

## **The Working Together of Root and Sky: Christopher Fry's *The Boy with the Cart***

“The period (except in a strictly historical play) is merely the colour on the brush: the extra illumination of the idea. I do not believe that audiences as a whole disassociate themselves because the clothes on the stage are different from the clothes on their backs, so long as thought and language are contemporary. Neither do I think the audiences have any difficulty in accepting poetry as the natural idiom of a play which is dressed and housed in the current fashion.”—“Poetry and Drama”

Should Fry's one-act *The Boy with the Cart* be considered “a strictly historical play”? (cf. 120)

### The Structure

The Prologue: sets up the thematic considerations and the chief dilemma of root (our bodily and social existence) cooperating with sky (the divine will and power).

The Episodes

1. Innocence: Cuthbert trusts God to guard his sheep.
2. Sorrow: Cuthbert learns of the death of his father and the loss of his farm.
3. Faith: Cuthbert builds a cart, so his mother and he may journey.
4. Divine Call: Cuthbert and his mother are defended by God, and Cuthbert realizes his mission to build a church.
5. Arrival: Cuthbert and his mother are received in Steyning.
6. Vindication: The Fipps brothers are yoked by Cuthbert, and their mother is blown away by God's action.
7. Incarnation: Cuthbert witnesses a miracle as Christ the carpenter appears to place the king-post.

The Epilogue: confronts modern audiences with the conditions of the modern world and its need to humble itself and enter the house of God to discern something beyond itself.

### **Discussion Questions**

- How does Cuthman mature throughout the play?
- What role does the chorus serve?
- How would you characterize Cuthman's mother?
- How would you describe the tone of the play? How important is it to its meaning?
- What are the play's key metaphors? What purpose do they serve?
- What is Cuthbert's life to teach us?