ACOUSTIC TYRANNY
Metre, Alliteration and Voice in *Christ before Herod*

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The poetic diversity of the York Corpus Christi Cycle is well known to students of early English drama. The play's earliest editors and critics (and many scholars since) presumed that such variety is evidence of the different styles of the dramatists who worked on the cycle in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and, therefore, also correspond to different stages in its composition.[1] While it is inconceivable that the York Corpus Christi Cycle would not have been subject to revision during its long history, viewing the existing cycle in such way does limit how we understand the use and effects of its verse in performance. Of course, some pageants will necessarily be from an earlier or later stage in the Cycle's performance life, but dismissing parts of the cycle as 'simple' and 'dull',[2] for example, or even ascribing the choice of verse to authorial style alone perhaps, misses an opportunity to explore the structural details and potential effects of that verse when embodied by an actor and performed in real time. Previous critics have similarly expressed misgivings with the sequential authorship model; J.B. Reese was one of the first, arguing that the sequential authorship theory ignored 'the elaborate poetic devices that are used for dramatic purposes'.[3] Reese both illustrated the similarities between the pageants traditionally assigned to three different playwrights and showed how the shifting use of syllabic and alliterative verse moves with the subject, tone and character of the scene, rather than with a change in author. He argued that the alliterative verse of the York Cycle was, therefore:

> fitted into intricate stanzaic patterns [and] was equipped with the many devices of linking in order to create ... a functional dramatic medium. When Herod rants, the alliteration *does* become 'tumultuous'; but when Christ speaks from the Cross, the same medium of alliterative verse is used for quite a different effect.[4]

In recent years, however, with the foregrounding of the play as a performed (rather than literary) medium, the variety and effect of its verse has received relatively little attention. But with the recent turn in early drama studies towards phenomenology, embodiment, and audience

response it is perhaps an apt moment to return to the subject and consider further the dramatic and affective potential of the York Cycle's poetic form. There isn't the space here to discuss the verse of the entire cycle and so this article will focus on one of the most metrically diverse of York's pageants, *Christ before Herod*, and specifically on Herod's opening speech in the first three stanzas of the pageant, those that establish the patterns and tone of the piece as a whole. I will first analyse how the *Herod*-playwright handles the two cornerstones of alliterative verse (metre and alliteration), before moving on to consider their effects in terms of character representation and audience experience, and how both align with the play's specific devotional agenda. However, before we discuss the pageant's complex metre and alliteration, it is worth pausing to explore Herod as a character type in the literature, art and drama of the Middle Ages.

The Herod Role

Historically, three different Herods ruled the kingdom of Judea between 37 BC and AD 44. It is the first, known as Herod the Great, who, according to the bible, met with the Magi and ordered the Slaughter of the Innocents; his son Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist and mocked Christ before returning him to Pilate for judgement, and it is he who is the main protagonist of *Christ before Herod*. Herod the Great's grandson, Herod Agrippa, was the third of that name to rule Judea and was noted in history for his pride and vanity, a mortal king who proclaimed himself a god, the king who ordered the beheading of Saint James and the imprisonment of Saint Peter before finally being struck down by an avenging angel. The Gospel accounts do distinguish between the rulers, although it easy to see how they could be conflated; as monarch of the Kingdom of Judea, for example, Herod the Great is referred to as *Herodes rex* (Matthew 2:3), where Herod Antipas is generally called *Herodes tetrarcha*, Herod the Tetrarch (Matthew 14:1; Luke 3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1).[5] The different titles mark the division of Herod the Great's kingdom into the four territories forming the Roman Tetrarchy of Judea, of which Herod Antipas governed only a portion, namely Galilee and Perea.

In some medieval texts the distinction between the three Herods and their actions is also maintained, as in *The Golden Legend* which clearly sets them apart by outlining their deeds, although the author also stresses that all three were 'notorious for their cruelty'.[6] In other works, however, and especially in the drama, the deeds and characteristics of the three historical Herods are conflated, although whether deliberately or through

misinterpretation is not clear. In *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, for instance, both the Slaughter of the Innocents and the beheading of John the Baptist are attributed to a king named 'Herode', who is also punished by God by being 'eten and put to dethe / by the smallyst worme',[7] a death usually associated with the vain Herod Agrippa.[8] David Staines explains such conflation by suggesting that the name of Herod by the thirteenth century evoked everything that was wicked in mankind and so came to represent not an individual historical character, as in *The Golden Legend*, but a 'personification of vice', an 'exemplum of the horror of vice and a frank warning to mankind to avoid evil'.[9]

With the conflation of the different generations and their actions can also be seen the beginnings of Herod as a character type, his key traits of rage, envy, cruelty, lustfulness, instability and pride being provided by his three historical antecedents. Even in early liturgical drama the crimes of the Herod dynasty were attributed to a single individual and already he was beginning to exhibit his characteristic vices and behaviours, and so become the 'epitome of human wickedness'.[10] In the *Service Representing Herod* and the *Slaughter of the Innocents* episodes of the twelfth-century Fleury play, for instance, Herod is described as *furore accensus* ('inflamed with rage') and the stage directions add that *Herodes et filius minentur cum gladiis* ('Herod and his son should make threatening gestures with their swords'). Later, the stage directions of the *Slaughter of the Innocents* request that *Tunc Herodes, quasi corruptus, arrepto gladio, paret seipsum occidere* ('Then Herod, as if demented, having seized a sword, [should] contrive to kill himself').[11] These distinctive characteristics of rage, violence and madness are also seen in much later drama. The Shearmen and Taylors' Herod, for example, famously rages in the streets of Coventry, and in Chester marginal stage directions seem to require Herod to throw and catch a sword, the symbol of his confrontational nature, which he then breaks in a fit of rage.[12] In Towneley's *Magnus Herodes*, Herod the Great (the father of Herod Antipas, our protagonist) tells of his boundless anger that threatens to burst forth from his body along with his twisted guts and bile; he is so incensed at the news of the Magi's escape that he gnashes and grinds his teeth, and beats the soldiers who permitted them to escape.[13]

The character of Herod also had a long history of representation in the arts. A detail from folio 131[r] of the fourteenth-century Queen Mary Psalter, for example, shows Herod the Great sitting facing the three Magi with his right arm raised and his index finger pointing decisively at the other men as he orders them to search out the new-born Christ. He sits

side-on from the viewer and we can see that his left leg is crossed over his right knee, the ankle then tucked tightly around the right-leg's calf, a position mirrored almost exactly by Pilate.[14] Herod is pictured in a similar position in a detail from folio 132[r] (which depicts the Slaughter of the Innocents) and a *bas-de-page* scene of folio 235[v], where he is giving orders to three soldiers. Other worldly, morally corrupted kings and leaders are also figured in similar postures in this manuscript; the possessed King Saul, for instance, the King of Egypt, Nero, King Henry II as he orders the death of Thomas Becket, and various other anonymous kings, emperors and prefects who order the execution of saints like Catherine and Maurice.[15] While crossed-legs are not uncommon in artistic representations of rulers, the postures in these images are quite ostentatious and seem to denote prideful, corrupted leaders whose bodies betray their degenerate souls. In the image of Herod in folio 131[r] and Pilate in folio 248[v], crossing one leg over the other to such a degree twists the body, making it seem far more asymmetrical and unbalanced than if the legs are uncrossed (compare Christ in Majesty at folio 298[v], for example). Herod is also shown in a similarly contorted pose on an early sixteenth-century ceiling boss in the north transept of Norwich Cathedral where the enraged king (standing this time) has both arms raised above shoulder height as two soldiers restrain him, his hands tugging violently on his beard. His right leg is again raised, so that the upper half is almost at a right angle, while his ankle rests on a slightly bent left leg, making the figure look like he is hopping, his cross-legged, contorted and kinetically expressive body reflecting the destructive power of his rage.[16]

As a dramatic character Herod seems to have contributed to the arrival of a particular style of performance. Chaucer's Absolon, for example, shows off his 'lightnesse and maistrye' by playing 'Herodes upon a scaffold hye', the performance obviously requiring a level of virtuosity to thus display Absolon's skill and agility as is perhaps suggested by the pictorial and dramatic representations described above.[17] The remnants of Herod's life as a dramatic character are recorded in Hamlet's stern warning to his player king, where he emphatically requests that the actor not mouth his speech like a town-crier:

> Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very

rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it. [18]

This famous speech lists many of the defining characteristics of the Herod role: the thrusting gestures (perhaps similar to the Chester Herod's sword-play) and the *robustious* or violent attitude, but more importantly for this essay, the whirling tempest of noise that 'split[s] the ears of the groundlings' and rips 'a passion to tatters, to very rags'.

In line with such character traits, York's Herod bursts suddenly into the performance space demanding silence and obedience from the audience, and, like his fellow tyrants elsewhere in the cycle plays, threatens violence upon those who do not conform. Other scholars have noted that this initiates a particular type of interactive game between the tyrant and the audience, one in which the latter are cajoled into reacting and responding to the despotic figure on stage (more of which later).[19] Alliterative verse is often associated with such figures and noted for its use in works exploring courtly bombast, political oppression and shifts in power, all of which are also topics addressed in most Herod pageants.[20] However, because of its rhythmic flexibility and relative lack of formal constraints (as compared with syllabic verse) it is also a highly versatile poetry and can be used to express a variety of emotions, themes and topics. And it is, as this essay will argue, the flexibility and malleability of alliterative verse that the playwright exploits in *Christ before Herod*.

The Sound of Tyranny

In contrast with syllabic verse, in alliterative verse the alliteration is structural and not simply decorative. The alliterative long line usually contains four stresses and is divided by a caesura into two 'verses', the a-verse and the b-verse, each given two stresses, or lifts. While syllables are vital for the overall effect, the number of unstressed syllables per line varies as can the pattern of their placement between the four lifts meaning that, although there are usually four stresses per line, their proximity to one another can vary significantly, creating vastly different stylistic effects. The standard alliterative pattern is usually cited as aa/ax, the typical arrangement in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with alliteration placed on both stressed syllables in the a-verse, but only the first in the b-verse. This also varies depending on what a particular poet wants to emphasise and

the effect that he/she wants to create, with the force and power of the line, and its flexibility, coming from the relationship between stress and alliteration, which can both complement and compete with one another.[21] As already mentioned, the alliterative long line can be moulded to suit an array of different moods and topics, and a comparison of its use in *Piers Plowman* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* neatly demonstrates this point. These patterns are generally associated with unrhymed alliterative verse and while much can be transferred to the rhymed stanzaic alliterative form (which includes *Christ before Herod*) there is an important difference to the alliterative pattern. Instead of the aa/ax arrangement, in rhymed stanzas the final stressed syllable also often alliterates to form an aa/aa pattern. For the greater part of his opening speech Herod adheres to the rhymed stanzaic pattern of aa/aa alliteration and only deviates from four stresses on three occasions: in a one-stress bob line and in two three-stress lines in which the caesura is also removed. The verse in this pageant is, nonetheless, extremely varied and it is to the complexities of metre to we must first turn to establish exactly what makes Herod's speech so 'tumultuous'.

Like most tyrants in the York Cycle, Herod opens his pageant with a demand for silence from the audience; he ascends his wagon and bellows 'Pes, ye brothellis and browlys in þis broydenesse inbrased' (1).[22] The actor playing Herod would have been in competition with an array of sounds emanating from the city and the audience, a general cacophony of noise over which the performer needed to be heard. The initial interjection here would certainly have had a pragmatic effect, the simple, single syllable *Pes* offering a short, sharp order, calling attention to the player and the commencement of the performance. Such a sudden outburst would ensure that the actor would not be consumed by the noise of the city and the other pageants close by, making him prominent within the soundscape and so a central figure within the performance space itself.[23] It is therefore also likely that this initial monosyllabic eruption would have been experienced as an individual unit of speech and therefore not part of the metrical pattern that follows. The rest of this line along with line 2 establishes the underlying arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables against which the rest of Herod's speech will be measured; in other words, it establishes the rhythm that an audience can perhaps begin to anticipate. In both lines 1 and 2 the a-verse pattern runs *x/xx/x* ('ye brothellis and browlys'; 'And freykis þat are frendely'), that is two stressed syllables each flanked by one unstressed syllable and separated by a disyllabic dip.[24] In the b-verse there

is only minor variation, with the b-verse of line 1 having an additional syllable in its initial dip, xx/xx/ ('in þis broydenesse inbrased') *versus* x/xx/ in line 2 ('your frekenesse to frayne'). Line 1 has twelve syllables in total (excluding the extra-metrical *Pes*), line 2 eleven syllables and both distribute these relatively evenly between the a- and b-verses to form a quite regular, emphatic rhythm of four stresses separated by either one- or two-syllable dips.

In establishing this kind of regularity in the first two lines the playwright is creating a rhythmic expectation for the rest of the piece, one that an audience upon hearing might begin to anticipate and, therefore, participate in, their minds and bodies preparing for it. There is evidence from both cognitive science and biomusicology to support the notion that strong rhythmic patterns affect corporeal experience, evidence which could have a significant bearing on how we understand the role of poetry in medieval drama. In examining the relationship between auditory rhythm and brain function, for example, cognitive theorist Michael H. Thaut suggests that such auditory rhythms communicate what he calls 'interval-based temporal templates' to the brain, that is aural patterns based on regular timed beats, and that these templates have a particular influence on the body's motor system.[25] Research like Thaut's demonstrates that auditory rhythm, whether in music or, as at York, in poetic verse, affects the entire body as well as aural sensation; as Jill Stevenson puts it, aural rhythm entrains the human body.[26] The term *entrainment* refers to the moment in physics when the frequency of one moving system becomes locked to the frequency of another driver system. Translated into *Christ before Herod*, the emphatic first two lines of verse would become akin to the driver system, entering the brains and motor systems of the listeners and tuning them into that same forceful rhythm. The metre of the first two lines then perhaps entrained the spectators' bodies, encouraging the audience to both anticipate and participate in that rhythm, a rhythm determined and regulated by the actor. As the driving force behind the beat, Herod, the player and the character, would have been to some extent in control of his subjects, his rule and governance subtly imposed on them through the auditory power of his verse.

But this metrical pattern is not sustained and from line three onwards Herod's verse becomes increasingly irregular. The number of syllables per line remains relatively consistent, only varying by a syllable or two, but the pattern of dips and lifts starts to fluctuate, as does the distribution of syllables between the a- and b-verses. So, in line 3 the a-verse becomes an

alternating x/x/x ('Youre tounges fro tretyng'), rather than the previous x/xx/x ('your frekenesse to frayne', 2); line 4 then adds an extra syllable to the unstressed prelude of the a-verse and removes the final dip, ending the a-verse on a accented syllable (generally avoided in most other alliterative works). Its b-verse then adds a third syllable between the two lifts, so the full pattern runs xx/xx/ || x/xxx/ ('Or þis brande at is bright schall breste in youre brayne', 4). Where line 4 extends its unstressed prelude, line 5 dispenses with it altogether, starting with an abrupt 'Plextis for no plasis' (/xxx/x) before repeating the b-verse pattern of line 4. However, it is with bob line 7 that the verse becomes increasingly erratic. Following this one-stress, three-syllable line there is no wheel of four three-stress lines as there is in *Gawain* (although lines 10 and 11 are of three stresses). Instead, line 8, like line 5, starts abruptly with the first stress, but this time there is also a very uneven distribution of syllables between the a- and b-verses in addition to a vastly different sense of proximity between the two alliterated stresses in each half-line. Scanned, the line 'Traueylis noȝt as traytours þat tristis in trayne' (8) runs /xxx/x || x/x/. The difference between the six syllables in the first half line and the four in the second is quite marked, tipping the balance heavily towards the a-verse, which also has a relatively long dip separating out the two accented syllables, the first of which is also the initial syllable of the entire line. On its own such changes may not be significant, but put alongside the previous patterns the shift is striking and initiates the jolting, turbulent instability that characterises the rest of Herod's opening speech and, indeed, Herod himself.

The verse never really recovers from the rhythmic break of the bob line. The number of syllables per line begins to fluctuate considerably, from five in lines 12 and 13, for example, to eight in lines 15 to 16, all varying the pattern of dips and lifts and the balance struck between the two half-lines. By the time we get to stanza three the underlying pattern initially established by the first two lines is barely visible. Indeed, it is in this third stanza that the metre becomes truly chaotic. As with the previous stanzas, the sense of disorder stems from the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and the uneven distribution of syllables between the two half-lines. Within the first eight lines of the stanza (the rest of which is then shared between Herod, Dux 1 and Dux II) there are a total of five b-verses containing only four syllables (19, 20, 21, 24, 25), as compared with only one in the previous two stanzas (8). Furthermore, while the a-verses are consistently between six and eight syllables, their patterns of stresses and dips vary wildly; bearing in mind the standard a-

verse pattern established by lines 1 and 2 (x/xx/x), in stanza three they go from a very similar xx/xx/x (22: 'As a lorde þat is lerned') to an entirely opposite xxxxx// (23: 'And ye þat are of my men'). The b-verse is as wide-ranging, from the twice-repeated /xx/ pattern (20: 'boste for to blowe' and 21: 'listen to me'), for example, to an unusual xx// (19: 'or any bale be') and the directly contrasting alternating patterns of x/x/ (24: 'as ȝe wele knawe') and /x/x (25: 'in þis cyté'). Uneven as these half-lines are separately, when united they become even more so with concentrations of lifts often (and especially in the a-verse) preceded by long sequences of unstressed dips.[27] Moreover, in the previous stanzas there are only four instances of an a-verse ending on a stressed syllable (4, 9, 13, 17) whereas, in these eight lines, the majority do so. But the big difference between those earlier four and those of stanza three is that in the latter the b-verses also start with a stress. So, for example, where line 4 runs xx/xx/ || x/xxx/ ('Or þis brande þat is bright schall breste in youre brayne') showing a clear rhythmic dip ('schall') between the last stress of the a-verse and the first of the b-verse, line 21, 'And ȝe þat luffis youre liffis, listen to me' (xxx/x/ ||/xx/) contains no such dip, in this instance therefore running both the accented syllables and alliteration immediately one after another.

There are, obviously, stylistic and thematic effects to such diverse metrical arrangements. For instance, the running on of stress and alliteration in line 21 most obviously emphasises the connection between keeping your life and listening to and obeying the king. Similarly, line 23's unusual pattern of xxxxx// || xx//x ('And ȝe þat are of my men and of my menȝe') clearly unites that specific group of individuals with the king and perhaps also indicates a sense of possession and elitism. But taken as a whole and considered as an auditory experience, the increasing irregularity of the metre in these opening three stanzas would become both an aural representation of the character of Herod and an immediate physical and emotional encounter with that character. Herod's variable metre would clearly prevent the development of harmony, the sharp, jolting and unexpected shifts in metrical structures creating an impression of unruliness and unpredictability. In their introduction to the stylistic features of the *Gawain*-Poet, Malcolm Andrew and R.A. Waldron write of the underlying regularity of pace created by that poet's deployment of stressed and unstressed syllables.[28] There is no sense of such regularity in Herod's verse; there are few repeated patterns and although most lines keep to four stresses, they are frequently unevenly placed in relation to one another and the unstressed dips, which are also extremely irregular.

Therefore, like his body in the pictorial representations, Herod's verse is twisted and warped, made asymmetrical and disharmonious by his corrosive characteristics, his spoken words communicating that inherent instability through the irregularity of the metre. But Herod's metre would do more than this because, as already mentioned, poetic rhythm can have a direct impact on corporeal experience. Hearing the sharp rhythmic changes of Herod's opening lines would perhaps have been quite uncomfortable, the shifting patterns making it difficult to anticipate, to synchronise with, to be a part of. The audience were, then, subject to that inconsistency, being forced to respond to it rather than participate in it, and so Herod's authority would be enforced through his rhythmic dominance and control. The audience, therefore, were not only witness to Herod's tyranny, they were victims of it, experiencing it directly through the psychological and physical effects of his irregular verse.

The playwright's exploitation of alliterative verse's metrical flexibility to generate such an experience extends to his use of alliteration itself. Up until about half-way through Herod's opening speech the alliterative pattern is consistently aa/aa, typical for rhymed stanzaic alliterative works (excluding 7, the bob line, and 10–11 where there is no caesura, although all still alliterate the stressed syllables). But, like the metre, this becomes increasingly more varied as the pageant progresses. Stanza two, for example, introduces the more typically unrhymed long-line pattern of aa/ax (13) in addition to the more unusual xx/aa (17) and aa/xa (18, also at 24, 25), and, in stanza three, ax/aa (19). In some instances, the lack of alliteration on a stressed syllable (perhaps unexpectedly) works to highlight that particular word, such as the first person accusative pronoun *me* in 'And ȝe þat luffis youre liffis, listen to me' (21) or *vs* in 'All renkkis þat are renand to vs schall be reuerande' (18). In others, the unusual alliterative patterns might be a response to the metrical pattern, especially where there are no unstressed syllables between the last stress of the a-verse and the first of the b-verse. This is the case in line 25, 'And semlys all here same in þis cyté' (x/xxx/ || /x/x), where the two medial stresses (*same*, *in*) are juxtaposed but not alliterated. But more often than not, this is not the case and the alliterated syllables run immediately after one another, as in line 21, quoted above, or line 20, 'Þat no brothell be so bolde boste for to blowe' (xx/xxx/ || /xx/). Here, there is also additional alliteration with unstressed 'be' and what Reese termed 'vertical' alliteration with line 19, 'Therfore I bidde you sese, or any bale be', a feature that occurs frequently throughout the first three stanzas.[29] So, even though on the face of it the

alliterative pattern seems quite regular, consistently coinciding with the metrical stress, it reinforces the metre's irregularity, compounding the disorientating effect of an erratic metrical structure while simultaneously giving Herod's speech its oppressive weight, the clustering of sound and the repetitiveness giving no reprieve to the audience's vulnerable ears.

Of course, like many such devices, the alliteration has a pragmatic use too, helping to emphasise a particular word, for example, so that even those who perhaps could not see the pageant wagon clearly could still hear and follow what was happening. But the alliteration would probably also have enhanced the experience of Herod's reign, especially when we consider not only the alliterative patterns, but also the types of sounds uttered and projected by the actor. Modern phenomenology often emphasises the unique nature of sound as an entity which is immaterial and yet can have an intensely corporeal effect on the hearer, an effect which also penetrates beyond the material body to affect the immaterial soul.[30] Medieval thinkers were also keenly aware of the penetrative nature of sound and voice, and their ability to stir the emotions and influence the inner workings of man. This was partly influenced by biblical sources, such as Isaiah 55:10–11 in which the word of God is figured as a seed planted in the soul of man, bringing forth buds that it may 'give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater' (*dat semen serenti et panem comedenti*).[31] But it was not just the Word of God that could have such an effect; the power of sound to stir emotions and move the spirit to a more fervent devotion may also have been a key feature of the preacher's art. In a recent article, Carolyn Muessig discusses an early sixteenth-century Good Friday sermon given by a Franciscan observant friar in Metz. In an attempt to create an emotional and very real experience for his audience, the friar concealed two or three accomplices within a chapel-like structure in the church of St Peter. As the preacher began to describe the crucifixion of Christ, one of the hidden assistants 'hit hard on an anvil with a large hammer three times for every nail that went into the hands and feet of Jesus'. According to the chronicler, these sound effects had a significant emotional impact on the assembled congregation, 'bringing them to great compassion' and tearful empathy.[32]

However, via the same means people could also be seduced by bad sounds, the noise of the wicked, the harsh voices of the sinful and heretical could equally invade the body and contaminate the soul of the listener.[33] According to Aristotle, a man's voice was one of the ten physiognomic signs by which his temperament and moral status could be judged, its

quality and pitch reflecting the moral state of the soul within just as clearly as the body's skin and hair colour.[34] The voice was considered a specific type of sound, one that could only be made by a being that had a soul and was, therefore, perceived as the element of carnal man most akin to the spirit and its main channel to the outside world.[35] But those qualities did not necessarily remain in or with that individual. As Christopher Woolgar explains, because sound was understood as 'a material substance, coming from breath or *spiritus* … [it] might be perceived as a form of touch', a physical interaction that was believed to transmit moral as well as physical qualities.[36]

Therefore, the seemingly endless alliteration with repeated sounds dragged from one line to the next, would almost certainly also have been understood as affecting the audience's physical and moral state. Take, for instance, the emphatic, powerful /p/ of *Pes*, which opens the pageant and is also present in line 5, which starts immediately with a stressed syllable. This explosive sound can be performed quite forcefully, pronounced with emphasis and, when repeated in such quantities, can become like a round of verbal shots, especially when accompanied by lines of other stop consonants /b/, /d/, /t/, and /k/. Jeremy Smith has suggested that certain sounds were often associated with particular concepts, a notion called phonaesthesia. This concept outlines the intuitive notion that there are certain '"phonetic habits" which associate particular meanings … with particular sounds or clusters of sounds' in spoken and written language, despite there being nothing intrinsically to connect these sounds and meanings together.[37] In *Christ before Herod* the profusion of stop consonants may be evidence of this, their abrupt, abrasive qualities both communicating the same traits in Herod and projecting them out to be absorbed and internalised by the audience.

But it is not just the alliterated sounds that are repeated by Herod; his verse also exploits the effects of frequent consonantal agreement. So, the cluster /fr/ is combined with the repeated /k/ and /s/ in *freykis* and *freykenesse* (2), while /tr/ mingles with /s/ in *Traueylis*, *traytours* and *tristis* (8) and line 5 similarly not only alliterates /pl/ (*Plextis*, *plasis*, *platte*, *playne*), but combines it with stop consonant /t/ and fricative /s/ consonance (*Plextis*, *but*, *platte*, *to*; *plextis*, *plasis*, *þis*). This is not, however, limited to fricative and plosive sounds, but is also produced by the various combinations of these with, for instance, lateral /l/ (*lusshe*, 11), affricates /ʧ/ (*choppe*, 17) and /dʒ/ (*jeauntis*, 14), and nasal /m/, /n/ sounds. There may also be assonantal agreement in vowel sounds throughout the three

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stanzas, but this will depend on the interpretation of Northern Middle English vowel pronunciation and how they sound when joined with consonants /s/, /t/, and /y/, a discussion beyond the remits of the current work, but a linguistic point which we, nonetheless, need to be aware of.[38] Line 13 is particularly noticeable for the way in which it weaves phonetically similar sounds together. The line is the first to deviate from the standard aa/aa pattern established in stanza one, shifting instead to the aa/ax arrangement alliterating the /wr/ sound: 'In *wr*athe when we *wr*ithe, or in *wr*athenesse ar wapped' (13). But as the quotation shows, this line is peppered with the very similar consonant sounds of voiced /w/ (*we*, *wapped*), unvoiced /ʍ/ (*when*) and trilled /r/ (*or*, *ar*) in addition to assonance in *wrathe*, *writhe*, *wrathenesse*.[39] Added all together the effect is quite bewildering, the multiple yet proximate highlighted sounds pulling the audience in different directions as the stressed alliterated syllables work in tension with the unstressed, approximate sounds. So, even without the potential assonance, Herod's verse displays a bewildering array of sound combinations, creating a barrage of either completely contrasting sounds or similar sounds placed awkwardly in conflicting unstressed positions. And, because of both the frequent vertical alliteration and the juxtaposition of stressed alliterated syllables, this continues from line to line and verse to verse, generating a sustained assault on the already aurally vulnerable audience.

In comparison with other cycle-play renderings of Herod, the volume of alliteration and consonance used in York's version is striking. Counting only the most obvious use of alliteration, around 15 percent of the words in the N.Town Herod's longest speech are alliterative; in Chester, the king uses only one percent more, reaching around 16 percent of his words, but York far exceeds both of these with around 40 percent of Herod's vocabulary in his opening 26 lines being alliterative, and this does not include those instances in which the initial sound of a cluster alliterates with the first sound of an adjacent word, as with *tounges* and *tretyng* (3), or where a central segment of a word is in agreement with the alliteration throughout the rest of the line, *jeauntis* and *ingendis* (14), for example.[40] Also, very simply, the York Herod deploys a far greater volume of words within fewer lines than either N.Town or Chester; that is 242 words in 26 lines as compared with, say, the 226 words in Chester's 36 lines. This relentless correspondence of sound and verbosity is sustained throughout *Christ before Herod*, compressed into short stanzas with the effects building to intensify the audience's experience of Herod's reign.

It could be argued that the use of alliterative verse is a stylistic trait of the playwright known as the York Realist, and certainly the evidence from *Christ before Pilate I* and *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* has been used by past scholars to argue that these pageants and their author form the third stage in the Cycle's composition. However, regardless of the sequential authorship theory, it is also probable that the volume of alliteration and consonance that we see in *Pharaoh*, *Caiaphas*, *Pilate I* and *Herod* were devices used to generate a specific aural and dramatic experience, each creating through the repetition of various pronounced sounds a disordered and oppressive encounter, aurally recreating the earthy and spiritual tyranny of these biblical villains. The York *Nativity* offers a clear alternative to Herod's chaotic metrical structure, but it also contrasts significantly in its use of the alliterative device. This short pageant consists of 22 seven-line stanzas rhyming $abab^4c^2b^4c^2$. Those lines of four stresses consistently number eight syllables, the two-stress lines four syllables, with only occasional variations of either one or two syllables. In contrast to the constantly changing metrical patterns of Herod's opening speech, Mary, at the moment of Christ's birth, generally maintains a pattern of a single-syllable dip followed by one stressed syllable (x/x/x/x/ or x/x/).[41] In addition to this harmonious metrical structure, in the three stanzas between lines 43 and 70 only 15 percent of words alliterate, the majority alliterating continuant sounds like fricatives /f/ and /s/ and nasal /m/. A similar choice of sound is made by William Dunbar in his 'Hale, sterne superne', an astonishingly ornate lyric to the Virgin which frequently alliterates soft continuant sounds like /s/, /f/, liquid /r/, nasal /m/ /n/, and lateral /l/. Where stop consonants intrude into the flow of sound, continuants merge one sound into the next and therefore increase the sense of harmony, so essential to the representation and honouring of the divine. It seems then, in York at least, that the volume of alliteration, like the (ir)regularity of the metre, corresponds to the content of the biblical scene; the more peaceful and sacred the scene, the lighter on the ears the verse appears to be, offering a sharp contrast between the moments of hope and the performance of oppression.

Sound, Body, and Audience Response

As I have already touched upon, the reach of Herod's oppressive noise is unlikely to have been restricted to the disruption of the poetic line; his powerful verse would probably have derived much of its strength from its influence over the audience's physical experience. Like other means of

sound production, the human voice was believed to integrate itself into the listener's physiology and could, therefore, produce some acute responses to its various tones, pitches and rhythms.[42] Aristotle, in his 'On Things Heard', noted the power and physical impact of the human voice; his definition of hard voices, for example, describes not only how such a voice sounds but also the physical response of the listener's body: 'hard voices are those which strike forcibly upon the hearing; for which reason they are particularly unpleasing ... any quickly yielding body which comes in the way fails to abide the impact and quickly springs aside'.[43] The aggressive alliteration of Herod's verse can perhaps be understood as contributing towards such a harsh voice so suited to his character. As illustrated above, the relentless alliteration of harsh stop consonants would perhaps 'strike forcibly' upon the listener's ear, working in conjunction with the erratic metre to generate an uneasy experience that might encourage a 'quickly yielding body' to give way under the force of the aural attack. The possibility that an audience would have responded physically and kinetically to Herod's verse is important to recognise, especially in performances like York which were rooted in the corporeal, concrete form of affective lay devotion, and encouraged audiences to identify biblical events with their own experiences. Because of its penetrative qualities, the disorientating effects of Herod's verse would be experienced somatically, his voice seeming to breach the physical bodies of the listeners, mingling and interacting with their souls to influence them through their most immediate and intuitive mode of experience.[44]

Furthermore, for those closest to him, those on the front line of the attack, the full force of Herod's erratic metre and aggressive alliteration would reach them at its point of greatest intensity, the effects amplified by the volume of the player's voice as he bellowed to reach those at the back of the crowd, the metrical and alliterative variability enhanced or reduced at the player's will. In such a situation, it is easy to imagine the submissive responses from those overwhelmed by his belligerent attack on their senses and who react bodily as Aristotle describes. While some medieval audience members may have reacted in this way, perhaps others were not so intimidated by Herod's noisy, boisterous performance. As an annual event the York Corpus Christi Play drew many spectators not through novelty but by reputation, tradition, and familiarity, and so perhaps Herod's performance would have been less daunting through acquaintance with his character type, the form of performance expected, and possibly the familiar face of the guildsman actor. So, although some may have responded

meekly to Herod's quest for control, we need to imagine another possible response, one which reflects the audience's experience of and familiarity with Herod and his performance. Perhaps we can then speculate as to whether some spectators would have challenged his claim to power, reacting to it by, say, parrying his acoustic assault with laughter, boos, and hisses. Sarah Carpenter has recently uncovered an account from *c.* 1522 in which the humanist Juan Luis Vives describes and comments on similar spectator reactions. Vives notes that 'euen at the celebration of Christs passion and our redemption' the spectators continued to hiss, boo, and cajole the villains; for example, when Peter cuts off Malchus' ear in the Garden of Gethsemane 'all resounds with laughter' but they then hiss when he later denies being Christ's disciple.[45] This account offers a picture of an audience willing to interact with the performer and respond emotionally and vocally to the character he represents. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that some audience members at York would have responded to Herod's seizure of the performance space in a similar manner, their bodies reflecting their rejection of his attempt at control and vocalising their challenge through taunts and jeers, hissing and booing.

Despite the apparent polarity between the two responses proposed here, they both comply equally with the new order, one dominated by the chaos, noise and tumult of a volatile king. The more overtly submissive response most obviously displays the audience's compliance with Herod's spatial control, but it is those who appear to resist the king who, ironically, would contribute most to his auditory construction of the performance space. In reacting to him with their own vocal responses, the audience would add to the acoustic chaos created by the verse and so become a constituent of Herod's subjugating force. The opening verses of *Christ before Herod* appear, then, to be constructed to create a specific kind of experience, one which would elicit certain responses from the audience and simulate the experience of Herod's tyrannical reign.[46]

Noise versus Silence

As the pageant continues, more characters are brought into the scene so that, when the questioning of Christ begins, Jesus is surrounded by a total of eight speaking characters. As with the intrusion of Dux I and Dux II in stanza three, the verse would now have become further disrupted by its division between these eight speaking roles. For example:

I MILES: Lorde, welthis and worschippis be with you alway.
REX: What wolde you?
II MILES: A worde, lorde, and youre willes were.
REX: Well, saye on þan.
I MILES: My lorde, we fare foolys to flay
            Þat to you wolde forfette.
REX: We, faire falle you þerefore.
I MILES: My lorde, fro ȝe here what we saie
            Itt will heffe vppe youre hertis.
REX: Ȝa, but saie, what heynde haue ȝe þore?
II MILES: A presente fro Pilate, lorde, þe prince of oure lay.
REX: Pese in my presence, and nemys hym no more!   89–96

The quick exchanges here mimic the natural movement of dialogue, but in performance they would also hinder the flow of the verse by denying any one character a complete, whole stanza and so, again, rejecting any possibility of acoustic harmony. This stanza also shows how the playwright has divided single lines between two speakers, a technique similarly employed in *Pilate I* and *The Crucifixion*. Severing lines in this way further fragments the verse, bouncing the rhymes, metres and alliteration around the characters and so creating a general sense of disorder. It would, in addition, emphasise the differences between the voices of these eight speaking roles. As a vehicle of the soul, the voice was seen as a physiognomic sign indicating the nature of the spirit within and, therefore, as Bruce Smith explains, the idiosyncrasies of each human voice were 'as easily distinguished by the ear as are facial characteristics by the eye'.[47] E. Catherine Dunn has identified evidence of such vocal characterisation in early medieval performance, suggesting that the rubrics inscribed near the words of the Holy Week Passion readings are in fact musical conventions, which indicate the intensity, pitch and pace required by the actors to vocally represent individual characters in the Gospel. Accordingly, God is characterised by a slow, regular and low pitched chant, whereas the Jews are marked by their rapid speech and higher pitch, the contrast in sound indicating their moral state and directing the audience's reaction toward them.[48] Perhaps, therefore, we can similarly imagine each of the eight characters in *Christ before Herod* to be characterised, and therefore identifiable by, the pitch, tone and evenness of his voice, which may or may not harmonise with the other players.

    In the midst of this acoustic chaos is the solitary figure of Christ. Surrounded by the noise of Herod's court, the voluble responses from the

audience and the bustle of the surrounding city, Christ enters and continues in silence. Indeed, nowhere in the text is this central figure given any lines to speak and the only stage directions directly relating to him are those implicit in the others' words, which tell us that he is not only silent but motionless, even during the court's mockery. Christ's silence is a common theme throughout the Trial sequence with Caiaphas commenting on his notable reluctance to talk, anticipating Herod's later comment that 'His langage is lorne!' (190).[49] However, in both *Caiaphas* and *Pilate I*, Christ does speak, albeit a total of only thirty-five lines in a 1,852-line sequence, his whole stanzas contrasting sharply with the disjointed verse described above.[50] But during the *Herod* pageant the Saviour is entirely silent, although this is not the playwright's innovation; it is, rather, an adherence to his biblical source. In Luke: 23:8–9, Herod is described as 'exceeding glad' to see Christ, that 'he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracles done by him', and in his eagerness Herod questions Christ 'with many words; but he [Christ] answered him nothing' (*Herodes autem viso Iesu gavisus est valde erat enim cupiens ex multo tempore videre eum eo quod audiret multa de illo et sperabat signum aliquod videre ab eo fieri / interrogabat autem illum multis sermonibus at ipse nihil illi respondebat*). The other cycle versions of this episode likewise uphold the biblical account, keeping Christ silent while Herod asks question after question, but what separates York's account from the other cycle versions is its playwright's development of Herod's 'many words'. The York playwright expands on this one brief reference by exploiting the qualities and flexibility of the alliterative verse form to create both a unique character and a distinctive dramatic experience that could physically and emotionally affect his audience. The sheer number of words, the erratic metre, the aural bombardment through row upon row of alliteration, consonance and assonance described above, the severing of verses and lines, the combination of multiple, contrasting voices and Herod's notorious use of macaronic language expands on the initial biblical account, so that not only are there many words, but also many sounds all competing with one another in the cramped space of Herod's disharmonious and asymmetrical verse.

However, although Christ is verbally silent throughout the Trial section of the Cycle 'he is neither dramatically absent nor theatrically silent'.[51] His enigmatic peace and tranquillity, his quiet, impassive demeanour contrast with the audience responses suggested above and, from Herod's own increasingly random questioning, it appears that his

indifference begins to undermine the king's control.   Initially, Herod perceives his interrogation of Christ as a game, but as the scene progresses his frustration begins to show: 'Howe likis þa? Wele, lorde?' he demands, 'Saie. What deyull, neuere a dele?' (238), after which his orders become more unreasonable, expressed in increasingly abrupt sentences. When the Saviour still refuses to respond, the infuriated king resorts to non-verbal articulations: 'Vta! Oy! Oy!' (242), an expression of his own frustration and an attempt to rouse the apparently 'woode' Christ (247).   Eventually, Herod is bewildered by his quarry's lack of response declaring: 'What þe deuyll and his dame schall Y now doo?' (246). In denying Herod either the vociferous or submissive reactions he seeks to maintain his control, Jesus has diffused the potency of his opponent's power, a power that perpetuates itself in and through his victim's reactions to his incessant noise. Against the powerful silence of Christ, Herod's noise becomes impotent, absurd and, as Alexandra F. Johnston suggests, acts to condemn the king through his own mouth, rendering him ridiculous in comparison with the unceasing, enduring power of the *Agnus Dei*.[52]

The presence of the Messiah would almost certainly have also influenced the audience's experience and response to the performance. As always, Christ is the exemplum, the ideal, the paradigm of appropriate response and, therefore, his actions also offer an example of how to combat various worldly evils. *Jacob's Well*, a fifteenth-century manual on the avoidance of bodily sin, provides advice on avoiding the morally corrosive aspects of another's noise and angry words. The author proposes that just as 'þe vyolence of a gunne or of an engyne-ston is qwenchyd, whan softe erthe or softe thyng is sett þer-ȝens; ryȝt so, wyth myldenes of softe woordys þou schalt qwenchyn angry and boystous woordys of angry folk'.[53] So, just as a stone launched from a siege engine causes less destruction to a soft earthen bank than to a resisting stone wall, silence, or at least the use of mild words, absorbs the harmful energy induced through the aggressive sounds of anger. But this approach is not only about being meek, for, like the earthen bank, the act of deflecting hostility with humility saps its energy and, therefore, the harmful, corrupting power of the original attack. So, through his lack of an equally aggressive response, Christ neutralises the source of Herod's vocal power. Where such audience reactions as those described by Vives feed Herod's tyrannical reign, the alternative reaction offered by Christ, which is neither a retaliation nor a capitulation, kills it and renders it impotent.

Despite Herod's continued disharmony, his dominance over the audience in York would have dispersed during this final scene, his ability to enforce their subservience or their contribution to his chaotic construction of the space depleted by the divine force of the true king. In his place was a far more potent power, one that did not impose his authority over an unwilling audience, but showed by example the way to defeat wickedness and oppose the corruption of their soul by the insidious power of bad sounds. Christ's presence, then, would have had an equally affective impact on the audience despite the fact that it was characterised by silence rather than sound. Although Christ's silence was not invasive its influence went just as deep as Herod's noise, if not more so. The enigmatic authority of that silence was enhanced by the audience's previous experience of Herod's tumultuous, volatile verse, the opposing forces of sin and salvation captured in the aural experience created by the playwright's manipulation of the malleable alliterative verse. The playwright of *Christ before Herod*, then, shaped through poetic form a dramatic experience which capitalised on the emotional and physical potency of the audience's aural perception, so that they came to understand the purpose of Christ's life and sacrifice, not by proxy, but through a direct discovery of its significance to their own spiritual salvation.

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APPENDIX

Metrical and alliterative patterns of Herod's opening speech[54]

	a-verse		b-verse
1.	Pes, ye brothellis and browlys		in þis broydenesse inbrased
	x/xx/x	||	xx/xx/(x)
2.	And freykis þat are frendely		your freykenesse to frayne
	x/xx/x	||	x/xx/
3.	Youre tounges fro tretyng		of triffillis be trased
	x/x/x	||	x/xx/(x)
4.	Or þis brande þat is bright		schall breste in youre brayne
	xx/xx/	||	x/xxx/

5.   Plextis for no plasis   but platte you to þis playne
          /xxx/x || x/xxx/

6.   And drawe to no drofyng   but dresse you to drede
          x/xx/x || x/xx/

7.   With dasshis
          x/x

8.   Traueylis noʒt as traytours   þat tristis in trayne
          /x(x)xx/x || x/x/

9.   Or by þe bloode þat Mahounde bledde   with þis blad schal ye blede
          xxx/xxx/ || xx/xx/

10. Þus schall I brittyn   all youre bones on brede
          /xx/x || xx/x/

11. Ʒae, and lusshe all youre lymmys with lasschis
              x/xx/x/x

12. Dragons þat are dredfull   schall derke in þer denne[s]
          /xxx/x || x/xx/

13. In wrathe when we writhe   or in wrathenesse ar wapped
          x/xx/ || xx/xx/x

14. Agaynste jeauntis ongentill   haue we joined with ingendis
          xx/x/x || xx/xx/

15. And swannys þat are swymmyng   to oure swetnes schall be suapped
          x/xxx/x || xx/xxx/x

16. And joged doune þer jolynes   oure gentries engenderand
          x/xxx/xx || x/xx/xx

18. Whoso repreue oure estate   we schall choppe þam in cheynes
          xxx/xx/ || xx/xx/

18. All renkkis þat are renand   to vs schall be reuerande
          x/xxx/x || x/xx/xx

19. Therfore I bidde you sese   or any bale be
     xxx/x/ || xx//

20. Þat no brothell be so bolde   boste for to blowe
     xx/xxx/ || /xx/

21. And ȝe þat luffis youre liffis   listen to me
     xxx/x/ || /xx/

22. As a lorde þat is lerned   to lede you be lawe
     xx/xx/x || x/xx/

23. And ye þat are of my men   and of my menȝe
     xxxxx// || xx//x

24. Sen we are comen fro oure kyth   as ȝe wele knawe
     xxx/xxx/ || x/x/

25. And semlys all here same   in þis cyté
     x/xxx/ || /x/x

26. It sittis vs in sadnesse   to sette all oure sawe
     x/xxx/x || x/xx/

NOTES

I would like to thank Professor Thorlac Turville-Petre for his invaluable help with unpicking the metrical and alliterative structures of *Christ before Herod*.

1. Charles Davidson 'Studies in the English Mystery Plays' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Yale, 1892); C.M. Gayley *Plays of Our Forefathers* (New York: Duffield and Co., 1907); W.W. Greg *Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Cycles* (London: Alexander Moring, 1914); E.K. Chambers *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945). For a summary of the three presumed stages of composition, see Richard Beadle's 'Introduction' to his edition of *The York Plays* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) 40.

2. Beadle 'Introduction' 40.

3. J.B. Reese 'Alliterative Verse in the York Cycle' *Studies in Philology 48* (1951) 639–68, at 639.

4. Reese 'Alliterative Verse' 668. Richard J. Collier also wanted to explore the York Cycle's 'skilfully managed aural effects' to show how the Cycle's verse could be both poetically and dramatically artful. See his *Poetry and Drama in the York Corpus Christi Play* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978).

5. *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgata versionem* edited Robertus Weber and others (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 3rd edition 1983). All quotations will be from this text.

6. Jacobus de Voragine *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* translated William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton UP, 1993) *1* 56. Also see *2* 5, 34, 132.

7. *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* translated William Caxton edited M.Y. Offord *EETS SS 2* (1971) 111.

8. For more on the development of the Herod character, see S.S. Hussey 'How Many Herods in the Middle English Drama?' *Neophilologus 48* (1964) 252–9; Penelope B.R. Doob *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Medieval English Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1974) 96–7; and David Staines 'To Out-Herod Herod: The Development of a Dramatic Character' *Comparative Drama 10* (1976) 29–53, at 30–1.

9. Staines 'To Out-Herod Herod' 38, 31.

10. Staines 'To Out-Herod Herod' 32.

11. *Service Representing Herod* in *Medieval Drama* edited David Bevington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) sd 58, sd 77 and *The Slaughter of the Innocents* in *Medieval Drama* sd 8. Translations also Bevington's.

12. *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors* in *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* edited Pamela M. King and Clifford Davidson (EDAM Monograph Series 27; Kalamazoo: Medieval Insitute Publications, 2000) sd at line 728; *Play VIII: The Three Kings* in *The Chester Mystery Cycle, Volume 1: Text* edited R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills *EETS SS 3* (1974) 196–204, 325, 349–89.

13. *Magnus Herodes* in *Medieval Drama* (see *Service Representing Herod*, above) 118, 148, 240.

14. London: British Library MS Royal 2 B VII (Queen Mary Psalter) fol. 131^r; Pilate at 248^v.

15. Compare fols 15^v–17^r, 22^r, 24^r (King of Egypt); 51^v–2^r (Saul); 266^v (Maurice); 280^r–282^v (Catherine); 291^v–292^v (Henry II and Thomas Becket); 305^v (Nero and St. Paul). These images from British Library MS Royal 2 B VII can be viewed online via the British Library's catalogue <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6467&CollID=16&NStart=20207> [accessed 31 July 2013].

16. Doob *Nebuchadnezzar's Children* 108–9. Miriam Anne Skey discusses the correlations between dramatic and artistic representations of Herod in 'The

Iconography of Herod in the Fleury Play Book and the Visual Arts' *Comparative Drama* 17:1 (1983) 55–78.

17. Geoffrey Chaucer 'The Miller's Tale' in *The Riverside Chaucer* general editor Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 3rd edition 1987) lines 3383–4.

18. William Shakespeare *Hamlet* in *The Complete Works* edited Stanley Wells and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005) *3* 2, 3–14. See also Scott Colley 'Richard III and Herod' *Shakespeare Quarterly 37:4* (1986) 451–8 on Herod's influence on other early-modern dramatic characters.

19. For the most recent discussion of this 'coercive game' and further references see Peter Ramey 'The Audience-Interactive Games of Middle English Religious Drama' *Comparative Drama 47:1* (2013) 55–84.

20. Ralph Hanna 'Defining Middle English Alliterative Poetry' in *The Endless Knot: Essays in Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff* edited M. Teresa Tavormina and R.F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995) 43–64, at 54–5.

21. For more on alliterative metre see, in the first instance, Thorlac Turville-Petre *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1977) and Ralph Hanna 'Defining Middle English Alliterative Poetry'.

22. All quotations from *Christ before Herod* in *The York Plays, Vol. 1: The Text* edited Richard Beadle *EETS SS 23* (2009).

23. Eileen White suggests that from any given station along the pageant route it would probably have been possible both to see and hear the waggons ahead of and behind any given pageant waggon. See her 'Places to Hear the Play: The Performance of the Corpus Christi Play at York' *Early Theatre 3* (2000) 49–78, and 'Places for Hearing the Corpus Christi Play in York' *Medieval English Theatre 9:1* (1987) 23–63; Meg Twycross 'The Theatricality of Medieval Plays' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge UP, 2nd ediiton 2008) 30–31.

24. Where *x* stands for an unstressed syllable (or dip) and / for a stressed syllable. || marks the caesura. By the fifteenth century, Northern Middle English *–es* is syncopated in words of more than one syllable. Therefore, a word like *brothellis* in line 1 has two syllables rather than three. Final *–e* is also generally unsounded in the Northern Middle English of this period. See Hoyt N. Duggan 'Final *–e* and the Rhythmic Structure of the B-verse in Middle English Alliterative Poetry' *Modern Philology 86:2* (1988) 119–45, and Turville-Petre *Alliterative Revival* 52. It is likely, but not certain, that the inflexional endings of monosyllable words were also syncopated by the time of the plays. For this development see Richard Jordan *Handbook of Middle English Grammar: Phonology* translated and revised Eugene Joseph Cook (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 245–6 and E.J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation, 1500–1700* 2 vols (Oxford:

Clarendon Press, 1957) *2* 879–86. In my scansion I have assumed that this development has taken place.

To help readers follow the complex metrics of this opening speech, the Appendix provides the text (from Beadle's 2009 edition) with the scansion beneath.

25. Michael H. Thaut 'Rhythm, Human Temporality, and Brain Function' in *Musical Communication* edited Dorothy Meill, Raymond MacDonald, and David J. Hargreaves (Oxford UP, 2005) 172–91, at 176.

26. Jill Stevenson *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 138.

27. Hoyt Duggan refers to dips of two or more syllables as 'strong' dips. He also posits a set of rules for the arrangement of 'strong' and 'weak' dips around the main stresses whereby two dips containing two or more syllables and repeated monosyllabic dips were avoided. See his 'Final *–e* and the Rhythmic Structure of the B-verse', and 'The Shape of the B-verse in Middle English Alliterative Poetry' *Speculum 61:3* (1986) 564–92.

28. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* edited Malcolm Andrew and R.A. Waldron (Exeter UP, 2007) 45.

29. Reese 'Alliterative Verse in the York Cycle' 652.

30. See, for example, Don Ihde *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Ohio State UP, 1976) 75–81; Bruce Smith *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago UP, 1999); Wes Folkerth *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002) 18; Steven Connor 'Edison's Teeth: Touching Hearing' in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* edited Veit Erlmann (Oxford: Berg, 2004) 153–72; and in relation to words: Maurice Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception* translated Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge) 273–5 and Walter J. Ong, 'The Shifting Sensorium' in *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Source Book in the Anthropology of the Senses* edited David Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 25–30.

31. English translation from *King James Bible Authorized Version with Apocrypha* introduced by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (New York: Oxford UP, 1997). All subsequent English quotations are from this edition.

32. Carolyn Muessig 'Performance of the Passion: the Enactment of Devotion on the Later Middle Ages' in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* edited Elina Gertsman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 129–42, at 134–6.

33. Charles Burnett 'Perceiving Sound in the Middle Ages' in *Hearing History: A Reader* edited Mark M. Smith (Athens: Georgia UP, 2004) 69–84, at 71 and

C.M. Woolgar *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 74–85.

34. Aristotle *Physiognomonics* translated T. Loveday and E.S. Forster in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* edited Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton UP, 1984) *1* 806a 27–34.

35. Burnett 'Perceiving Sound in the Middle Ages' 69, 80.

36. Woolgar *Senses in Late Medieval England* 64.

37. Jeremy J. Smith 'The Language of Older Scots Poetry' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scots* edited John Corbett, J. Derrick McClure, and Jane Stuart-Smith (Edinburgh UP, 2003) 197–209, at 200–1.

38. For further discussions on late Middle English vowel pronunciation see Jordan *Handbook of Middle English Grammar: Phonology* (especially 204–21 and 232–46); G.L. Brook *English Sound Changes* (Manchester UP, 1972); Charles Jones *A History of English Phonology* (London: Longman, 1989); Donka Minkova *Alliteration and Sound Change in Early English* (Cambridge UP, 2003).

39. Northern Middle English of this period retained the Old English fricative /χw/ sound (usually marked in Northern and Scots texts as <qu, qw, quh, qvh, qwh>). The spelling of *when* in *Christ before Herod* is perhaps, therefore, a feature particular to the (more Southern) scribe and we can assume the actor would aspirate <wh> according to his Northern Middle English dialect. For more on the loss of aspirated *h* in Middle English see Jordan *Handbook of Middle English Grammar* 179–80.

40. *The Trials before Pilate and Herod* in *The N-Town Play* edited Stephen Spector EETS SS 11 (1991) 189–208; *Play XVI: the Trial* in *The Chester Mystery Cycle 1* 67–81.

41. *The Nativity* 43–70.

42. Ihde *Listening and Voice* 79.

43. Aristotle 'On Things Heard' in *The Complete Works* (see *The Physiognomonics*, above) 802b 30–4.

44. Richard D. Cureton 'The Auditory Imagination and the Music of Poetry' in *Stylistic Criticism of Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context* edited Peter Verdonk (Florence, Kentucky: Routledge, 1993) 170–82, at 86–7.

45. St Augustine *Of the Citie of God: with learned comments of Io. Lod. Vives, Englished by J.H.* (London: George Eld, 1610): see Sarah Carpenter 'New Evidence: Vives and Audience-Response to Biblical Drama' *Medieval English Theatre 31* (2009) 3–12.

46. Peter Ramey recently made a similar point in relation to the notion of a 'coercive game'. See his 'Audience-Interactive Games' 58–62.

47. Bruce Smith quoting Quintilian in *Acoustic World* 222.

48. E. Catherine Dunn 'Voice Structure in the Liturgical Drama: Sepet Reconsidered' in *Medieval English Theatre: Essays Critical and Contextual* edited Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson (Chicago UP, 1972) 44–63, at 57. This manner of marking the spiritual status of characters is perhaps also influenced by Aristotle who suggests that the contrast between a deep, full voice and one which is high-pitched and shrill distinguishes respectively a man of courage and of cowardice. See his *Physiognomonics* 806b, 27–8.

49. *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* in *The York Plays* (see *Christ before Herod*, above) 278.

50. Alexandra F. Johnston '"His langage is lorne": The Silent Centre of the York Cycle' *Early Theatre 3* (2000) 185–95, at 185.

51. Stevenson *Performance*, *Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture* 120.

52. Johnston '"His langage is lorne"' 191.

53. *Jacob's Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Conscience* edited Arthur Brandeis *EETS OS 115* (1899) 267.

54. Text from *Christ before Herod* in *The York Plays, Vol. 1: The Text* edited Richard Beadle *EETS SS 23* (2009).