

Parents, Teachers, and Rogue Companions: The Corruption of Youths in Tudor Interludes

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両親、教師、悪友： チューダー・インターラードに見る若者の墮落

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要旨：

『堅忍の城』や『エヴリマン』のような中世末期イングランドの道徳劇において、人間の魂を具現化した主人公は、擬人化された様々の徳や悪徳の影響に曝される。告白、痛悔、そして救済のプロセスを教えるこうしたカトリック演劇は、近代初期の宗教改革と共にその意味を失う。しかし、インターラードとも呼ばれるようになった道徳劇の枠組は、16世紀の社会を反映した様々の問題を取り込んで柔軟に変貌する。そうした社会問題のひとつが、子供や若者の教育である。

カトリック時代の道徳劇は、罪にまみれた生涯を送っている人間の魂を悔悛へと導くことを意図しており、根本においてはすべての人間の本質的な善良さを前提としていると言えるだろう。しかし、これらの新しいインターラードは若さと希望に溢れた世代を扱いながらも、彼らの本性と未来についてかなり悲観的な見方を示し、若者の墮落は社会や家族の倫理的な退廃の当然の帰結であることを暗示するかのようである。中世道徳劇における善悪の寓意的人物は、これらの劇においては教師、両親、悪友、そして賢い召使いなどへと具現化される。これらの劇はしばしば学校や書物に言及し、また、こうした劇の作者達の多くは学校教師や家庭教師であったと考えられる。劇作家達は裕福な家庭の子供達に強い関心を示しており、こうした上流家庭の子供の怠惰や傲慢、放埒に警鐘を鳴らし、非行の責任の多くは親たちにあると断じている。

In the twilight of the Middle Ages when recurring plagues, famines, and continuous wars tormented England, people were wondering how they

should live, or more exactly, how they should die before crossing over to the other world. Men and women listened to mystics, went on pilgrimages, bought pardons, flocked to images of deaths such as the *dance macabre*, and gazed at the scenes of extreme physical pain in the crucifixion and of martyrdom in the visual arts. The quintessential dramatic form of this self-questioning age was the morality play through which a wide-ranging audience, including commoners, was able to easily understand what every man and woman needed to do in order to secure the safe passage to the other world. The exchanges between the protagonist, usually an abstract human soul or a universal figure of Everyman, and allegorical personifications of vices and virtues display visually what should take place in a person's mind when they examine their past life and explore their inner psyche. Because of its simplicity, this morality format offered playwrights a versatile template for developing various agenda in the following years.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, when Renaissance Humanism and Protestantism were replacing the catholic teaching on confession, repentance, and salvation in these didactic plays, now called interludes, one of the new concerns which the playwrights began to take up was the upbringing of children and adolescents. Prior to this, many of the medieval moralities had dealt with approaches to the death; these new interludes dealt with the journey to adulthood. However, whereas the older plays offered a hope of salvation at the end of life, the new ones are often dominated by a pessimistic view of life and human nature. In plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman*, the male protagonist journeys towards salvation however difficult the process may appear; one expects a glimmer of hope even though he becomes desperately tainted with sins in the process. On the contrary, in plays such as *The Interlude of Youth* (hereafter, *Youth*) and *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* (hereafter, *The Longer Thou Livest*),¹ there is not much hope of the protagonists' reaching salvation through their

1 For the editions and abbreviated titles of the plays cited, see the bibliography. The numbers following the references to play texts indicate line numbers unless specified otherwise.

own will or merits; foolish youths, playwrights seem to be saying, deserve to suffer in misery and are unworthy of salvation, which could only be attained through God's grace. R. Mark Benbow, in his introduction to *The Longer Thou Livest*, writes that this is an exploration of "man's pilgrimage to hell-mouth" (xv). In fact, these interludes dealing with the theme of upbringing of children and youths draw very one-sided, pessimistic pictures of the issue; they warn society by giving some examples of very bad possible scenarios. They describe the corruption of youth as a symptom of moral, domestic, or social malady. It is the purpose of my essay to explore the depiction of the corruption of youth in the interludes and to consider how this pessimism reflects English society in transition. In this examination, I shall pay particular attention to the ways the new playwrights exploited the old formula of vices and virtues of the morality tradition.

I

Playwrights could not have avoided being aware of children and youths as there were a vast number of them in England. In early modern England, "perhaps half the population was under twenty" (Brigden, "Youth" 37), and by the mid-sixteenth century when the population had risen very rapidly, "children under the age of ten constituted a quarter of the entire population" (Brigden, *New Worlds* 55). Moreover, with the collapse of feudal tenancy and the rise of the capitalist economy, these youths were gravitating towards the capital; about 1,250 of them a year were arriving in London by the mid-sixteenth century (Brigden, *New Worlds* 76). "Adolescents were the most restless, the most untrammelled of the population, and the most evidently on the move. Young people streamed to the metropolis in search of their fortune, and maybe for freedom from the constraints of their country communities" (Brigden, "Youth" 44). This created visible social problems such as vagrancy, instability, and various crimes committed by youths. Playwrights could not remain unaware of the problems associated with a young population.²

In addition to these wider social problems, the playwrights of the

interludes were particularly concerned with the issues regarding children and youths possibly for more practical reasons. The main venues for performances of the Tudor interludes included schools and universities, and some of the playwrights such as Nicholas Udall were themselves schoolmasters, and the actors of the plays may have been their own choir boys and students; it is no wonder their plays were aimed at the problems of youth. Other prominent venues were the metropolitan and provincial households of wealthy people, who were deeply concerned with the issues related to upbringing of their children. *Youth* is a case in point: it is likely to have been written for a performance at the household of Henry Algernon Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland. He was a patron of drama, sheltered two playwrights, and had a school, children's choir and a full chapel at his court (Lancashire 28). Ian Lancashire writes that Percy, late in his life, "thought his young son ungovernable and might have had the interlude acted for his particular benefit" (Lancashire 29). The earl is known to have "accused the youth of 'prodigality,' of having 'always been a proud, presumptuous, disdainful, and a very unthrift waster,' and of intending his family's destruction" (Lancashire 29).

In addition to the nobility and gentry, the emerging middle class of merchants and craftsmen were becoming an important clientele of drama. The advent of the capitalist economy brought them and their descendants better prospects of accumulating wealth and climbing the social ladder. However, the rapid change in society and the economy also meant that they could easily miss such opportunities and fall into ruin if they were not capable enough. They recognized the value of education in their pursuit of a rise in social standing as Pinchbeck and Hewitt write: "more than in any other walk of life, good education was essential to the merchant's success" (36). The realization that family fortune could be swayed by their descendants' education is likely to have found its expressions in drama.

By modern standards, children were not given special treatments: for

2 Regarding some aspects of social problems of contemporary youths, see Beier 9-10; Brigden, "Youth" 44-51; Thomas 218-19.

instance, usually they were not indulged with toys or storybooks specially designed for them. Childhood was considered to be significant, however, as a preparatory stage for a successful adult life, and importantly, parents thought that, by investing more attention and money in their children, they could ultimately maintain and increase their family fortune in the future (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 8). For the first time in English history, children from a fairly wide spectrum of society were educated separately in schools. In the Middle Ages, many of the children of nobility and the gentry were sent to other households to be educated while those of the middling classes spent their teenage years as apprentices living apart from their parents and with their masters. Now, a large proportion of middle and upper class children were living with their parents and studying at school. Even when their offsprings were at a boarding school, parents kept regular contact with their education by means of holidays and consultation with schools (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 42-43). They felt more responsible for how children were growing up than medieval parents had, and society blamed parents if children turned out badly.

II

As touched on above, the interludes particularly reflect the anxiety felt by upper class parents about the upbringing of their children. The households of the aristocracy and gentry increasingly needed their sons to be highly literate courtiers and bureaucrats in order to maintain their family status. The Tudor government, in order partly to curb the power of aristocracy, took advantage of gentry class educated in the universities and the Inns of Court as elite bureaucrats. Such institutions of higher education were becoming fashionable amongst the upper strata of the society (Grantley 43).

However, some of the upper class youths apparently continued to spend their teenage years in acquiring the traditional skills of handling weapons and indulging themselves in customary pastimes of hunting and playing various games. Educational theorists lament over this as Thomas Starkey, an intellectual associated with Thomas Cromwell, in his *Dialogue between*

Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset (1533) writes:

First and most principal of the ill customs used in our country commonly, after my judgment, is that which toucheth the education of the nobility, whom we see customably brought up in hunting and hawking, dicing and carding, eating and drinking, and, in conclusion, in all vain pleasures, pastime and vanity. And that only is thought to pertain to a gentleman, even as his proper fait, office and duty, as though they were born thereto, and to nothing else in this world of nature brought forth. (123)³

As another example, Roger Ascham records that he heard that some young men of court were ashamed of their learning. Although he recognizes the use of “honest pleasure” and “good pastime” for young gentlemen, Ascham generally decries the fact that learning was not as much appreciated as such a “pastime” (49-52), and admonishes the fathers:

Learning ... ye wise fathers, and good bringing-up, and not blind and dangerous experience, is the next and readiest way that must lead your children, first to wisdom and then to worthiness, if ever ye purpose they shall come there. (52)

In the interludes, the concern with the education of the high status children is conspicuous. The prologue in *The Longer Thou Livest* remarks on the particular social importance attached to the education of the children of the ruling classes:

That rich men's sons be from evil manners refrained
Lest that with profuse fondness we do them nourish...
So that, when authority they have obtained,
They themselves being given to inconvenience

3 On Starkey's educational propositions, see Simon 156-160.

Oppress their subjects under their obedience.
O how noble a thing is good education,
For all estates profitable, but for them chiefly
Which by birth are like to have gubernation
In public weals, that they may rule ever justly ... (9-18)

On the other hand, the interludes often express the problem of many youths who indulge themselves in traditional upper class pastimes at the expense of learning as lamented by Starkey. By the standards of the previous age, these pastimes may have been regarded as a part of the common, and sometimes respectable, culture of gentlemen whereas the educationally-minded playwrights depict them simply as an expression of childish idleness. Moros, the protagonist of *The Longer Thou Livest*, stubbornly reverts to dancing and hunting:

Upon my one foot prettily I can hop
And dance trimly about an egg.
Also when we play and hunt the fox,
I outrun all the boys in the school. (144-47)

Idleness, one of Moros's companions, instructs him on playing cards and dice (859). Moros also enjoys flinging his dagger about:

I must be doing of somewhat alway.
My weapon once again I must handle.
How my dagger will cut now I will assay.
Beware how with me they wandle.
Fend your head. How like you this flourish? (926-30)⁴

In the interludes, sharply contrasted with these idle pastimes is the world

4 Also Wit in *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* very much enjoys his sword fight with Irksomeness (454-60).

of learning. Just as the traditional pastimes are promoted by the figure of Idleness above, learning is considered valuable not only for its practical uses but also for the moral and religious betterment of youths. Severity, the father of Wit, in *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* (hereafter *Wit and Wisdom*), says to his son in his very first speech: “Let all thy whole delight/ Be still in serving God aright and treading virtue’s trace;/ And labour learning for to get whilst thou hast time and space” (20-22). It seems that, in his mind, learning is diametrically opposed to idleness: “Apply your book and still beware of Idleness” (69). Even Tom Tossplot, a rogue in *Like Will to Like*, regrets the lack of virtue and learning in his upbringing which led him to a wretched end:

Oh all ye parents, to you I do say,
Have respect to your children and for their education,
Lest you answer therefore at the latter day,
And your meed shall be eternal damnation.
If my parents had brought me up in virtue and learning
I should not have had this shameful end,
But all licenciously was my upbringing (1010-16)

Tom Tossplot is also sorry that he was brought up “neither in virtue, learning, or yet honest trade” with which to earn his living (1018-19). This comment on learning and honest trade probably reflects more of the middle-class anxiety. Thus, along with the moral dimension of education, we also see some concern with teaching the young some knowledge or skill that would facilitate them earning a living in the future. Danio, the heroine’s father in *Calisto and Melebea*, exhorts parents to “teche them [young people] some art, craft or lernyng, /Whereby to be able to get theyr lyffying” (1051-52). As he sees it, when youths come of age with “no craft nor sciens,” one finds that many of them are compelled to “beg or stele by very necessite” (1056-59).

How do the playwrights go about representing learning in drama? Protagonists of the interludes are occasionally given books to study. In *Wit and Wisdom*, Wit says that he has toiled in his book where Wisdom is much

praised (133; see also a previous quotation from 69). In *The Longer Thou Livest*, Piety gives Moros a book in order to “learn what the will of God is, / To pray upon and to learn [his] Christian beleve / And to amend [his] manners that be amiss” (466-68). But, for those lazy youths of the interludes, books can only be harmful as the son in *The Disobedient Child* says:

No more of the school; no more of the book;
 That woful work is not for my purpose,
 For upon those books I may not look:
 If so I did, my labour I should lose. (pp.47-48)

In *Nice Wanton*, the profligate son and daughter cast away their books in a symbolic gesture of their refusal to be educated (the stage direction following 78).

With books also come teachers and schools. The personified allegory of the morality format is quite amenable to the educational theme as various virtues of the morality tradition now appear either as private tutors or schoolmasters, reflecting contemporary education in domestic or institutional settings. Perhaps for the first time in its history, English literature conspicuously featured teachers and schools, and problems involving them. Just as their counterparts in this century, the children in the interludes seem to spend more of their time with teachers or teacher figures than with their parents. Since many of the interludes with educational concern were addressed to upper class people, the teacher figures in them are often private tutors dealing with intractable and often arrogant youths. In *Youth*, Charity, one of the virtues, is obviously a cleric functioning as Youth’s private tutor. The student, however, is weary of Charity’s sermoning and Latin phrases, and accuses him of being “clerkish” and speaking “gibb’ish” (113-14). Although discipline in the Tudor period was extremely harsh by modern standards, the teachers serving their young, insolent masters could be threatened by them: Youth threatens to kill Charity with his dagger unless the teacher stops preaching (161). Later, upon Youth’s command, his rogue companions actually fetter Charity and leave him alone on stage (536-41). Such classics as Roger Ascham’s *Schoolmaster* and Richard Mulcaster’s

Elementarie testify that the contemporary theorists recognized the importance of teachers and explored the contents and methods of teaching. Ascham (6-7) in his preface to *The Schoolmaster* recalls an episode in which tactless and overly harsh schoolmasters deprived children of love of learning, which was one of the reasons why he was led to write the book. The Prologue of Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest* stresses the importance of teaching by wise schoolmasters:

To help hereto good schoolmasters are necessary—
Sage, sober, expert, learned, gentle and prudent—
Under such masters youth can never miscarry;
For either they refrain evils with good advisement,
Or to occupy the mind good lessons do invent. (36-40)

As in the above example, not only private teaching but also school education is often referred to in the plays. In *The Disobedient Child*, the father has a strong faith in school learning and persistently urges his son to attend school. He tells his son that, in school there is “no misery, /But rather joy, pastime and pleasure/Always with scholars keeping company” (p.48). However, the profligate son seems to have heard frightening rumours about the cruelty of schoolmasters; for him school is a torture chamber or, as he calls it, “the house and prison of a schoolmaster” (p.48). In *Nice Wanton*, the attitudes of the youths towards school simply divide the brothers and sister into good and bad offsprings at the outset of the play. Barnabas is eager to attend school and eventually grows up to be a fine adult whereas Daliah and Ishmael refuse to go there despite Barnabas's repeated protestations. They spend their time in idle pursuits and end up by completely ruining their lives, as does the son in *The Disobedient Child*. It is important to recognize that in these interludes teachers, the new names for old morality virtues, are often powerless in their struggle for young souls.

III

While teachers and some parents and family members such as the good brother Barnabas are considered to supercede the virtues of the morality plays, many wicked companions in the interludes take over the roles of the older, abstract vices and have adverse influences on protagonists. Children and youths were generally regarded as very vulnerable to such negative manipulations for two reasons. Firstly, both Catholics and Protestants believed in the notion of original sin, and consequently, in the innate depravity of human existence (Ben-Amos 12; Brigden, *New Worlds* 56). People at that time believed that, if children were left alone to grow up as their nature dictated, they would certainly go astray; they could only become honest members of society if appropriate influences, i.e., guidance of teachers and parents, were exerted on them in order to rectify this inborn problem. Secondly, adolescence, in particular, was considered a very precarious period; according to Ascham and other theorists, adolescence is the most dangerous time of life (Brigden, "Youth" 38). Reading through the interludes, we time and again witness the fact that many of the protagonists are very naïve, crude, and gullible, and therefore, easily exploited by bad companions. Yet, markedly different from the nature of their morality counterparts, this naiveté is not the kind that can be steered in either the right or wrong direction: these silly protagonists are born to resist righteous advice. In *The Longer Thou Livest*, the audience and reader are repeatedly reminded of Moros's incorrigible stupidity, which keeps frustrating the efforts of his virtuous companions to lead him in the right direction. Discipline, one of these companions and a teacher figure, is particularly despairing of his pupil's improvement:

The longer thou livest, the more fool thou art.
 A fool in childhood, a fool in adolency,
 In man's state thou wilt play a fool's part.
 And as a fool die with shame and infamy.
 Beat a fool in a mortar, saith the wise man,

And thou shalt not make him leave his folly.
I have done all that ever I can,
And I see it profiteth not, truly. (946-53)

Also in this play, Exerciacion expresses the notion that children can be reformed only in tender age, and therefore that it is too late to fundamentally reform one's character in adolescence:

While a plant of a tree is young and tender,
You may cause it to grow crooked or right;
So a child, while knowledge is but slender,
You may instruct whereto you will by might.
But after the plant is grown to a tree,
To any bowing it will not give place (438-43)

A similar negative naiveté can be witnessed in many of our young protagonists. In *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (hereafter called *Mary Magdalene*), the heroine is pitifully gullible and is soon surrounded by evil companions taking advantage of her inexperience before forcefully being reclaimed by Jesus and virtues. *Youth* contains an interesting and visual variation of this motif: the author seems to convey the unrestrained nature of the hero's adolescence through his *greenness*: Youth describes himself by means of images of rampantly growing plants:

I flourish as the vine tree.
Who may be likened unto me
In my youth and jollity?
My hair is royal and bushed thick,
My body pliant as a hazel stick. (45-49)⁵

5 It seems reasonable to me that "Who" in l. 46 should be taken as a relative pronoun, not an interrogative one as Ian Lancashire considers it to be.

The erstwhile vice figures, now gradually becoming less abstract and more individual, are particularly interesting as regards what kinds of people and temptations the playwright thought were corrupting their youths. If we reflect on our anxieties about adolescents in the twentieth century, our idea of bad companions tends to be of delinquent peers in school or in the neighbourhood. Yet, in the Tudor interludes, true to the morality tradition, the bad companions are not exactly friends but are more likely to appear in the shapes of advisors who pretend to please the protagonist and help him or her, often against austere and sermonizing virtues. Thus most of them seem older and more experienced or street-wise than the protagonist. This is in part because, as we have seen, many of these interludes address the problems of upper class youths. The vice figures, or bad companions, tend to approach these apparently wealthy youths with the intention of benefiting from their money or high status. Ascham, concerned with young gentlemen in court, writes: "they be to keep company with the worst, and what force ill company hath to corrupt good wits the wisest men know best" (41). The youth on their part are depicted as alluring flowers for such noxious vermin. In *The Disobedient Child*, the nameless hero is literally called "The Rich Man's Son" in the list of players (p.44). At the beginning of *Youth*, the rich and spoiled protagonist declares loudly that he is "the heir of all [his] father's land" and does not care about anything other than the inheritance (57-59). He later flaunts his gold coins to his companions (441). In *Mary Magdalene*, the heroine is a "gentlewoman" (168), and innocently tells Infidelitie, a wicked companion, that she already has a large amount of wealth at her disposal (256-59).

As we have seen, the young protagonists appear to be innately depraved, which makes them avoid diligent learning and leads them into a profligate lifestyle. This natural proclivity was compounded by the traditional gentry pastimes of hunting and playing various gambling games, which the capitalist economy was further escalating. Rogue companions are quick to seize upon the weakness of the heroes and heroines, and, unlike most of the Everyman figures in morality plays, the youths in the interludes rarely put up a strong resistance to the temptations that the rogue companions offer. In

play is not strictly concerned with the matter of upbringing of youths, but, as we have seen in the case of Tom Tossplot (1010-16), there are several speeches indicating the playwright's awareness of the issue. The play has no central protagonist over whom vices and virtues try to exert influences; instead, there are vices with varying degrees of wickedness, some of whom such as Tom Tossplot, Ralfe Roister, Cutbert Cutpurs, and Pierce Pickpurs are less abstract and are turned into common low-life criminals. All four of them at the end of their criminal career utterly regret the mistakes of their youthful years (989-1023 and 1129-55). I believe there was a clear interest on the part of the contemporary audience in watching the crimes of these rogues enacted on stage just as many of us enjoy watching crime drama on TV and films today. However, the playwright also uses these characters and their farcical crimes, in part to show what a disaster a wrong upbringing can lead to.

IV

Now, who do the playwrights regard as responsible for the ruins of these and other characters in the interludes? Cutbert Cutpurs, before being hanged, grieves over his ruined life and says: "you that fathers and mothers be, /Bring not up your children in too much liberty" (1145-46).⁶ As witnessed in this and some other examples I have already cited, these plays are often directly concerned with parents' responsibility for their off-springs. The playwrights in most cases condemn the indulgence and lack of discipline of parents towards their children. Most of the children and youths in the plays which we have been examining have been hopelessly pampered in the past and, at the outset of the play, are just starting to exhibit the adverse signs of their misguided upbringing. This apprehension about parental laxity seems more pronounced in the plays which reflect wealthy upper class families where parents can easily afford to spoil children with material luxury and flattering servants. Mary's deceased parents in *Mary*

6 See also the earlier quotation of Tom Tossplot's speech (ll. 1010-16).

Magdalene were well-intentioned and loving, and they brought her up “in vertuous qualities, and godly literature” (249), yet Mary innocently admits: “But euermore they were vnto me very tender, / They would not suffer the wynde on me to blowe, / My requests they would always to me render” (252-54). The author of *The Longer Thou Livest* is probably most articulate in condemning parents’ indulgence. In the play, both parents of Moros are considered lax, and not only unwise but just as stupid as the son: Moros says to Discipline: “ ‘Be bold,’ quoth my father, ‘and do not fear; / If thy mother anger thee, call her whore’ ” (172-73). As some of the children of our age, Moros claims that his father would not allow him to be disciplined by teachers (327-28).

In *The Longer Thou Livest*, the father seems guiltier than the mother. However, in some other plays, mothers are particularly picked out as being more indulgent, thereby causing more harm to their children. In *Nice Wanton*, the father does not appear in the play, and parental pampering is represented only through the mother, Xantippe.⁷ In *Wit and Wisdom*, Severity, Wit’s father, is as strict and righteous as his name, but Good Nature warns, “yet his mother’s pampering will bring his son to thrall” (229). Even the profligate elder son, Esau, in *The History of Iacob and Esau* (hereafter *Iacob and Esau*) thinks that his brother Iacob is pampered by his mother (118-20). These evidences suggest that the indulgent mother may have been a stereotype of the period.

However, as society was rapidly changing and social influences on their children must have often been beyond their control, parents could not be held responsible for every sin and failing of their children. Danio, the disciplined father of Melibea, in the concluding speech of *Calisto and Melibea*, tells parents about the necessity of giving their children a good education.

7 The absence of one of the parents as in this and other cases, or of both parents as in *Mary Magdalene* may reflect the contemporary situation that lives of many men and women were suddenly cut short because of plagues, accidents and other reasons which we do not as often experience as they did. But it is possible that small troupes of travelling players could not afford to stage both parents at the same time and chose to represent their presence only through one of them.

Yet, he goes on to stress the responsibility of the rulers:

But yf there be therfore any remedy,
The hedys and rulers must furst be dylygent
To make good lawes, and execute them straytely,
Uppon such maystres that be neclygent.
Alas, we make no laws but ponyshment
When men have offendyd! But laws evermore
Wold be made to prevent the cause before. (1060-66)

Such a realization of the rulers' responsibility for the right upbringing of their young subjects may be reflected in the fact that Thomas Cromwell drafted the Royal Injunctions of 1536 in which he stresses the needs for educating "children and servants, even from their childhood, either to learning or to some other honest exercise, occupation or husbandry." This, he writes, should be done for "the great commodity and ornament of the commonweal" (quoted in Cressy 17).

Wherever the responsibility may be ascribed to, most of our young heroes and heroines are depicted as if they were essentially the off-springs of Cain: their inborn depravity seems nearly impossible to eradicate. This is particularly true of plays by Protestant authors such as *The Longer Thou Livest*, *Mary Magdalene*, and *Iacob and Esau*. In these plays, although the playwrights are telling the audience to give their children proper discipline and education, at times they give contradictory messages. In Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest*, the prologue says:

Bringing up is a great thing, so is diligence,
But nothing, God except, is so strong as nature;
For neither counsel, learning nor sapience
Can an evil nature to honest manners allure.
Do we not see at these days so many past cure
That nothing can their crookedness rectify
Till they have destroyed them utterly? (43-49)

The author of *Jacob and Esau* expresses this matter of man's predestined nature through a conversation of the neighbours of Jacob and Esau. Even though the brothers' parents are exemplary and brought them up under the same condition, they have grown up to be entirely different. Hanan, one of the neighbours, wonders:

And wherof commeth this, of Education?
Nay it is of his [Esau's] owne yll inclination.
They [the brothers] were brought vp bothe under one tuition,
But they be not bothe of one disposition.
Esau is gyuen to looce and leude liuyng. (181-85)

How the plays deal with this crux of "predestination versus upbringing" is a complex matter which needs a separate study, and I cannot give a facile generalization in a limited space. But, ultimately, the cause which can reform the degenerate man and woman is, not the human deeds prompted by his or her free will as in older moralities, but God's grace. For instance, in *Mary Magdalene*, Jesus Christ himself appears as a character in order to reform Mary (1321ff.).⁸ His command to Mary has the force of absoluteness which even the degenerate heroine cannot resist:

The kyngdom of heauen is at hand, therfore repent,
Amende your lyues, and the Gospell beleue,
The sonne of God into this world is sent,
To haue mercy on men, and theyr synnes to forgeue. (1329-32)

V

In this essay, I have examined the corruption of youths in the Tudor interludes paying particular attention to how the new generation of playwrights exploited the medieval morality format for their illustration of

8 For a detailed analysis of this play, see White, *Theatre* 80-87.

the issues related to upbringing of children and adolescents. Many of the plays are particularly concerned with the issues of educating upper class youths, and the medieval morality figures of virtues and vices are exploited effectively to represent teachers, parents, and rogue companions for these youths. The fundamental difference between the morality plays and these interludes is that the authors of the latter plays stress innate human depravity; they offer the interludes as a warning to parents and youths against all the pitfalls which the youths are naturally susceptible to unless they be given a proper upbringing and education.

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