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## Crisis and Transformation in Everyman

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La structure d'*Everyman* peut être considérée comme celle de crise suivie d'une transformation. La mort s'éprouve comme une crise, une rupture et une descente puis comme une ascension, une rédemption et une transformation une fois que l'âme transfigurée d'Everyman est reçue au paradis. L'articulation de ces deux états a lieu dans la seconde partie de la pièce quand Everyman entame un processus de réconciliation avec Dieu à travers le sacrement de la pénitence. En prenant en compte le cadre de l'univers moral du Moyen Age, nous examinerons par quelles techniques la mort et l'agonie sont représentées dans *Everyman* afin de faire comprendre aux lecteurs/spectateurs de la pièce combien il est important de saisir les aides que propose l'Eglise catholique pour atteindre le salut. Nous montrerons ensuite comment des éléments de la pièce qui semblaient être des signes de catastrophe subissent une mutation pour devenir des preuves de rétablissement.

Medieval theatre is a cosmic one; it puts man's life in the context of eternity since, for the medieval audience, the life of the body in this world is only a prelude to the life of the spirit in the next and eventually to that of the transformed and perfected body of the saved after the Last Judgment. The closing words of the Doctor to the audience express this potential of reunification as a pious hope: 'Unto which place (heaven) God bring us all thither, / That we may live body and soul together' (11. 918-19 italics mine). Death was seen as a moment of rupture in a number of respects: certainly that between the soul and the body, often conceptualized as two separate entities in medieval poetry and iconography, 2 but, most importantly, the existence of death itself symbolizes the fracture of the relationship between God and mankind. Man's first disobedience, the eating of the forbidden fruit, severed the privileged connection between them, bringing the expulsion from the garden of Eden and death into the world. As Death reminds Everyman, '[...] in the world each living creature / For Adam's sin must die of nature' (11. 144-45). Yet according to Christian belief, God restored the relationship that man destroyed by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> All quotations are taken from A. C. Cawley ed., *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays* (London: J. M. Dent, [1956] 1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Clifford Davidson, Visualizing the Moral Life: Medieval Iconography and the Macro Moralities (New York: AMS Press, 1989), p. 7 remarks that the soul that is separated from the body is intended as 'an absolutely concrete figure about which there was universal agreement'. He is referring here to The Castle of Perseverance in which an actor, representing the soul, crawls out from beneath Humanum Genus's deathbed and accuses the body of being the cause of its perdition. See also the Messenger: 'Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet, / Which in the end causeth the soul to weep, / When the body lieth in clay' (Il. 13-15, italics mine).

allowing himself to be crucified, which repaired the damage caused by the Fall and thus instituted one of the central paradoxes of the faith – 'To get them *life* I suffered to be *dead*' (l. 32 italics mine) as God reminds the audience in his initial speech. This intersection of the human and the divine, according to Catholic doctrine, is reproduced during the Eucharist when the priest transforms the wafer into the body of Christ. Man's responsibility, therefore, is to avail himself of the promise of salvation held out to him, both by participating in the sacramental life of the church and by repenting for his sins.

All morality plays deal with man's sinful, mortal nature, the problems which assail it, and the remedies which exist. In plays like *The Castle of Perserverance* and *Mankind*, the audience experiences vicariously the power of the sins to perturb human life. The audience of *Everyman*, however, is to experience the power of the sacraments in the pattern of salvation. Temptation and fall are not the play's main concerns. They are not enacted on stage whereas penance is. *Everyman* is a concentrated example of what Potter sees as an underlying principle of the morality play, 'the call to a specific religious act [...] the acknowledgement, confession, and forgiveness of sin, institutionalized in medieval Christianity as the sacrament of penance'. The structure of *Everyman* may be said to be that of crisis and transformation; the articulation between the two states coming in the second half of the play as Everyman enacts the process of reconciliation with God through penance.

The crisis of Everyman's confrontation with his ineluctable mortality gives the play its driving force. Death is experienced as crisis, as rupture, as descent. It is a death that drags out throughout the play. However, Everyman does not end with the death of the body; there is the rescue at the end where Everyman's soul is received into heaven. The question is how does this transformation come about? This is the importance of the central section of the play with its concentration on penance. The moral struggle with which the play is concerned, therefore, is towards the understanding of and the preparation for the fact of death. It is thus a learning experience for Everyman and a representation for the audience of already familiar doctrinal material in the form of an urgent reminder to act now, while there is still time: 'For after death amends may no man make' (1.912). It teaches the paradox that though, through the body, man is devoted to death, it is through physical life that he, by his actions and his faith, can prepare himself for eternal life. As has often been pointed out, morality plays are not illusionistic or mimetic; this allows various representational techniques

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Robert Potter, The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 16.

to be exploited in *Everyman* to depict moral meaning and to evoke the facts of death and salvation.

#### Death as Rupture

From one point of view, *Everyman* is concerned with 'representing the unrepresentable'. Death exists as a biological *state*, only perceptible in the physical world through the absence of life. The *act* of dying can be observed, though, in a modern, medicalized setting, the moment of death is often imperceptible. *Everyman* uses a number of techniques for representing death, some of them making reference to contemporary iconographic tradition, but also departing from it significantly. In the course of the play death is first figured and then enacted, ending with a different figuration of the transformed and redeemed protagonist.

The human imagination has always objectified and personified death as an external agency, aggressively wielding a sharp implement of some kind, usually in modern imagery a scythe; frequently, in medieval imagery, the spear. By the late Middle Ages various iconographic motifs had developed in which Death as a grinning cadaver figured prominently.<sup>5</sup> Although Death in Everyman is equipped with a 'dart' (1. 76) and is initially presented as the agent of God's vengeance, sent to punish mankind in general for their sins, his main role is as God's messenger and as the protagonist's first teacher. He confronts Everyman with the meaning of his mortality, by showing himself impartial, implacable and inescapable. He defines the reality of the moral balance sheet that God requires as 'Thy many bad deeds, and good but a few; / How thou hast spent thy life' (ll. 108-9). He is thus partly made visible as a recognizable iconographic type, inducing in Everyman the shock and panic which one might expect. But his dialogue with the protagonist is also maieutic, initiating the process that is finally to lead to Everyman's repentance and redemption. Faced with Everyman's apparent obtuseness in integrating the notion of physical death, he expostulates:

Everyman, thou art mad! Thou hast thy wits five And here on earth will not amend thy life; For suddenly I do come. (ll.168-170)

The five wits are the essential attributes of the physical self; Death is thus criticising Everyman's use of his physical being so far. However, it is also worth noting that mere words – 'good deeds' and 'wits five' – are later

<sup>5</sup> Notably, the motifs of the Three Living and the Three Dead and the Dance of Death.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Phrase used in private conversation by Wendy Harding whom I take this opportunity of thanking for her advice in the writing of this paper.

materialized and incarnated in the bodies of actors on the stage, as supports to Everyman.

Death exits as a separate character at line 183, though the rest of the play is still very concerned with dying and it is the representational techniques which it uses that interest me at this point where the play moves into a different mode. Its concern is now to present in a sequential form the various complex intersections of the time and space of the medieval moral universe. In general terms there is a contrast between eternity and time which moves Everyman and all human beings towards extinction. However, the word 'now' appears a surprising number of times in this play, stressing the unfolding of a series of present moments to the audience. A brief study of some of these reiterations shows that the use of this word in itself expresses the themes of death as rupture and the promise of repair through the sacraments of the church. For God in his eternal present at the beginning of the play 'now' is the abiding state of human sinfulness throughout history, the eternal repetition of human abandonment of God all those who 'now [...] clean forsake me' (1. 35) in favour of the seven deadly sins. 6 It is this fact that motivates him to call in Death as a purifying force. For Everyman, made aware of the impending cessation of personal time, 'now' is the discovery of his ontological isolation - 'Now I have no manner of company / To help me in my journey and me to keep' (ll. 185-6). It is in the present moment that he agonizes, 'How shall I do now for to excuse me?' (1.188). The implicit message of death has been of his sinfulness and it is thus at this point that he begins to remember the existence of hell - 'For now I fear pains huge and great' (l. 191).

The rupture is not merely with God; Death involves a rupture with all worldly things. 'Now' is also the moment when his companions desert him, marking the speed with which they abandon him and Everyman's regretful comments. <sup>7</sup> However, the immediacy and urgency of 'now' becomes transformed in the second half of the play. Once Knowledge assures Everyman that she will accompany him, he finds that his situation has radically changed. From anxiety he passes to confidence in the outcome: 'In good condition am I now in everything' (1. 524). This mood continues in marking the stages of his regeneration through confession and penance

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> '[...] the seven deadly sins damnable / [...] / Now in the world be made commendable' (ll. 36-38); 'For now one would by envy another up eat' (l. 50).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> FELLOWSHIP. In faith, Everyman, farewell now at the ending (1. 308); EVERYMAN. [...] now little sorrow for me doth he make (1. 308); EVERYMAN (to Kindred and Cousin): For now I shall never be merry, / If that you forsake me (ll. 349-350); COUSIN. Now God keep thee, for now I go (l. 377).

until, instead of trying to avoid death, Everyman actively seeks it:<sup>8</sup> 'let us go now without tarrying' (l. 651).<sup>9</sup> All this has been a way of dramatizing Everyman's moral growth and development. Notions of mimetic time are irrelevant here. However, the abandonment of Everyman by his personal qualities of Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five Wits reorientates the action: it is a way of enacting the actual process of physical death and to do so the representation of Everyman's body and mind is divided between a number of actors.

Here allegorical theatre in which the material and psychological worlds can be represented on the same plane movingly comes into its own. Of course, Everyman has always had the physical being now incarnated separately as Beauty, Strength and Five Wits. These characters do not appear in the play until, activated by Good Deeds, they are ready to be used in the quest of salvation rather than of sin. It is paradoxically only after Everyman has in some respects denied his body by punishing it in the penance scene and treating it as separate and other than himself - 'in the way of damnation thou (addressing the body) did me bring' (l. 615) – that personifications of bodily qualities come to his aid. Furthermore, the use of actors to perform aspects of Everyman's selfhood on stage makes an important theatrical and didactic point for it is the order of their exit which is in conformity with observable patterns of aging and dying. The audience watches a progressive symbolization of physical and mental disintegration. Beauty and Strength go first, followed by Discretion. This is a moment of helplessness, against which can only be posited Everyman's realization that 'all thing faileth, save God alone' (l. 841). Significantly, it is after this that Five Wits announces her intention to leave; the departure of the five senses. the means by which the consciousness becomes aware of the material world, demonstrates the final failure of Everyman's physical nature. The progression towards the assurance of salvation is not a linear one. In dramatizing a second series of betrayals and Everyman's disappointments in his second group of friends, the dramatist nuances the moral message: salvation is possible but the terrors of physical death are undeniable. Only Good Deeds and Knowledge can accompany him to the threshold of death but even the latter cannot go beyond, despite the good will which demarcates her from the other qualities. The moment of death is, therefore, materialized as a progressive stripping away so that the remaining presence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> KNOWLEDGE. Now let us go together lovingly/ To Confession (l. 535-6); EVERYMAN. For now I will my penance begin (l. 574); For now have I on true contrition (l. 650).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> This idea is repeated in line 779: 'And now, friends, let us go without longer respite'.

of Good Deeds and Knowledge as Everyman's companions provides an important visual symbol.

This series of exits is, then, a particular way of enacting a deathbed scene. The deathbed itself is not present, 10 for the author has preferred to use the motif of the journey towards death rather than the more static staging implied by the central character taking to his bed during the course of the action. Space in Everyman is moral rather than geographical. The journey is an internal one, represented physically, though Everyman does not move across the stage until he goes to Confession, an important materialization of moral decision. The road is one of choice and the choice of companions along the route. The most important aspect of space is vertical; the contrast between this world, and all the worldly affairs that prevent Everyman focusing on God, and the 'heavenly sphere.' A lexical study would show that 'heaven' and this 'world' are systematically opposed in the play's verbal texture; 'worldly prosperity' (l. 24), the good things of earthly existence which God has created, ironically cuts human beings off from God. However, the third level of the medieval cosmos, hell, although mentioned and a source of Everyman's fears, is not potently present as a place or a really probable destination for him, a sign of the play's emphasis on salvation. Indeed, when Everyman scourges himself in penance it is, he says, to save himself from the fires of *purgatory* (1. 617). The lower level of Everyman's journey ends, as he remarks, with his creeping into a cave (1. 792). 11 Death has now become a place, not a person, a cave, not an actor.

The discussion of the various methods of staging death has shown the significant shift in the modes of representation used. The allegorical figure of death as a force external to the main character is replaced by an action that Everyman has to perform; he learns that he must die from a messenger and then actually has to crawl into his grave. Figuration becomes enactment. This pattern of concretizing the abstract is fundamental to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> As we saw in fn 1, it is an important stage property in *The Castle of Perseverance*. Davidson (p. 77) notes that Humanum Genus' death in bed presents us with a scene commonly depicted in the visual arts. To support this claim he makes reference to Psalters and Books of Hours as well as to the well-known painting of Bosch's dying miser (which can be viewed at <a href="http://www.mystudios.com/art/gothic/bosch/bosch-death-miser.html">http://www.mystudios.com/art/gothic/bosch/bosch-death-miser.html</a>). One may also add the woodcut illustrations to the shortened version of the *ars moriendi*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Interestingly, in the Dutch original, Elckerlijc enters a pit, not a cave. The change is a minor one, but it seems to indicate that Everyman has to descend less far than his Dutch counterpart. See John Conley et al., *The Mirror of Everyman's Salvation: A Prose Translation of the Original Everyman* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), l. 766. All quotations are taken from this edition.

didactic strategy of the play as a whole. And this is the final exit of Everyman's body. However, the play also represents the fate of his soul as it is welcomed into heaven; the last sequence is concerned with the assurance of salvation and the transformation of the descent into the grave into the ascent to the 'heavenly sphere'. The vertical schematization is more intense here than in the Dutch original, for the angel in *Elckerlijc* merely offers to 'lead her (the soul) into the plain of Heaven' (l. 868). Death as finality and rupture with physical life and worldly time is transformed into the restoration of eternity with God. It is the play's central sequence which gives the keys to this turnaround.

#### Repair and Restoration

Elements in the play that seemed like signs of catastrophe mutate into signs of restoration. The twin lessons that the play imparts are the right use of worldly goods and the active demonstration of Christian faith by participating in the sacraments. In the first part of the play, Everyman's relationship with his material possessions and the change of heart that he must undergo are represented by a dialogue with Goods. The latter is paradoxically a teaching-figure, bracingly putting certain concepts within a divine perspective and telling Everyman a few home truths. Firstly, while Goods can make things right in this world, in the court of heaven money will hinder his case. Secondly, the real death is spiritual death and love of riches is a kind of annihilation – 'My condition is man's soul to kill' (l. 442) – and Everyman seems to have fallen into the 'snare' (l. 453). But Goods offers a way in which earthly treasure could have been transformed into spiritual capital, unexpectedly giving instruction in the necessity of alms-giving in the Christian life:

But if thou had me loved moderately during, As to the poor to give part of me, Then shouldst thou not in this dolour be. (ll. 431-433)

This articulates the transition to the upward curve of the play's action. Giving to the poor is an important aspect of the works of mercy that are described in the great eschatological chapter of St Matthew, chapter 25, and the next person that Everyman thinks to call on for aid is his Good Deeds. She cannot help him, however, for, as she says, she lies 'cold in the ground' (1. 486), an image of the death that awaits Everyman's body at the end of the play. Everyman has reached an emotional nadir. Full of self-loathing – 'Thus may I well myself hate' (1. 478) – his language gives voice

to his fears of hell and damnation.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is just at this point that his fortunes begin to improve. He has, after all, started to take personal responsibility for what is happening to him – 'Then of myself I was ashamed, / And so I am worthy to be blamed' (ll. 476-477).

The sequence of events is important here: Everyman first becomes conscious of the real gravity of his situation; this makes him realize the necessity of Good Deeds but also gives him a realistic assessment of their paucity – materialized visually by the prone position of the actress and her weakness; but Good Deeds can call upon her sister Knowledge to help channel Everyman's desperation and self-reproach into the sacraments offered by the Church. Knowledge, this sequence tells us, can only come when a certain spiritual state has already been reached – the consciousness of being a sinner. Everyman has now reappraised his rightful position in the universe as someone in need of God's mercy.

The most significant aspect of performance in the play is the enactment of the sacrament of penance. The word 'penance' is a complex one: according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, as well as designating the sacrament itself, it also can refer to the 'work of satisfaction' which the recipient of the sacrament must undertake. Its prime condition is repentance 'i.e. heartfelt sorrow with the firm purpose of sinning no more'. Penance is called:

a 'sacrament' not simply a function or ceremony, because it is an outward sign instituted by Christ to impart grace to the soul. As an outward sign it comprises the actions of the penitent in presenting himself to the priest and accusing himself of his sins, and the actions of the priest in pronouncing absolution and imposing satisfaction. This whole procedure is usually called, from one of its parts, 'confession'. Without sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment, confession avails nothing, the pronouncement of absolution is of no effect, and the guilt of the sinner is greater than before. <sup>13</sup>

Penance in church ritual as 'outward sign' is thus a symbolization of an inner state and *Everyman* uses a number of techniques for materializing this. Firstly confession in *Everyman* is a person not a speech act and, to meet him, Everyman has to move across the stage to the house of salvation. Though this is a decisive action, using kinesics to depict moral decision and setting in train Everyman's pilgrimage towards salvation, for the moment 'sincere sorrow' (contrition) is merely a verbal formulation. As Everyman explains on his approach to the house of salvation, 'I come with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> 'For my Goods sharply did me tell / That he bringeth many into hell' (ll. 474-475); 'Good Deeds, I pray you help me in this need, / Or else I am for ever damned indeed' (ll. 509-510).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See the relevant references under 'Penance' and 'The Sacrament of Penance' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, consultable at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/

Knowledge for my redemption, / Redempt with heart and full contrition' (ll. 548-549). Contrition has not been demonstrated in any experiential way. It is materialized some hundred lines later as a stage property, the 'garment' which Knowledge gives Everyman to replace his gay garments, thus rendering visible his transformation. Nonetheless, it is his own actions which render him worthy of the change of costume.

The 'work of satisfaction' is also symbolized as an object, the whip with which Everyman scourges himself. It is the *performing* (in both senses of the word) of the action that earns him the right to the redemptive change of costume. The whip is a suitable symbol for a number of reasons. Contrition comes from the Latin *contritio*, meaning a breaking of something hardened. The dramatist of *Elckerlijc/Everyman* exploits this figurative potential, noting that the knots of the scourge 'be painful and hard within' (l. 576). Real sorrow involves real pain. Furthermore, flagellation has a long history as a literal means of penance and punishment. The whole Confession/Penance sequence has an important function in shifting Everyman from physical to heavenly concerns, paradoxically using material techniques to symbolize spiritual progress.

Confession does not function as the auditor of Everyman's avowal of sins; his contribution is more complex and more indirect than this. Firstly his words gather together a number of the play's motifs, redeeming and renewing them. We have already seen that worldly treasure can potentially become spiritual treasure thanks paradoxically to its abandonment to the poor. In conformity with this change of perspective from worldly to heavenly, Confession calls penance a 'jewel', a designation that would have had no significance for Everyman earlier in the play, concentrated as he was on the material significations of goods such as money and jewellery. Similarly Confession assures Everyman that if he asks God sincerely for mercy, making an effort, then God will listen: 'When with the scourge of penance man doth him bind, / The oil of forgiveness then shall he find' (ll. 570-571). In the same way that Good Deeds was bound and rendered immobile thanks to Everyman's sins, so Everyman may partake of a virtuous binding, the link to God.

Secondly, however, Confession's main significance is in terms of action. He is the one who gives the scourge of penance to Knowledge. In addition, he locates the reason for this choice of pentitential act in the life of Christ. Everyman receives the following command:

[...] remember thy Saviour was scourged for thee With sharp scourges and suffered it patiently; So must thou [...]. (Il. 563-565)

Penance is thus both self punishment as atonement for offenses against God and an *imitatio Christi*. From this point on Everyman has to bring his own life into consonance with that of Christ. His actions in whipping himself express a repudiation of his body and a turning towards the life of the spirit; yet at the same time he experiences on his flesh the reality of the passion of Christ who ensured that the body will not die eternally. Christ saved him; now he must act to save himself. This explains the combination of violence and joy that is expressed during this sequence. The violence is in the actions and Everyman's urging of himself to lay on more vigorously – 'Now will I smite faster than I did before' (l. 628). His joy is produced by the indications that salvation is now possible thanks to the newly invigorated Good Deeds whose rising from the ground as a consequence of Everyman's act of self-mortification is such an important component of the action and the moral meaning here.

Though the garment of contrition is said by Knowledge to be wet with Everyman's tears (l. 639), Everyman himself says 'I weep for very sweetness of love'. Again this functions on both the verbal and the kinetic levels. Weeping in *Everyman* is transformed and redeemed in this passage. At the beginning of the play, it is an indication of despair and abandonment by God. The Messenger warns the audience at the beginning that sin 'causeth the soul to weep, / When the body lieth in clay' (ll. 14-15). It is also an indication of the vain expenditure of emotion, an exteriorization of feeling that will have no effect. Death curtly informs Everyman that it 'availeth not to cry, weep, and pray' (l. 140) while he himself recognizes that his spiritual state is such that indeed he 'may well weep with sighs deep' (l. 184).

Tears of contrition, however, code Everyman's weeping as sincere, giving them power as a form of entreaty. Tears of this nature are associated with the story of the 'woman in the city', commonly taken to be Mary Magdalene, who 'was a sinner', The story told in Luke 7: 37-38 recounts that she washed Christ's feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed them with ointment. As an example of the enduring nature of this association we may cite Thomas à Kempis from the fourteenth century who counseled young monks to 'seek the gift of tears' as a way to gain purity of heart. The weeping for sweetness of love is a stage further on: mystics, such as Richard Rolle, experienced tears combined with joy at moments of heightened perception of God. He often uses the word sweetness to express spiritual happiness. I am not suggesting that Everyman is meant to be a mystic here, merely pointing out that tears of sweet joy would be readily

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999) p. 26.

associated with signs of God's presence in the Middle Ages. The important point here is the notion of tears as a physical manifestation, and the fact that crying can be seen as a more direct and genuine expression of feeling than language because conveyed without words. Everyman is now ready for death and the hereafter.

The final transformation and the final rupture is the separation of the soul from the body, placed as the Angel's welcoming words - 'Come, excellent elect spouse, to Jesu!' (1. 894) - indicate in the tradition of the mystic marriage of the soul with Christ. This is a deliberate choice, since another distinct iconographic tradition exists: that of the preliminary cosmic struggle between the forces of evil and the forces of good for the possession of the soul. In certain representations of the deathbed, for example, the soul is represented as a frail, vulnerable, childlike figure emerging from the mouth of the dying person while angel and devil lie in wait or, as in the case of the famous image in the Rohan book of hours, 15 it dangles helplessly from the hands of the fiend while Michael strives to rescue it. Everyman's soul's ultimate destiny as Bride of Christ is appropriate to the sober certainties of the play that salvation can be achieved if the sinner repents and is willing to receive the sacraments of the Church. The link between the sacraments on earth and the soul's potential fate in heaven, as imaged by the play, is well summarized by Clifford Davidson who notes that the sacrament of communion, 'participates, according to medieval theology, in the deepest mysteries of salvation history and [...] provides a foretaste of the great wedding feast awaiting men and women beyond the judgement day'. 16 The image of the Bride of Christ offers a final transformation of Everyman to the transfigured feminine of Anima (the Latin for soul and grammatically feminine). Whether or not Everyman's soul is actually on stage as part of the production, the words of the angel create a powerful verbal picture.

Everyman is a play primordially concerned with death; both the necessity of death from a divine perspective and its inevitability from a human point of view. God's justice is seen to be tempered with his mercy as means of inciting the sinful audience to put all the chances on their side by partaking of the life of the Church. Though penance comes last in the list of the seven sacraments mentioned by Five Wits and is not mentioned at all in Elckerlijc, it is clear from the action of the play that it is a closely detailed performance of penance that transforms Everyman from a state of sin to a state of grace, from death to eternal life.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The image can be viewed at www.library.arizona.edu/.../illuman/15\_12.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Visualizing the Moral Life, p. 48.