

# Images of the City



# Images of the City

Edited by

Agnieszka Rasmus and Magdalena Cieślak

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Images of the City, Edited by Agnieszka Rasmus and Magdalena Cieślak

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## INTRODUCTION

MAGDALENA CIEŚLAK  
AND AGNIESZKA RASMUS

The present book is a unique collection of essays by representatives from different academic environments, fields of speciality, and scholarly backgrounds. Its authors from the UK, Poland, Romania, Italy, Hungary, and Portugal had an opportunity to meet and discuss their papers at a conference in Łódź—*Images of the City*—organised by the Department of Drama and Pre-1800 Literature of the University of Łódź, in October, 2007. Łódź, situated in the heart of Poland, a former textile centre often referred to as the Polish Manchester, and now in the process of redefining itself as a cultural centre (a candidate for the European City of Culture in 2016), with its confusing post-industrial and post-communist landscape of old factories turned into art galleries, seemed more than a fitting location to ponder the elusive essence of urban existence. The selected essays put together in this volume attest to the quality and diversity of that scholarly debate.

The articles in *Images of the City* apply different theoretical approaches and come from a wide range of disciplines: literary studies, architecture, film studies, theatre studies, media studies, gender studies, and cultural studies, offering a truly interdisciplinary perspective on the issue of understanding, representing, and interpreting the city.

In the papers selected for this collection the city is rendered in a wide range of genres. The literary genres include various forms of drama and performative arts (miracle play, tragedy, problem play, satire, city comedy, masque, comedy of manners, comedy of menace, opera, radio play, allegorical religious drama), poetry, and fiction (short stories, novels and letters). Other media include film (both mainstream and independent) and television (teleplay, documentary, music videos).

Epoch-wise, *Images of the City* spans virtually all crucial literary periods, from Old English, through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Restoration, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Romanticism, Victorian Era, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, till very recent works. Moreover, it provides a wide geographical perspective

discussing writers and artists from the UK, the US, and Eastern and Central Europe, and makes references to world's literary trends and theories, philosophies, and art movements, such as Christian doctrine, Augustinian rhetoric, New Historicism, Foucault's Panopticism, Modernism and Postmodernism, *flaneurism*, psychogeography, German Expressionism, *film noir*, the Orient, and Hollywood.

The discussed material features a number of iconic and canonical writers and artists, such as Shakespeare, Blake, Poe, Beckett, Stoppard, Pinter, Lynch, or Kieślowski, those lesser known, such as Lady Montagu, Williams, or McBride, those only locally known (Warchoń, Golna, or Saint Etienne), and, finally, those who have only recently become widely appreciated (Waters or Taymor).

The book is divided into eight chapters, each comprising a number of essays united under a similar theoretical perspective or overriding theme. Examining abstract concepts of urban locations as well as fictional cities alongside London, Venice, Vienna, New York, Los Angeles, Dublin, Palmanova, Istanbul, Rome, and Łódź, the contributors to this volume discuss the notion of the city in many contexts, providing a variety of methodological tools and theoretical perspectives of looking at urban space. Thus, one can find here analyses of the city on an architectural level, historical perspectives of city development and functioning, social and socio-political views of urban space, philosophical approaches to the idea of the city as a structure or system, religious and didactic understandings of the city and its inhabitants, literary analyses of a variety of aspects of urban milieu (the concept of utopia and dystopia, the problem of identity, city imagery, symbolic and allegorical dimension, and others), and representations of the city in performance and media (city as a spectacle, city as stage, city as film location, city as a movie character).

In the opening chapter, **The City, Community and Public Display**, the city and its inhabitants are presented as a performative construct, representing and corroborating urban values and ideologies. Both papers show the role of performance in establishing harmony, the former in the Middle Ages, the latter in the 17<sup>th</sup> century London. Thus, Dąbrówka's essay, "Staging a Mirror, Establishing Harmony. Theatrical Constitution, Display and Control of Value Systems," describes the role of a city and "theatre" in a public expression and propagation of values. He illustrates that mechanism by an analysis of a late medieval Eucharistic miracle play from the Netherlands and its public performance showing how the citizens' participation becomes a tool for creating and experiencing their creed. Limon's paper, "The Masques of the City: Staging London in Early Stuart Court Spectacles," presents the implications of performing the

masques in the City of London. According to Limon, the city as part of the spectacle was not only a stage sign but became a sign representing the entire community, country and its inhabitants with the monarch at its head. In this light, the masque emerges as a projection of Stuart ideology and the whole spectacle, incorporating the court and the city, may be seen as a magical instrument through which the audience can experience the transformation of chaos into order thanks to the king's superhuman qualities.

Assuming a perspective of medieval didacticism, **Chapter Two, The City of Good and Evil: Morality, Didacticism and Religious Doctrine**, offers a moralistic view of the city and discusses it primarily as a locus of sin versus redemption, seen from perspectives ranging from Old English poetry to 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. In "Slash and Burn? The Rhetoric of the Conquered City in Anglo-Saxon Didactic Verse," Boryslawski takes the image of a deteriorating city in *The Ruin* as a starting point for the analysis of two contrary depictions of a city: *urbis encomium* and *urbis excidio*. Examining selected fragments of Old English didactic and gnomic poems, he proposes to look beyond the treatment of urban space as an instrument of religious and political rhetoric, and to discuss it as a manifestation of the divine schemes to be seen in the world's apparent chaos. Considered from this perspective, the Anglo-Saxon image of a conquered city may actually function as a symbol of hope and a way of confronting the indeterminacy of existence. Ciobanu's paper, "City of God? City Merchants, Bloody Trade and the Eucharist in the Croxton *Play of The Sacrament*," looks at the late medieval concept of the city fluctuating between approval and suspicion/rejection as dramatised in the title miracle play. The protagonists—a Christian and a Jewish merchant—are shown as representatives of the city's practice of combining trade and power. Their exchange, however, goes beyond the mundane and relates the power of buying with the redeeming work of Christ. Thus, paradoxically, the play's city becomes the place of faith and redemption where mediation between heaven and earth is possible. In "The City in Charles Williams's *Judgement at Chelmsford*," Kowalczyk looks at how the motif of the city is explored in the 1939 religious verse play. On the one hand, its universal allegorical dimension is shown, and, on the other, its contemporary socially-involved aspects are highlighted since the modern city is presented as a machinery of destruction. Hence, the play offers a 20<sup>th</sup> century reading of the medieval dichotomy of the City of Man and the City of God. Finally, Wicher's essay, "The Image of Hell as a Hidden City in C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*," is devoted to the discussion of Lewis's allegorical and religious work with focus on the visualisation of

Heaven as an idealised garden and a city as a likely representation of Hell. *The Great Divorce* presents the inhabitants of the “grey city” as hurtful, argumentative and at odds with each other, in what becomes Lewis’s criticism of city life and his rebuke of modern moral relativism associated with urban settings.

Next, **Chapter Three, Shakespeare’s City on Page and Screen**, presents different functions of urban spaces in Shakespeare’s plays as well as readings of real or symbolic city-scapes rendered in recent film adaptations. Gibińska’s essay, “The Street, the Lovers, and the Tragedy. Town as Space in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*,” proposes to look at the tragedy of both pairs of lovers not from a lyrical standpoint, but from a social perspective. Discussing the lovers’ plight in relation to the community and its laws, she argues how the shape of the city affects the development of the plot and how private matters impress society. Grzegorzewska’s “*Ars Moriendi* in the City of Vienna. Discourses about the Fear of Life and Death in William Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*” examines the play not only in terms of the fictional topography of Vienna, but also in terms of the links between the portrayal of the city and the issue of (in)visible or disguised power. In her reading of Vienna, she focuses on two “faces” of death: public, inviting us to the public space of the city, and private, which casts light on the plot from within. The next two papers analyse the function of city-scape in three recent adaptations of Shakespeare’s tragedies. In “Shakespeare’s Camp City,” Cieślak looks at the problem of adapting Shakespeare’s symbolic locations from a specifically aesthetic perspective: camping up Shakespeare’s cities in Baz Luhrmann’s *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet* and Julie Taymor’s *Titus*. She presents the tools of camp, such as mannerism, exaggeration, auto-irony, hyperbolisation, and extravagance, together with their possible implications. According to Cieślak, by toying with the concept of taste and balancing on the verge of kitsch, both directors create urban settings which, while thriving on city icons, themselves become iconic. Another tragedy is the subject of Sosnowska’s paper, “New York City of 2000 as *Pars Pro Toto* in Michael Almereyda’s *Hamlet*.” She investigates the director’s techniques of defragmenting and disconnecting New York City’s structure as a means of commenting on the paradoxes of disjointed postmodern reality which Hamlet, an amateur director, and Ophelia, an amateur photographer, desperately try to piece together.

The corruptive practices of urban life are the focus of **Chapter Four, Big City Corruption**. Here, the authors discuss the corruptive forces of the city in a variety of texts organised in chronological order, from Jacobean period to contemporary British drama. Janicka-Świdorska in

“London and Londoners in *Eastward Ho!* and in Other City Comedies of the Earlier Seventeenth Century” shows how Jonson gives us a very accurate and detailed account of 17<sup>th</sup> century London life and, how due to his critical and satirical edge, the city emerges as a spiritual map for Londoners. The next paper in this section is also concerned with Ben Jonson’s city comedies. In “Corrupted Images of the City or Images of the Corrupted City in Two Screen Versions of Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*,” Fabiszak explores the ways in which the landscape of Venice presented in the play becomes a metaphor of money-scape and stage-scape. He then looks at how Johnson’s depiction of the city finds its visual representation in two film versions of the play: Auburtin’s film and Warchol’s teleplay, both adding to the source text their own French and Polish connotations respectively. Furthermore, Fabiszak explains the different portrayals of the city in terms of media specificity. In the next paper, “Big City Corruption, Small Town Venality: Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) in Ayckbourn’s *A Chorus of Disapproval* (1984),” Barker compares the critiques and tones of these two works from different times. The former was a satire of private morals and political corruption in Walpole’s 18<sup>th</sup> century London. In the latter, small-town corruption set against the background of the 1980s reflects the politics of Thatcher’s government. The last paper in this chapter is also located in Thatcher’s England and is specifically concerned with the problem of non-professional prostitution in Manchester and London. In “Corruption, Illegitimate Practices, Wilderness: The City in Kay Adshead’s *Thatcher’s Women*,” Lorek-Jezińska argues that Adshead’s main theme is the dichotomy of corruption and innocence, an opposition traditionally associated with the city versus nature. In the play, London emerges as a collision of urban concepts vs. practices. Furthermore, the play explores the ambiguity of the mother-virgin-whore triangle in the context of innocence vs. corruption and city vs. wilderness opposition.

**Chapter Five, Images of London**, consists of four papers exclusively devoted to the portrayal of one of the world’s icons of urbanity—London—and in this way continues some of the themes touched upon by the authors in the previous chapter. This time the diversity of media—poetry, prose, drama and film documentary—corresponds to the variety of images of London and of ideologies that are communicated through the city’s imagery. Kocot’s paper, “Wandering through Chartered Streets of William Blake’s Nocturnal London,” examines the changes brought to the nocturnal culture of metropolitan life by modernisation and how they are addressed in Blake’s poem “London,” which becomes a protest against the adverse effects of industrial civilisation on the life of an individual. Next,

in “Dis/locations: Images of London in Sarah Waters’ Fiction,” Więckowska shows how London in Waters’ novels functions as a mirror reflecting events and in spite of its fluidity remains a relatively constant point of reference. She proposes to read the London of Waters’ novels as a theatrical space where identities are performed and recycled as well as a space where a seemingly familiar landscape turns out to be unknown and unknowable. Predominantly, however, London in Waters’ fiction is, as Więckowska argues, a postmodern city, a place of lost identity. In the next paper, “Conjuring up London: Harold Pinter’s Idea of the City,” Mirowska demonstrates that the artist known primarily for his predilection for confined territories and compact social milieus is also the dramatist of the city. In her paper, she looks at Pinter’s London as simultaneously localised and universalised. Furthermore, she argues that the plays’ power derives from the dramatist’s skill in designing a topography that seems to derive as much from attitudes of mind as from factual geographical detail. The last paper in the chapter, Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska’s “*Finisterre*—Archiving the London Nobody Wants to Know,” looks at several documentary films portraying the UK’s capital, in particular a quasi-documentary by Saint Etienne. This trio obsessed with London offer a very emotional and personal journey through its alien-looking urban landscape in *Finisterre*. Their homage is to be read as a medium conveying overpowering nostalgia for intimacy lost in the material world. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska also points at the ever-growing need to translate London into a more heterogeneous visual experience to counterbalance often bland or uninspired tourist-oriented images propagated by mainstream films.

**Chapter Six, An Ideal City? In Pursuit of Utopia**, consists of three papers examining the search—be it in architecture or literature—for an ideal city. The pursuit of utopian ambition is portrayed in planning, constructing, experiencing and interpreting urban spaces, both real and imagined. In “The Ideal City Conceived, Perceived, and Lived,” Munteán offers a comparative analysis of two geographically and architecturally distinct manifestations of ideal cities—Palmanova in Italy and the Newtowne settlement in the Massachusetts Bay Colony—as a planned structure (conceived space), a realised form (perceived space), and a location for social practices (lived space). In the next paper, “Imagining the City of Man in Arnold Wesker’s *Their Very Own and Golden City*,” Kęłowska-Ławniczak discusses Wesker’s play as focusing on urban utopia and non-existing reality. Using theoretical perspectives (mainly the concept of utopia and Howard’s idea of the *Garden City*) as a point of departure, she analyses the role of the architect and social implications of city planning. She also stresses the specificity of the city vision created by

Wesker which seems more fitting for the screen than for the stage. Next, in “Two Tales of a City,” Percec presents a comparative portrayal of Istanbul in two literary works documenting two different moments in the history of the metropolis. In Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s 18<sup>th</sup> century writings, Istanbul is the capital of an empire, exotic, mysterious and sophisticated, while in *City of Man’s Desire. A Novel of Constantinople*, by Greek American writer Cornelia Golna, it is shown at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a decaying world of conflicting traditions. Percec argues that despite belonging to different backgrounds, both female authors experience and depict the contradictory nature of this mystical city with similar sensitivity.

**Chapter Seven, Above and Beyond the City—(Sub)Urban Space Rendered in Sounds**, consists of two papers and offers an alternative approach to the problem of the city in two respects. Firstly, it moves away from the hubbub of the city and looks at it from a distance, be it the top of a bridge or suburbia. Secondly, it uses the very specific medium of a radio play composing an interesting—phonic—picture of (sub)urban space and life. In “The Journey through the Dying World of the Boghill in Samuel Beckett’s Radio Play *All That Fall*,” Ojrzyńska examines loss, deterioration, and the gradual physical and spiritual decay of the characters in Dublin outskirts not only in terms of both Beckett’s recurrent and universal theme, but also as a comment on Ireland and its future. Anna Suwalska-Kolecka’s paper, “‘Dots, Bricks and Beetles’—The City Rendered in Sounds. A Study of Tom Stoppard’s *Albert’s Bridge*,” discusses the opposition between chaos and order as the play’s central thematic interest. In the eyes of its protagonist, the city represents the anxieties of the real world and is shown as an oppressive, soiled and hostile environment, while the bridge, harmonious, self-contained and serene, embodies peace of mind, freedom and beauty.

In the postmodern spirit, **Chapter Eight, The Paradox of City Identity**, looks at the problem of the city’s identity, status, and imaginary. In the articles in this section, London, New York, Vienna, Łódź and Los Angeles appear not so much as locations but as live protagonists, often more quintessential in determining the interpretation of a given work than characters or events. In “The Paradox of Identity in *The Man of The Crowd* and *City of Glass*,” Pascucci analyses Poe’s London and Auster’s New York through the prism of Modernism and Postmodernism and shows the protagonist’s search for the quintessence of the city in which he lives. In both cases, the quest ends in a failure and the characters suffer a loss of identity. Schreiber’s paper, “Death in Vienna / Death of Vienna: Carol Reed’s *The Third Man* and the City Symphony Genre,” finds

affinities between Reed's presentation of post-war Vienna and the progenitors of the city symphony genre, such as *The Man with a Movie Camera*. However, while the genre is associated with the celebration of life, Reed needs to find appropriate visual means to relate to Vienna's post-war identity, by, amongst others, alluding to *film noir* and German Expressionism. Goddard's "Unravelling 'HollyŁódź: The Industrial and Cinematic Imaginary of Łódź'" focuses on the explicitly cinematic imaginary of Łódź from Kieślowski's documentary *From the City of Łódź* and Wajda's *Land of Promise*, culminating in an examination of the presence of Łódź in David Lynch's *Inland Empire*. Goddard argues that while Łódź may not appear to be such an obvious contender for a postmodern city as Warsaw, it nevertheless possesses a strong cinematic identity created with and through both Polish and international cinematic imaginaries. Finally, Rasmus' paper, "Location LA: Reflexivity in Remakes in Jim McBride's *Breathless* and Brian De Palma's *Body Double*" argues that in choosing this particular city, both directors wish to emphasise their film's status as film imaginary, perpetuating the notion of LA as a movie set. Consequently, the paper does not address the issue of Los Angeles as a real socio-geographical location but looks at LA as a hyperreal and simulated space which not only houses the film industry but is also Hollywood's favourite movie character.

Thus, moving from the Middle Ages and the performative function of the city in the opening chapter, we end in contemporary Los Angeles, a city whose context of performance seems to subsume that of the real. As each chapter and individual paper takes the reader on a journey through imagined or real streets of English, American, Turkish, Irish, Dutch, Italian or Polish cities, we see how the plight of an individual, his/her identity, dreams, desires, passions, creed, hopes, and pursuits are intricately linked with and expressed through urban spaces. At times, that individual wishes to endorse and glorify the city, at others, he/she wants to escape from its clutches. Having posed many questions, the articles contained within hopefully manage to offer some answers on the essence of city identity and significance, as well as on urban existence and its constructive/destructive potential.

Finally, thanks to its interdisciplinary approach and multiple theoretical perspectives, *Images of the City* will challenge interests and meet the tastes of a wide array of readers, from specialists in particular scholarly disciplines, to lecturers and school teachers, graduate and postgraduate students as well as mere enthusiasts of the subject. We hope that the book's neat division into thematic sections makes for easy yet

informative and inclusive reading, encouraging cross-referencing and stimulating interest in further research on *images of the city*.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

# **THE CITY, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC DISPLAY**

STAGING A MIRROR,  
ESTABLISHING HARMONY:  
THEATRICAL CONSTITUTION, DISPLAY  
AND CONTROL OF VALUE SYSTEMS

ANDRZEJ DĄBRÓWKA

Then the Prince spread out his coat of patches,  
and the King shouted enraptured:  
O, never, I never saw a town more beautiful!  
—A Flemish fairy tale

Social bodies like the populations of cities must express their values constantly and publicly in order to become and remain aware of them. Only by such public display can values manifest and constitute themselves as belonging to the accepted heritage.

No recurrent behaviour can become accepted as being value-bearing if it does not have many adherents who can fit it within the cultural system. Becoming an adherent happens by individual acceptance and is preceded by two main cognitive procedures: choice, based on understanding, or obedience to an authority. The most common and natural method of conforming to one's milieu can probably be reduced to a mix of the two. All of them may result in defending them until one's death.<sup>1</sup> Without numerous and conscious adherents recurrent behaviour exists only as an uncoordinated, existential event, not as a part of culture (Corti 347-354).

For the creation of patterns and control of behaviour to be effective, coordinating techniques are needed. The best-known method was the clock-tower, which guaranteed the synchronicity of individuals' clocks, and thence of actions within a city.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dionysius the Cartusian's *certitudo adhaesionis* (qtd. in Swiezawski 283).

<sup>2</sup> There is a reduced economic interpretation of the clock-tower's function by LeGoff.

Beyond measuring time, the same method works for other cognitive domains and value systems. They all must communicate their inner states to one another and to their individual human participants in order to establish a functional harmony between and within systems. Under systems I understand firstly general cultural systems such as religion, the arts, politics, science, but they can also be defined on lower levels of the organised activity of societies.

At the level of individuals two problems arise: first, that of one's conformity to each system separately, and second, that of coherence among different systems' demands within one's subjective integral identity. To explain this we can use the analogy of how to guarantee synchronicity of clocks (the three ways of "establishing harmony" as described by Leibniz):

One may think of two clocks which are completely synchronous. This can only happen in three ways: firstly, it may be based on a mutual influence among them; secondly, that continuously somebody takes care; thirdly, on the internal precision of each of them. (qtd. in Leydesdorff)

Without further elaborating on the details of separate solutions as Leibniz identified them,<sup>3</sup> it should be noted that all three ways of coordination seem as applicable to social relations as they were for mechanical clocks.

Let us compare mechanical clocks to *symbolic engines* moving organised social groups. Mutual *influence* then means cooperation between social actors caused by the horizontal exchange of symbols (messages, signals, and meaningful artefacts). Social *occasionalism* would mean the *subordination of groups* to a central (local) power, thus "taking care" of their synchronicity by giving commands vertically from above, in much the same way that a central tower clock gives signals of the time. The third sort of synchronicity, *internal precision*, can be expected when different groups follow the same rules (laws, principles); each time something has to be done without being told to.

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<sup>3</sup> "Leibniz then attributed the first hypothesis to Huygens; the second refers to the noted continuous need for intervention (occasionalism); and he chose the third option himself (*Harmonie préétablie*, 1696). This option enabled Leibniz to integrate into a single encompassing system the metaphysical issues at stake, the mathematical concept of infinite time which he (and Newton) had derived a few decades earlier when developing the calculus, and the mechanistic world picture of Cartesianism" (Leydesdorff).

The first case implies a willingness to establish contacts by equal bodies at the same level within the hierarchy (“mutual influence” based on cooperation). The second case implies obedience to a hegemonic power enforcing the coordination of actions between subordinated entities (“continuous care”). The third method implies the internalisation of norms and value systems, allowing each body to act systematically in a parallel manner, yet independent from each other’s inner state (that need not be communicated to each other).

This is where we start asking questions about *mirrors and harmony*. How do social bodies achieve coordination of their actions (“internal precision”) only by accepting the same rules for their behaviour and without being permanently controlled from the outside? What is the role of the city and the “theatre” in fulfilling the aforementioned tasks (creation, acquisition, negotiation, and propagation of values)?

Symbolic coordination of social actions is successful if the acting bodies have acquired and share sets of rules, values, and principles. Shared belief in the same values allows for formal parallelism or intentional coherence in the interactions of different subjects, who in this way develop interior mechanisms of self-control that give them the ability to act against each other in a manner of predictable subjects.<sup>4</sup> The opposite of predictability is obedience: following the same rules or values by force of coercion executed by a hegemonic instance.

The balance between the principles of predictability and obedience in European societies has changed through the ages in favour of predictability based on self-control. This change has been described by Norbert Elias as the civilisation process for the Middle Ages. His relationist approach presents European civilisation as the growth of social integration, and explains the rise of self-control and moral will through political circumstances (as an unintended consequence of the monopoly of force associated with the centralised state). Many a social institution has been created or additionally devoted to the task of monitoring the status of essential values of the society as they manifested themselves in the moral judgements, attitudes, and behaviour of social partners. The standards of mutual control, observable in different forms of discursive assessment, are called *public opinion*. Stressing and extending the cognitive factor in the theory of Elias we see that apart from the *indirect* way of creating standards of behaviour by reflecting or projecting external conditions onto individual minds a *direct* transfer of standards should be taken into account. This

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<sup>4</sup> This is drawn from Max Weber’s term “predictability of law,” especially of contracts, also called calculability.

includes intentional inculcation, training, learning, and a whole range of conscious acts, recursive activities, and special institutions with specific functions or even tasks in the civilisation process. Different forms of organised behaviour ruled by overwhelming action structures have an important place in this context.

Both city and theatre are extremely efficient in realising the task of instilling norms—a double task to be sure, consisting of building and maintaining symbolic engines. Compared with rural society, the city intensifies both activities. Hyperbolically speaking, the city emerged because it is so effective as a milieu of the cultural construction of communities that are able to survive and flourish. It makes looking in the mirror easy.

Among the institutions that make and stage the mirrors to look into, that is realise the tasks of expressing or bearing what we called *public opinion*, medieval and postmedieval confraternities and theatrical activities (“theatre genres”) play an important though still underrated role.

## Confraternities

The number of rules and the obligatory registration or approval by Church authorities (bishops) relate the confraternities (CF) to a sacramental form of devotion. Sacramental patterns are an obligatory element of the statutes: parochial structure, individual chapel and chaplain, patron saints, individual Masses and other feasts and forms of devotion, the whole sacramental curriculum from baptism through canonical marriages to the care for the deceased, works of mercy, etc. Some CF had a larger area of activity, not just one parish or town; members could not have known each other. This type most closely realises the anonymity of the user-recipient of mass-media.

Any dissemination of ideas (transfer and tradition) involves people who do not participate in this process as persons, but only as members of organisations (agents, figurations). They can express opinions if they have media at their disposal. Media<sup>5</sup> are means of (social) communication that include all conventional forms of behaviour, all material, social, economic, and symbolic *factors* (objects, processes) potentially involved in processes of the *mutual orientation* of organisms within their respective domains of operation (cognitive domains).

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<sup>5</sup> This is a wide definition used and applied by Schmidt and Rusch in their research on modern media (Schmidt 371-395; Rusch 431-469).

## Theatre

In a paper delivered at the SITM 12<sup>th</sup> Congress,<sup>6</sup> Carol Symes said, “the study of theatre in the Middle Ages is tantamount to the study of public life.” Symes gives a new interpretation of sources concerning public life in the city of Arras in the late medieval period. Performance practices used in public life should become the main area of research in medieval theatre. In order to do this we must abandon the classicist concept of drama as a fully structured and regulated literary genre (“theatre play”) and abandon the idea of “theatre” as presenting dramas on a box-stage.

Having done this anti-classicist move<sup>7</sup> we will see that many more written historical sources have been staged, and that their staging was a necessary condition for their communicative intention to be fulfilled. This is how *performance* becomes a category of historical analysis, and how theatricality is being put in the centre of medieval studies.

Taking performance seriously, whether one is a scholar of medieval drama or not, therefore means doing more than strip-mining documents for facts. It means *using performance as a category of analysis*,<sup>8</sup> as a tool for the re-embodiment of texts which are, essentially, the residue of human interaction. Thinking about performance historically thus aids in the recovery of what was said or done by reexamining the making of the historical record on which we rely in order to uncover the strategies, purposes, motives, and claims to authority that are revealed in the employment, layout, and physical appearance of the text, and the modes of reception, immediate or delayed, of the object and/or its contents. Governing this process at every stage is what ancient and medieval rhetoricians called *actio*, the delivery, the activation, the *enactment* of a message, the final and most important phase of communication, the phase involving materialization and physicalization. (Symes)

Although all practices of the rhetorical fifth canon (*pronunciatio*) are activating messages, some types of *actio* are productive in a special way. They include production of special rhetorical figures expressing time and

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<sup>6</sup> Her paper entitled “Toward a New History of Medieval Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Indigenous Performance Practices” was an announcement of her book, *A Common Stage: Theatre and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca and London, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> This is among students of medieval drama not a revolutionary idea, as Alexandra Johnston has put it in the discussion after the paper.

<sup>8</sup> Emphasis mine.

doing so because they accompany or represent behaviour and direct speech. This has been recognised by linguistic pragmatics, established as a discipline introducing performativity first into language semantics, and then into other disciplines, recently even into formal logic (Thalos).<sup>9</sup>

The performative dimension of language communication has always been recognised by rhetoric. The effectiveness of some rhetorical figures is dependent on their performance, and a performative impact on the audience belongs to most expected tasks of rhetoricians. Figures dependent on performance are related to time more closely than other language forms. Here belong different tropes implying or introducing speaking persons or personifications such as *prosopopoeia*, *sermocinatio*, or *chria* (χρεία, Lat. also *usus*). The time-relatedness happens by way of activating the existential context for the apperception of direct speech as compared to reading fixed and thence “timeless” written messages—time being the most important factor for the understanding of behaviour. Oral performance—normal in the Middle Ages—makes the existential impact of such figures only stronger. Works *performed* are to some extent automatically *performative* (the audience is being influenced by performance). That is why we must admit a specific ontological status to those works of art; they have the pragmatic power of *doing things with words* (Austin). And they have this extreme power of being “more than mere words” only when *performed*, i.e. produced in space and time.<sup>10</sup>

The metaphysical consequences of rhetoric, although its devices (*enargeia*, time figures, personification) lack “the doom of reason” (the power of syllogisms<sup>11</sup>), their performative forces can influence recipients and create “powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations” (Geertz). Thanks to the rhetorical *pronuntiatio*, abstract and mental qualities and processes become evident and visible. If their realised representations can be perceived by the senses as being co-existent with past and present events and processes, they somehow become real.

The performative force of some beliefs can be so real that people are helpless even if they want to avoid its impact. There is an early example of a dramatised miracle about two beggars—one blind and the other lame—who are so happy working together that they run away to avoid meeting a

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<sup>9</sup> Mariam Thalos says, “making a judgement about truth value is a performative act made in time and space, which differs metaphysically from making the truth value of sentences dependent on logical or formal conditions” (98).

<sup>10</sup> This paragraph comes from Dąbrówka 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the “doom of reason” [=judgement of reason] of Pecock (1390?-1461?) (6). The “doom of reason” refers to rational judgement, especially when the syllogistic method is employed. The “lawe of kinde” (Pecock 6) is the natural law.

nearing procession bearing the relics of St Martin; they fear the relics will cure them both and they will lose their jobs. Fleeing through the streets of the city, they run into the procession anyway and the relics make a miracle and cure them both against their will. The blind man and the cripple do not want to regain their health, but they do because they believe it is possible.<sup>12</sup> And we see how the power of relics is made performative by their active display during a procession. The relics *performed the miracle on the stage of a city street*.

## Harmony

Let us have a look at the historical, ethical, and aesthetic dimension of value systems. Urban culture is the necessary soil for historical knowledge of values to grow, because only from the population's public activities do *testimonies* arise that can be checked against each other as such (Ricoeur 194). Towns could more easily develop an ideal of *Sakralgemeinschaft*, characterised by "the unity of religion, law, and the honour of a town."<sup>13</sup> Extreme diversity of the parts making up a unified city may be compared to the picture of a magic coat of patches that can be transformed into a beautiful city. This harmony allowing a city to exist through the ages (if not eternally) has many dimensions, and none of the factors establishing harmony are magic, but all are dynamic.

So many resources are activated that the only way to harmonise them is by public, co-temporary display. This multi-faceted, multi-level public event is theatre.

In reality, of course, the theatres of the Middle Ages were *not* fixed structures and, even when they were, they doubled as towns or taverns or houses or halls or churches. Medieval theatres were not built. They were called into being. And this means, crucially, that scripted plays of the kind now known to us shared the same spaces, and the same audiences, as the preaching of sermons, the news of town criers, royal proclamations, public executions, religious processions, acts of worship, and a plethora of other activities. (Symes 2)

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<sup>12</sup> St Martin's vita in the *Golden Legend* (my Polish edition, *Złota Legenda*, 836). Dramatised by André de La Vigne, *Moralité de l'Aveugle et du Boiteux*—addition of his saint play *Vie de Saint Martin*, staged on three days in 1496. For an allegorical interpretation of this topic see Knight 7.

<sup>13</sup> "Einheit von religiösem Heil, Recht und Ehre einer Stadt" (Ringshausen 217); cf. Schmidt 1968, 34.

This multilayered event has as its ultimate basis the individual's cognitive activity aimed at the construction of an adequate concept of reality. The central ideas of cognitive constructivism are these: cognitive processes and cognitive structures are activities and units of building or realising (not representing or reflecting) elements, relations, and features of reality (Rusch 435). Cognitive structures and processes may be regarded as causes or determinants of a subject's behaviour—because concepts, schemata, frames, scripts, plans (on different levels of cognition) embody, shape, structure, and organise the appearance of the outer and inner world as well as the intellectual tools of action and interaction, e.g. plans, strategies, language, logic, emotion, etc. (Rusch 436).

There are two ways of socialising and learning standards: mimicking, i.e. following an example without knowing the rules, or gaining knowledge of the rules and their observance as an individual decision. The result of the first way is *obedience*, and of the second *sovereignty*. The existence and cognisance of rules engender the mutual predictability of behaviour. The media are indispensable for replacing obedience with sovereign behaviour. They must be free; otherwise they strengthen obedience (see totalitarianism).

### The Procession in Breda<sup>14</sup>

The theoretical tools will now be applied to the case of a late-medieval Eucharistic miracle play from the Netherlands, and the multiple delivery of its subject matter in a preserved confraternity codex. The case shows how the impact of a tradition becomes irresistible if the tradition is intensive, multiple, and public. It is also almost empirical proof (or at least a fruitful application) of Geertz's theory of *religion as a system of symbols* that creates permanent attitudes that result in the aura of factuality of providential conceptions.<sup>15</sup> Practices and rules of using this system of symbols for creative tasks can be called aesthetics.

In the case of the Christian religion it may be called an aesthetic of recapitulation.<sup>16</sup> As a creative impulse this aesthetic aims at multiplying

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<sup>14</sup> In this part I am using data from the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Dąbrówka 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Geertz, put short as follows by Sulewski: religion can be conceived as a system of symbols acting to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting "moods and motivations" in people and thereby formulating a specific view of existence, giving it such an "aura of factuality" that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (558).

<sup>16</sup> "aesthetics of recapitulation" governing "the stream of social communication intended to confirm the reality of religion, the possibility and necessity of the attainment of the goal [namely, salvation via communion in the Church], and the

transmission by using as many levels and channels of communication as possible and addressing as many participants as possible—authors and recipients. Broad participation guarantees the practical or pragmatic truthfulness of the contents. The truth in the world of the profane, as well as the truth of religious messages, comes from accepted outside sources, from authorities, but also from neighbours.<sup>17</sup> The shape of “our truth” is co-decided by anybody who can deliver knowledge, but the diversity and richness of messages concerning any propagated idea are conclusive. The multiple materials collected in the confraternity book of Breda show the mechanism of gathering and storing subsequent proofs of a certain truth.

The MS of ca. 1500 was preserved as a property of the “Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of Nyeuwervaert” in Breda, and later of the Church of St Barbara there.<sup>18</sup> It consists of the following parts:

- History of the Host: finding and moving to the parish church of Nieuwervaert (1373);
- Miracula, describing host miracles that happened in the period 1373-1437;
- Translation of the Host to Breda (1449);
- Miracles performed in Breda between 1449-1456;

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correctness of the way being shown” (Dąbrówka 2001, 363). This aesthetics thus seeks to establish consistency within the symbolic system and by that consistency to confirm the reality that system seeks to convey. The goal of recapitulation is to build the Church (or at the very least to maintain it) with Christ as the head (theologically). But to be effective, this kind of aesthetics must encompass the entire sphere of human creativity, including ceremonies and the various practices of religion and even everyday behaviour. “It unites all religious forms and behaviors” in such a way that each person’s mind can have a picture of Christ or such an example of behaviour—as Dąbrówka puts it—that guarantees the salvation of the soul (Sulewski 558).

<sup>17</sup> F. C. Sautman, et al. (eds.), *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998): Folklore connotes the ever-changing knowledge of a given people and refers to a complexity of attitudes, beliefs, rituals, customs, thoughts, myths, legends, theories, etc. Folklore includes both the oral tradition and literacy; it refers to the practices and beliefs of the lower and upper levels of medieval society (summary by Andreas Klare, “The Medieval Review” 99.02.15).

<sup>18</sup> *Den boeck vanden heilighen sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert*, archive of St Barbara church in Breda. Ca 1800 it got the title *Liber venerabilis Confraternitatis sanctissimi sacramenti in Ecclesia Romana Catholica Bredae*, added to the content description from the 16<sup>th</sup> c., not covering the whole history presented in the codex. The codex is available in diplomatic edition by Asselbergs and Huysmans; for an earlier critical edition of the drama cf. Leendertz 213-276.