



In Front of the Mask: The Priest in Contemporary Dramas of Integrity

LARRY D. BOUCHARD

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Images of the priest or pastor in popular culture range from quaint and idiosyncratic (the clerics who appear frequently in TV versions of Agatha Christie mysteries) to scandalous and hypocritical (any of today's real-life versions of Elmer Gantry) to distant and ethereal (the aging cleric in Flannery O'Connor's "The Displaced Person," whose reverencing a peacock's plumage as an icon of the church no one in the story comprehends). But there are exceptions to this marginal view of the pastor, exceptions found where the pastoral vocation is explored at the levels of character, context, and conflict¹—and in terms of what it means not only to be a pastor but to be a self possessed of integrity.

I. A RELATIONAL VIEW OF INTEGRITY

Since I began teaching religion and literature to undergraduates some years ago, I have been interested in how narrative and drama represent characters in the act of achieving or failing to achieve "integrity" in the midst of difficult cultural or historical circumstances. There are certain kinds of stories and dramas that interest us mainly by how they show persons trying to bring tradition, vocation, and self-expression into some sort of coincidence, especially in crises where common notions of self and community have been disrupted. In such crises, integrity in respect to one's identity, principles, and defining task in life may seem foreclosed. The crisis may arise from attempting to enact one's vocation in a conflicted but

¹See Horton Davies, *A Mirror of the Ministry in Modern Novels* (New York: Oxford University, 1959) and Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972).

traditionally religious milieu (as in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*) or in a secular culture (Jean Anouilh's *Becket*; Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*) or in a hostile environment where ideologies and catastrophic events threaten to negate any witness of faith (Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence*; the film *The Mission*; Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy*).

Such works offer insights into the relational and necessarily contingent nature of the integrated self, and each discloses unexpected strategies for realizing integrity in marginal situations. The authors inquire not about the self *per se*, but about the self-negating aspects of selfhood and the self in relation to the world. Their insights may be in profound tension with views that subordinate the relational, social, and public dimensions of integrity to the solitude of "authenticity" or the shallowness of facile "sincerity."

In fact, integrity has almost always been given an inward connotation, as when Polonius

counseled Laertes, “To thine own self be true.” Integrity connotes honesty and self-consistency. It usually entails personal independence or uncompromising loyalty to individually-held values or moral principles. Integrity may recall romantic images of one whose expressive genius must constitute its own truth, measured by the authenticity of its encounter with the world. All such associations suggest an essential *interiority* of integrity. Even in today’s televised spectacles of a public figure’s loss of integrity, the focus usually is on a shameful revelation of private life or the exposure of some secret inconsistency, not on the inherent ambiguities of being a social self who must integrate complex relations of accountability to one’s vocation, overlapping roles, and communities.

In an excellent article, Lynne McFall describes personal and moral integrity as one’s acting out of unconditional commitments to a set of core values and relationships, without which a self would not be a self, or would be a self with nothing to risk and hence nothing to lose.² So stated, hers is an accurate characterization of integrity. But it is a view that can be sustained only if the person is defined as much in terms of outer, interactive relations to the world as in terms of private, inward relations.

There are three possible limits to a primarily interior view of integrity. First, to the extent that integrity is interior, it remains “invisible”—unless we have some privileged view into another’s interior self.

Second, to the extent that a person’s “core values” are modeled by traditions, stories, and paradigms, it is difficult to imagine how integrity reveals itself in a pluralistic milieu, where we must relate seriously with people whose cultural paradigms we do not share and may not recognize.

And third, integrity becomes a most acute problem when we cannot say with confidence that “we know who we are.” If we cannot, can we still act with integrity? At the most extreme intellectual outposts of “post-modernism,” the whole idea of the inward, essential self is being displaced, and with it, surely, received notions of personal integrity.³ It may be, of course, that the concept of integrity is sufficiently

²Lynne McFall, “Integrity,” *Ethics* 98 (1987) 5-20.

³See Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), chapters 2, 4; and David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), chapter 5.

rich to meet these challenges. But it may also be that in narrative and especially in live theatre integrity can be discovered *in front of* and *not behind* its masks.

II. THE DRAMA TIC PORTRAYAL OF INTEGRITY

In narrative—fictional or historical—there are many devices for showing solitude. The narrative voice can enter another’s consciousness or can allow that consciousness to speak for itself—which may or may not persuade us that the character or the narrator has integrity or is in some way trustworthy. When integrity is primarily an inward relationship of the self to itself, narrative is a method well-suited for representing integrity, especially that of the individual who finds himself in a world hostile or alien. Inherently more difficult is the use of dramatic methods to reveal integrity, especially in live theatre. Dramatic methods include both the emphasis on

action (available in narrative as well as in theatre) and the idea of dramatic interpretation as bodily enactment (most fully realized in theatre).

In live drama, everything is perceived directly and immediately by the audience; this provides more sensate intensity than, say, reading a book or even listening to a story. In drama there is typically no secret intrusion into a character's interior unless narrative devices are transmuted to the stage—as in Shakespearean soliloquies, the asides in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, or when Thomas à Becket is visited by tempters out of his own psyche in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Usually, however, theatre allows us no look behind the mask. So if one's notion of integrity is strongly inward or subjective, any outward act or self-referring statement that signifies integrity may be systematically doubted as to its truth, authenticity, or "sincerity."

A. *Murder in the Cathedral*

Eliot's play dramatizes the public as well as personal character of integrity and the relational nature of identity. In Thomas à Becket's actions, integrity of self and integrity with one's religious and vocational identity are seen to coincide, and their coincidence is the play's principal source of dramatic interest. But only if Thomas's "self" is understood as a dynamic intersection of cultural, vocational, and social relationships, may we judge this play dramatically sound. Elder Olson, for one, asks why anyone should believe Thomas's great claim to have overcome the fourth temptation, "to do the right deed for the wrong reason."⁴ Thomas is claiming to have successfully defeated spiritual pride, to be acting, in short, with integrity. Yet by the end of Part I, when he says this, we have not seen what he has actually done to enact the *right* reason. Unlike narrative, lyric poetry, and even film, live theatre demands that in some fashion a character's subjectivity literally be made visible on stage. So if we believe Thomas, it is because Eliot's theatrical art has made Thomas's complex identity directly visible to the audience. His integrity has been dramatized.

Theatre has no special view of the inward self or Freudian ego. But it does have *entrée* to a relational view of selfhood closer to what we find in William James or Erik Erikson⁵ and which in a sense may be both classical and postmodern. The relational self is "spread out" among its relationships with others, with history and

⁴T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1935). See Elder Olson, *Tragedy and the Theory of Drama* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1966) 251-55.

⁵See Don S. Browning, *Pluralism and Personality: William James and Some Contemporary Cultures of Philosophy* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University, 1980).

tradition, even with nature. Its integrity is the enactment of an integrated character or ethos, an identity constituted not primarily by inward self-relatedness but by the dynamic, intersecting relations with which we are always struggling to keep in continuity. When plays examine the actions and speech, the successes and failures of such characters—who are played by living selves in real space and time—they dramatize this relational model of the self.

If the audience is to believe Thomas's claim to have discovered his integrity it must actually see him enact the religious, vocational, and social relations that constitute and reshape his character in the midst of crisis. These relations must be seen to motivate his actions, and these relations are in turn intensified and transformed by his actions. I mean the word "seeing" both

literally and figuratively: we understand Thomas because we see on stage the people, the symbols and vocational roles, and some of the deeds that constitute the dynamic formation of his self. The first three tempters represent the allure of temporal advantage that Thomas has already overcome. And we must grant that for Thomas the “right deed” is not in question, for his episcopal office demands that he resist the temporal powers and his own cautious priests, even at the risk of his office and his life. If the play succeeds as drama, if it brings Thomas to some crux of action and circumstance, then the temptation to seek the glory of a martyr must be a real threat to Thomas’s integrity, and his response to it must entail an enlargement and completion of his character.

The religious paradigms that constitute Thomas’s identity are united in the symbol of the eternal “still point”—around which pivot other symbols of the self-sacrificial actions of Christian redemption.⁶ Thomas, as priest and as archbishop, enacts these symbols as a representative of Christ. This is confirmed most sharply when the fourth tempter repeats back to him his assessment of the chorus, the women of Canterbury, as an assessment of Thomas: “You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer. / You know and do not know, that action is suffering, / and suffering action....” Further, these paradigms, with their Christic center, are manifest in the whole liturgical environment of this play, in which Eliot attempts to dramatize an intersection of the eternal and temporal upon a stage, within a church, before an audience whose members are likely to be both secular and Christian.

The vocational relations of Thomas’s public self arise from his commitment symbolically and, if required, practically to re-enact the drama of Christ. This vocational commitment is important for understanding why the two acts of the play are divided by a homily, whose themes have been recognized as crucial for assessing Thomas’s action. Since the homily is a ritual as well as a discourse, its meaning is effected as much by its performance as by its words. As discourse, the homily proclaims the “right reason” that should motivate Thomas. Mourning and grief intermingle when Christians contemplate the birth and death of Christ, and martyrs are made by the design of God, never the design of individuals. But the more dramatic reason why the sermon may persuade us that Thomas acts with integrity is this: the sermon is itself an action.

In preaching—as in saying mass and unbaring the cathedral door—Thomas

⁶See Louis L. Martz, “The Wheel and the Point: Aspects of Imagery and Theme in Eliot’s Later Poetry,” in *Sewanee Review* 55 (1947) 126-47, and William V. Spanos, *The Christian Tradition in Modern British Verse Drama: The Poetics of Sacramental Time* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1967) 88-89.

is visibly performing his pastoral vocation in an extraordinary way. He teaches and preaches in the midst of a crisis where complacency would be the safer path. His words connect his own vocation with that of Christ, St. Stephen, and Canterbury’s martyr, Elphege, which effectively enlarges his personal horizon as he conforms himself to the church’s ritual patterns and moral demands. The homily is an instance of what J. L. Austin calls “performative” speech and Aristotle calls argument from ethos or character (as opposed to “logical” or “emotional” arguments). Its very language and form are what elicit our trust in Thomas’s character, and its ritual occasion effectively creates a new situation of accountability between the speaker and his audience. In preaching, Thomas performs his vocation and reconstitutes his self. And as listeners in the theatre, enacting the role of Thomas’s congregation, we too become included in the drama of dynamic relationships that, at this moment, *is* Thomas’s character.

One more aspect of Thomas's ethos that elicits our trust is his capacity for self-negation, which we see in his responses to those in his community most dependent upon him, the women of Canterbury. Francis Fergusson observed that their long lament at the end of Part I, after the speeches of the tempters and the priests but before Thomas's conclusive reply, is strategic for Thomas's discovery of the right reason.⁷ The women are "living and partly living," fatalistic about nature and history; they plead that their marginal livelihood needs the protection that their archbishop can give them only if he survives, even as an exile in France. But Thomas, poised to answer the last temptation, recognizes that what they need more fundamentally is salvation. Thus, we see his integrity—his conforming himself to the right reason as well as the right deed—in his acknowledging that accountability to the powerless and poor is also demanded by the design of God.

If we perceive these relations of social and religious identity intersecting with theatrical immediacy, right before our eyes, then we may indeed believe Thomas: "Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain." We need no interior view, unless skeptical sensibilities forbid us to believe in what we see.

Of course, the kind of symbolic action that Eliot creates in *Murder in the Cathedral* is perhaps an anomaly, for the shared traditions and expectations that make Thomas's action comprehensible are a product of Christian not modern culture. Modern audiences may say that what interests them about Thomas is more his projection of an independent and autonomous self at great risk than the way he enacts vocational paradigms. For instance, S. M. Halloran considers that in classical rhetoric effective argument from ethos was created by a speaker's embodiment of the best aspirations of a tradition shared with the audience, which could well include religious and moral as well as cultural paradigms. This essentially describes Thomas's sermon. But in a modern culture of fragmentation, isolation and, I would add, pluralism, "ethos is generated by the seriousness and passion with which the speaker articulates his own world, the degree to which he is willing and able to make his world open to the other, and thus to the possibility of rupture."⁸ By this reading, integrity is less a matter of existential self-consistency than of risk and willingness to change in the face of severe inconsistency. Yet even here, the existential self, whose "wholeness" may derive in part from a recognition of its own

⁷Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1949) 215.

⁸S. M. Halloran, "On the End of Rhetoric, Classical and Modern," *College English* 36 (1975) 621-630.

fragmentation, cannot embody such integrity apart from many intersecting relationships with history and culture, with others, and with anticipations of the future—however much these relations may be fragmentary and fraught with uncertainty and doubt. The stability or survival of such a self in a broken symbolic universe can make for a very interesting dramatic problem, as in Jean Anouilh's version of the Becket story.

B. Becket, Or the Honor of God

Ostensibly, the drama of vocational integrity in Anouilh's *Becket, Or the Honor of God* is the same as in Eliot's. Becket tells Henry, "I am waiting for the honor of God and the honor of the King to become one."⁹ But Becket dramatizes the impact of signs, symbols, and roles upon a self whose time in history and whose very identity have been displaced. Becket says that "there is

a gap in me where my honor ought to be.” His self finally seems absurdly established by external circumstances and an arbitrarily assumed vocational paradigm. Seemingly, Becket can perform with integrity any role given him, but apart from such external roles—the “labels” without which, he says, “the world would have no shape”—he has no sense of self at all. That as Archbishop of Canterbury, Anouilh’s Becket can defy his friend Henry II is an achievement that is marginal and more fraught with pathos than that of Eliot’s Thomas. The play asks us to decide whether or not such an attenuated self is still, nonetheless, a self.

I am inclined to say it is—that even when I cannot say with conviction who I am, it is no small achievement if I discover what ought to be done and do it. I may still act with integrity, if in acting my character is established or reestablished in its relations with others. And it is this sense of being-in-relation that saves integrity from the kind of moral neutrality where even a “sincere” or self-consistent thief or tyrant could be said to have honor or integrity. In Anouilh’s *Becket*, as in *Murder in the Cathedral*, there is a link between the authenticity of Becket’s act of integrity and the welfare of the powerless, namely, the Saxon peasants. Becket, as archbishop, does manage to connect the honor of God and the honor of the realm with the dignity of the poor, and he can do so precisely because Anouilh, contrary to the fact that the historical Becket was Norman, makes the Saxons a fragment of Becket’s own history and identity. No more than a fragment, to be sure, but a fragment sufficiently valued to root his fragile self in the common ground of human embodiment as well as in abstract signs of honor.

Becket is a rather extreme case of not knowing one’s self but acting nonetheless—extreme in that Becket has a rather absurdist view of the Christian burden he has shouldered. He cannot say he loves God, but he has “learned to love the honor of God.” So the play is also asking whether we can act with integrity not only if we doubt who we are but also doubt our belief in the paradigm of our action. One answer would be to take a clue from Victor Turner on the way in which root paradigms and symbols shape character. They do so not deterministically but interactively. In “liminal” situations, where identity and possibilities are confused (e.g., Thomas à Becket’s near despair at the Council of Northampton), we may find ourselves having to respond innovatively to the traditions and relations that inter-

⁹Jean Anouilh, *Becket, Or the Honor of God* (New York: Signet, 1960).

sect our lives.¹⁰ Thus, doubt becomes a condition for renewed belief. But another, more difficult answer, is that the full measure of our actions with others—the full extent of our selves—must await the unfolding of time and may be better seen from perspectives we do not share. At a given moment we may know intuitively that integrity means accountability to a host of intersecting relationships: with history and tradition, family and friends and nation, other communities and strange others, nature and spirit future possibilities and foreclosures, the complex circumstances at hand, and the vocational paradigms that shape our sense of moral imperative and ultimate meaning. But we also know that we never know enough—never know what all is entailed in these myriad interrelations, never know the effects of the actions we take in spite of our ignorance. In these ways, our integrity may be discerned only in the future, and not always by ourselves.

C. *Silence*

Let us consider Shusaku Endo’s *Silence*, a novel of the Christian mission in 17th-century

Japan during a period of severe persecution. Two Portuguese Jesuits, among them one Sebastian, arrive secretly to investigate unbelievable reports of the apostasy of their mentor, Fr. Ferreira (whose own story has some historical basis). Before they separate, they contact a Christian underground capable of great courage and sacrifice, yet which seems to them unable to comprehend the Christian faith—especially the meaning of divine transcendence and salvation. Sebastian must helplessly watch Japanese Christians undergo most horrible episodes of martyrdom, and it appears to him that in Japan God has become silent. It seems all the more so when he is confronted by a diabolical method of torture calculated to show that the more faithful a missionary is to his mission, the more suffering is inflicted upon Japanese Christians.

It is often remarked how similar *Silence* is to Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. But Endo plots his own course after Sebastian is imprisoned and at last meets the apostate Ferreira. Cooperating with the Japanese, Ferreira tells him what he himself has sometimes imagined, that Japan is a "terrible swamp" in which Christianity cannot take root; what the Christians there really believe is more Buddhist than Christian. "The Japanese cannot think of anything that transcends the human....[They] imagine a beautiful exalted man—and this they call God." Until Sebastian apostatizes, by trampling upon a filthy bronze icon bearing the image of Christ, he is made to listen to the moaning of tortured Japanese. There comes a moment when he hears Christ speaking, "Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross."¹¹

What does the reader make of this? Does the crisis of integrity turn upon trampling or not trampling? Upon a symbol that is self-negating? Upon whether an act of faith is an act of betrayal or an act of betrayal an act of faith? Upon whether the words of Jesus are but the rationalizations of someone in despair? Upon whether Christianity can maintain its own integrity in an alien place?

What makes *Silence* particularly "dramatic" is the way its narrative voice changes. First we hear Sebastian's own voice in entries from his diary, then the

¹⁰See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1974), especially chapter 2 on Thomas à Becket.

¹¹Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (New York: Taplinger, 1976) 229, 259.

voice of someone else who has fashioned reports about Sebastian into a coherent narrative. The last chapters are fragments from the diaries of Dutch traders and Japanese officials who have occasion to hear of Sebastian throughout the remainder of his life. As the narrators recede further into the distance, what we see of Sebastian—whose vocation may seem a failure to himself and to those around him—is placed in a much more expansive surrounding. We see him in a Japan where Christians managed to sustain themselves in innovative ways, where priests continued to come and were arrested, where bounties were placed upon the heads of weak and strong Christians who were believers or who had wanted to believe. We see, as if from the view of eternity, many intersections and relations that comprise an imitation of Christ recognizable, perhaps, only from such distance.

If Sebastian has acted with integrity, it is because he found his best self not behind the role given him but through it. Imitating Christ always means willingness to relinquish self-possession. Sebastian, who all his life had been possessed by the image of Christ, finds that this

image demands giving up his vocation—in all its normal guises. Sebastian finds a way to conform himself to a paradigm of *kenosis*, in which his vocation—not his life—is emptied into the world. In fact, if integrity is understood as our accountability to many traditions, roles, and intersecting relations, then some notion of self-critical negation—of losing oneself to find oneself—may be indispensable.

We often speak as if our true self is behind the masks we offer to the world. We often speak as if playing a role were hypocritical. Of course it may well be—if we have not made the role our own, if it is fraught with evil or injustice, if it denies our accountability to the other both as other and as neighbor. But in live theatre, an actress may find that she is most herself when she has so mastered her part that she can lose herself in the interplay of other actors who are creating the performance. It is through interpreting the part that she makes the part her own. This sentiment is expressed by those who seem most completely themselves when caught up in patterns of work or avocation, especially when the patterns interact with others in more than routine ways. Often, in meditation, we search *within* ourselves, it is true—we seek the center of our self-relations. But in so doing, we usually meditate on something other than ourselves, something not behind but beyond our faces.

It is only in the risk of self that we transcend the risk of narcissism. It is only in risking our own horizons of understanding that genuine encounter with others is possible—much as Bultmann says of the hermeneutical circle that defines understanding and as Buber says of the ephemeral I-Thou relationship that defines our very humanness. It is true that from particular historical and religious traditions we receive the parts and possibilities that shape our identities. But the virtue of integrity in a world that comprises a pluralism of cultures cannot only be a matter of rediscovering our selves in the stories of our tribe, nor only achieving personal wholeness in the midst of chaos. Integrity is both of these, surely. But both accomplishments will be quite futile unless we also learn the skills of living in the world as fellow interpreters to each other, translators amid the many stories and languages we share with our neighbors in the same geographical and cultural space.

D. The Fifth Sun

Immediately upon the assassination in 1980 of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, comparisons were made to the martyrdom of Thomas à Becket. Romero

was killed in a chapel, at an altar, as he elevated the chalice, having delivered a homily on death, peace, and justice. Once again, an actor in a liturgical drama suddenly became a player in a historical drama, which in turn lent itself to theatrical dramatization. A number of plays have been created since then, and among the first was an unpublished piece by Chicago playwright Nicholas Patricca. *The Fifth Sun* premiered at the Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago in 1984. The title was taken from Mayan Indian mythology, which functions in the play to establish Romero's Christian drama of integrity in a pluralistic cultural and religious context.

Ostensibly, the plot concerns the political and spiritual “education” of Romero, his identification with powerless victims of atrocity and privation, and his strategy of nonviolence that puts him on an inevitable path toward assassination. But Patricca intensified the structure of the drama by placing the whole story in a ritual framework comprising both Mayan and Christian

symbols, which are the play's real source of theatrical energy. Aside from Romero and his staff, the only other actors on stage are four elaborately robed, painted, and masked guardians, or "Suns," who are "the four compass points of the Mayan-Nahuan cosmos [and] the elemental forces of guardians of the Indian world."¹² The belief is that a "Fifth Sun," who gives life to the human world, arises in each age through a perfect, voluntary sacrifice.

The real plot, then, is the four guardians' preparation of Romero to become, through sacrifice, the Fifth Sun. The actors who play the guardians also assume the roles of all the other minor characters in the play, creating the dramatic impression that the guardians are indeed the remote, underlying protagonists who guard and guide nature and culture in the geographic and spiritual milieu of Central America. In its theatrical milieu—secular and probably not predisposed to Christian universalism—the use of an alien religious motif in conjunction with Christian paradigms give Romero's action and ethos an intrinsically pluralistic character which bears on how his integrity becomes dramatically visible. As he speaks performatively from his pastoral and episcopal office, he is also seen to be faithful to another vocation of which he is completely unaware and which places him in timeless solidarity with those who are guarded by the Fifth Sun. We see what he cannot see, that through his self-transcendently Christian symbolic action, Romero crosses the limit of his particularly Christian historical horizon.

E. Mass

Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Schwartz's *Mass* is a limiting case in which the possibility of personal integrity and the meaningfulness of religious tradition have been foreclosed in the community in which a priest attempts to mediate grace. *Mass* is a drama insofar as the celebrant is engaged in a kind of liturgical conflict with his congregation. The parishioners suffer doubt about what they believe, anxiety about the world, and are unable to assert the integrity of head and heart or of style and content. Between them and the celebrant a breach has opened; as it widens he tries anxiously to close it by frequent and insistent calls to prayer. But his conflict with the faithlessness and hopelessness of his disillusioned parish finally leads him to confront the same emptiness within himself. When he smashes the host and chalice and rips apart his vestments, his is a loss of integrated selfhood and a

¹²Nicholas Patricca, *The Fifth Sun* (photocopy privately circulated by the author, 1984).

breaking of the symbolic paradigms that have intersected his character and community.

Oh I suddenly feel every step I've ever taken,
And my legs are lead
And I suddenly see every hand I've ever shaken,
And my arms are dead
I feel every psalm that I've ever sung
Turn to wormwood on my tongue.¹³

And the end of the *Mass*, when reintegration is achieved, it is an amorphous, pluralistic community of singers, dancers, and musicians that revives the spiritually wrecked celebrant. The community has assumed his priestly vocation. He rejoins them not as pastor but as a divested

singer who is invited and accepted into the common ethos of holiness that appears in the theatrical space consecrated by the “secret song” of the boy soprano. As the celebrant’s religious vocation is displaced, theatrical vocation is asserted and transformed into a ritual for the apparently religious benefit of an audience who attends this *Mass* for largely aesthetic and secular reasons.

Mass is subtitled “A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers,” and in part it is the tradition of theatre—of individual and ensemble performance and the common ethos of singers and players loyal to given roles and voices—that makes *Mass* an unusual yet trustworthy image of selfhood and integrity. But that is not all. *Mass* enacts another instance of a pastor finding himself in losing himself, another case in which Christian paradigms are most effective in their fragmentation and self-negation. The celebrant’s integrity depends upon his establishing through his pastoral actions visible connections with those who are powerless, alienated, or disenfranchised. His broken sacrament is strangely effective, for his parish finds in it the grace to enact their parts as priests and pastors to one another.

¹³Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Schwartz, *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* (New York: Columbia Records, 1971).