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Shakespeare's "Removed Mysteries"*

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Maurice Hunt persuades me in "Old England, Nostalgia, and the 'Warwickshire' of Shakespeare's Mind" that several details in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might have been prompted by one of Shakespeare's own early Warwickshire experiences, a summer pageant in 1575 at Kenilworth. I disagree, however, with his suggestion that such Warwickshire memories manifest themselves only in the early plays. Perdita's reference to "Whitsun pastorals" (*WT* 4.4.134) reminds us that the mental landscape of Shakespeare's past is still composed, as late as the romances, of memories of local drama, probably in this case the mystery plays which were performed during Whitsuntide.[1] Reginald Ingram and many other scholars have shown us that the Coventry mystery plays, or Whitsun plays, as they were sometimes called, were still being performed until 1579, when Shakespeare was just Perdita's age. Since the other mystery cycles were also suppressed during the 1570s, it is most likely that Shakespeare saw them performed during his teenage years. Coventry is of course just a day's walk from Stratford, and it is hard to imagine England's greatest playwright not going to see England's greatest mystery cycle.[2] But to me it is the informing presence of details from those plays in Shakespeare's major tragedies that suggests most persuasively that Shakespeare knew them intimately. I am currently investigating the ways in which the Herod plays and the mysteries of the "Troubles" and the "Trials" of Joseph and Mary may have influenced Shakespeare's representation of Macbeth and his exploration of the tensions between Desdemona and Othello. I have just argued that the art, the theology, and the drama of the Annunciation

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informs Shakespeare's representation of Hamlet's misogyny as well as his tormented sense of moral responsibility and moral confusion. *King Lear*, too, glances with informed anachronism at the "side-piercing sight" of Crucifixion art, theology and drama, especially as the play explores the extraordinary suffering of the old king and the extraordinary empathy of witnesses of that suffering, people like Edgar, Kent and Cordelia.[3] Before we close our book on Shakespeare's possible Warwickshire memories, I think we should look more closely at the connotations of these possible allusions to religious art, and particularly to the mystery plays, in the great tragedies.[4]

While several critics have noticed that Herod and Macbeth both order a slaughter of innocents in a vain and futile attempt to preserve kingships threatened by prophecies, Herod and the Herod plays of Shakespeare's youth leave a richer and a more dynamic legacy in *Macbeth* than we have previously understood.[5] The witches' presentation of a line of kings that stretches out even to the crack of doom may be seen, for example, to echo and outdo the *ordo prophetarum* or line of prophets and kings which bludgeons Herod into accepting the promised Messiah and his own consequent overthrow.[6] And when Macbeth struts and frets in response to the prophecies and messages of his doom, he also shares the stage with the raging, boasting bluster of the comic Herod and his futile attempts to deny his own inevitable overthrow. "The Shearman and Taylor's Pageant," which contained the Herod material at Coventry, has a long procession of "profits," plus the boasting and then the fearful Herod that so often parallels and influences Macbeth in all his glory (and inglory). David Staines and Robert Weimann agree that the influence of the mystery plays made the "grandiose epithets," the "grotesque boasting and ranting," the non-canonical wrath and rage become "almost proverbial attributes" of the foolish and the fearsome Herod.[7] The *Chester* figure characteristically boasts of his powers over the sun, the moon and the rain (ll. 171, 175-77). The "mightiest conqueror" of the *Coventry* "Pageant" proclaims: "For I am evyn he thatt made bothe hevin and hell, / And of my myghte powar holdith up this world rownd." He calls himself "the cawse of this grett lyght and thunder" as well as earthquakes and clouds, "prynce . . . of purgatorre and cheff capten of hell," adding: "All the whole world . . . /

I ma tham dystroie with won worde of my mowthe."[8] *York*'s Herod boasts that all the planets are his subjects, and includes under his heavenly dominance "Blonderande þer blastis, to blaw when I bidde."[9] The ironic impotence of these claims is manifest in their outrageous impossibility, like the threats of an evil Sheriff of Nottingham in a Robin Hood pantomime, at which even the children can hiss their disapproval.

Herod's boastfulness must lurk behind Macbeth's more frightening rant about his own powers when he tells Lady Macbeth that he would

> . . . let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly. . . . (3.2.16-19).

His rhetoric almost convinces us of his potential to reduce the frame of things to chaos, shake heaven and earth (or heaven and hell) to their very foundations. But we know at the same time that Macbeth cannot even command his dreams to stop, for all his ranting. These are words of desperation, not power. Nor can he, despite his sonorous and ominous greeting to the witches in 4.1, control any more than Herod the wind or the waves, earthquakes and floods and seasons, the very principles of created matter:

> Though you untie the winds and let them fight
> Against the churches, though the yesty waves
> Confound and swallow navigation up,
> Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down,
> Though castles topple on their warders' heads,
> Though palaces and pyramids do slope
> Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
> Of nature's germens tumble all together
> Even till destruction sicken, answer me
> To what I ask you (4.1.52-61).

Macbeth's ironic disadvantage is even greater than Herod's because there is such a discrepancy between his powerful poetry and his cosmic impotence. The Coventry records also contain many references to the costs of repairing Herod's helm, scepter, crest, falchion, and gown, all details

indicating a frantic, furious dressing and undressing that I think might have influenced Macbeth's own nervous commands to Seyton about arming and disarming himself in his final hour upon the stage.[10]

Shakespeare reveals in other plays his considerable knowledge of the Herod figure from the mysteries. Hamlet uses the name as the theatrical eponym for overacting: "It out-Herods Herod" (3.2.13). Henry V overcomes Harfleur by threatening to match the deeds and to reproduce the visual and audible effects of Herod's cruel slaughter of the innocents even as he imitates the ranting tyrant with his own purposeful overacting:

> Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
> Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
> Do break the clouds as did the wives of Jewry
> At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen (3.3.38-41).

Mrs. Ford's "What a Herod of Jewry is this" (2.1.19) probably associates Falstaff's preposterous love letters and the equally preposterous self-image which wrote them with Herod's over-inflated ego and his usual obliviousness to the possibility of failure.[11] Of the three references, only this last seems to refer to a general understanding of the Herod figure rather than a specific reference to his strutting and fretting theatrical representation. That the remnants of the Coventry cycle reproduced in the Craig edition also contain the pageants of nine worthies, obviously reminiscent of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and a reference to "two worms of conscience" new to the cycle in 1561, just three years before Shakespeare's birth, reinforce our sense that Shakespeare's Warwickshire memory bank included a rich array of such deposits.[12] Margaret's prophecy against Richard, "The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul" (1.3.222), could be one of the early withdrawals.

The mysteries lie just as clearly behind Shakespeare's representation of Othello's distrust, Iago's detraction, and Emilia's and Desdemona's responses. In fact, the "open relish and obscene repartee" of the detractors,[13] Joseph's evidence and his expressed doubts, Mary's protestations of innocence and her vigorous defense by an Emilia-like maid, and a final clarifying trial and judgment all invite us to consider the ways in which these "Troubles" and this "Trial" might clarify and intensify our

sense of Shakespeare's treatment of analogous material. Most of the cycles represent Joseph's suspicions about Mary's pregnancy, his complaints about being an old man with a young wife, and his concerns about his lost reputation. *York*, however, is unique in representing the Puella's courage in the face of Joseph's threatening interrogation, a role in which she anticipates and often parallels Emilia. Though I would not trade away the mystery of Iago's iniquity to make this point, I suspect that part of his motiveless malignity, and part of Don John's too, lies in the transparent theatricality of their predecessors' generic evil and their gleeful detraction of Mary. To give just three examples, Iago is given lines like "That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit" (2.1.281) as he tests the plausibility of his slander. The second detractor in the N-Town "Trial" anticipates him: "Be my trewth al may wel be, / For fresch and fayr she is to syght. / And such a mursel, as semyth me, / Wolde cause a ȝonge man to haue delyght." The gleeful detractors also enjoy taunting the court and Joseph too with their reminders that "A ȝonge man may do more chere in bedde / To a ȝonge wench þan may an olde" and the "olde cokolde" cannot enjoy the "fresche wench." They go so far as to delight in the young virgin's unseemly sexuality, as in "Such a ȝonge damesel of bewté bryght, / And of schap so comely also / Of hire tayle ofte-tyme be lyght / And rygh tekyl vndyr þe too" ("right ticklish," Block, p. 399). Iago cynically and gleefully juxtaposes Desdemona's youth ("She must change for youth") with their lack of "sympathy in years" and Othello's "weak function." He also suggests that Desdemona is "inviting," "full of game," and delights in "the act of sport," and he urges her "fresh appetite" and "history of lust and foul thoughts." "Blessed fig's-end" indeed.[14]

Such close parallels enhance even more crucial differences, however, since the angel who assures Joseph of Mary's innocence and the magic potion which proves her guiltless at the trial are replaced in *Othello* by the evil angel Iago and the lost handkerchief. In *Othello*, prayers and protestations to heaven are as frequent as they are in the "Trials" and "Troubles" plays, but they are always ineffective. Falsehood and truth are not made plain until it is too late to save any of the principals. Even when Othello asks "Are there no stones in heaven / But what serves for the thunder?" (5.2.235-36), Iago remains standing in defiance. The many

Marian signs Othello might find in Desdemona are difficult to read, and do not "mend him of his misse."

When Polonius instructs Ophelia to hold a book when Hamlet discovers her, some critics and directors agree that he contrives her visual similitude to representations of the Virgin at the moment of the Annunciation. Once again, however, little has been done with this inviting allusion to related art, the mysteries, and theological controversies.[15] Polonius calls this image "devotion's visage." Claudius ironically reinforces the connection to religious art by speaking in immediate response of the "painted words" and "plastering art" of their false iconography here. Hamlet's taunting of Polonius with words like "God-kissing carrion" and "Let her not walk i'th'sun. Conception is a blessing," helps us see something of the misogyny and the moral disillusionment that also lie ironically behind this network of Annunciation imagery in *Hamlet*. Claudius's "painted words," like Hamlet's taunts, both suggest the ribboned words of Gabriel's greeting to Mary and the frescos and wall paintings which so often embodied them. Among those words are Gabriel's "Behold the Virgin shall conceive" and Mary's acquiescent and graceful response "Let it be," a phrase Hamlet may finally also echo as he nears his own tragic end both acquiescent and confused. But though a young Shakespeare could have seen many of the Annunciation motifs I think he played with in *Hamlet* in both the Warwickshire art that survived the iconoclasts' fury and in the representation of Gabriel's greeting and Mary's response in the Coventry Pageant,[16] it is likely that he also used newer motifs from Northern Renaissance art that he probably did not see in person. Since reformation art and reformation iconoclasm, not to mention disputes about Mary's complex role as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, all continued into Shakespeare's adulthood, it is not surprising that such motifs were in the air and on the tongue in London, if not always in the eye or on the wall. The Tudor queens also controversially appropriated Annunciation imagery into their own royal iconography.[17] Controversy, suppression, destruction and reappropriation all have a way of underlining, making prominent and fascinating, the very things they try to destroy. But none of this precludes the likelihood of an earlier planting of these Annunciation images and ideas in Shakespeare's fertile imagination.

My sense of the broad fields in time and space from which Shakespeare might have drawn his memories of these Annunciation motifs carries over into the other tragedies, especially when the influences stem more from the "discourses" of art and theology than from the mysteries. Edgar's "side-piercing sight" allusion (4.6.85) invites his audience to consider in *King Lear*, remember and process, the associations they would draw between both Edgar and Lear and the crucified and suffering Christ of art, theology, and the mysteries.[18] To be fair, there is no extant Coventry play of Christ's Passion, though of course there would have been such a play, and three of the four we have contain a speaking Longinus, compassionate and contrite, his sight, intriguingly, restored by Christ's blood.[19] The allusion also has no neat or necessary connection to the surviving crucifixion art in Warwickshire. Much of that art depicts Longinus holding the spear at the Crucifixion, but none of it contains the very traditional image of the pelican, which Shakespeare obviously knows as well since he invitingly paints it into his anachronistically pre-Christian canvas with Lear's reference to his "pelican daughters." Christ's humiliations and the more literal instruments of His passion are lavishly enacted in the mysteries, but His possible despair of God's presence and grace, a motif whose associations also seem to inform Lear's despair, Edgar's, and Gloucester's, is much more common in the theological discourse of writers like Calvin, Andrewes, and Donne than it is in the cycle plays. Even when the mysteries may stand directly behind Shakespeare's representations of Lear, as when the First Torturer in the Towneley/Wakefield "Buffeting of Christ" mocks Christ because "the elementys," "the wyndes" and "the firmamente" are not "hym obeyng tyll," other narrative versions compete for influence. Gower's Nebuchadnezzar is also made humble amidst "the hevenliche myht" of the storm, so that when Lear speaks of the "good divinity" "When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not cease at my bidding," he could be referring to either 'source,' or even more likely the general folk tradition of the unholy wild man cured through humiliation.[20] This kind of allusion is richer in its connotations than the more direct and more exclusive references to the mysteries in *Macbeth* and *Othello*, but it is also almost impossible to 'date,' since its texts are printed rather than performative.

Clifford Davidson tells us that Shakespeare's father "was recorded as chamberlain [of the Guild Chapel, Stratford] to have covered over the controversial wall paintings" of several saints and a last judgment, apparently "forced to conform in 1563-4," the year of Shakespeare's birth, to the new regulations about religious art.[21] This is a devastating personal detail of Reformation iconoclasm, and I find numerous possible references to it in Shakespeare's tragedies at moments of transition and sacrilege. "Is this the promised end, / Or image of that horror" is the question raised by both Edgar and Kent just after the apocalyptic last battle and Cordelia's execution, and just before Lear's death to come. Macduff too recalls "the great doom's image" when he witnesses to the "most sacrilegious murder [that] hath broke ope / The Lord's annointed temple, and stole thence, / The life o'th'building."[22] Macduff even refers to the image of Duncan's murder as Confusion's "masterpiece." When Hamlet, furious about what he vaguely calls his mother's "act" or "deed" against his father, suggests that heaven and earth would "glow" "With heated visage, as against the doom," "thought-sick at the act" (3.4.41, 46, 49-52), he too arguably compares their faces to those agonized souls represented in Last Judgments. Othello recalls the same iconography more than once in his final act, most clearly when he predicts his own damnation:

> When we shall meet at compt,
> This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
> And fiends will snatch at it . . . .
> Whip me, ye devils,
> From the possession of this heavenly sight!
> Blow me about in winds! Roast me in sulphur!
> Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! (5.2.274-81)

Here Othello transforms the Marian figure usually depicted in Last Judgment art near the top of the triangle of judgment, interceding for sinners at Christ's right hand, into the condemning god of judgment, just as earlier he has tried to paint Desdemona among the damned by calling her "a liar gone to burning hell" in response to her graceful intervention on his behalf at the moment of her death.[23] This repeated underlining of the 'image' rather than merely the idea of doomsday, last judgment,

suggests though of course it does not prove the continuing power of the memory from Shakespeare's childhood of this desecrated religious image.

This complex interplay of past and present, local and universal, persistently engages me when I try to attribute details in the mature plays to "the Warwickshire of Shakespeare's memory." Some connections are more solid than others. If we accept Hunt's demonstration of parallels between the Kenilworth entertainment of 1575 and details in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we are persuaded to assume a direct connection between a specific experience early in Shakespeare's life and passages in the play. The entertainment only occurred once. If we affirm an influence from the mysteries of the Herod figure on Macbeth, or of Joseph and Mary on Othello and Desdemona, it is likewise logical to assume that the young Shakespeare saw the Coventry plays, since the mysteries were all officially suppressed by the time Shakespeare was fifteen. We are on more slippery ground when we connect Shakespeare's apparent preoccupation with what he repeatedly refers to as 'images' of the Last Judgment with his knowledge that his father was forced to cover that wall painting in the Guild Chapel in 1563-64. But it seems plausible to me that that erasure which Shakespeare would surely have heard about during his childhood, that remembered absence, could have become a powerful presence in his later works. If Hunt and Fraser are right that Shakespeare would have walked through Banbury each time he returned to Stratford from London, Shakespeare is even more likely to have remembered, since Banbury was one of the centers of iconoclastic fury into the early seventeenth century.[24]

I am less confident that we can connect Shakespeare's use of Annunciation motifs in *Hamlet* and Crucifixion motifs in *King Lear* to some set of Warwickshire remembrances. Davidson shows survivals in Warwickshire of Annunciations and Crucifixions despite the destruction and suppression of religious iconography during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, but of course such representations also survived elsewhere in England. Mary's and Joseph's representation in the York and N-Town mysteries of the "Troubles of Joseph" and "Trials of Mary and Joseph" also seem much more directly influential than the more local Coventry plays in Shakespeare's representation of Othello's distrust, Iago's detraction, and Emilia's and Desdemona's responses. We have, of course, only two of the Coventry

plays, but Shakespeare must have seen in Coventry something like the York or the N-Town versions of the Mary and Joseph plays, as well as the Coventry representations of Christ's suffering and death. In fact, since the N-Town play was apparently sometimes an itinerant cycle, it too could have been put on near Stratford during Shakespeare's youth. There is another remote but unsettling possibility. Leeds Barroll has recently reconstructed the "poor fortunes" of Shakespeare's company during the "twelve successive months of theatre closings from plague: April 1603 to April 1604." Barroll also shows that Shakespeare characteristically did not write plays during such periods, and that he seems to have written *Othello, Macbeth,* and *King Lear,* the three great tragedies most influenced by the mysteries, within two years after the theatres reopened. Dutton comments that "the last recorded mystery play, at Kendal, was [only] apparently suppressed" in 1605. This means that Shakespeare would have had both the time and the opportunity to have seen the mystery plays just before he was to write their resonances into *Macbeth, Othello,* and *King Lear,* though it would have required a serious journey to Kendal.[25] But of course common sense tells us in any event that Shakespeare's memories of the Warwickshire mysteries would only have been sharpened by this still entirely hypothetical trip to the edge of the Lake District. His crowning works would inevitably have been poorer if he had wiped from the table of his memory "all trivial fond records," "all forms, all pressures past / That Youth and observation copied there" (*Hamlet* 1.5.99-101), including those of the great saints and sinners of medieval art and drama. Such efforts to reconstruct influence, much less date memory, are inevitably imprecise. But against that imprecision I would set the likelihood that there are many more examples than we can ever imagine in Shakespeare's works and words of "the forms of things unknown" (*MND* 5.1.15) from his Warwickshire past. It is impressive that scholars can give "a local habitation and a name" to as many early influences as they have found. The result is a sense of the work and the worker that is more profound than one somehow isolated from the art and drama, not to mention the great historical turbulence, of Shakespeare's most formative years.

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NOTES

[1]The phrase "more removed mysteries" is from Ben Jonson's preface to *Hymenaei*, and apparently describes his use of Neoplatonic symbolism in the masques (*Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel [New Haven: Yale UP, 1969] 76). The quotation from *The Winter's Tale* and all subsequent references to Shakespeare cite *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking Reprint, 1977).

[2]See R. W. Ingram, "Fifteen seventy-nine and the Decline of Civic Religious Drama in Coventry," *The Elizabethan Theatre VIII*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Port Credit, Ontario: P. D. Meany, 1982) 114-28. See also Harold C. Gardiner, *Mysteries' End* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1946) 72-85; Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955) 354-63; Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd. ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), ch. 7. Richard Dutton, "Censorship," *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 390, calls the end of the mysteries "a slow process of attrition, which perhaps lasted until 1605, when the last recorded mystery play, at Kendal, was apparently suppressed."

[3]See "'Painted Women': Annunciation Motifs in *Hamlet*," *Comparative Drama* 32 (1998): 47-84.

[4]Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: OUP, 1977) 31-84, and Cherrell Guilfoyle, *Shakespeare's Play Within Play* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1990), have both recently discussed connections between Shakespeare and the mystery cycles.

[5]David Staines, "To Out-Herod Herod: The Development of a Dramatic Character," *The Drama of the Middle Ages*, ed. Clifford Davidson et al. (New York: AMS Press, 1982) 207-08; Jones 82. Glynne Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1969) 230.

[6]See Staines 224; and Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933) 2: 125, 131-70, 458-62. See also *The Chester Plays*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills (London: EETS [S.S. 9], 1986) 2: 131-32. M. D. Anderson, *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1963) 23, mentions Maurice Serpet's idea that the Old Testament liturgical plays, and thus the mysteries, might have been offshoots of the *ordo prophetarum*. See also Craig 66-67.

[7]Staines 212, 219; Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 66.

[8]"Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors," *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Hardin Craig (London: Oxford UP, 1957 [EETS, E.S. 87]) 17-18, ll. 488-89, 493, 503, 498-99.

[9]"Herod," *The York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) 134, l. 4. Cf. Staines 223; Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge, 1972) 203.

[10]See, e.g., *Macbeth* 5.3.33-36, 48-50, 54; 5.5.46-52.

[11]For notes on these lines, see the Arden eds: *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982); *Henry V*, ed. J. H. Walter, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1954); and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1971).

[12]See *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* for the prophets (12-16), the boastful and the fearful Herod (16-28), the repair records (86-87), and the "Two Worms of

Conscience" (101). The "worm of conscience" in Chaucer's "Doctor's Tale" (see *OED* "worm" n. 11. a) could of course be a common source for both references.

[13]Woolf 174.

[14]*York's* "Joseph's Trouble" 117-20; "The Trial of Mary and Joseph," *The N-Town Play*, ed. Stephen Spector (Oxford: OUP, 1991 [EETS, S.S.11]) 1: 142, ll. 90-103. Cf. *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. K. S. Block (Oxford: OUP, 1960 [EETS, E.S. 120]). *Othello* 2.3.15-26, 23; 1.3.347; 2.1.223-26, 253, 247.

[15]Bridget Gellert Lyons in "The Iconography of Ophelia," *ELH* 44 (1977): 60–74, and Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987) 138, both notice that the iconography of the Annunciation informs this scene. Linda Kay Hoff, in *Hamlet's Choice* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1988) 173-235, uses some of *Hamlet's* Annunciation motifs to discuss the play as Reformation allegory. The Olivier film shows us an Annunciation fresco as background to the scene.

[16]See Clifford Davidson and Jennifer Alexander, *The Early Art of Coventry, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwick, and Lesser Sites in Warwickshire* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1985) 3-5, 18-22, 88, 112-14. See also *Coventry*, "Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors," 3-4, ll. 47-99, and 109.

[17]See John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989) 182-83, 201, 211, 259-61; Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia UP, 1989) 177-78, 194; and Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977) 125-26.

[18]On this image in *King Lear*, see Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1976) 183; Peter Milward, *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare's Great Tragedies* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 189-90; John Doebler, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1974) 8; and Russell A. Peck, "Edgar's Pilgrimage," *SEL* 7 (1967): 227.

[19]See the *Chester* "Passion" 1:321; the *York* "Mortificacio Christi" 368; the *N-Town* "Burial" 1: 341.

[20]"The Scourging," in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley (Oxford: OUP, 1994 [EETS, S.S. 13]) 1: 276, ll. 205-8; *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901) vol. 2, Book 1, 113, ll. 2845-50. For a full discussion of the "wild man" tradition, see Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1974).

[21]Clifford Davidson, "The Anti-Visual Prejudice," *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Ann Eljenholm Nichols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1989) 35, 37 (citing Walter H. Frere's edition of *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the period of the Reformation* 90). Even though much religious art was suppressed and destroyed during the iconoclastic fury of the English Reformation, the work of Davidson and his colleagues has shown us how much of that art also survived in and around Warwickshire. See Margaret Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine," *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama* 73; Davidson and Alexander 3, 21-22, 88, 112-14.

[22]*King Lear* 5.3.264-65; *Macbeth* 2.3.74, 62-65.

[23]Though critics have often associated Desdemona and Christ, they have seldom compared her to the Virgin. See, however, Milward 62; and Hunter 138. In *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 416, Roy Battenhouse connects

Desdemona's intervention on Cassio's behalf with Mary's intercession. *Othello* 2.1.246; 2.3.342.

[24]Aston (75-76) cites several historians, including Alan Crossley in *A History of the County of Oxford*, 7-8, 23, 98, to remind us of this.

[25]Spector suggests that this "play was itinerant, at least at some point in its history" (xiii). Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 14-19, 123-26, 133-34. Dutton (290) cites Audrey Douglas and Peter H. Greenfield, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmoreland, Gloucestershire* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1986) 17-19: "The Kendal Corpus Christi play, still in existence at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was possibly unique in English town life at this late period. Various sources, both manuscript and antiquarian, document the history of the Kendal play between 1575 when the borough was incorporated and 1605 when the play was apparently suppressed."