MARTHA TUCK ROZETT

The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy

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TITLE PAGE: DETAIL OF AN ILLUSTRATION FROM THE STAGING OF
TITUS ANDRONICUS

For my parents

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Dramatic tragedy emerged suddenly in Elizabethan England. In the 1560s serious drama was still primarily religious and designed to serve didactic ends; by the end of the 1580s, the transition to an essentially secular, commercial drama had occurred. How and why tragedy came into being at this time and in this place remains a subject of energetic scholarly debate, debate which frequently reveals as much about our attitudes toward literature as it does about Elizabethan tragedy itself. This book joins the debate in at least two ways. From one perspective, it is about the evolution of the tragic protagonist, and his relationship with the Elizabethan audience. This character's increasing ability to summon up complex and ambivalent feelings in the spectator resulted from (although it also helped bring about) the transformation of an essentially religious dramatic tradition into a secular one. From another perspective, this book is about the written and oral material, most of it overtly didactic, that provided the playwrights with so many of their character types, dramatic structures, themes, and rhetorical strategies. In looking at these sources, I am not much interested in their influence on the playwright's personal artistic development.[1] Rather, I am interested in how the

[1] Because my approach to the sources places greater emphasis on the audience's expectations than on the process of composition, there will be few references in this book to the traditional source studies which have helped scholars to understand the playwrights' relationships to their literary predecessors. My approach has instead been influenced by such works as C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* and Robert Weimann's *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, and has benefited from the approaches represented in the volume of *Renaissance Drama* devoted to Dramatic Antecedents (N.S. VI, 1973). In his preface to this volume, Alan C. Dessen observes that "For many years the study of Renaissance Drama was largely the study of dramatic sources, influences, and antecedents," but that "inevitably the pendulum swung" and the evolutionary models were challenged as misleading or inadequate. The essays Dessen has collected all reexamine questions of influence, many of them

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playwrights reacted to their audience's expectations, and in how these expectations were at least partly determined by the preoccupations of the age. To what extent were the audience's responses to a play shaped by their familiarity with morality plays, sermons, tracts, and histories, or, perhaps more accurately, by the kinds of ideas and attitudes expressed in such works? To what extent did those responses lead to unspoken agreements between playwrights and audiences about ways of presenting characters? And to what extent did conventions of characterization depend upon attitudes about the nature of man's relationship with God or the concepts of good and evil as manifested in human behavior? To answer questions such as these, I plan to reconstruct one set of assumptions which the Elizabethan audience brought to the theatre and hypothesize about its effect on the emerging shape of tragedy. Broadly defined, these assumptions represent a range of culturally determined attitudes toward the self in relation to others; more specifically, they originate in the Calvinist doctrine of election.

The doctrine that God has predestined some persons to salvation and some to reprobation is deeply rooted in the Pauline tradition, as set forth in the epistle to the Romans. Emphasized by St. Augustine and again by Calvin, the doctrine of election taught that all men and women are by nature sinners but that God's free gift of grace has conferred righteousness upon a chosen few, who would come to recognize the signs of election in themselves through a process involving intense self-scrutiny, repentance, and gradual regeneration. The widespread influence of Calvin on sixteenth-century English Protestantism led to an adherence to the doctrine of election that transcended the political differences between the reformers and moderate Protestants. This is not to say that the Elizabethans were strict believers in absolute and unchangeable predestination; inherent in Elizabethan Calvinism, as I will

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with the expectations and demands of the audience in mind. Taken together, they form an important contribution to our sense of scholarly method in the field of Renaissance drama.

demonstrate in Chapter II, was a politic ambiguity on this score.[2]

At this point it may have become apparent that certain implicit premises lie behind my hypotheses about the emergence of tragedy. The first premise is that when literature is a commercial enterprise, as the Elizabethan drama was becoming during the period this book examines, it is carefully attuned to what its audience wants. However varied or heterogeneous in terms of class or social position, that audience was more "communal" than "random"; that is, it possessed what George Steiner calls a "mythology," the context of belief and conventions which the artist shares with his audience.[3] Some of our best clues to the way this audience helped shape the development of drama will thus be found in the groups or sub-genres of plays (the conqueror and revenge plays, for example) whose shared characteristics result from the audience's expressed preference for certain character types, situations, and theatrical techniques.

My second premise is that popular art forms always address issues of current public interest and debate in one way or another. They constitute one public forum among many, reflecting and commenting upon the dialogue of the time. This, of course, may be an aspect of popular art of which the artist is not wholly conscious, for the presence of topical issues in the text need not be intentional. Rather, it may result from an influence so subtle and oblique that neither playwright nor audience recognizes it at the time. For these topical issues to be religious in origin, in a time of energetic religious controversy, seems natural and indeed, inevitable.[4]

[2] On the widespread adherence among Elizabethan Protestants to the doctrine of election see Charles H. and Katherine George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation: 1570-1640* (Princeton, 1961). The Georges argue that it is very hard to distinguish "Anglicans" from "Puritans" and that all English Protestants before the period dominated by Archbishop Laud were essentially Calvinists (p. 71).

[3] The terms "communal" and "random" belong to Bernard Beckerman, whose *Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis* (New York, 1970) contains a useful theoretical analysis of the relationship between audience and play.

[4] For a more general theory of the presence of topical moral issues in pop-

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My third premise is that whenever plot and character play a primary role in narrative or dramatic literature, the reader or spectator enters into a special kind of relationship with the protagonist. We relate differently to the protagonist than to other characters, and this relationship fulfills a deeply rooted need of some kind. Young children, in my experience, prefer stories with clearly defined protagonists to those without them. So, I suspect, do adult audiences, although our ability to adjust to the absence of a protagonist is greater than a child's. When literature is performed rather than read, this relationship is more complex yet also more direct, for the actor's physical presence gives his role a semblance of "reality." Yet because the actor does assume "a local habitation and a name," he is also clearly different, or separate, from the spectator. For the Elizabethans, as for subsequent generations of audiences, this special relationship involves an element of engagement, that identification or fellow-feeling with and emotional attachment to the protagonist which the spectator feels during part or all of the play. It also involves a certain amount of detachment, the ability to judge the protagonist dispassionately and critically from a remove, which may at times become outright repudiation, particularly when to identify would implicate the spectator in a dangerous rebellion against accepted norms.

In the chapters to come, I shall be proposing a dialectical framework within which to describe the sixteenth-century spectator's relationship with the protagonist. The Elizabethan Protestants' conviction that all mankind is divided into the

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ular drama, see J.S.R. Goodlad, *A Sociology of Popular Drama* (London, 1971). Goodlad proposes the following theory: that popular drama in any age deals with "the area of social living in which members of a community find it most difficult to comply with the moral requirements necessary for the survival of the prevailing social structure" (p. 9). Arguing for a topical approach to the drama which preceded the emergence of Elizabethan tragedy, David Bevington asserts that "during the formative midcentury years, religious politics was virtually the whole substance of drama. . . ." *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to the Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 3. As Bevington demonstrates, this tradition of topical commentary played an important role in the development of secular drama.

saved and the damned reveals a fundamental dualism in their way of thinking, which is significantly different from our twentieth-century relativism. We employ a multiplicity of categories to define another human being: ethnic or religious background, political leanings, economic status, place of origin, level of intelligence or education, professional or avocational interests. For the Elizabethans these factors may have been of interest, but there were only two categories that truly mattered, and any person, no matter how complex, ultimately belonged in one or the other. To judge another person, one applied a series of antitheses, for all traits could be reduced to goodness or wickedness. Moreover, every judgment invited an implicit comparison with one's own state of election. Self-definition in contrast to others was an ongoing process, ending only when one made one's final peace with God.

Although the extent to which the Elizabethans brought their religious convictions to the theatre will always remain debatable, the dualism I have just described went beyond consciously adhered to religious belief. Indeed, it was so basic to the Elizabethans' way of perceiving reality that it became a lens through which they viewed themselves and everyone around them. In discussing the earliest experiments in Elizabethan tragedy, I plan to show how the playwrights used this dualism to direct their audience's response, and how the inclination to divide people into the saved and the damned gradually yielded to the discovery that more complex discriminations were needed.[5] In proposing the paradigms of saved

[5] The influence of Puritanism on the emergence of Elizabethan tragedy has received surprising little attention from scholars. Notable exceptions are Alfred Harbage, who observed in *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952; rpt., Bloomington, Indiana, 1970), that "To an extent that has never been recognized, the popular drama at its height expressed many of the attitudes we associate with Puritanism, and its period of hardiest growth had been synchronous with that of the bitterest and most sustained attacks by the clergy" (p. 27), and Robert G. Hunter in *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens, Georgia, 1976), which starts from the premise "that a necessary (though far from sufficient) cause for the ability of the Elizabethans to write great tragedy was the impact on their minds of some of the more strik-

and damned as a context for looking once again at these oft-discussed plays, I have borne in mind that this is one possible approach among many—for just as there is no poetics of tragedy, but only tragedies, as Morris Weitz reminds us at the end of *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*, so there is no single explanation for the emergence of Elizabethan tragedy.[6]

Since I began working on this topic ten years ago, a growing number of scholars in the field of Renaissance drama have begun to look at the play at least partly in terms of audience response. Taken together, they constitute a critical approach heralded by Norman Rabkin in his collection of English Institute essays of 1968, entitled *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*. Rabkin saw in the essays he chose a new paradigm for the study of Renaissance drama, concerned with the play as it impinges upon the audience. His call for more work in this area was echoed by Robert Weimann, in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre*. Weimann spoke of the mutual influence of "the sensibilities and receptivity of the audience and the consciousness and artistry of the drama" and invited "increased awareness of the dialectics of this interdependence" on the part of critics and scholars.[7]

Rabkin's collection contained Stephen Booth's detailed study of the manipulation of audience response in *Hamlet*, which employs a critical approach subsequently used by E.A.J. Ho-

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ing ideas of the Protestant Reformation" (p. 1). George C. Herndl, in *The High Design: English Renaissance Tragedy and the Natural Law* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1970) looks at the influence of Calvin on Jacobean tragedy. Herndl uses Harbage's distinction between popular and coterie drama and is primarily concerned with the latter.

[6] Morris Weitz, *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Chicago, 1964), p. 307; cf. the recent caveats against comprehensive explanations by Richard Levin in *New Readings vs. Old Plays: Recent Trends in the Reinterpretation of English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago, 1979) and Norman Rabkin in *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago, 1981).

[7] Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form*, trans. and ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore, 1978), p. xii.

nigmann in *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies: The Dramatist's Manipulation of Response* and Larry Champion in *Shakespeare's Tragic Perspective*, among others. Other scholars who have recently recognized the importance of the audience in a variety of ways include Patrick Cruttwell in *The Shakespearean Moment*, Juliet Dusinberre in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, Alan Dessen in *The Viewer's Eye*, Michael Goldman in *The Actor's Freedom*, Terence Hawkes in *Shakespeare's Talking Animals*, G. K. Hunter in his preface to the essays collected as *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition*, Emrys Jones in *The Origins of Shakespeare*, Michael Manheim in *The Weak King Dilemma in The Shakespearean History Play*, Robert Y. Turner in *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship*, Judith Weil in *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet*, John Weld in *Meaning in Comedy*, Joel Altman in *The Tudor Play of Mind*, and, perhaps most obviously, Ann Cook in *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, the first full-scale study of the Elizabethan audience since Alfred Harbage's *Shakespeare's Audience*.

For all of these scholars, Stanley Fish's pronouncement in his influential essay "Literature in the Reader" might be said to be an operating assumption. Fish declared that "the information an utterance gives, its message, is a constituent of, but certainly not to be identified with, its meaning. It is the experience of an utterance . . . that *is* its meaning."[8] For Fish, as for most of the "reader-response" critics, the reader or spectator whose experience or response is the subject of criticism can belong to any time and place; little effort is made to distinguish between the original audience and subsequent ones. One objective of this book is to bring together an audience-oriented approach to literature and some of the extensive material on sixteenth-century religious attitudes available to the student of the period. In speculating about the original audience's images of themselves and how the plays were affected

[8] Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 393.

by those images, I hope to reconstruct an important element in the Elizabethan response to tragedy.

This kind of imaginative reconstruction is an essentially interdisciplinary undertaking and, as such, it has benefited greatly from the increasing willingness on the part of literary critics to look to other disciplines for fresh insights and approaches. Much of the best work on Elizabethan literature has resulted from the critic's creative use of the historian's tools and insights. The fields of linguistics and anthropology, more recently, have helped us to view drama as an integral part of its surrounding culture, linked to it through the verbal and visual symbol systems which the community shares and through which its essential values are expressed. As Stephen Greenblatt observes in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, the goal of cultural or anthropological literary criticism is to become a "poetics of culture," one which approaches literature in terms of "the social presence *to* the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world *in* the literary text" (my emphasis). Or, as Terence Hawkes puts it, drama is by definition "a communal art by whose means a community 'talks' to itself. A good play 'utters' (or 'outers') the inward and formative presuppositions of its audience, confronts it with, and so potentially resolves, its own essential and defining tensions."[9]

[9] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), p. 5; Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare's Talking Animals: Language and Drama in Society* (London, 1973), p. 1. An earlier statement of the influence of a writer's culture on the drama was formulated by Madeleine Doran, who observed in *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1954) that the culture supplies the writer with formal possibilities and formal restraints that affect the shape of the work by restricting his conscious choices (pp. 3-19). The relationship between the literary critic and the historian is explored in the opening chapter of Wilbur Sanders' *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1968). Sanders employs a synthesis of historical and literary methodologies to grasp the "interaction of the personal and social in the creative act," that is, the artist's "creative assimilation" of the "received ideas" his culture offers him. Hence Sanders proposes that an Elizabethan play constitutes *"prima facie* evidence for the state of mind of the audience to which it is addressed" (pp. 17, 40). I am also indebted to William

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The defining tensions in Elizabethan England were social, political, economic, and, above all, religious. M. C. Bradbrook once said that "in an age of religious tension, all social and political problems tend to formulate themselves in religious terms."[10] The doctrines of election and justification by faith provided the Elizabethans with a particularly apt framework for articulating the tensions of a highly mobile and rapidly changing society. Although Calvinism emphasized man's innate depravity, its corresponding emphasis on God's omnipotence led circuitously, as J.F.H. New observes, to an intensified conviction of human regeneracy. The result was a new dignity afforded to man as a consequence of the exaltation of God's power to grant faith.[11] The implications of Calvinism were as much social and political as they were theological. Lawrence Stone concludes in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* that the exaltation of private conscience associated with Puritanism "erected a second, independent, hierarchy of spiritual grace alongside that of temporal authority and dignity," and thus contributed to the aristocracy's deeply felt loss of power and influence.[12] As the aristocracy's confidence decreased, that of other classes increased, particularly the mercantile class for whom the doctrine of election provided the assertive self-confidence necessary for survival in a time of economic fluctuation. Because the only true sign of election was inner assurance, Calvinism inadvertently both demanded and encouraged a general self-confidence in people who had until then been told to believe that God rewards humility, subservience and resignation.[13]

Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism: Or, the Way to the New Jerusalem as Set Forth in Pulpit and Press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton, 1570-1643* (1938; rpt., New York, 1957).

[10] Muriel C. Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (London, 1962), p. 33.

[11] J.F.H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition 1558-1640* (Stanford, 1964), pp. 20-21.

[12] Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), p. 743.

[13] This is a recurring argument of Christopher Hill's in his many studies of the intellectual and economic implications of English Puritanism. In *Change*

But if the doctrine of election offered Elizabethans a way of dealing with the tension posed by social change, it also contributed to those tensions. Implicit in the believer's religious experience was the coexistence of an intense consciousness of natural sinfulness and a belief in the efficacy of God's grace; in Luther's words, "A Christian man is both righteous and a sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a childe of God. . . ."[14] This unresolved tension between two utterly opposed self-perceptions was, as scholars frequently observe, the central paradox of Protestantism, and it created an undercurrent of uncertainty and anxiety that could easily lead to despair in even the most confident member of the elect. Two recent studies of Protestant poetics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emphasize the extent to which this aspect of religious experience informed the structures of literature. Both Andrew Weiner and Barbara Lewalski show how the range of emotional states which marked the believer's inner life are reflected in the meditative poem, a form which provided the writer with a way of defining himself.[15]

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and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975), a collection of essays, Hill stresses the point that "the elect were those who felt themselves to be elect. . . ." The self-confidence that Calvinism encouraged coincided with and spurred the commercial successes that gave rise to capitalism and increased productivity ("Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism," pp. 92, 102). Hill's work grows out of the Weber-Tawney tradition, which links the emergence of a thriving capitalistic economy in seventeenth-century England with the confidence and self-assurance encouraged by the Puritan ethic. R. H. Tawney, for example, eloquently describes the Puritan as "a spiritual aristocrat" who "drew from his idealization of personal responsibility a theory of individual rights, which, secularized and generalized, was to be among the most potent explosives that the world has known. . . . For, since conduct and action, though availing nothing to attain the free gift of salvation, are a proof that the gift has been accorded, what is rejected as a means is resumed as a consequence, and the Puritan flings himself into practical activity with the daemonic energy of one who, all doubts allayed, is conscious that he is a sealed and chosen vessel." *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926; rpt., New York, 1947), p. 191.

[14] Quoted by Barbara K. Lewalski, in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, 1979), p. 17.

[15] Lewalski, and Andrew Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism* (Minneapolis, 1978).

The notion that fictional characters can also serve as exercises in self-definition is hardly new; in recent years, it has received increased support from the contributions of psychology to literary criticism. Applying psychoanalytic theory to textual analysis, Constance Brown Kuriyama shows how Marlowe's protagonists reflect the playwright's own search for an ideal self that would fully meet his own requirements, or society's, or both. In the "wavering treatment of the protagonist" which other Marlowe critics have also observed, Kuriyama sees signs of Marlowe's own confrontation with the choice between a negative and positive identity. She uses Erik Erikson's concept of "negative identity," a composite of roles perceived as dangerous and desirable embodying an "evil self."[16] In much the same way, Kai Erikson identifies one of the essential characteristics of Puritanism—that impulse to define oneself in terms of what one is not. This impulse, I shall argue, is at the heart of the Elizabethans' interpretation of the doctrine of election.[17] Stephen Greenblatt posits a similar process in his description of "self-fashioning" in the work of selected Renaissance writers: ". . . self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange or hostile. This threatening Other—heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Anti-Christ—must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed."[18] The tragic protagonist was, from one point of view, just such a discovery or invention.

Like the literature it explicates, every piece of criticism is part of the dialogue of its age. None is self-sufficient; none is all-explanatory. My approach to the emergence of Elizabethan tragedy builds on the work of many other scholars. Wherever possible, I have tried not to retrace their steps. Having chosen to focus on how the development of a genre reflects the atti-

[16] Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer or Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1980), pp. 108, 127. Kuriyama places a good deal of emphasis on Marlowe's alleged homosexuality in her discussion of negative identities.

[17] Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, 1966), p. 64.

[18] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

tudes of its audience, I have consciously devoted little attention to the playwrights themselves. They undoubtedly had reasons for writing their plays that were unrelated to the audience's demands. Nevertheless, from what we know about the playwright's profession in the sixteenth century, their primary concern was to give their public what it wanted to see, and to prosper in the process. They did not expect their work to outlast marble and the gilded monuments of time, and could never have anticipated the critical attention that has been lavished upon them. If, like Chaucer's Troilus, they are looking down upon us from heaven and laughing at our follies, I beg their indulgence for still another attempt to reconstruct the complex web of circumstances from which their plays emerged.

Play and Audience

I. THE OVERLAPPING AUDIENCE

The medium through which the doctrine of election helped to shape the emergence of the tragic protagonist was the spoken word. In the London of the 1570s, 1580s, and 1590s, both the players and the preachers were attracting increasingly large audiences, and in both cases what they offered was a mixture of instruction and entertainment presented with considerable verbal artistry. Although there were pious sermongoers who shunned the theatres and, conversely, pleasure-loving theatre-goers who attended sermons only when compelled to do so, the two audiences undoubtedly overlapped. The fact that preachers and moralists frequently expressed their hostility to the playhouses is the best evidence that they did; just as the adult companies fought to keep their audiences from defecting to the boy companies, using plays as their weapons, so the preachers and London authorities used sermons, tracts, and public proclamations in their battle to discredit the theatres. These efforts were not limited to Puritans; as Chambers points out, the writings against the stage, especially during the critical period from 1576 to 1583, are of a very heterogeneous character.[1]

Evidence that the audiences overlapped abounds in the sermons and tracts of the 1570s and 1580s. The authors of the Marprelate tracts, for example, continually used theatrical jokes and allusions, assuming that their readers knew and enjoyed the plays. Neither they nor John Foxe, the celebrated author of *The Actes and Monuments*, better known as *The Book of Martyrs*, saw an innate antagonism between plays and religious zeal; as Foxe noted of one of the bishops, "He thwarteth and

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[1] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), I, 253.

wrangleth much against players, printers, preachers. And no marvel why; for he seeth these three things to be set up of God, as a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the Pope to bring him down; as, God be praised, they have done meetly well already." There are verbal echoes of the plays in the sermons that suggest both an attempt on the part of the preachers to enter into competition with the playwrights and a pervasive influence of sermon rhetoric upon the playwrights.[2] Still more evidence that the audiences overlapped can be found in the diary of John Manningham, a young gentleman law student at the Middle Temple in 1602-1603. Manningham's account of a performance of *Twelfth Night*, for which the diary is known to Shakespeare scholars, is juxtaposed with several summaries of sermons. For him, the sermon seems to have been a form of intellectual exercise, worth recording for its ideas and rhetorical presentation. He attended sermons delivered from pulpits throughout the city of London, by preachers as unlike one another as the Anglican Lancelot Andrewes and the Puritan Stephen Egerton. The interspersal of the summaries with jests and aphorisms, lines of verse and snatches of conversation, suggests that Manningham's interest was as much literary and rhetorical as it was pious.[3]

Manningham is typical of the privileged playgoers Ann Cook describes in her recent study of the London theatre audience. Estimating that the "privileged" constituted 10 percent of the permanent population of London and 15 percent of the London populace when visitors are taken into account, Cook hy-

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[2] Chambers, p. 242n.; see also Lawrence A. Sasek, *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans* (Baton Rouge, La., 1961) and Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1980), for evidence that the opposition to the theatre was shared by High Anglicans during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and that their condemnations shared the same terms as the Puritans'. For echoes of sermon rhetoric in the plays, see Peter Milward, *Shakespeare's Religious Background* (Bloomington, 1973), which focuses on parallels between the 1593 edition of Henry Smith's collected sermons and Shakespeare's plays.

[3] *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple: 1602-1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover, N.H., 1976).

pothesizes that they accounted for at least half of the audience at public and private theatres alike. Cook defines the "privileged" broadly enough to include London merchants, schoolmasters, clerics, soldiers, lawyers, writers, artists, students, well-born apprentices, and the upwardly mobile yeomen and tradesmen who were acquiring wealth, land, and coats of arms in unprecedented numbers during the 1580s and 1590s. Not all the privileged were wealthy, but most were fairly well educated. Unlike most servants, laborers, and craftsmen, they had the leisure time to attend a play in the middle of the day. For the most wealthy and idle among them, attending a play may simply have been a way of passing the time; for the others, it was an experience as instructive as it was entertaining.[4]

In the early years of the reform movement in England, the privileged were also the mainstay of the sermon audiences. They were intelligent, articulate, impatient with the laxness of the older, non-preaching clergy, and willing to support preachers out of their own pockets. The increased emphasis on preaching in Elizabeth's reign was a logical consequence of humanism, with its emphasis on learning, and of Puritanism, a movement led by the religious intellectuals of the day. These were men of education and advanced ideas who shared with their opponents the cultural legacy of the Renaissance.[5] The fact that seventeenth-century Puritanism opposed the monarchy and espoused radical egalitarian political positions has sometimes led to the conclusion that Puritanism began as a popular mass movement. Elizabethan Puritanism was, in fact, an intellectual movement with a relatively small lay base, which attracted the patronage of many of the most important peers of the realm.[6] William Cartwright, whose expulsion from

[4] Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London 1576-1642* (Princeton, 1981), passim.

[5] For discussion of Puritanism as an intellectual movement, see Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England; Vol. I: From Cranmer to Hooker: 1534-1603* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 55, 285; and Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Princeton, 1970).

[6] Elliot Rose, *Cases of Conscience: Alternatives Open to Recusants and Puri-*

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Cambridge in 1570 is regarded by many as the first major event in the rise of Puritanism, was, as A. F. Scott Pearson observes, ". . . the mirror of the movement. He enjoyed the special patronage of statesmen like Leicester, Walsingham, Davison, etc., was regarded with sympathy by Burghley, and counted among his friends many of the leading gentry and parliamentarians. . . . His well-wishers were scholars, ministers, and men of social influence, and it was such who were the mainstay of Puritanism."[7] The Puritan nobility were particularly influential in enabling Puritanism to gain a foothold in the universities. Lawrence Stone calculates that "between 1565 and 1575 Cambridge produced no fewer than 228 Puritan ministers and schoolmasters to say nothing of the hundreds of young gentlemen who went out into the world with a firm belief in the need for a Puritan reformation of the Anglican Church."[8] Noblemen like Leicester, Bedford, Huntingdon, Warwick, and Rich were sufficiently powerful to insure Puritan spokesmen access to publication and to protect them from being silenced. Hence a highly verbal minority emerged, composed primarily of preachers and patrons, its influence vastly disproportionate to its lay base. They were united not so much by a desire to change the form of church government or a common theological doctrine; rather, they were united by their conviction that preaching was, as Archbishop Grindal told the Queen, "the only mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind."[9]

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tans Under Elizabeth I and James I (Cambridge, 1975), p. 213. Rose adds that many of the patrons of Puritan preachers were not themselves Puritans.

[7] A. F. Scott Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism: 1535-1603 (Cambridge, 1925), p. 411. See also Patrick Collinson in The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (Berkeley, 1967).

[8] Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641 (Oxford, 1965), p. 735.

[9] Quoted by Christopher Hill in Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, 2nd ed. (New York, 1967), p. 31. The debate about the appropriateness of the term "Puritan" to describe this group shows no signs of abating. As Patrick Collinson observes, the term "Anglican" is applied anachronistically to this period, and the ideological differences between those we call

Thousands of sermons were preached in London in the 1570s and 1580s. There were 123 parish churches in London and its immediate suburbs, many filled to overflowing, according to Manningham, by crowds eager to hear sermons. In London, the percentage of regular parish clergy who preached rose from 27 percent to 88 percent between 1561 and 1601. Independent lectureships, approximately a third of which were held by Puritans, produced still more sermons; by 1600, lecturers were preaching 100 sermons a week.[10] Like the theatres, the churches were meeting places, where business and social transactions took place, and where people gathered to talk and exchange news. According to contemporary accounts, sermons were disrupted by jests, laughter, and the showing off of new clothes, just as the plays were. Preachers whose

Puritans and Anglicans was one of degree, not fundamental principle (pp. 26-27). Andrew Weiner argues in *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism* (Minneapolis, 1978) that the term "Puritan" is used anachronistically also, since those to whom it was applied did not accept it as a positive apellation until well into the seventeenth century. He prefers the term "godly" for the reformers of the 1560s, 1570s, and 1580s (p. 6). Lawrence Stone notes that for long periods most of the men now referred to as Puritans were full members of the established Church, agitating change from within (p. 725).

[10] The lectureship was an essential element in Puritan proselytizing and education, and one which had long belonged to the English religious tradition. Begun by the medieval preaching friars, the endowed town lecture survived the Henrician and Edwardian reformations and became a vehicle for religious protest with the return of the Marian exiles, many of whom could not get preferments but could attract a constituency eager to hear sermons. The London lectureships were conducted within the parishes for the local congregations; some were endowed (usually by members of the business community), but many were initiated and financed by the parishioners themselves. The lecturer was therefore directly responsible to the congregation and could be dismissed at will; hence he had to be sure to please his audience in very much the same way as an acting company did. While the lectureship was not a strictly Puritan institution, the number of Puritans who came to London as lecturers reflected the extent of the demand for their style of preaching, particularly since, as Seaver notes, by the 1590s there were enough properly licensed Anglicans to answer the City's need. Puritans were more likely than Anglicans to hold a lectureship more than once, and their mobility contributed to the rise of a common rhetoric. Hill, p. 60; Paul S. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent: 1560-1662* (Stanford, 1970), pp. 124, 180.

sermons did not please were known to have been pulled from the pulpit, or, at the very least, harassed by coughing and heckling. The growing popularity of preaching, like that of playing, accounted for a dramatic increase in the number of publications during the 1570s and 1580s. The publication of printed sermons rose from nine volumes in the decade of the 1560s to 113 in the decade of the 1580s.[11] Through pulpit and press, the attitudes of the preachers and the language that attached to those attitudes passed into the culture and became the common possession of playwrights and audiences alike. Whether or not these attitudes were consciously endorsed by the people exposed to them is unimportant; what matters is that their widespread influence gradually began to affect the way the plays were written and received.

The importance of the overlapping audience as a link between the pulpit and the stage predates the rise of Puritanism. An earlier wave of popular preaching, inaugurated by the friars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, coincided with the emergence of the mystery cycles. G. R. Owst has speculated that the sermons, preached in the vernacular on outdoor scaffolds, helped bring about the "secularization" of the Latin liturgical drama which until then had been confined to the churches. The sermons contained *"every* variety of expression to be found in the plays—canonical and uncanonical, serious and humorous, satiric and tragic"—presented with a dramatic intensity that made them a truer antecedent of the medieval drama than the formal liturgical recitations of the priest. Responding to their audience's tastes, the preachers gradually incorporated more satire and comic *exempla* into their sermons. These corresponded to the comic interludes in the plays— they were designed *"to plesen the puple,"* but with an eye to their ultimate edification.[12]

[11] Alan Fager Herr, *The Elizabethan Sermon: A Survey and a Bibliography* (Philadelphia, 1940), pp. 32-33; 27. For more information on Elizabethan preaching, see J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, 1964).

[12] G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 473-90, 527-28.

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What began as a process of mutual influence soon became a rivalry, as preachers and players competed for the same audiences. By the last decades of the sixteenth century, this rivalry was intense and frequently virulent, despite—or perhaps because of—the immense popularity of both forms of public entertainment. Threatened by the success of the plays, the preachers met "every attempt to justify players on didactic grounds . . . by the retort that plays were the devil's sermons—a hideous mockery or antitype of true instruction."[13] The efforts of the preachers, however, had no apparent effect on theatre attendance. Anthony Munday, who wrote *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* pseudonymously, probably at the commission of the City of London, complained that although preachers denounced plays "daie by daie in al places of greatest resort," it was nevertheless the case that "infinite thousands of Christians doe dailie abide at the showes of vnseemlie things." So great was the appeal of the players that on feast days "the temple is despised, to run unto Theaters, the Church is emptied, the yeard is filled; wee leaue the sacrament, to feede our adulterous eies with the impure. . . ." Munday represents theatre attendance as a hellish inversion or antithesis of church attendance. "How saie we that wee worship God in his Church, which serue the Diuel alwaies at plaies, and that wittinglie, and willinglie?" The theatre is "the destruction of our hope, and saluation," a despising of the Lord's table, the sin which replaces godliness, an uncleanness opposed to repentance, a filthiness opposed to purity of life.[14]

The neat parallelisms of Munday's tract suggest the extent to which the theatre was perceived as an alternative to the formal worship of God. Ironically, the reformers drove their audiences to seek in the theatre what the Church no longer

[13] Muriel C. Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (London, 1962), p. 40.

[14] W. C. Hazlitt, ed., *The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart Princes 1543-1664* (London, 1869), pp. 101-19. See Sasek for other examples of tracts which opposed the theatres because they offered alternative gathering places to sermon attendance.

provided. In their contempt for prelates as "stage players" engaged in "popish pageants,"[15] they had rejected the need for ritual and ceremony, for the incarnation of abstract beliefs in physical gesture, adornment, and symbolic objects, which is to be found in every culture. When the English Church ceased to fulfill this need, the drama began to take its place. Marlowe, who is reported in the Baines note to have said "That if there be any god or any good religion, then it is in the Papists' because the service of god is performed with more ceremonies . . . ," was among the first secular Elizabethan playwrights to recognize instinctively the existence of an audience whose need for dramatized ritual the Church could no longer satisfy. In *Doctor Faustus*, and again in subsequent Elizabethan tragedies, the ceremony of the mass is spectacularly, indeed blasphemously, transformed into secular drama.[16] In a similar way, the controversy over vestments, certainly one of the defining tensions of Elizabeth's reign, is imaginatively mirrored in so many plays' preoccupation with clothing and its significance, and in the process of assuming and putting off robes which come to stand for identities in plays from *Tamburlaine* to *Richard II* to *Macbeth*.

But if the drama provided Elizabethan audiences with the theatricality that the reformers had banished from religious observance, it also provided them with a searching examination of character for which the popular tradition of preaching had helped to create a demand. The preachers spoke directly to their audiences' need for "physicians of the soul." William Haller describes their method in *The Rise of Puritanism*:

For centuries preachers had been analyzing the moral life into such categories as pride, envy, lust, avarice and their

[15] Cf. Jonas Barish's two very suggestive essays on anti-theatrical prejudice: "Exhibitionism and the Anti-theatrical Prejudice," *ELH* XXXVI, 1 (March, 1969), 1-29; "The Antitheatrical Prejudice," *Critical Quarterly* 66, 329-48.

[16] C. L. Barber, "The form of Faustus' fortunes good or bad," *Tulane Drama Review*, 84 (Summer, 1964), 96 ff. Barber explores the idea of religious ritual in *Faustus* in a daring application of Freudian theory to the images of eating and drinking in the play.

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opposites. They diagnosed spiritual morbidity by identify-
ing the species of sin with which the soul might be infected.
Their method was to make war on wickedness by attacking
its several varieties. They treated sinners by showing them
how to detect each sin in the abstract under the infinite
disguises which evil knew but too well how to assume. . . .
This often led the preacher—in the sixteenth and the sev-
enteenth, as in the fourteenth, centuries—to more or less
realistic description of actual manners and morals as well as
to elaborate systematic allegorization of moral abstractions.
. . . Thus he came to depict the miser or the hypocrite in-
stead of, or in addition to, defining or allegorizing the sins
they embodied.

The Puritan preachers and lecturers, competing with the de-
pictions of sin and folly offered by the players and confronted
with audiences who "longed to know what they must do to
be saved," produced sermons that spoke eloquently to their
listeners' needs:

So they set out to describe the warfare of the spirit, to por-
tray the drama of the inner life, to expound the psychology
of sin and redemption. This, they found, was what the peo-
ple would come to hear, and the more actively they re-
sponded to ever-increasing audiences the more they gave
up abstractions in order to mirror the individual conscious-
ness of spiritual stress, to convince the individual of sin in
order to persuade him of grace, to make him feel worse in
order to make him feel better, to inspire pity and fear in
order to purge him of those passions.

"Had they but known it or been capable of admitting it,"
Haller adds, "precisely such a mirror was being held up to
nature in the theatres, though not with quite the same inten-
tion or effect."[17]

The notion that the drama and the sermon spoke to the
same need felt by the Elizabethan audience receives support

[17] William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938; rpt., N.Y., 1957), pp. 31-
33.

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from no less a critic of the theatre than Stephen Gosson. Although he inveighs against the amorous scenes in the comedies, Gosson grudgingly admits that "nowe are the abuses of the worlde revealed, every man in a play may see his owne faultes, and learne by this glasse, to amende his manners." Indeed, while the declared purpose of *The Schoole of Abuse* was to be a criticism of poets, Gosson reveals himself to be just as preoccupied with gamblers and bearbaiters and other such characters. His main complaint against the plays seems to have been less concerned with their content than with the behavior of the audience: he speaks at great length of "suche heaving, and shoouing, such ytching and shouldring, too sitte by women . . . such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking," in sum, such activity that the playhouse resembled "a generall Market of Bawdrie."[18] His outrage implies that the innocent and well-intentioned were indeed present among the spectators, and could become corrupted by their environment.

The writings of Gosson and others indicate that the effort to subvert the theatres in sixteenth-century London was largely caused by an anxiety about the effects of assemblies in a compact and volatile community. Gosson accused the players of being instruments of the devil because they brought together multitudes of people. Ironically, Elizabeth regarded preaching in much the same way; the devil of sedition, she feared, was present wherever crowds were allowed to gather.[19] Indeed, the complaints about playing and preaching in the sixteenth century sound remarkably alike, and are, as the following examples suggest, somewhat at cross purposes with one another. In the Lord Mayor's protest to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1592, he complained that "the youth is greatly corrupted and their manners infected by the wanton and profane devices represented on the stages; prentices and servants withdrawn

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[18] Stephen Gosson, *The s[c]hoole of abuse, conteining a pleasaunt invective against poets* (London, 1579), STC #12097, sig. C2ᵛ, B5⁴. (For this and all other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works reproduced on microfilm, I have given the Short Title Catalogue [STC] number.)

[19] Douglas Bush, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660* (Oxford, 1962), p. 312.