

TWO SAINTS' PLAYS/CONVERSION PLAYS
FROM BODLEIAN MS DIGBY 133

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ABSTRACT

Though *The conversion of St. Paul* and *Mary Magdalene* belong to the same genre and are in the same manuscript they illustrate the use of different dramaturgical devices. The former play is a processional drama being, sometimes, closely linked with religious ritual and then the audience is treated as congregation. The Poeta who begins and ends each part of the play called "station", directly addresses the audience inviting them to take part in the procession to reach the next place where the performance will continue. Thus he breaks the dramatic illusion and simultaneously links the life of the audience/congregation with the theatrical reality. The action of the play dealing mainly with one theme is simple. *Mary Magdalene*, on the other hand, was worked out on quite different principles, except for the use of comic effects. There is much less communication with the audience and the structure of the play is complex as there are subplots, various actions, journeys to and from distant places. Moreover, the playwright employs memory instead of enactment in an original way. It is when the crucifixion of Christ is only remembered and when it is recorded in a letter to the Roman emperor. Finally, more than one character in this play experience intense inner states, not rarely expressing their feelings by means of impressive imagery. Thus *Mary Magdalene* is artistically and technically a more developed play than is *The conversion of St. Paul*.

The conversion of St. Paul and *Mary Magdalen*, appearing in the same manuscript, differ a great deal from each other. The former, written in the early 16th century (Davidson 1986: 98), is much shorter and simpler concerning the use of dramaturgical and theatrical devices, while the latter demonstrates a surprising development of the given dramatic genre in the late 15th century (Davidson 1986: 74). No wonder then that it has received more critical attention than *The conversion of St. Paul*. David Baker stresses that *Mary Magdalen* is "physically the most elaborate single play in the English religious drama" (1982: xlvi) and J. M. Manly already in 1927 writes about saints' plays in general, finding that they "were more important for the development of the drama in England than the

great Scripture cycles" (Manly 1927: 133-153). The latest scholarly edition of the two plays (edited by Donald C. Baker), published for the *EETS* (1982), contains an excellent commentary on language, sources, and a survey of the critical views concerning textual problems as well as those relating to staging. Clifford Davidson's (ed.) most valuable book on *The saint play in medieval Europe* (1986) endeavours to give an overall view concerning saints' plays in Europe with regard to the links with plastic arts. Moreover, a certain amount of articles on saints' plays have appeared which shows a growing interest in that genre and in *Mary Magdalen* in particular. There are still, however, issues worth analysing. In this short study, I will venture to deal with chosen problems while discussing the two plays separately. Before analysing *The conversion of St. Paul*, however, it will be worth while, I think, by way of introduction, to briefly survey some of the views of scholars on the staging of the play in order to demonstrate how difficult it is to prove how the play was really staged in those times.

F. J. Furnivall stated in his edition of the play for the *EETS* (*The Digby Plays*, 1896) that it was put on in three different places according to the three parts of the play called "stations" (*EMI*: 105), a term used to define the stages of the passion of Christ on his way to Calvary, celebrated during Lent in the Catholic Church. This view was accepted by other scholars until the 70's of our century. In his article on "The staging of saint plays in England" (1972: 99-119) and later in the Introduction to his edition of the play, Glynne Wickham (1976: 105) finds that, as to his knowledge, he is the first to challenge that view. He contends that the play was performed in one "acting area", arguing that Furnivall misinterpreted the word "procession" which was used instead of "process" (argument) for rhyming purposes. Earlier, however, Mary del Villar found that the play was staged on a stationary stage, similar to that on which *The castle of perseverance* was put (*LMRP*: xxvi). But already in 1973, as Baker points out, Raymond Pentzell followed F. J. Furnivall's idea concerning processional staging (*LMRP*: xxviii). Finally, Clifford Davidson (1986: 99) concludes that "the play in fact combines processional movement with playing at stations and mansions or houses, with riding on horse-back..." but according to him to his mind the audience does not move (1986: 99). Although this approach to the problem, not being dissimilar to that of Glynne Wickham's, may seem convincing, I agree with Donald Baker that this must not have been always the case (*LMRP*: xxviii). Depending on the locale and the customs where the play was performed as well as the preferences of the person directing the play or the ones who helped to finance it, the performance could have taken place as Furnivall and, after him, Chambers and others saw it. At least one acting area could have been extended so that the audience would have to move anyway, at least from one mansion or scaffold, following Saul and the knights riding on horses from Jerusalem to the place where the conversion took place (*LMRP*: xxviii). In this way, the term sta-

tion used in the play to divide it into three parts, would be justified in the sense that Paul's activity as a preacher, as Christ's disciple who is in danger of life, would be strongly linked by the audience with Christ's passion celebrated in a processional way at the Stations of the Cross (*LMRP*: xxviii).

1. The critics generally agree and Poeta, standing for the Prologue of each of the three parts of *The conversion of St. Paul*, stresses himself that the play is chiefly indebted to The Acts of the Apostles. Other sources have also been referred to: "the office for the feast of the conversion of St. Paul (25 January) and the feast in commemoration of St. Paul the Apostle (30 June)" as well as "Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*" (*LMRP*: xxii). Although I agree with Baker and Davidson that there is no evidence for the play's indebtedness to the earlier dramatic versions in Latin on the conversion of St. Paul, I have found out that the animal images of the wolf and the lamb describing Saul in the Digby play also appear in the Latin liturgical play from Fleury on the same subject (Fleury play book, 12th or 13th c.). In the Digby play Christ says to Ananias:

Ther shall ye fynd Saule in humble vyse,
As a meke lambe þat a wolf before was namyd. (*LMRP*: ll. 217-218)

while in the play from Fleury, Barnabas who has welcome Paul in Jerusalem, ends the play with the following words addressed to the Apostles:

Qui nunc erat lupus saevissimus,
Nunc est agnus mansuetissimus. (Bevington 1975: ll. 79-80)

In the Latin text, the images have been employed in an intensified way, owing to their metaphoric function, especially when compared with those in the Digby play, and to the use of "most", in the predicate describing the lamb and the wolf. The word "savage" referring to the wolf is also used here. Yet it cannot be denied that the Digby playwright could have found them in another source or used them as common similes.

It will be rewarding, at this point, to show how a much more developed play is *The conversion of St. Paul* in the MS. Digby 133, when compared with the Latin play of the 12th or 13th c. which is very short (ab. 4 pages), while the former one is about five times longer. The following characters and motifs are added or changed: 1. Poeta who begins and ends each of the three sections. 2. Dances which appear at the end of each section. Additionally, one dance is executed at the beginning of the play, after Poeta's introductory speech. 3. There are two priests, Caiphaz and Anna, instead of one. They are the same, however, both in Jerusalem and, as it seems, in Damascus, while in the earlier play they are different. On the other hand, their roles in the Digby play are considerably extended. 4. It is above all, St. Paul, however, whose spiritual experience is treated

with some psychological insight, and his monologues and his sermon are given more space. 5. An angel appears to Saul after he has been detained by the high priests' servant, warning him of their endeavour to have him killed and telling him of God's assistance. There is no angel in the play from Fleury. 6. In his sermon, St. Paul deals with the Seven Deadly Sins. In the play from Fleury, on the other hand, he criticizes the Jews for not believing in the birth of "God and man" by the Virgin Mary (Fleury: ll. 62-68). 7. Two comic scenes have been introduced. 8. The stage-directions are considerably more economically used than those in the Latin play, they are even scarce and, contrary to the play from Fleury, no lengthy introductory stage-direction is given. Poeta at once begins his speech. 9. It is also worth comparing the dénouement of the plays: the Digby play ends with a short speech of St. Paul in which he tells the Angel, how he will be rescued with the help of the disciples, after which Poeta confirms that the Apostle was put into a basket and let down from the wall of the city. He finally apologizes for his lack of literary education and knowledge of rhetoric. The earlier play, however, seems to have a more dramatic, an *à propos* and effective finale. There, Barnabas, never appearing in the Digby play, welcomes St. Paul who has come back from Damascus to Jerusalem. He asks his "brothers" to rejoice on that occasion and he ends the play indicating the conversion of St. Paul by the use of the two metaphoric images of the wolf and the lamb which I have already discussed. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the Digby playwright, who repeatedly refers the audience to the Bible, giving the impression that he is not sure whether the life of St. Paul has been handled correctly by him, seems to have mixed up Damascus with Jerusalem, since though the high priests Caiphas and Anna are in Jerusalem, yet when St. Paul is in Damascus he is led by their servant to them before his escape which would mean that they are also in Damascus. In spite of this, however, *The conversion of St. Paul* in the MS. Digby 133 is, nevertheless, much superior to the liturgical play, especially owing to the treatment of Saul's religious experience and, in general, to the ease the characters communicate, expressing their thoughts and adhering to established patterns of behaviour and interrelations.

2. The play has a simple construction as there is one action only with a miniature subplot concerning the high priests and two low comedy episodic scenes. The comic scene with Saul's servant and the stable-groom as well as that with Belyall, who despairs on learning about Saul's conversion, are in line with the strategies of the medieval playwright who wished to introduce some relief from the lofty, serious style of the religious subject. The earlier scene is rather loosely connected with the main subject, though the motif of the horse, emerging when Saul asks for one to start his journey to Damascus, is somehow linked with it. There the stable-groom is mockingly blustered by Saul's servant. Against such a background, created by everyday life: servants, stable-grooms, an imagined sta-

ble with horses, and travelling, the character of Saul from the Bible became more familiar to the audience. On the other hand, the episodic scene with Belyall, I have mentioned above, is strictly connected with the main subject of the play, as both Saul and the high priests are shown in the play as being allied with the devil on account of their persecution of the Christians. In this context, one may view Saul as a morality (vicious) character who has yielded to pride, hatred and cruelty and is under the influence of the vices/devils. His conversion brings about his change from a vicious to a virtuous character, from a very proud and hateful man to a humble one who is full of love of God and people. His spiritual journey is symbolized by his spatial journey from Jerusalem to Damascus. It is worth remarking that in his play *To Damascus*, August Strindberg (1898) has also employed that kind of symbolism in reference to the protagonist's human interrelations and to himself.

Saul appears on stage just after Poeta's introductory speech. He must have impressed the audience by his rich clothes characterizing an "aunterous knyth". In his self-introduction, again a typical device employed by medieval playwright and continued in Shakespeare's drama, Saul confirms what the audience sees, boasting of his outward appearance, his rich clothes, his fame and the dread he evokes among Christians whom he hates and persecutes. He also claims that his God is Belyall. In this way the playwright asserts that non-Christian religion is allied with the devil.

Although Saul's monologue seems to be a soliloquy, it is evidently addressed to the audience in order to tell them who and what he is. He uses formal, official language presenting himself as a public person. The following words: ground, world, orient or the occident, pepull universal, firmament, create a universal space, against which arises not only a valiant knight but also a powerful ruler. In a later scene, Caiphas and Anna, the high priests of Jerusalem, praise him as the best governour and Anna adds that they

honour hym as champyon on euery stownde.
 Ther ys non such lyuyng upon þe grownde,
 That may be lyke to hym, nor be hys pere,
 Be est nor west, ferre nor nere!

(*The conversion*: ll. 151-154)

Thus he is envisaged as a hero, whom the priests trust, love and honour. It is worth while stressing that he uses the same formal language when approaching the priests about getting permission to persecute the Christians in Damascus. One may also notice that Saul is well acquainted with the formal etiquette how to address the authorities, how to speak in public. But he dispenses altogether with that kind of style when God appears to him. Then he becomes a private person and speaks as a private person, as the one who is shocked, who feels and suffers. According to The Acts of the Apostles and as stated in the stage-direc-

tion, a great wind and tempest throw him off his horse and we learn from what the soldiers say later that "Sertenly thys lyzt was ferefull to see" (*The conversion*: l. 255). Thus intense light (torch light?) is used when he sees "Godhed" in "heuyne" and when, moreover, he hears the voice of God. He then becomes completely confused. God's reproach is also done on a private, even intimate ground, as he expresses his sorrow: "Saule, Saule! Why dost þou me pursue?" (*The conversion*: l. 183) and later he adds: "Offende nott my goodnes; I wyll þe recure!" (*The conversion*: l. 187). Saul is very frightened and he says:

O Lord, I am aferd, I trymble for fere!

What woldyst I ded? Tell me here!

(*The conversion*: ll. 188-189)

Saul takes for granted that it is God who speaks to him. He has no doubts about it and he is ready to do what he is told. In the play from Fleury, it is interesting to note, Christ appears. What is definitely clear to him now is that he has acted against God's will. Accordingly, he changes rapidly from a proud, hateful man to a humble servant of God and this should be enacted on stage in a very impressive way. Moreover, Saul feels entirely lost and desperate as he has lost sight and has become lame. He does not know where to go and he finds that his men have left him:

O mercyfull God, what aylyth me?

I am lame, my leggyes be take me fro!

My sygth lykwyse, I may nott see!

I can nott tell whether to goo!

My men hath forsake me also.

Whether shall I wynde, or whether shall I pas?

(*The conversion*: ll. 197-202)

He ends his monologue by asking God for help. Thus the playwright shows in a very appealing way the spiritual conversion of Saul who has lost his self-assurance and is helpless. From a man who gave commands and ruled he has turned into a cripple who has entirely lost ground and needs assistance. At the same time, however, he has received "light" in the metaphysical sense and now he has the will to obey God. Though the playwright has obviously not invented the whole situation, having used Biblical sources, yet he imbued it with dramatic potential and by using repetition and partly rhetorical questions, as well as the rhyme royal, Saul's experience has been expressed in a very moving and a rather poetic way. The final stage-image is that of Saul as a blind, lame, helpless man being led by his soldiers to an unknown future. It entails universal meaning of man's destiny. But these are not external circumstances, it is not the idea of the Wheel of Fortune, so prevalent in the Middle Ages, but it is expressly God's will that has brought about a thorough change in Saul's internal and external life.

In the next scene, God appears as Christ before Ananias and in a conversation he says that Saul is "as a meke lambe þat a wolf before was namyd" (*The conversion*: l. 218). Later on he prophecies in figurative language what place is ascribed to him in the divine order:

He ys a chosen wessell,

To me assyngned by my Godly eleccyon.

He shall bere my name before the kyngys and chylder of Israell...

(*The conversion*: ll. 234-236)

Finally, he assures Ananias that Saul will be "A very pynacle of þe fayth" (*The conversion*: l. 240). Before Christ departs he says warmly, like a friend, "Farewell, Ananie! Tell Saule what I do say" (*The conversion*: l. 244). In this way, when Saul is given voice again, which takes place after the soldiers' talk about what and whom they saw, and while, owing to simultaneous staging, Ananias is shown walking to Saul, the contemporaneous audience must have perceived him with much fuller understanding and even with admiration. He is contemplating now, having calmed down and having accepted his fate. His conversion is only now fully seen, as he has become a pious man praying to God and asking him for help. He regards himself as God's prisoner having been punished by him. He has imposed additional punishment on himself by not having eaten or drunk for three days. He establishes another relation with God in earthly terms, namely that of master and servant and he promises that it will last his whole life though he knows that he will "suffer dethe" (*The conversion*: l. 268) for that.

The scene in which Ananias restores Saul's sight followed by the latter's great joy forms a second climax. Saul says then: "From sobbyng and wepyng I can not refreyne" (*The conversion*: l. 301). He expresses his deep gratitude to God as well as his awareness of his cruelty and suffering he has inflicted on Christ's disciples, which makes him decide to assist and defend the Christians. A second movement of the action in that scene is the baptism of Saul which like the restoration of sight is enacted ritualistically. In the former, the Holy Spirit appears before Saul taking, according to Glynne Wickham, the form of a dove (*EMI*: 106). Another suggestion is that the actor, standing for the Holy Spirit, spreads his arms over the head of Saul (Davidson 1986: 103).

The second station ends with Saul's full submission to Ananias, God's messenger: "To be gydyd and rulyd as ye wyll haue me" (*The conversion*: l. 341). It is interesting to note that in the play from Fleury, neither the restoration of his sight nor his baptism are enacted.

The third station presents Saul as Christ's disciple who wears simple clothes contrasting with his earlier ones and representing his present status. His sermon on the Seven Deadly Sins forms the integral part of the station. He is especially

concerned with pride and its antithesis: humbleness which are strictly related to Saul as he was and as he is now. The compact unified action, except for the two comic scenes, and above all the religious experience of Saul expressed in an intense, dramatic way by means of a developed language pervaded with figures of speech which he uses in his monologues, must have immensely impressed and moved the contemporaneous audience. It seems that it would also strongly appeal to our audience nowadays, depending, of course on the way it would be directed and acted.

It should be mentioned at least that in the play from Fleury, Saul says altogether four lines while addressing Christ, it is Christ, after he has fallen from the horse:

Quid sic faris? Quis es tu, Domine?
 Cur me meo privasti lumine ?
 Quando tuum affixi populum?
 Quis es, et quod tibi vocabulum? (Fleury: ll. 25-28)

The stress has been put on Saul's ignorance of who has appeared before him. His despair, his helplessness, the shock he has received are not expressed by means of language. Besides, only eight lines are devoted to his sermon, while there are sixty nine lines in the Digby play. This may serve as an example of how drama developed during the three or four centuries. The Digby playwright paid much attention to express man's feelings and use various language registers, especially to distinguish man as a public person from the private one.

3. The author of *Mary Magdalen* (Davidson 1986: 74), drew on the Bible and *The Golden Legend* (LMRP: xl). It contains 2140 lines, hence it is more than three times longer than *The conversion of St. Paul* (662 lines). It differs in many ways from the latter play, especially as it has a multiplot structure, there are many characters and the action takes place in various places reached sometimes by voyageing. Moreover, it is formed by more genres than is the play about St. Paul. Though in both plays one may discern the influence of the morality play, yet in *The conversion* it is of a rather general kind. And, although there is the scene with Bellyal who despairs on account of Saul's conversion, as do the devils in *Mary Magdalen*, the morality machinery is absent here, while it is fully put in action in the latter play to show the temptation on stage. As in *The castle of perseverance*, in *Mary Magdalen* the main evil characters: the World, the Flesh and the Devil, are seated in their scaffolds. The besieging of Mary's castle which allegorically stands for her soul reminds us of the besieging of the soul in *The castle of perseverance* (Davidson 1986a: 76). But the Digby playwright has in his own way worked out the moral allegory as after the besieging of the castle and Mary's yielding to Lechery with whom she goes to Jerusalem, the tempta-

tion takes place in the form of a romance, in a close up it seems, in a realistic setting: the tavern. The meeting of the personification of pride in the person of a young gallant, Curiosity, results in his paying compliments and making love to Mary who becomes attracted to him. Interestingly enough, it is here, as well as in the moralities, that the theme of reality and appearance, which was later developed and perfected by Shakespeare, operates with considerable force. Mary naively takes the evil one for a lover and the temptation for wooing. All the while, the World, Flesh, and Devil play the roles of directors, as it were, pulling the strings and making their servants, the Seven Deadly Sins, act on their commands. The playwright does not, however, develop the theme of Mary's spiritual fall and with great speed moves on the allegorical action so that already in the next scene Mary Magdalen is shown in an arbour, again in realistic scenery, though partly symbolically presented (some pots with flowers, a shrub(s), a bench?), as was earlier the tavern (a table and benches, chairs) and we learn from what she says that she has many lovers, her Valentines, as she calls them. She decides to sleep "Tyll som lovyr wol apere // That me is wont to halse and kysse" (MM: ll. 570-571). She falls asleep (on a bed or bench?) and through the intervention of the Angel who speaks to her in her sleep, she realizes, when she awakes, that she is a sinner and in danger of eternal death. Like Saul, she expresses her great sorrow, even distresses in her soliloquy and decides to find Christ whom she describes by means of a metaphor: "þe welle of perfyth charyte" (MM: l. 610). She also figuratively associates mercy with balm with which Christ will give her new life. Although her language expresses her thoughts and feelings in an impressive way, her conversion lacks the intense, dramatic quality we find in the play about St. Paul. It was the Biblical story, however, which enabled the playwright of the latter play, it seems, to create very high dramatic tension through the experience of directly meeting God (Christ), accompanied by intense light which resulted in Saul's blindness.

After the conversion, the play deals with Magdalen as Christ's disciple, "apostola" and saint who is able to perform miracles.

The play about Mary Magdalen has received much attention from scholars and a great number of issues have already been researched. There are still interesting problems, however, some of which I would like to discuss. They especially refer to the handling of: a) the Crucifixion scene, b) the circumstances of death and resurrection of the queen of Marseille as a possible source/antecedent of that motif appearing in later works, c) the integration of realistically presented space and means of travelling with allegorical matter.

a. Apart from the influence of the morality play, a group of scenes takes up the Biblical theme of Christ, crucial for the mystery plays, namely the scene with Christ visiting Simon, his crucifixion and resurrection, in order to introduce Mary Magdalen when she shows her repentance and later takes part in the es-

sential moments of Christ's life. The crucifixion, however, the apex of the mystery cycles, is not shown on stage here since, after all, the play is about Mary Magdalen. Instead, the playwright approached this theme in two different ways, but in both it is memory that makes the characters remember what has happened, a device not used in *The conversion of St. Paul*. After the scene showing the harrowing of Hell, the three Marys, Mary Magdalen among them, appear at the place where the crucifixion took place and they remember with great sorrow and pain of Christ's suffering:

[Mawdley]. Alas, alas, for þat ryall bem!
 A, þis Percytt my hart worst of all!
 For here he turnyd aʒen to þe woman of Jerusalem,
 And for wherynesse lett þe crosse falle!
 Mary Jacobe. Thys sorrow is beytterare þan ony galle,
 For here þe Jevys spornyd hym to make hym goo,
 And þey dysspytyd þer Kyng ryall.
 That clyvytt myn hart, and makett me woo. (MM: ll. 993-1000)

The women revive the past in a dynamic way, making the place a witness, as it were, of the crucifixion. In Noh drama, Shite also relates the story connected with the place to which Waki has come, remembering what happened there. Thus the scene here may be defined as a miniature memory play, based on a dramatized narration. Another instance of that method is in the following scene in which one of the Angels who have appeared before the Marys, tells them that Christ has risen, linking the past with the present in a similar way, but at the same time enlarging it with the vision of the future, concerning Christ's coming to the Apostles (MM: ll. 1023-1030). Finally, John and Peter also remember the crucifixion of Christ when they meet the three Marys. It is the word "here" used by the Marys and by the Angel, being absent in the mystery plays, that especially makes the event, which is remembered and made so real by pointing at the places where Christ suffered, more acutely present and more painful.

The other method of using memory concerning the crucifixion in *Mary Magdalen* is the letter written by Pilate to the Roman emperor in which he, as he says, has narrated the event. The motif of the letter is missing in the mysteries. Its contents, however, is not known. The audience is supposed to fill in the gap themselves. But it is certainly another way of making them remember what they have experienced.

b. The motif of death and resurrection is not limited to Christ only. It is preceded by Lazarus' death and resurrection. However, still another death and resurrection takes place later on and this time it is Mary Magdalen, as a saint who acts as Christ's follower performing miracles. It refers to the queen of Marseilles, who,

together with her husband, under the influence of the saint, have converted to Christianity, a theme taken from legendary stories. While in *The conversion of St. Paul*, Saul travels to Damascus on horse, here Mary Magdalen, the king and his wife move from one place to another by sea on a ship which is also introduced on the stage. The voyage of the royal couple is dramatized as a terrible storm takes place and the queen falls seriously ill. She suffers great pains and suddenly dies together with the baby she gave birth to. The king is desperate, while the mariners superstitiously think that if they do not throw the corpses into the sea, the ship will sink. It is worth while mentioning that this motif anticipates the storm at sea as well as the fears of the mariners in Caleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*, when the albatross was killed. In a similar way, Shakespeare in his *Pericles* makes the sailors express their fears during the storm and demand to throw the body of the dead queen into the sea (Hoeniger 1990: xc).¹ In *Mary Magdalen*, on the king's request, the queen and child are buried on a rock, while in *Pericles* the child is alive so that only the queen is put into a chest and thrown into the sea. It is on his return from Jerusalem to Marseilles that the king asks the mariners to stop at the place where his wife was buried and to his and others' amazement he finds that, as Mary Magdalen has prophesied, his wife and the child are alive. This motif again paves the way to Shakespeare's *Pericles* in which the father, after years of voyaging, has found his wife and child alive. The voyages, and unusual happenings, including miracles, have enriched the play which allowed the critics, and among them David Bevington, to call it a romance of travel (Bevington 1975: 687) and *Pericles*, as is known, is of the same kind.

c. The playwright considerably developed and dramatized the story, based on various sources, about Mary Magdalen. Certain scenes endow the given place, situation and human relations with a life-like quality. At the same time, they often signal the allegorical theme, like the scene in the tavern or in harbour. Moreover, as Teresa Coletti aptly demonstrates in her study, the motif of banqueting, of food and clothes, delineating life on earth and, at the same time, implying the allegorical meaning, formed a special design of the play (Coletti 1979: 313-333). It should be emphasized, however, that the sea and ship imagery and the repeated coming in, taking and leaving the passengers, also received a notable place in the design of the play, creating a specific aura in the vision of man's life.

¹ Only after having given the paper on the two saints' plays in Poznań, 2002, on which this article is based, did I find out that F. D. Hoeniger in his Introduction to the Arden Edition of *Pericles* had outlined the *Mary Magdalen* play thus showing the links between the two plays.

Sea imagery already appears in Old English poetry (*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*) as is well known. In the Flood scene in the mystery plays, there hovers the idea of the dangerous, menacing sea destroying life and Noah's small ark seems to stress man's powerlessness as opposed to God's infinite power and his will to defend the chosen people against the dangers of life. In the morality, sea and ship imagery was employed in *Hickescorner* in 1513, staged after the performance of *Mary Magdalen*. The allegorical function of the ship in the former play is accompanied by some realistic details. Thus before the Vice Hickescorner, as captain, meets his companions, Free Will and Imagination, we hear his voice giving commands in the sailors' jargon: "A-le the helme! A-le! vere! shot of! vere sayle! Vera!" (*Hickescorner*: l. 302). There are, moreover, references to really existing ships, such as Regent, which was burnt down (*Materialien*: ix). The allegorical struggle is again at work, however, when Hickescorner with derision enumerates the virtues, such as Truth, Patience, Meekness, Humility, who, according to him, were drowned on those ships aiming at reaching Ireland and thus would never return to England. He continues his narration in a disguised- satiric vein when he describes the passengers of the ship Envy. They are all vices or vicious characters:

There was Falshode, Favell and Sotylte,
Ye, theves and hores, with other good company,
Lyers, backbiters, and flatterers the whyle... (*Hickescorner*: ll. 369-71)

Hickescorner keeps a shop of bawdry there (l. 391) and Hatred:

hath made a vowe for-ever to dwell in Englonde. (*Hickescorner*: l. 381)

The allegorical image of the ship at sea with vicious characters/fools on it is obviously indebted to the German work *Das Narrenschiff* by Sebastian Brandt, translated into English in 1509 by Alexander Barclay. In a later morality, *The tyde taryeth no man*, the Vice Courage functions as the captain of the ship of fools (Janicka 1972: 82) and he literally describes the destination of the ship: "... we sayle // To the Diuell of hell" (Wapull 1907: ll. 127-128). *Mary Magdalen*, on the other hand, is not indebted to Brandt's/Barclay's work at all. The ship functions in a realistic way, like a slice of life there, being closely related to the staging of the mystery plays, it seems, where the craftsmen often advertised their handi-craft on stage. Like the mystery playwright, by bringing the audience closer to their own life, the author of the saint play introduced some relief from the sublime, religious subject, some distance from the supernatural reality. At the same time, however, he wished to indicate that our earthly life is to be experienced side by side with the metaphysical reality or even that the two realities are fused with each other. Thus when the ship appears for the first time and then moves out with Mary Magdalen on board the contrast between the audience's

condition, that is their settled life in one place and Mary Magdalen's voyage on sea to an unknown, far off land, where she will perform miracles, distances her from them as well as from her own past and enhances her with an aura of mystery and mystic experience. Simultaneously, however, the scene is realistically enacted: at the beginning, the shipman's commands are heard and a merry song sung by the mariners creates a joyful atmosphere while the ship moves on, being carried by sailors, on their shoulders, (*LMRP*: li) who are inside it – as there is no floor (or, perhaps it was on wheels and pulled by means of ropes or pushed by men?). The sailors' gay disposition, which could be stressed by their facial expressions and manual gestures, is taken over by the captain who joyfully remarks: "I hope a good harbour have xal wee" (*MM*: l. 1398). Moreover, more amusement is introduced later, when a farcical dialogue takes place between the Master (captain) and his boy who is impudent and is beaten on account of it, a motif sometimes employed by the mystery playwright (Janicka 1972: 93-95) and to be found in the Mummings' play (Chambers 1933: 44-45, 170). Later on, the sailors sing again a song while the ship moves out. Interestingly enough, in order to simulate the voyage and give the impression of movement and of the passing of the time, the playwright made the Master enumerate the names of countries they pass until they reach Marseilles where Mary disembarks. It obviously shows that he had no geographical knowledge, since here he also mentions, Turkey (Tork(y)e).

The ship moves in for the second time when, after their conversion by Mary Magdalen, the king of Marseilles and his wife desire to go to the Holy Land. Again a comic episode takes place when, not knowing it is the king, the shipman suspects him of having "stollyn sum mannys wyffe" (*MM*: l. 1734). Then he bluntly states that he must know how much he will be paid for the voyage, otherwise he will not go. On that the king says that he will pay him "ten marke" (*MM*: l. 1739) for the voyage to Holy Land. Thus the playwright has worked out another, to a great extent, realistic scene in which the religious intention of the royal couple is deflated by a trivial approach to them, which indicates that the infidelity of a wife and the importance of money in man's life are a common event. Later, when the king has reached his destination, he is reminded of paying for the fare, which he does, concluding that he will pay one more "marke" to each of them (*MM*: l. 1804).

In the second ship scene, however, when the queen dies having given birth to a child on the ship, the playwright presents life in tragic terms. In this way, the religious plot is integrated with basic situations in life, where financial transactions, voyaging, birth and death take place during a short period of time.

The analysis of only some devices and strategies employed by the playwright of *Mary Magdalen* has shown that he endeavoured to show life, permeated with allegory and metaphysical beings, in all its variety. He employed a technique, based on simultaneous staging, which is also discernible in *The conversion of St. Paul* and the mystery plays. After having dealt with a certain scene, he leaves the characters in that scene for a while, passing to another scene, with other characters, in order to return to the former one, after some time. Owing to that, various scenes apparently discontinued, nevertheless from a unified plot.

The conversion of St. Paul is obviously an antecedent of Elizabethan drama, but it is especially *Mary Magdalen* which paves the way to that drama, owing to its use of a number of subplots, many actions, scenes taken from life, theatrical effects, comic episodes, characters who travel to various places, as in Shakespeare's romances, especially *Pericles*. Kitto defines that kind of drama as "representational drama", which is opposed to the single, compact vision of the "constructive" Greek tragedy (1960: 208, 229). One is tempted to add that, as regards the intensity of experienced and expressed suffering by both protagonists, *The conversion* seems to have also approached the Elizabethan playwrights' working out that theme in a theatrical way.

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