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Playing with Croxton

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Southeastern University

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Molly McCann
April 2016

Abstract

The Croxton Play of the Sacrament is an often overlooked, yet highly important piece for understanding the social climate of England in the fifteenth-century. This time period was riddled with religious and nationalist anxieties ingrained in the text of Croxton. This paper is designed to give an overview of these tensions and explain how our production of this drama sought to navigate and translate these tensions for a modern audience.

Key Words

Theatre, Medieval Drama, Croxton Play of the Sacrament, Lollards, Jews, Conversion, Transubstantiation, Liturgy

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Introduction

The often overlooked *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* is a medieval dramatic text that engages and straddles different genres, religious doctrines, and social anxieties prevalent in the Middle Ages. It follows the story of a Jewish merchant eager to disprove the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of transubstantiation by desecrating the Holy Sacrament. After convincing a Christian merchant to steal the Sacrament for one hundred pounds, the Jew stabs it, and it begins to bleed. After a series of failed attempts to destroy the Host, he throws it into an oven. The wounded image of Christ miraculously appears and admonishes the Jew for putting him through a “newe passyon” (803). A Bishop rebukes, forgives, and christens both the Jew and the Christian. The play concludes with a liturgical procession inviting the audience to share in the character’s reconciliation with God.

Host-miracle stories, such as the one that occurs in *Croxton*, appear throughout Medieval Europe. Unlike most other Host desecration narratives, the Bishop at the end of *Croxton* offers salvation and redemption to the Jews. Typically, in both historical and dramatic accounts, the Jew would be executed and publicly humiliated for his crime against the Sacrament. This unusual salvation scene prompts questions about the motivations for producing such a text in East Anglia in the mid-fifteenth century and reproducing it in a folio almost 60 years later.

The Jewish presence in *Croxton* has fueled a great deal of debate about the role and presence of Jewish people in fifteenth-century East Anglia. Although there were no openly-practicing Jews in England when *Croxton* is said to have been performed, ongoing interactions with foreign merchants, as well as horror stories about violent Jews in England before they were expelled, account for this residual anti-Semitism evidenced in the text. Given

the lack of an openly identifiable Jewish presence in England, many scholars view *Croxton's* Jews as stand-ins for heretics, or more specifically, Lollards. The play's graphic representation and defense of transubstantiation work to support this idea.

To meet the increasing scholarly demands for consolidated information and analysis on this play, this project aims to make the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* more accessible by compiling current scholarship and using it to document and recreate a provoking, relevant performance of the drama. This database of resources and information is designed primarily as an educational tool.

Croxton and the Church

Very little is known about the production history of the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. The theories concerning its performance are based solely off the text itself and what is known about the social and geographic climate of East Anglia in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, there is no extant evidence from the time period to prove any of the theories. Nevertheless, the text leaves some explicit clues to when and where it was produced in the Banns, references to specific locations in East Anglia, and consistent use of East Anglian dialect (Davis lxxvi).

Croxton opens with the Banns, which introduces the performance which is to take place "At Croxton on Monday" (74). Although there were quite a few Croxtons in England at this time, other references to real locations in the text indicate that this was the Croxton in southwestern Norfolk near Bury St. Edmonds (Davis lxxxv). Norman Davis arrives at this location through Colle's reference to "Babwell Myll," which was a landmark in Croxton (621). Using this region as the drama's location, John M. Wasson identified All Saints Church as an

ideal backdrop for the performance (31). Both the staging and doctrines upheld in *Croxton* point to the church playing a significant role in the production of this drama.

The Bishop ends the play by leading the audience to sing *Te Deum*. This likely would have resulted in the audience joining the Bishop in a processional from the embankment into the church (possibly All Saints Church) for a service (Tydeman 58). This processional would not be possible if a church was not reasonably close to the play-space, or if the church did not endorse this production in some way. *Croxton*'s relationship to the church is integral in understanding both the text and the audience's reception of the drama. Definitively determining the role of the church in the production of the drama is currently impossible given the lack of performance records and the complexity of the textual discussion concerning the church's role and authority.

Wasson's staging theory is dependent on the text being permanently situated in Croxton, England, rather than being performed by a traveling troupe. The Banns seems to indicate multiple performances traveling from town to town, hence the need for the advertisement. If it were a traveling troupe using the Church, this would complicate the church's proposed involvement in the production and raise questions concerning an actor's ability and authority to initiate a liturgical procession at the end of the play. Despite the ambiguity concerning who actually performed the play, it seems quite clear that the church had some role to play in its production because of its reliance on Latin, the Holy Week Liturgies, and its overt teaching of Catholic theology. The question thus becomes: to what extent was the Church involved, and in what ways is that authority undermined in the text?

Croxton's use of Latin is both strategic and accurate. The Latin in the play directly references the liturgy and is prefaced with lines in English that expound upon and elucidate those

liturgical phrases. For example, when Jesus first emerges from the oven, he says “O mirabiles Judei, attendite et videte/Si est dolor sicut dolor meus,” which translated says “O wonderful Jews attend and see/If there be any sorrow like my sorrow” (717-8). His next line is almost a direct translation of the first Latin phrase: “Oh ye marveylows Jews” (719). He goes on to catalogue his tortures and sorrows at the hands of the Jews for the next twenty one lines. When each of the Jews respond to Christ, a Latin phrase from the liturgy is included and elaborated on in English. Practically, it would have been very difficult for the laity to meaningfully integrate Latin into the play, as they would not have understood it. Given this lack of cognizance, it would have been even more difficult for the laity to compliment and support these liturgical phrases with English. It would seem, thus, that the playwright comprehended Latin and wanted the audience to understand, and subsequently engage, it more fully. In addition to giving physical presence the liturgy, *Croxton*'s use of Latin also reaffirms the authority of the Church.

Given the exclusive use of Latin in church services, the laity would have relied on visual forms of devotion (stained glass, the ceremony of a church service, or the spectacular nature of religious drama such as *Croxton*) to learn Biblical truths and theology. Jill Stevenson comments on the laity's desire to increase their devotional practice and suggests that one way to do this was through drama. She states that the sensory-engaging aspects of the plays were often of concern to religious authorities, since the senses were viewed as gateways for temptation and sin. Accessing Christ through a largely sensory experience via theater was a dangerous practice. Stevenson believes that the Church, to pacify the laity's desire to use theater as a devotional practice, would open and close productions with sermons. This works to unite the sensual experience of devotion with the cerebral and authoritative. *Croxton*, perhaps more than the York Cycle plays Stevenson

is working with, integrates the sensory and cerebral, dramatic and ritualistic almost seamlessly into one experience. The largely inaccessible Latin language is paired with visceral experience in a way that gives physical presence to the liturgy and prompts the audience to engage more meaningfully with Latin in church services.

Providing the laity with a means of engaging more deeply with the liturgy through *Croxton* is a noble goal with a convenient side effect for the Church: the use of Latin by Christ and the Bishop in the play reaffirm the authority of the language and of those who use it. In “The Voice of God”, Jeanette Dillon discusses how characters endowed with religious authority in medieval drama spoke largely using Latin or Latinate syntax; the vice characters, however, spoke in colloquial, plain English. Both Christ and the Bishop use Latinate English in the text and are thus given moral authority. The clergy, who exclusively use Latin in church, are endowed with that same authority--they speak in the language of Christ (at least the staged Christ).

In a similar sense, the language of the liturgy, particularly pertaining to the transubstantiating of the Host, formed a specific, exclusive religious language, which cultivated a growth in the size and influence of the clergy as well as ignited more political turmoil within the Church. Miri Rubin argues that the momentous claim of transubstantiation required an equally elaborate ritual that reaffirmed the power of the Church: partaking in communion was an essential devotional practice initiated and governed by the clergy.

While seeking to test the Sacrament, Sir Jonathus and his compatriots enact the language and ceremony of the Sacrament almost exactly. This heretical recitation is far from ineffective. Although the Host was already transubstantiated when procured by Aristorious (“Here ys the

Host sacred newe” (379)), the physical presence of the Sacrament (through the miracle of the bleeding Host as well as Christ’s appearance) is enacted through the mockery and torture inflicted by the Jews. In “Ritual, Church and Theater: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body,” Sarah Beckwith argues that the Jew’s ability to produce the miraculous underplays the authority of the church--although the clergy gives presence to the Host, the actions and words of the Jews animate that presence.

Despite this slight against the authority and effectiveness of the clergy, *Croxton* is strongly rooted in traditional Catholic theology. Overall, it works to reaffirm the liturgy, language, and doctrines of the church while engaging the audience in worship and repentance. The humor and spectacle of *Croxton* often led to its dismissal in scholarship. In “Meaning and Art in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*,” Nicholas Maltman advocates for the literary and doctrinal significance of the drama. Maltman believes this grotesque representation of Christ’s crucifixion would be more likely to draw repentance than laughter from the audience. Similarly, in “Empathy, Entertainment, and Devotional Instability,” Stevenson discusses the devotional effects of staging a physical, touchable Christ. She notes that staged “touch-encounters” activate the same regions of the cortex as direct touch encounters (137). *Croxton*’s physical, bodily depiction of Christ would likely have been a moment of sincere devotion for the audience. Since it seems likely the church was heavily involved in the creation of this drama, it affirms the church’s role in creating space for and channeling devotional practice.

***Croxton*’s Jewish Question**

The significance of the Jewish characters in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* is heavily debated. Given the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, it would seem implausible for a

playwright to feel compelled to write a play admonishing a people group that has been largely absent for nearly two centuries. Although some explain this dissonance by interpreting the Jews as stand-ins for Christian heretics, it is important not to dismiss the inherent Jewishness of these characters. Understanding the socio-cultural landscape of Croxton, England, particularly in its tumultuous relationship with Jewish people, contributes to a better understanding of why *Croxton's* Jews are essentially Jewish.

The presence (or absence) of Jews in England is not as simple as it may appear. Although the Jewish people were expelled from Bury St. Edmonds in 1190, one hundred years prior to their final expulsion from all of England, after years of ritualistically being accused of murder, some remained in hiding and continued to pass through as merchants (just like the Jews in *Croxton*). One of the arguments for an anti-Lollard reading of *Croxton* uses this expulsion as evidence for the unimportance and irrelevance of Jews' ethnic affiliations in the text. Scholars such as Lisa Lampert use historical accounts outside of this play to more fully understand ongoing social and political anxieties concerning Jews in England. Lampert specifically recounts the history of Abbot Samson and his challenger, William, to demonstrate some enduring tension about a Jewish presence.

While William was more lenient in his policies about Jews remaining in Bury St. Edmunds, Abbot Samson was very strict. Once he rose to power by popular opinion, he solidified the Jews' expulsion as well as the excommunication of anyone caught harboring a Jew. To support Samson's ascent to power, a small Jewish child, "Little Robert," was murdered, and the Jewish community was blamed. Robert became the martyr necessary to finally expel the Jews. In "Prayer to Saint Robert of Bury" (dating from approximately 1475), John Lydgate

depicts Robert using Christ-like imagery. This young, martyred Christ figure is seen in the staging of Jesus in *Croxton*. According to an account of a very similar French Host-Miracle play, *Mistere de La Sainte Hostie*, the image that emerged from the oven was that of a small, wounded child. According to Lampert, this image clearly harkens to the tale of Little Robert.

Similarly, the account of the Jew of Bourges tells of a Jewish child who takes communion with his friends. When his father finds out, he throws the child into an oven and seals it. This is exactly what the Jews do with the Host in *Croxton*:

I shall with thes pynsonys, without dowl,
 Shake thys cake owt of thys clothe,
 And to the ovyn I shall yt rowte
 And stoppe Hym there, thow He be loth...(701-4).

These stories, clearly emulated in *Croxton*, demonstrate the endurance of social anxieties about Jews as a malevolent force. The conversion and admonishment of the Jews at the end of the text both embodies the residual anti-Semitism in Bury St. Edmonds while also offering hope for reconciliation. Unlike most Host-Miracle stories, redemption and salvation are offered to the Jews at the end of *Croxton*.

In addition to enduring resentment about the former Jewish presence in England, there were still Jews in the area. Although Jews were expelled officially, Jewish merchants frequented England's international ports (the setting of the play). Derrick Higginbotham expounds on the mercantile Jews in England in "Impersonators in the Market: Merchants and the Premodern Nation in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*." According to Higginbotham, foreign merchants were given considerable leeway to travel throughout England despite laws prohibiting their

presence. Foreign merchants were essential to England's growing economy, but the country continued to profess its self-sustainability and independence (economic, geographic, and otherwise). This dissention provoked a great deal of nationalist anxiety. Higginbotham finds this same anxiety in *Croxton* by tracing the self-identification of the two merchants in their introductory speeches. He specifically studies their recognition of country names, religious affiliations, and social classes. He argues that these categories are confused, and the merchants' actions contradict their professed affiliations. This confusion results from international mingling: the Jew takes on the identity of the English Christian, and the Christian takes on that of the Jew. This identity swapping ultimately results in sinful activity, thus further exploring a newfound English nationalist identity. The salvation of the Jews at the end of *Croxton* can thus be viewed as an attempt of absorbing the "other" into the "self." The success of this endeavor to envelop the other into the self would have to involve both a religious and ethnic merging. Although the Jews were accepted into the Church, were they also accepted into England?

David Lawton argues that one of the foremost questions posed by *Croxton* is "Who or what is a Jew?" (284) When this question is paired with an understanding of the growing nationalist anxiety, it helps reexamine the role of Jews in England. Part of the tension concerning the question "Who is a Jew?" comes from the conflation of the ethnic and religious components of Jewish identity (Shapiro 15-6). Traditional indicators of Jewishness, such as their participation in specific ceremonies or adhering to dietary restrictions (the religious components of Jewishness) or visual stereotypes, such as having a hooked nose, are not present in the text of *Croxton*. Thus, on the surface, the question of Jewishness is left open-ended.

Prior to their conversion, the Jews are a corrupting force: they tempt the Christian merchant into a sin he would not have otherwise committed. They, in many different senses, are importers of sinfulness through greed and foreign goods. Even after the conversion of the Jews, however, they do not remain in England. Jonathas is commanded to spread his story around the world and thus transform from an importer of temptation to an exporter of Christianity. The Jew is sentenced to “wandering” despite his integration into the Christian faith—the Jew can become Christian, but he cannot become English.

The instability of the Jewish identity is further complicated by exploring Jonathas’s invocations of Muhammad: “Now, almyghty Machomet, marke in thi magesté” (149). Michael Mark Chemers uses this conflation of belief systems to explain and defend a complex process of “surrogacy and erasure” in England at this time (25). Chemers cites Roach’s idea of surrogacy which is a technique by which “a community defines its core identity by identifying its borders... [through] collective memory, performance, and substitution” (30). Surrogacy becomes necessary when a culture experiences something traumatic as a whole and seeks catharsis through erasure, a communal cleansing of discrepancies between the ideal narratives and current policies. Chemers argues that theatre can act as a surrogate for the Church, especially in *Croxtton*, where the Eucharist is the central prop.

The nature of the Jews in *Croxtton* is necessarily fluid. Much of the tension with Jewishness in England is derived from a communal misunderstanding and uncertainty about Jewish identity. Conflating the ethnic and religious components of Jewishness is problematic when attempting to identify someone or something as decidedly Jewish. Although *Croxtton* avoids cataloguing the characteristics that make the Jews Jewish, that does not mean that the

ethnic (and religious) affiliations of the Jewish characters are not important. It does indicate, however, that Jewish identity was a matter of concern and contention in medieval England. This question of identity is avoided by other Host-Miracle stories since the Jew is not typically offered redemption. The conversion scene at the end of *Croxton* asks a very important, yet unanswered question: Can a Jew ever become Christian?

Anti-Lollard Propaganda

Given the lack of an open Jewish presence in England in the fifteenth century, many scholars have viewed the Jewish characters as allegorical. Rather than actually representing Jews, the characters become stand-ins for Christian heretics, or more specifically, Lollards. The Lollard movement, inspired and guided by the teachings of John Wycliffe, sought to reform the church, and its followers were thus persecuted as heretics. A document dating from the 1420s indicates a network of about one hundred active Lollards on the Norfolk-Suffolk border in fairly close proximity to *Croxton* (Jurkowski 120). Even though this document appears about forty years prior to the performance of the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, and the final Lollard proceedings ended by 1431, this gap of thirty to forty years is significantly smaller than the nearly two-centuries between *Croxton* and the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290.

One of the hallmarks of the Host-miracle genre is its stereotypical rendering and direct admonishment of Jewish people. Although *Croxton* certainly embodies those characteristics, the Bishop's sermon at the end of the text also criticizes the teachings of the Lollards. This sermon, and other smaller sections of the text, address many of the "Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards." This document succinctly and directly lists the Lollards' grievances against the Catholic Church.

The fourth conclusion, that against the doctrine of transubstantiation, is the most clearly articulated in *Croxton*.

Cecelia Cutts first proposed that *Croxton*'s Jews served as surrogates for Lollards with her article, "The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece." Cutts argues that the doctrines established in *Croxton* deal less with heretical Jewish practices and more so with the Lollards' teachings. The play most strongly defends the doctrine of transubstantiation with its literal treatment of the Host as the body of Christ. One of the founding and most heretical teachings of the Lollards was against this literal understanding of the Sacrament. For Lollards, communion was a commemorative, symbolic act rather than the actual consumption of Christ's body. *Croxton* graphically gives a divine, bodily presence to the Sacrament. This representation of the Host as both "pure symbol" and "pure presence" directly speaks against the teachings of the Lollards and other proto-protestant groups of the time (Strohm 35). The other conclusions of the Lollards, albeit less blatantly, are mentioned in *Croxton*.

The spiritual importance of going on a pilgrimage is questioned in the eighth conclusion of the Lollards. They go so far as to equate traveling long distances to view sacred objects as idolatry. Once the Jews finish confessing to the Bishop, Jonathas feels compelled to go on a such a pilgrimage:

Now wyll we walke by contre and cost,
 Owr wyckyd lyvyng for to restore,
 And trust in God of myghts most,
 Mever to offend as we have don befor.
 Now we take owr leave at lesse and mare;

Forward on owr vyage we wyll us dress.

God send yow all as good welfare

As hart ca tynk or towing expresse! (964-71)

Although this is not a direct commandment of the Bishop, there is something holy implied in this action. Jonathas is compelled to go on the voyage in order to complete his salvation. The Jew's commitment to travel brings joy to both the Bishop and the priest thus affirming its spiritual value.

Earlier in the "Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards," the Lollards address the hierarchy within the Church. The ranking of clergy was rooted in religious and moral authority. The structure of the church was complex and became politically oriented. Those with political power were granted positions in the Church in order to more absolutely solidify that power. The Lollards viewed this complex hierarchy, the merging of secular with religious, and the growing corruption in the clergy as less than scriptural.

Croxton depicts two different figureheads of the Catholic Church: the priest and the Bishop. The Bishop is the unquestioned moral authority in the play. When Christ appears to the Jews, he admonishes them, heals Jonathus's hand, and says, "Ite et ostendite vos sacerdotibus meis" ("go and show yourselves to my priests") (765). This works to assert the power of the Bishop in two ways: Jesus affirms the Bishop's essential role in salvation and also affirms the religious authority of the Latin language, the language of the Church.

Towards the end of the Jews' confession, Jonathas thanks "owr father and byshoppe" for their salvation (960). Similarly, when reflecting on Christ's visitation, Masphat says that Christ "bad take us to a confessore" to fully achieve their conversion (947). The ninth conclusion of the

Lollards rejects this need for confession. Christ instigates the conversion, but the Bishop solidifies it by leading them in confession and christening them into the Church. Confession, in this play and for the Catholic Church, is essential to conversion and is governed by the Bishop.

Unlike the priest, the characters have limited access to the Bishop, and he does not engage in the more common tasks of church management (like locking up the church and regularly participating in evensong (231)). The priest, however, is a local, accessible presence: he seems to view his tasks as more menial than spiritual and personally engages with the members of his parish (namely Aristorius). The priest's "neclygens" in leaving the church unlocked and being "no wyser" about failing his priestly duties indicates both that he finds his tasks to be of minor spiritual importance, and that he does not deserve a higher position in the church (920-3). Although a great deal of power and spiritual authority is wielded by the Bishop, the priest still maintains the authority to transubstantiate the Host. The priest's competence and devotion are questioned and corrected by the Bishop in his ending sermon. The Bishop also warns other lower levels of clergy viewing the play against a similar kind of negligence:

And all you creaturys and curatys that here be,
Of thys dede yow may take example,
How that yor pyxys lockyd ye shuld see,
And be ware of the key of Goddys temple (924-7).

After his sins are absolved, the priest takes his place next to the Bishop and joins him in worshipping God for the conversion of the Jews (980-2).

Thus, *Croxton*, in some sense, agrees with the complaints of the Lollards—the text is aware of the corruption in the lower levels of priesthood and condemns them. The ending of the

text works to atone for such corruption and prevent further issues by directly addressing the clergy in the audience. *Croxton* likewise justifies the need for the Church's hierarchy: the higher levels are established to correct the lower ones. The Bishop, the foremost religious authority in the text, is above reproach. He uses Latin in the same capacity and "register" as Christ, demonstrating his moral authority, and only arrives to rebuke and facilitate conversion for the corrupt characters in the text (McNabb 27).

Both Christ and the Bishop deliver key lines in Latin that derive from the Liturgy. The exclusive use of Latin in the Church made it the language of religious authority. A main teaching of the Lollards, although not directly addressed in the "Twelve Conclusions," denies Latin as a language holier or more authoritative than any other. The creation and distribution of the Wycliffe translation of the Bible into English speaks to this belief. In "Speaking Truth," Dillion discusses the complex relationship between language and politics, class, and education in the Middle Ages. Lollards desired to empower the lower classes by giving them access to scripture in their vernacular. They believed truth was found in the simplicity of laborers and poverty and was thus accessible through English. The clergy, however, emphasized the importance of reverence, sacrament, and absolute faith in the holy language of Latin. In, "Hocus Pocus and the Croxton Play of the Sacrament," Cameron Hunt McNabb refers to the play's use of Latin as a "litmus test for orthodoxy" (25). She traces the use of Latin in the text starting with the Jonathus's mockery. The consequences of the Jews' misuse of Latin demonstrates the power of the language as well as its potential to be corrupted. Post-conversion, the Jews continue to use Latin, but it is spoken using "a more solemn register and evidencing that they now serve Christ in both word and deed" (McNabb 25). The words and registers used by the characters are

essential to determining their moral and religious standing, thus defending the church's exclusive use of Latin as a holy language.

The case for an anti-Lollard reading of Croxton is strong given its direct assertion and defense of Catholic doctrine and the lack of openly practicing Jews in England at this time. The absolute identity of Croxton's Jews as being definitively Jews or Lollards is a "logical error" (Lawton 292). There's no reason why Jonathus and his companions cannot stand for heretics while remaining essentially Jewish.

Our Production—Introduction

The Croxton Play of the Sacrament is seldom studied and staged even less often. In all fairness, a play about a group of Jews stabbing the Sacrament is a difficult sell, and bursting Jesus ovens are difficult to stage. Nevertheless, staging a drama is essential to understanding and fully engaging the piece. Textual analysis alone—particularly when considering the improvisational, playful nature of medieval drama—does not paint a complete picture of what could have happened during its original performance and how the audience would have responded to the action. In "The Medieval Archive and the History of Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Premodern Performance," Carol Symes delineates between three types of texts that comprise a religious drama (the transcript, the script and the scripture) and argues a holistic view of a premodern performance must account for all three. Our production sought to accomplish this by integrating textual analysis of the play with common performance tropes from the middle ages and scholarship on the religious and social atmosphere of the time period ("Appendix A").

In order to maintain the level of engagement the audience would have experienced when viewing this play, the script was modernized and cut significantly (“Appendix B”). For instance, the merchants’ lengthy introductory speeches that catalogue their riches and fame were considerably condensed. We wanted to focus on maintaining the sentiment of the production while also engaging a modern audience in a manner coinciding with what the medieval audience would have experienced. In order to accomplish this goal, the language was updated to modern, conversational English, and the longer monologues and dialogue that detracted from, and perhaps confused, the main action were cut. Some of the scenes were also re-ordered to accommodate some of the cuts as well as make the action easier to follow. The re-ordering also allowed us to more effectively emulate the humor and playfulness of medieval drama and transition more smoothly into the serious religious content.

The humor of medieval religious drama is not always easy to translate to a modern audience. The blasphemous action and the anti-Semitic portrayal of Jews in *Croxton* does not immediately come across as funny. A medieval audience would have been more prepared to engage the humor with confidence that all would be rectified by the end; modern audiences are far less comfortable freely engaging with this kind of humor. In addition to including an introduction encouraging the audience to involve themselves with the humor and action, we included a great number of what Peter Ramey describes as “interpretive games” (5). These “games” are moments of interplay between the actors and the audience in which the audience’s response is integral to further the action of the play. Likewise, Olsen Glending in “Plays as Play: A Medieval Ethical Theory of Performance and the Intellectual Context of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*” discusses the importance of play and entertainment in medieval drama. The actors in

our production were directed to engage the audience playfully to encourage positive reception. For instance, before the play, the two Vexillators directed audience members to seating corresponding to either Sir Jonathus or Sir Aristorius. Once the play began, the audience members on either side were encouraged to cheer for their respective character when he (or “she”) was introduced. We also encouraged live-Tweeting using the hashtag “#jesusoven” and a Twitter poll where votes were cast for one merchant or the other. This was designed as a game to encourage playfulness; it created a positive, light-hearted atmosphere for even the more dicey scenes of the play.

Another way in which we attempted to engage the modern audience was through the use of spectacle. *Croxton* relies heavily on special effects and even gore. In “Special Effects,” Jody Enders describes the vividness of medieval theatrical gore. Violent scenes were designed to engage the sights, sounds, and smells of violence. *Croxton* calls for a number of gory special effects: the bloody Host, the removal of Jonathas’s hand, the oil to blood miracle, and the tortured image of Christ emerging from an oven leaking blood. These scenes were likely to entertain as well as genuinely terrify the audience. Enders, in “Witnesses at the Scene,” argues that the medieval audience would have been more terrified of actual violence occurring on the stage due to common mishaps on stage that resulted in real injury. Since modern audiences tend to be more trusting and assured of the actors’ safety, we sought to intensify their experience of terror through surprise. For instance, the stage directions for the stabbing of the Host indicate a slow (but profuse) leaking of blood from the bread. Our production made the blood effect more abrupt to elicit a brief, but strong sense of terror from the audience.

Our production aimed to entertain as well as engage some of the critical issues raised in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. The subsequent sections will discuss the major ways in which our production sought to engage the current scholarship on the play and respond to some of the more problematic themes in the text.

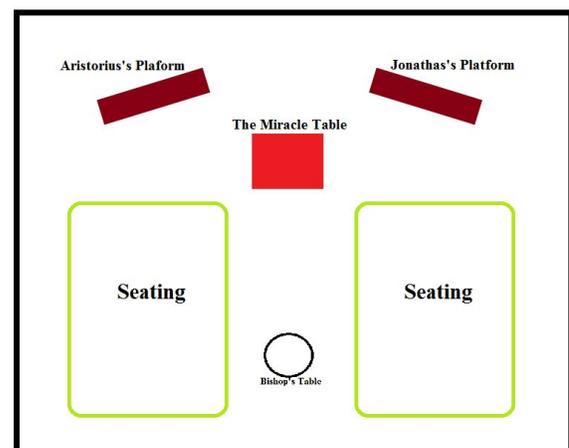
Staging

Using the limited information gleaned from stage directions, common medieval staging tropes, and the landscape of Croxton, England, it is possible to hypothesize about how the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* was staged. The manuscript opens with The Banns, an introduction that advertises a future performance of the play “At Croxton on Monday” (74). Although this is indicative of a traveling performance, others, such as William Tydeman and John M. Wasson, propose a production history and staging of the play that is rooted in the landscape of Croxton. Tydeman suggests that The Banns would have been delivered by “cryers” who traveled to neighboring regions to draw people to the performance in Croxton (58). Both Tydeman and Wasson stage the play using scaffolds positioned around, or in close proximity to, a Church.

Scaffolds were commonly used in Medieval drama to indicate devotional, or holy spaces. Traditionally, the elevated space was viewed as a divine space, the medial space was an Earth or neutral space, and a lower level, usually under the stage, was a Hell or grave space. *Croxton* is proposed to be a place-and-scaffold play. The elevated spaces in this type of staging are used to depict a web of different times, images, and locations within the drama. *Croxton* identifies three distinct spaces: The Jew’s house, Aristorius’s House, and the Church. One option for depicting these three spaces is to have three elevated platforms. Tydeman suggests that the Jew’s house,

since it is the setting for the central action of the Host desecration, would have been the center scaffold (67). Another option for positioning the scaffolds is placing Aristorius's house in the center because it serves as the spiritual medium between the heretical Jews and the Church, according to John T. Sebastian (20). Wasson suggests that, rather than three platforms, there would have only been two because the performance would utilize the actual church (possibly All Saint's Church) for the Church space. Thus, Aristorius would go into the church to steal the Host and re-enter the play-space to deliver it to Jonathus (31). Regardless, when there are three platforms or spaces in line with one another, they are coded, morally and spiritually, in relationship to one another.

Given the corruption of Jonathus and Aristorius, we found it problematic to code one of their homes as closer (both physically and spiritually) to the church than another. Thus our production moved the church space to the back of the center aisle. This left us with two elevated scaffolds (one for Aristorius and another for Jonathus) and an even play-space or *platea*. The merchants' homes flank the stage and the church space centered in the audience. As a result, the traditionally neutral platea takes on a new, divine



coding (at least where the audience is seated), and the elevated space becomes a place of self-elevation rather than being something inherently moral or divine. At the beginning of the show, Aristorius and Jonathus are elevated on their respective scaffolds. From this position, they boast all of their worldly and material accomplishments: “Ful wyde in this worlde spryngyth my

fame” (91). To engage in the process of confession and repentance, both parties must descend from their platforms and come down again on their knees before the Host. Descension rather than ascension becomes something holy.

Although a Hell space was not technically staged, our Jesus character was placed under the center table (“The Miracle Table”) for the duration of the show where he hand-operated the special effects and delivered lines. The space under the table and inside the oven that is placed on top of the table becomes the grave space. Thus, when the Host is thrown into the oven and emerges, it mimics the resurrection. This staging would be problematic had we staged the physical body of Christ emerging from under the oven (which is what the stage directions call for); that would indicate Jesus performed miracles and interacted with people from the staged Hell or grave space. The only embodiment of Christ given in our production is through the Sacrament. The Host ultimately and fully embodies Christ--when the Sacrament leaves the oven (grave space), that is Christ leaving the grave.

There are two tables in the production: “The Miracle Table” and the table signifying the Church space where the Host was taken from. The two tables face each other down the center aisle. The Host is taken from the Holy, church space into the platea. This mimics Jesus’ coming to Earth. The isle, and also the audience, are placed in this transitional space between Earth and Heaven, the human and the divine. At the end of the play, the audience’s role as audience transforms to congregation by the initiation of the hymn (in our production, through the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer) and the processional leading them to the church. Placing the church-space down the center aisle pre-positions the audience to adopt the role of congregation by the end of the play.

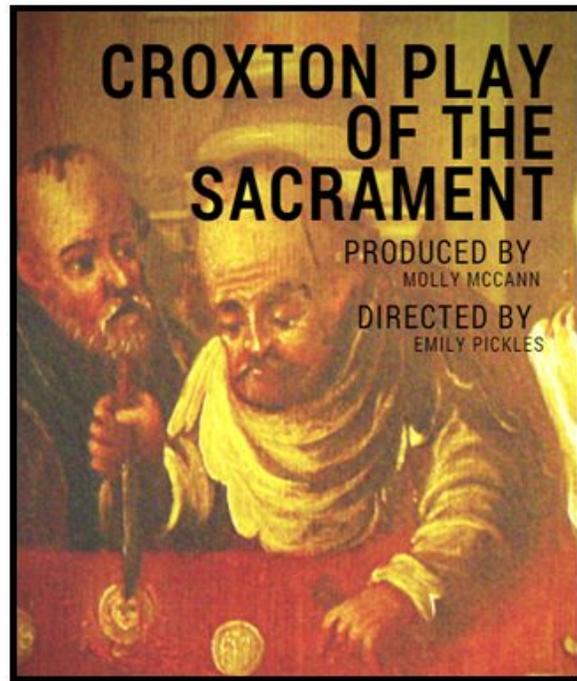
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Appendix A



Cast

Vexillator One/Peter Paul/Physician.....	Pablo Rivera
Vexillator Two/Bishop.....	Jenny Koch
Sir Aristorius.....	Drew Poche
Sir Jonathas.....	Elena Trout
Jason.....	Blake Lawhorn
Malachus.....	Dallas Fitzmartin
Priest.....	Kelly Paluis
Colle.....	Erica Piper
Voice of Jesus.....	Clayton Gilbert

Special thanks to Dr. Cameron Hunt McNabb for supporting and advising us in the making of this project. We would also like to thank Dr. Linda Linzey and the SEU English Department for their support.

The Middle English script was modernized for this production by Molly McCann.

Appendix B

SCENE 1: Introduction The Vexillators

1 Vexillator:

Now the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost
That all this wide world has created
Save all these worthy people, of low and high degree,
and bring you to the bliss that He has redeemed for you.
We fully intend, with heart and with thought
Of our subject to tell the intent
Of the marvels that were wonderfully wrought
By the holy and blessed sacrament.

*V1 and 2 build support for A&J
V2 interacting with audience, late
synchronized sign of the cross*

2 Vexillator:

Soverigns, if it please you to hear the purpose of this play
that is represented now in your sight,
Which in Aragon was done, truth be told,
In the famous city of Heraclea, indeed,
In that city there lived a merchant of great ability—
Sir Aristorius was his name—
Known far and wide by many a person
and his fame was far spread in the world.

A. ascends to platform; cheers

1 Vexillator:

Anon to him there came a Jew, by the name of Sir Jonathas
with great riches indeed,
and dwelled in the city of Syria, this is completely true,
Who had a great plenty of precious stones.

J. ascends to platform

2 Vexillator:

Now minstrel, blow a merry sound!

*Cardboard Instruments; improv bit
J. ducks behind platform
V1 sits in audience, V2 exits behind A's
scaffold*

*Here follows the play of the conversion of Sir Jonathas the Jew by miracles of the Blessed
Sacrament.*

[On the stage the Christian merchant, Aristorius, is attended by his clerk, Peter Paul, and his
chaplain, Sir Isodore]

SCENE 2: Introduction of the Christians

Aristorius:

Now Christ, who is our creator, may he save us from sin
And preserve who move with happiness upon on earth.
Unto his endless joy may He restore us,
All those who in great peace His name do hold
For a merchant most of might, thereof my tale is told;
For of all Aragon I most mighty of silver and of gold—
For if there were a country to buy now, I would not hesitate.

Delivered from stg. Right scaffold

Sir Aristorius is my name,
A merchant mighty, of a royal array.
Full wide in this world springs my fame,
In all manner of lands, without any doubt,
My merchandise travels, truth be told,
In Gene and in Jenyse and in Genewaye,
In Syrian, and in Saba, and in Salerno, I sell

V2/audience cheering

In Antioch and in Germany much is my might,
In Brabant and in Britain I am full bold,
In Calabria—

A. descends; walks around
“without any doubt” - V2 from scaffold
“truth be told” - V2

Priest:

You are worthy and notable in wealth
Among Aragonese merchants you have no peer
And thereof thank God that died on the cross,
Who was your maker and holds you dear.

A. ascends to stg. R scaffold

Priest enters from audience

Begs for money with offering dish

Aristorius :

For all I thank God of his grace, for he it me sent—
And as a lord’s peer thus I live in worthiness
My priest waits upon me to know my intent
And men are at my bidding, and all is lent me
To work my will in this world so wide
They dare not displease me in no way.
And whoever does displease me is not able to remain.

Pauses for P. to lick ring pop

V1 emerges from Scaffold with
pump-action water gun

Priest:

No man shall hinder or trouble you at this time
But every man diligently shall please you;
And I, to the best of my ability, shall guide them
Unto God's pleasing for your edification.

*P. pulls audience member to stage to
beg for money*

Aristorius:

Forsooth, sir priest, your talking is good,
And therefore according to your speech, I will act
To worship my God that died on the cross.
Never, while I live, against that will I speak.
But, Peter Paul, my clerk, I pray thee go fully
Throughout all Heraclea,
And learn if any merchant has come to this realm
From Syria or of Sabe or of Shelysdown.

*P. P. (V1) enters from behind Stg. R
scaffold*

Peter Paul:

At your pleasure I will
Swiftly to go search at the waterside.
If any pleasant bargain be to your profit,
As swiftly as I can, I shall guide him to you.
Now will I walk these wide paths
And search the harbor, both up and down,
To find out if any unknown ships arrive
From Syria or of Sabe or of Shelysdown.

P.P exits down center aisle

Priest:

Sir, by your leave, I may no longer dwell.
It is far past 3 P.M.; it is time to go to church,
There to say my evensong—truly as I tell you—
And afterwards come home again, as I am accustomed to do.

Slowly, rubs stomach

Aristorius:

Sir Priest, I pray you: walk at your will,
For to serve God it is well done.
And come again for supper, and you shall dine to your fill.
And walk then to your chamber, as you are accustomed to do.

A. ducks behind scaffold

P. exits down center aisle

SCENE 3: Introduction of the Jews

Jonathas:

Now all mighty Adonai, distinguished is your majesty,
Whose laws tenderly I have to fulfill,
After my death bring me to your high throne
To save my soul, if it be your will,
For my intent is your commands to fulfill,
And my glorious god, You, to honor.
To do against Your intention, it should grieve me ill,
Or to speak against your law.

J. stands on stg. left scaffold;

Jas and M flank scaffold

For I thank You highly, that has sent me
Gold, silver, and precious stones.

J. clears throat

Jonathas the Jew is my name;
Jason and Malchus they wait on my will.
I tell you all, by dale and by hill
In Heraclea is none so much of might.
Therefore, you ought to heed me carefully,
For I am chief merchant of Jews, I tell you, by right.

*V2 cheers w/ party popper from
audience*

Jas and M bounce water balloons

But Jason, a matter will I discuss.
The belief of these Christian men is false, I suspect,
For they believe on a cake—I think it is unnatural,
And they all say how the priest does make it subject,
And by the might of his word makes it flesh and blood—
And this through trick they would make us blind—
And how that it should be He that died on the cross.

J. descends

Jas and M laughing; pause

Jason:

Yes, yes, master, a straw for such stories!
That may not happen, in my opinion!
But, might we get it once within our palace,
I trust we should soon put it to the test.

I wish I knew how we might get it!

Malachus:

Now by Adonai so mighty, that you do what you do what you've suggested!
Yes, I dare say faithfully that their faith is false:
That was never He that on Calvary was killed!
Or bread to be blood, it is untrue also.
I'm bent on beating that bread.

Jason:

Well, then keep counsel, I command you,
And no word of all this be known.
But let us walk to see Aristorius' hall,
And afterward we'll deliberate.
I am able to buy and sell with him immediately.
To bargain with him I will try:
For gold and silver I am not deterred
But that we hall get that cake to our pleasure.

SCENE 4: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

P.P enters from audience

Jonathas:

A, Peter Paul, good day and well met!
Where is thy master, as I thee pray?

Peter Paul:

I have not been long from him, to tell the truth,
What tiding with you, sir, I pray you,
That after my master do you inquire?
Have you any bargain that would be to his profit?
Let me have some knowledge; I shall know how to speak to him.

Jonathas:

I have bargains royal and rich
To buy and sell with a merchant
In all this land there is none equal
In abundance of Good, as I will tell.

[Here shall the clerk go to sir Aristorius [at his scaffold] saluting him thus:

Peter Paul:

All hail, master, and well may you be!
Now tidings can I you tell:
The greatest merchant in all Surre
Is come to buy and sell with you—
This tale right well he told me.
Sir Jonathas is his name,
A merchant of right great fame;
He would sell you, without blame,
Plenty of cloth of gold.

V2 cheers; party popper in audience

Aristorius:

Peter Paul, I can thank thee!
I pray you, richly array my hall
As beseems a merchant of the bank.
Let no lack be found at all.

Peter Paul:

Surely, master, no more there shall!
Surely I think to stir about,
Hastily to hang your parlor with fine cloth
As is suitable for a lord's peer.

Jas, M, and PP set table

[The clerk sets to work.] Here shall the Jewe merchant and his men come to the Christian merchant].

SCENE 5: The Bargain

Jonathas:

All hail, Sir Aristorius, worthy to see,
The mightiest merchant of Aragon!

Aristorius:

Sir Jonathas, ye be welcome into my hall!
I pray you come and sit by me,
And tell me what goods you have to sell,
And if any bargain may be made.

J and A sit across from one another

Jonathas:

I have cloth of gold, precious stone, and spices plenty.
 With a bargain I would make.
 I would barter with you in privacy,
 For one little thing, that you would steal for me.
 Secretly in this place;
 And I will assure you, by this promise,
 Never to betray you, day or night,
 But be sword to you full right—
 And give you twenty pound.

Dismisses Jas and M

Pulls out chocolate coins

Aristorius:
 Sir Jonathas, say to me for my sake:
 What manner of merchandise do you mean?

Jonathas:
 Your God, that is full of might, in a cake!
 And this good anon shall you see.

Aristorius:
 No, in faith, that shall not be!
 I will not for a hundred pounds,
 To stand in fear of my Lord's anger
 And *for so little a value* stand bound in my conscience.

Jonathas:
 Sir, the intent is, if I might know or understand
 If he were God almighty;
 Of all my misdeeds I would make amends
 And do him worship both day and night.

Aristorius:
 Jonathas, The truth I will tell you:
 I stand in great doubt to do that deed;
 To sell you that dear One,
 I fear me that I should stand in danger!
 If into the church I went,
 And priest and clerk might me see,
 To the bishop they would go tell that deed,
 And accuse me of heresy.

Jonathas:

Sir, as for that, may you find good means,
And for cover walk at night,
When the priest and clerk have gone to rest.
Then you shall be discovered by no person.

Aristorius:

Now tell me, Jonathas, by this oath
What payment would you make for this?

Jonathas:

Forty pounds, and pay for it immediately
Even for that Lord's sake.

Aristorius:

No, no, Jonathas, there again.
I would not for a hundred pounds.

Jonathas:

Here is a hundred pound, neither more nor less,
Of ducats good, I dare well say.
Count it before you leave me.
It seems to me a royal display.
But first, I pray you, tell me this,
When will I have deliverance of this thing?

Aristorius:

Tomorrow early. I shall not miss; (end)
This night therefore I shall make preparations.
Sir Priest he is now at church,
There saying his evensong.
At it is pious to do.
He shall soon come home—he will not be long—
In order to eat his supper.
And when he is gone to his bed
Soon thereafter it will be accomplished.
Don't fail to hold your tongues!

Jonathas:

Sir, almighty Adonai be with you!
And I shall come again right soon!

Aristorius:

Jonathas, ye know what I have said,
and I shall do that which has to be done.

J. exits behind stg. L scaffold

[Here the Jews go away, and the priest comes home [from the church to A's scaffold]]

SCENE 6: Deception

P enters from center aisle

Priest:

Sir, may almighty God be your guide!
And comfort you wherever you rest!

Aristorius:

Sir, you are welcome home this time.
Now, Peter, get us wine of the best.

P sits down at table

PP enters from stg. R scaffold w/ wine

Peter Paul:

Sir, here is a draught of Romney Red—
There is no better in Aragon—
It is wholesome, as says the physician.

[Peter Paul retires]

PP exits behind stg. R scaffold w/ some food from table

Aristorius:

Drink up, Sir Priest, and be of good cheer!
This Romney is good to go with the rest.
There is none more precious, far or near,
For all indigestible foods it will digest.

A. continues to pour more wine/make P drink

[The priest drinks]

Priest:

Sir, this wine is good at a taste,
And thereof I have drunk right well.
I have decided to go to bed

Directly after this merry meal.
Now, sir, I pray to God send you good rest,
For to my chamber now will I go.

A takes P's keys; tosses back to PP

Aristorius:
Sir, God almighty be with you,
And shield you ever from you foes!

P. exits down center aisle with food and wine

[The priest goes off to bed]. Here shall Aristorius call his clerk to his presence]

How Peter! In thee is all my trust,
In special to keep my secret,
For I must walk a little way;
I will not be long. Keep trust as I thee tell.

PP emerges from stg. R scaffold

PP exits from stg. R scaffold

[He crosses the plateau toward the church].

Now privately will I test my step,
To fulfill my bargain this night.
Sir Priest shall not know of this affair,
For he often consecrated the Host, as is reasonable
The church key is at my will;
There is nothing that shall hinder me.

A applies mustache & puts on beanie

A sneaks down center aisle

[Here he shall enter the church and take the host.]

Ah, now I have all my intent.
Unto Jonathas I will go.
To fill my bargain I have intended.
For that money will improve my condition,
It seems to me.

Whispers; takes Host

A walks back up center aisle to J

J enters from stg. L scaffold, walks center

[Exit church to the plateau; Jonathas comes forward.]

Welcome, Jonathas, gentle and true!
For faithfully you kept your appointed time.
Here is the host, sacred new.
Now will I home to house and bower.

A exits behind stg. R. scaffold

Jonathas:

And I shall keep this prized treasure
As I would do my gold and property!
Now in this cloth I shall thee cover,
That no person shall see thee.

J walks stg. L to meet Jas and M

[Here shall Aristory go his way; and Jonathas [returning to his stage] and his servants shall go to the table, thus saying]

SCENE 7: The Bloody Host

Jonathas:

Now, Jason you are a gentle Jew,
Malchus, mighty in mind,
This merchant from the Christian temple
Has brought us bread that deceives us blind.
Now, Jason, into the dining room privately take your step.
Spread a cloth on the table as you shall find there.
And we shall follow after to discuss this situation.

Jas emerges from behind scaffold

M emerges from behind scaffold

[Here the Jews go and lay the host on the table saying:

Sirs, I pray you all, harken to my speech:
These Christian men boast of a marvelous case.
They say that this is Jesus who was condemned in our law,
And that this is He that crucified was.

J places Host on Miracle Table

On these words their law He established.
That He said on Holy Thursday at his supper:
He broke his bread and said “Accipite,”
And gave his disciples to cheer them.
And more he said to them there
While there were all together.
Sitting at the table so clear:
“Comedite corpus meum”

Jason:

Yes, some men recite another tenent in that law:

They say of a maiden he was born.

Malchus:

They say that Jesus be our king.
But I believe he paid for that dearly.
But they make a royal array of his uprising;
And that in every place is preached far and near
How he appeared again to his disciples,
And then ascended to heaven by his own power—
And this, ye know well, is plainly heresy.

Jason:

Yes, and also they say he sent them wit and wisdom
For to understand every language,
When the Holy Ghost came to them—
And then how that he likened himself to a lord of high birth:
On the Father's right hand he set himself.

Malchus:

Yes, yet they speak falsely, I dare lay my wager.
How that the dead will come again to Judgment,
And our dreadful Judge shall be this same bread.

Jas and M laugh

Jonathas:

Now, sirs, you have rehearsed the substance of their law,
But I would have this bread put to the test.

Jason:

If that this be he that on Calvary was made red,
As I recall, I shall make known to you a good trick.
Surely with our daggers we shall pierce this bread.
And so with blows we shall know if he has any blood.

Jas pulls out dagger from pocket

Malchus:

With our blows we will attack him as though he were on the cross,
That he was undone with great shame.

Jason:

Yes, I pray you, smite you in the middle of the cake,

And so shall we smite thereon five wounds!
We will not spare to do it harm
To prove whether in this bread there is any life.

Malchus:

Yes, we go forward, then and take our places,
And make sure our daggers are sharp and keen!

M pulls out dagger from pocket

Jonathas: When you have all smitten, my stroke will be seen:
With this same dagger that is so stiff and strong
in the middle of this cake I think for to stab.

J pulls out dagger from pocket

[Here shall the four Jews prick their daggers in the four quarters, thus saying:

Jason:

Have at it! Have at it, with all my might!
This side I hope for to seize!

Malchus:

And I shall freshly strike the blade so bright on this other side.

Jonathas:

Now am I bold with battle to make him pale,
This middle part for to stab.

*Pause; Bloody hand grabs J's arm
Screaming; M faints; J high pitched*

[He strikes in the middle] Here the host must bleed.

J clears throat

What devil is this?
It bleeds as though it were enraged, truly!

Jason:

A fire, a fire, and that in haste!
Anon, get a cauldron full of oil!

*Jas attempts to wake up M, gathers
Supplies; places culdron center stage
in*

Malchus: And I'll help to see that the host is cast in!
To boil for all the three hours!

front of M. table

[Jason goes for the oil].

Yes...

Jason, where are thou so long?

Jason:

Lo, here is four gallons of oil clear.
Be done quickly! Blow up the fire!
Sir, bring that same cake near,
Manly, with all your might.

Jas comes stg. L scaffold w/oil

Jonathas:

And I shall bring that same cake,
And throw it in, I undertake.

[He seizes the host, which clings to his hand]

Out, out, it does me injury!
I may not remove it from my hand.
I will go drown myself in a lake.
I'm aroused to madness.
I run, I leap over this land!

J does to run towards backstage

Jas and M grab him

[Here he runs crazy, with the host in his hand.]

Jason:

Run, fellows, run, for God is suffering,

Guide J to stg. L scaffold

Hold firmly on this ground.
And fast bind him to a post.

Jas holds J's feet to floor

Malchus:

Here is a hammer and three nails, I say.
Lift up his arms, fellows, on high
While I drive these nails, I pray you,
With strong strokes fast.

M obtains hammer from stg. L scaffold

M nails sacrament to scaffold

[They nail the sacrament to the post].

Jason:

Now set on, fellows, with main and might,
And pluck his arms away in fight!

Jas and M pull J's arm

[They try to pull Jonathas from the host].

He is twitching, fellows, sure enough.
[Here shall they pluck the arm, and the hand shall hang still with the sacrament.

J's hand is removed; screaming

Malchus:

Alas, alas, what the devil is this?
Now he has but one hand.
Forsooth, master, right woe is me
that you have had this misfortune.

Jonathas:

There is no more; I must endure!
Now hastily to our chamber let us go,
'Til I may get me some remedy.

Jews exit behind stg. L scaffold

*Colle, from audience, tries to flag down J ;
drinking from a flask*

SCENE 8: Pharmaceuticals are the Devil

Colle:

Aha, here ys a fayer felawshyppe,
I have a master
He ys a man off all syence
But of thryffte, I may with yow dyspence:
He syttyth with sum woman in the dispensery—
Hys hoode there wyll he sell.

Mayster Brendyche of Braban —
I tell yow he ys that same man —
Called the most famous phesycyan
That ever sawe uryne!

He ys allso a boone-setter,
I knowe no man go the better.
In every taverne he ys detter:
That ys a good tokenyng!

But ever I wonder he ys so long.
I fere ther gooth sum thyng awrong,

He had a lady late in cure,
I wot be this she ys full sure:
There shall never Cristen creature
Here hyr tell no tale!
And I stode here tyll mydnyght,
I cowde not declare aryght
My masteris cunyng insyght
That he hat in good ale.

But what devyll ayleth hym, so long to taré?
A seek man myght soone myscary.
Now all the devyllys of Hell hym wari,
God gunte me my boon!
I trowe best we mak a crye:
Yf any man can hym aspye,
Led hym to the pylleri;
In fayth yt shall be don!

[Here shall he stand up and make proclamation, saying this:

Colle:
Yf ther be eyther man or woman
That sawe Master Brundyche of Braban,
Or owyht of hym tel can,
Shall wele be quit hys med.
He hath a cut berd and a flatte noose,
A therde-bare gowne, and a-rent hoose.
He spekyt never good matere nor purpose.
To the pylléré ye hym led!

*[Enter behind him, and unobserved, Master Brundliche.
putting*

*Phys enters from stg. R scaffold;
on a Lab coat*

Master Brundiche:
You boy, what are you chattering here?

Colle:

A! Master, master, but to your reverence,
I wend never to a seen yowr goodly chere,
Ye tared hens so long!

Master Brundyche:

What have you said in my absence?

Colle:

Nothyng, master, but to yowr reverence
I have told all this audiense.
(And some lyes among!)
But, master, I pray yow: how dothe yowr pacyent
That ye had last under yowr medycament?

Master Brundiche:

I warrant she never feels annoyment.

Colle:

Why, ys she in hyr grave?

Master Brundiche:

I have given her a drink made full well
with oxymell,
lettuce, sage, and pimperlle.

Colle:

Nay, than she ys full save!
Dwellth non so cunnyng, be my fey,
In my judgyment.

Master Brundiche:

Cunning? Yes, yes, and with practice have I saved many a man's life.

Colle:

On wydowes, maydese, and wyfe
Yowr connyng yow have nyh spent!

Master Brundiche:

Phys checks C's breath

Where is my bag with profitable drink?

Here is a great congregation,
And not all are healthy, undoubtedly.
I would have certification:
Stand up and make a proclamation.
Do it fast, and make no pause,
To all people that would have help.

To audience member, flirty

[Here for a time he will make proclamation.]

Colle:
All manar of men that have any syknes,
To Master Brentberecly loke that yow redresse.
What dysease or syknesse that ever ye have,
He wyll never leve yow tyll ye be in yowr grave!
Who hat the canker, the collyke, or the laxe,
The tercyan, the quartan, or the brynnyng axs,
For wormys, for gnawyng,—

Phys stands on stg. R scaffold

Master Brundyche:
Now if there be either man or woman
That needs a physician's help—

*Jas and M try to flag down phys from
scaffold*

Colle:
Here is a Jew, named Jonathas,
Who has lost his right hand.

Phys & Colle walk stg. L

Master Brundyche:
Fast to him I will inquire.

Jonathas:
What are you doing here fellow?
What would you have?

Master Brundyche:
Sir, if you need any surgeon or physician
Of your disease I can well help you,
Whatever hurts or harms soever they be.

Jonathas:

Sir, though art not well bred to come in so abruptly,
Or to appear in my presence so impudently.
Withdraw from my sight immediately
For you are mis-advised!

Colle:

Syr, the hurt of yowr hand ys knowen full ryfe,
And my master have savyd many a manes lyfe.

Jonathas:

Away, fellows, I love not your babble.
[To his servants] Brush them both hence, and quickly.
Give them their reward so they are gone.

*Jas and M pay Phys&Colle
Phys&Colle exit center aisle*

SCENE 9: #jesusoven

Jonathas:

Now have done, fellows and that anon.
For doubt of dread what after befall.
I am nearly dazed—my wit is gone.
Therefore, of help I pray you all.

J walks to front of scaffold

And take you pincers that are so sure,
And pluck out the nails, one by one,
Also in a cloth conceal it
And throw it in a cauldron quickly.

[Here shall Jason pluck out the nails and shake the hand into the cauldron.]

Jason:

And I shall hasten at once
To pluck out the nails that stand so fast.
And bear this bread and also this bone,
And into the cauldron I will it cast.
And stir the cloth round about

That nothing thereof shall be raw.

[Here the cauldron shall boil, appearing to be as blood.

Red ribbons rolled out from table

Malchus:

Out and harrow, what devil is here?
All this oil is becoming red as blood,
And out of the cauldron it begins to run!
I am so afraid I am near mad.

M faints

[Here shall Jason and his company go to sir Jonathaas, saying:

Jason:

Ah master, master, how are you?
I cannot see our work will do any good.
I beseech you, come forward
Somewhat with you counsel!

Jonathas:

The best counsel that I now know,
That I can concive, far and ear,
Is to an oven as red hot
As ever can be made with fire,
And when you see it appear so hot,
then throw it in the oven fast.
Soon shall he staunch the appearance of bleeding.
When you have done, stop it, be not frightened.

Jasdon:

By my faith, it shall be done in great haste.
Come on Malchas, and bring on fire,
For that shall heat it well, I believe.

*Retrieves toaster oven from stg. L
scaffold and places it on the table*

Malchas:

Ah, how this fire begins to burn clear!
I think to make this oven right hot!
Now, Jason, go to the cauldron,
And quickly fetch that cake hither.

[Here shall Jason go to the cauldron and take out the host with his pincers and cast it into the oven.

Jason:

I shall with these pincers, without doubt,
Shake this cake out of this clothe,
And to the oven I shall it throw,
And to shut him up there, though He be unwilling—
The cake I caught here, in truth,
The hand is boiled the flesh from the bone—
Now into the oven I will therewith.

Pulls out Host w/ skeleton attached

Malchas:

I plug this oven, without doubt.

Plugs in electrical plug

Jesus:

O ye wonderful Jews, behold and see
if there is any sorrow comparable to my sorrow.
Oh ye marvelous Jews,
Why are you so cruel to your King,
When I so redeemed you with bitter pain?
Why do you behave so foully to your friend?
Why do you cause me pain and narrowly confine me,
When I bought your love so dearly?
I show you the seriousness of my grievance,
And move you all to my mercy.

Jews scream and fall to knees

Jonathas:

You are the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?
O thou Lord, who is my defender,
For fear of You I tremble and quake!
Of Your great mercy let us receive the shower;
And meekly I ask mercy, amends to make.

Jason:

Ah, Lord, with sorrow and care and great weeping.
All we fellows, let us say thus
With contrite heart and great sorrow:
With our tears may we baptize our conscience.

Malchus:

Lord, I have offended thee in many a sundry vice.
That strikes my heart as hard as hard as a core.
Lord, by the water of contrition let me arise:
With lamentable heart: *have mercy on me God.*

Jesus:

All you that desire to be my servants
And to fulfill the precepts of my laws,
Know the intent of my commandment:
Go and present yourselves to my priests.

To all you that desire in any way
To ask mercy, I am ready to grant it.
Remember and let your wits suffice,
And then I will not turn away from you my face.

Sir Jonathas, in your hand you are but lame,
And it is through your own cruelty.
For your hurt you may blame yourself:
You wanted to prove your power to oppress me.
But now I consider your necessity:
You wash your heart with great contrition.
Go to the cauldron—your pain will be less—
And touch your hand to your salvation.

*J walks to cauldron; sticks nub in; pulls
out restored hand*

Jonathas:

Oh you my Lord God and Savior, Hosanna,
You king of Jews of and Jerusalem!
Oh you mighty, strong, glorious and gracious stream of oil,
You mighty conqueror of infernal suffering,
I am rid of much trouble through thy mediation,
For which ever blessed you may be!

Jonathas:

Hail, father of grace! I kneel upon my knee,
Heartily beseeching you entirely,
A sorrowful sight for all to see

J goes back on knees; holds up Host

In my house appearing:
The holy sacrament, to which we have done torture—
And there we have put him to a new Passion—
A sorrowful sight it is to look upon!

*Jews slowly walk down center aisle and
kneel before the Bishop*

SCENE 10: The Conversion

Priest:
Sir Aristorius, I pray you, what does all this mean?
Some miracle, I hope, is wrought by God's might.
To church in haste I will run full right.
The sacrament so seemly is borne in sight.

P pulls A from behind scaffold

Aristorius:
To tell you the truth I will not refrain—
Alas that ever this deed was done!
As sinful bargain I began to strike
I sold these same Jews our Lord full right
For covetous of wealth, as a cursed man.
Woe the while that I ever made that bargain.
Unless you be my defender in our bishop's sight,
I fear he will take me for a heretic.

Priest:
Forsooth, your wit was not at all well-advised;
But I will labor for your absolution.

Let us got quickly hence,
And beseech him of his benign grace
That he will show us his benevolence
To make amends for your trespass.

*P and A walk down center aisle and
stand behind kneeling Jews*

Bishop:
Oh, Jesus, son of God,
How this painful Passion wrenches my heart!
Lord, we all smart with sorrows,
For this unlawful work we live in misery.

Now will I take this holy sacrament

With humble heart and great devotion,

Look you be not slow or negligent
To arm yourself in the seven virtues.
For that serpent, the devil, is full strong
Marvelous mischief he intends for man,
Except that the Passion of Christ is meant for us,
And that is in spite of the devil's injury.
Beseech our Lord and Savior so great
To put down that serpent, ensnarer of men.

P and A kneel

Priest:
My father under God, I kneel unto your knee,
We submit ourselves to your gentle authority
If it please you to hear our distress.
We have offended sorrowfully in a mortal sin,
Wherefore we fear that our Lord will take vengeance
For our sins, both great and small.

Bishop:
And in the fatherhood, that belongs to my rank,
I will accept your sorrow.
Say what you will, in the name of the trinity,
Against God if you have done any offense.

Aristorius:
Holy father, I kneel under your blessing!
I have offended in the sin of covetousness:
I sold our Lord's body for greed of money
And delivered to the wicked with cursed advice.
I am worthy to be put in burning fire.

Bishop:
Chastize your body as I instruct you
With fasting and praying and other good works,
To withstand the temptation of the fiends of hell;
And never be reluctant to call to God for grace.

Also, you priest, for your negligence,

That you were no wise in your offense,
You are worthy of imprisonment for your offense.
But beware ever hereafter, and be more wise.

And all you preachers that are here,
Take example of this deed, so that your hearts be locked,
And be wary of the key of God's temple.

Jonathas:

[Here the Jews may all kneel down.]

We kneel all upon our knees—
For we have grieved our Lord on earth
And put him to a new painful Passion,

Malchus:

In His law make us steadfast.
He cast our hearts into contrition

Jason:

And therefore we all with one consent
Kneel unto your high sovereignty'
For our intent is to be baptized.

[Here shall the bishop christen the Jews with great solemnity.]

Bishop:

Now may the Holy Ghost bless you at this time
As you all kneel now in his name!
Now in order to make the devil's power lame
In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost,
I christen you all, both least and most.

B walks to the stage and faces audience

Look to serve God omnipotent evermore
With devotion and prayer, while you can.
For there is pain and sorrow cruel on Earth,
And in heaven there is both joy and bliss
more than any tongue can tell;
There angels sing with great sweetness.

To such bliss he brings us
He whose name is Jesus,
And in worship of this glorious name
To pray to His honor: We praise you, God!
Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

B leads audience in Lord's prayer

Jews, A, P, B exit

procession-like out of the room

End.