Substitution: Theatrical Sleight of Hand in Medieval Plays

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Substitution is concerned with replacing one thing with another. This is straight forward enough. But to what extent is the replacement indistinguishable from the original in order to qualify as substitution? Is there any compulsion to make the replacement identical with the original in order to be defined as substitution? If the replacement is 'standing in' for the original then there is no compulsion for it to be a mirror image or 'clone' of the original. If, on the other hand, that which substitutes the original is not meant to be recognised as a substitution then verisimilitude is necessary. These questions and their concerns reflect directly on to engagement with theatre and its adopted conventions.

Theatrical evidence exists to demonstrate use of artificial substitutions in replacing mutilated or amputated parts of the body. It also includes substitution of real bodies with dummies. Given the nature of evidence in this area a key question is: To what extent is verisimilitude important in substitution? Is the mutilation or amputation intended to convince the audience of its realism? Are there any staging techniques or theatrical sleight of hand involved in such substitution? Does the audience know that it is witnessing substitution? If so, what does this mean?

Some accounts, particularly those in the form of explicit stage directions, are explicit in respect of substitution by dummies or dummy parts. Other stage directions are explicit in terms of dummy substitution through the action of the play. For instance, in *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* [c.1461] when Jonathas' hand can not be removed from '*th*e Ost in hys hond' his fellows, Jason, Jasdon, Mashat and Malchas attempt to nail '*th*e Ost' to a post it order to remove it from his hand.[1] At this point an explicit stage direction declares: 'Heres hall [here shall] thay pluke *th*e arme, and *th*e hond shall hang styll with *th*e Sacrament.'[2] The arm is ripped away from what is a dummy hand that is still nailed to the post. The dummy hand and '*th*e Ost' are still attached. Further attempts to separate '*th*e Ost' from Jonathas' hand involve the attempted separation

and destruction of the Host by boiling the two in a cauldron of oil. This attempted solution does not work and so resort is made to casting the hand and Host into an oven. An explicit stage direction requires the oven to 'ryve asunder' and out of the riven oven appears an image of Christ. Jesus persuades Jonathas that he should 'wasshest thyn hart with grete contrycion' by putting 'hys hand into *th*e cawdron, and yt shalbe hole agayn'.[3] This is indeed what happens. Jonathas presumably pushes his real hand through his sleeve to reveal the miracle.

Later references to the implied use of false limbs are contained in *Edmond Ironside or War Hath Made All Friends* [c. 1595]. Explicit stage directions require amputations to be conducted by Stich on behalf of Canutus.[4] This action is carried out on the 'Two Pledges' because their 'fathers did abuse theire tongues in periurye'. Stich has entered according to a stage direction 'wth an Axe'. In quick succession further stage directions determine that: 'Hee cutts offe one hand' and then 'Hee Cutts offe the other hande'. Four lines later another stage direction determines that 'Hee Cutts off his Nose'. Within the next eight lines '2 Pledge' is given the same treatment. A stage direction states: 'Hee Cutts his hand*es* and Nose'. The amputated '1 Pledge' refers to 'theis my stumpes' which are presumably held up in front of his face after chopping off his nose. Canutus permits this possibility by saying: 'Cut off his nose then lett him praye againe'. Presumably, false hands extend beyond the length of partially sewn-up sleeve endings in order to produce 'stumpes'. It is less certain whether false noses were involved.

A stage direction in *The Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius Nero* of 1607 requires the two imprisoned and hungry characters, Nero and Drufus, to perform the following actions: 'They eate each others armes'. Presumably, false arms are used to fulfill the requirement and presented in such a way as to disguise the substitution.[5] Further macabre treatment is dispensed when Shacklesoule burns off the hand of Rauillac with a 'burning torch' in Thomas Dekker's *If This Be Not A Good Play* [1611].[6] An explicit stage direction determines: 'Enter Shacklesoule with a burning torch, and a long knife'. A few lines later, another stage direction states: 'Hand burn't off'.

In both the above examples, hands are severed. Do the audiences witness the severances? The respective texts are not clear in this respect. In *Edmond Ironside* the amputation at the wrist enables '1 Pledge' to refer to 'theis my stumpes'. Presumably, the audience was allowed to see these.

If this is the case then the audience was similarly able to witness the 'before' and 'after' conditions i.e. '1 Pledge' both with and without his hands. Even if the audience did not witness the feigned chopping off of hands some stage business concerned with hiding the real hands and the retrieval of false hands would have been necessary to manipulate the conditions in producing the 'stumpes'.

A number of plays concerning the Assumption of Mary contain an episode where one of the Jews, who places his hand on the bier upon which Mary rests, remains stuck to it. However, not all Assumption plays include this incident although the *Valencia Assumption Play* of the early-fifteenth century does include that which might be regarded as the simplest of theatrical sleight of hand techniques through substitution. This is not sleight of hand in the conventional sense of 'close manipulation' but it is that theatrical condition that enables an audience to 'see it' and 'not see it'. This is achieved through a simple staging device in which an 'image', or dummy figure, replaces the body of Mary in its ascent to heaven. The apparatus, as at Elx (Elche), by which the ascent takes place is known as the 'araceli'. The staging routine that promotes the substitution is outlined as follows:

> When Christ has spoken, Mary shall fall into the arms of the handmaidens as if dead (faent com es morta). Meantime there is to be loud thunder, and they are to place Mary beneath the stage (devall lo cadafal). And they are to carry up the image (la ymage) and say all the rest of the office.
>
> On the second day of the play (en la segona iornada), after St. Michael has returned the soul to the body, those who are beneath the stage (devall lo cadafal) are to receive the image quickly and make thunder and smoke, and the living person (la viva) is to emerge suddenly.
> ...
> Then the angels, apostles, and everybody else are to crowd round Christ and Mary, and thunder and smoke are to be made, and Christ and Mary are to

> exit. And at once the lifting machinery (la ara celi) is to rise.[7]

The translation above does not quite convey the intention behind the act of 'everybody else to crowd round Christ and Mary'. Here, the intention is that the crowd is to mask Christ and Mary so that they may depart without being seen. The thunder and smoke is not only intended as a contribution to the illusion but also a distraction from the staged deception. Presumably, their destination is 'beneath the stage (devall lo cadafal).

Although theatrical sleight of hand is frequently sought through manipulation of that which is seen and that which is not seen the means by which it is achieved is often conducted 'secretly'. In the *Rouergue Judgement Play* [fifteenth century] dummies are substituted in the torture of the damned:

> Then shall be prepared the throne (cadieyra) of Pride, and the devils come out of Hell leading Pride all dressed in fine clothes and a collar round the neck. And they set her on the throne and secretly they must put there a dummy figure made to look like her. And let him who plays Pride position himself behind the throne, and the devils shall torture the said person in silence[8]

A similar stance to such artifice through secrecy occurs in the *Bourges Effects* of the *Mystery of the Acts of the Apostles* [1536]:

> There must be a nude (ung nud) or a body (une carnacion) for the flaying of St. Bartholomew.
>
> St. Bartholomew shall be placed on a revolving table (une table tornisse) with a nude (ung nud) underneath, and when he is covered with a cloth the table must be turned secretly.[9]

In addition to this effect 'Several other dead bodies should appear in the water (venir sur l'eaue) moved by the waves, which can then

disappear under the stage (retirer soubz terre) when it is time.' Also, dummies are substituted for Cidrat, Titon and Aristarcus when they are burned: 'There must be a pillar near Paradise to which Cidrat, Titon, and Aristarcus will be fastened to be burnt, and the said pillar shall be sited over a trapdoor (sur une trappe) and three dummy bodies fastened to the pillar in their place, surrounded by faggots.[10]

During the battle sequence in the Mercade *Vengeance* [late fifteenth century] dummies are recorded to represent dead bodies:

> And they raise the siege ladders, and it shall last as long as seems appropriate; and they throw [down] dummy bodies dressed like some of those inside the town. In addition, at the foot of the walls, the besieged must pull inside the walls one or two of the attackers and make a show of killing them: and then they must throw down dummy bodies dressed like those who were dragged to their death.[11]

A particularly gruesome sequence is recorded in the French *St. Lawrence Play* in 1499. Even if audience members were conscious of the use of a dummy in the production of this effect the dramatic intent is sufficiently vicious for the power of the action to take over from any awareness of artifice:

> Then they attach two horses to the hands in addition to the two which are at Ypolite's feet. And after he has been dragged on a hurdle across the playing area (champ) by the first two horses, he speaks what follows. And then when he has spoken, the torturers put a dummy, similar to him, in his place, to which they attach the four horses, one to each limb.
> [*Speech by Ypolite*]
> Then the torturers exchange and put a dummy in the place of Ypolite under the protection (?custodes) of the scaffold (eschaffault), and...do not move...

> [*Dialogue in Paradise. The torturers each mount a horse.*]
> Then each one individually spurs his horse and drags away his limb of the dummy.
> [*Dialogue.*] Then they untie the pieces and leave them in the playing area (place), and when they have done it they go away, and the angels come to look for the soul among the pieces.[12]

Dummy 'souls' appear as doll-size representations in a number of accounts. A stage direction in the text of *La Passion de Semur* of 1488 records: 'Here the soul descends and comes on a wire (filium) onto the body in the tomb.'[13] The *Volume of Secrets of a Provençal Stage Director's Book* records a particularly vivid description concerning the hanging of Judas where a dummy soul and attendant entrails are allowed to fall from under his shirt:

> e que agues una
> arma que la lay-
> ses ana aitabe,
> e los diables
> venria que
> sarion jost el
> que amasarion
> las tripas e l'a-
> rma e ho po-
> rtaria en Ifern,
> e pueis venria
> serqua lo cors.[14]

> there would be a soul that should also be allowed to go, and the devils would come, who would be below, and that they collect the intestines and the soul and bring them to Hell, and then will come to pick up the body.

The same effect is recorded in *Michel's Passion* for 1486: 'Here Judas bursts at the belly and the guts fall out and the soul comes out.'[15]

The *Bourges Effects* for the *Mystery of the Acts of the Apostles* record similar treatment to St. Barnabas:

> There must be wood to burn St. Barnabas who will be bound to a cartwheel (une roe de chareste), and there must be a dummy corpse full of bones and entrails.[16]

Yet another account of the same effect occurs in the *Modane Antichrist Play* where it is required that there shall be:

> two dummy bodies to rip or saw through the middle, from which shall come out entrails and blood and which will look as much as possible like the two Jesuits. And the officials (syndics) will supply the flesh of the said bodies and the pig skins and shall take back the said flesh afterwards.[17]

Concern to produce realistic effects is not only found in the severance of limbs and simulated human entrails but also in decapition or, as it is often termed, decollation. Different levels of reality may be inferred from available evidence. In some instances, decapitation is part of the dramatic narrative and in other cases it exists in the form of a staged trick involving sleight of hand. Sometimes, the sleight of hand is that of the juggler; on other occasions it is that arising out of manipulated staging conditions.

In the *Majorca SS Crispin and Crispinian* [sixteenth century; possibly earlier] the two saints are beheaded: 'Llevar-los an los caps. Y a on steran y aurà dos cosos morts, que feran de bulto, plens de palla, y los caps de duas màscaras molt gentils.'[18] [They are to be beheaded. Where they are standing, there are to be two dead bodies which are to be dummies filled with straw, and the heads are to be made with masks with calm expressions]. The *Majorca Judith* [sixteenth century; possibly earlier] records: 'Holofernes is to be sleeping in his bed; and there is to be made a head like his, so that it can be held and cut from a dummy body (una stàtua). And kneeling, she says: [*prays to God*]. Now she shall get up, take his knife, which is to be on the bolster, and taking the head by its

hair, she says: [*prays to God*]. After these words, she is to cut off Holofernes' head and take it to the servant.'[19] Severed heads for St. James and Josias are required properties in the *Bourges Effects*.[20] Further severed heads appear in the property list of the St. George Play ,Turin in 1429.[21] The dummy heads are of St. Marcellin, St. Cladien, St. Cirin and St. Anthony 'whom Dacien first beheaded'. Payment is recorded for the white paint required to paint 'the faces of the [false] heads'. In total the play required eleven severed heads complete with wigs and beards.[22]

In Thomas Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr* [1620] a stage direction requires that Dorothea's head be removed: 'Her head strucke off'.[23] John Marston in his *The Insatiate Countess* of 1610 records the fate of Isabella: 'The executioner strikes off her head.'[24] In *Appius and Virginia* [1564] by R. B. [Richard Bower?], a stage direction requires of Virginius: 'Here let him profer a blowe' to his kneeling daughter, Virginia.[25] Another stage direction, some four lines later, states: 'Here tye a handcarcher aboute hir eyes, and then strike of hir heade.' Seemingly, a dummy head is used for Comfort says: 'Nomore Sir knight, but take the head, and wende a while with me.' If the 'handcarcher' is still in place at this point then imitation of the real head is made easier. One of two watermen in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* by Robert Yarington [1601] trips over a bag lying on the floor. A stage direction states: 'Taking the Sack by the end, one of the legs and head drops out.'[26] The sack is likened to a 'hangman's budget' by waterman 1. The head is described by him as having 'many wounds' and that 'hoase and shooes' are still 'remaining on the legs'. This kind of specific detail implies false body parts to satisfy these descriptions.

Although not informed by an explicit stage direction the intention of the narrative is clear in Fletcher and Massinger's *Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* [1619] in relation to Barnavelt's execution.[27] A kneeling Barnavelt invites the executioner to perform his task by saying: 'now: now: now I present ----'. After the execution the executioner asks: 'is it well done mine Heeres?' The reply states: 'somewhat too much: yo^{u} haue strooke his fingers too'. The implication is that Barnavelt lays his hands at the side of his head on the block in a kneeling position. Whether the head and fingers are seen as false body parts by the audience is unclear.

In *Mankind* (c. 1465-70), Myscheff declares that 'I xall smytt of *th*i hede and sett yt on agayn' (l. 435).[28] A few lines later he claims that 'I

kan choppe yt of and make yt agayn' (l. 445). Although this intention may be no more than a comic threat to remove the head of one of the 3 N's and restore it within the narrative, the capacity to fulfil this action may have some basis in known juggling practice. Girolamo Cardano in his *De Svbtilitate* of 1550 refers to the jugglers' repertoire as being extensive. With regard to decapitation he writes:

> Pueram sine capite, caput sine puero ostendunt, uiuunt tamen omnia, & nihil detrimenti puer patitur interim.[29]
>
> They show a boy without a head and a head without a boy, yet both of them are alive, and the boy suffers no harm in the meantime.

Ludwig Lavater writes of the range of jugglers' skills, in 1572:

> It is well knowne, a mans sight maye be so deceiued, that he verily thinkes that one deuoureth a sword, spitteth out money, coales, and suche like: that one eateth breade, and spitteth foorth meale: one drinketh wine, which after runneth out of his forehead: that one cutteth of his felowes head, which afterwardes he setteth on agayne: and that a cocke seemeth to drawe after hym a huge beame of tymber. &c. Moreouer it may be brought to passe by naturall things, as by perfumes and suche like, that a man woulde sweare in earnest, that all men sitting at the table wyth him, haue no heds at al, or else that they are like the heads of asses: & that som times a vine spreadeth it self as it were ouer al the house, whe*n* in deed it is a mere deceit, or a plain iuggling cast. Of whiche matter there be bookes co*m*monly set abrode.[30]

These accounts of Cardano and Lavater pre-date that of Reginald Scot in his *Discouerie of witchcraft* of 1584 in which he explains the trick 'which the iugglers call the decollation of Iohn Baptist'. This

description and the trick that it outlines has become the standard account of early forms of this trick from which later ones have been derived and developed. Cardano's account indicates knowledge of this trick in Italy in 1550. Lavater's description suggests that the trick was known in England in 1572. Lavater was able to claim that the trick of taking off someone's head and restoring it to its normal state was one: 'Of whiche matter there be bookes comonly set abrode.' If this was so, no English works appear to have survived from 1572 or earlier.

Scot's *Discouerie of witchcraft* is generally regarded as the earliest extant work on the approaches and methods of early jugglers. He wrote the work, in part, to expose the growing mythology surrounding that which was being passed off as caused by supernatural forces. Scot wanted to assert that jugglers created these effects by conscious, deliberate and purposeful skill. Hence, the tricks were 'discovered', that is, 'revealed'. Scot outlines the trick as follows:

> To cut off ones head, and to laie it in a platter, &c: which the iugglers call the decollation of Iohn Baptist.
>
> To shew a most notable execution by this art, you must cause a boord, a cloth, and a platter to be purposelie made, and in each of them holes fit for a boies necke. The boord must be made of two planks, the longer and broader the better: there must be left within halfe a yard of the end of each planke halfe a hole; so as both planks being thrust togither, there may remaine two holes, like to the holes in a paire of stocks: there must be made likewise a hole in the tablecloth or carpet. A platter also must be set directlie ouer or vpon one of them, hauing a hole in the midle thereof, of the like quantitie, and also a peece cut out of the same, so big as his necke, through which his head may be conueied into the middest of the platter: and then sitting or kneeling vnder the boord, let the head onlie remaine vpon the boord in the same. Then (to make the sight more dredfull) put a little brimstone

into a chafing dish of coles, setting it before the head of the boie, who must gaspe two or three times, so as the smoke enter a little into his nostrils and mouth (which is not vnholsome) and the head presentlie will appeare starke dead; if the boie set his countenance accordinglie: and if a little bloud be sprinkled on his face, the sight will be the stranger.

This is commonlie practised with a boie instructed for that purpose, who being familiar and conuersant with the companie, may be knowne as well by his face, as by his apparell. In the other end of the table, where the like hole is made, an other boie of the bignesse of the knowne boie must be placed, hauing vpon him his vsuall apparell: he must leane or lie vpon the boord, and he must put his head vnder the boord through the said hole, so as his bodie shall seeme to lie on the one end of the boord and his head shall lie in a platter on the other end. There are other things which might be performed in this action, the more to astonish the beholders, which because they offer long descriptions, I omit: as to put about his necke a little dough kneded with bullocks bloud, which being cold will appeare like dead flesh; & being pricked with a sharpe round hollow quill, will bleed, and seeme verie strange, &c. Manie rules are to be obserued herein, as to haue the table cloth so long and wide as it may almost touch the ground. Not to suffer the companie to staie too long in the place, &c.[31]

Although Scot's description gives the gist of the deception involved and method employed there is insufficient information divulged to enable the trick to be performed. Such is the case with many so-called explanations of tricks that are apparently designed to let the reader in on the secret(s) of the trick. However, William Vincent provides some additional information in his 1634 edition of *Hocvs Pocvs Ivnior* when he

adds that the platter 'must, as also the table, be made to take in two peeces'.[32] If this were not the case there would be a sizeable gap between the boy's neck and the rim of the hole in the platter. Having the platter made in this way ought to ensure that the platter fits snugly around the boy's neck. Vincent also stresses the need for secrecy in setting up the basic situation by saying: 'Let no body be present while you doe this, neither when you have given entrance, permit any to be medling, nor let them tarry long.'[33]

David Calderwood in his *The History of the Kirk of Scotland* for 1540 records that James Wedderburne:

> had a good gift of poesie, and made diverse comedies and tragedies in the Scotish tongue, wherein he nipped the abusses and superstitioun of the time. He composed in forme of tragedie the beheading of Johne the Baptist, which was acted at the West Port of Dundie, wherin he carped roughlie the abusses and corruptiouns of the Papists.[34]

What form of surmised 'decollation' took place in this account is unclear but a technique and performance of quite a different order to produce a decollation is described by Richard Johnson in 1556 and published in 1599 in *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages*. Johnson travelled with 'Steuen Burrowe in the Serchthrift 1556. and afterwarde among the Samoedes, whose deulish rites he describeth':

> Then they made a thing being foure square, and in height and squarenesse of a chaire, and couered with a gown very close the forepart thereof, for the hinder part stood to the tents side. Their tents are rounde and are called Chome in their language. The water still seething on the fire, and this square seate being ready, the Priest put off his shirt, and the thing like a garland which was on his head, with those things which couered his face, & he had on yet all this while a paire of hosen of deeres skins with y^{e} haire on, which came vp to his

buttocks. So he went into the square seate, and sate down like a tailour and sang with a strong voyce or halowing. Then they tooke a small line made of deeres skinnes of foure fathoms long, and with a smal knotte the Priest made it fast about his necke, and vnder his left arme, and gaue it vnto two men standing on both sides of him, which held the ends together. Then the kettle of hote water was set before him in the square seat, al this time the square seat was not couered, and then it was couered w^{t} a gown of broad cloth without lining, such as the Russes do weare. Then the 2. men which did hold y^{e} ends of the line stil standing there, began to draw, & drew til they had drawn the ends of the line stiffe and together, and then I hearde a thing fall into the kettle of water which was before him in the tent. Thereupon I asked them that sate by me what it was that fell into the water that stoode before him. And they answered me, that it was his head, his shoulder and left arme, which the line had cut off, I meane the knot which I sawe afterwarde drawen hard together. Then I rose vp and would haue looked whether it were so or not, but they laid hold on me, and said, that if they should see him with their bodily eyes, they shoulde liue no longer. And the most part of them can speake the Russe tongue to bee vnderstood: and they tooke me to be a Russian. Then they beganne to hallow with these wordes, Oghaoo, Oghaoo, Oghaoo, many times together. And as they were thus singing & out calling, I sawe a thing like a finger of a man two times together thrust through the gowne from the Priest. I asked them that sate next to me what it was that I sawe, and they saide, not his finger; for he was yet dead: and that which I saw appeare through the gowne was a beast, but what beast they knew not nor would not tell. And I looked vpon the gowne, and

> there was no hole to bee seene: and then at the last the Priest lifted vp his head with his shoulder and arme, and all his bodie, and came forth to the fire...And I went to him that serued the Priest, and asked him what their God saide to him when he was dead. Hee answered, that his owne people doeth not know: neither is it for them to know for they must doe as he commanded.

It appears from this account that Richard Johnson attempts to report faithfully that which he saw and experienced. His observation, however, does not question the action as juggling activity and when he does question that which he sees he is placated by religious or quasi-religious reasons as to why he should not delve any further. All the individuals of whom he enquires appear to have a confederate relationship with the activity. In other words, they know of the deception that is taking place and provide him with responses to maintain its secrecy. At one level this may be considered to have been a naive response on the part of Johnson. But given the juggling intention of his hosts it is hardly likely that they would allow him to have the deception revealed. It is relatively easy to label responses as naive when the witness or audience does not share in or is not party to the juggling intention. A number of accounts refer to the juggling audience as 'simple people' and they do so with an apparent sense of superiority that arises out of knowledge of the deception. This is not necessarily knowledge of the means of deception; it is simply knowledge of the fact that the deception takes place. Take for instance the comments made by William Lambard in his *A Perambulation of Kent* [1576] where he refers to those people who were deceived by the Rood of Boxley as 'the sillie lambes of Gods flocke'.[36] John Gee in his *The Foot out of the Snare* [1624] compares acts of the Catholic Church with those of 'puppets, apes-faces and gawds' through 'allures, masks, and disguises' and recipients of them as 'the poor silly people'.[37] William Bourne in his *Inuentions or Deuises* [1578] refers to the communication of sound through 'trunckes of brasse or other mettall' to produce an effect that 'the simple people will maruell at it.'[38] Bourne, later in the same work, refers to responses to mechanical devices as ones 'which the common people would maruell at, thinking that it is done by Inchantment.'[39] Interestingly, those jugglers who write about

juggling and those who know about it tend not to refer to their potential audiences as common, silly or simple.

Labels of naivety may be attached innapropriately to individuals or audiences because they do not appreciate or are not made aware of different realities. A number of early writers focus on this condition as a means of explaining the nature of juggling. Henry Cornelius Agrippa writing 'Of Iuglinge' in 1569 attempts to explain the nature of it:

> But let vs retourne to Magicke, wherof the Juglers skil is a parte also, that is, illusions, which are onely done accordinge to the outwarde apparance: with these Magitiens doo shewe vaine visions, and with Juglinge castes [tricks] doo plaie many miracles, & cause dreams, which thinge is not so much done by *Geoticall* inchauntmentes, and praiers, and deceites of the Deuill, as also with certaine vapours of perfumes, lightes, medicines, colleries, bindinges, & hangings, moreouer with ringes, images, glasses, & other like receites and instruments of Magicke, and with a natural and celestial vertue. There are many thinges done also, with a readie subteltie and nimblenesse of the handes, as wee dayly see stage players and Juglers doo, whiche for that cause we terme *Chirosophi*, that is to saie, hande wise.[40]

The notion that illusions 'are onely done accordinge to the outwarde apparance' presents the beginning of an understanding concerning sleight of hand. Another way of articulating this condition is to consider that one reality stands for another. The likeness of the two realities being such that they are promoted to become indistinguishable to the audience. The creation of this state is inextricably bound up with the juggler's purpose in the conduct of sleight of hand and misdirection. One of the results of this process is a form of verisimilitude that conditions the nature of illusion. This process also possesses an equivalent in terms of theatrical verisimilitude. For instance, such convergence of realities is described in an account of the *Bourges Effects* of the *Mystery of the Acts of the Apostles* in 1536: 'It lasted forty days, and it was so admirably

acted (as a contemporary historian assures us) that the greater part of the spectators judged it to be real and not feigned.'[41] The juggler's intention to develop sleight of hand through misdirection may be seen to present a further theatrical equivalent during the *Lucerne Passion Play* in the sixteenth century in which a crude, but no doubt effective, manoeuvre is graphically described:

> Meanwhile Esau sets off hunting, that is, in the Garden of Eden, and when he sees the rabbit (küngelin) he speaks to himself and shoots it with a bow or crossbow, not with a gun (büchsen); and it can be arranged so, for someone to be lying in the bushes who has a rabbit, and as soon as Esau shoots the live rabbit which he is hunting in the garden this person is to thrust an arrow through the rabbit he has with him and throw it out quickly, as though it were the one Esau shot.[42]

It may appear self evident that this description refers to conspicuous sleight of hand in order to produce illusion. The sleight of hand does not depend on 'close manipulation' ability but exists through a theatrical equivalent of the juggler's stance to licensed deception. This is theatrical sleight of hand through manipulation of staging conditions. Sometimes stage directions or stage instructions state the necessary prerequisites towards the production of desired effects. 'Skill' is often required to produce likeness to an 'original'. The original may be an object or a person. In the records concerning the *Modane Play of Antichrist* [sixteenth century] there are a number of items that require use of appropriate skill to produce verisimilitude:

> Item. They shall make and paint an image looking like Antichrist which by skill they shall make move and alter its lips as a sign it is speaking.
> Item. They shall by a device (<u>par engin</u>) make an earthquake when necessary with everything possible to make it convincing (<u>pour lui ressembler</u>).

> Also, they will make several limbs that look like the limbs of people killed in the battle with the semblance of blood on those thus killed and wounded.
>
> They shall paint five or six souls, and they shall find some means by skill and cunning (par engin et industrie) to put out the eyes of the catholic with pointed skewers (brochettes poignantes), and to this end they shall make the necessary eyes and false faces or some alternative as skilfully as they can.[43]

The *Bridge House Rentals* of the Corporation Records of the City of London record the following item concerning expenses for the reception at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville in 1464: 'And for three pounds of flax bought & used in the likeness of hair for the angels'.[44] Further verisimilitude is indicated in the records concerning the indoor performance in the Household of Miguel Lucas de Iranzo at Jaen in 1461:

> In front of the place where the Countess was seated, there then appeared the head of this huge dragon (serpiente). It was made of painted wood, and a device inside it (su artificio) propelled the boys out through its mouth one by one, and it breathed huge flames at the same time. And the pages, whose tunics, sleeves, and hoods were soaked in spirits (aguardiente), came out on fire, and it seemed that they were really being burned up in flames.[45]

The examples at Modane concerning the desire to produce verisimilitude through application of appropriate skill are different from the one from Jaen where the account is a response to verisimilitude. Clearly, satisfaction in and conviction by the audience in its response to verisimilitude depends upon the concerted and collaborative sum of a number of contributory factors. The first of these concerns the context as

it is affected by narrative and the nature of its presentation. Another consideration is that which focuses on the purpose of the object as it affects the context and is affected by it. Additionally, a number of other relative features bear upon this condition. Distance from the object is a critical factor. The amount of light available by which the audience is able to witness the object is also an important consideration. Verisimilitude is also affected by the way in which the object is used in relation to narrative, character and presentational needs and functions. Communication and reception is in turn affected by audience experience and its perception.

In the present age and notably in western societies notions of verisimilitude are affected by public exposure to photographic and filmed objects and events. Thus, today, subjection to and experience of still and moving images extensively condition public reading of verisimilitude. This does not necessarily make for a more sophisticated ability, as is popularly thought, but it does modify how an audience interprets and receives verisimilitude. Despite these differences there are still similar ways in which medieval and modern audiences may react. Take, for example, Thomas Addy's description of the juggler who performs with an artificial mouse. Assuming that potential performances are of good quality there is no reason why the juggler and his simulated mouse could not create appropriate verisimilitude for both a medieval and a modern audience:

> he therefore carrieth about him the skin of a Mouse stopped with feathers, or some like Artificial thing, and in the hinder part thereof sticketh a small springing Wire of about a foot long, or longer, and when he begins to act his part in a Fayr, or a Market before Vulgar people, he bringeth forth his Impe, and maketh it spring from him once or twice upon the Table, and then catcheth it up, saying, would you be gone? I will make you stay and play some Tricks for me before you go, and then he nimbly sticketh one end of the Wire upon his waste, and maketh his Impe spring up three or four times to his shoulder, and nimbly catcheth it, and pulleth it down again every time, saying, Would

> you be gone? in troth if you be gone I can play no Tricks, or Feats of Activity to day, and then holdeth it fast in one hand, and beateth it with the other, and slily maketh a squeeking noyse with his lips, as if his Impe cried, and then putteth his Impe in his breeches, or in his pocket, saying, I will make youstay, would you be gone? Then begin the silly people to wonder, and whisper, then he sheweth many slights of activity as if he did them by the help of his Familiar, which the silliest sort of beholders do verily beleeve...[46]

This account is yet another that refers to responses from the 'silly people'. However, the nature of verisimilitude produced by this example is mainly achieved through the performed behaviour of the juggler and is conducted with the related skill of the puppeteer and ventriloquist. Clearly, for a modern audience the juggler's patter would need to be converted to a contemporary vernacular. All the relative conditions outlined above would need to operate but it is possible that this basic situation through the relationship of the juggler and mouse might achieve verisimilitude solely through the skill of the juggler without the actual presence of an artificial mouse.

NOTES

1. *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. by Norman Davis, Early English Text Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 73.

2. *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, p. 74.

3. *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, p. 82.

4. Anon, *Edmond Ironside or War Hath Made All Friends*, ed. by Eleanore Boswell and W. W. Greg, The Malone Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 32-5.

5. Anon, *The Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius Nero*, ed. by John S. Farmer, Tudor Facsimile Texts (Amersham: John S. Farmer, 1913), sig. M3^{v}.

6. *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953-61), III, 203.

7. *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation* ed. by Peter Meredith and John Tailby, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, Medieval Institute Publications, 4 (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1983), pp. 236, 238; N. D. Shergold, *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the end of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 76-8.

8. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 111.

9. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, pp. 102, 103.

10. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 103.

11. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 113.

12. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, pp. 110-11.

13. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 113.

14. Vitale-Brovarone, Alessandro, ed., *ll quaderno di segreti d'un regista provenzale del Medioevo: Note per la messa in scena d'una Passione*, (Alessandria: Edizioni Dell 'Orso, 1984), p. 20; 'Notes for the Staging of a Late Medieval Passion Play', in *Material Culture & Medieval Drama*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 25 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), pp. 79-80.

15. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 113.

16. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 102.

17. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 105.

18. *Teatre Hagiogràfic*, ed. by Josep Romeu, 3 vols (Barcelona: Editorial Barcino, 1957), III, 200; *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 110; *A History of the Spanish Stage*, pp. 62-4.

19. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 110.

20. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 110.

21. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, pp. 111-12.

22. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 112.

23. *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, III, 448.

24. *The Works of John Marston*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, 3 vols (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887), III, 232.

25. R. B. [Richard Bower?], *A new Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia*, ed. by Ronald B. McKerrow and W. W. Greg, The Malone Society (London: C. Whittingham & Co, Chiswick Press, 1911), sigs. $C1^{v}$-$C1^{r}$.

26. Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, ed. by John S. Farmer, Tudor Facsimile Texts (Amersham: John S. Farmer, 1913), sig. $F4^{r}$. See also Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* where a stage direction determines that 'A banquet [is] brought in, with the limbes of a Man in the service': *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, 6 vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), III, 21.

27. John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *Sir John van Olden Barnavelt*, ed. by T. H. Howard-Hill, The Malone Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1979 [1980]), p. 94.

28. *Mankind* in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, Early English Text Society, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 168.

29. Girolamo Cardano, *Hieronymi Cardani Mediolanensis De Svbtilitate libri XXI* (Nuremburg: Ioh. Petreium, 1550), p. 342.

30. Ludwig Lavater, *Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters, & alterations of kyngdomes*, trans. by R.[obert] H.[arrison] (London: Henry Benneyman, 1572), p. 18.

31. Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of witchcraft* (London: H.[enry] Denham for W.[illiam] Brome, 1584), pp. 349-50; Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendivm Maleficarvm In tres libros distinctum ex plvribvs avthoribus per fratrem franciscvm Mariam Gvaccivm* (Milan: 1608), p.4. Brother Guazzo refers to the work of Ioannes Tritemius in his ability to perform the decapitation trick: 'Ioannes Tritemius refert ex antiquioribus, quod anno 876. tempore Ludouici Imperatoris, Sedechias quidam Religione Iudeus, professione Medicus, stupenda quaedam coram principibus uiris fecit; videbatur enim hominibus ipsum deuorare curram onustum foeno, cum equis, & Auriga: insuper amputare capita, manus, & pedes, quae pelui coram imposita sanguine stillantia, cunctis spectanda praebebat, & ea statim hominibus illesis suo quoque loco restituebat.' [John Trithemius tells that much earlier, in the year 876 during the time of the Emporor Louis, a certain Zedechias, a Jew by religion and a physician by profession, worked wonders in the presence of Princes. For he appeared to devour a cart loaded with straw, together with the horses and the driver; he used to cut off men's heads and hands and feet, and exhibit them in a bowl dripping with blood, and then suddenly he would restore the men unharmed each to his own place'. Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, trans. by E. A. Ashwin (New York: Dover, 1988), p. 5.

32. William Vincent, *Hocvs Pocvs Ivnior. The Anatomie of Legerdemain or The Art of Iugling set forth in his proper colours, fully, plainely, and exactly, so that an ignorant person may thereby learne the*

full perfection of the same, after a little practice (London: T.[homas] H.[arper] for R.[alph] M.[abb], 1634), sig. E2^{v}.

33. *Hocvs Pocvs Ivnior*, sig. E3^{r}.

34. David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, 8 vols (Edinburgh: The Wodrow Society, 1842-1849), I, 142.

35. Richard Johnson, *The thirde voyage into Persia, begun in ...1565* in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiqves, and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by sea or Ouer-Land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth...Richard Haklvyt Preacher* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie and Robert Barker, 1599), pp. 317-8.

36. William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent: Conteining the description, Hystorie, and Customes of that Shyre. Collected and written (for the most part) in the yeare. 1570* (London: Ralphe Newberie, 1576), p. 182.

37. John Gee, *The Foot out of the Snare* (London: H.[umphrey] L.[ownes] for Robert Milbourne, 1624), p. 51.

38. *Inuentions or Deuises*, p. 99.

39. *Inuentions or Deuises*, p. 99.

40. Agrippa, Henry Cornelius, *Henry Cornelius Agrippa, of the Vanitie and vncertaintie of Artes and Sciences, Englished by Ja. San.[ford] Gent.* (London: Henry Wykes, 1569), fol. 62^{r}.

41. *Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. by G. G. Coulton, 4 vols (Cambridge: The University Press, 1929), II, 138.

42. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 118.

43. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 105.

44. Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660*, 3 vols (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), I, 326. See also an account concerning the St. George play, Turin for 1429 where it is recorded 'for flax to make hair of the angels and of the souls: 6lbs., 6 gross': *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 121.

45. *The Staging of Religious Drama*, p. 121.

46. Thomas Ady, *A Candle in the Dark* (London: Robert Ibbitson, 1655), pp. 36-7.

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June 2004