee have my peace.
'Capture? Rogue, you lie, by my faith. Therefore I advise that you flee and let me have my peace.'

**Secundus Mulier**. Saye, rotten hunter with thy gode, / stytton stallon, styck-tode. [Chester 10.305-314]
'Ah, wicked robber with your goad, lecherous stallion, toad-stabber!'

(3)  **Noe**. […] All that has ban or bloode / Sall be ouere flowed with the floode.
'[…] All that has bone or blood shall be overflowed by the flood.'

**Uxor**. In faithe, the were als goode / To late me go my gatte. / We! Owte! Herrowe!
'In faith, you may as well let me go my way. Ah! Out! Help!'

**Noe**. What now, what cheere?
'What now? What's the matter?'

**Uxor**. I will no nare for no-kynnes nede. [York 9.97-103]
'I will go no nearer at any need.'

My study revealed that features of communicative immediacy cluster in particular episodes throughout the cycles. The three stretches of dialogue, for example, contain a number of speech-like features and have therefore been quoted in several sections of my empirical chapter. It is worth reiterating at this juncture that dramatic dialogue may incorporate linguistic characteristics of immediacy for various reasons, including the wish to reach and appeal to less educated audience members (see Oesterreicher's (1997: 203f.) 'writing subjected to 'simple' discourse traditions'). Beyond the didactic intents, the playwrights often seek to entertain, and dialogues are often manipulated for purposes of characterisation and/or humour. In quote (3) above, Uxor's cry *We! Owte! Herrowe!* may have been included in the text primarily to point up her character and to enhance the comic effect of the scene rather than imitate colloquial speech. As far as I can conjecture from the empirical analysis, the non-biblical, farcical scenes like the Noah episodes, where playwrights were uninhibited by considerations of *decorum*, mainly contain colloquialisms which were – at least partly – integrated deliberately to make the scenes sound more speech-like. In a similar way, the scenes derived from the expansion of biblical material, such as the comic shepherds' episodes, reveal features and constructions which seem to be based on spoken interaction. Thus, we cannot agree with Diller (1973: 223) who has claimed that dramatic dialogue does not show the interpersonal function of language, since the conversation between the shepherds above (1) is an example of exactly this function (see Mazzon 2009: 122, footnote 3). It should be noted that the cycle plays' main sources – the liturgy, the Old Testament, the gospels, apocrypha – are highly dialogic at some points, and not merely descriptive and narrative (Mazzon 2009: 142). My evidence suggests that some linguistic material from the play texts might have been taken over directly from the language of immediacy (see Oesterreicher's (1997: 205f.) 'simulated orality'). Although fictional, theatrical or aesthetic constraints must certainly have influenced the production of the mystery plays, some effort seems to have been put into representing plausible dialogue. It is, of course, impossible to know to what extent the author(s) of the mystery cycle consciously attempted to produce an imitation of 'real' conversation.

What is certain is that the effect of naturalness did not appear naturally, but could be achieved only by great skill (Spearing [2]1990: 158). The effect of 'lifelikeness' in the comic episodes, then, is one that is created by the playwrights through syntax, lexical choices, turn-taking strategies, etc. The speech-like features only seem real, when in fact they were *selected* as speech-mimetic and therefore the role of literary convention is present to some degree (see also Woolf 1980: 106). In a circular way, then, while the mystery 'comedies' contain constructed representations of informal spoken language, the very fact that it is a construction makes it more literary and less speech-like (cf. Moore (2016) on Chaucer's fabliaux).

My qualitative analysis suggests that some features contribute to the distinct purposes of the plays rather than "simply contributing a speech-like aspect, and, from the opposite point of view, that genres themselves are more complex and multi-dimensional than simple designation of speech-like qualities to them allows" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 100). What I have found is that the texts from my sample are complex mixtures of the language of immediacy and the language of distance, combining speech-like and non-speech-like features in interesting ways. While the terms *dame* and *ribot* in dialogue excerpt (2) may have been based on 'real' contemporary usage, *stytton stallon* and *styck-tode* are most probably inventions of the playwright(s). Whatever the combination of features looks like, dramatic language will always be "un compromis entre deux 'langages', l'écrit et le dit" ('a compromise between two 'languages', the written and the spoken'; Larthomas 1972: 21ff.). Even if they were meant to be spoken in front of an audience, the exchanges reported in my empirical chapter cannot be assimilated to tokens of real face-to-face interaction. It should always be borne in mind that the dialogues are unlike speech in their form; first of all, Middle English speakers did not typically speak in rhymed couplets. Applying Culpeper and Kytö's terminology, our selected play texts may be speech-purposed and, at least partly, speech-like, but they do not mirror authentic spoken dialogue: "The essential point is that we have to accept that it is always a matter of *simulation*" (Oesterreicher 1997: 205).

# 5 Final remarks

The object of the present study has been to provide new insights into the linguistic representation of communicative immediacy in the comic mystery plays. Although drama (comedy), which is based on fictional representations of dialogues, has long been regarded as a speech-related text type, there have thus far been only a few studies on medieval play texts as a source of information on past linguistic resources and conversational dynamics. The main concern of past studies on the Middle English mystery cycles has been literary criticism rather than language (apart from hypotheses about dating and geographical origin), and it was Mazzon (2009) who first shed light on the special dynamics of dialogic interaction in a medieval play collection.

In order to determine whether the comic mystery plays were conceived in a conceptually oral style, Chapter 3 examined the influence of sociocultural and/or stylistic guidelines for medieval comic drama. I identified three main factors which may have encouraged the presence of communicative immediacy in the play texts: 1) the Fourth Lateran Council, which promoted vernacular preaching and religious instruction for the laity, 2) the movement of affective piety, which emphasised emotional identification with the sufferings of Christ, 3) the Christian *sermo humilis*, a simple style which sought to make the sublime message of Scripture accessible to the humble (combined with anachronistic elements which allow characters, scenes and settings of the past to be transferred to the immediacy of the medieval present).

Chapter 4 examined how much communicative immediacy is contained in the cycle plays and in which configuration it may appear. For my analysis, I arranged the comic mystery plays from the Chester, York and Towneley collection into three groups, on the basis of the major features of the medieval *comoedia*. Overall, my core sample contained 30 play texts which, in spite of their originating from different regions and periods, display sufficient thematic, formal and functional coherence to make it possible to analyse them together. Another sixteen texts from the N-Town collection were examined in terms of a control group to the core sample. A major objective of the present study was to detect speech-like features, but with the materials themselves rather than any specific list or theory as a starting point. The possible range of linguistic exponents of communicative immediacy is of course very broad; my 'conversational diagnostics' included second-person pronouns, questions, imperatives, lexical repetitions, turn-initial discourse markers, single-word expressive features (interjections, vocatives) and demonstrative pronouns. My quantitative evidence revealed that second-person pronouns, imperatives and vocatives appeared in considerable numbers, while questions, lexical repetition, interjections, discourse markers and demonstrative pronouns were poorly represented in the sample, which made a supplementary qualitative analysis indispensable.

The play texts incorporate or lack different speech-like features for different reasons. On the basis of the evidence, I suggest that the main reasons pointing towards the pole of communicative immediacy was the dramatists' wish to create naturalness and simplicity or even an illusion of 'spokenness' in order to make the texts accessible and comprehensible for 'everyman' as well as the intention to make (non-)biblical material exciting and appealing for the purposes of performance, so as to involve and hold the attention of the audience. The main reason pointing towards the pole of communicative distance was the playwrights' intention to communicate information about character and plot, in order to instruct the audience in religious doctrine. My analysis showed that the linguistic strategies employed by the dramatists were based on the conventions of the speech community but at the same time context-sensitive and purposive in view of the play texts' didactic, instructive aims. The hybrid nature of the mystery cycles, which are based primarily on religious sources and doctrine but deeply involved in the secular life of the lay people in the cities, may have created the intriguing mixture of communicative immediacy and distance.

I hope to have shown in my study that some analytical tools of modern pragmatics can indeed be applied to Middle English religious drama, and therefore can be regarded as 'universal' in some sense. However, I have stressed at various points that drawing on the categories and principles gained from modern pragmatic studies is also fraught with difficulties, for example as concerns (im)politeness strategies, which are difficult to interpret and evaluate as such because of the absence of a 'default politeness' paradigm (cf. Mazzon 2009: 195).

This study is also meant to contribute to the debate on 'realism' in Middle English play texts, with the aim not only to determine to what extent the comic texts of the mystery cycles actually exhibit characteristics of communicative immediacy, but also to provide insights into the combined use of several features to construct interactional stance in dialogue. It is clear that the play texts should not be regarded as a direct representation of 'real' spoken interaction. My study may not tell us directly how people communicated in Middle English, but it is interesting in itself to study how Middle English authors chose to represent dialogues. The mystery cycles contain data that can be valuable objects of study in their own right, and thus provide a rich source of material not only for literary critics. I hope that scholars of historical linguistics can benefit from my attempt to align the close reading of the mystery play texts with recent developments in English historical linguistics, suggesting some ways forward for this kind of research.

This is no comprehensive study; there is room for further scholarly research concerning the features of 'communicative immediacy', as I could only touch upon eight characteristics. There are some linguistic elements that were almost completely neglected in the present thesis (one significant feature are performative verbs, which deserve further attention in the context of the

paralleling of speech and action in medieval drama), or were not discussed thoroughly enough (for instance some personal stance markers which are common in conversation: speech act verbs, adverbials or modality markers – also in connection with *T/V*. Further analyses may adress the specific strategies for the involvement and guidance of the audience. Several plays in my sample contain language acts directed at the audience, which is expectable given the didactic purpose of mystery cycles. It is a moot point whether the communication strategies used between characters are comparable to the communication strategies employed on the superordinate level of discourse, i.e. between the playwright(s) and the audience, as Mazzon's (2009: Chapt. 6) analysis of the N-Town collection indicates.

Another direction looks promising for analysis, and could form an interesting object of analysis for further studies. Precisely because the results for the N-Town collection turned out to be similar to the other play cycles, it would be interesting to extend the analysis to the full range of popular vernacular plays from the Middle Ages. To do this, the sample needs to be extended to the mystery plays from the continent. Happé (2004: 14) has noted that the dramatic cycles appear at approximately the same time in history, and arise from sociocultural conditions which transcend national boundaries. The interrelations between the texts, according to Happé (2004: 14), occasionally involved taking over foreign plays, and copying verbatim. A linguistic study could reveal which features are similar and which features can be traced back to differing requirements in other countries. A comparison with other Middle English text types would also be enlightening. It should be intriguing to see whether their linguistic properties (in)validate my results about communicative immediacy in medieval religious drama.

I hope that in spite of its limitations this thesis can be useful to provide new insights into the study of orality in the Middle English mystery plays. What should be remembered is that authors might strive to create authentic dramatic dialogue but they will never succeed in providing a completely accurate representation of spoken discourse. There is an inherent, unavoidable discrepancy – wider or smaller, but never disappearing completely – between spoken discourse, especially in spontaneous everyday conversation, and even the most naturalistic types of fictional dialogue.

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# 7 List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *De Doctr. Christ.* | *De Doctrina Christiana* |
| DM | discourse markers |
| DP | demonstrative pronouns |
| *Etym.* | *Etymologiae* |
| FTA | face-threatening act |
| IMP | imperatives |
| *Inst. Orat.* | *Institutio Oratoria* |
| INT | interjections |
| *Poet.* | *Poetics* |
| PP | *Prima Pastorum* |
| QU | questions |
| REP | repetition |
| *Rhet.* | *Rhetoric* |
| *Rhet. Her.* | *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* |
| SP | *Secunda Pastorum* |
| SPP | second-person pronouns |
| VOC | vocatives |
| VUL | The Latin Vulgate |
| WYC | Wycliffe Bible |

# 8 List of tables

# 9 List of figures