FESTIVE PIETY: STAGING FOOD AND DRINK AT CHESTER

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> In the act of eating one is connecting oneself with the world.
> Anna Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction'[1]

Ten of the twenty-five Chester Cycle plays feature eating, drinking, or something closely associated with eating or drinking (like an alewife) at the centre of the action.[2] Over the three performance days of Whitsun week, then, these ten plays required guild players to display and use a series of food-related items at four stations through Chester's main streets.[3] Any biblical cycle must include food in some of its most important episodes: Eve will eat the apple, Christ will break bread. But the Chester Cycle's non-biblical scenes and embellishments, particularly the interpolations that do not appear in other medieval adaptations of the Bible, also tend to involve the consumption or exchange of comestibles. Outside of the ten 'food and drink plays' I have listed in TABLE 1, the Cycle contains multiple gestures toward offstage food and drink, dialogues about eating or hospitality, and extended food-based metaphors.[4] However, because my discussion here will primarily concern *public staging*, I will limit my scope to those cases in which the extant play text necessarily calls for a visible food-related prop or character.

I do not wish to make a unifying case that the entirety of the Chester Cycle is fixated on or organized around feasting, though the thematic and literal presence of food and drink throughout the plays is remarkable. What concern me here are the resonances between the feasting staged by the Chester players and the unscripted festivity that surrounded them before, during, and after performances. The play texts reveal the marks and traces of this festivity, which function as a kind of fossilized record of Cestrian festive practice — a record that not only illuminates Cestrian culture, but also is essential to the understanding of the extant form and content of the plays. After a thorough examination of public feasting both inside and outside the performances, I will demonstrate that the Cycle's use of food and drink is not always necessarily a function of the Eucharistic feast, whether as type or antitype. In contrast with the York Cycle, for

Table 1: Chester's Ten Food and Drink Plays		
GUILDS RESPONSIBLE FOR 1570S PRODUCTIONS[5]	NUMBER AND EPISODE(S)	CASES OF STAGED FOOD AND DRINK
Drapers; Hosiers	Play 2: Adam and Eve	The apple (Adam and Eve both visibly eat fruit, lines 241–56 + sd. An 'apple' is specified at lines. 240, 245, 250).
Waterleaders; Drawers of Dee	Play 3: Noah's Flood	A container of Malmsey wine, along with visible drunkenness: the Good Gossips sing 'And lett us drinke or wee departe … a pottell full of malnesaye good and stronge …', lines 225–36.*
Barbers; Wax-chandlers; Leeches (Surgeons)	Play 4: Abraham, Lot, and Melchizedek	Bread and a cup of wine (Messenger, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Lot exchange offerings, lines 57–108+ sd).*
Painters; Embroiderers; Glaziers	Play 7: The Shepherds	Bread, onions, garlic, leeks, butter, green cheese, a pudding, a *jannock*, a sheep's head soaked in ale, a *grayne*, curds, a pig's foot, a gammon joint, another pudding, tongue, ale, liquor, flask, bottle, bowls, pan, pot, loin, *sose*, *sowse*, flacket with spoon, nut-hook; MS Harley 2124 adds pig's foot, tripe, belly-meat, chitterlings (the Shepherds' supper, lines 101–50).*

Vintners; Merchants	Play 8: The Three Kings	A *pigge* [pitcher] and cups of wine, visible drunkenness (line 381 + sd; Herod: 'Have done and fill the wyne in hye; / I dye but I have drinke! / Fill fast and lett the cuppes flye …' lines 416–8).*
Bakers; Millers	Play 15: The Last Supper	Lamb, bread, chalice of wine; the Last Supper requires food and drink throughout the episode.
Cooks; Tapsters; Hostelers; Innkeepers	Play 17: The Harrowing of Hell	An alewife (she enters into Hell and gives specific information about how, in life, she adulterated her brew, lines 277–336).*
Saddlers; Fusters	Play 19: Christ on the Road to Emmaus; Appearance to Apostles I	Bread (Jesus, with Lucas and Cleophas: *Tunc frangit panem* … 'Eates on, men, and do gladlye', lines 119–20 + sd); fish and honeycomb (Jesus and Apostles: 'Rosted fyshe and honye in fere … Eate we then in good manere … *Tunc commedit Jesus, et dabit discipulis suis*', lines 192–9 + sd).
Tailors	Play 20: Appearance to Apostles II; Ascension	'Meate' (Jesus and Apostles: 'Nowe eate we then for charitie … *Tunc commedet Jesus cum discipulis suis*', lines 38–56 + sd).*
Hewsters [Dyers]; Bellfounders	Play 23: Antichrist	Bread (*drynke* is also mentioned. Enoch and Elias: 'Yf thou be so micle of might / to make them eate and drynke' … 'Have here breadd both too', lines 547–84).

* These embellishments are not essential to the narrative of their plays: in other words, Cestrians thought them important or entertaining enough to interpolate them.

which the Eucharist undoubtedly forms the primary symbolic core, Chester's staged feasting is generated by, and prioritizes, a broad public commensality of which the sacrament is but one essential part, and within which religious symbolism can be articulated as popular practice. The performances establish continuity between Cestrian urban revelry and the teachings, tradition, and ritual of Church feasts by rendering the latter in the localized, familiar terms of the former: as the structure of the secular celebration is legitimised, religion's fundamental and central place in that structure is secured. Indeed, the Chester Cycle in performance maintains, through play, a conceptual space complex and free enough for revellers to negotiate, or even delight in, the antinomy of a medieval festival that is at once gluttonous and sacred.

The Shepherds' Supper in the Marketplace

On the night of the Nativity, the Painters' three Shepherds, Harvy, Hannkeynn, and Tudd, throw their supper together from the leftovers in their packs: 'Laye forth, each man ilych', orders Hannkeynn, 'what hee hath lafte of his liverye' (Play 7: 105–6). Only forty-five lines pass, including the simple stage direction *Tunc commedent* ('then they eat'), before Hannkeynn ends the meal: 'nowe our bellyes be full' (Play 7: 101–50). The short scene passes quickly on the edited page, halting the action briefly to add colour to the poetry, until the primary narratives of the play re-emerge. But as a playable piece of drama, to be repeated at four waggon stations, the scene is a prop master's nightmare.

Within less than fifty lines, the three Shepherds unpack and eat 'bredd', 'onyons', 'garlycke', 'leekes', 'butter', 'greene cheese', 'a puddinge', a 'jannock' (a leavened oatcake), a 'sheepes head sowsed in ale', a 'grayne' (either a pig's snout or its groin), 'sowre milke' (curds), a 'pigges foote from puddinges purye', 'gambonns' (gammon joints), another 'puddinge' ('with a pricke in the end', provocatively), and 'tonge'.[6] Tudd refers vaguely, three more times, to other 'meate' that he has brought.[7] Then the Shepherds drink 'ale' and other 'lickour' from a 'flackett', a 'bottell', and 'bowles'. In later lines, the Shepherds and their boy Trowle gesture to further items that must be visible onstage, though they haven't been mentioned aloud yet: a 'pott' for more drinking, a 'loyne' (with punning reference to Hannkeynn's own loins), 'sose' (sauce, possibly, or just 'a sloppy mess of food'), and 'sowse' (pickled pig parts, usually the feet and ears).[8] All five extant cycle manuscripts contain all of those items, and BL MS Harley

2124 adds another 'piggs foote', a 'panch-clowte' (tripe), a 'womb-clout' (belly meat), and a 'chitterling' (fried or boiled intestines).[9]

Modern Cestrians, whose 2008 community-based adaptation of their cycle interpolated stage business and technical spectacle wherever possible, still chose to reduce and simplify the Shepherds' meal. They abridged the lines so that they mentioned only goat cheese, leeks, bread, and Welsh ale.[10] The modern Tudd did not have to figure out how to pull eight food props out of his pack, including gammon joints and an ale-soaked sheep's head, not to mention his pan and the five ingredients for his sheep remedy, all of which he would then have to safely stow in time for the Shepherds' departure to Bethlehem. In the section that follows, I will consider how — and why — sixteenth-century Cestrian players chose to stage such an extensive supper scene in the first place, taking the Painters' 1568, 1572, and 1575 performances as my test cases. Only then, with a recalibrated idea of what staged feasting looked like in sixteenth-century Chester, will I be able to consider that staging in the context of unscripted guild revelry.

In his *Dramatic Design in the Chester Cycle*, Peter Travis suggests briefly that sixteenth-century Cestrians would have used non-perishable mock-ups for the props in the Shepherds' supper. He is 'convinced that the fun of these scenes was heightened by the use of special theatrical effects: by ludicrous, antinaturalistic stage properties for all the medicinal wares and foodstuffs'.[11] In his endnotes, however, Travis acknowledges that he is working from a 'hunch', unsupported by the Painters' record of expenditures for their final performance in 1575.[12] That record is one of three relevant expenditure records now available in *REED: Cheshire*.[13] TABLE 2 aligns those records with the corresponding lines in the *Shepherds* play. The resemblance is undeniable.

Other Cestrian guilds' sixteenth-century expenditure records are equally saturated with feasting expenses, but demonstrate no apparent order or purpose behind their specific choices of food and drink.[14] In 1568, for instance, the Smiths record heavy food costs, but they can only be spending their money on provisions for general feasting: their play, *The Purification/Christ and the Doctors*, does not require any comestibles as props. For the dinner at their 'generall reherse', the Smiths buy items in bulk (2s 8d on cheese, 8s 10d on beef, etc.); the Painters spend a similar total amount, but it is divided into smaller charges (only 5d on cheese, 4d for a sheep's head, etc.) for a greater variety of items. The peculiarity of the Painters' menu, and the specific care that their bookkeeper took to record it, makes clear that there is intent, rather than

Table 2: The Painters' *Shepherds* Play and the Painters' Food Expenditures

MS HUNTINGTON 2 (1591) DIALOGUE	GUILD ACCOUNTS, 1568[15]	GUILD ACCOUNTS, 1572[16]	GUILD ACCOUNTS, 1575[17]
SECUNDUS PASTOR Here is (1a) **bredd** this daye was bacon, (1b) **onyons**, (1c) **garlycke**, and (1d) **leekes**, (1e) **butter** that bought was in Blacon, and (1f) **greene cheese** that will greese well your cheekes.	(1a) Item payd for **bred** to the playe (1e) Item payd for **botter** to the playe (1f) Item for **Chesse**	(1e) Item for **bouttare** (1f) Item payde for ij **chessces**	(1a) Item for **cakes** (1e) Item for **bouter** (1f) Item for **ij chysses**
TERTIUS PASTOR And here (2a) **ale** of Halton I have, and (2b) *whot meate* I had to my hyer; a (2c) **puddinge** may noe man deprave and a (2d) **jannock** of Lancastershyre.	(2a) See 9a–9c below (2c) Item payd for wosshyng **puddynges** (2c) Item to Rychard halewoddes wyffe for xv[i] **hagays**	(2a) See 9a–9c below (2c) … to doosse wyfe to yarneste the **hagoosscys** (2c) … to dosse wyfe for **hagocyes** (2d) … for ij **gannokes** from Waryntone	(2c) Item for **vj hagosses** (2d) Item for a **Ianokes**
Loe, here a (3a) **sheepes head** sowsed in ale, and a (3b) **grayne** to laye on the greene, and (3c) **sowre milke** …	(3a) Item for a **Tuppes hed** (3b) Item for a **grone**	(3a) Item payde for a **topes yede**	(3a/3b) Item for the **topas hed and the groyne**

PRIMUS PASTOR *[in Harley 2124 only:]* … a (4a) **piggs foote** I have here, pardye, and a (4b) **panch-cloute** in my packe.	(4b) See 2c: 'haggis' may refer to a savoury pudding or to tripe	(4a) … for a gambone a bacone & **iiij fytte** (4b) See 2c: 'haggis' may refer to a savoury pudding or to tripe	(4b) See 2c: 'haggis' may refer to a savoury pudding or to tripe
PRIMUS PASTOR *[in Harley 2124 only:]* A (5a) **womb-clout**, fellowes, now have I, a (5b) *lyveras* as it is no lack; a (5c) **chitterling** boyled shall be …	(5a) Item for a **bestes bely** & calues fette	—	—
PRIMUS PASTOR … and a (6a) **pigges foote from puddinges purye**.	(6a) See 2b, puddings	(6a) See 2b and 4a, puddings and pig's feet	—
TERTIUS PASTOR Abyde, fellowes, and yee shall see here this (7a) *hott meate* — wee serven yt here — (7b) **gambonns** and (7c) *other good meate* in fere, A (7d) **puddinge** with a pricke in the ende.	(7b) Item to [Rychard halewoddes wyffe] for **bacon** (7d) See 2c, puddings	(7b) Item for **a gambone a bacone** & iiij fytte (7d) See 2c, puddings	—
PRIMUS PASTOR And this (8a) **tonge** pared rownd aboute with my teeth yt shalbe atamed.	(8a) … for a Mydcalffe And An **ox tonge**	(8a) Item for a besstes **tonge** & iiij colfes fytte	(8a) … for the leg loyne and **tounge of velle**

SECUNDUS PASTOR Now to weete our mouthes tyme were; this (9a) **flackett** will I tame, if thow reade us. TERTIUS PASTOR And of this (9b) **bottell** nowe will I bibbe, for here is (9c) **bowles** of the best. Such *lickour* makes men to live; this game may noewhere be leste.	(9b) Item spente at Iohan Cockes to borrow **bottelles** (9c) Item payd for **mogges**	(9a) Item spente goynge to borow **bogyttes [leather pouches or bottles]** (9b) Item spend at gettynge cattes an **bottylse** (9c) Item for **xiiii yerthen mogges**	(9b) Item for the brebynge [?] of the **botell** (9c) Item for **xii erthen moges**
PRIMUS PASTOR … on this (10a) **loyne** thow may have good lugginge. GARCIUS Fye on your **loynes** and your *liverye*, your *liverastes*, (10b) **livers, and longes**, **your sose, your sowse**, your *saverraye* …	(10a) Item for a **Mydcalffe** [loin of veal] And Anox tonge (10b) Item for **parbolyng of the garbyge [offal, variety meat]**	(10a) Item for a **lawne a velle**	(10a) Item for the leg **loyne** and tounge of velle (10b) Item for the **boylange and dressynge the garbyche**
Note: Where terms refer to specific items, I have listed them in **bold**; more generalised terms are in *italics*.			

coincidence, behind the correspondence between records and play. Meanwhile, the Painters included costs for the painting, construction, and purchase of various props in their Whitsun accounts, but no expenditures for any oversized fake food. Travis's hunch, in light of these records, is all but untenable.

Lawrence Clopper, in *Drama, Play, and Game*, also addresses the 'quantity and variety' of the Painters' food in both dialogue and archives, but with a very different idea of their stagecraft: 'at Chester it becomes a true carnival banquet when the Shepherds distribute their excess to the audience'.[18] The food, for Clopper's Shepherds, is not anti-naturalistic; when shared and ingested, it is more tangibly real than any of the action onstage. Yet Clopper's imagined staging, like Travis's, takes on a more tentative tone when it is explained in a footnote. Clopper connects the Painters' *Shepherds* play to the Bakers' *Last Supper* play, and to a clue in the Chester *Late Banns* about the staging of that play:[19]

> The sharing is suggested by the fact that the Chester Painters purchased multiple items of the foods named in the Shepherds' list of foods and by the directive in the Chester Late Banns that the Bakers 'caste godes loues abroade with accustomed cherefull harte'. The latter hint at the use of bread as a token presented to the onlookers much as favors are thrown to the crowds at Mardi Gras.[20]

On the basis of their hypotheses about the staging of the supper in performance, Travis and Clopper produce dramatically different interpretations of the same scene. Travis, pointing out that the Shepherds eat their cartoonishly exaggerated feast before they have seen the light of Jesus, argues that their supper of false food draws attention to the false nourishment of the profane, pre-Christian world, soon to be exposed to the true light of Christ. Clopper, imagining a different scene entirely, naturally draws an opposite set of conclusions. For him, after the boy Trowle rebelliously wrestles his masters and takes their food, the excess food is distributed among the audience: that gesture demonstrates 'the grotesque realism of carnival', a Bakhtinian popular banquet that subverts authority and 'provides a good example of topsy-turveydom'.[21] A carnival-oriented reading supports Clopper's suggestion that the cycles 'may have arisen as a solution ... to clerical attempts to suppress and control play and game' and 'that the biblical drama did not support a clerical educational agenda but a spirituality reflective of late medieval lay piety'.[22] That understanding of the Cycle is directly opposed to Travis's, whose 'dramatic

design' is established by a clerical, theologically precise, 'Chester dramatist'.[23] Two suppers, one very false and one very real, emerge from Travis's and Clopper's readings, and they shift the symbolic meaning of the entire *Shepherds* play.

Clopper is surely correct that the Bakers used some kind of baked goods as audience favors during their play; there is little else that the Chester Late Banns' reminder to 'caste godes loues abroade with accustomed cherefull harte' could possibly mean.[24] After all, they are *bakers*, and the areas in which the plays were staged were also at or near the markets in which the Bakers' guild sold its bread. The Cycle, for the Bakers, is an opportunity for advertising: the spectators were all potential customers. To specify the staging further, it is highly doubtful that the Bakers' players, with edible bread nearby and the clear direction to eat, would have mimed eating or used false props. When the Bakers' Jesus *edit et bebit cum discipulis* ('eats and drinks with the disciples'), he actually eats bread, during the dramatic action and in full view of Cestrian spectators, who share the bread with him, a powerful gesture that I will discuss at more length below.

The case of the Painters' *Shepherds*, however, is quite different from that of the Bakers' *Last Supper*. I must rule out Clopper's suggestion that the Painters' players passed their food among the audience in the same way that the Bakers' players distributed bread. Small baked goods make perfect audience favours: they are easily portable, and can be easily divided and equitably shared, all the while reminding Cestrians of the quality of the bakers' workmanship. None of the Painters' foods fit those practical requirements. Most of the foods the Shepherds eat would require constant attention to carving, if not heating, in order to share (sheep's heads, puddings, pig's heads, veal loin, gammon, tongue) or would require many containers to allow for distribution (butter, curds, ale, liquor, *sowse*). The Painters do account for purchasing mugs and borrowing bottles that could have contained liquid or semisolid foodstuffs, but the 1572 record specifies just how many *yerthen moges* (earthen mugs) three shillings would buy (see Table 2, 9c): fourteen, perhaps just enough for the lead players (the three Shepherds, Trowle, Mary, and Joseph, leaving out minor roles) and for the *viij pottarres* (putters, the men who pulled the waggon) whose wages are recorded for that year.[25] Only tuppence was allotted for the bottles, and since these were borrowed, they could not be distributed to the audience without a great deal of confusion.

The Shepherds' only sharable foods are the *jannock* (oatcake) and the fresh bread, but according to the Painters' records, they spent very little on fresh bread (4d in 1568 and 1575) and even less on *jannocks* (2d for two *jannocks* in 1572, 2d for one *jannock* in 1575). In contrast, the Smiths spend 2s on bread in order to supply their 'generall reherse' dinner alone, then 8d on bread for their players' breakfast; the Painters' bread expenditure is hardly enough to supply four audiences in a day and still have enough left for use as a prop.[26] If the Painters' two *jannocks* were somehow large enough to act both as favours and props, then they could not have fit in Tudd's pack at the beginning of the play.[27] Trowle, meanwhile, steals a 'cake' before the Shepherds finish it, and immediately withdraws from view (*et sic recedat*). There is little reason to imagine that Trowle would break apart and distribute the bread after stealing it for himself, nor is there any suggestion in the manuscripts that he would have done so. Meanwhile, the Painters' total expenditure on food, drink, and tavern costs 'for whitson playes' in 1568 (a list that lumps together play-related costs as far back as the Banns and as far forward as Midsummer) is slightly *less* than the Smiths' food, drink, and tavern expenditures for the same period. If the Smiths, whose play texts provide for no edible props or passed favours, needed £1 10s 1d just to feed their players, putters, guild producers and families, then the Painters' £1 8s could not possibly have been enough to feed their companies *and* to circulate hot food among the gathered Cestrian audiences at four stations.[28]

The Painters' total expenditure on food and drink, similar to or less than that of other guilds, is thus just enough to feed a guild. It is almost certain, then, that the Painters bought and used real food for props, but ate it *themselves*, in an open, theatrical, gluttonous display, with no plans for sharing it with the audience. They did not, however, reserve all of their food and drink for props. The three Shepherds certainly could not have eaten it all. The Painters' drink expenditures, beyond those listed in TABLE 2, make clear in all three available years that the Painters, just like the Smiths, hosted a variety of public festivities oriented toward the performance in the days leading up to and immediately following their play: there was *ale* 'when we dressed oure playes & when we made oure capes & cotes', *drynke* 'vpon wytson Sondaye', a *shoute* 'at the fyrste reherce' and 'when the playe was donne', and so forth. And the Painters also purchased 'bryddes', 'crabefysshes', and other foods that are never mentioned in their play.[29] In other words, in addition to their use of real

food and drink as props, the Painters found multiple extra-dramatic moments to publicly enjoy the comestibles that they bought.

The same economic sense that makes it unlikely for the Bakers to have used fake bread makes it highly unlikely for the Painters to have constructed and maintained comically exaggerated false food, when there was so much corresponding real food so readily available for guild feasts. What is certain is that, like the Smiths and other guilds at Whitsuntide, the Painters were required to spend a solid portion of their budget on actual food and drink for their holiday festivities: the most probable explanation for the correspondence between records and dialogue, and for there being very few food expenditures otherwise, is that the Painters thriftily, and playfully, used much of the same food for their ceremonial Whitsun and Midsummer meals as they did for their props. They started the rehearsal process by feasting, and, because the action called for it, they continued feasting even as the play was underway. It is as if a modern cast party, whose theme mimics its play's content, has become so broad, constant, and inclusive that it envelops and becomes indistinguishable from the performance. For the *Shepherds* players to publicly consume their enormous portions of the Painters' feast, let alone to do so repeatedly at four stations throughout Chester, promises amusement for the eater and the spectator; such a display of excess would not be the last feat of gluttony to provide entertainment at a community festival. And there was little need to distribute food to fellow guildsmen in the audience because, as I will demonstrate at more length below, they were involved in their own holiday feasts.

The colourful theatrics of the Shepherds' supper, a gluttonous alliterative list of local or near-local foods (butter from Blacon, ale from Halton, a *jannock* from Lancashire) whose fun is in its size and variety, are as much at work in the Painters' play as they are in the Painters' unscripted but visibly structured bill of fare. Repeated from year to year in this holiday feast, alongside some of the more expensive delicacies we would expect for an affluent guild, there is a surprising amount of offal: the guildsmen, some of whom have played at speaking, singing, and wrestling as they imagine poor Welsh shepherds might, all role-play similarly in the way that they eat. The grand guild feasts are theatrical in the same way that the Shepherds' supper is — a supper which is itself composed of real food provided by the guild, and thus quite literally part of the Painters' public feast.

Indeed, when an actor eats or drinks onstage in any play, and especially when he does so in a festive environment already characterized by feasting, his body is no longer just representing an act. The player is not only reflecting a public feast: he is enacting it, participating in it, with no break in the dramatic action. In other contexts, it might be argued that such an act could have had the potential to aggravate debates over sacramental simulation versus reality, whether in religious drama or religious ritual, that raged throughout the sixteenth century. That ground has been well covered, particularly in Sarah Beckwith's work on the 'body of Christ as sacramental theater' at York, where Eucharistic ritual was appropriately the central focus of a cycle that remained anchored to the Corpus Christi festival.[30] My contention here, however, is that the Eucharistic feast's presence at Chester's Whitsun festival, while still central to devotional symbolism, is reframed by the Chester cycle as part of a broader tradition of secular commensality.

In his search for dramatic design, Travis places the Eucharist at the definitive heart of the Shepherds' putative 'mock' feast:

> The innovation of these fascinating dramatic tropes can best be understood, I believe, if they are seen as displaced metaphors or physical profanations of qualities traditionally associated with the Eucharistic Host ... the artistic mode by which the Chester dramatist disguises the eucharistic feast in the shepherds' gross banquet.[31]

But I am not convinced that the Painters' Shepherds' supper, nor the other nine food and drink plays, nor the spectacular feasts that accompanied guild rehearsals and performances, were 'displaced metaphors' for the Eucharist. As Clopper has argued, the Cycle took on its extant form, and much of its content, as a function of the shift *from* Corpus Christi Day *to* Whitsuntide.[32] The body of Christ was always important to late medieval lay piety, and the Chester Shepherds' bread and sheep-meat might invoke it if they were taken on their own, but unless it is assumed *a priori* that any onstage eating would automatically bring the Eucharist to mind — particularly unlikely when so much offstage eating and drinking was underway — the Shepherds' cheese, onions, and pickled pig parts can hardly be understood as sacramental symbols.

When he sits down to his massive supper, Tudd proudly announces:

> Abyde, fellowes, and yee shall see here
> this hott meate — wee serven yt here —
> gambonns and other good meate in fere ... Play 7 129–31

R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills find 'an echo of the salesman's pitch' in Tudd's 'wee serven yt here': 'Possibly this, like earlier addresses, is directed as much to the audience as to the company on stage'.[33] They explain the salesman's pitch by citing Clopper's unlikely suggestion that Tudd could share his food with the spectators.

The simplest explanation for Tudd's sales pitch, however, is in its location. Since the tenth century, the region's primary market for produce, meat, dairy products, and fish was located in Chester, where it convened on Wednesdays and Saturdays.[34] As Lucian lauds it in 1195, the market centre, where Chester's High Cross and Pentice would eventually be built, received ample foodstuffs and wine from England, Wales, Ireland, Aquitaine, Spain, and Germany, and an inexhaustible supply of fish from the River Dee just beneath the Cestrian walls.[35] Some non-comestible wares were also available for purchase, but Lucian's praise centres on the *copia … precipue victualium* ('the abundance … especially of victuals'), on the prospect of *precium porrigens, referens alimentum* ('putting forth payment, receiving nourishment in exchange').[36] The primary Cestrian markets for livestock, grain, cloth, and coal were smaller, farther from the centre of town, and less densely packed: Chester's central market was concerned primarily with the immediately edible and potable.[37] As the market thrived at the centre of town, Cestrians built temporary or permanent stalls, spouts, and shambles, adding further visible layers to the market, which extended itself well into the surrounding streets, and visibly reshaping the entire area with architecture that recalled the exchange of food.[38]

In the first half of the sixteenth century, as the Chester plays were developing their mobile three-day Whitsuntide structure, the main site of the markets was also shifting: from the Pentice forum to the fairground in front of the abbey gates in Northgate Street.[39] During the height of the Chester Cycle's development, then, the focus of the region's primary produce marketplace was split between these two sites. The Northgate Street and Pentice sites were also the first two of the four stations at which the Chester plays were staged.[40] The clustering of storefronts and shambles at and between them must have been constant reminders of the areas' frequent use for the sale of comestibles.

Whit-Wednesday, the final day of performance, would have coincided with a Pentice market day. There would have been little concern that the plays could interrupt, or be interrupted by, the exchange of food underway at their first two stations. Mills has argued that, although modern

criticism tends to focus more on religion and politics, 'the simple commercialism of the occasion' was foremost in the mind of the average guildsman.[41] The guildsmen and civic authorities, during the shift to Whitsuntide, *chose* to relocate their plays to the market sites, and scheduled recurring Wednesday performances, knowing that the Pentice market had been active on that day for centuries. They set their plays directly within the literal space and time of the marketplace. In medieval Chester, the producers of the plays were also producers and vendors of all the items sold in the performance area. Guild business at the marketplace must have benefited considerably from the increased traffic of spectators, particularly the revellers who wished to watch the many hours of plays in succession, and who would require refreshment, as did the players, from the nearby tables, stalls, storefronts, and taverns.

Tudd delivered his sales pitch in the midst of a holiday festival, repeating it once in each of the region's primary market centres, and once in Watergate Street, near the port through which the many imports were delivered.[42] There is little reason why hawking cries should have had to cease entirely while the dramatic action was underway, or why food traders would not take advantage of the sizeable pauses while the waggons moved between stations.[43] It is with the traders, not the sacrament, that the symbolism of the Shepherds' supper most powerfully resonates. Lucian's praise of public food at the Pentice market predates the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi by sixty-nine years. The salesmen of the town centre had been selling food for centuries in precisely the spots where Tudd yelled out 'hott meate — wee serven yt here'; they had done so before the Corpus Christi movement began, and would continue well through the end of the Whitsun plays. I contend that at Chester, thirteenth-century Eucharistic fervour would therefore have entered into a pre-existing culture of the festive public consumption and exchange of foodstuffs, not the other way around.

The Shepherds' supper was as connected to public festivity as Clopper would have it, then, but it was celebratory, not subversive — Chester guildsmen, after all, were hardly disempowered. I agree with C. Clifford Flanigan's convincing argument that the limitation of Bakhtinian readings of medieval drama often lies in their unspoken assumption that popular ritual always unfolds in an antagonistic relation to established power structures.[44] As I will continue to demonstrate below, the playful display of public gluttony powerfully affirmed the social structure of the Cestrian community, and the place of faith within it, through theatricalised displays

of commensality that resonated with an array of rehearsal dinners, players' breakfasts, and drinks between waggon stations. The guilds' vigorous commensality was not disconnected from the dramatic design that shaped and reshaped the Chester play texts as we have received them in the cycle manuscripts; rather, it is a crucial element of the cycle texts.

Guild Revelry

Preserved in the guild records of the Whitsun and Midsummer performances are not only hints about the materials used in the plays' production, but evidence of Cestrian festive practice behind, around, above, and between the dramatic action. *REED: Cheshire* contains the twelve extant sixteenth-century Chester guild expense accounts to enumerate play-related costs, beginning with the Cordwainers' 1550 accounts.[45] The Cordwainers' expenses include new planks for their waggon, payment to the players and putters (the men who pushed the waggon), and costs for Mary Magdalene's coat and for painting the players' faces (including the gilding of God's face). And of the £3 17s 6d that the Cordwainers spend in all, £1 2s 8d, or about 29% of the total budget, goes to food and drink.[46] Food and drink costs cover a comparably significant proportion of all twelve budgets. All but one of the records refer specifically to at least one official meal subsidized by the guild; half of them mention two or more, usually one 'generall Reyherse' dinner, probably on the night before the production, and a 'players breykeffaste' on the morning of the production.[47]

All twelve accounts include food costs alongside costume repairs and actor stipends, with no visible distinction between them in the lists. Various headings ('The expense to oure pley') or marginal notations ('whitson plays') establish that all of these expenditures are to be taken as production costs for the play. It was in the guilds' interests to pad their play expenses: a guild often submitted complaints to the city that the costs of its play outweighed the benefits, to pressure associated guilds for more assistance.[48] That said, the guild accounts are still the only commentary guildsmen made on their own productions. The generation of these itemized lists thus amounts to a kind of performance in itself, directed to fellow and future guildsmen who could then measure and replicate prior holiday festivities; the lists embody the conception that guild members had of what activities constituted those festivities. Food and drink were a major part of that conception, which encompassed not only the cycle plays

but the breakfasts, dinners, and shouts that occurred in conjunction with every performance.

The Smiths' accounts, for instance, survive in British Library MS Harley 2054. In the margin next to part of his record for 1554, the Smiths' bookkeeper writes 'whitson plays'. Of the £3 4s 7d the Smiths spent on all items related to the 1554 'whitson playes', including preparations for their Banns, payment to players, and costs for the upkeep and decoration of their waggon, at least £1 5s 1d (about 38·8% of the total budget) was devoted to food, drink, and tavern expenditures.[49] Here is the tally, in full:

> Spent at Iohn plemers howse when master maior came to loke what harnise euery man had viij d.
> for ridinge the banes xiij d. the Citty Crier ridd
> spent at potyng aute off Carriges at Richard barkers 4 d.
> we gaue at geting aute of the Carriag 4 d.
> we gaue for an axeyll tre to Richard belfounder vj d.
> for an other axelltre to Richard hankey iiij d.
> payd for dressing of the Carriage x d.
> for Ropes nelles pyns sope & thrid x d.
> for wheate ij s. ij d. for malt iij s. 4 d. for flesh ij s. x d.
> **for flesh at the breckfast & bacon ij s. 8 d.**
> **for 6 chekens x d. for 2 cheeses xvj d.**
> Item we gaue for gelldinge of Gods fase xij d.
> Item **we gaue botord beere to the players 4 d. for bred in northgatestreat ij d. we drank in the watergate street vj d.** at Iohn a leys x d. at Richard Anderton founderer xij d. **at mr dauison tauarne xiij d.**
> to the mynstrells in mane ij s.
> we gaue to the porters of the Caryegs ij s., for gloues xiiij d.
> we gaue to the docters iij s. 4 d.
> we gaue to Ioseph viij d.
> we gaue to letall God xij d. we gaue to mary x d. to damane x d.
> we gaue to the Angells vj d., to ould sermond iij s. 4 d.
> we gaue to barnes & the syngers iij s. 4 d.
> **for more wheate 18 d. malte ij s. ij d. flesh 3 s. 4 d. a chese ix d.**
> to Randle Crane in mane ij s.
> **spent at mrs dauison tauarne ij s. j d.**, for the charges of the Regenall xij d.
> to the skayneares iij s.

for makinge of the Copes v s., for dressinge of the stands & Iauddases xij d.
for gelding of the fane & for Carriages of the lightes xij d.
in all iij li. 4s. 7d.[50]

As focused on feasting as the other eleven records, the Smiths' 1554 Whitsun account pays particular attention to specific locations and times ('breckfast', 'in northgatestreat'). The record thus offers an apparent chronological organization from waggon station to waggon station: it appears to preserve a rough itinerary for the Smiths on the Tuesday of their performance. The charges incurred on Tuesday must have begun with 'flesh at the breckfast'; the food charge on the list preceding the breakfast, for wheat, malt, and flesh, presumably refers to a rehearsal dinner on a prior night.[51]

Some refreshment is certainly necessary during a day of outdoor performance, but for only four repetitions (compare to York, where there were between ten and sixteen) of a play with 334 lines, one song, and little physical action, the Smiths' itinerary is clearly in excess of the necessary provisions. This is festive consumption, and the records locate it in the streets and in the communal space of the taverns.[52] At the Smiths' players' breakfast (an event also attested in their 1568 record, as I mention above), they serve meat ('flesh'), bacon, chicken, and cheese. Only after that large meal can the boy Jesus' face be gilded, and the performance set in motion. Since the Smiths' play is second in a Tuesday order that had to accommodate nine plays (with four showings each), the Smiths' first performance must have happened relatively soon after their breakfast. And yet in Northgate Street, at the first waggon station, the players receive further refreshment: buttered beer and bread. Watergate Street was third out of four stations; the Smiths drink again there, and thus *between performances* — a necessity to refresh the players, perhaps, but surely a convivial occasion as well. And after Watergate Street, the Smiths make a trip to Davison's tavern. Following those items is a list of final reckonings for services rendered, a signal that the fourth and final performance has ended. But the bookkeeper accounts for more wheat, malt, meat, and cheese, along with another trip to Davison's tavern, before the final tally is made, calling an end to the Whitsun expenses. If that final meal and tavern trip did not occur as part of the Tuesday celebration proper, then it must have occurred soon after.[53]

In a recent issue of *METh*, Meg Twycross remarks on the centrality of meals to civic ceremony at York; there, not even mortal illness could

excuse a Sheriff from providing dinner supplies, and failure to do so constituted grounds for formal complaint.[54] When Eamon Duffy's discussion of medieval lay piety turns specifically to guild-sponsored processions across England, he remarks that '[t]he function of these processions as celebrations of communal identity ... is underlined in accounts of early Tudor perambulations by the prominence within them of the motif of eating and drinking'.[55]

If the Whitsun expenditure records are any measure of similar practices at Chester, then guild producers, players and putters ate and drank all day on the day of their performance, and on the night before. The twelve extant play-related expenditure records represent four of the participating guilds — and all four guilds usually hosted two or more official meals during Whitsuntide. If even half of the twenty-four participating Cestrian guilds did the same, then twenty-four meals would be hosted within the four days of Whitsuntide; if all the participating guilds hosted two meals each, then there would be forty-eight official meals within the space of four days, happening in quick succession with the performances themselves. In other words, a Cestrian at play tends to stay at play, regardless of whether he is in character.[56] That festive and convivial custom was surely part of the reason for volunteering for the plays in the first place. Watching fellow Cestrians try to remember their lines by the fourth station, after multiple bouts of drinking during the performance day, may have been part of the fun of the spectacle.[57] Indeed, the understandable thrill of onstage drinking continues to inspire Cestrians: Robin Goddard, director of Chester's modern community revivals, complains that though he 'insisted that the actors in both 2003 and 2008 use water in the prop bottles' for the modern *Shepherds* play, he still has 'strong doubts that the bottles contained water' after the show opened.[58] Meg Twycross, meanwhile, relates that modern players of a 1988 *Death of the Virgin* at York 'turned the throne of Christ into a handy store for several crates of Carlsberg, and made good use of it along the way'.[59]

Some light is shed here, in the broader tradition of guild commensality, on why the spectacle of the Shepherds' supper pivots not on the promise of food shared for free, but on the guilds' public display of their own eating and drinking in and around the town's market centre. Anthropologists are well aware of the symbolic power of public food exchange, and their theories shed new light on Cestrian theatrics. 'Much anthropological labour has been invested in showing how food exchanges develop and express bonds of solidarity and alliance', and 'how exchanges of food are

parallel to exchanges of sociality', according to Anna Meigs, in her ethnographic work on the Hua people of Papua New Guinea.[60] But in addition, as Meigs stresses, the social function of public feasting is not limited to food exchange, nor to conspicuous consumption as a marketing tool for exchange. Instead, Meigs argues that 'food and *eating* (and the rules associated with both) are understood as means that unite apparently separate and diverse objects and organisms, both physiologically and mystically, in a single life'.[61] The open performance of commensality is thus, for any community, a most basic element of social cohesion and identification:

> Through his or her continual acts of food exchange, both as producer and consumer, the individual is constituted as part of a physically commingled and communal whole ... Food has a distinctive feature, one that sets it off from the rest of material culture: it is ingested, it is eaten, it goes inside. In a small-scale society, moreover, it is and is understood to be the product of the labor of known individuals, the output of their blood, their sweat, their tears. As output of one person and as input into another, food is a particularly apt vehicle for symbolizing and expressing ideas about the relationship of self and other.[62]

Acts of public food exchange (at the markets) and ritual consumption (at ceremonial breakfasts and dinners, and during the course of the plays) were continual in Chester, unfolding at the geographical and social centre of its small-scale society. That society organized 'the labor of known individuals' through the same system it used to produce its plays: the guilds. V.A. Kolve reminds us that the plays 'used actors from the community who were known to the audience in real life ... local, familiar faces'.[63] In such a society, a Cestrian's ability and willingness to publicly consume local (or locally traded) foodstuffs must have been essential for his or her sustained inclusion in secular systems of trust and exchange. Familiar local players, engaging in the public acts of feasting featured in the Chester Cycle, thus affirmed their inclusion in Chester's community.

Witnessing Food: Fish, Honeycomb, and Bread

Caroline Walker Bynum's important work on medieval food symbolism is focused on Eucharistic piety, but some of her stories of asceticism prove Meigs's theory by its contrapositive: just as inclusion in a community requires commensality, the refusal of commensality will result in exclusion. Outside of the convent walls, secular communities expressly distrust

anyone who will not eat, or, more commonly, anyone who restricts his or her eating to the Eucharist:

> Catherine of Siena insisted that her inability to eat was an infirmity, not an ascetic practice at all ... A witness in the canonization proceedings of an extreme ascetic, John the Good, testified that John sometimes, in the presence of all, 'ate more than any other brother and more quickly', in order to prove that his abstinence was under his control. Columba of Rieti, who was criticized both for abstinence and for frequent communion, defended herself by eating a grape before witnesses to squelch rumors that she lived only on the eucharist.[64]

Especially in Columba of Rieti's case, eating food in front of one's community — food that is required to *not* be the Eucharist — is necessary to maintain inclusion, or at least to prevent persecution or ostracism. Nor were Columba's distrustful neighbours particularly un-Christian in their suspicion: they may have found support for their behaviour in Luke's descriptions of Jesus' appearance to the Apostles after the Resurrection. In Luke 24, Jesus has already appeared to the disciples at Emmaus, who only recognize him when they all break bread together. Then, when Jesus appears to the Apostles at Jerusalem to confirm the disciples' report, the Apostles do not believe their eyes.

> *Stetit Iesus in medio eorum et dicit eis: Pax vobis: ego sum, nolite timere. Conturbati vero et conterriti existimabant se spiritum videre. Et dixit eis: Quid turbati estis, et cogitationes ascendunt in corda vestra? Videte manus meas et pedes, quia ego ipse sum; palpate et videte quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtis habere. Et, cum hoc dixisset, ostendit eis manus et pedes. Adhuc autem illis non credentibus et mirantibus prae gaudio, dixit: Habetis hic aliquid quod manducetur? At illi obtulerunt ei partem piscis assi et favum mellis. Et, cum manducasset coram eis, sumens reliquias dedit eis. Et dixit ad eos: Haec sunt verba quae locutus sum ad vos, cum adhuc essem vobiscum, quoniam necesse est impleri omnia quae scripta sunt in lege Moysi et prophetis et psalmis de me. Tunc aperuit illis sensum, ut intellegerent Scripturas.*[65]
>
> 'Jesus stood in the midst of [the Apostles], and saith to them: Peace *be* to you; it is I, fear not. But they being troubled and frighted, supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle, and see: for a spirit hath not

> flesh and bones, as you see me to have. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and feet. But while they yet believed not, and wondered for joy, he said: Have you here any thing to eat? And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains, he gave to them. And he said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.' [66]

Unlike the Doubting Thomas of John 20, the Apostles of Luke 24 are not satisfied to 'handle, and see' Jesus' body. Even Jesus must eat, and then share, the apostolic community's food before they will believe that his resurrected body, not an unnatural phantom, stands before them.

Both the Chester and York Cycles, along with the Towneley and N-Town plays, include a Doubting Thomas scene. While York features two Thomas-centred plays, however, the Chester Saddlers' Thomas gets only a short scene in a play that includes longer depictions of Emmaus and the fish-and-honeycomb episode. York and Towneley do include the fish-and-honeycomb scene in their plays, but only as a brief prelude to the main event: Jesus appears and eats for ten Apostles, then disappears again before Thomas arrives; the Apostles' initial doubt prefigures Thomas' more important and longer story. N.Town simply ignores the fish-and-honeycomb episode. But Chester includes it *twice*, in all five of its extant full-cycle manuscripts.

The first iteration, in the Saddlers' *Emmaus/Thomas* play, occurs between the Emmaus episode and the Thomas episode, except with far fewer lines devoted to Thomas than at York or Towneley, so that there is little sense that the Apostles' disbelief prefigures Thomas'. Immediately after Luke and Cleophas return from Emmaus to report to the Apostles, Jesus appears. Peter is convinced that he sees a ghost, so Jesus says 'Handle me, both all and one'; even after doing so, Andrew still does not know 'what he ys', so Jesus eats and shares fish and honeycomb with them. Thomas, who enters after the feast, is convinced much more quickly.

The next play, the Tailors' *Ascension*, opens with a scene that at first glance corresponds reasonably to John 21, in which Jesus appears to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, and shares one last meal of fish with them before ascending. In place of that episode, however, the Tailors' players simply reiterate Luke 24 (see TABLE 3).

The two scenes repeat the same content almost exactly, and their wording does not differ much; the only significant difference between them is that Play 20 does not specify that fish and honeycomb are served, and that it adds a broader invitation to commensality, perhaps suggesting a love-feast, in Jesus' 'Nowe eate we then for charitie'.[67] The two scenes are clearly redundant duplicates of the same biblical source in Luke 24, and occur in immediate succession, in two pageants meant for the same day of performance. Mills interprets this repetitive disruption in the Cycle's master narrative as a scribal fusion of two independent cycle productions. It 'may be assumed', he writes,

> that the directions in the original indicated the transfer of the morning appearances from Play 20 to Play 19 in such a way as to confuse the scribes of the extant manuscripts, and that the transfer of the appearance to the disciples from Play 19 to Play 20 led to unwarranted duplication.[68]

Mills elsewhere characterizes the Cestrian scribes as conscious agents in the preservation and revision of their cultural heritage.[69] Rather than slavishly reproducing a massive 'unwarranted' confusion in their exemplar, it seems likely that these antiquarians actively chose to repeat what must have been an important scene in their memory of what a performed cycle looked like, or should look like. There is no precedent in the five meticulously revised Chester Cycle manuscripts for a plot inconsistency of this size. While Lumiansky and Mills enumerate a number of instances of redundant alternative passages, the cases are all very minor, usually affecting staging practicalities; the duplication of the fish-and-honeycomb scene stands out as '[a] similar problem, but on a larger scale'.[70] Even James Miller, the alert, fastidious scribe of Harley 2124, who tends to offer correctives to errors shared by the other four manuscripts and whom Lumiansky and Mills acknowledge as 'the first editor of the Chester cycle', would have to have been fooled by this error.[71]

Mills' theory that Cestrians transferred the same scene from one play to another does not explain why the scene should have been entirely rewritten in the process. But whatever the cause of the scene's repetition, someone at Chester has taken special care with the scene. If there was indeed an error during the late shuffling of content between plays, then during the various final revisions of the Chester productions, the players

TABLE 3: Luke 24 in the Saddlers *Emmaus/Doubting Thomas* and the Tailors' *Ascension*

Play 19: *Emmaus/Doubting Thomas* (The Saddlers)	Play 20: *Ascension* (The Tailors)
PETER A, what ys hee that comys here to this fellowshippe all in fere as hee to me nowe can appeare? A ghooste methinke I see. [...]	JESUS And leeves this, both all and one, that ghoost hath neyther fleshe ne bonne as yee may feele mee upon on handes and on feete [...]
JESUS Handle me, both all and one, and leeve well this everychone: that ghooste hath neyther fleshe ne bonne as you see nowe on mee.	PETRUS A, what ys this that standeth us bye? A ghoost meethinke he seemeth, wytterlye. Meethinke lightned mych am I this spryte for to see.
ANDREAS A, lord, mych joye is us upon! But what he ys, wott I ney can.	ANDREAS Peeter, I tell thee prevelye I dread me yett full greatlye that Jesu should doe such maystrye, and whether that this be hee. [...]
JESUS Nowe sythe you leeve I am no man, more sygnes you shall se. Have you any meate here?	JESUS I see well, brethren, sooth to saye, for any signe that I shewe maye yee be not steadfast in the faye, but flittinge I you fynd. Moe signes therfore yee shall see. Have you ought may eaten bee?

PETRUS
Yea, my lord leeffe and dere,
rosted fyshe and honye in fere,
therof we have good wonne.

JESUS
Eate we then in good manere.
Thus nowe you knowe withowt were
that ghooste to eate hath no powere,
as you shall see anon.

Tunc commedit Jesus, et dabit discipulis suis.

JESUS
Brethren, I towld you before
when I was with you not gayne an howre,
that nedelye both lesse and more
must fulfilled bee.

In Moyses lawe as wrytten were,
all other prophettes as nowe weare,
ys fulfilled in good manere
of that was sayd of mee.

For thys was wrytten in prophecye:
that I must suffer death nedelye
and the thyrd day with victorye
ryse in good arraye

and preach remission of synnes
unto all men that his name doth mynne.
Therfore, all you that bee herein
thinke on what I saye.

SIMON
Yea, lord, here — meate innough for thee,
and elles we were unkynd.

JESUS
Nowe eate we then for charitie,
my leeve brethren fayre and free,
for all thinges shall fullfilled bee
wrytten in Moyses lawe.

Prophetes in psalmes sayden of mee
that death I behoved on the roode-tree,
and ryse within dayes three
to joye mankind to drawe

and preach to folke this world within
pennance, remyssion of there synne;
in Jerusalem I should begynne,
as I have donne for love.

Therfore, beleeve steadfastlye
and come ye with mee to Bethanye.
In Jerusalem yee shall all lye
to abyde the grace above.

Tunc commedet Jesus cum discipulis suis.

made sure to keep the Luke 24 scene intact. If one guild did not stage it, then the other was sure to — and hence the duplication. If the antiquarian scribes purposefully preserved the scene twice, then it was important enough to them that they chose to preserve both versions, despite the interruption in continuity. Perhaps, to take an even simpler solution, the players actually staged the scene twice on the same performance day, because the importance of the scene merited an encore.

The plays, as written, guarantee above all that both the Saddlers' and the Tailors' players, if only in the scribes' antiquarian memory, get the important chance to eat publicly, to assert their membership in the community of Christian onlookers, just as Jesus himself did in Luke 24. It is that system of commensal witnessing and proof that demands the conspicuous theatricality of Chester's eating and drinking.

In the Dyers' *Antichrist* play, as Lumiansky and Mills have noted, there is an episode that does not correspond to any known source, nor to any prior depiction of the Antichrist legend.[72] The passage is unique to the Chester Cycle. In it, Enoch presents another case in which a potentially unnatural subject must prove its incarnate place in the natural order:

> Bringe forth those men here in our sight
> that thou hast reysed agaynst the right.
> Yf thou bee so micle of might
> to make them eate and drynke,
> for verey God we will thee knowe
> such a signe yf thou wylt shewe,
> and doe thee reverence on a rowe
> all at thy likynge. Play 23: 545–52

The *Antichrist* play mirrors the test-by-eating of Luke 24, as it is dramatized in the Saddlers' and Tailors' plays. The Antichrist, who has supposedly brought dead men to life, must show that he has not done so by unholy or unnatural means. He agrees to Enoch's terms, sure that the test will prove him 'worthye of deitee' (Play 23: 559). But Elias announces that he will bless the bread 'with [his] hand / in Jesus name ... the which ys lord of sea and land / and kinge of heaven on hie', then he makes the Sign of the Cross over it (Play 23: 565–76). The blessed bread terrifies the Antichrist's minions, exposing the entire fraud:

> Alas, put that bread out of my sight!
> To looke on hit I am not light.

That prynt[te] that ys uppon hit pight,
hit puttes me to great feere. Play 23: 577–80

Richard K. Emmerson suggests that '[t]he reference to the "pryntte" makes it clear that Elijah has challenged them with the bread of the Eucharist', and that the scene was 'probably added to underscore the cycle's celebration of Corpus Christi'.[73] While there is certainly Eucharistic power at work here, I am not sure that Elias' bread should be taken literally as the Host. Words about the extent of God's power, followed by the Sign of the Cross, were never sufficient to transubstantiate the Eucharist, nor would medieval spectators, familiar with the weekly ritual, have interpreted them as such.[74] They would be equally familiar with the typical, everyday grace that could be said over any dinner throughout the year: *Cenam sanctificet qui nobis omnia prebet* (May he bless this dinner who provides everything to us), followed by the Sign of the Cross — a short blessing that, set to verse, might look similar to Elias'.[75] The Sign of the Cross is the performative gesture that punctuates the dinnertime grace; the important performative gestures of transubstantiation are entirely absent in Elias' blessing.

Nor does the *prynt* necessarily signify the Eucharist. Early English speakers commonly used *prynt* figuratively, as we use 'impression', so the word could quite easily be an alliterative metaphor for Elias' Sign of the Cross.[76] Or, to take a more literal possibility, it would be unsurprising for fresh-baked bread at holiday-time to be decorated with some kind of imprint, as in the later tradition of hot cross buns on Good Friday: this may be a faint clue to what the *godes loues* of the Bakers' Play looked like.[77] What matters here is that an outwardly non-Eucharistic blessing of a meal — the Antichrist seems to understand it as such — takes on Eucharistic power anyway. The *prynt* may be as common as the cross on a bun, but the Antichrist's minions see it as a manifestation of the light of Jesus, as if the bread might as well be the Host itself. The scene was, as Emmerson suggests, surely added to celebrate Corpus Christi; the Dyers' celebration, however, is not necessarily in the creation of the Eucharist, but more likely in the way the episode's signifiers slide between sacramental bread and daily bread, reducing the conceptual distance between the two.

In his 1572 list of 'absurdities', Christopher Goodman complains of 'Elias blessing bread with the sign of the Cross', but does not overtly refer to the sacrament.[78] Goodman's issue with the blessing is most certainly due to its Eucharistic resonance, but even he treats it as an unspoken subtlety, writing down only what he precisely sees, with the assumption that the Archbishop will pick up, as he did, on the implication. His

writing, in its attempts to separate objective events from interpretation (because the events are 'absurd' enough on their own), thus helps modern readers discern between implied staging and actual staging. Had the Dyers presented the Host literally in the 1572 production or any production in Goodman's memory, he would certainly have referred to the sacrament directly in his description, as he does for three other episodes in the Cycle.[79]

It is vital to observe here that, before the bread is blessed, Enoch, Elias, Antichrist, and all their witnesses take it as a granted communal assumption that a public act of non-sacramental eating is the final proof of humanness, and thus a necessary gesture for inclusion into any human community, beyond which no further proof is needed (to *stynt all stryffe*; Play 23: 560). The Antichrist's surety that his 'men' can eat human food qualifies that communal gesture by making clear that simple commensality, without Christian practice, is not a sufficient test. But that qualification only makes sense in relation to a basic cultural assumption that bread of any kind could function as proof against manifestations of the unnatural or unholy. Without that assumption, Enoch's initial suggestion of bread-as-test, and the Antichrist's agreement to it, would be nonsensical to its audience. And if any passage in the Chester Cycle must have been culturally legible to Cestrians, it was this one, which was invented in fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Chester, so specific to its time and place that Cestrians interpolated it, to synthesize apocryphal stories of the Antichrist into a familiar and recognizable setting.

By investing ordinary bread with sacramental power, the Dyers' *Antichrist* does insist upon the power of the Eucharist. But in doing so, it defines that power in terms of a communal, commensal system of proof set up by prior plays, in which the ability to publicly eat normal food is necessary for inclusion in the community. The *Antichrist* play, coming just before the finale of the entire cycle, looks back on the Cestrian tradition of witnessed commensality. Through that tradition, the Eucharist — along with other, less sacred Whitsuntide feasts — is legitimized and raised up by the basic unifying power of food. Just as the Corpus Christi play form entered into the already bustling Cestrian marketplace, the plays reframe the Eucharist as the ultimate example of food's broader social-commensal function, which implicitly validates the gluttonous but pious celebrations of Chester's Whitsuntide feasting.

The Chester Cycle features not only the Bakers' *Last Supper* play with real shared bread, but also the Barbers' *Abraham* play, in which an

Expositor tells the audience point-blank that Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine prefigures the Eucharist (Play 4: 113–44). To suggest that the Eucharist is absent from all of the Chester Cycle's food and drink symbolism would be absurd. But to subordinate all of its food and drink symbolism to the Eucharist would be equally reductive. Ritualized public acts of eating, as Meigs shows, are a global practice, and Eucharistic ritual is only one manifestation of that basic social phenomenon. Among her examples of food rituals, Meigs discusses tribal sacrifice, in which believers 'share a common meal with the deity and in so doing ... establish a bond of common life'.[80]

Food's power to commingle and unite surely governs and shapes Eucharistic ritual, especially as it is represented through the story of the Last Supper. More overtly than Elias' grace, the Bakers' reimagining of Eucharistic bread as party favours, to be thrown playfully into a crowd of gathered neighbours, is an act that blends secular feast with sacred ritual. As I mention above, their sharing of bread crosses from representation to real action: not the real action of transubstantiation, but simply the real action of eating together. The gesture renews a sense of living commensality in the Last Supper story and in the ritual formed around it, breaking down its routine structure and rendering it playful, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, bodily, and communal — in short, human. In Chester, the sacrament reaches its most understandable, familiar form because the Cycle weaves it into the broader festival tradition of Cestrian food exchange and consumption, from which the plays draw their cultural significance and power.

Herod and the Gossips

In the Waterleaders and Drawers' *Noah* play, after Noah's wife fails to secure admission into the ark for her Good Gossips, the Gossips celebrate their doom with a final display of conspicuous overconsumption, three stanzas which British Museum MS Additional 10305 introduces as 'THE GOOD GOSSIPPES SONGE'.[81] The interpolation of a drinking song is unique to Chester; Travis excises it from his reader's text because it 'mocked' the otherwise sincere plays, and was 'foreign to the comic joy of the pre-Reformation dramatic productions':[82]

> The fludd comes fleetinge in full faste,
> one everye syde that spredeth full farre.
> For fere of drowninge I am agaste;
> good gossippe, lett us drawe nere.

And let us drinke or wee departe,
for oftetymes wee have done soe.
For at one draught thou drinke a quarte,
and soe will I doe or I goe.
Here is a pottell full of malnesaye good and stronge;
yt will rejoyse both harte and tonge.
Though Noe thinke us never soe longe,
yett wee wyll drinke atyte. Play 3: 225–36

The Gossips and their lyric can be best understood in terms of their physical location in relation to the performance, which is relatively easy to determine. The ark, which needed to be large enough to allow for eight actors to participate in slapstick physical comedy inside and upon it, and which had to have room to display painted images of the forty-eight different species that they name, would have to take up the entire waggon.[83] Any action that took place outside the ark would thus have to occur in the *platea*.[84] When the Gossips sing or speak their drunken lyric, then, they do so out in the festival market, among the Cestrians who are or will soon be drinking, eating, or buying and selling foodstuffs nearby. All but Noah's family are barred from the ark; on the ground, a visibly Cestrian crowd of revellers await the flood.[85] When Noah's Wife insists on remaining on land with the damned, she asserts that she 'will not owt of *this towne*' (Play 3: 200: my emphasis), a line that asserts the locality of the *platea*. She and the Gossips speak for Chester.

The Cestrian Gossips know what is coming, as do the local sinners whom they represent, and they embody a 'Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die' lifestyle that St. Paul would surely criticize.[86] The revellers stage their own symbolic punishment, but on their own terms. They interpolate themselves into the action temporarily, by means of a drinking song, sung in unison, for which, like many of the vocal non-liturgical songs in the Cycle, 'a preexistent tune probably was used, well known to players and audience'.[87] And when the punishment comes, it passes over painlessly, if not amusingly: a psalm is sung, then Noah shuts the window to the ark, 'and for a little space within the bordes hee shalbe scylent', then Noah emerges, and all is well.[88] All manuscripts agree that 'the[y] sing' when the flood comes, and MS Harley 2124 identifies the hymn as 'Save me, O God'.[89] Richard Rastall argues convincingly that this rendition of Psalm 69 would have been vernacular, and probably similar to John Hopkins's 1561 version:

> Save me, O God, and that with speed,
> the waters flow full fast:
> So nigh my soul do they proceed
> that I am sore aghast.
> I stick full deep in filth and clay,
> whereas I feel no ground:
> I fall into such floods, I say,
> that I am like be drowned.[90]

As Rastall points out, the Gossips' 'the fludd comes fleetinge in full faste' and 'for fere of drowninge I am agaste' clearly play upon the later psalm, though they do not directly parody it. In its context in *Noah*, the 'I' of the psalm is the drowning sinner in the *platea*, not the saved; if Noah and his family joined in on the singing, they still sang on behalf of the masses in the marketplace. The interplay between folk song and pious hymn conflates the Gossips' sinful overflow of wine (a quart in one gulp) with the flood that cleanses that sin; public Christian revelry is at once pleasure and penance. By shaping its revelry according to biblical terms, by enacting a symbolic punishment for its worldly excess that celebrates and encourages more of the same, Chester's *Noah* begins to resolve the inherent contradiction of a gluttonous, but sacred, holiday.

As for Herod, late medieval tradition commonly attributed his tyrannical madness to drunkenness.[91] The Cestrian Herod is certainly mad, and in the Vintners' *Three Kings* play he confirms that an overabundance of wine is at least partially to blame for his tyranny:

> [Jesus] doth mee soe greatly anoye
> that I wax dull and pure drye.
> Have done and fill the wyne in hye;
> I dye but I have drinke!
> Fill fast and lett the cuppes flye. Play 8: 414–8

Herod's boisterous call for wine ends the play, which comes second to last in the Whit-Monday schedule. And though drunkenness is embodied by a mad tyrant, that tyrant's fearsome crime and punishment are deferred until Tuesday morning, which opens with the Goldsmiths' *Slaughter of the Innocents*. Herod's drinking, like that of his Cestrian counterparts, is a bit of harmless madness at the end of the day, as painful and sinful as it may feel the following morning. The capacity of the *Three Kings* play for cautionary polemic is limited by the guild that produced it: no one could take too seriously a call for sobriety on the part of the Vintners' Guild.

In short, in the festive context of Whitsun, Herod's cups and the Gossips' quarts have everything to do with reconciling Cestrian festivity with lay piety, but nothing to do with the Blood of Christ: their significance is not dependent in any way upon the Eucharist. Granted, the polysemy of theatre, or any work of art, has the capacity to express both weighty theological significance and light public festivity in a single gesture. But a sacramental reading here would necessarily exclude wine's more ancient role, its festive role. It would miss the point. It would reduce Herod and the Gossips to pat antitypes, simply because, like all Cestrian revellers, they drink. The same forced logic would find Eucharistic significance in Robin Goddard's modern Cestrian actors as they smuggled real ale onto the stage. Even if the sixteenth-century Good Gossips were not already drinking real wine in their scene — though there is no reason why they shouldn't have done so — their drinking song paid tribute to the fellow guildsmen who, if they were anything like the guilds of REED, were already drinking festively along or near to the waggon route. That playful meaning is fundamental to the extant texts.

Festive Piety

In Northgate Street alone, within a two-minute walk of the St Werburgh's market, there were at least three establishments actively serving ale in the 1530s: the Pied Bull Inn (at the head of King Street), the Cross Keys tavern (adjacent to St Werburgh's), and the Eagle and Child tavern (up in Shoemakers' Row, offering a perfect view of the High Cross market).[92] The Cooks, Hostellers, Tapsters, and Innkeepers' guild, when they presented their *Harrowing of Hell* play on Whit-Tuesday in front of the Abbey gates and the Pentice, would thus have performed in immediate view of the businesses that they controlled — and of the patrons of those businesses. In the play, after Jesus releases the saved, one 'Mulier' emerges and speaks, in the voice of a local alewife, one of the sinners whom Jesus left behind:

> Woe be the tyme that I came *here* ...
> Sometyme I was a taverner,
> a gentle gossippe and a tapster,
> of wyne and ale a trustie bruer,
> which woe hath me wrought.
> Of kannes I kept no trewe measure.
> My cuppes I sould at my pleasure,
> deceavinge manye a creature,
> thoe my ale were nought ...

Tavernes, tapsters *of this cittye*
shalbe promoted *here* with mee
for breakinge statutes *of this contrye*,
    hurtinge *the commonwealth*,
with all typpers-tappers that are cunninge,
mispendinge much malt, bruynge so thinne,
sellinge smale cuppes money to wynne,
    agaynst all trueth to deale.
Therfore *this place* nowe ordayned ys
for such yll-doers so mych amysse.
Here shall they have ther joye and blys,
    exalted by the necke ...
Thus I betake you, more and lesse,
to my sweete mayster, syr Sathanas,
to dwell with him *in his place*
    when hyt shall you please. Play 17: 277–324[93]

The alewife scene is an essential point of contact between the historical time of the Cycle narrative and the festival time of Chester, contact without which the cycle text is left bereft of its defining dramatic design. The scene embodies medieval drama's characteristic interplay between scripted and unscripted festivity, and fits into a broadly defined, but symbolically coherent, citywide celebration.

Kolve argues that medieval street theatre was 'never geographically localized ... it happened *there* in England, in front of and amid the spectators'.[94] The Mulier's speech does not disprove Kolve's point, but it does add new complexity: there are two *here*s in her monologue. She is both in Hell ('*this place* nowe ordayned ys / for such yll-doers so mych amysse / *Here* shall they have ther joye and blys') and, like the Gossips, in Chester ('Tavernes, tapsters *of this cittye* ... breakinge statutes *of this contrye*'). The seriousness of her crime, like the Gossips', is belied by the weakness of her punishment: she damns crooked Cestrian tapsters like herself — who are in earshot, or are soon to be, at the Cross Keys, Pied Bull, and Eagle and Child — to remain exactly where they are. The humour of her accusations relies on the visibility of 'familiar faces' in the performance. The producers, and probably most of the players, were recognizably members of the Taverners' guild, and so the scene allows the Taverners to poke decidedly harmless fun at themselves, but also to affirm that, in Chester, there are universally acknowledged rules of proper brewing. As the guild performer playing the alewife recites his list of

possible offences, his performance also demonstrates his mastery of, and memorization of, those rules.

At the beginning of the *Harrowing*, Satan sits in a high-seat before a *felowshipe* gathered indoors. He gloats:

> A noble morsell ye have mone;
> Jesu that ys Godes Sonne
> comes hither with us to wonne.
> One him nowe ye you wreake.
> A man hee ys fullye, in faye,
> for greatly death hee dread todaye,
> and these wordes I hard him saye:
> 'My soule is threst [thirste] to death'. Play 17: 97–108

MSS B and H clarify the final line's somewhat confusing reference with a quote from the Matthew 26:38: *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem*, that is, 'My soul is *sorrowful* even unto death'.[95] Satan's mistranslation of *tristis* for *thirst* may be a sign that his Latin is poor, a clerical playwright's joke. Or it may have been the guildsmen and copyists who, after generations of performance, substituted a more familiar word for the Latin, spelled as *threst* in Lumiansky and Mills' base text and as *thirste* in the other four manuscripts.[96] Satan uses Jesus' complaint as proof that he is a man, not a god: in that context, *thirst* makes the most sense.

From there, the demons' dialogue continues to evoke eating and drinking. The demons refer to their situation twice more as a 'felowshippe', a term that suggests guild ceremonies.[97] In Satan's final boast, he claims responsibility for torturing Jesus through his *dinere*:

> Aysell and galle to his dinere
> I made them for to dight,
> and sythen to hange him on roode-tree.
> Nowe ys he dead, right so through mee. Play 17: 130–4

The Third Demon says that Jesus took Lazarus out of Hell 'maugre our teythe' (Play 17: 151). Satan refers to the patriarchs as 'my prysoners and my praye' (Play 17: 222). In this Hell, where Jesus is a potential morsel, the patriarchs are prey, and Lazarus is saved from teeth, demons exact their torture by devouring the damned (who have probably entered through a Hellmouth). Such a Hell is the perfect setting for an alewife, whose scene cleverly transposes the torture of demonic gluttony onto the gluttonous enjoyment of the Cestrian alehouse.

The *Harrowing*, as a point of connection between real time and narrative time, also falls at the most appropriate time of day. Like Whit-Monday, Whit-Tuesday included nine plays overall, each performed at four stations in succession, with significant pauses between plays for the tricky job of moving the waggons. Even if the Whit-Tuesday plays began immediately after the ceremonial breakfasts, they would have been a full-day event.[98] It is no wonder, then, that the final plays of Whit-Monday and Whit-Tuesday centre on a stage effect that produced light from within darkness: on Monday, the star of the nativity; in the *Harrowing*, the final Tuesday play, *primo fiat lux in inferno materialis aliqua subtilitate machinata* ('first, let there be light in Hell, by means of some subtle device'; Play 17: 1 + sd). For the effect to be visible, let alone impressive, it must have been implemented, at the earliest, as the sun began to set behind Market Hall and the Rows.[99] And so, after the Mulier's monologue on her crooked life, the demons welcome her to a new kind of festivity, providing the final stanza of the day:

> Welcome, deare darlinge, to endles bale.
> Usynge cardes, dyce, and cuppes smale,
> with many false othes to sell thy ale —
> nowe thou shall have a feaste! 332–6

'Nowe thou shall have a feaste': the Cooks, Tapsters, Hostellers, and Innkeepers speak this final line to festival-goers at all four stations, at once closing and opening festivities. Through the Alewife epilogue, the *Harrowing*'s metaphoric conceit — Hell as tavern, demons as gluttons — concludes with a perfectly-timed pivot between daylight performance and evening festivity on Whit-Tuesday. From there, the recreation would move fully indoors, in the form of multiple *general rehearse* dinners for the next day's show, return trips to Davison's tavern for shouts, and any other unrecorded festivities.

The Taverners' play encompasses the immediate time of day (sunset, the onset of night and the need for artificial lights) and its real location (as a transition from street festival into tavern feasting); it localizes its own real setting within biblical time and space by introducing a recognizably Cestrian character and allowing her to speak from both the Cestrian tavern and from Hell, which itself looks like a tavern. And through its demonic tavern, the play also locates itself in a distinctively homiletic tradition that G.R. Owst has discussed at length. It is still extant in Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwyt*:

> [þ]e zennes / þet comeþ of glotounye / and of lecherie… arizeþ communliche / ine tauerne: þet is welle of zenne … Ðe tauerne / ys þe scole of þe dyeule / huere / his deciples studieþ. and his oȝene chapel / þer / huer me de / his seruese. and þer huer he makeþ / his miracles / zuiche ase behoueþ to þe dyeule.[100]
>
> 'The sins that come from gluttony and lechery commonly arise in the tavern: it is a well of sin … The tavern is the school of the devil, where his disciples study. And it is his chapel, where men do his service. And there, he makes his miracles, such as are fitting to the devil.'

For Dan Michel, Christian miracles are amusingly reversed in the tavern: the upright lose their ability to walk, the sane become mad, and men lose their ability to speak, hear, or see correctly. As Owst points out, John Bromyard and the anonymous homilist of MS Additional 41321 provide similar descriptions of taverns.[101] The tavern and all the activities that occur within it are infernal reversals of the Church and its sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, as holy wine and bread give way to drunkenness and gluttony. In the *Harrowing*, Satan's presentation of Jesus as a 'noble morsell' is a distinctly anti-Eucharistic move.

The Chester guildsmen thus place themselves in respectable literary company. Ralph Hanna has located four passages in *Piers Plowman* that fit, along with the *Harrowing*, within a broad trend of 'medieval antitavern invective': a trend that arose 'in response to a variety of circumambient social discourses … [Langland] replicates the misbehaviors, the covert adulterations of product, also typical of Langland's Rose or the alewife of the Chester *Harrowing of Hell*: these are representations that speak … to abiding suspicions of victualing as a profession'.[102]

Chester's alewife epilogue does, as Hanna argues, draw its material directly from a generalized suspicion of victuallers' adulteration of their goods. The Alewife admits that she has deceived customers by selling them smaller measures than were promised, that she illegally masked the weakness of her beer by adding hops, that she adds ashes and herbs that mar her malts, that she waters down her brew and hides the extra malt, that she sells badly fermented wine that causes sickness (Play 17: 289–320).[103] Hanna and Owst show convincingly that a very broad swath of medieval poets and homilists, including Langland, use invectives based in that suspicion to drive listeners away from taverns. But those poets, at least as far as we know, were not brewers or taverners themselves, nor did

they write to an audience of tavern-goers and revellers. It would be absurd to consider that the Cooks, Tapsters, Brewers, and Innkeepers' players would take up such a charge in any seriousness. These players are more like Chaucer, who can simultaneously lampoon anti-tavern invective, celebrate the fun of drinking, and criticize excessive gluttony — by filtering his tale through a Pardoner whose hypocritical piety is unserious in the extreme, who preaches on the tavern as the 'develes temple' filled with the 'verray develes officeres' while he drinks and eats within one.[104] The alewife, who owes Satan her allegiance, works well as one of the 'develes officers', an inverted priest: rather than administering wine that is more than wine, she sells ale that is less than ale. And the Pardoner's three revellers, like the Cestrian players, begin drinking at breakfast.[105]

Both texts admit that the tavern is Hell and invite their listeners in anyway. The symbolic power of such satires is more complex than simple reversal or parody. Like Chaucer, the Cestrian *Harrowing* players wink at their audiences from within a nominally pious conceit, encouraging revelry without breaking from doctrine, gesturing at a practical street-level lay piety that reconciled local festive tradition with Christian imprecations against sins of the body. The *Harrowing* is no more an anti-Christian work than the *Canterbury Tales*, nor is it carnivalesque in any real anti-establishment way. Rather, it is playful: even as it pays due respect to the power of Jesus' pure light as he releases sinners from the *develes temple*, it relishes in the irony that it is Cestrian taverners presenting that image.

That sense of play goes far beyond devotional analogies with the Eucharist. A Cestrian holiday festival seems to have been much like modern Mardi Gras — to return to Clopper's cognate for the Chester Bakers' bread-sharing — a complex of cultural practices and symbols within which the reversal of the Lenten fast is only a small, though defining, part. Lay believers enjoyed worldly gluttony and revelry under the auspices of a Church feast; the feast day drew its schedule and its significance from a belief system that disallowed such behaviour.[106] Steven Justice defines medieval belief as 'a complex of intellectual and voluntary practices, irreducible to the propositions they are meant to maintain ... a set of practices cultivated systematically with the goal of habituation'.[107] The humour of the *Harrowing*, like the real feasts that are enacted throughout the Chester cycle, does precisely that kind of symbolic work, embedding in local habits (that is, in the recurring performance of the plays) a narrative that makes guild gluttony continuous with biblical history.

Public drama, at the secular and religious centre of civic festivities, opens up a playful conceptual space within which religious contradictions can be reconciled. Sarah Beckwith has argued that the York Cycle, for instance, allowed guildsmen to work through contradictions between Eucharistic belief and practical sense.[108] I propose that, at Chester, believers negotiated the paradoxes of sacred gluttony and festive piety by incorporating them into a play cycle that both decried and celebrated conspicuous consumption as a proof of humanness, reaffirming the Eucharist's continuity with essential secular feasts, while simultaneously enacting and deferring the divine punishment that might restrain human appetites. The Chester food and drink episodes allow the Cestrian laity to enter into taverns with a clear conscience, despite the familiar homiletic warnings against them — to show their Whitsuntide devotion *in* their revelry. Cestrian players at once confess and celebrate their gluttony, by presenting the central spectacles of excess in a worshipful but comic shape. Staged festivity, at once in Hell and in Chester, provides the conceptual space for two incompatible truths — that feasting in excess is sinful, and that such excess forms the core of guildsmen's observance of holidays — to coexist for the duration of the festival.

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NOTES

1. Anna Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction' in *Food and Culture: A Reader* edited Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997) 95–106, at 104.
2. British Library MS Harley 2124 presents the *Trial* and *Passion* as one play, so in at least one case the count of plays was twenty-four, not twenty-five; I follow Lumiansky and Mills's convention of enumerating the plays from 1–24, with the *Passion* as 16A. See *The Chester Mystery Cycle, Vol. 1: Text* edited R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills *EETS SS 3* (1974) 303.
3. According to David Rogers, the first waggon station was at 'the Abbaye gates', which are in Northgate Street; Rogers places the second waggon station at the High Cross (the intersection between the modern Northgate, Eastgate, Watergate, and Bridge Streets), the third in Watergate Street, and the fourth in Bridge Street. There may have been a fifth station in Eastgate Street, but this is not confirmed. See *REED: Cheshire including Chester* edited Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills, 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, 2007) *1 xli*, 331–2. For a bit of the ongoing debate about the waggons' route, see also Elizabeth Baldwin 'A Note on the Chester Pageant Route' *METh* 27 (2005) 131–2.

4. Among the multiple examples in which food, drink, or an item associated with food and drink is directly mentioned or indirectly implied:

   In Play 3 (*Noah*) lines 277–92, God goes into extended detail about adding clean beasts, fowl, and fish to Noah's previously vegetarian diet. No parallel speech exists in the other extant dramatisations of the Noah story.

   In Play 9 (*Offerings of the Magi*) Melchior's offering of gold takes the form of a chalice (*Tunc appariet sciatuum cum auro*, line 135 + sd).

   Various characters in Play 10 (*Innocents*) and Play 18 (*Resurrection*) repeatedly swear 'As drinke I wine' or 'As eate I brede'; Play 18 also includes Jesus' extended monologue on the 'verey bread of life'.

   In Play 12 (*Temptation*) lines 41–84, Satan tempts Jesus with 'speach of bread'.

   Play 14 (*Christ at the House of Simon the Leper*) features the hospitality of Simon and his household, and may easily have involved a table setting or the sharing of food or drink, especially when Martha offers 'to serve you here / as I was wonte in good manere / before in other place' (lines 37–40).

   In Play 16 (*Trial*) Jesus' torturers use food-based metaphors for violence: buffeting as a feast ('though my fiste flye, / gettes he a feast', after line 97, only in MSS R and B); spitting as spice 'nowe my nose hase / good spice' (line 350); in Play 16A (*Passion*) when Jesus cries out from thirst, they offer him torment as 'drynke' (not vinegar, interestingly: lines 352–5, compare Play 17 lines 130–34). In the *Harrowing of Hell*, as I will discuss at more length, the Demons offer the Alewife 'a feaste' of torture (line 336).

   In Play 22 (*Prophets of Antichrist*) line 135, Daniel prophecies a beast 'eatinge over all that hee could fonge'.

   In Play 23 (*Last Judgment*) lines 453–67, Jesus saves those who helped him by helping the needy (including by feeding the hungry) and damns those who did not.

5. In his 1609 *Breviary*, Cestrian David Rogers set down a list of 'all the companyes as the were played vpon there seuerall dayes. which was. Mondaye. Tuesedaye, and Wensedaye in the Whitson weeke. And how many Pagiantes weare played vpon euerye daye at the Charge of euerye companye'. The list is often more comprehensive and thorough than the guild ascriptions in the cycle manuscripts, so I have used it as the basis for my table. There are earlier and slightly different iterations of the list, including the guild list accompanying the Early Banns in the White Book of the Pentice (British Library MS Harley 2150), but I have chosen the later list because it is more contemporary with the records and productions I refer to later on in my discussion. See *REED: Cheshire including Chester 1* 79–80 and 341–5.

6. Lumiansky and Mills provide thorough explanations and hypotheses for the meanings of 'grayne' and 'sowre milke' in their notes to Play 7: see *The Chester*

Mystery Cycle, Vol. 2: Commentary edited R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills *EETS SS* 9 (1986) 108. For 'jannock', see *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. *janok*, *n.*

7. The play dialogue does not make clear whether Tudd's 'meate' refers appositively to one of the many foods he has already named and unpacked, or whether—and I think this is more likely—he brings out still more food each time he mentions 'meate', adding item after item to an already extensive menu.
8. Play 7: 189, 201–4. For 'sose', see *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. *sos*, *n.* For 'sowse', see *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. *souse*, n^1.
9. Play 7, after line 124**;** see also Lumiansky and Mills's footnotes; also *Chester Mystery Cycle 2* 108.
10. *Chester Mystery Plays 2008*, directed by Robin Goddard, performed by Citizens of Chester at the Cathedral Green, Chester, 26 June – 19 July 2008. Confirmed by an email exchange with Goddard 31 January 2009.
11. Peter Travis *Dramatic Design in the Chester Cycle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 124.
12. 'My hunch that the foodstuffs for the feast were obvious, artificial stage-properties is not supported by the Painters' records for 1574/75, where real food seems to have been bought for the performance'; Travis *Dramatic Design* 279 (see note 32).
13. As the *REED* editors explain, clear records only remain for these final three cyclic performances of the *Shepherds* because the Painters began to distinguish their play expenses under a special heading in 1568. By 'final three cyclic performances', I do not count a final non-cyclical performance of the *Shepherds* play, performed at Chester for the Earl of Darby and Lord Strange in July 1578; that performance does not appear in the Painters' records and probably was not produced by the guild; see *REED Cheshire* 181, 1013.
14. I discuss some of these other records at length later on in the paper. See Note 45.
15. *REED Cheshire* 122–5.
16. *REED Cheshire* 139–41.
17. *REED Cheshire* 165–7.
18. Lawrence M. Clopper *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 178, emphasis added.
19. The Late Banns, like the list of company assignments (see note 5), appear in Rogers's *Breviary*. There is some disagreement over the Late Banns' date of composition (and thus over the performance years to which they refer), but Clopper and others have agreed that the extant revisions of the Late Banns probably refer to the cycle performances of the 1560s and 1570s. The Banns are

thus applicable to the 1568, 1572, and 1575 performances and records that I discuss in this section. But it is important to note here that both Clopper's estimations and my own, in this section of the paper at least, are *restricted to the latest performances of the plays*. No instruction about casting loaves appears in the Early Banns. See Lawrence Clopper 'The History and Development of the Chester Cycle' *Modern Philology 75: 3* (Feb. 1978) 219–46; R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills 'Development of the Cycle' in *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Essays and Documents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983) 165–202; and *REED Cheshire* 886–97.

20. Clopper *Drama, Play and Game* 178 (note 26).
21. Clopper *Drama, Play and Game* 178, emphasis added.
22. Clopper *Drama, Play and Game* 169.
23. Travis *Dramatic Design* 122. See also 38–9, 68, and 253.
24. In 1550, the Cordwainers and Shoemakers spend 4s. 8d. for 'bakyng of godes brede', which seems to be part of the 'generall Reyherse' feast before the show. Though the context in the Banns makes clear that 'God's loaves' are some kind of baked good, small and cheap enough to be baked in bulk and distributed (and soft and non-sticky enough to be safely 'caste'), there seem to be few clues to what the baked good might have looked like. The term is absent from the *OED* and *MED*, except in *OED* s.v. *god* 16a, in oaths by the Eucharist (as in *Romeo and Juliet 3* 5), but the favours passed out at Chester obviously cannot have been Eucharistic wafers. I will suggest one possibility for 'God's loaves' when I return to the Bakers later on in this essay.
25. *REED Cheshire* 140. In 1575, two fewer mugs are bought, but there is also one fewer putter on the books.
26. *REED Cheshire* 126.
27. Jannocks are less apt for sharing, it seems, than clap-bread, the unleavened, flat oat cake, described at some length in *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*; the two northern forms of oat-bread seem often to be mentioned together elsewhere. See *Oxford English Dictionary* s.vv. *clap-bread n.* and *jannock n.*, and Celia Fiennes *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* edited Christopher Morris (London: Cresset Press, 1947) 188–91.
28. *REED Cheshire* 122–6.
29. *REED Cheshire* 123.
30. Sarah Beckwith *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Cycle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 65–71.
31. Travis *Dramatic Design* 120–22.
32. Clopper 'History and Development' 219–20.

33. *Chester Cycle Vol. 2* 108 (see notes 129–30). Lumiansky and Mills note that the line only appears as 'wee serven yt here' in two of five manuscripts, but the editors favour the reading for sense.
34. C.P. Lewis and A.T. Thacker *A History of the County of Chester Volume V, Part 2: The City of Chester: Culture, Buildings, Institutions* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2005) 94. On Chester as the northwest's primary port town, see *REED Cheshire xli–xlii*.
35. Lucian *Extracts from the MS. Liber Luciani De Laude Cestrie, Written About the Year 1195 and Now in the Bodleian library, Oxford* edited M.V. Taylor (London: The Record Society, 1912) 44–7. See also David Mills *Recycling the Cycle: The City of Chester and Its Whitsun Plays* (University of Toronto Press, 1998) 20–38.
36. Lucian *De Laude Cestrie* 47. After praising the secular marketplace, Lucian attempts to sacralise it: *Nimirum ad exemplum panis eterni de celo venientis, qui natus secundum prophetas 'in medio orbis et umbilico terre', omnibus mundi pari propinquate voluit apparere* ('Clearly, it is a symbol of the eternal bread coming from heaven, which springs forth, following the prophets, "at the centre of the earth and the navel of the world"; he wishes to provide for all of the world brought equally near'). Lucian's primary objective is to read divine symbolism into Chester's layout, particularly its cruciform main streets; the fact that the streets date back to a pre-Christian Roman grid (see *REED Cheshire xxiii*) serves as a corrective to Lucian's revisionist history.
37. Lewis and Thacker *A History of the County of Chester* 98–100.
38. Lewis and Thacker *A History of the County of Chester* 94–5.
39. Lewis and Thacker *A History of the County of Chester* 95. See also Keith D. Lilley et. al 'Digital Mapping' and 'Digital Maps' in *Mapping Medieval Chester* at <www.medievalchester.ac.uk/mappings/mapintro.html>.
40. See note 4.
41. David Mills 'Who Are Our Customers? The Audience for Chester's Plays' *METh 20* (1998) 104–17, especially 104.
42. See note 38.
43. The suggestion may surprise modern theatre-goers, including Goddard's modern Cestrian players, who enjoy the benefits of a quiet and attentive audience. As V.A. Kolve and others have pointed out, however, such practice is a relatively recent innovation; indeed, the 'mystic abyss' of silence and darkness that surrounds most modern theatre was an invention of Wagner at Bayreuth in 1876. That 'abyss' is fast eroding in the twenty-first century. As Broadway theatre refocuses on spectacle (with an eye, like Mills's guildsmen, on 'simple commercialism'), silent audiences may be passing out somewhat out of vogue — during the Tony-nominated *Rock of Ages*, for instance, '[y]ou get to drink cans of Coors Light while sitting in a red velvet chair in an 85-year-old

Broadway theatre ... vendors walk down the aisles hawking cold six packs like they're at a Mets game'. See V.A. Kolve *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford University Press, 1966) 22–4; Barry Millington *The New Grove Guide to Wagner and His Operas* (New York: Oxford University Press 2006) 146, 173; Ellen Carpenter '7 Reasons to Love "Rock of Ages"' in *Spin Magazine Online* at <www.spin.com/blog/7-reasons-love-rock-ages>.

44. C. Clifford Flanigan 'Liminality, Carnival, and Social Structure: The Case of Late Medieval Biblical Drama' in *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literarture and Anthropology* edited Kathleen Ashley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 42–63.
45. *REED Cheshire* 91. After the Cordwainers and Shoemakers in 1550, those records are: the Smiths, Cutlers, and Plumbers in 1554, 1561, 1567, 1568, 1572, and 1575; the Painters, Glaziers, Embroiderers and Stationers in 1568, 1572, and 1575; the Bowyers, Fletchers, Coopers, and Stringers in 1572 and 1575.
46. The Cordwainers' accountant separates the record into two totals, noting 58s in the margins halfway through, then adding 21s 4d at the end. The grand total is still a few shillings off from my own figures.
47. *REED Cheshire* 92, for instance.
48. Such a complaint, in 1422, constitutes our first reliable record of the plays in performance. See *REED Cheshire* 47–8.
49. This is a conservative estimate. Context makes it probable that expenditures 'at Iohn plemers howse', 'at Iohn a leys', and 'at Richard Anderton founderer' were primarily for refreshments.
50. *REED Cheshire* 95–6. The total of all the expenditures listed here amounts, according to my count, to £3 4s 10d, not £3 4s 7d. I cannot be sure whether the three-penny error is mine or the Smiths', so I give them the benefit of the doubt and proceed with their total.
51. Compare the Smiths' 1568 record, which specifies charges for food 'at our generall reherse', just before the 'tewsday morning ... players brekfast'; *REED Cheshire* 126.
52. The expenditures 'for bred in northgatestreat' and for drinks 'in the watergate street' could theoretically be taken, out of context, to imply indoor locations ('for bread *at a house* in Northgate Street', 'in *a tavern* in Watergate Street'.) But the Smiths' book-keeper makes a point, when the guildsmen enter a house or tavern, of referring to the place by name, not by location; since all these events happened in succession, and the names of local establishments were surely well-known, there seems to be little reason why he would leave so much up to the imagination—the simplest explanation is that these cases describe some form of eating and drinking in the streets themselves. That said, whether outdoors or inside taverns, the consumption was still public, and still festive: as I will discuss

at more length in the final section here, there would still be significant interplay between indoor revelry and outdoor theatrics.

53. Another reading of the day's events might place the tavern visits on two separate nights: one on Tuesday night, after the performance; one on Wednesday night, after the final payments are made to players. But that reading would only extend, not weaken, my argument that the Smiths engaged in near-constant feasting throughout the Whitsun-week celebration. It may also be worth noticing that the record specifically refers to 'Mr Davison' and 'Mrs Davison' as the tavern owners; this is a likely scribal error, but its suggestion of two competing taverners named Davison is amusing.
54. Meg Twycross 'The King's Peace and the Play: The York Corpus Christi Eve Proclamation' *METh 29* (2007) 121–50 at 126.
55. Eamon Duffy *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 137.
56. The very notion of 'in character' here is somewhat anachronistic anyway. And since the players dressed and put on face paint as part of their morning ceremonies, and did not remove them until their play was done, then they would likely have remained in costume throughout the day, in full view, eating and drinking, both attendees at and creators of the festival. The ritual procession of costumed cycle characters during Chester's Midsummer festival is a testament to the players' tendency to remain simultaneously in the persona of their characters and to walk through the marketplace as Cestrians.
57. This minor point has proven to be my most contentious, because of axiomatic assumptions about medieval people's alcohol tolerance, and the weakness of their ale. Sixteenth-century English ale could be relatively weak indeed, but it was still usually as strong as modern light beer, according to the 'Medieval Brewers' Guild' that meets and shares its wares each year at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo. In their *Harrowing of Hell* play, the Cooks and Innkeepers imply that the adulteration of ale is among the worst of mortal sins. As high as their alcohol tolerance was, pre-modern Englishmen must have gotten drunk sometime, or else Langland and Chaucer would have had no models for Gluttony or the Miller. I am convinced that the occasion of the plays was one of those times, but my argument here does not depend upon this point.
58. Email with Robin Goddard, 31 January 2009.
59. Email with Meg Twycross, 12 September 2009.
60. Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction' 103.
61. Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction' 95, emphasis hers.
62. Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction' 104–5.
63. Kolve *The Play Called Corpus Christi* 23–4.

64. Caroline Walker Bynum *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 86–7.
65. Luke 24: 36–45; *Bibliorum Sacrorum, Iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam, Nova Editio* edited Aloisius Gramatica (Vatican: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1913) 1004–5.
66. Luke 24: 36–45; *The Precise Parallel New Testament, Rheims New Testament* (Challoner revision) edited John R. Kohlenberger III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 468–70.
67. Thanks to Meg Twycross for suggesting that a love-feast may be hinted at here.
68. Mills *Recycling the Cycle* 181.
69. R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills 'The Texts of the Chester Cycle' in *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Essays and Documents* edited R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983) 57–76.
70. Lumiansky and Mills 'The Texts of the Chester Cycle' 22.
71. Lumiansky and Mills 'The Texts of the Chester Cycle' 76.
72. *Chester Mystery Cycle Vol. 2* 345 (note for lines 585–616). Also see Richard K. Emmerson 'Contextualizing Performance: The Reception of the Chester Antichrist' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 29:1* (1999) 81–119, at 99.
73. Emmerson 'Contextualizing Performance' 98–100.
74. See *Manuale ad Usum Percelebris Ecclesie Sarisburiensis* edited by A. Jefferies Collins (Chichester: Moore and Tillyer for the Henry Bradshaw Society, 1960) 85–6.
75. *Manuale* 72.
76. *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. *prente*, *n.*
77. See *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. *hot cross bun*, *n*: 'A type of sweet spiced currant bun marked with a cross and traditionally eaten hot or toasted on Good Friday', with a reference as early as 1733. The significance of the cross on the bun is Christian, but that does not make the bun the Eucharist.
78. *REED Cheshire* 148.
79. *REED Cheshire* 147–8: he refers to the *Last Supper*, the *Resurrection*, and the *Pentecost*.
80. Meigs 'Food as a Cultural Construction' 103.
81. Cues for music in the Chester cycle manuscripts are generally vague and inconsistent, and Richard Rastall acknowledges that the positive indication of music in one cycle manuscript neither necessitates nor precludes singing in the other four, though the similarity of the lyrics to a psalm later in the play makes it very probably that the lines were sung. Whether or not they were sung, the first two stanzas of the passage are set apart in meter, rhyme, and content as a

stand-alone lyric: the Gossips switch to three stanzas of $a^4b^4a^4b^4$, which is sing-song in comparison to the typical Chester dialogue ($a^4a^4a^4b^3c^4c^4c^4b^3$, sometimes $a^4a^4a^4b^3a^4a^4a^4b^3$), which pauses and ties stanzas together with a shortened tag line. See *Chester Mystery Cycle 2* 52, and Richard Rastall 'Music in the Cycle' in *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Essays and Documents* edited R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Press, 1983) 111–65, at 156.

82. Travis *Dramatic Design* 68. See also Lumiansky and Mills 'The Texts of the Chester Cycle', in which no data is given to support Travis's suspicion that the Gossips and Alewife scenes were from a late, corrupted copy of the cycle.
83. See Play 3: 160 + sd 'Then Noe shall goe into the arke with all his familye, his wyffe excepte, and the arke muste bee borded rownde aboute. And one the bordes all the beastes and fowles hereafter reahersed muste bee paynted, that ther wordes may agree with the pictures'. In the lines that follow, the characters point out forty-eight different species, with two animals each.
84. Some of it certainly was set up in the Rows or on the high levels of the abbey: the stage directions suggest that *Noah*'s God made use of site-specific architecture that varied from station to station. 'And firste in some high place — or in the clowdes, if it may be — God speaketh unto Noe standinge without the arke with all his familye' (line 1 + sd).
85. Thanks to Jennifer Miller for providing the initial suggestion that the Gossips would be located in the audience.
86. See 1 Corinthians 15:32.
87. Rastall 'Music in the Cycle' 157.
88. Play 3: 260 + sd.
89. Play 3: 252 + sd.
90. Rastall 'Music in the Cycle' 159.
91. Chaucer's Pardoner, for instance, uses Herod as an archetype of drunken misconduct: 'Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste, / Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste / To sleen the Baptist John, ful giltelees'. Geoffrey Chaucer *The Riverside Chaucer* edited Larry D. Benson and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 196.
92. Thomas Hughes 'On the Inns and Taverns of Chester, Past and Present. Part I'. *Journal of the Chester and North Wales Architectural, Archaeological, and Historical Society 2nd Series, Number 5* (1858) 91–110, especially 97–105.
93. Emphasis added.
94. Kolve *The Play Called Corpus Christi* 23.
95. Matthew 26: 38, emphasis added; *Vulgatam Clementinam* 953; *Rheims New Testament* 156.

96. *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. *thirst*, *n* recognizes them both as variant spellings.

97. *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. *felaushipe*, *n*. Definition 3 is 'The mutual relationship, or characteristic behavior, of boon companions; conviviality, revelry'; definition 6 is 'An organized society of persons united by office, occupation, or common rules of living: (a) a collegiate body; a knightly order; (b) a craft fraternity; a guild, (c) a monastic community'. See Play 23: 123, 147.

98. At 25 minutes per play per station, plus 10-minute transitions between stations — a *very* conservative estimate — the entire day of overlapping plays would have taken 6 hours and 50 minutes. At all stations, the sun rose and set behind at least two storeys on all sides (the only station outside of the Rows was in the shadow of the Cathedral and Market Hall), so semi-darkness would have set in earlier than if the plays were performed in an open field. See Lilley and others 'Digital Maps'.

99. Lilley and others, 'Digital Maps'.

100. In more detail:

> [þ]e zennes / þet comeþ of glotounye / and of lecherie... arizeþ communliche / ine tauerne: þet is welle of zenne. Ðeruore / ich wylle a lite take / of þe zennes / þet byeþ y-do / ine þe tauerne. Ðe tauerne / ys þe scole of þe dyeule / huere / his deciples studieþ. and his oȝene chapel / þer / huer me de / his seruese. and þer huer he makeþ / his miracles / zuiche ase behoueþ to þe dyeule. At cherche / kan god / his uirtues seawy. and do his miracles. þe blynde: to liȝte. þe crokede: to riȝte. yelde þe wyttes of þe wode. Þe speche: to þe dombe. Þe hierþe: to þe dyaue. Ac þe dyeuel deþ al ayenward / in þe tauerne. Vor huanne þe glotoun geþ in to þe tauerne / ha geþ opriȝt. huanne he comþ a-yen: he ne heþ uot þet him moȝe sosteyni ne bere. Huanne he þerin geþ: he y-zycþ / and y-herþ / and specþ wel / and onderstant. huan he comþ ayen: he heþ al þis uorlore / ase þe ilke þet ne heþ wyt / ne scele / ne onderstondinge. Zuyche byeþ þe miracles þet þe dyeuel makeþ.
>
> 'The sins that come from gluttony and lechery commonly arise in the tavern: it is a well of sin. Therefore, I will talk a little about the sins that are done in the tavern. The tavern is the school of the devil, where his disciples study. And it is his chapel, where men do his service. And there, he makes his miracles, such as are fitting to the devil. At church, God knows his seven virtues, and does his miracles. The blind: to sight. The crooked: to straight. He gives wits to the mad. Speech to the dumb. Hearing to the deaf. And the devil does all of this backwards in the tavern. For when the glutton goes into the tavern, he walks upright; when he comes out again, he does not have the ability to balance or carry himself. When he goes in, he can see and

> hear and speak well, and understand; when he comes out again, he has lost all of this, just like those that have no wits, nor skill, nor understanding. Such are the miracles that the devil makes.'

Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwyt, or Remorse of Conscience, Volume 1 edited Pamela Gradon *EETS OS 23* (1975) 56. Interestingly, much later in the *Ayenbite*, at 247–8, Dan Michel also describes Heaven as a tavern.

101. Gerald Robert Owst *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd revised edition 1961) 434–41.

102. Ralph Hanna III 'Brewing Trouble: On Literature and History — and Alewives' in *Bodies and Disciplines. Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England (Medieval Cultures 9)* edited Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 1–18, at 7-10.

103. See also Lumiansky and Mills *The Chester Mystery Cycle Vol. 2* 275–6.

104. *Riverside Chaucer* 196.

105. 'Longe erst er prime rong of any belle ... set hem in a taverne to drynke'; *Riverside Chaucer* 198–9.

106. Duffy insists that pre-Reformation lay piety could often reach extremely rigorous levels of personal devotion and affect. He acknowledges, however, that in practice, lay festival often incorporated 'patently pagan observances', drawing on 'a vocabulary derived from the ritual calendar, in which sacred and secular themes, the polarities of fast and feast and downright misrule, were difficult to disentangle'. See Duffy *Stripping of the Altars* 11–14.

107. Steven Justice 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?' *Representations 103* (2008) 1–29, at 14.

108. Beckwith asserts that one of the York cycle's primary social functions was to work through 'some of the central paradoxes of Christ's ministry on earth in a dramatic language from which the meanings of that ministry cannot be separated or extracted'. She focuses on transubstantiation as one of York's 'most ardent and outrageous claims', a contradiction not only embodied in public play but also made possible by it. See Beckwith *Signifying God* xvi–xvii, 59–60, 121–4.