

*Redemption Reception: Body and Soul in Medieval Morality Play "Mankind"*

Presenter Abbey Mason, English major

Mentored by Dr. Leah Haught

In the middle ages it was a common construct to believe that the body and the soul were two separate faculties, but some medieval Christians held that the body was somehow inherently more sinful, or at least more capable of sin, than the soul. The primary vehicle I will use to explore this notion of the sinfulness of the body and the purity of the soul more thoroughly is the play, *Mankind*. *Mankind* is a medieval morality play; it consists of personified vices and virtues and a main character named Mankind, who is pretty clearly a stand-in for every man (the reader) and goes through a series of trial. It is ironic that *Mankind* is named a morality play seeing as it centers around the very religious notion of Christ's prevailing mercy in the lives of those willing to accept him. Ultimately, in *Mankind*, both body and soul are evidently stained by sin, and thus exist as separate entities, but as evidenced by the conclusion of the play can be united by their need for and reception of spiritual redemption. Since the play offers ideas of freedom held by Christianity, *Mankind* leaves the reader, who has likely identified with Mankind in some way, with a feeling of hope and a clear path towards redemption.