WAS THERE A TWELFTH–CENTURY CREED PLAY AT ST. EMMERAM?

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Theatre historians have long suspected that from as early as the twelfth century, the great Benedictine monastery of St. Emmeram at Regensburg was the site of highly innovative large-scale performances. The most telling evidence for unconventional forms of paraliturgical activity at St. Emmeram is found in the chronicle of local history compiled by the Regensburg canon Hugo von Lerchenfeld. An entry in the *Annales Ratisponenses* for the year 1194 mentions the performance of a unique cycle of episodes portraying the Creation and Fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels, the Creation and Fall of humankind, and a version of the *Ordo Prophetarum*:

> Anno Domini MCXCIIII celebratus est in Ratispona ordo creacionis angelorum et ruina Luciferi et suorum et creacionis hominis et casus et prophetarum sub Celestino papa regnante Henrico imperatore et semper augusto et Chuonrado regente inibi episcopatum VII. id[us] Februarii.[1]
>
> 'In the year of Our Lord 1194, in Ratisbon on the 7th of February when Celestine was Pope, in the reign of the Ever-August Emperor Henry, and the rule of Bishop Conrad in that same diocese, there was celebrated a ceremony of the Creation of the Angels and Fall of Lucifer and his [adherents]. The Creation and Fall of Man, and a Prophets' [play].'

Unfortunately, the text of the play itself is lost, but in 1932 Bernhard Bischoff discovered that elsewhere in the same manuscript (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS 14733) Hugo von Lerchenfeld had also copied fragments of several other highly unusual Latin dramas.[2] On the basis of palaeographical evidence, Bischoff was able to date these entries to the period 1184–1189. Because Bischoff's discovery came too late for Karl Young to include mention of the plays in his monumental *Drama of the Medieval Church* published that same year, these intriguing texts have remained virtually unstudied to the present day.

Three of the texts edited by Bischoff from the Regensburg annals are unmistakably fragments of Latin plays. The first passage (fol. 52^{v}) preserves

stage directions and dialogue for Augustine, Gabriel, Elizabeth, Mary, and Synagoga.[3] There can be little doubt that it must once have belonged to a Christmas play. The speech by Elizabeth to the Virgin is identical to the passages assigned to her in versions of the *Ordo Prophetarum* from Limoges (twelfth century), Laon (thirteenth century), and Rouen (fourteenth century), while the debate between Augustine and Synagoga is reminiscent of the opening scene of the famous Christmas play in the *Carmina Burana* manuscript.[4] The second passage in the Regensburg manuscript (fol. 53^{v}) preserves stage directions and a brief dialogue between Gideon and an Angel.[5] The subject is the miracle of Gideon's fleece (Judges 6), an episode which may also have been portrayed in the lost cycle performed in Riga in 1204 but which is otherwise unknown to medieval drama.[6] Hugo von Lerchenfeld copied the third fragment inside the back cover of his book.[7] It contains stage directions and dialogue for Solomon, Ecclesia, and the three daughters of Jerusalem, and must once have been part of a dramatisation of the Song of Songs, which despite its inherently dramatic character has no other counterpart in the corpus of medieval Latin drama.

A fourth text, which Hugo copied inside the back cover immediately before the aforementioned dialogue from the Song of Songs, is more problematic.[8] It appears to be a descriptive list of the dramatis personae for a lost play or plays. Because the text is neither well known nor readily accessible, it is perhaps worth including it here in its entirety:

> Petrus canus et coronatus.
> Paulus calvus canus et barbatus.
> Andreas canus barbatus et in crine imaginem chruchis habens.
> Iacobus Zebedei frater Iohannis evangeliste ? niger coronatus et iuvenis.
> Iohannes frater eius crinitus canus et barbatus.
> Thomas iuvenis niger barbatus.
> Philippus iuvenis niger barbatus.
> Bartholomeus crinitus canus et barbatus.
> Matheus canus barbatus.
> Symon Chananeus iuvenis niger.
> Tatheus iuvenis niger coronatus.
> Iacobus alter . . . frater Domini canus coronatus.
> Ferat quisque eorum circulum in capite quod est signum sanctitatis.
> Aron sit inbutus ephot et infulatus cum florida virga.
> Moyses cornutus.

Synagoga nigris induta cooperta fa(c)ie morosa fer(at) iugum legis et cultrum.[9]

Ecclesia ferat calicem in c(a)pite et sit hone(s)ta.[10]

Iohannes babtista ferat nigrum pyrrum et barbam.

Salvator ferat circulum in modum chrucis et nigros capillos et barbam et albam (d)almaticam et vestem purpuream.

Because the list of biblical and allegorical personages together with their individual appearance, clothing, and attributes immediately precedes the play fragment copied inside the back cover, and because it bears a striking resemblance to a similar list that accompanies a thirteenth-century *Ordo Prophetarum* from Laon, Bernhard Bischoff accepts it 'without hesitation' as evidence for the use of costumed characters in liturgical dramas performed in Regensburg.[11] He goes on to speculate that the rôles of Christ and the twelve Apostles must have belonged to an Easter Play, while the roles of Aaron, Moses, Ecclesia, Synagoga, and John the Baptist must have belonged to a Prophets' Play.

There is good reason to accept Bischoff's identification of the list as evidence of twelfth-century Bavarian stagecraft. At the same time however, his conjecture that the list refers to two separate plays — an Easter Play and a Procession of the Prophets — is implausible. To begin with, no surviving version of the liturgical rite known as the *Visitatio Sepulchri* nor any independent Latin Easter Play, not even so ambitious a work as the Klosterneuburg *Ludus Paschalis*, has separate rôles for all twelve apostles. The only apostles who figure significantly in Easter ceremonies of any kind are Peter and John, whose race to the empty tomb is a characteristic feature of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* (Type II), and Thomas, whose incredulity is depicted in a thirteenth-century Easter Play from Tours.[12] The other apostles occasionally appear as an undifferentiated chorus but not as distinct individuals. At the same time, a number of characters who play major rôles in the various Easter rites (e.g., the angels and the grieving women at the tomb, Mary Magdalene, the spice merchant) are conspicuously absent from the Regensburg list. It is not surprising, then, that the versions of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* preserved in fourteenth–and fifteenth–century service books from Regensburg do not correspond even remotely to the list of characters recorded by Hugo von Lerchenfeld.[13] In short, the list includes characters not found in Latin Easter plays and omits characters which are indispensable to the tradition.

The Regensburg list also fails to fit the standard paradigm of the *Ordo Prophetarum*. The five figures which Bischoff associates with the Procession

of the Prophets (Aaron, Moses, Ecclesia, Synagoga, and John the Baptist) would constitute an incomplete and unrepresentative cast for such a play. The pseudo-Augustinian homily known as the *Contra Judæos, Paganos, et Arianos Sermo de Symbolo*, which was frequently used as the *lectio* for Matins at Christmas, is the source from which the various versions of the *Ordo Prophetarum* derive. Only two of its thirteen speakers (Moses and John the Baptist) are named in the Regensburg list.[14] When the *lectio* was shortened to its briefest and most essential form, it included only Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the Erythræan Sibyl.[15] These four were apparently considered to be indispensable to the ceremony, for they are found in every surviving version of the *Ordo*, but none of the four is mentioned by Hugo von Lerchenfeld. The closest analogue to the Regensburg list would seem to be the *Ordo Processionis Asinorum* for the Feast of the Circumcision found in two Rouen service books dating from the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.[16] The longest surviving example of its genre, the Rouen *Ordo*, summons no fewer than twenty-eight personages to testify to the divinity of Christ, including Moses, Aaron, and John the Baptist. Although there are no parts for Ecclesia and Synagoga, the Rouen text does call for two choruses, one composed of six Gentiles and one of six Jews. Despite these similarities, however, the extreme brevity of the Regensburg list and the absence of the most essential prophets make it extremely unlikely that it refers to a work like the lengthy Rouen procession. Finally, Bischoff fails to explain why the cast of the *Ordo Prophetarum* should interrupt the list of characters for the Easter Play instead of simply following after it. In short, Bischoff's reading of the Regensburg canon's enigmatic entry would compel us to accept a list of characters which is incomplete for both of the plays which it purportedly describes, which includes characters not represented in the known analogues, and which interrupts the cast list of the Easter Play by abruptly inserting the dramatist personae from a putative Prophet Play instead of simply having the second list follow the first. As it stands, then, it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that Hugo was referring to a single play rather than two separate ones.

If we are forced to abandon the two-play hypothesis proposed by Bischoff, is there any other way to explain the contents of the Regensburg list? When one looks beyond early Latin drama to the vast corpus of late medieval vernacular plays, it is indeed possible to identify a family of works whose cast of characters is consistent with the figures recorded by Hugo von Lerchenfeld. The genre in question is the Creed Play of the late Middle Ages. Comparative studies have shown that Creed Plays were an

international phenomenon known in England, France and Germany.[17] These plays fall into two distinct but clearly related categories. The first consists of dramatisations of the legendary composition of the Creed by the twelve apostles at Pentecost, often performed as a prologue to various scenes of apostolic preaching, miracles, and martyrdom.[18] In German-speaking areas, this branch of the tradition is represented by two extant works. The first is the so-called *Innsbrucker Spiel von Mariae Himmelfahrt*, a fourteenth-century Thuringian play copied by the scribe Johannes in the summer of 1391 and transported to the Augustinian monastery at Neustift bei Brixen (Bressanone) sometime before 1445.[19] The other dramatisation of this scene is found in the Tyrolean Ascension and Pentecost Play composed by Vigil Raber in 1517 and performed in Cafless in Flemstal (Cavalese) in the same year and again in 1518.[20] The second type of Creed Play, which is of particular interest for our present purposes, apostles, and other sacred figures presents a clause-by-clause exposition of the twelve Articles of the Creed. Two German plays of this type also survive. The earliest is the *Ludus de corpore Christi*, better known as the *Innsbrucker Fronleichnamsspiel*.[21] Like the Assumption play mentioned above, the *Ludus de corpore Christi* is preserved in the Innsbruck Playbook of 1391. It must have existed in at least two prior redactions as well, namely, the version in the lost anthology which served as the copyist's source in 1391 and an original version composed in eastern Thuringia about a half century earlier.[22] A marginal note in a later hand shows that it was still being performed for lay audiences at Neustift as late as 1445.[23] The Innsbruck text is closely related to another much longer exposition of the Creed preserved near the end of a cycle of Biblical plays composed in Künzelsau (Württemberg) in 1479 and performed there on several occasions until as late as 1522.[24]

A comparison of the cast of characters from the Innsbruck and Künzelsau plays with the list preserved in the twelfth-century *Annales Ratisponenses* suggests that the Benedictines of St Emmeram were performing a Latin Creed Play two centuries before the date of the earliest known vernacular version of the play. A comparative table of the dramatis personae demonstrates the high degree of correspondence among the three texts (Fig.1). The solution offered here meets two essential conditions: (1) the main categories of characters found in the later Creed Plays are already present in the Regensburg list, and (2) no character from Regensburg is without a counterpart in the later plays. There can be little

Regensburg (1184–89)	*Innsbruck (1391)*	*Künzelsau (1479)*
Moses and Aaron	Adam and Eve; Twelve Prophets	Twelve Prophets
Peter Paul Andrew James the Greater John Thomas Philip Bartholomew Matthew Simon Thaddeus (Jude) James the Less	Peter Andrew James the Greater John Thomas James the Less Philip Bartholomew Matthew Simon Jude Matthias	Peter Andrew James the Greater John Thomas James the Less Philip Bartholomew Matthew Simon Jude Matthias
John the Baptist	John the Baptist; Three Magi	Saints
Ecclesia and Synagoga		Ecclesia and Synagoga; Wise and Foolish Virgins; Antichrist
Salvator		Salvator
	Pope	Pope

doubt that the Creed Play model explains the evidence from Regensburg far more satisfactorily than the flawed two-play hypothesis proposed by Bischoff.

Given the fluid nature of the genre itself, it should come as no surprise that there are minor discrepancies among the lists. It has long been recognised, for example, that the identity and order of the Apostles and their association with the particular articles of the Creed which they were thought to have composed were all subject to a wide variety of combinations.[25] Other discrepancies are also more apparent than real. The Innsbruck play's procession of the Three Kings, each of whom testifies to the truth of the Incarnation, is the structural and thematic equivalent of the procession of saints in the Künzelsau play. Similarly, the dire eschatological warnings offered by John the Baptist in the Innsbruck *Ludus de corpore Christi* are represented in vastly expanded form at Künzelsau by the debate between Ecclesia and Synagoga, the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and the defeat of the Antichrist by the Saviour.

At Regensburg these same elements must have been represented by John the Baptist, Ecclesia and Synagoga, and the Salvator. Both German plays conclude with a papal sermon on the nature of the Eucharist. One can easily imagine Christ himself functioning in this capacity in the Latin play. What is even more likely, however, is that the eucharistic homily was a late addition to the genre for the purpose of making the plays more suitable for performance at the Feast of Corpus Christi, instituted by Pope Urban IV in 1264. At any rate, it is apparent that given the flexible definition of what constitutes a Creed Play, the lost Regensburg play would have included all of the essential categories of characters: Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, the twelve Apostles, New Testament witnesses, Ecclesia and Synagoga, and Christ the Saviour. Hugo von Lerchenberg's list thus allows us to conclude that the repertoire of highly innovative performance practices at the monastery of St. Emmeram most likely included a twelfth-century version of the Creed Play. Moreover, this lost play would be both the earliest known example of its kind and the only one known to have been composed in Latin.

To argue that the vernacular Creed Play tradition of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries developed directly from the Regensburg play or from other lost Latin versions related to it would be to resurrect a thoroughly discredited evolutionary model of the history of European drama.[26] On the contrary, most theatre historians would now agree that the different cultural relations and local performance practices obtaining at different

times and places are as important as the kinds of structural similarities noted above. Whatever the actual shape of the St. Emmeram performance may have been, there can be no doubt that its function as a paraliturgical event within the Benedictine community must have differed drastically from the function of late medieval vernacular performances designed to reinforce doctrinal orthodoxy among lay people. Clearly, Creed Plays could be shaped to accommodate a wide array of heterogeneous representational practices depending on the specific *Sitz im Leben* of their sponsors and spectators. At the same time, however, there is no need to let a species of neo-nominalist historiography blind us to the undeniable similarities among these plays. Nor must we revert to outmoded essentialist notions of literary genre in order to recognise the importance of the evidence from Regensburg. Hugo von Lerchenberg's long-neglected list of dramatis personae suggests that in the medieval Creed Play we have a rare example of a family of performances which not only endured in diverse configurations and diverse social circumstances for more than three centuries, but which also exhibited analogous structural principles in both Latin and vernacular forms.

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NOTES

1. Bernd Neumnn *Geistliches Schauspiel im Zeugnis der Zeit: Zur Aufführung mittelalterlicher religiöser Dramen im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Artemis, Munich, 1987) *1* 610 [No.2366]. The passage has been frequently cited as evidence of an early 'Paradiesspiel'; see, for example, Leopold Schmidt *Das deutsche Volksschauspiel* (E. Schmidt, Berlin, 1962) 268; Wilhelm Creizenach *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, 2nd ed. (Niemeyer, Halle, 1911) *1* 64; Karl Young *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1933) *2* 542; Rosemary Woolf *The English Mystery Plays* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972) 56; Rolf Bergmann *Studien zu Entstehung und Geschichte der deutschen Passionsspiele des 13 und 14 Jahrhunderts* (Fink, Munich, 1972) 175. For evidence of an unrelated performance at Regensburg on Good Friday in 1469, see Bergmann *Geistliches Schauspiel 2* 611 [No.2368]. For Easter ceremonies at St. Emmeram, see note 13 below.
2. Bernhard Bischoff 'Regensburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Dramatik und Ikonographie' in *Mittelalterliche Studien* (Hiersemann, Stuttgart, 1967) *2* 156–68. This is a revised and expanded version of an essay which first appeared under the same title in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift 27* (1932) 509–522.

3. Bischoff 160–162.
4. Young *2* 141, 148, 163, 175–180.
5. Bischoff 162–63
6. Bergmann *2* 614 [No.2370]; Young *2* 542.
7. Bischoff 163–64.
8. Bischoff 164–68.
9. Bischoff (165) notes that the unusual description of Synagoga corresponds closely to her depiction on the Crucifixion page of the illuminated Gospel Book of Abbess Uta of Niedermünster (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS 13601, fol.3^{v}), a product of a Regensburg scriptorium, where she carries a knife in her left hand and bears the scroll of the Law yoke-like across her left shoulder; see also Georg Swarzenski *Die Regensburger Buchmalerei des X und XI Jahrhunderts: Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Malerei des frühen Mittelalters* (Hiersemann, Leipzig, 1901) 94 and fig.30; Albert Boeckler and Hanns Swarzenski *Deutsche Buchmalerei vorgotischer Zeit* (Langewiesche, Königstein im Taunus and Leipzig, 1942) pl.35; and Albert Boeckler 'Das Erhardbild im Utacodex', in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* edited by Dorothy Miner (Princeton UP, 1954) fig.171.
10. Bischoff (165) notes that the unusual attribute assigned to Ecclesia (a chalice upon her head) is a traditional element in Regensburg iconography. She is depicted this way in the Uta Codex; see n.9 above.
11 Bischoff 165 (translation mine). The list from Laon gives similar details for thirteen roles; see Young *2* 145.
12. Young *1* 307–368, 446.
13. St. Emmeram service books dating from the tenth to the fifteenth century record Holy Week observances which include both the Deposition and Elevation of the Cross and the *Visitatio Sepulchri*; see *Lateinische Osterfeiern und Osterspiele* edited by Walther Lipphardt (W. de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1975–81) *2* 417–30 [No.319–326] and Young *1* 256, 295–97, 504–506, 558, 561–62, 563–64, 586.
14. Young (*1* 126–131) gives a version from Arles which includes the standard sequence of the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Moses, David, Habbakkuk, Simeon, Zacharias, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Virgil, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Sibyl.
15. Young *2* 131.
16. Young *2* 154–70.
17. For an overview of the genre with particular attention to English and German texts, see Stephen K. Wright 'The York Creed Play in Light of the Innsbruck

Playbook of 1391' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England 5* (1991) 27–53, for the French tradition, see page 38 and notes 29 and 30.

18. For the legend that each of the apostles was inspired to compose one of the twelve articles of the Creed, see Rufinus of Aquileia 'Expositio Symboli' in *Tyrannii Rufini Opera* edited by Manlius Simonetti (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 20, Brepols, Turnholt, 1961) 134–35; and the pseudo-Augustinian sermons 'Sermo CCXL: De Symbolo IV' and 'Sermo CCXLI: De Symbolo V' edited by J. P. Migne *PL 39* (Migne, Paris, 1861) cols. 2188–2191.
19. For the text of the play, see *Altteutsche Schauspiele* edited by Franz Joseph Mone (Basse, Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1841) 19–106. For the thematic relevance of the Creed material to the following scenes (the missions of the apostles, the death and Assumption of the Virgin, and the war against the Jews), see Stephen K. Wright *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatisations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1989) 52–61, and Wright 'York Creed Play' 38–43.
20. *Ludus de ascensione domini* in *Die geistlichen Spiele des Sterzinger Spielarchivs* edited by Walther Lipphardt and Hans-Gert Roloff (P. Lang, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris, 1990) 257–300; see especially lines 772–828.
21. For the text of the play, see Mone 145–64, see also Wright 'York Creed Play' 32–38.
22. For textual history, see Stephen K. Wright 'Scribal Errors and Textual Integrity: The Case of Innsbruck Universitätsbibliothek Cod. 360' *Studies in Bibliography 39* (1986) 84–87.
23. Wright 'York Creed Play' 33.
24. *Das Künzelsauer Fronleichnamsspiel* edited by Peter Liebenow (W. de Gruyter, Berlin, 1969) 154–217. For performances of the play, see Neumann *1* 428–32 [No.1998–2016]. The precise nature of the relationship between this play and its Thuringian predecessor remains uncertain, see Wolfgang F. Michael *Die geistlichen Prozessionsspiele in Deutschland* (Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, 1947) 33–42, and Elizabeth Wainwright *Studien zum deutschen Prozessionsspiel: Die Tradition der Frohleichnamsspiele in Künzelsau und Freiburg und ihre textliche Entwicklung* (Arbeo-Gesellschaft, Munich, 1974) 54–68.
25. For numerous textual and iconographic variants, see Curt F. Bühler 'The Apostles and the Creed' *Speculum 28* (1953) 335–39; James D. Gordon 'The Articles of the Creed and the Apostles' *Speculum 40* (1965) 634–40; Nicole Mezey 'Creed and Prophets Series in the Visual Arts, with a Note on Examples in York' *Edam Newsletter 2* (1979) 7–10, Tables 1–2; H. W. van Os 'Credo' in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* edited by Engelbert Kirschbaum and others (Herder, Freiburg, 1968–76) *1* 461–64.

26. The fallacies of evolutionary explanations of the relationship between Latin liturgical compositions and vernacular plays are exposed by O. B. Hardison *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1965) 1-34.