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Storming the Castle: Non-Secular Subversion of the Pas D'Armes in The Castle of Perseverance

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STORMING THE CASTLE:
NON-SECULAR SUBVERSION OF THE PAS D’ARMES
IN THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

STORMING THE CASTLE:
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By John Robert Moss, Bachelor of Arts

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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It is important to remember that the categories of medieval performance were established far removed from their period in history. As a genre, the morality play includes a wide diversity of time, geography, content and performance styles. Such disparities have made it difficult to develop a comprehensive definition, without which comparisons between works cannot be consistent. As scholarship continues to explore
these works in context of their performance, it becomes increasingly important to identify which performance styles best inform their production. In examining The Castle of Perseverance within the parameters of pas d’armes, new meanings can be drawn from its text. Instead of simply incorporating the conventions of tournament staging, the play exposes the faults of the secular societies they were intended to promote. Currently it is impossible to determine definitely that The Castle of Perseverance was intended to be a subversion of the pas d’armes. There is no identified author or even record of a single performance in medieval times. Yet the circumstantial evidence within the text supports the theory of subversion. Further research is still needed on the performance of The Castle of Perseverance within the appropriate historical context in order to better understand its place within the larger canon of medieval drama.
Chapter 1

The Castle of Perseverance as Morality Play

The English medieval morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* (1450) is the story of Mankind. Caught in the struggle between vice and virtue, he must endure the battle for possession of his soul.

The play begins with the Banns, which may have been performed independently from the play proper. Two heralds announce the performance while providing a brief synopsis of the action along with instructions on when and where the performance is to be held. The play proper begins when the World, the Flesh, and the Devil enter, each announcing their supremacy over their domain. Mankind then appears as a baptized youth, accompanied by his Good and Bad Angels. The Bad Angel convinces Mankind to serve the World and his lieutenant Greediness. Soon Mankind is in company with the Seven Deadly Sins. The Good Angel mourns the loss of Mankind and calls for the Seven Virtues to aid her. Mankind is pierced by a lance of regret, which causes him to confess and repent. He is then taken to the Castle of Perseverance, where he may be kept safe from sin and vice.

Upon news that Mankind has reformed, the World, the Flesh and the Devil call to arms and prepare to storm the castle. As virtues defend against their corresponding vices, Mankind grows old. Having been unsuccessful in breaching the defenses, Greediness
tempts Mankind with promises of comfort to willingly leave the castle. Now old and miserly, Mankind is struck by Death and is abandoned by the World and Greediness. As the Bad Angel attempts to escape to the Devil with Mankind’s soul, the Four Daughters of God appear to debate his fate. Taking the case to their father God who finds in favor of Mankind’s salvation.

The Castle of Perseverance includes all the elements of the traditional morality play, yet is rarely cited as a quality example of the genre. While it contains allegorical characters, a central human figure, a struggle between virtue and vice and an ultimate salvation, it is also so markedly different in both structure and performance as to make any direct comparison with other morality plays a flawed exercise. However, in both physical and dramatic form it does bear a striking resemblance to the medieval tournament traditions of pas d’armes. While previous scholars have explored the physical similarities between the two, there is no research into how such a relationship affects the interpretation of text. By incorporating the performance style of the secular tournament, the non-secular morality play can now be interpreted as more than an incorporation, but as a subversion. By examining The Castle of Perseverance in performance, the aspects of the pas d’armes expose the deeper relationship between secular and non-secular powers as they vie for the attention and support of an increasingly empowered populace.
Chapter 2

Defining the Morality Play

Luigi Riccoboni’s *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe* (1741) first uses the word “morality” to identify what would later be known as the morality plays. Riccouboni’s references to the French medieval plays and *moralites*, were translated as, “pieces of piety and morality, under the common title of moralities” (Riccoboni 123). Of the forty-five extant English plays that have been classified as under the morality genre, only twenty were written before the accession of Queen Elizabeth. Gerard Langbaine, one of England’s first dramatic bibliographers, wrote in 1691 that he could only identify ten morality plays from the period, only three of which, *Hickscorner* (1513), *Four Elements* (1515), and *Youth* (1520), could be considered pre-Shakespearean (Langbaine 535). The first morality to be published was *New Custom* (1570) in a modern edition of Robert Dodsley’s *Old Plays* (1744). In 1763, *Everyman* (1495), the earliest morality play then identified, was discovered by Bishop Thomas Percy, who referenced it in his essay “On the Origin of the English Stage.” Yet, *Everyman* would remain unpublished until 1773 when it would appear in Thomas Hawkins’ *The Origin of the English Drama*. It would be almost 50 years before another medieval morality play surfaced.

*The Castle of Perseverance* first appears as a reference in William Hone’s *Ancient Mysteries Described* (1823). It is Hone who first provides the title and a brief description of the included stage diagram. The lack of specificity in description stems from the fact
that Hone was never in the presence of the original manuscript: “to a bibliopolical friend I am indebted for notice of the Castle of Good Perseverance, which he saw in Dr. Macro’s collection” (Hone 228). Dr. Macro has been identified as Dr. Cox Macro, an East Anglian antiquarian, whose collections included many manuscripts from the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. After his death in 1767, the collection passed unnoticed through a number of owners before being sold at auction in 1820 when the manuscript, containing The Castle of Perseverance (1405-50) and two other plays, was acquired by Hudson Gurney (Potter 213). In 1825, Thomas Sharpe includes the stage diagram in his book A Dissertation on the Pageants, or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry, but without mention of the dramatic text. John Collier is the first to write extensively about The Castle of Perseverance in his book The History of English Dramatic Poetry. He formally titles the other two plays Wisdom Who is Christ or Mind, Will and Understanding (1460-70), later titled Wisdom and Mankind (1465-70), and provides plot summaries for each. Collier devotes five chapters to the study of morality plays, but experiences difficulty incorporating the Macro plays with his dramatic conceptions, based on Everyman and the morality plays of the 16th century (214).

The Macro plays would not be printed in their entirety until 1904, when translated by F. J. Furnivall and A. W. Pollard. Pollard attempted to include the Macro Plays in the genre by contrasting the earlier works “that touch the whole of human nature,” with 16th century morality plays, which were limited in their length and scope to human experiences such as death or youth (219). E. K. Chambers’s The Medieval Stage (1904), further separates 15th and 16th century morality plays by defining the genre as characteristically
lengthy, comprehensive or “full scope” and performed outdoors. The remaining, primarily 16th century, morality plays were redefined as moral interludes; however, Chambers was not consistent in his categorization. Magnificence and Three Estates were identified as morality plays chiefly due to length and “full scope” plays, such as Nice Wanton, were cataloged as moral interludes. In 1908, Felix Shelling limited the delineation to the scope of human experience. In Elizabethan Drama, he places The Castle of Perseverance as a full scope morality play, alongside Mudus et Infans (1508) and Mankind (Potter 220). A further narrowing of thematic categorization by Robert Potter, this time focused on the instruction of repentance, still results with eight plays spanning 200 years (30-1). C. F. Tucker-Brooke, who acknowledged the difficulty of defining the genre thematically, was the first to propose a chronological distinction between 16th century moral interludes and the 15th century morality plays, now limited to Everyman, Mankind, Wisdom, The Castle of Perseverance and The Pride of Life (1350-1400).

Discovered and titled in 1891 by James Mills, The Pride of Life was preserved at the Public Record Office in Dublin. This original manuscript was lost when the building was destroyed in 1922, though a small, copied section survived. Mills had reputedly, however, made a scholarly transcript of the whole fragment. Later other scholars worked on it – Brandl in 1898 (using also work done by Skeat), Holthausen in 1902 and Waterhouse in 1909, the last-named having collated the evidence from the three earlier transcripts. In 1970, Norman Davis published a new version in the light of all previous versions and comments on them, and this is likely to remain the authoritative source for the text (Davis 90).
This current list of five medieval morality plays constitutes those plays with entirely allegorical characters written before the fifteenth-century and are thematically focused on the nature of the soul’s salvation. Yet, it is important that such categorization of these plays has occurred entirely out of context from their historical performance. Would a fifteenth-century observer have identified *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman* as being of the same genre? If not, what other performance style would be most similar? These are the questions necessary to better define the morality plays as a genre or to reclassify them as an entirely new category.
Chapter 3

Genre Contradiction and The Castle of Perseverance

Unfortunately, the process of categorizing the morality play genre by formula has left the remaining medieval morality plays without a comprehensive definition. This inherent deferment of meaning results in a dramatic category of “what is not” rather than “what is.” The genre is also hampered in representation, as the bulk of evidence rests within a single manuscript. The plays themselves still contain markedly different uses of language, conventions of staging, and narrative focus. The only unifying factor is the thematic focus on salvation. Craig writes:

“In consequence of the fall of Adam, man is destined to die in sin unless he be saved by the intervention of divine grace and by repentance. It is the presentation of man in this situation in perfectly general terms that is the essence of the English morality play.” (Craig 351)

But without stronger parallels in the presentation of that essence, comparisons between morality plays often reveal more of the critics’ bias than the value of the play. Since Everyman was discovered earlier, the rest of the medieval morality plays have largely been examined in relation to it. Due to its early popularity among neo-classical scholars and the notoriety attached to its being the first morality play to have been restaged in 1901, comparisons to Everyman have, until recently, been largely negative. The value
of *The Castle of Perseverance* has particularly suffered for its comparisons to other medieval morality plays, particularly *Everyman*.

*Everyman* is the most recognizable of the medieval morality plays. It has dominated dramatic collections for over 200 years. Only recently has it been substituted or included with the shorter examples of *Wisdom* and *Mankind*. The narrative focus of *Everyman* is the preparation for Death. Death summons Everyman who pleads for and receives a few hours of respite to find companions for the journey. He turns to his longtime friends and relations, Sir Fellowship, Sir Kindred, Sir Cousin and Sir Goods, who all eventually forsake him. In his desperation, he recalls Good Deeds, long abandoned on the ground, who recommends him to her sister, Knowledge. Knowledge then directs him to Confession. After confessing his sins, Everyman prepares to meet God. As he reaches the grave, Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five Wits, who have pledged to accompany him, announce they can go no further. Knowledge, too, escapes him. Only Good Deeds remains to plead for him. At the play’s end, an Angel then bears the purified soul of Everyman to Heaven.

The first inconsistency found between the plays suggests that while *Everyman* focuses on preparations for death, *The Castle of Perseverance* addresses the entire scope of human experience, even beyond death. Since Death is the unifying dramatic element, it is best to compare the differences in its presentation. In *The Castle of Perseverance*, Death does not converse with any of the onstage performers. Death enters addressing only the audience. His approach is staged so as to be invisible to Mankind:

**DEATH.** Nobody shall take his part.
I shall thee shape to shame and shock:
Now I kill thee, with my knock;
I strike thee, Mankind, with my stroke
Unto the root of my heart!

(He strikes MANKIND with the lance. At this blow, MANKIND turns and sees Death for the first time. DEATH turns and walks out of the place.)

MANKIND. Ah Death! Death! Bitter is thy blow! – (2682-7)

For over 50 lines, the audience has been lectured on the inevitability of death by Death personified, as he moves closer and closer to the unsuspecting Mankind. Yet upon his death, Mankind has no opportunity to plead with the now absent Death. In Everyman, the response to death is markedly different. Death speaks with Everyman, which allows Everyman the opportunity to plead for more time. He asks for an additional twelve years before making the pilgrimage for his reckoning. An important difference arises then in the presentation of death as a journey in Everyman and life as a journey with death being an unpredictable part in The Castle of Perseverance.

In The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind does not request more time to live, but begs the World to save him from ever experiencing the pain of death.

MANKIND. Now, hold to what you’ve promised long,
For fellowship, both old and new:
Release me of my pains strong;
Some balm for me I would thou brew,
That I may sing their praise!
World, for old acquaintance,
Help me from this sorry chance!
Death has struck me with his lance –
I die but for their grace! (2706-12)

Everyman accepts his death, his only struggle remains facing judgment alone.
Upon his actual death, Everyman is represented by his Good Deeds grown strong through
his confession and repentance. When Mankind dies, his own soul must call upon one of
the Four Daughters of God for salvation.

MANKIND. I die, certainly!
Now my life is done for:
My heart breaks – I sigh sore!
A word may I speak no more.
I put me in God’s mercy!
(MANKIND dies and, as he does so, the SOUL emerges from beneath his
bed.)

SOUL. “Mercy”! -- This was my last tale
That ever my body had here.
But Mercy help me in this vale,
Of damning drink, I sorely fear. (2847-55)

Additionally, Everyman exits entirely without comedic language, the only
exception being when Sir Kinship deserts him due to a stubbed toe. The Castle of
Perseverance contains comedic language throughout the text, even during Mankind’s
death. The Boy who comes to claim Mankind’s possessions identifies himself as “I don’t know who.” When Mankind later laments his loss he cries:

MANKIND. All my goods, without fail,
I have gathered with great travail,
The World has ordained, of his entail,
“I don’t know who” to be my heir! (2835-8)

Perhaps the most historically important distinction is that, of all the medieval morality plays, Everyman is not of English origin. The Dutch play Elckerlijc, printed in 1495, is identical in plot and action. In some instances, even the end-rhymes are identical, though in the English version they are placed inside the lines (Miyajima 16). This geographical distinction is the first step in establishing the category of English medieval morality plays.

The shortest of the complete medieval moralities at 914 lines, Mankind is also considered the liveliest, due to its coarse language and obscene humor. The theme of the play is announced at the beginning in a short homily of five stanzas by Mercy, personified here as a man. Its basic theme concentrates not on the entire span of human life but on an allegorical incident epitomizing the constant warfare between man’s spiritual friends and foes. Mankind, who has been charged to serve others through physical toil, pleads to Mercy for aid against Mischief and his agents, Nought, New Guise and Nowadays who use a variety of evil and farcical strategies, like bawdy songs and wild dancing, in order to distract him from his duty. They all serve Titivillus, the chief power of evil, presiding even over the World, the Flesh and the Devil. The entrance of Titivillus also requires a
collection of money from the audience. Commanded by Mischief, the three villains circulate amongst the spectators demanding that they pay money if they wish to see the great “abominable presence” of Titivillus. After taunting the three for their meager earnings, he announces that he is now invisible to Mankind. He can then prevent Mankind from toiling in the earth by making the ground too hard, stealing his tools and even with the biological distractions of urination and an attack of colic. The play ends with Mercy blessing Mankind for his endurance and the audience for their attention.

What separates The Castle of Perseverance from Mankind is the perspective of the human experience and the lack of balance in the struggle for man’s soul. This balance, be it one good angel and one bad or Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Virtues, is necessary for representing this struggle. A balanced universe leaves the fate of Mankind on his choices and his relationship with God. In Mankind, the forces of evil far outweigh the sole representative of good. In fact, Mankind must constantly ask for Mercy’s aid in protecting him from worldly distractions. While he receives Mercy’s blessings, he does not receive salvation. Additionally, the portrayal of Mercy as a man is unique. It also means that there is no identifiable female presence onstage, making Mankind the only all male morality play. The action in the play is also of an allegorical instance, removed from an identifiable life stage. Mankind exists as any and all ages, while in The Castle of Perseverance his age informs his actions. He is rebellious when young, repentant when middle aged, covetous when older and fearful when dying. In Mankind, he experiences no significant milestones in life so there is no final judgment or permanent salvation.
Wisdom, at 1163 lines, is little more than a quarter the length of The Castle of Perseverance. The central figure is not Mankind or Everyman, but the human soul Anima, portrayed as and by a woman. Responding to the insistence of an Anima respectfully kneeling, Wisdom, who is in fact Christ, delivers a sermon on the nature of the human soul blackened by sin and washed white by the knowledge of God. The Five wits or faculties of the soul come on stage; then the three Mights – or powers of the soul (Mind, Will and Understanding) – explain how one may come to know God. Wisdom warns them of their corresponding temptations – the World, the Devil and the Flesh. Lucifer, disguised as a young gallant, reveals himself to the audience and he corrupts Mind, Will and Understanding. Mind becomes proud, Understanding avaricious and Will turns to lechery, each indulging in song and dance with a band of followers. They then quarrel with one another until Wisdom appears and them shows them how they have deformed Anima, appearing “fouler than a fiend.” Anima is then cleansed of sin by Repentance and Confession after Mind, Will, and Understanding submit to Wisdom. All return on stage to symbolize, by their costumes, the defeat of Sin, Anima rejoices at being purged of sin by the Grace of Wisdom, who is Christ King, and the play closes with the Soul praising Christ for his capacity to redeem mankind.

The thematic difference between The Castle of Perseverance and Wisdom concerns the portrayal of the allegorical characters. In The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind is the only character that undergoes a physical and spiritual transformation. He is both corrupted and converted throughout the course of his life. In Wisdom, the transformation of Anima is not by her actions, but by the actions of the Three Mights manipulated by Lucifer. The
allegorical characters can be corrupted or changed in a way they are not in The Castle of Perseverance. Though the Seven Deadly Sins engage their counterparts during the siege, they do not alter their very natures. Wisdom’s focus on transformation, in both costuming and staging, makes it uniquely different to The Castle of Perseverance.

The remaining morality play, The Pride of Life, predates The Castle of Perseverance and coincidently has the most in common in both theme and staging than any other English medieval morality play. The play begins with a prolocutor calling for the audience to be attentive and tarry for as long as the weather lasts. The plot concerns the boastful King of Life who issues a challenge to Death. The Queen of Life attempts to warn him of Death’s power, even summoning the Bishop, but to no avail. Death arrives and after a “stern strife” drives the King to the ground, where the Devil seizes his soul. The play ends with the Queen and her son praying for the King’s soul and the prolocutor announcing that he is saved.

What distinguishes The Castle of Perseverance and The Pride of Life from each other is the extent of reality given to the allegorical characters. Mankind is featured alone, without mention of a partner or offspring. The rest of the performers are all abstractions, with the Boy being the most like a real person. The King of Life has allegorical characters in his employment such as his knights, Strength and Health, along with his messenger, Mirth. Yet he is also joined with characters based on familial and occupational roles, such as the Queen and the Bishop. While they are still representative, they are not abstractions. The performance of the Queen is inherently different than one of Fidelity, just as the performance of the Bishop is different than of the Church. The dramatic base for The
Pride of Life has allegorical elements, but is not entirely allegorical like The Castle of Perseverance.

What is striking about both plays is that religious conflict is depicted through martial violence, through either a single combat contest or a siege. While Mankind and Wisdom physically display the conflict between vices and virtues through pranks, song and dance, The Pride of Life and The Castle of Perseverance both are more rigidly formal in their engagements. There is a challenge either for the supremacy of the King or the possession of a soul, followed by an armed conflict and a final judgment. This structure is identical to the one used in medieval tournaments. By examining The Castle of Perseverance in relation to this tournament tradition of staging, a unique perspective of the play in performance can be achieved in contrast to the conclusions derived by comparisons to other morality plays such as Everyman.
Chapter 4

Tournament Tradition and the *Pas d’Armes*

More serious than a round table, but less deadly than an *emprise*, where knights of different nations generally challenged one another to rough contests similar to *pas a la guerre*, a *pas d’armes* (passage of arms) was a highly stylized tournament that included an obstacle to be defended, allegorical justification and appropriate pageantry. The *pas* began practically as training reenactments of the military situations where a confined, strategic position, or pass, would be defended by a few against many. *Pas d’armes* could also be limited to single combat situations, as illustrated in the story of a French knight at Constantinople in 1096, who recounts:

… at the crossroads in the country where I come from there stands an old sanctuary, to which everyone who desires to fight in single combat goes ready accoutred, and there prays to God while he waits in expectation of the man who will dare to fight him. At those cross roads I have often tarried, waiting and longing for an antagonist (Keen 203).

In a *pas d’armes*, knights, known as the *tenans*, would announce, either at an event such as a feast or a knighting ceremony, their intention to defend a location (a castle, bridge, gate, tree or field) against all challengers. The obstacle often housed a lady or ladies, whom a knight or knights would pledge to protect through martial exercises such as the joust, single combat, *melee* or a mock siege. Such contests would take place within the
limits of a list an area enclosed by a barrier, fence or ditch. They would then set about spreading word such that other knights and squires could attend. Holding themselves ready for the hour, day, or even month of the challenge, the tenans would await their opponents. The challengers, the venans, would arrive accordingly arrayed in finery, disguise or costumed.

A defending knight or knights would also draft a *chapitre d’armes* to formalize the conventions of safety and decorum during the *pas d’armes*. These regulations ensured the safety of the participants and established criteria for judgments. During a *melee*, knights could enter a frenzied state, in one case resulting in the burning down of a neighboring town (Marshall). At the Boston Fair tournament in 1288, knights extended their revelry beyond the lists and began looting the nearby markets (Anglo 26). The purpose of the *chapitre d’armes* was to curtail such un-chivalrous behavior, including implementing new techniques to improve safety. Developments in *armes a plaisance*, or weapons of courtesy, included the blunting of blades and lances tipped with coronals, reduced the risk of death during a *pas d’armes* without diminishing the intensity of mock combat. At the *pas d’armes* of the Arbre de Charlemagne (1443), the challengers, armed with weapons of courtesy, demonstrated the combatants’ level of physical engagement during the *pas d’armes*.

The squires were strong, hardy and courageous, and sought each other so harshly that they quickly achieved the fifteen strokes contained in their chapters, and more, without either gaining advantage, or giving ground, or losing their weapons. And they made solid hits on the body so often that
the coats of arms of each of them were torn and ripped in many places. And
finally de Vaudrey pierced the visor of his companion, and when
de Compais felt it pierced, he threw his sword with all his strength at the
visor of his companion, and with that stroke they were both similarly taken
in the visor. Each champion held the other by the pierced visor, and they
lifted their swords so that both of them had their face naked and uncovered,
and at the end the judge threw down his baton, and had the guards restrain
and separate them. (Marche)

The intensity of combat in *pas d’armes* was present even when fought with
allegorical siege weapons, due to the competitive nature of the participants. Such an
outbreak occurred during the earliest account of *pas d’armes* involving a siege, the *castello
d’amore* (1214)

These Venetians, bearing the fair banner of St. Mark, fought with much
skill and delight. Yet much evil may spring sometimes from good
beginnings: for while the Venetians strove in sport with Paduans,
contending who should first press into the castle gate, then discord arouse
on either side; and (would that it had never been!) a certain unwise
Venetian… made an assault upon the Paduans with fierce and wrathful
mien: which when the Paduans saw, some of them waxed wroth in turn and
laid violent hands on that banner, where from they tore a certain portion;
which again provoked the Venetians to sore wrath and indignation.

(Coulton 268)
Such violence stands in contrast to the introduction of women as active participants in the *pas d’armes*. The *castello d’amore* features maidens within a mock castle, besieged by a number of knights. Instead of assaulting with weapons of courtesy, they attack the stronghold with fruits, flowers and spices.

A fantastic castle was built and garrisoned with dames and damsels and their waiting women, who without the help of man defended it with all possible prudence…. For the castle itself must needs be assaulted; and the arms and engines wherewith men fought against it were apples and dates and muscat-nuts… and all manner of flowers or spices that are fragrant to smell and fair to see. (269)

The assault on the senses to tempt the maidens to dessert the castle was waged by the men with the same intensity they would shove a sword through a rival’s helm. The use of sweet and savory gifts ensures the physical safety of the participants, but also illustrates the seductive risks of such contests. The theme of a maiden guarded castle continues in a fifteenth-century *pas d’armes*, *the castel de loyall*.

The king assigns to four maidens of his court the umpireship of the castle called ‘Loyall’; for the attack and defense of which they are to arrange as they may collectively decide upon. The castle is a mock fortress, representing one, which has been subjected to a remarkable siege in history. (Clephan 48)

The increasingly elaborate allegorical displays in the *pas d’armes* also demanded they be equally justified, beyond the knights desire to engage in mock battle. The *pas*
*d’armes* included an allegorical prologue, which explained both the obstacle and the presence of the knight or knights who defended it. Festivals at Eltham in 1401 issued thirteen allegorical letters of challenge for a tournament (Pederson 23). In a *pas d’armes*, the defense of a lady or ladies was often the reason for the *pas* to take place. A lady or ladies would commission a knight or knights to serve them and he would be entrusted to invent a story explaining his presence at the lists.

The proclamations for the *Pas de la belle Pelerine* (1449) explained that while Belle Pelerine was on her way to Rome, she stopped at many holy places. At one spot, she was attacked by robbers, but a knight rescued her from the assailants. According to her wishes, the knight became Belle Pelerine’s escort, but before finishing the journey to Rome, the knight thought his lady should rest, so he pledged to protect the *pas* for three months. (Anglo 28)

The *Pas de la bergiere* (1449) was organized by Rene d’Anjou, notable for his treatise concerning tournament ceremonies, *Livre des tournois*. Loys de Beauvau provides an eyewitness account of the allegorical staging elements used to justify the *pas d’armes*. Rene of Adjou chose a pastoral setting.

At Tarascon, in a very agreeable spot, you will find jousting lists adjoining these delightful surroundings. And at one end everyone will see a gentle shepherdess stationed beneath a tree watching over her flock with all the charming objects that most befit her. (26)

The pastoral scenic elements continued in the construction of the lists and tournament space, including a gallery for the spectators in the form of a thatched cottage.
On either side of her were the shepherd-challengers, and behind them their pavilions, fashioned to resemble cottages. (Ibid 26)

The *pas d’armes* also includes the hanging of shields from a tree of chivalry. There you may see two jousting shields attached to a tree…guarded by two gentle shepherd-squires striving as loyal servants to attain the favor of the shepherdess. (Ibid 26)

Each shield was a representation of either the preferred contest or the character of the challenger. In this *pas d’armes*, a sable shield was selected by those challengers content with love and a white shield by those amorous and dissatisfied. This distinction is interesting since the object of protection, the above-mentioned shepherdess, was also Jeanne de Laval, Rene’s second wife (Pederson 16). At the day’s end, all left the lists and returned to the castle to dine and receive prizes.

During the *pas d’armes* of the *Fontaine des Pleurs* (1450), staged at Chalon-sur-Saone on the island of St. Laurent, the Hainault knight Jacques de Lalaing tallied over thirty challengers in an elaborate allegorical display. The *chapitre d’armes* was signed a full two years before the *pas d’armes* even took place. A pavilion with an image of the Virgin Mary was set up behind a model of weeping maiden tending a unicorn bearing three tear-stained shields of white, violet, and black. Once a month a herald would greet challengers, who would then touch the shields to indicate their preferred weapon; white for axe, violet for sword, and black for twenty-five courses with the lance. The challenger would then be verified as a gentleman of at least four generations and assigned an encounter time no sooner than seven days. Prizes for the *pas d’armes* were, accordingly, a
golden axe, a golden sword and a lance made of gold. Fallen challengers were bound to bear a gold bracelet for a year, or less if they could find a lady with the key. The *pas d’armes* lasted for eleven months and concluded with a great banquet where prizes were distributed (Keen 203).

The *Pas de l’arbre d’or* (1468) presented the story of a count held prisoner by a lady. The cast of characters ranged from the Lady of the Ile Cellee to the Bastard of Burgundy, who was disguised as an aged knight called “Dangier,” thus called because he was the disdain of a lady. The *pas d’armes* required a variety of elaborate scenic elements such as a golden tree, a large hourglass, two towers of trumpeters, multiple movable pavilions within the lists, and a castle (Anglo 29).

The *Pas d’armes de la sauvaige dame* (1469), held in Ghent, contains a preamble to the herald’s proclamation announcing the challenge that allegorically justifies the challengers joust on behalf of his lady.

> It is true that the said entrepreneur…left…the rich Kingdom of Childhood behind him and entered a bleak, tenuous and sterile country called Youth…. Imagined adventures alone sustained and strengthened him in these pastures until he came upon the great plain of Happiness, which is situated between the castle of Beauty and the noble mountain of Grace, called High Renown (Wickham 18)

The challenge goes on to outline how the knight met and fought with another, but lost and was left for dead. A hermit arrived, however, and took the knight to the “hermitage of Good Accord” which was on top of the “mountain of Grace.” The beauty
and charm of Lady Sauvaige restored the knight to good health, and in gratitude to her he offered to perform a feat of arms. In this pas, the knight’s lady dressed as Lady Sauvaige and was accompanied by appropriate wild men and women.

Finally, though technically not a *pas d’armes*, *The Barriers* (1616) is a rare seventeenth-century manuscript that supports the use of military displays with histrionics. *The Barriers* includes dramatic interaction in the form of a colloquy between the characters of Truth and Occasion. This drama of about 150 lines mainly concerns the travels of Truth who is seeking a place of rest. She describes her involvement with peasants, gentry, and academicians as she seeks to discover a better understanding of humanity. Her journey brings Truth in contact with a company of armed men who represent four famous islands. Occasion informs Truth that these same knights are now ready to enter the lists in order to dispute by combat. The quarrel concerns whether a “Mistress is more worthy of love, being false and kind, than when she is true and forward” (Pederson 98). The simple stage direction, “they fight,” indicates the major action of the drama, the combat at the barriers by the four knights. The same use of “they fight” as a description of combat parallels the commands concerning the same actions in *The Castle of Perseverance*. While *The Barriers* is not as thematically complex as *The Castle of Perseverance*, it clearly records drama occurring within a list. Most important, as in the play and in a *pas*, *The Barriers* includes allegorical characters, a rationale justifying the contest, and the drama of combat within a list.
Chapter 5

The Castle of Perseverance and Pas d’Armes

The Castle of Perseverance and the traditions of the pas d’armes share many physical and thematic elements of staging and performance, yet these similarities have only been recently examined in any detail. Early criticism on The Castle of Perseverance narrowly focused on its allegorical elements. Following the publication of Richard Southern’s The Medieval Theatre in the Round, the focus shifted to aspects of its staging, especially in context of the stage diagram. Southern’s book, full of detailed analysis and broad speculation, has spawned over fifty years of scholarly criticism. In one of the great academic ironies, countless books and articles document this heated debate over aspects of staging for a play that has no record of performance. In comparing it to the performance of the pas d’armes, the bulk of analysis lies in Steven I. Pederson’s The Tournament Tradition and Staging The Castle of Perseverance. In it, he compares the play to a variety of tournament styles, identifies physical and structural similarities and tests his thesis by restaging the play as interpreted through tournament. Pederson proposes a list theory to the stage diagram and the text. A list was a safety barrier that separated combatants during jousts and spectators during other marital displays. The list theory is based on convergence of the tournament and The Castle of Perseverance on aspects of physical layout, action, and personnel.
The stage diagram is the primary source for information on physical layout. The drawing depicts a castle in the middle of two concentric circles. Above the castle is written:

This is the Castle of Perseverance
That standeth in the midst of the place,
But let no man sit there for letting of sight,
For there shall be the best of all. (Bevington 797)

Enclosing the castle are two concentric circles, between which reads:

This is the water about the place. If any ditch may be made, there it shall be played, or else that it be strongly barred all about. And let not over many stytelerys be within the place. (Ibid 797)

On the exterior of these circles are five scaffolds: the Devil’s in the North, Greediness’ in the Northeast, God’s in the East, the Flesh’s in the South and the World’s in the west. The diagram also contains additional notation concerning elements of costuming.

The first part of Pederson’s list theory is that the central action of the play, a defended castle under siege, is fundamentally a *pas d’armes* in structure. The use of castles as obstacles for defense is well illustrated in the *chateau d’amour* and the *pas d’armes* of the castle loyall. Interestingly, both castles are defended by women against mostly male aggressors, and in *The Castle of Perseverance* the Seven Moral Virtues are also all women.
The second part identifies similarities in the circular shape indicated by the diagram for the playing space and the moat/barrier to the round lists documented for tournaments and roundtables. For the feat of arms in Eltham in 1401, two knights fought on foot within closed circular lists (Pederson 29). Roundtables were a form of tournament embraced by the Order of the Garter as a means of displaying virtues within the context of Arthurian legend. Hence the roundtables were often held within round lists. Though almost 150 years before The Castle of Perseverance, these roundtables shared many of the aspects of allegorical justification found in \textit{pas d’armes}. During a roundtable celebrating the marriage of King Edward I in 1272,

The King instructed his squires to introduce into the play the wrongs that he had suffered from certain towns so that his knights might be pledged to avenge them. The parts of Lanceloet, Walewein, Perchevael, Eggrawein, Bohort, Gariet, Lyonell, Mordret, and Keye were taken. The tournament had been announced all over England and a great assembly including many ladies gathered. At sunrise, the round Table began, and the knights aforementioned had the better of their opponents. (Loomis 83)

The third part also compares purpose of the safety barricades and ditches utilized in roundtable tournament with the one indicated in the stage diagram. The lists for tournaments were intended to be sturdy constructions in order to keep the combatants and the spectators safely separated. Often these tournaments would necessitate two rows known as the principal lists and the counter lists, so that tournament personnel could safely
monitor the event. The Black Book of Admiralty, which contains conventions and reports for judicial tournaments, records:

And it is to be understood that the lists are to be made without the principal lists, within which the attendants of the constable, and the marshall, and the sergeants at arms of the king, ought to be for the purpose of guarding and defending, if any person is disposed to commit any offence or affray against the proclamations made in the court or anything which may be against the royal majesty of the king. (Clephan 160)

The description of the moat/barrier is inscribed within two concentric circles, which may also indicate the use of both principal and counter lists. This connection is further strengthened by the inclusion of instructions for the deployment of stytelerys, which would then be allowed to operate between the two barriers.

The fourth part finds similarity between the scaffolds of the Flesh, the World, the Devil, Greediness and God to the scaffolds constructed for tournaments. Scaffolds were often constructed to provide notables with a better vantage of the tournament while the general public was placed at level with the lists. For a tournament in Smithfield in 1467, the stands for the royal court were three stories tall (Cripps-Day 70). Such scaffolds also served as décor for the tournament, decorated with bunting, embroiders, shields and tapestries. In The Castle of Perseverance, the scaffolds are also reserved for the most significant characters and are similarly arrayed.

A major aspect of the debate concerning interpreting the stage diagram centers on whether the scaffolds were placed within or outside of the moat/barrier. Southern argues
for the scaffolds to be inside the circle, so the moat can serve as a barrier keeping out those who cannot afford admission. This reasoning is based on numerous assumptions concerning construction techniques and theatrical conventions of payment, along with a reinterpretation of the siege to include a second, symbolic moat (Southern 50). The list theory contends that scaffolds were outside the moat/barrier, as they would be placed in tournament. This theory does not require an alteration of the stage diagram and maintains possibility of constructions for audience seating.

The fifth part attempts to identify the meaning of stytelerys with the men-at-arms who governed tournaments within the lists. Using the Oxford English Dictionary definition of “stightle” as “to intervene as mediator or umpire,” Pederson proposes the stytelerys may have performed the same duties as the king of arms and his assistants, who ushered combatants into the lists and moderated the conventions of the *chapitre d’armes*. The violence that occurred during the *castello d’amore* was subdued in this manner.

So the Court or pastime was forthwith broken up at the bidding of the other stewards of the court and of the Lord Paolo da Sermedaula, a discreet Paduan citizen of great renown who was then King of the Knights of that court, and to whom with the other stewards it had been granted, for honour’s sake, that they should have governance and judgment over ladies and knights and the whole Court. (Coulton 268)

Even single combat *pas d’armes*, like the *Arbre de Charlemagne*, required eight men carrying wands and blunted lances in order to separate the joined combatants. Though sometimes the conflict between combatants would become so spirited that even
the men-at-arms could not control them, as during the tournament at Bruges in 1468, when the action ceased only at the intervention of the sword-wielding duke (Arnott 86).

Viewing The Castle of Perseverance as a form of pas d’armes, the function of the stytelerys would then be to regulate the conventions of the pas d’armes during the performance. They would usher the actor’s movements through the platea between scaffolds, maintain a safe separation of performers and audience and serve a symbolic purpose. Thematically, the presence of stytelerys symbolizes that the rules of pas d’armes are upheld not only through the mock siege, but also to the entire performance.

Glynne Wickham writes—though does not fully support—that morality plays, “bear a close resemblance to tournaments in which the princes in the lists are God and Lucifer; and the prizes for which they joust are the souls of men” (156). If the medieval morality play is defined as an allegorical struggle between the virtues and vices of a human soul, then it bears a strong thematic correlation to pas d’armes, where the tenans and the venans would wage mock warfare over an obstacle. The similarities in structure and style certainly support an incorporation of the tournament practices into religious drama, but inherent within all performance is the ability to subvert the form. By utilizing the structure of the tournament, The Castle of Perseverance simultaneously comments on the event, making it possible to subvert its traditions and staging conventions. Though this subversion is not necessarily a conscious act, in order to better understand the use of tournament in The Castle of Perseverance it is important to examine its rocky relationship with the church.
Chapter Six
The Case for Non-Secular Subversion

To better understand how a secular celebration of state power could serve as the basis for ecclesiastical performance, it is necessary to examine the complex relationship of both the church and the government towards tournaments. The tournament began as form of military training but quickly evolved as a public display of state power. They showcased not only the military prowess of a nation, but the wealth to afford the cost of mock warfare (Mate 277). As they developed from violent gladiatorial contests to elaborate pageants, so did the feudal powers begin developing national identities with transcontinental ambitions. The tournaments were now “complex, symbolic ceremonies, frequently laden with polemical or propagandistic intent” (Marshall). Juliet Barker comments on such public performances as “a supreme opportunity for the nobility to display their wealth so as to impress their social inferiors and even their peers…” (Keen 10). Edward III’s desire to elevate the status of his rule resulted in the revival of tournaments known as roundtables, where knights, some members of the newly established Order of the Garter, would participate in contests and feasts that recalled the legendary rule of King Arthur. These roundtables, while infrequent and ultimately economically draining, were extravagant displays of the power of the state (Prestwich 77).
If political power is considered finite, than every gain for secular states is a loss in power for the Catholic Church. The church was strongly opposed to tournaments, not only for the violence of the event, but also for the licentious behavior that accompanied such gatherings. From the tournaments earliest beginnings, the papacy used harsh language to condemn them. In 1130 at the synod at Clermont under Innocent II it states:

We firmly prohibit those detestable markets or fairs… at which knights are accustomed to meet to show off their strength and their boldness and at which the deaths of men and dangers to their person should often occur. But if anyone is killed there, even if he demands and is not denied penance and the viaticum, ecclesiastical burial shall be withheld from him.

(Marshall)

The power of the tournament in persistence and popularity is evidenced by the continuation of such church condemnations. In 1139, the second Lateran Council prohibits tournaments in the IX Canon. Followed by another proclamation in 1148, this time by Eugenius III, and confirmed at the third Lateran Council (Cripps-Day 39). The popularity of tournaments and the spread of chivalry resulted in each promoting the other.

The realities of war, the ideals of the church, the pride of noble families, the records of heralds, and the researchers of lawyers all contributed to give the cult of knighthood an ardent following. Without the splendour of secular ceremonies and the flights of fancy of the romances, however, its flame would never have been so bright. (Wickham 153)
The tournaments held during the reign of Richard I were frequently condemned by
the Church owing to the brutal character of many of them; and Jocelin of Brakelond tells
the story of a number of Knights who held one between Thetford and Bury St. Edmunds,
in spite of the fiat of the abbot. Another took place soon after, which had also been
prohibited; and all who had taken part in it were excommunicated (Clephan 55). In 1192
Celestine III ordered the bishops and Richard I to forbid tournaments in order to focus
resources toward the Crusades. In 1194, Richard I’s writ licensing tournaments in England
came almost on top of this, in the form of a writ to the archbishop of Canterbury. It seems
to have been merely a temporary measure, for meetings at five places in open country. One
of these places was in East Anglia at Stamford in Suffolk, not to be confused with
Stamford in Lincolnshire (Denholm-Young 243-4). This would place church defiant
tournaments in the area of East Anglia where many scholars believe The Castle of
Perseverance to be written two centuries later.

The church viewed the tournaments as a serious threat to papal authority and to
religious devotion. Prohibitions and bans on tournaments carried the threat of
excommunication and in November of 1219, all who attended the Count of Aumale’s
tournament at Brakely were excommunicated (246). Even those who were not
excommunicated were still under threat of being denied a Christian burial for defying
papal authority. In 1219, the dying William, Earl of Pembroke, was convinced by a priest
to donate his armor and other spoils of tournament, in order to make amends for violating
the pope’s prohibitions (Cripps-Day 62). This concession led to a highly lucrative
relationship between the tournament and the church. Over the next three centuries the
church would use the donated armor of fallen knights as collateral for papal projects. The incorporation of this practice became so engrained that in 1334 the Prior refused to bury Prince John, the son of Edward II, until the Priory had received his armor, a horse, and a fine of 100 pounds (63). By becoming fiscally connected to the success of the tournament, the church had also become a silent supporter of them.

With the popularity of tournaments defying papal edicts and the church now economically entwined with them, the church’s attitude toward tournament shifts from one of prohibition to incorporation. It is important to delineate between imitation or incorporation and subversion. Glamour and ceremony were effective propaganda for the power of the patron of the pas, even if that patron was the church (Keene 211). By blending the staging conventions of the pas d’armes with their own religious spectacles, the church could exploit the appeal of tournament to support non-secular supremacy over secular ideals. In Huon De Mery’s Le Tournoiment d’Antechrist Satan is portrayed bearing a token of the chemise of Proserpine, and challenged by Christ in full armor, with a cross emblazoned shield and a token woven by the Virgin. Included in Christ’s company are Archangels and the personified Christian virtues of Chastity, Justice and Mercy (Geoff 98-9). Since all the participants are religious representations such a use of the tournament does not subvert the conventions against the secular source, but diverts it in support of a religious message. By including the World and the Flesh to the conflict, The Castle of Perseverance serves as a spiritual pas d’armes, not strictly between good and evil, but between non-secular and secular powers. Instead of a tournament glorifying the wealth
and power of secular society, it is a morality play exposing the selfish and temporal failings of government and commerce.

This may be best illustrated in the representation of the World and Greediness. Spatially, the balance of the *platea* is upset by the elevation of Greediness from one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Now, instead of the scaffolds of God, the Flesh, the World and the Devil evenly dividing the space along ordinal points, Greediness stands in the Northeast splitting the space between the Devil and God. Greediness is also placed across the *platea* from the World, his master. So in terms of spatial relationships, the scaffold placements indicate a dominance of worldly representation in the performance.

Additionally, as Greediness is later successful in extracting Mankind from the Castle of Perseverance, his elevation from just one of the Seven Deadly Sins with his own scaffold situated between God and the Devil also foreshadows that Greediness will be the most influential in the struggle for Mankind’s soul. For in youth, he is seduced by the consolidation of power, wealth, and experience. In his age, he is tempted by fiscal security, material comfort, and an earthly legacy.

By devoting more physical space to Greediness and the World, *The Castle of Perseverance* places those forces in greater opposition to God. In fact, the World’s scaffold in the east is on the opposite side of the *platea* from God’s in the west. The significance of this ordinal placement means the play rises in a worldly venue, but sets in a heavenly one. This is complemented by the first lines of the play proper belonging to the World and the last to God. This comparison of heavenly and earthly powers continues
with the earthly outcome of Mankind’s death being ultimately judged by the higher authority of God.

The World and Greediness also dominate the language of the text. The World is always the first to speak of the three main forces at beginning of the play. Although he is the last to be informed of Mankind’s repentance, he is the leader of the siege to win him back. After the siege, the Devil and the Flesh are silent while the World and Greediness continue to meddle in the affairs of Mankind. The representations of the World and Greediness are also embedded with the language of secular dominance over government and commerce. In the World’s opening lines, he speaks:

WORLD. Worthy wights in all the world wide,
Living by wild woods and in the by way,
To his precious prince puffed up in pride
Through this proper, plain place give silence and stay.
Be ready bold bachelors under my banner to abide
Where bright broadswords be battered and backs be played! –
Yea, seemly sirs, who sit side by side –
For both by sea and by land my boys have I sent. (1-8)

The World, with authoritative language and military bluster, informs the audience that The Castle of Perseverance should be viewed as a tournament rife with allegorical battle and glory. It also casts the World in the role of the tournament arbiter, who has arranged for the tournament to take place in order to display his own power and for his own amusement. The religious message implied is that the literal world conspires against
individuals living a purely Christian life. Later, the World continues to speak on the inherent hostility of the physical world.

WORLD. Therefore, my sport and my glee grow full glad;
Is there any one in this world to refuse my word?
Every rich ruler runs as if he were mad,
In lust and liking that my laws may be heard.
With fair folk in the field freshly am I fed;
I dance down like a doe in the darkling dell.
Whoever bids to do battle or debate with a blade,
Him were better to be hanged high in a corner of hell
Or burnt with bright lighting!
Whoso speaks against the World,
In prison he shall be hurled;
My commands are held and heard
Unto high heaven! (27-39)

The World delights in the revels of the tournament because they are selfish displays of power. He is callous to the risk and suffering of those participating, showing no concern for their safety. The World confesses that all leaders are mad, in that they have they use a unique logic to justify their actions. These actions are above reproach from the citizens below and must be supported by religious institutions. The World displays this power when he attempts to woo Mankind away from the Good Angel with promises of dominion over his own earthly paradise.
WORLD. Ah, Mankind, may luck you provide
That thy love on me is set!
In my bowers thou shalt abide,
And fare much the better yet.
I endow you with all my dwellings wide,
In the grave ‘til thou be set;
I make thee lord of much pride.
Sir, in what your own mouth utters,
I find no treason.
In all this world, by sea and sand,
Parks, places, glades and land,
Here I give thee with my hand, Sir, an open season. (595-607)

The World promises Mankind the status and power of lordship, but in later passages will refer to him as The World’s servant. The World then places Mankind under the dominion of the Seven Deadly Sins, further lowering his status amongst the allegorical figures. Lawrence Clopper writes, “Given the fact that civic freedom is a consequence of an abdication of rights by a secular or ecclesiastical lord, to be fiefed is to be returned to a non-free status…suggesting that allying oneself with the World and the Sins is like losing the free status that townspeople gained when they receive freedoms or charters of incorporation” (254). By dressing Mankind in the heraldry of The World, The Castle of Perseverance presents a strong visual representation of how individuals may lose spiritual integrity to a secular identity.
The World is not the only character in *The Castle of Perseverance* that the church uses to illustrate the fleeting wealth and power of secular society. As The World represents the state so does his lieutenant Greediness represent the increasingly influential merchant class. With political and social identity so strongly tied to trade, Greediness displays how a singular focus on personal economic gain results in a loss of humanity.

GREEDINESS. Thou must give thyself to simony

Extortion and false assize;
Help no man but thou knowest why;
Pay not thy servants their service;
They neibours look that thou destroy;
Tithe not in any wise;
Hear no beggar, thou he cry –
And then thou shalt full soon rise
And when you handle merchandise,
Look that thou be subtle of sleights,
And also swear by deceits,
Buy and sell by false weights –
For that is natural greediness. (685-97)

Greediness’s advice in dealings with money engages the audience in all aspects of their economic experience. The church is represented in the practice of tithing and offers of charity. Financial and civic responsibility can be seen in paying just wages and fair trade. Through Greediness, the church can damn and shame, without fully alienating the
audience. For as Greediness is subordinate to The World, so is the merchant class still subject to the state. The church can then argue that only through shifting one’s loyalty away from an earthly to a heavenly power, can one escape the cycle of sin.

The representation of the Seven Deadly Sins also allows for a subversive opportunity. The Seven Deadly Sins feature prominently in church admonishments of tournament. Le Goff reprints the 52nd sermon of a thirteenth-century priest, Jacques of Vitry’s. The sermon recounts a meeting with a knight whom he persuaded to quit the tournament due to the inherent presence of the seven deadly sins.

Knights do not lack for pride, since for the praise of men and vainglory the impious and vain make the rounds. They do not lack for envy, for each man envies the other for being judged a stronger contestant and for drawing greater praise. They do not lack for hatred and wrath, for each man strikes the other, hurts him, and often mortally wounds and kills him. Hence men incur the fourth mortal sin, which is dispiritedness or sadness. They are in fact so obsessed by vanity that all spiritual goods seem insipid…. They do not lack for the fifth mortal sin, which is avarice or theft, for each one who makes his enemy prisoner ransoms him and takes the horse, which he coveted, and the arms from him who he has defeated in battle…. These tournaments are not lacking in the sixth mortal sin, gluttony, for the knights hold banquets and seek invitations to others in sacrifice to worldly pomp…. They are not lacking in the seventh deadly sin, which is called lust, for they
want to please immodest women by distinguishing themselves in combat
and even by wearing certain female items as banners. (Geoff 189-90)

Nowhere is this more dramatically presented than when the Seven Deadly Sins
siege the castle itself. As the Seven Deadly Sins perform as knights in a *pas d’armes* they
also demonstrate their corresponding vice. The vices can then only be challenged when
paired against their opposing virtue. It is the structure of the siege, where the parallels with
*pas d’armes* are the strongest, that the opportunity for subversion is equally great.

In order to maintain a level of decorum and safety during *pas d’armes* participants
had to agree on a *chapitre d’armes*. While the *chapitre d’armes* would be different for
each tournament, it is likely that conventions of safety would be similar amongst contests.
Clephan reprints the *chapitre d’armes* for the *pas d’armes* of the *castello d’amore*:

Item. Yt shalbe lawfull for the assulters to devise all manner of engines for
the wynenge of the said castell ; engyn or tole to breake the ground or
howse with all only excepted.

Item. None do meddell with fier neyther within or without but to fire their
gunnes. (48)

These restrictions on the use of digging and fire may be critically applied to the
frequent references to fire and the draining of the moat, both features prominently used
during the siege. While debate continues into the exact staging, the use of fire during the
siege was more than likely not limited to the figurative. In the stage diagram, it is noted
that:
And he that shall play Belial look that he have gunpowder burning in pipes in his hands and in his ears and in his arse when he goeth to battle.

(Bevington 797)

The gunpowder would not have been of military grade, but a mealed powder, also known as serpentine powder, that was very popular in the manufacturing of fireworks (Butterworth 67). So it is plausible that the allegorical combatants entered the platea with both weapons of courtesy and brandishing real fire. The imagery of fire is ubiquitously present in the speeches of the invading forces. It is first invoked by Gluttony. Calling back to his master, The Flesh, he cries:

GLUTTONY. Lo, Sir Flesh, how I fare the field,

With a faggot in hand, those bitches to burn!

(GLUTTONY displays a bundle of sticks and a firebrand of wood intended for firing the Castle)

With a wreath made of wood, my weapon I wield.

From my long lance those ladies a lesson will learn!

Go we with our gear:

Those bitches shall blanch and blubber;

I shall make each one shudder,

With my smoke I’ll them smother,

They shall shit for fear! (1806-12)

It is interesting to note that while the forces that conspire against Mankind have consistently used language that would have been considered course and ill mannered, it is
during the siege proper that the vulgarities increase in number and the images become more graphic (Kelley 38). This technique is another subversion of the *pas d’armes*, where the preconception of the chivalrous knight is stripped away, revealing a crass barbarian and buffoon. The fire then takes on the characteristics of Gluttony, consuming without remorse or recompense. Gluttony’s intent is not to breach the Castle’s walls, but to burn alive all the women inside. He threatens his antithesis, Abstinence.

**GLUTTONY.** War! Glutton’s smoke shall make a stench
Against the castle, I vow!
Abstinence, though thou blanch,
I look on thee with bitter brow!
I have a firebrand here, thou fop!
With it I’ll set Mankind aflame!
My foul flame thou shalt not stop,
I vow to God, by name!
Therefore put him out here
In disease-ridden Gluttony.
With good meats and drinks you see
I nourish my sister Lechery,
‘Til Man runs on fire! (2092-104)

In opposition to the language and presence of fire, the Virtues repel the onslaught with a volley of red roses.

**PATIENCE.** If thou triest to come aloft,
I shall drive you from this croft
With these roses, sweet and soft,
Painted with Patience! (1987 – 90)

While these can be interpreted as being in accord with romantic iconography of the
pas d’armes, for the purposes of The Castle of Perseverance, the symbol also serves as a
representation of Christ’s passion. By subverting the symbol the church makes the
statement that Christ’s love is more powerful than chivalrous love. Instead of serving as
tokens of romantic affection, the roses represent an eternal love. With the failure of the
first assault, a second wave of challengers engages the defending Virtues. This time it is
Sloth who presents a strategy for victory.

SLOTH. War! War! I dig with a spade!
“Lord Sir Sloth” men call me.
(SLOTH digs at the bank or wall of the Castle moat with his spade.)
Ghostly grace I spill and spread:
The water of grace from this ditch I empty!
(He turns and addresses the other Sins)
You shall come here right soon enough,
By this dry ditch where springs no seed!
(He then addresses BUSYNESS as he continues to dig)
Thirty thousand that I will know,
In my life lovely I lead,
Who had rather sit at the ale,
Three part songs to sing aloud,
 Than toward the church for to crowd.
 Busyness, thou bitch, thou bawd! –
 I brew for thee thy bale! (2170-81)

The action of draining the moat has sparked much debate and speculation. Richard Southern supports a physical ditch, with removed dirt serving as audience seating (Southern 50). The 1979 production of The Castle of Perseverance, by the Poculi Ludique Societas and the University of Toronto chose to represent the moat with sheets of blue fabric that were then pulled from the platea (Miyajima 63). The stage diagram presents the possibility of a barrier or fence, instead of a moat. For the purpose of subverting pas d’armes, all would be acceptable staging techniques. It is the aftermath of removing the first line of defense that raises the most subversive possibilities. Now the opposing forces can engage each other in greater physical proximity as they would in a brawling melee. The allegorical engagements become physical as the Virtues are pressed into the upper level of the castle.

The invocation of fire and the use of restricted siege techniques also exposes the contradictions of allegorical representation. In traditional allegorical representation appearance is more important than action. So in terms of chivalry, a maid who appears virtuous or a knight who appears noble must be so (Mathew 361). The representations of Greed, Gluttony, and Sloth need only appear so in order to function. This has resulted in neo-classical scholars referring to characters in The Castle of Perseverance as “bloodless abstractions” (MacKenzie ix). However, if their methods of engaging in the pas d’armes
violated conventions of safety and decorum, then they would no longer be allegorically negative characters. It would be their actions that determined their true value. Just as in professional wrestling, participants who use inappropriate techniques (entering the ring unannounced, shifting loyalties during a match, or handling a folding chair with ill intent) are identified by the audience as villains. So the vices in battle represent the same knights that, while professing to uphold the ideals of chivalry, also violate decorum by rioting and looting.

In *pas d’armes* it is acceptable for challengers to tempt those in security to willingly surrender themselves. So when all of the unconventional techniques employed during the siege do not result in the gaining of Mankind’s soul, The World dispatches Greediness to persuade Mankind to leave of his own accord.

**GREEDINESS.** Peter! Thou has the more need

To have some goods in thine age –

Marks, pounds, lackeys to lead,

Houses, homes, castle and cage!

Therefore do as I caution:

With Greediness thou should engage.

Come! I’ll now present thy petition

To worthy World who’ll give thee wage,

Not a little, its true.

Come on, old man! It is no disgrace

That Greediness favors your face.
If you die in distress, the Blame is all on you. (2336 – 48)

Greediness convinces Mankind to abandon the Castle of Perseverance. Yet, the conventions of the *pas d’armes* allow the Virtues to lose Mankind’s soul without losing to their corresponding vices. The Seven Deadly Sins did not seize Mankind’s soul by force or defeat the Virtues. Mankind betrays their protection, in favor of Greediness’s promises of worldly comfort. By placing responsibility for the loss of Mankind’s soul to his choices, the church’s hierarchy of non-secular over secular is maintained. The audience is reminded that Mankind possesses the freedom to choose, but witness his choices being manipulated by society. At Mankind’s death, the World reveals that his true object is not Mankind’s soul, but the souls of all mankind.

WORLD. Oh Mankind! Hath Death with thee been? –

Against him there’s no help in rage.

I would thou were under grass so green,

And another had thy heritage.

Our bond of live I soon shall break;

And cold clay shall be thy cage.

Now shall the World on thee vengeance wreak:

For thou hast done so great outrage,

Thy wealth thou shalt forego.

World’s goods thou hast thee forsworn,

And by devils dark thou shalt be torn –

Thus have I left forlorn
Hundred of souls before you! (2713-25)

It is now clear why Greediness is subservient to the World. While the Flesh enjoys an equally large appetite, the World consumes without consideration. The World makes no distinction over defeating Mankind’s soul to the ones who preceded him.

The loss of Mankind’s soul also allows for new dramatic possibilities. Since *The Castle of Perseverance* has been operating as a *pas d’armes*, the audience experiences it as a competitive event, with no predetermined outcome. Even though the Banns over 2,000 lines ago assure Mankind’s salvation, the action and language of the play do not support a predestined conclusion. As the *pas d’armes* requires an arbiter to judge the contests, it is the World who presents himself as the ultimate arbiter in the contest for Mankind’s soul. The World makes an early reference to his role of secular arbiter over a *pas d’armes* during his opening speech.

    WORLD. Now I sit in my splendid sale;
    I twist and tremble in my true throne;
    And a hawk, I hop in my handsome hall;
    King, knight and Kaiser to me make moan;
    Of God nor of good men I give not a damn.
    As a loose-living lord I loll here alone;
    Whoso brags any boast, wherever I am,
    Those rogues shall be terrified and pitifully groan for sure! (300-7)

By having The World reinforce the convention of the physical world as arbiter of Mankind’s fate, *The Castle of Perseverance* can undermine the authority of the state by
revealing a higher authority. Though Mankind’s soul has been taken by the Bad Angel to
the Devil, the Four Daughters of God appear, at Mercy’s prompting, to debate whether
God should intervene. Truth and Righteousness uphold Mankind’s damnation, while
Peace and Mercy argue for forgiveness. Then God, who has silently observed for over
3,400 lines, makes the final judgment.

GOD. King, Kaiser, knight, and champion,
Pope, patriarch, priest and prelate in peace,
Duke doughtiest in deed, by dale and by down,
Humble and might, the more and the less:
All states of this world must serve my throne;
To me shall they give reckoning at my high dais
When Michael blows his horn at my dread doom! (3460-6)

Though by all the rules of the game Mankind has lost the contest, God through his
authority, power and mercy, reverses the ruling. When Mankind begs the World to stop
his death, the World is unable. While the World’s authority is limited to the corporeal,
God’s authority is extended to the everlasting. The end result for faithfully utilizing the
conventions of the *pas d’armes* is a complete subversion of the drama for non-secular use.
The performance form that developed as display of state wealth and power now glorifies
faith and spiritual renewal.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

It is important to remember that the categories of medieval performance were established far removed from their period in history. As a genre, the morality play includes a wide diversity of time, geography, content and performance styles. Such disparities have made it difficult to develop a comprehensive definition, without which comparisons between works cannot be consistent. As scholarship continues to explore these works in context of their performance, it becomes increasingly important to identify which performance styles best inform their production. In examining The Castle of Perseverance within the parameters of pas d’armes, new meanings can be drawn from its text. Instead of simply incorporating the conventions of tournament staging, the play exposes the faults of the secular societies they were intended to promote. Currently it is impossible to determine definitely that The Castle of Perseverance was intended to be a subversion of the pas d’armes. There is no identified author or even record of a single performance in medieval times. Yet the circumstantial evidence within the text supports the theory of subversion. Further research is still needed on the performance of The Castle of Perseverance within the appropriate historical context in order to better understand its place within the larger canon of medieval drama.
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VITA

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