Yf to the orature many a sundry tale
One after other treatably be tolde
Than sundry ymages in his closed male
Eache for a mater he doth than well holde
Lyke to the tale he doth than so beholde
And inwarde a recapitulacyon
Of ech ymage the moralyzacyon

Stephen Hawes, *The Pastyme of Pleasure*, 1509

The complexity of the multivalent relationship between late medieval art and drama has been a subject of lively scholarly debate for many decades. Early scholarship generally sought to foreground one at the expense of the other, either asserting, as Emile Mâle did, that many religious iconographies have roots in medieval drama, or pointing out, like Patrick Collins, that the narrative structures of certain plays were inspired by image sequences in English manuscripts and murals. More recent studies sought to obviate what A. M. Nagler christened the *primo-dopo* issue, and to consider both drama and art, as Pamela Sheingorn and Martin Stevens suggest, as fundamental elements of an intervisual and intertextual culture of the Middle Ages. This paper will examine the space of medieval performance that transcends the delimitations of different media, and will explore the relationship between art and theater as an equal exchange, governed by the rhetoric of the art of memory. More specifically, I will compare the *locus-and-platea* spaces articulated in medieval theater with the centralized but fragmented visual spaces constructed in late medieval devotional woodcuts in order to argue that both guide the viewing and participatory experience of their audiences in similar ways. As early as 1979, Sheingorn brought attention to the fact that both
Theater and printed media shared a particularly wide circulation: "Most medieval drama," she writes, "is assumed to be popular art and can therefore be most convincingly related to other arts that enjoyed a wide audience such as woodcuts." In considering a series of late medieval images, which, like the plays, re-enacted sacred narratives, "reconstitut[ing] the profane," to quote Robert Scribner, "into sacred time and space," I will draw parallels between the fluid space of the platea and the central image of the woodcut that provides a generalized viewing/acting space, as well as between the fixed loci that frame the platea and the fragmented array of smaller images that anchors the central space of the woodcut.

In her article "Spatial Semantics and the Medieval Theatre," Pamela King identifies the locus as a "unit of specified place, often sacral in its significance," and the platea as "[t]he area between and around the loci, where commuting and other non-specifically localized action takes place." Loci, then, fix snippets of the play's narrative into discrete and abbreviated iconic moments, intertwined amongst themselves and connected to the viewer by the fluidity of the platea. So, in the Digby Mary Magdalene play, Mary moves from her castle (a place of safety) to the tavern (a place of seduction) to the arbor (a place of incipient sexuality) to Simon the Leper's house (a place of cleansing). Her subsequent travels to and from Marseille, also punctuated by fixed loci, are united by the rhetoric of journeys, both physical and spiritual, that involve the space of the platea perfectly suited to transitional movement.

Platea is a shared spectator-actor realm, and the entrance of the performer into the platea mixes two distinct spaces, the public (performative) and the private (personal). This intrusion is often used to achieve identification between viewers and the play's protagonists: as Meg Twycross points out, the staging of the Resurrection play benefits especially from the placement of the three Maries among the audience as they lament Christ's death, becoming "inciters to emotion." A similar device is used in contemporary visual imagery as the same inciters, gathered at the foot of the cross in Rogier van der Weyden's Deposition, carefully guide the viewers' responses of lament through facial and bodily gestures (wringing hands, gushing tears, tormented swoons); as the Three Maries descend into the space of the platea to be brought closer to the spectators, so van der Weyden's protagonists burst into the viewers' space as if too large to be contained on the shallow stage of the altarpiece (Figure 1). The action here clearly takes place in the platea, in all its physicality and visceral discomfort. The blurring of separate spatial realms — the entrance of the beholder upon the stage of Christ's life, the intrusion of this stage upon the beholder's world — was meant to provide a fruitful context for devotional exercises. So, the fourteenth-century Franciscan Meditationes Vitae Christi stresses the importance of compassionate contemplation and meditation upon each and every detail in this space that plays out Christ's suffering, urging the reader to become a tangible presence upon the imagined stage.

Figure 1. Rogier van der Weyden, Deposition, c. 1435, oil on oak panel, 220 x 262 cm. By permission of Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

The involvement of the beholder through the blurring of the on-stage and off-stage spaces can also be accomplished through a different construction of requisite affectivity. So, the parading of the resurrected souls in front of the viewer in the York Last Judg-
ment play, "calls upon [the audience]," to quote Richard Beadle and Pamela King, "to search their consciences and choose whether they will be among the saved or the damned." A telling story discussed by Konrad Stolle, for instance, has Landgrave Frederick the Peaceable fall gravely ill at the performance of the play in 1922, as he contemplated the five foolish virgins and the exacting judgment of God: "he became lame on one side, and he lost the faculty of speech." I have shown elsewhere that such a call for identification is similarly accomplished in contemporary late medieval murals, such as the Berlin Dance of Death, configured as the Last Judgment (play); by virtue of its position in the angling space of the bell tower, in which the Dance procession becomes split in the middle by the image of the crucified Christ, the painting forcibly involves the viewers in the cavalcade of the dead, compelling them to reflect upon their fate, and to choose between the paths of salvation and damnation (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Dance of Death in Berlin, ca. 1500, Marienkirche, Berlin, Germany. Photograph courtesy Lucas Verlag.

Consideration of the connections between the visual and the performed through the spatial arrangements and dynamics of viewing have yielded useful observations. In discussing the loci-and-platea configurations, King compares the static arrangement of scenery and actors in any given locus to a devotional image, localizing, then, the intermediary space of the platea as that of change and action. I would like to propose that both the disparate loci and the unifying space of the platea are related to devotional imagery, and structure the spectators' responses in equal measure. I suggest, too, that the platea acts as a pathway of memory that binds the narratives staged on the scaffolds, and that a wide variety of late medieval woodcuts are designed in the very same manner, with a central but fluid image binding narrative snippets arranged around it, meant to be viewed in accordance with the visual practice of the Ars memorandi, the medieval Book of Memory.

Conceived for the memorization of Gospel narratives, this book presents the viewer with a series of full-page images related to Gospel chapters, accompanied by a brief summary of these chapters in the text page facing the image. Each image places the Evangelist symbol of a Gospel writer in the middle, and disperses different narratives, codified as abbreviated static icons, around the beast. For instance, in the Ars memorandi blockbook, executed around 1470 in Germany, the Evangelist Mark is given three images with three accompanying pages of text. The second image, discussed at length by David Areford, figures a winged lion splayled in the middle of the page (Figure 3). Around his neck are an eye, a key, and seven loaves of bread; his body is punctured by a leaping demon; the sun emerges from behind his back; his left hind leg is pierced by a large needle; between his claws are disembodied clasped hands and a scallop shell. In his front paws, the lion clutches a melancholy donkey, a grapevine and a purse. Above the Evangelist floats a hand and a dog's head, holding a piece of bread in its jaws.

I suggest that these images ought to be seen as a collection of loci, bound together by the figure of the lion who acts as a platea of sorts, taking the viewer on the spiritual and visual journey of Gospel chapters seven through twelve. Let us reconstruct the play, mnemonic scaffold by mnemonic scaffold. Chapter 7 imagery is found floating at the top of the woodcut space: the hand refers to Christ's disciples eating bread with "common" unwashed hands;
the dog holding the bread in his mouth refers to one of Christ’s healing miracles, and more specifically to the words he said to a Syrophenician woman: “it is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs” (7:27). In Chapter 8, we read about the healing of the blind man, the miracle of the seven loaves and fishes feeding four thousand people, and Peter’s proclamation “thou art the Christ”; the relevance of the images arranged around the lion’s neck now becomes obvious. In Chapter 9, Mark speaks of Transfiguration (hence the sun) and Christ casting out demons (hence the gray devil jumping from the slit in the lion’s torso); in Chapter 10, we read about the prohibition against divorce indicated by the clasped hands, the oft-cited “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,” and the sons of Zebedee, fishermen James and John, referred to by the shell. The two following chapters similarly weave together a narrative of isolated iconic images: the mercilessly gripped donkey recalls to the viewer Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem (Chapter 11), while the purse and the vines refer to Caesar’s tribute and the parable of the vineyard and husbandsmen recounted in Chapter 12.17

Piece by piece, the story is established, the coherent narrative that emerges from the isolated loci of each disparate image. The relationship of images to one another loosely follows Thomas Bradwardine’s *ars memorativa*, a mid-fourteenth-century treatise on memory discussed at length by Mary Carruthers. Although *ars memorativa* sets forth an imagined diagram of memory, complete with an imagined location and imagined images, we see its basic premise at work in the blockbook. Any given memory locus (location) “should be of a size neither greater nor smaller than what the eye can take in at a single glance ... [i]n shape it should be rectangular like a page or a tablet.” Within these places one inserts *imagines*, memorial images, which ought to include figures “brilliantly but abnormally colored ... engaged in activity of a sort that is extremely vigorous ... grouped against a plain background.”18 The first image is to be enlarged, centralized and brought towards the front, much in the manner of Mark’s lion; images are then to be attached to this central one, often in “an active, even violent manner”: so, the needle pierces the lion’s body, while the exorcised demon leaps straight out of his wounded side. The central figure serves to reinforce stability among the subsidiary images, to act, as Carruthers quotes from the treatise, “like a kind of gluing-together of the order among them.”19 And so, through the faculty of memory, coherence is established, as separate elements are drawn together, mentally, by the viewer in order to compile, through the very act of recollection, the overall narrative, complete with the didactic lesson.

The fifteenth century saw a revival of interest in memory techniques, and numerous treatises, both classic — such as *Rhetorica ad Herennium* — and new, continued to offer visually structured loci for remembering20; Jacopo Ragone writes, in his *Artificialis memoriæ regulæ* (1434): “As Cicero taught, and as Thomas Aquinas also attests, artificial memory is achieved by means of two things: namely, places and images [...] memory-places are ... fixed images on which delible images are written like letters on paper: memory-places are like matter, whereas images are like forms.”21 Like diagrammatic images, mnemonic arrangements serve two simultaneous functions: a pedagogical one (in that they secure specific memories) and a meditational one (in that they include prompts
for remembering). This is accomplished by the viewers-readers of
the woodcuts, just as it is by the spectators of medieval plays, who
gather the information impressed upon them through the action
unfolding in different loci, and use it to recollect what they already
know: for mnemonic images, like plays, require a certain degree of
prior knowledge of the story. In discussing German Passion
plays, Glenn Ehratine points to the resemblance between the si-
multaneous stages on which plays unfolded and the structures of
"a pre-formed locational mnemonic on which one could 'hang'
select devotional images, not only during a play performance, but
also afterwards during private meditation." Just as the woodcut
image was constructed for the purpose of recollection and remem-
brance, so does the medieval stage fix particular loci in the
memory, eliciting active viewing from the audience during the play
and active recollection after the play is over.

It is perhaps limiting to focus solely on an image from the ars
memorandi, the very book dedicated to the art of remembering,
and to generalize from its configuration similar patterns of re-
response construction in art and drama. Such a configuration, how-
ever, governs a large number of late medieval woodcuts, many of
which bear an intrinsic connection to the Ars memorandi, although
they do not derive from it. Indulgence prints provide especially
fertile ground for the examination of such visual constructions:
their wide circulation is akin to the wide circulation of per-
formances. An indulgence print from the Bodleian Library, produced
around 1500, and related in its composition to numerous other
arma Christi prints, is an instructive example (Figure 4). In compar-
ing the mnemonic image of Mark's lion from a fifteenth-century
treatise Rationarium evangelistarum omnia to Urs Graf's Arma
Christi woodcut (1506), Peter Parshall draws attention to the fact
that both present "a comparable way a segregated set of memory
cues [are] parsed out to recall specific moments in the Gospel ac-
count." This reading of these cues, in their relationship to
Christ's body, was guided, in turn, by a dual significance attached
to the Instruments of Passion; to quote Gertrud Schiller, "every
suffering is an instrument to vanquish sin and death; the greater
the number of Instruments, the more comprehensive is Christ's
victory and hence the Redemption."
its own blood, Christ's seamless cloak, a pincer and a hammer, clubs and swords that refer to the Arrest, Judas's thirty pieces of silver, and, above the nails, the dice rolled by the soldiers for Christ's garment. In briefly addressing this print, Twycross compares its abbreviated series of icons that refer to Christ's Passion to the York play of Doomsday, which similarly lists, in what Twycross calls a "passive" manner, the instruments of His torture: the crown of thorns, the cross ("on cross they hanged me"), and the spear ("this spear into my side was sette").

But there is more here than the direct comparison between the uttered and visual lists of Instruments of Passion. The arrangement of such images recalls the diagrams of the theater-in-the-round, which delineate a circular area with specific spots assigned to specific scaffolds and with the most important space in the center. This central space usually features a key element: the castle in the Castle of Perseverance play or the chapel in the Beunans Meriaisk play. The Castle of Perseverance sketch is particularly well annotated: the edifice in the center is surrounded by scaffolds, here designated as the World (Mundus) in the west, Heaven in the east, Covetousness (Coveyyse) in the north-east, Flesh in the south, and the Devil (Belial) in the north (Figure 5). The parallels with the woodcut structure are striking, but here, instead of a static castle (albeit related narratively to the surrounding scaffolds), Christ's body occupies the key central space, becoming the focal point of the image, much in the way Mark's body does in the Ars memorandi woodcut; like Mark's body, moreover, it is not just a fixed representation, but rather a malleable tool for interpreting other images arranged all around, a transition space that links the disembodied narratives.

These narratives are arranged in the manner of scaffolds, only here, instead of Mundus or Belial, one sees Pilate and Caiaphas, a column and a pelican, a cloak and the dice—the loci multiply to embrace a lengthy play of Christ's Passion. Each miniature abbreviation, static and iconic, therefore acts as the scenic locus, dependent upon the performers—here, the viewers themselves, the performers of the gaze, of devotion, of memory exercise—to activate its meditational dynamic. Like Magdalene in the Digby play who travels from locus to locus as the narrative propels her forward, so does the viewer's gaze travel from visual locus to visual locus marked throughout the print, but whereas Magdalene and her viewers are constrained by the preordained narrative, the viewer of the woodcut has greater freedom to construct a varying series of meanings by choosing to focus on select loci. The scenery is provided; the viewer/actor does the rest.

Figure 5. Diagram of the Castle of Perseverance, ca. 1400, V.a.564, Macro Manuscript, f.191v. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

It is important to note here, as a related point, the artificiality of this scenery, which provides another bridge between the performative and visual structures we are discussing. The woodcut images are governed by the obvious sense of artifice, much as medieval theater is governed by the palpability of its illusion. Audiences may identify with the protagonists of the play, but the suspension of disbelief is often undercut by the props that visualize a theological concept—for instance, St. John the Baptist ends up re-
ceiving an actual lamb from Christ's hands in the Towneley *Baptism* play — and, especially, by the open-air setting. This stress on the illusion similarly regulates the disjunctive construction of the woodcuts, with their disembodied snippets of narratives that float around the central space, the visual equivalent of open air: this construction underscores the artifice, and underlines the desire to represent credible reality that governs logically constructed narratives — such as, for example, Duccio's *Maestà*, in which the Healing of the Blind Man and Transfiguration follow one another in a cohesive continuous succession. Instead, the *loci* of a played performance, like the iconic visual fragments of the *ars memorandi* woodcut, serve as mnemonic aids that are inscribed on the memory, and, in turn, provide the possibility of recollection and meditation.

This possibility, dependent on the progress along the *loci*, however, hinges on two things. Because the *arma Christi* objects are arranged in no particular order but rather in a purposefully jarring, disjointed, memorable way, it is up to the viewer to chronologically arrange the episodes, to link them together through an exercise of memory. The viewer's memory becomes the *platea*, the flexible space, "the location of movement and action," to quote King, "of transition between those pictures." She, of course, refers to the play, more specifically to the Coventry Pageant of the *Shearman and Taylors*. Nonetheless, the use of this woodcut *platea* is aided, guided, mediated, in fact, by the body of Christ, whose flesh links all the episodes, both formally (by virtue of his centrality on the page) and narratively: each and every object is related (must be related) to his body. Because the small iconic images are not arranged in any kind of intelligible order (unlike play episodes that follow one another in logical succession), it is up to the viewer to recall the events, all the while linking them to the space of Christ's displayed flesh; as Areford says, in discussing another Man of Sorrows print, "an ordered reading is only possible by making connections across or through the figure of Christ, a visual and mental exercise that makes clear the way in which these objects and events act upon and injure the body." Christ here is meant to invoke a mimetic kind of emotional experience in the viewer by anchoring the viewer's gaze to the wounds, the blood, the cross, the whip. This is what Scribner would call "sacramental gaze" — "a prolonged, contemplative encounter with the holy figure represented [that occurred] through a combination of eye contact and gestural appeal ... with which the suffering Christ addressed the pious viewer in the *imago pietatis*." The Passion therefore is never complete: re-enacted over and over through the acts of remembering and meditating, it is guided by the body of Christ, alive yet simultaneously dead, dripping blood, eternally wounded, beaten and sacrificed.

This peculiar temporal framework, of course, effectively functions in a similar way in medieval plays: in the opening of the York Cycle, God speaks of this very eternity in the first stanza of his monologue: "Ego sum Alpha et O: vita, via, veritas, primus et novissimus / I am gracious and great, God without beginning / [...] My body in bliss abiding / Unending, without any ending." This stanza establishes what King calls the connotative property inherent in patterned history; in other words it proposes that the represented events are not simply part of the historical time, but of all time now as represented in the church calendar with its recurrent Christmas and Easter. The properties of time in the cycle are established rhetorically by the first and last lines, ending in "without beginning" and "without ending" respectively.

The *Man of Sorrows* is simultaneously dead and alive because he exists continually before and after the end of his cycle of life, crucified and resurrected, suffering, tormented, eternally bleeding, this eternity dependent on the viewer's use of memory and meditation, for "through the process of mentally reenacting each episode," writes Areford, "the devotee is thoroughly implicated in Christ's humiliation and torture in a continual Passion that is powerfully expressed by the Man of Sorrows."

I have tried to show, in this essay, patterns of construction, of perception and of reception that govern both *art* and *drama*. I see both as types of cultural performances, as, to quote Kathleen Ashley, "a complex set of formal possibilities for playing out and playing with the structures and themes of the culture. Spatially fragmented, they are structured and unified not only by narrative threads but also by active — physical and mental — audience participation that demands the use of memory. The location of this
performative experience within the body of the viewer allows us to see medieval culture as one within which the visual (both static and kinesthetic) and the dramatic do not simply exist in a mimetic relationship, but are also connected through the faculty of memory and a series of stagings — external and internal, but ultimately somatic. Seeing one trains the viewer to engage with the other: both art and drama rely on the spectator's faculty of memory to recall, engage with, meditate upon and be released from imagery: this is purgation, by image or by performance. The viewer's task is to remember but also to be imprinted with newly-forged memories, not unlike the way the woodblock imprints itself on paper; the dramatic spaces of locus and platea, of stability and transition, inform meditation on visual imagery, while the imagery, in turn, bears on the reception and understanding of these very spaces. The totality of such an experience allows us to inscribe the spectator as an active participant in the fabric of medieval multi-medial culture. Rather than joining the debate over issues of influence, therefore, I hope to have shown in this article that both theater and art form an integral part of a shared cultural discourse: visual, performative, mnemonic and devotional.

NOTES

This paper, originally presented at The Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Binghamton University, benefited from many perceptive questions and comments that came from the audience; I thank Sandro Stica and Karen-edis Bazman for fruitful discussions we had during and after the session. I am grateful for the opportunity to read the typescript of Glenn Ehrstein's paper, which will be forthcoming next year in the volume on the interdisciplinarity of performance I am currently editing. As always, I thank Robert Carroll for his invaluable editorial help.


9. For the recent translation of the work, see John of Caulibus, Meditation on the Life of Christ, translated from the original Latin and edited by Francis X. Taney, Sr., Anne Miller, and C. Mary Stallings-Taney (Asheville, NC, 2000).


11. Konrad Stolle, Memorial thüringisch-erfurtische Chronik (Halle, 1900), 189-90.


13. King, 46.

14. When I was initially completing this essay, I was not aware of the work of Glenn Ehrstein on the very subject of connections between loci (mansions) and memory. I would like to thank him for sharing with me his article "Das figurierte Gedächtnis. Figura, Memoria und die Simultanb/hne des deutschen Mittelalters," in Text und Kultur. Mittelalterliche Literatur, 1150-1450, ed. Ursula Peters (Stuttgart & Weimer, 2001), 414-37. I would like to direct the reader to Ehrstein's article "Framing the Passion: Mansion Staging as Visual Mnemonic" forthcoming in Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts, ed. Elina Gertsman (Burlington, VT, 2008).
15. For the discussion of iconography of this page, see cat. #15, in Origins of European Printmaking. Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public, eds. Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch (New Haven, 2005), 95-97.

16. Here and further quotes are taken from the Reims-Douai version.


27. For images and discussions of the diagrams, as well as for the summation of the theater-in-the-round debate, see The Medieval European Stage, 500-1550, ed. William Tydeman (Cambridge, 2001), 221-29.


30. King, 46.


33. King, 53.

34. Origins of European Printmaking, 247.


36. See the discussion of this dual function of memory in V. A. Kolve, 9-58.