

Mystery Play

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 Nov 2000

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Jeremy W. Crampton — 06 Nov 2000, 20:51

In an archived message, Gordon Brain wrote:

From: "Gordon Brain" <gobrain at netcomuk.co.uk>
Subject: (urth) Mystery Play?
Date: Tue, 25 Nov 1997 19:51:24

[...]

My first reactions on reading about the play were that it reminded me of a medieval Mystery Play. These were performed out of doors, with scenes mounted on a wagon-stage. Their subjects were usually biblical, including The Creation, The Fall & Redemption Of Man, The Last Judgement and so on. God, archangels, devils were portrayed, usually by males but with the occasional nude female as Eve or Bathsheba. They were in the vernacular with no attempts at historical realism and were apparently often witty and satirical. In other words popular entertainment of their time. I think that this is the kind of effect that Wolfe has recreated here, but with ideas and symbolism relevant to the future age.

If I can make a slight contribution to this message, if anyone is interested in Mystery Plays they are in fact still occasionally performed around England. I think there are a limited number of places which host them, including Chester, my hometown, and Wakefield. It was in the latter that I myself appeared in the late 1970s (Devil No. 4, iirc).

I also have here an entire script for the Chester Mystery Plays, which appears to have been published in the late 1950s. This is a series of three plays "In the Beginning," "The Nativity," and "The Passion". The dramatis personae are given below:

First Play (entire cast)

A Citizen of Chester (ie Narrator, gives framing tales and connects them) Deus Lucifer Adam Cain Abel Noah, Noah's Wife Shem, Ham, Japhet, Shem's Wife and Ham's Wife and Japhet's Wife Abraham Isaac Moses Ezekiel Jeremiah David Joel Micah Eve Archangels Cherubim Seraphin Angels The Devil, Formerly Lucifer Crowd A Lion A Lamb

Second Play

Includes Herod, Simeon, Mary, The Archangel Gabriel, 3 kings, citizens, demons etc.

Third Play

Includes Jesus, disciples, Pilate, soldiers, 1st and 2nd thief, Mary, Mary Magdalene, two angels, Jews, and The Devil.

Thanks,

Jeremy