DISJOINTED UNISON:

Bodily Porousness and Subversion in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*

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The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* has been one of the most widely studied texts in relation to depictions of the body, including Christ's body, the body of the 'other' (in this case, the Jewish body), and the medical body.[1] In the majority of such studies, bodies seem to be conceived within and through a dichotomy which privileges bodily 'wholeness' over bodily damage or disintegration. It is fairly easy to find justification for this privileging: one sense of the Middle English word *hole* (*whole* in modern spelling) signified the healthy, undamaged state of the body, and an undamaged body tends to have a more pleasant sensory experience than a damaged one.[2] However, 'wholeness' of the body is not privileged over disintegration in all late medieval contexts: in some examples, the un-whole body is an important signifier. This prompts a reconsideration of how to refer to the quality of being un-whole without invoking the dichotomy and denigrating the un-whole state of bodies to a state of being damaged. My term of choice is *porousness*, defined as the capacity of the body to have its superficial integrity violated without descending into dysfunction or damage, which then enables it to enter relationships and transactions with other bodies through that very state of porousness. Accordingly, to avoid resorting to 'disintegration', I will also refer to the process

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[1] I will use the edition of the text edited by Greg Walker: 'Croxton, *The Play of the Sacrament*' *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* edited Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; 5th edition 2000) 213–33.

[2] 'hōl(e adj.(2)' in *Middle English Dictionary* edited Robert E. Lewis et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001) in *Middle English Compendium* edited Frances McSparran et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>.

of achieving such a state as 'becoming-porous'. By suspending the dichotomy between whole bodies and damaged bodies, we can enrich our understanding of the pivotal scene during the Passion sequence of the Croxton *Play*, in which the Host (or the body of Christ) and the hand of the character of Jonathas are joined. The adjusted perspective and the reading it offers augment existing scholarship on the role of bodies and subversion in the play, as well as affecting how we view un-whole bodies (including the body of Christ), highlighting porousness not as the negation or absence of wholeness, but as a self-sufficient property of bodies.

I argue that from such a perspective, the simultaneity of the performance of becoming-porous in the bodies of both Christ and Jonathas (the oppressed and the oppressor) unites Christian and Jewish bodies through the very state of porousness, blurring the purported natural differences between them.[3] Consequently, it offers an opportunity for the subversion of the hierarchy of status between them. It is quite typical of Host desecration narratives—of which the Croxton *Play* is an example—to feature the two instances of becoming-porous: that of Christ and that of the Jewish villain. Each seems intended for its own purpose: one to elicit pity and compassion as well as to show Christ's power and resilience in the face of adversity, and the other to enact cathartic justice on the Jewish aggressors. Jody Enders notes that Passion plays and Host desecration plays provided a 'golden opportunity to purge audience emotion and give them pleasure by staging the unjust punishment of Christ and the presumably just punishment of the Jews for having punished him'.[4] In the Croxton *Play*, however, the simultaneous occurrence of the two processes,

[3] See note 67 below for examples of this different conception. As will be discussed below, performance in this essay is defined broadly. We could use Katie Normington's definition of performance as 'an act which has been self-consciously prepared for deliberate spectatorship'. This definition includes rituals (such as the Mass), different forms of drama, music, games, various forms of processions, and even instances of public punishment: Katie Normington *Medieval English Drama: Performance and Spectatorship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009) 2.

[4] Jody Enders *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999) 183.

however, confuses the cathartic function: it allows the becoming-porous of the Jewish body to mirror Christ's, which is then boosted by the Jews' growing understanding of Christ and eventually their conversion. The subversive potential of porousness is augmented by the performance of the two simultaneous processes, as it is in the immediacy of performance that the conflation of the two senses of becoming-porous is most effective.

To demonstrate how this process works, I will draw on the theoretical concept of *becoming*, which refers to what Erika Fischer-Lichte characterises as the capacity to generate 'something that does not yet exist elsewhere but comes into being only by way of the performative act/the performance that occurs'.[5] The concept will help me account for the play's subversive capacity not as a product of authorial decision, but as a potential and emergent consequence of the simultaneous performances of becoming-porous. In what follows, I shall elaborate on my choice of the term *porousness* and expound on the theoretical concept of *becoming* and its applicability to medieval drama. I will then offer a reading of the interaction between Christian and Jewish bodies in the play and its capacity to subvert the hierarchy of status among bodies.

1. Struggling for Words

Late medieval culture's understanding of the body as a permeating, unstable, and networked entity has been explored by a number of scholars.[6] They emphasise the limited applicability of understanding the medieval body as solely a unified, isolated whole when examining late medieval cultural phenomena. What they suggest emerges instead, is a view of the body as composed of various elements, in constant flux, not necessarily bound by its superficial

[5] Erika Fischer-Lichte *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2005) 27.

[6] There are plenty of studies on the subject, but the works of Sarah Beckwith, Caroline Walker Bynum, Katherine Park, and Miri Rubin are significant interventions.

integrity, and capable of establishing connections with other entities within and without it. They use various terms to characterise this body: 'compartmentalised', 'fragmented', and 'in parts' or 'bits'.[7] Much like 'disintegration' in the dichotomy discussed above, these terms are negative: they insinuate a lack or absence of a privileged quality of wholeness, even if they are used by the authors to argue the contrary. I would like to suggest 'porous' as an alternative term to describe the capacity of the body to function as a whole as well as a fluctuating amalgamation of entities within and without its superficial boundaries, capable of establishing connections with new entities at any given moment.

The phrasing of this understanding is, as we shall see, indebted to posthumanist and New Materialist theories of embodiment; but this conception of the body is itself inspired by medieval medical theories, which place the human being in continuous transaction with a universe-wide network of factors, ranging from the stars to diet.[8] Within this framework, the human body never remains uncontaminated by outside influence. It also never remains a passive recipient of outside influence for, as the Middle English translation of the thirteenth-century Bartholomaeus Anglicus' encyclopaedia notes, the body is 'ful of poores' which have the function of 'puttynge out of superfluitees of fumosite. For by hete þe pores open, and þe superfluite þat is bytwene þe fel and þe fleisch it is iput out by vapoures and swetes'.[9] When

[7] David S. Areford *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) 77; Caroline Walker Bynum *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); 'Introduction: Individual Parts' in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* edited David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997) xi–xxix; Sarah Beckwith *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993) 113.

[8] The posthumanist and New Materialist framework I use is informed by the works of Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti, Manuel DeLanda, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Bruno Latour. For medieval theorisations of networked embodiment, see *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* edited Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998); Julie Orlemanski *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Elizabeth Sears *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Cycle of Life* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1986); Nancy G. Siraisi *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[9] Bartholomaeus Anglicus *On the Properties of Things* translated John Trevisa edited M. C. Seymour, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) *1* 286.

pores are blocked, the healthy level of transaction between the body and extracorporeal entities is disrupted, which results in humoral imbalance, and, consequently, illness. Various means of treatment were recommended for such circumstances: from purgatives and anti-inflammatory drugs to topical salves and ointments, and more invasive methods of treatment such as phlebotomy and even surgery. Many of these solutions involved restoring the body to its porous state. Therefore, to make the body 'whole' again often entailed both violating its superficial integrity and making it porous.[10]

In the medical sense, then, porousness bypasses the problematic dichotomy of *whole* versus *damaged*. However, corporeal damage, such as that done to Christ's body during the Passion, is not easily viewed as a positive or neutral state of porousness from the medical perspective. On the other hand, late medieval devotional culture provides an angle from which porousness, even in the sense of bodily damage, achieves significantly positive powers. Iconography, for example, rather than solely encouraging veneration of Christ's perfect and healthy body, also reveres Christ's crucified, tormented, and wounded body which becomes the focus of intense piety in meditational literature and portrayals of the scenes of the Passion. The prime example of this is the iconographic trope of the Man of Sorrows.[11] Instances of the trope typically depict Christ with all of his wounds, including his nail wounds. However, whereas in late medieval representations of the crucifixion, Christ is

[10] Detailed explanation of such processes can be found in Nancy G. Siraisi's and Mirko D. Grmek's works cited in note 8 as well as Jacques Jouanna *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers* edited by Philip van der Eijk translated Neil Allies (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Vivian Nutton *Ancient Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2nd edition 2013); Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007).

[11] The origins of the image of the Man of Sorrows go back to a fourteenth-century miraculous appearance of the icon during Mass at the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (or Santa Croce) in Rome. The inception of the image is emblematic, to some extent, of the larger shift of focus from Crucifixion as the moment of Christ's triumph to one worthy of the viewer's compassion and pity: Eamon Duffy *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2nd edition 2005) 241–2; Bernhard Ridderbos 'The Man of Sorrows: Pictorial Images and Metaphorical Statements' in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* edited A. A. MacDonald, H. N. B. Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998) 145–81, at 149. A pan-European overview of the trope of the Man of Sorrows can be found in Gertrud Schiller *Iconography of Christian Art* translated Janet Seligman, 2 vols (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1972) *2* 184–230.

on the cross with his eyes closed (signifying his death), in the Man of Sorrows portrayals, his eyes are open (therefore he is alive, even though he bears the nail wounds as well as the side wound which signify that he has already died on the cross), and while he bears the wounds caused by his crucifixion, he is not on the cross. There are also instances in which elements from the tropes of crucifixion, the *arma Christi*, the *Pieta*, and even Christ the Judge blend into the Man of Sorrows. In the words of Bernhard Ridderbos, what we have is 'a portrait of the dead Christ who was miraculously standing or sitting', an adaptable anomaly constructed to inspire meditational piety through the representation of porousness. Ridderbos notes that the icon is principally a fusion of 'elements from the representation of the crucified Christ and the representation of the Pantocrator' (usually translated as all-powerful), a predominantly eastern icon showing a stern Christ looking directly at the viewer, his right hand making the gesture of teaching or blessing (and often his left holding the New Testament).[12] This suffering yet triumphant Christ is, then, 'a visualisation of theological antitheses', an idealisation of disintegration which infuses the state of porousness with new emotional meaning and fervour.[13]

This adoration was translated into writing in devotional literature, a famous example of which is a meditational treatise on the Passion attributed to the fourteenth-century mystic Richard Rolle. In a series of extended similes, he compares the wounded body of Christ to a number of things, highlighting similarities as well as differences which nonetheless always

[12] Ridderbos 158. Michael Camille notes that 'When any character in a painting looks directly at us, conscious not only of being observed but also observing us, this crucially breaks the illusion of reality that has been constructed. Instead of being a historical narrative happening in the past, the internal gaze incorporates the viewer within the scene': 'Mimetic Identification and Passion Devotion in the Later Middle Ages: A Double-Sided Panel by Meister Francke' in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* edited A. A. MacDonald, H. N. B. Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990) 183–210, at 190. On the Pantocrator, see Hans Belting *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion* translated Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990) 91–4.

[13] Ridderbos 162. Also see Mitzi Kirkland-Ives 'The Suffering Christ and Visual Mnemonics in Netherlandish Devotions' in *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650* edited John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016) 35–54.

reinforce the superiority of Christ's wounded body to the other image. Christ's body is 'lyk to hevyn, for as heuyn is fill of sterris, so was þy body ful of woundes'. Rolle then exclaims: 'Bot, lord, þy woundes bene bettyr þan sterris, for sterres shynen bot by nyght, and þy woundes bene ful of vertu day and nyght' (ll. 195–98).[14] He then prays that 'þese woundes be [his] meditacioun nyght and day, for in [Christ's] woundes is hool medicyne for euche desaise of soule' (ll. 202–3).[15] Here, not only are wounds considered virtuous and medicinal, they are also constant, which demonstrates the superiority of Christ's porous body to a night sky punctuated by stars. The next comparisons are even more immediately related to the idea of porousness. Rolle notes, 'lord, swet Ihesu, þy body is lyk to þe nette, for as a nette is fill of holys, so is þy body ful of woundes' (ll. 210–11).[16] Further on, he writes, 'þy body is like to a dufhouse, for a dufhouse is ful of holys: so is þy body ful of woundes', and petitions Christ to shelter him from temptation in his nest-like wounds (ll. 221–6).[17] Rolle proceeds to compare the wounded body of Christ to a honey-filled honeycomb, a book written with red ink, and a meadow 'ful of swete flours and holsome herbes', all of which emphasise how porousness (even in the form of physical damage) can have positive, protective qualities.[18]

What is evident here is that the quality of porousness, when considered in a broader cultural context inclusive of not only medical theories, but also devotional and theological notions, offers an understanding of the body with sufficient complexity to allow nuanced readings of un-whole bodies. One could also consider the doctrine of concomitance itself, which states that each crumb of the broken Eucharistic wafer contains the unbroken,

[14] Richard Rolle *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse Edited from MS. Longleat 29 and Related Manuscripts* edited Sarah Ogilvie-Thompson *EETS 293* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 74.
[15] Rolle 74.
[16] Rolle 74.
[17] Rolle 74.
[18] Rolle 74–5.

undiminished blood and body of Christ.[19] Here, we are ostensibly closer to a compartmentalised or fragmented understanding of the body. However, once we consider the process of becoming-porous of Christ's body in the Croxton *Play,* we realise that concomitance is as much about porousness as it is about compartmentalisation. The play depicts the conspiracy of a group of Jews in late medieval Aragon to 'examine' the Host, subjecting it, in the process, to a second Passion which includes gory scenes of the Host being attacked and wounded.[20] Similar to the Passion in scripture, this results in Christ being resurrected and vanquishing doubt. The play concludes with a Corpus Christi procession and the conversion of the Jews, the latter of which is untypical of the genre of Host desecration tales. The bloody becoming-porous of the Host as well as its transformation into the figure of the Christ Child and back into a wafer highlight the significance of porousness in the conception of concomitance throughout the play.

The only extant copy of the play is bound in Trinity College, Dublin MS F.4.20. It was originally inscribed independently as a standalone text in the mid-sixteenth century; but the text itself claims that the events it dramatises took place in 1461.[21] The association with a village of Croxton (of which there are more than one in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk) comes from a reference to the town in the Banns. Due to the mention of another village, Babwell Mill near Bury St Edmunds, it has been suggested that the Croxton the text refers to is one near Thetford.[22] At the centre of the miracle play is the notion of transubstantiation,

[19] Miri Rubin 'The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities' in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* edited David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992) 43–63, at 50.

[20] Typically known as Host desecration narratives, the earliest instance of such stories occurs in Gezo of Tortona's treatise on the Eucharist, written around 981, in which a Jew steals a consecrated host in order to disgrace it: Phyllis G. Jestice 'A Great Jewish Conspiracy? Worsening Jewish–Christian Relations and the Destruction of the Holy Sepulcher' in *Christian Attitudes toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook,* edited Michael Frassetto (New York: Routledge, 2007) 25–42, at 38.

[21] For a different assessment of the context of the manuscript's production, see: Tamara Atkin 'Playbooks and Printed Drama: A Reassessment of the Date and Layout of the Manuscript of the Croxton "Play of the Sacrament"' *The Review of English Studies, New Series 60: 244* (2009) 194–205.

[22] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 213–33, at 214.

and it is the corporeality and immediacy of transubstantiation that permits the becoming-porous of the Host to be considered as a key element in the study of the play. In the next section, I will explore the significance of the modern theoretical concept of *becoming* for our understanding of this process as well as its subversive potential through performance.

2. Representation and Becoming in the Performance of the Passion

A. Becoming in Modern Theory

In Gilles Deleuze's theorisation, *becoming* is presented as the polar opposite of *representation*. It is defined as 'the continual production (or "return") of difference immanent within the constitution of events, whether physical or otherwise'.[23] It challenges 'the primacy of identity […] [and] a world of representation (presenting the same world once again)' in exchange for 'a world of presentation anew'.[24] What this means is a shift from the static and fixed presentation of what has already happened—which relies on reference to pre-existing events, objects, or subjects—to the emergence of something which does not reflect a pre-existing entity. As Laura Cull puts it, *becoming* marks a shift from representation of 'discrete objects and subjects', to the presentation of something being actualised in real-time in 'processes, relations and happenings'.[25] Deleuze's definitions are less concise and plain, but one could look to the following for his further explication of the term:

> In becoming there is no past nor future–not even present, there is no history. In becoming it is, rather, a matter of involuting; it's neither regression nor progression. To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that

[23] Cliff Stagoll 'Becoming' in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition* edited Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010) 25–7, at 26.
[24] Stagoll, 26.
[25] Laura Cull 'Introduction' in *Deleuze and Performance* edited Laura Cull (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009) 1–21, at 3.

> very reason populated. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute. It is obviously the opposite of evolution, but it is also the opposite of regression, returning to a childhood or to a primitive world.[26]

It is important to emphasise, as Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink notes, that this 'emphasis on process, experimentation, or continuous differentiation [does not lead] us beyond representation'.[27] The reason for this is that bypassing representation completely is virtually impossible. Even if we were able to present something which is un-representable (or, in other words, is 'full presence'), in order to comprehend the total non-representation of the event, we would still need representation, signification, representational systems such as language, and repetition. This point is explained succinctly by Jacques Derrida: he notes that for something to make sense, it must have 'iterability', which means:

> it must carry with it a capacity to be repeated in principle again and again in all sorts of contexts ("no context permits saturation"), at the same time as being in some way singular every time ("no meaning can be determined out of context"). Iterability thus entails both "repetition" (sameness) and "alterity" (difference).[28]

As he further points out in an essay on Antonin Artaud, 'Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself'.[29] Therefore, Deleuze's (and, by extension, my) use of *becoming* does not signify a total absence of representation, but rather, a move away from representation. Similarly, and as noted by Derrida above, each iteration of

[26] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet *Dialogues* translated Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 29.
[27] Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink *Nomadic Theatre: Mobilizing Theory and Practice on the European Stage* (London: Methuen, 2019) 51.
[28] Jacques Derrida 'Living On' in *Deconstruction and Criticism* edited Harold Bloom et al. translated James Hulbert (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) 75–176, at 81.
[29] Jacques Derrida 'From "the Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation"' in *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader* edited Edward Scheer (London: Routledge, 2004) 39–46, at 44.

a performance cannot be a perfect representation of the original, because for repetition to occur as repetition, there has to be difference. Therefore, it would be more helpful to conceive of the *representation-becoming* dichotomy as a continuum, as opposed to a binary opposition, for there is a simultaneity in the existence of *representation* and *becoming* in all forms of production.[30] This is especially apposite to our understanding of theatrical performance, perhaps in particular to the performance of transubstantiation in Croxton.

Nonetheless, *becoming* tilts performance away from representation. The stability of representation, for Deleuze, enables the dominance of power over it. This stability ensures that meaning and interpretation are regulated, and the hierarchies of power are preserved. Thus, for example, ostensibly innocuous elements such as the preservation of male authority figures, a historically accurate costume design which serves to distinguish noble from common characters, or the sustenance of the source material's original language in every production and iteration of a play all maintain sexist, historical, and linguistic hierarchies of power, which are perpetuated and extended through the stability of continual representation. These elements of power 'are those which assure at once the coherence of the subject dealt with and the coherence of the representation on stage'.[31] The non-representational aspect of performative events enables, on the other hand, the destabilisation of such fixed elements of power, which operate through representation. He further elucidates that this destabilisation can be achieved via

[30] See Jacques Derrida 'Signature Event Context' in *Limited Inc.* translated Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1988) 1–23. Mohammad Kowsar refers to this mixed state of representation and non-representation as a kind of 'bilingualism where the trace of the original dialogue and speech exists, albeit with gaps, hiatuses, and partial repetitions': 'Deleuze on Theatre: A Case Study of Carmelo Bene's "Richard III"' *Theatre Journal 38* (1986) 19–33, at 22. Deleuze extends this simultaneity even to language, in every utterance of which repetition and difference (representation and becoming) are simultaneously present. He claims that 'Every word is physical, and immediately affects the body': Gilles Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* translated Mark Lester and Charles Stivale edited Constantin V. Boundas (London: The Athlone Press, 1990) 87. For a discussion of the debate in the late Middle Ages, see below.

[31] Gilles Deleuze 'One Manifesto Less' in *The Deleuze Reader* edited Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) 204–22, at 207.

> […] [the] elimination of constants or invariants not only in the language and the gestures, but also in the theatrical representation and in that which is represented on stage; thus the elimination of everything which "makes" power, the power of what the theater represents (the king, the princes, the masters, the system), but also the power of the theater itself (the text, the dialogue, the actor, the director, the structure). Hence the passage of everything through continuous variation, as if on a creative line of flight, which constitutes a minor tongue within the language, a minor character on stage, a minor transformational group across the dominant forms and subjects.[32]

In practical terms, then, to facilitate a move from representation to becoming, as Deleuze suggests, might include initiatives like preferring improvised noise to dialogue, radically altering the expected succession of events in the play (i.e. narrative), and suddenly changing the setting, the *mise en scène*, or the costume design. As we shall see, all of these measures occur, to some degree, in the Croxton *Play*. The existence of these features in the *Play* should not be deemed a haphazard coincidence. Rather, as I will demonstrate in the following lines, such features highlight the significance of and controversy around the potential of *becoming* in performance. This was also an aspect of the late medieval debate around the representation-becoming continuum. Therefore, our consideration of *becoming* as a modern theoretical concept can be utilised as a tool to help us understand better the anxieties around the performance of the Passion in the late medieval context better. Such anxieties are, in turn, significant for our appreciation of the *Play*.

[32] Deleuze 'One Manifesto Less' 217.

B. Becoming in Late Medieval Thought

Devotional works on the life and the Passion of Christ and in the tradition of affective piety, such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Life of Jesu*, in which the reader is encouraged to 'behold' Christ's suffering, offer a mode of understanding performance which seems to try to move away from strict bounds of representation.[33] Sarah McNamer defines the practice of affective piety as imagining oneself 'present at scenes of Christ's suffering and [performing] compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart'.[34] Compassion, here, would entail an attempt to empathise with the suffering via its renewal through 'beholding' it via imagination, sensation, and experience. An early Franciscan tract, written in mid- to late-thirteenth century and attributed to Bede, puts this view more bluntly: 'it is necessary that when you concentrate on these things in your contemplation, you do so as if you were actually present at the very time when He suffered'.[35] Fischer-Lichte notes that 'the Church [overall] acknowledged attendance at a religious play as a "good work," and actors and spectators were often granted indulgences'.[36]

On the other hand, it is in Lollard polemics against representations of the Passion (in sacramental or dramatic form) that we find one of the most specific discussions about the difference between iconography and drama in terms of the representation-becoming continuum. The early fifteenth-century two-parter *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*—generally

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[33] Nicholas Love *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* edited Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005) at various places. Also see: Richard Beadle '"Devoute Ymaginacioun" and the Dramatic Sense in Love's Mirror and the N-Town Plays' in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference, 20–22 July 1995* edited Richard Beadle, Shoichi Oguro, and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997) 1–17.

[34] Sarah McNamer *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) 1.

[35] Translation quoted from David Freedberg *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 171. Original Latin: 'Necessarium etiam esse, ut aliquando ista cogites in contemplatione tua, ac si praesens tum temporis fuisses, quando passus fuit': 'De meditatione passionis Christi per septem diei horas libellus', in *PL*, 94, cols. 561–8, at col. 561.

[36] Fischer-Lichte 'The Medieval Religious Plays' 254. The early fifteenth-century treatise on the commandments, *Dives and Pauper*, also has a generally approving attitude towards 'pleyys and dauncis þat arn don principaly for devocioun and honest merthe': *Dives and Pauper* edited Priscilla Heath Barnum, 2 vols *EETS 323* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) *1* Part 1 293.

thought to have been written between 1380–1425—is a treatise which, despite being targeted at ‘miraclis pleyinge’, a term which seems to denote a wide range of dramatic performances, mainly discusses Passion Plays.[37] Appearing to be from the East Central Midlands in its dialect, the tract is commonly considered to be associated with the Wycliffite or Lollard movement.[38] Each part was written by a separate author. In the first part, the author responds to six reasons that advocates of such performances provide in support of the ‘miraclis pleyinge’, which are: that they are an aid to worship, that they convert their viewer to true faith, that they (specifically those of the Passion) spur and inspire compassion and piety, that they captivate those who would not otherwise heed the church’s teaching, that they are the lesser of two evils compared to ‘pleyinge of other japis’ (l. 178),[39] and, lastly, and perhaps most importantly:

> […] sithen it is leveful to han the miraclis of God peintid, why is not as wel leveful to han the miraclis of God pleyed, sithen men mowen bettere reden the wille of God and his mervelous werkis in the pleyinge of hem than in the peintinge? And betere they ben holden in mennes minde and oftere rehersid by the pleyinge of hem than by the peintinge, for this is a deed bok, the tother a quick.[40]

Here we find two clues about the representation-becoming duality: first, that there is something extra in performance, a kind of liveliness, as the author puts it, which distinguishes

[37] *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* edited Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011) 1. The text exists in London, British Library MS Additional 24202, fols. 14r-21r). For an alternative, albeit not overwhelmingly convincing, understanding of the term, which posits that the term refers to parodies of the liturgy or sacred events, see Lawrence M. Clopper '*Miracula* and *the Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*' *Speculum 65: 4* (1990) 878–905.
[38] *Tretise* 59.
[39] *Tretise* 98.
[40] *Tretise* 98 (ll. 179–185). Many scholars have understood mystery plays as having a predominantly didactic function. For an introduction, see: Deane E. D. Downey 'Images of Christ in Corpus Christi Medieval Mystery Play Cycles' in *Images of Christ: Ancient and Modern* edited Michael A. Hayes, Stanley E. Porter, and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 206–26.

it from iconographic representation. A ‘quick’ book has the potential to reaffirm itself and its powers (to some extent) without a need to refer to pre-existing entities, and this could indeed be unpredictable and/or unintentionally subversive. As the second part of the treatise posits: ‘unkindely seyen men nowe on dayes, “Crist doth now no miraclis for us, pleye we therfore his olde,” adding many lesingis therto so colowrably that the puple gife as myche credense to hem as to the trwthe’ (ll. 623–6).[41] The problem, here, then, is not just infidelity to the source material and going beyond faithful representation, but the re-enactment—presenting anew—of Christ’s acts, as well.

On this presenting anew of Christ’s acts, the first author contrasts ‘signes of verrey love’ with ‘dedis of verrey love’, and then argues that ‘sithen thise miraclis pleyinge ben onely singnis, love withoute dedis, they ben […] contrarious to the worschipe of God’ (ll. 197–202).[42] Here, it is made clear that for the *Tretise* authors all representations, and not just performance, are indeed problematic, because they are mere signifiers (or signs, in the author’s words), and they refer to something other than the material reality of the event. Every portrayal of Christ without Christ himself and his actions, then, is invalid. Just as for medieval realists, a representational understanding of things would demote them to an inferior order of existence, so for the reformists, anything other than pure becoming (or total presence without the trace of another sign) is deceitful and false. In fact, what makes performance even more threatening is that extra element of ‘liveliness’ or ‘becoming’ in addition to representation, which renders performance more than ‘signs without deeds’, but rather deeds without deeds. This is why, for reformists, even the ritual of the Mass is considered against the truth, as it is simultaneously representational and non-representational.

[41] *Tretise* 111. Theodore K. Lerud avers that the *Tretise* considers performative acts and images as part of the same category, which, as my analysis shows, may not be entirely convincing: Theodore K. Lerud 'Quick Images: Memory and the English Corpus Christi Drama' in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* edited Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüskin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 213–38, at 216.
[42] *Tretise* 99.

The idea that the bread and the wine contain the essence of ('become') the body and blood of Christ, as asserted in the first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, means that the body and blood are transubstantiated into bread and wine every time they are administered at Mass. Therefore, every time the Mass is held, the Passion occurs anew. Karl Young points out that 'The central act [in the Mass] is designed not to represent or portray or merely commemorate the Crucifixion, but actually to repeat it. What takes place at the altar is not an aesthetic picture of a happening in the past, but a genuine renewal of it'.[43] It is through the reformists' criticism that we begin to see the subversive potential performance and becoming harbour in relation to theological tenets, which, in Deleuze's theorisation, comprise one set of the elements of power.

The criticism of representation in art and performance is not extended to language and the scripture, however, which implies that for the authors of the treatise, language—at least in relation to the scripture—seems capable of reliably conveying truth without descending into representation, thus serving as their chief and only authority. This is, of course, contrary to the position of contemporary nominalists—for whom language was capable of producing illusory abstractions such as the universals, as well as to that of orthodox authorities such as Archbishop Arundel who sought to regulate the use of language in preaching via his *Constitutions*.[44] More importantly, however, there seems to be a contradiction between the *Tretise* authors'—and indeed other reformist thinkers'—confidence in language as a system

[43] Karl Young *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) *1* 84–5. Miri Rubin also points out that from the High Middle Ages, the Eucharist emerged 'as a re-enactment, not merely memorial, of the central act of sacrifice which had been foretold in the Last Supper, and suffered in the Passion': Rubin 'The Eucharist' 46–7.

[44] On nominalism and the problem of universals, see: Alastair Minnis '"Authorial Intention" and "Literal Sense" in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature 75* (1975) 1–31; Roberto Pinzani *The Problem of Universals from Boethius to John of Salisbury*, *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). Penny Granger views the *Play of the Sacrament* and the Towneley Shepherds' plays as evidence that Arundel's constitutions may not have been as influential as sometimes presented: *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009) 58.

capable of conveying ‘the absolute truth and authority of the bible as the Word’ and the implied acknowledgement of the opaqueness and unreliability of language in Wycliffite translators’ reliance on commentaries (the dominance of which over exegesis they opposed) in their efforts to produce a vernacular version of the Bible.[45] This suggests that the supposed radical literalism that is associated with the Wycliffite movement(s) appears to have been fuelled by more than just theoretical opposition: there was a political dimension to their struggle, one which opposed the clergy’s regulation of interpretation and, indeed, representation. Regardless of the *Tretise* authors’ positions on language, it is evident that when accompanied by visual representation and performance, even the status of language did not remain unsullied.

In terms of visual representation, the first *Tretise* author, in their response to that last proposed benefit of ‘miraclis pleyinge’, writes that ‘peinture, yif it be verry withoute menging of lesingis and not to curious, to myche fedinge mennis wittis, and not occasion of maumetrie to the puple, they ben but as nakyd lettris to a clerk to riden the treuthe’ (ll. 372–8).[46] The three conditions here can be reformulated as: the absence of any form of becoming (i.e. going beyond the text, with infidelity (‘lesingis’) as its weakest example and emergent, subversive, and self-referential (‘curious’) elements as stronger examples), incapacity to be affective (not appealing to people’s senses or ‘wittis’), and not representing the original, true signified (idolatry or ‘maumetrie’). Only by removing layer after layer of any imaginable additional element which has the potential to go beyond the ‘nakyd’ truth (i.e. scripture) does the author finally acknowledge that a painting could conceivably be considered a faithful

[45] Ruth Nisse 'Reversing Discipline: The *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, Lollard Exegesis, and the Failure of Representation' *The Yearbook of Langland Studies 11* (1997) 163–94, at 166; Anne Hudson *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 257; Ralph Hanna, Tony Hunt, R. G. Keightley, Alastair Minnis, and Nigel F. Palmer, 'Latin Commentary Tradition and Vernacular Literature' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 2: The Middle Ages* edited Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009) 363–421, at 396.

[46] *Tretise* 104.

representation.[47] This view, however, was obviously not shared by the majority of the reformists, who did not even consider even such pictorial depictions as valid.[48]

The second clue about the representation-becoming duality in the passage quoted from the *Tretise* above is the implication that viewers are moved more greatly when watching the tangible performances as opposed to still, iconographic representations. This second clue re-emphasises that for medieval viewers just as for modern theorists such as Fischer-Lichte and Deleuze, the affective power of *becoming* in performance was significant. Furthermore, as Carolyn Muessig argues, this is especially true for performances of the Passion, in which 'there is no gap between what happened at one moment in salvation history and what happens in real time, [so] the religious events are brought to the present and can occur at any moment'.[49] It is thus evident that what is extra in performance in comparison with iconography, and, consequently, threatening for the reformists' penchant for literalism and/or independence from the Church's monopoly over exegesis, is this move away from representation towards becoming, which creates a more tangible, immediate experience with a potentially subversive affective power.

How might this examination of the *Tretise* impact our understanding of the play? Firstly, it highlights that becoming (or 'liveliness' in the discourse of the *Tretise*) was an equally legitimate concern for late medieval thinkers. The affinities between the late medieval conception of performance and modern theorisations of *becoming* in performance, then,

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[47] For a study of the *Play* proposing that it is, similar to the *Tretise*, a critique of performances of the Passion, see Christina M. Fitzgerald 'Performance Anxiety and the Passion in the Croxton Play of the Sacrament' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 46: 2* (2016), 315–37.

[48] Margaret Aston *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984) 139. An example of such disapproving views can be found in a tract on images in the same early fifteenth-century manuscript that contains the *Tretise*, London, British Library, MS Additional 24202, fols. 26–28v. It notes that while there were images, by God's command, in the Temple of Solomon, by Christ's new law, such images are prohibited: 'Images and Pilgrimages' in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* edited Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978) 83–88, at 84.

[49] Carolyn Muessig 'Performance of the Passion: The Enactment of Devotion in the Later Middle Ages' in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* edited Elina Gertsman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 129–42, at 137.

enable the adoption of the concept of *becoming* as a critical tool for the examination of the play. Secondly, the late medieval understanding of performance's subversive capacity is itself quite germane to Deleuze's theorisations of *becoming*. In both cases, a performative event has the potential to dissociate itself from either historical reality or narrative accompanied by exegetic addenda which aimed to provide the 'correct', sanctioned contextualisation and explanation for the event. This potential, in turn, is what made performance problematic for reformists. The addenda must necessarily rely on representational systems such as language to disseminate and be understood. In our particular case, such exegetic addenda would aim to differentiate between the piety-inducing becoming-porous of Christ and the cathartic becoming-porous of Jewish characters by putting the performance in its appropriate context. Once this context is bypassed, such becomings, untied to any theological explanation, enable emergent, unintended interpretations of performance through their affective power, and make possible the conception that Christ and the Jew are actually united through becoming-porous. In the next sections, I will bring the two previous areas of discussion together, first by considering how the more nuanced idea of porousness opens up the possibility for alternative readings of the Croxton *Play*, and then by examining the subversive potential of specific performative instances of becoming-porous from this perspective.

3. Wholeness vs. Porousness: a False Dichotomy?

There have been extensive and conflicting discussions of the Croxton *Play* as an example of anti-Lollardy or antisemitism, and at the same time of its openness towards heterodoxy and alterity.[50] While many have persuasively written against the Lollard connection, Ann Eljenholm Nichols notes that the author must at least have been familiar with the anti-Lollard

[50] For the frequently challenged connection with Lollardy, see Cecilia Cutts 'The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece' *Modern Language Quarterly 5: 1* (1944) 45–60; Gail McMurray Gibson *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 34–42.

discourse as well as the vocabulary used by Lollards themselves, for the text ‘uses Lollard vocabulary to characterize the non-believing Jews’.[51] Thus, the text is consciously aware of the issue of exclusion at work within it. Similarly, the reason for scholarly attention in relation to the play’s antisemitism is that, apart from the body of Christ, the text foregrounds the Jewish body and its porousness, as well as its role in the torture of Christ. Critics generally fall into two broad camps: those who see the play as emblematic of the exclusionary forces of antisemitism at work within late medieval society, and those who see a challenge to such forces in the play’s depiction of the interaction between Jews and the Host.[52] It could be said that each camp emphasises one function of becoming-porous introduced at the beginning of this paper: the first sees antisemitism as manifesting itself in the cathartic function, and the second camp sees Eucharistic and affective piety bringing bodies closer.

With regards to catharsis, the play situates itself within a context of violence against Jews, which goes beyond the charge of Host desecration and forms the basis of the narrative. David Nirenberg emphasises that violence against Jews, literally and symbolically, was a ritualised aspect of Holy Week festivities in mainland Europe, sometimes following

[51] Ann Eljenholm Nichols 'Lollard Language in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*' *Notes and Queries 36* (1989) 23–25, at 23, 25. For the vocabulary used by Lollards, see: Anne Hudson *Lollards and Their Books* (London: Bloomsbury, 1985); especially 165–80.

[52] Former camp includes: Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler 'Othered Bodies: Racial Cross-Dressing in the *Mistere De La Sainte Hastie* and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 29: 1* (1999) 61–87; Lisa Lampert 'The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton "Play of the Sacrament," Little Robert of Bury and Historical Memory' *Jewish History 15: 3* (2001) 235–55; Steven Kruger 'The Spectral Jew' *New Medieval Literatures 2* (1998) 9–35; Stephen Spector 'Time, Space, and Identity in the Play of the Sacrament' in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theater in Late Medieval Europe* edited Alan Knight (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997) 197–98. The latter camp could be said to include: Sarah Beckwith 'Ritual, Church and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body' in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* edited David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992) 65–89; Richard L. Homan 'Devotional Themes in the Violence and Humor of the *Play of the Sacrament*' *Comparative Drama 20* (1986) 327–40; Elisabeth Dutton 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* edited Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 56–71; Greg Walker 'And Here's Your Host…: Jews and Others in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*' *Jewish Culture and History 11: 1&2* (2009) 40–56.

performances of the Passion of Christ.[53] As Nirenberg suggests, one of the aims of the Holy Week cycle was to 'make brutally clear the sharp boundaries, historical and physical, that separated Christian from Jew'.[54] In practice, these boundaries were also enforced via biopolitical means which sought to regulate Jews' activities and movements through separating them from Christians throughout Holy Week.[55] Furthermore, rumours of Host desecrations were often followed by riots against Jews.[56]

However, the play's engagement with bodies, as Nichols points out, is also informed by its engagement with the elements of Eucharistic and affective piety popular in the fifteenth century.[57] She reminds us that the 'symbols of the Passion are ubiquitous in East Anglian parish churches; they are carved on baptismal fonts and porch facades, decorate roodscreens, and are held by myriads of angels on hammerbeam roofs from which the reserved Eucharist was suspended'.[58] This image is fused with the Eucharist in the iconography of the Mass of St Gregory, in which the Man of Sorrows appeared or came to life on the altar during a Mass held by Pope Gregory praying to convince doubters of transubstantiation.[59] We see a form of this fusion at the climax of the Croxton *Play*, where the Host transforms into the figure of the Christ Child. The narrative backbone of the *Play* is similarly concerned with the Eucharist

[53] David Nirenberg *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996) 214–15.
[54] Nirenberg 217–19.
[55] Shlomo Simonsohn *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991) 131–2. This was, one must bear in mind, at the same time as lepers were allowed into the community to participate in rituals or collect alms, especially before the Black Death: Anna M. Peterson 'Connotation and Denotation: The Construction of the Leper in Narbonne and Siena before the Plague' in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean* edited Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2021) 323–43, at 333.
[56] Jestice 25–42.
[57] Nichols 'The Croxton' 117 and 121. Also see: Michael Jones 'Theatrical History in the Croxton "Play of the Sacrament"' *ELH 66: 2* (1999) 223–60.
[58] Nichols 'The Croxton' 122.
[59] The origins of the image of the Man of Sorrows go back to a fourteenth-century miraculous appearance of the icon during Mass at the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (or Santa Croce) in Rome: Nichols 'The Croxton' 122. For similarities between the image of the Man of Sorrows and the image of the Christ Child appearing at the end of the play, see below.

and shaped by Host miracles or Host desecration stories which, as Miri Rubin notes, developed from an account from 1290 Paris and became popular in the late Middle Ages.[60]

Thus, both positively and negatively, the play seems to be already centred on bodies, and the first step in that direction is taken by Jonathas, the Jewish merchant, who intends to put the Host 'in a prefe' (to a test); Jason, the first of his attendants, proposes:

> Yff þat thys be he that on Calvery was mad red,
> Onto my mynd, I shall kenne yow a conceyt good:
> Surely wyth owr daggars we shall ses on thys bredde,
> And so wyth clowtys we shall know yf he have eny blood.[61]

The Jews' subsequent suggestions are equally disturbing and sacrilegious: one says that 'wyth our strokys we shall fray hym as he was on þe Rood', another tells his companion to 'smyte ye in the myddys of þe cake | And so shall we smyte þeron woundys five!' (ll. 375, 377–78).[62] When inflicting those wounds, thus initiating the becoming-porous of the Host, the characters emphasise the force with which they bore into the Host, describing their every strike and its intended goal, while the Host remains silent and ostensibly passive. But this turns into confusion as soon as Jonathas pierces the middle of the Host—the equivalent of Christ's side. The Host starts bleeding profusely, and before they can immerse it in the cauldron full of boiling oil which they have prepared, it sticks to the hand of Jonathas, who starts running around in desperation.[63] The Jews tie the Host to a post, drive three nails into it, and then try to remove it from their master's hand; but somehow they end up ripping the

[60] Rubin 'The Eucharist' 54; Nichols 'The Croxton' 123. Also see: W. C. Jordan *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) 191–4.
[61] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 223 (ll. 369–72).
[62] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 223.
[63] The significance of oil in the cauldron is that it parallels the anointing of Christ's body in the Passion narrative.

hand off his arm: ‘Here shall thay pluke þe arme, and þe hand shall hang styll with þe Sacrament’ (l. 436 sd).[64]

This moment is pivotal with regards to the validity of the binary opposition between wholeness and porousness. Robert Clark and Claire Sponsler highlight that ‘[l]ike women, Jews were frequently defined as “body,” and, again like women, their bodies were often seen as dangerously porous and open, threatening contamination of those (Christian males) who came into contact with them’; they argue that the same dynamic is at work in the threat of contamination posed by Jewish bodies to the Host in this scene.[65] For them, it is the Jewish body that has the potential to ‘pollute’ the Host. However, their reading is quite unbalanced in its characterisation of the attachment of the Host to Jonathas’s hand. They emphasise that when Jonathas’s ‘hand becomes so strongly attached to the Host that it is actually ripped from his body, pollution is vividly explored as the body of the Jew conjoins with the body of Christ’.[66] It is true that the conjoining highlights an anxiety in terms of the proximity of the threatening, polluting, and excluded body to a perfectly pure one, mirroring the anxieties in terms of the proximity of Jews in mainland Europe (and Lollards in England) to the unpolluted within the urban environment. Jews were associated with a variety of diseases and conditions, some of which involved bleeding (such as menstruation, haemorrhages and haemorrhoids), and the unease around contact with a Jewish body must have been recreated among the play’s audience.[67] However, characterising what occurs here as the hand becoming

[64] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 224.
[65] Clark and Sponsler 72.
[66] Clark and Sponsler 72.
[67] Joshua Trachtenberg *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Skokie, Illinois: Varda Books, 2001) 50, 149, 228 n. 27. Anthony Bale disagrees with characterising the medieval understanding of the Jewish body as something degenerate and contaminating. Rather, in his analysis of Chaucer’s ‘The Prioress’s Tale’, he emphasises that ‘The Jewry is not a contagious or leaking corrupt body, but rather an entity which is entered by non-Jews’. Here, Bale reverses the direction of the Jewish body’s flow of power, underlining that it is the absorptive porousness of the Jewish body, its adaptive instability, as one of the reasons why it is treated with hostility: Anthony Bale *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 132, 83.

‘so strongly attached […] that it is actually ripped from [the] body’ misses the point. The hand is not detached from Jonathas’s body in order to signify that the polluted and the pure cannot naturally co-exist at any cost; it is ripped off his body, but remains attached to the Host, in the middle of an attempt at treatment—which itself aimed to separate the Host from the hand. The hand itself is still Jonathas’s hand, the hand of a Jew attached to the Host, and nowhere in the scene or in the play is the hand disowned and treated as an entity that no longer belongs to Jonathas. At the same time, we cannot ignore that for an ‘othered body’ to become melded with the body of Christ, a boundary has to be crossed—a network has to be established. If the sole concern had been pollution, the Host would have had to reject the hand, not take it and keep it.

Clark and Sponsler go on to argue that ‘the dismemberment of Jonathas is the counterfigure of the wafer's enduring wholeness’, and that this dismemberment is materialised in order ‘uphold the wholeness of Christian community’.[68] The proposition here is based on the mistaken binary opposition discussed above, which privileges wholeness over porousness, and it is through this privileged sign that they read the entire text. For them, the Host has to remain intact the whole time, otherwise the play will become too subversive to remain contextually, representationally, and discursively stable: wholeness is only for the same (Christ and Christians), and porousness and damage only belong to the other (Jews). It is due to this hierarchic binary opposition that Clark and Sponsler underline a ‘risk of [the audience’s] self-implication in the disavowed qualities projected onto racial others’ as their conclusion.[69] The self-implication, by which is meant the realisation by Christians that they, too, doubt transubstantiation, is not necessarily a deconstructive glitch in the play’s discursive

[68] Clark and Sponsler 73. David Lawton opposes this view by casting doubt on the whole ideas of ‘wholeness’ and ‘community’ in relation to dramatic performances: 'Sacrilege and Theatricality: the Croxton Play of the Sacrament' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 33: 2* (2003) 281–309, at 295.
[69] Clark and Sponsler 80.

system that has somehow made its way into the play. Rather, it is the result of a parallel conception of the two bodies as porous and permeable, allowing for the Jewish body to be conjoined with that of Christ. As briefly noted at the beginning of this paper, porousness was indeed idealised and invoked in order to secure the Passion's redemptive and protective powers. Here, too, it cannot be any more obvious that the bleeding, bored-through Host is not intact, and if we were to tear the dichotomy down and dethrone wholeness, we would discover that when Jonathas's hand is ripped off, porousness is the only thing in common between him and the Host; it is what unites Christ with the Jews. The result of this disjointed unison is, firstly, the investment of the Host with a further degree of materiality and corporeality, as the Jewish body was considered a more visceral 'body', as Clark and Sponsler put it. Consequently, the idea that the Host is the body of Christ becomes more immediately tangible. Secondly, Christ, Christianity, and God enter into the Jewish body through the union, which will then render the Jewish body capable of becoming Christian and entering the communal Body of Christ. It is here in this episode that the Passion moves beyond representation of already existing discourses and the narrative which typically emphasises the exclusion of the Jewish body, towards *becoming*, where the boundaries between same and other are crossed beyond the narrative through a positive, simultaneous violation of bodily integrity. As opposed to porousness negating the status of bodies and reinforcing exclusion, this *becoming* unites the ostensibly excluded Jewish bodies and the Body of Christ. *Becoming*, of course, is not a single, static action occurring during the performance of the scene. Rather, it is, as discussed in the previous section on the *Tretise*, interactive and cumulative. *Becoming*, then, is the aggregate of the simultaneous processes of becoming-porous, its affective impact, and the potential resultant interpretation which proposes that a porous Jewish body can be as favourable an entity as the porous body of Christ.

4. Becoming-Porous and Subversion

The interaction between porous bodies has thus provided the potential to pose a challenge against the dominant medieval position of antisemitism. This form of becoming is further strengthened by the absence of any verbal explication of the theological significance and implications of what goes on in the sequence, leaving communication predominantly to affective and non-representational means. This is exemplified by the silent Host or the Body of Christ and how it overcomes adversity and communicates with the audience, as well as the Jewish characters, through the process of becoming-porous. The Host remains ostensibly passive and silent throughout most of the sequence of the renewal of the Passion. I propose that the absence of language in the performance of the becoming-porous of Christ's body activates a new mode of communication that depends on affective communication through corporeal damage (in other words, speaking via wounds). In turn, this new mode further destabilises the centrality of the representational system of language, through which sanctioned interpretations of events are disseminated.

The motif of speaking wounds enjoyed considerable popularity in late medieval iconography. For instance, an illustration in an early fifteenth-century Book of Hours, a collaboration between Flanders or France and England, allows the reader to view the heart through Christ's side wound, which is mandorla-shaped. Around the side wound, there is a labial caption, which reads: 'Hec plage Christi sint ad veniam michi cuncti; Quinque vulnera dei sint medicina mei' ('May Christ's wounds be my forgiveness for all, and the Lord's five wounds be my medicine').[70] Apart from the shape's gynaecological connotations, David S. Areford reads the shape as approximating a mouth, which would suggest that the wound is

[70] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. Liturg. F. 2, f. 4v <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/55dbf4b2-d614-4f46-80de-c7de81ab47b6/surfaces/d02a0df6-2109-43f1-8944-e64d06812904/>.

speaking.[71] In the opening folios of London, British Library, MS Egerton 1821 (c. 1480–c. 1525), we see the wounds evolving into an entire book. The manuscript is catalogued as a Psalter and Rosary of the Virgin but includes other devotional texts, as well. Folios 1r–2r are painted black, punctuated by bright drops of blood; In folios 6v–9v, the pages are painted entirely red, featuring bleeding wounds of darker shades. On several of these are pasted devotional woodcuts of the *arma* as well as the wounds, at the centre of which is displayed the bleeding heart. The whole content of the book thus become part of a conversation with Christ. It is noteworthy that even with the efforts of Egerton 1821, all the abovementioned examples still rely on the representational system of language to initiate contact between the reader and Christ. On folio 9v, for instance, there exists a conversation between a severely wounded Christ and a Carthusian monk, in which Christ guides the monk to salvation by the following words: 'Fili fuge vince tace quiesce' (Son, shun, master, be silent, be still). Below the illustration proclaims a caption: 'The greatest comfort in all temptacyon is the remembraunce of crystes passyon'. Despite the multisensory experience offered by the manuscript, the only way to truly interact with Christ is, the manuscript's maker seems to suggest, to *read* him; thus Christ's ability to speak depends on the devotee.[72]

[71] David S. Areford 'The Passion Measured: A Late-Medieval Diagram of the Body of Christ' in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* edited A. A. MacDonald, H. N. B. Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990) 211–38, at 238 n. 87. The mouth motif is even more pronounced in a modern impression of a German late fifteenth-century woodcut in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich (1929: 268): David S. Areford *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) 236–7.

[72] London, British Library, MS Egerton 1821, fols. 1r–2r, 6v–9v <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=egerton_ms_1821_f001r>. For the multisensory engagement in Egerton 1821, see: Michelle M. Sauer 'Audiotactility and the Medieval Soundscape of Parchment' (17 October 2016) <https://soundstudiesblog.com/tag/ms-egerton-1821/>. On the gynaecological representations of the side-wound, see Martha Easton 'The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages' in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art and Architecture* edited Susan L'Engle, and Gerald B. Guest (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2006) 395–414; Flora May Lewis 'The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response' in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence* edited Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997) 204–29.

By contrast, in the play the performative wounds are active: they rely neither on language nor on the devotees to be able to speak, and even if one spectator averts their eyes, the act of speaking continues through means other than visual connection (e.g. kinetic, auditory, olfactory, or even tactile). This woundly form of communication is not achieved via language. Until the denouement of the play, no word is spoken by the Host/Christ; it/he remains silent throughout the Passion, meekly undergoing the ordeal as per the narrative. In addition to the Gospels, Christ's silence is a significant aspects of the narrative of the Passion elsewhere in the Bible and devotional literature: it is suggested in Isaiah 53:7, which mentions 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth'. The performance of the Passion, however, enables the establishment of the active, material, and affective mode of woundly communication which relies on *becoming* (specifically, the process of becoming-porous of Christ) and overcomes Christ's ostensible passivity.[73] As Cull points out, affective impact is itself a kind of becoming and cannot be engineered.[74] The Jewish tormentors, by contrast, do use language, but only to emphasise either the affective force of the violence and cruelty being performed or their own confusion when their scheme is disrupted. The innocence and truth of Christ and the depravity of his/the Host's offenders, then, are not communicated explicitly via language. Rather, they are demonstrated by their non-representational becoming-porous in real time. As mentioned

[73] Christ's silence has been examined in a number of studies: Alexandra F. Johnston '"His Langage Is Lorne": The Silent Centre of the York Cycle' *Early Theatre 3* (2000) 185–95; Clare Wright 'Acoustic Tyranny: Metre, Alliteration and Voice in "Christ before Herod"' *Medieval English Theatre 34* (2012) 3–29; Daisy Black 'Commanding Un-Empty Space: Silence, Stillness and Scopic Authority in the York "Christ before Herod"' in *Gender in Medieval Places, Spaces and Thresholds* edited Victoria Blud, Einat Klafter, and Diane Heath (London: University of London Press, 2019) 237–50, at 247. The closest anyone has come to an understanding of Christ's silence as an action rather than inaction is Rosemary Woolf, who argues that 'Far from Christ's silence being solely a manifestation of his unquestioned submission to human suffering, it becomes rather a sublime expression of his divinity': *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972) 257.

[74] Cull 8. Deleuze and Felix Guattari emphasise this in: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* translated Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 256.

earlier, the becoming-porous of Christ reveals his innocence and inspires the audience with pious reflection, as well as portraying the Jews as the culprits in Christ's Passion. The becoming-porous of the Jews, in contrast, might be supposed to have a cathartic function, through which justice is restored, as well as to emphasise their felony even more. In the absence of any sanctioned exposition which would clarify what each action should signify, the impact of the performed becoming-porous during this specific sequence is rendered predominantly affective. By bypassing language, then, the simultaneous becoming-porous of Christ's and Jonathas's bodies confuses the purpose of each becoming-porous and opens up the possibility of a disjointed unison between them. In this unison, the becoming-porous of Jonathas might be read along the same lines as that of Christ. In turn, this emergent interpretation destabilises the pre-existing narrative of Host desecration within which the play may also be read.

Becoming here seems to instigate an irreversible chain reaction of further becoming, for at this point, the famous quack doctor interlude takes place, which removes the performance from its supposed source material by another degree.[75] The episode does not move the plot forward in any way, but it transports the setting of the play from Heraclea in Aragon to Norfolk when Colle, the doctor's assistant, says 'Inquyre to þe colkote, for ther ys hys loggyng, | A lytyll besyde Babwell Myll, yf yhe wyll have und[er]stondyng' (ll. 540–41).[76] As soon as we are transferred from a narration of something which happened in Aragon to something which is happening now, we have crossed the threshold separating representation from becoming once again. The initial authority of the narrative derives from the recording of its occurrence in Aragon, which is mentioned in the Banns: the transposition

[75] Ruth Nisse suggests that the episode harbours some of the animosity directed towards the migrant Flemish, Dutch, Walloon, and Brabantine communities active in East Anglia since the mid-fourteenth century: *Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 118.
[76] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 226.

to here and now destabilises the representational structure of the play.[77] Furthermore, if we consider the confrontation between the Host and the doubters, the moment of the doctor's entrance marks the first stage of the Jews' defeat. Once we have suspended the privileging of wholeness over un-wholeness, Christ's silence and torture no longer seems as passivity; instead, they can be seen as the Host fighting back. As noted in the previous section, the plight of the Jews begins once the Host starts bleeding. Thus, the Host can be said to be repelling attacks by being violated and wounded—by affectively communicating to the audience Christ's innocence through becoming-porous, thus coming to life and moving beyond passive representation. In other words, the blood functions both as a sign of physical damage, through which Christ speaks, and a weapon with which the Host disrupts the aggressors' scheme.[78] We can even view the farcical pandemonium of the Jews in this light and see it as the point when their defeat is laid bare. The fooling around serves to deflate the built-up tension in the situation and establish Christ's dominance in the power play; the comedy is, in effect, the humiliation of the losers and a show of dominance by the Host.

At the same time, however, due to the absence of representational communication and through the attachment of the Host to Jonathas's hand, the Host and Jonathas are paradoxically united, undermining the Christian-Jew dichotomy in the struggle between the Host and the Jews. This alternative interpretation is assisted by the Jews' conversion and inclusion in the Christian community at the end of the play, and therefore, it can be viewed as the moment the woundly mode of communication begins to affect Jews alongside Christians.[79] By becoming-porous, the Host overpowers and convinces the Jews, and the

[77] Also see Thomas Betteridge 'Playing with the Past: History in the Croxton Play of the Sacrament and King Johan' in *Staging History: Essays in Late Medieval and Humanist Drama* edited Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (Leiden: Brill, 2021) 62–77.

[78] Estella Ciobanu similarly argues that Christ's becoming-porous is part of an 'argument' or contesting of claims to power by Christ and his torturers: *Representations of the Body in Middle English Biblical Drama* (The New Middle Ages; Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 125–88.

[79] At the same time, it could be argued that when the Jews set off on a voyage at the end of the play (ll. 884–91), they are once again excluded from the community even after conversion. Based on such a reading, the

Jews begin to understand Christ's righteousness and register the woundly speech. After the doctor episode, the doubters, already on the backfoot, pull the nails out of the Host, wrap it in a cloth, and toss it into a cauldron. Then, however, 'shall þe cawdron byle, apperyng to be as bloode', consequently overflowing (l. 592 sd).[80] Bewildered, they resort to trying other means to get rid of the Host, and Jonathas suggests that they should 'make an ovyn as redd hot | As ever yt can be made with fere', throw the Host in it, and shut the lid (mirroring the entombment of Christ) (ll. 603–4).[81] The scene concludes with the explosion of the oven and blood gushing out of the cracks. A victorious Christ, or rather, 'an image [which we later learn is one of the Christ Child] appere[s] owt with woundys bledyng', calling on the Jews (l. 632 sd):[82]

> *O mirabiles Judei, attendite et videte*
>
> *Si est dolor* [*sicut*] *dolor meus!*
>
> Oh ye merveylows Jewys,
>
> Why ar ye to yowr kyng onkynd,
>
> And [I] so bitterly bowt yow to My blysse?
>
> Why fare ye thus fule wyth yowre frende?
>
> Why peyne yow Me and straytly Me pynde,
>
> And I yowr love so derely have bowght?
>
> […]
>
> Why blaspheme yow Me? Why do ye thus?

subversive implications of the conjoining of the bodies of Jonathas and Christ could more easily be seen as a deconstructive glitch in the narrative the plays seeks to present, what Pierre Macherey calls the work's 'unconscious'—'the inscription of an *otherness* in the work' which exposes the 'decentred-ness' of the text: Pierre Macherey *A Theory of Literary Production* translated Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978) 94, 79.

[80] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 227.

[81] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 227.

[82] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 228.

Why put yow Me to a newe tormentry,

And I dyed for yow on the Crosse?[83]

Richard Homan finds a similar depiction of a wounded victorious Christ Child in a fifteenth-century exemplum in Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 50, fols. 126v-127r, and while he refutes the connection between the image of the child and the Man of Sorrows, the similarities are not easy to overlook, as Nichols's reading and my analysis illustrate.[84] Similar to the Man of Sorrows, the Christ Child here invites the viewers to behold the wounds. This time, however, the Jews are the direct addressees of the spectacle: they are encouraged to engage in woundly communication with Christ, which is, on this final occasion, framed within verbal speech to elicit from them the desired response—i.e. contrition. It is only after completely vanquishing the Jews, once they have been virtually beaten into submission and are unable to harm Christ anymore, that Christ begins to speak verbally. During this whole sequence, the wounds and the blood speak to the audience and Jews simultaneously about how Christ was wronged as well as his power in overcoming his enemies and death.

Much like the oxymoronic protective power of wounds in iconography, here the blood performs three functions: on the one hand, it dramatically illustrates and emphasises Christ's innocence. In contrast to iconographic representations of the Passion, in which Christ is presented 'as passively exposed to the gaze of the devotee', it is the blood that actively

[83] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 228 (ll. 637–44, 651–3). The Latin translates as 'O you strange Jews, behold and see if any sorrow is like unto My sorrow'. See Lamentations 1:12.

[84] Richard L. Homan 'Two "Exempla": Analogues to the "Play of the Sacrament" and "Dux Moraud"' *Comparative Drama 18: 3* (1984) 241–51. Furthermore, the role of blood libel stories must not be underemphasised. For instance, the analysis of visual representations of the story of Simon of Trent (alleged death in 1475), one of the most famous iterations of blood libel canards, by David S. Areford demonstrates the parallelism between its iconography and that of Christ's: the child is depicted among the instruments of his torture (similar to the *arma Christi*), in a wounded state (like the Man of Sorrows), dead (as in the *Pieta*), and in a triumphant state (mirroring Christ's resurrection), highlighting that the portrayal of Christ as a triumphant child would certainly not have been deemed outlandish by the audience: *The Viewer and the Printed Image* 165–227. On the story of Simon and its impact, see Klaus Brandstätter 'Antijüdische Ritualmordvorwürfe in Trient Und Tirol: Neuere: Forschungen Zu Simon Von Trient Und Andreas Von Rinn' *Historisches Jahrbuch 125* (2005) 495–536.

disrupts the Jews' scheme and makes a mess of their arrangements.[85] On the other hand, it unites Christians and Jews by fusing the Body of Christ and the Jewish body, blurring the hierarchy of status between Christian and Jewish bodies as well as signifying the Jews' registration of Christ's woundly power of communication. Consequently, unlike similar Host desecration narratives, the Jews repent, and they are told by Jesus that they should go to a priest to become his 'servauntys' (l. 682; Luke 17:14).[86] Jesus also restores Jonathas' amputated hand, which has by this point been 'soden' and boiled to the point of tissue disintegration, and tells him:

> Thow woldyst preve thy power Me to oppresse.
> But now I consydre thy necesse;
> Thow wasshest thyn hart wyth grete contrycyon.
> Go to the cawdron, þi care shal be the lesse,
> And towche thyn hand, to thy salvacyon.[87]

Nisse avers that the play's mode of converting the Jews—through miracle rather than exegetical reasoning, 'offers a critique of the predominant English urban dramatic model, the typological play cycle in which the spiritual or allegorical senses attempt to neatly resolve history and the carnal, literal Jews ultimately disappear'.[88] This signifies the affective mode through which the play makes its impression on the audience, and undermines the discursive/representational system governing the play. After this, the Jews go to the bishop and explain what they have done. This time, however, the woundly speech gives way to

[85] Alexandra Barratt also links this passivity to femininity in iconographic representations of Christ: Alexandra Barratt '*Stabant Matres Dolorosae*: Women as Readers and Writers of Passion Prayers, Meditations and Visions' in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* edited A. A. MacDonald, H. N. B. Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998) 55–71, at 55.
[86] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 229. Ruth Nisse locates this scene within an apocalyptic context, in which the conversion of Jews is a necessity for the Christian teleology: *Defining Acts* 102.
[87] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 229 (ll. 693–7).
[88] Nisse *Defining Acts* 103.

language, the representational system within which legitimate interpretation of events is regulated. The plot, however, does not return to type, for no cathartic revenge is enacted. The bishop petitions Christ that 'From thys rufull sight þou wylt reverte', which then leads to a procession to the church headed by the now reverted Host (similar to Corpus Christi and certain feast processions) (l. 737).[89]

The second narration of the second Passion also takes place through language. The emphasis is still on the wounds, and the Jews describe what each of them has done, which includes admitting 'Wyth daggars styckyd Hym wyth grevos wonde | New naylyd Hym to a post, and with pynsonys pluckyd Hym down' (ll. 854–5).[90] Jason avows that 'in a cawdron we dyd Hym boyle' and 'In a clothe full just we Hym wounde | And so dyd we seth Hym in oyle', while another notes 'In an hott ovyn we speryd Hym fast' (ll. 857–9, 861).[91] The narration emphasises, once again, the overwhelming power of Christ in the face of such brutal attacks. This time, too, in spite of a return to the representational system of language, it does not seem that this return has any effect on the hierarchy of status between Christian and Jewish bodies, which could be interpreted as the irreversible consequence of their simultaneous processes of becoming-porous.

The final procession to the church could have potentially included the audience—if the play was ever actually performed.[92] Dutton notes that the church here would probably have been 'another scaffold or another theatrical re-designation of a single stage' and not a real church as suggested by several critics.[93] Furthermore, Dutton suggests that the line 'The Bysshope commythy [in] processyon with a gret meny of Jewys' implies the identification of

[89] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 230.
[90] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 231.
[91] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 231.
[92] David Lawton dismisses this idea as a fantasy, arguing that the stage is simply cleared at the end: 296.
[93] Dutton 68. Lawton casts doubt on the idea of the play being performed near an actual church: 294.

the audience, ‘by the miracle of theatre, as a Jewish crowd’ (ll. 763–4).[94] This would be another instance of destabilisation of the distinction between Christian and Jewish bodies. Here, the union between the Host and the Jewish body is extended to the entire audience, therefore blurring the lines of exclusion of bodies at work in the play’s context. In addition, the terms in the Bishop’s words, typically addressed to a Christian crowd, are applied, this time, to ethno-religious others, thereby removing the discursive exclusionary power surrounding the play. Greg Walker highlights that ‘the Croxton play seems perversely to insist on alienating its audience, unsettling familiar conventions, and blurring the very distinctions between the domestic and the foreign, the familiar and the alien, virtue and vice, that such drama conventionally takes for granted’, and it is indeed this effect that comes with a successful move from representation (conventions) towards becoming.[95] This is achieved, most prominently of all, I suggest, by the porousness which links various bodies in the performance space as well as in the audience.

5. Conclusion

Victor Turner describes public performances as part of a culture’s ‘subjunctive’ mood, which opens up a realm of desire and possibilities.[96] To fully appreciate this realm and the emergent interpretations generated within it, we must stop privileging wholeness, marked by the supposed intact superficial integrity of the body, over un-wholeness, which is defined as anything other than this perfect state. As I have illustrated, the body was never understood as immaculately whole and isolated in late medieval culture: medical theories acknowledged the

[94] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*' 230; Dutton 68. Also see David Bevington 'Staging and Liturgy in *the Croxton Play of the Sacrament*' in *Staging Scripture: Biblical Drama, 1350–1600* edited Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 235–52.
[95] Walker ‘And Here's Your Host’ 45.
[96] Victor Turner 'Liminality and the Performative Genres' in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* edited John MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984) 19–41, at 21.

skin's pores as well as other orifices as ports through which matter is absorbed by and excreted from the body. Furthermore, violating the integrity of the body was often an essential part of treating illness, as the state of health required an optimal level of exchange between within and without the body. Similarly, devotional culture offered an idealised state of un-wholeness in the wounded bodies of holy figures, highlighting the unsuitability of privileging wholeness. The state of porousness, as I have proposed, can function as a more useful alternative: it incorporates the ambivalent function of bodily un-wholeness as a simultaneously unfavourable and favourable state which can even include, but is not limited to, bodily damage. It is by means of this concept that Christ's bodily disintegration can be understood not just as a sign of passivity, oppression, and defeat, but also as a show of power, a means of retaliation, and a mode of communication. In the Croxton *Play*, the silence of the Host/Christ is only silence within the representational system of language, which is the representational system associated with the liturgical culture authorising legitimate interpretation of events, miracles, offences, etc. Porousness enables communication through non-representational means (performance, *becoming*, and the woundly speech), which then opens up opportunities for emergent, unsanctioned, and potentially subversive interpretations of acts and events within and without the play. In this woundly mode of speech, Christ and the Host speak through their wounds, circumnavigating, and, at the same time, convincing or overpowering their adversaries—i.e. the Jews.

Within this realm of possibilities, not only does the performance of becoming-porous in the Croxton *Play* destabilise the authority of language and the location of Christ's Passion, it also, crucially, obliterates the distinction between Jewish and Christian bodies. Moreover, the play moves beyond the representation of scriptural material and towards a non-representational form of communication by renewing the Passion and transubstantiation in real time and on the spot. It also subverts late medieval liturgical convention by holding the

Mass in the performance space, and modifies the tonality of priestly address by including the Jews in the same group as Christians. Lastly, the dissolution of boundaries in Croxton, materialising through the fusion of the Host with a Jew's hand and the inclusion of Jews in the concluding procession, would have further destabilised the exclusionary forces regarding Jews within the play itself as well as in late medieval culture. Such emergent and potentially subversive outcomes are dependant on recognising that late medieval culture understood the body as an open, interactive entity for which wholeness is not an essential property, and recognised performance as an interactive experience within which it is possible to move beyond mere representation.

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