



THE PAGEANT  
OF THE  
SHEARMEN AND TAYLORS  
OF  
COVENTRY

TRADITIONALLY PERFORMED ON CORPUS CHRISTI

Edited by

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THE Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors was one of ten plays, performed at stations around the city of Coventry by various guilds on the feast of Corpus Christi; each one telling stories from the life of Christ. Only this and the Weavers Pageant survive, the latter dealing with the Purification and the boy Jesus disputing with ‘Doctors’ in the temple; though we still have other pageants from cities such as York and Wakefield.

The text survives only in a transcription by Thomas Sharp in 1817 (published again in 1825). His source was a manuscript made by Robert Croo in 1534, itself a copy of earlier material; but Croo’s text was tragically destroyed in a fire at Birmingham Free Library in 1879.

“The fire at Birmingham has made Sharp’s books more valuable than they could ever have been, had the manuscript remained”, wrote Craig Hardin, in an edition of 1902, describing how valuable the copy is now, in spite of its many faults. Sharp in turn criticises his source material, which Croo describes as ‘*nevly correcte*’, with Sharp suggesting that this is ‘complacent’ ... “for the orthography is so illiterate and confused as not to exhibit the language of his times in a fair and appropriate dress”.

Thus, we have a poor copy of a poor copy as our sole authority. The purpose of this edition is to remove the needless obstacles of orthography, creating a text that can easily be read, or performed, by anyone familiar with editions of Shakespeare, or the Book of Common Prayer. Conventional spellings have been used wherever possible. There is no punctuation in the source, so all marks are editorial, as are all assumptions of where the phrases fall. Thus:

*Yondur me thynke a feyre bryght star I se  
The wyche be tocunyth the byrth of a chyld  
That hedur ys cū to make man fre  
He borne of amayde & sche nothyng defyld*

becomes:

Yonder, methinks a fair bright star I see,  
The which betokeneth the birth of a child  
That hither is come to make man free;  
He born of a maid, and she nothing defiled.

Some proper names have been changed to more familiar versions, e.g. *Bedlam* becomes *Bethlem*; *Josof* becomes *Joseph*. The character designation *Pastor* becomes *Shepherd*; *Rex* becomes *King*, *Miles* becomes *Soldier*. The division of the play into sections with titles is editorial.

Archaic words, whose meaning is not widely known, have definitions supplied in the margin, in brackets. Where the source is impenetrable, the original spelling is shown in the margin (in italics, without brackets), and the most obvious or most likely rendering is given in the text. Longer discourse about ambiguous inferences is given in footnotes. Original spellings in the margin are also used to show a rhyming scheme that is no longer possible. Italics in the body of the text highlights the word referenced in the margin.

Some lines in the source have been split to show additional internal rhymes.

The text of the song ‘*Lully lullay*’ requires some comment. Sharp’s transcription of the music shows him to have little understanding of the notation. Two of the three parts have “*This poor youngling*”; but one of them has “*Our poor youngling*”, which seems at least equally likely. (“*How will we preserve our younglings?*”) There seems little purpose in the difference between ‘*lulla*’ and ‘*lullay*’.

The last verse has ‘*And ever mourn and say*’, with ‘*say*’ inferred as ‘*sigh*’. The English scholar George Lyman Kittredge proposed ‘*mourn and may*’ as making better sense and being more likely. This creates alliteration (a feature of the poetry) and avoids the repetition of ‘*say*’ in two different senses. (“*For thy parting, I will mourn, and may not say nor sing lullay.*” versus “*Ever mourn and say, neither say nor sing.*”) The *Oxford Book of Carols* has seeded a mistake of ‘*morn and day*’ for nearly a century.

#### PERFORMANCE NOTES

Additional stage directions are shown in square brackets.

Presumably, the female parts were performed by men, which explains (and makes light work of) the Bass parts in the songs.

The *Dialogue of the Prophets* repeats much that has already been acted out, and may be a later addition. The drama would not be harmed by its absence. It could be performed in a ‘repartee’ style.

The Nuncio’s opening speech, in Medieval French (but spelt quasi-phonetically in Medieval English!) is a puzzle for any editor to make sense of. An English alternative might be:

*Peace, Lord Barons of grand renown!*  
*Peace, Sir knights of noble presence.*  
*Peace, gentlemen, companions great and small.*  
*I command you all full silence to keep;*  
*Peace, while your noble King is present*  
*Let every one here pay him full deference.*  
*Be on guard not to strike, but keep all patience,*  
*And to your Lord keep your hearts in reverence*  
*For he is your king, all powerful.*  
*In his name, I command you, peace.*  
*And King Herod the Great... — Devil take you!*

Dramatically, it would work well for the crowd to keep booing while the Nuncio calls for peace in French, until he gives up. Herod’s switch from Latin to English is also worth making into a feature (in case the audience is losing interest in the babbling) by switching from regal serenity to more earthly ‘raging’. Herod’s raging through the crowds seems to be part of the spectacle.

Ben Byram-Wigfield  
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## Dramatis Personae

ISAIAH	NUNCIO
GABRIEL	HEROD
MARY	KING I
JOSEPH	KING II
ANGEL	KING III
SHEPHERD I	SOLDIER I
SHEPHERD II	SOLDIER II
SHEPHERD III	WOMAN I
PROPHET I	WOMAN II
PROPHET II	WOMAN III

## Isaiah's Prologue

ISALIAH    The Sovereign that seeth every secret,  
               He save you all and make you perfect and strong,  
               And give us grace with his mercy for to meet.  
 For now in great measure mankind is bound;  
               The serpent hath given us so mortal a wound  
 That no creature is able us for to release  
               Till thy right *unction* of Judah doth *cease*.                 *seyse*  
 Then shall much mirth and joy increase  
               And the right root in Israel spring,  
               That shall bring forth the grain of holiness;  
 And out of danger he shall us bring  
               Into that region where he is king,  
               Which above all other far doth abound,  
               And that cruel Satan he shall confound.  
 Wherefore I come here upon this ground  
               To comfort every creature of birth;  
 For I, Isaiah the prophet, hath found  
               Many sweet matters whereof we may make mirth  
               On this same wise.  
 For though that Adam be deemèd to death  
               With all his childer, as Abel and Seth,  
               Yet *Ecce Virgo concipiet* —  
               Lo, here a remedy shall rise!  
 Behold, a maiden shall conceive a child  
               And get us more grace than ever men had,  
               And her maidenhood nothing defiled.  
 She is deputed to bear the Son [of] Almighty God.  
 Lo! Sovereignties, now may you be glad,  
               For of this maiden all we may be *fain*;                         *joyful*  
 For Adam, that now lies in sorrows full sad,  
               His glorious birth shall redeem him again  
               From bondage and thrall.  
 Now be merry every man  
               For this deed briefly in Israel shall be done,  
 And before the Father in throne,<sup>1</sup>  
               That shall glad us all.  
 More of this matter fain would I move,  
               But longer time I have not here for to dwell.  
 That Lord that is merciful, his mercy so in us may prove  
 For to save our souls from the darkness of hell;  
               And to his bliss  
                   He us bring,  
               As he is  
                   Both lord and king  
 And shall be everlasting  
               *In saecula saeculorum, Amen!*

<sup>1</sup> *Fathur in trone*; alternatively, 'triune' has been suggested.

## Annunciation to Mary

- GABRIEL Hail, Mary, full of grace!  
Our Lord God is with thee.  
Above all women that ever was,  
Lady, blessèd may thou be.
- MARY Almighty Father and King of bliss,  
From all disease thou save me now.  
For inwardly my spirit troubled is,  
That I am amazed and know not how.
- GABRIEL Dread thee nothing, maiden, of this;  
From heaven above hither am I sent  
Of embassage from that King of bliss, *(mission)*  
Unto thee, lady and virgin reverent;  
Saluting thee here as most excellent,  
Whose virtue above all other doth abound.  
Wherefore in thee grace shall be found:  
For thou shalt conceive upon this ground  
The Second Person of God in throne;  
He will be born of thee alone;  
Without sin thou shall him see.  
Thy grace and thy goodness will never be gone,  
But ever to live in virginity.
- MARY I marvel sore how that may be.  
Man's company knew I never yet,  
Nor never to do; *chaste* I be *kast*  
While that our Lord sendeth me my wit.
- GABRIEL The Holy Ghost in thee shall light  
And shadow thy soul so with virtue  
From the Father that is on height.  
These words, turtle, they be full true.<sup>1</sup>  
This child that of thee shall be born  
Is the second person in Trinity.  
He shall save that was forlorn  
And the fiend's power destroy shall he;  
These words, lady, full true they be. *bene*  
And further, here in thine own lineage  
Behold Elizabeth, thy cousin clean,  
The which was barren and past all age;  
And now with child she hath been  
Six months, and more as shall be seen;  
Wherefore, discomfort thee not, Mary.  
For to God, impossible nothing may be.
- MARY Now, and it be that Lord's will  
Of my body to be born and for to be,  
His high pleasure for to fulfil  
As his own handmaid I submit me.
- GABRIEL Now blessèd be the time set  
That thou wast born in thy degree.

<sup>1</sup> *These wordis turtle thé be full tru*: 'Turtle' (dove) is a metaphor for an affectionate partner, frequently applied to Mary. If the reference is felt too obscure, the phrase could be changed to '*These words told to thee be full true*'.

For now is the knot surely knit,  
 And God conceived in Trinity.  
 Now farewell, lady of might's most;  
 Unto the Godhead I thee *beteach*. (entrust)  
 MARY That Lord thee guide in every *cost* (circumstance)  
 And lowly he lead me and be my *leech*. (healer)

*Here the angel departeth, and Joseph cometh in and saith:*

JOSEPH Mary, my wife so dear,  
 How do you, dame, and what cheer  
 Is with you this tide?  
 MARY Truly, husband, I am here  
 Our Lord's will for to abide.<sup>1</sup>  
 JOSEPH What? I trow that we be all *shent!* (ruined)  
 Say, woman, who hath been here since I went,  
 To rage with thee?  
 MARY Sir, here was neither man nor man's *even*, (equal)  
 But only the *sond* of our Lord God in heaven. (messenger)  
 JOSEPH Say not so, woman; for shame, lay be!  
 Ye be with child so wondrous great,  
 Ye need no more thereof to treat  
 Against all right.  
 Forsooth, this child, dame, is not mine.  
 Alas that ever with mine eye<sup>2</sup>  
 I should see this sight!  
 Tell me, woman, whose is this child?  
 MARY None but yours, husband so mild,  
 And that shall be seen, [*ywis*]. (certainly)  
 JOSEPH But mine? Alas, alas! Why say ye so?  
 Well-away, woman; now may I go,  
 Beguiled as many another is.  
 MARY Nay, truly sir, ye be not beguiled,  
 Nor yet with spot of sin I am not defiled;  
 Trust it well, husband.  
 JOSEPH Husband, in faith! And that *a-called*; acold  
 A-well-away, Joseph, as thou art old,  
 Like a fool now may I stand and *truce*. (make peace)  
 But in faith, Mary, thou art in sin.  
 So much as I have cherished thee, dame, and all thy kin;  
 Behind my back to serve me thus!  
 All old men, example take by me  
 How I am beguiled here you see,  
 To wed so young a child.  
 Now farewell, Mary, I leave thee here alone.  
 [Woe-]worth thee, dame, and thy works each one!  
 For I will no more be beguiled  
 For friend nor foe.  
 Now of this deed I am so dull,  
 And of my life I am so full,

<sup>1</sup> Mary doesn't say enough to justify Joseph's reaction. Perhaps something is missing?

<sup>2</sup> *wt my nynee*: A rhyme with *ys not myne* in the previous line.



That my child will be born, which is King of bliss.  
 Unto some place, Joseph, kindly me lead,  
 That I might rest me with grace in this tide.  
 The light of the Father over us both spread,  
 And the grace of my son with us here abide.

JOSEPH    Lo, blessèd Mary, here shall ye land, *lend*  
 Chief chosen of our Lord and cleanest in degree.  
 And I for help to town will I wend.  
 Is not this the best? Dame, what say ye?

MARY        God have mercy, Joseph, my husband so meek.  
 And heartily, I pray you, go now from me.

JOSEPH    That shall be done in haste, Mary so sweet.  
 The comfort of the Holy Ghost leave I with thee.  
 Now to Bethlem straight will I wind  
 To get some help for Mary so free.  
 Some help of women God may me send,  
 That Mary, full of grace, pleased may be.

## Annunciation to the Shepherds

SHEPHERD I    Now God, that art in Trinity,  
 Thou save my fellows and me;  
 For I know not where my sheep nor they be,  
 This night it is so cold.  
 Now is it nigh the mid of the night;  
 These weathers are dark and dim of light,  
 That of them can I have no sight,  
 Standing here on this wold.  
 But now to make their hearts light,  
 Now will I full right  
 Stand upon this *low*, *(mound)*  
 And to them cry with all my might.  
 Full well my noise they know:  
 What ho, fellows! Ho! Ho! Ho!

*[Two other shepherds appear.]*

SHEP. II      Hark, Sym, Hark! I hear our brother on the low,  
 This is his voice, right well I know;  
 Therefore toward him let us go,  
 And follow his voice a-right.  
 See Sym, see where he doth stand. *stond*  
 I am right glad we have him found. *fond*  
 Brother, where has thou been so long,  
 And it is so cold this night? <sup>1</sup>

SHEP. I      Eh, friends, there came a *pirrie* of wind with a mist suddenly,  
*(gust)*

<sup>1</sup> *And this nyght hit ys soo cold:* Sharp draws lines linking the rhymes, and he links this line with 'a-right' four lines earlier. Nothing rhymes with 'cold' nearby. 'Afright' (afrayde) follows at the end of the next quatrain.

That forth off my ways went I  
 And great heaviness then made I  
 and was full sore a-fright.  
 Then for to go *wist* I not whither, (*knew*)  
 But travelled on this low hither and thither.  
 I was so weary of this cold weather  
 That near past was my might.  
 SHEP. III Brother, now we be past that fright,  
 And it is far within the night,  
 Full sun will spring the daylight,  
 It draweth full near the tide.  
 Here awhile let us rest  
 And repast ourselves of the best,  
 Till that the sun rise in the east,  
 Let us all here abide.

*There the shepherds draweth forth their meat and doth eat and drink, and as they drink, they find the star and say thus:*

SHEP. III Brethren, look up and behold!  
 What thing is yonder that shineth so bright?  
 As long as ever I have watched my fold  
 Yet saw I never such a sight in field.  
 Aha! Now is come the time that old fathers hath told,  
 That in the winter's night so cold  
 A child of maiden born be he *will* *wold*  
 In whom all prophecies shall be fulfilled.  
 SHEP. I Truth it is without nay;  
 So said the prophet Isaye, (*Isaiah*)  
 That a child should be born of a maid so bright  
 In winter, nigh the shortest day,  
 Or else in the midst of the night.  
 SHEP. II Lovèd be God, most of might,  
 That our grace is to see that sight;  
 Pray we to him, as it is right,  
 If that his will it be,  
 That we may have knowledge of this signification,  
 And why it appeareth on this fashion;  
 And ever to him let us give laudation,  
 In earth while that we be.

*There the angels sing 'Gloria in excelsis Deo'.*

SHEP. III Hark, they sing above in the clouds clear;  
 Heard I never of so merry a choir.  
 Now gentle brothers, draw we near  
 To hear their harmony.  
 SHEP. I Brothers, mirth and solace is come us among;  
 For by the sweetness of their song,  
 God's son is come, whom we have looked for long,  
 As signifieth this star that we do see.  
 SHEP. II '*Gloré, glorea in exselsis*' — that was their song;  
 How say ye fellows, said they not thus?



*[The shepherds approach and worship the Babe.]*

SHEP. I	Hail, maid-mother and wife so mild! As the angel said, so have we found. I have nothing to present with thy child But my pipe; hold, hold, take it in thy hand; Wherein much pleasure that I have found; And now to honour thy glorious birth, Thou shalt it have to make thee mirth.	<i>fond</i>  <i>hond</i> <i>fond</i>
SHEP. II	Now hail be thou, child, and thy dame. For in a poor lodging here art thou laid, So the angel said and told us thy name; Hold, take thou here my hat on thy head. And now of one thing thou art well sped, For weather thou hast no need to complain For wind, nor sun, hail, snow, and rain.	
SHEP. III	Hail be thou, Lord over water and lands; For thy coming all we may make mirth. Have here my mittens to put on thy hands, Other treasure have I none to present thee with.	
MARY	Now herd-men hind, For your coming To my child shall I pray, As he is heaven's king, To grant you his blessing, And to his bliss that ye may wind At your last day.	

*There the shepherds singeth again...*

*Down from heaven, from heaven so high,  
Of angels there came a great company,  
With mirth, and joy, and great solemnity  
They sang, Terli, terlow;  
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.*

*...and goeth forth of the place.*

## Dialogue of the Prophets

*The ii prophets cometh in and sayeth thus:*

- PROPHET I Novels, Novels<sup>1</sup>  
 Of wonderful marvels  
 Were high and diffuse unto the hearing. *hy & defuce*  
 As scripture tells,  
 These strange novels  
 To you I bring.
- PROPHET II Now heartily, sir, I desire to know,  
 If it would please you for to show,  
 Of what manner a thing
- \*\*  
 Were mystical unto your hearing? <sup>2</sup>
- PROPHET I Of the nativity of a king!  
 PROPHET II — Of a king? Whence should he come?  
 PROPHET I From that regent royal and mighty mansion,  
 The seat celestial and heavenly wisdom,  
 The Second Person and God's own Son,  
 For our sake now is man become.  
 This godly sphere  
 Descended here  
 Into a virgin clear,  
 She undefiled;  
 By whose work *obscure* *obskevre*  
 Our frail nature  
 is now beguiled.
- PROPHET II Why, hath she a child?  
 PROPHET I Aye! Trust it well;  
 And nevertheless  
 Yet is she a maid, even as she was,  
 And her son the king of Israel.
- PROPHET II A wonderful marvel,  
 How that may be,  
 And far doth excel  
 All our capacity  
 How that the Trinity  
 Of so high regality  
 Should joinèd be  
 Unto our mortality.
- PROPHET I Of his own great mercy,  
 As ye shall see the exposition,  
 Thou whose humanity  
 All Adam's progeny  
 Redeemed shall be out of perdition.  
 Since man did offend  
 Who should amend  
 But the said man, and none other?

<sup>1</sup> *Novellis novellis of wondrousfull m(ar)vellys*: The word is 'novels', in the sense of 'news'.

<sup>2</sup> The asterisks show where the source has Prophet 1 starting to speak; though it seems likely that the marker is in the wrong place.

- For the which cause he  
 Incarnate would be,  
 And live in measure as man's own brother.
- PROPHET II Sir, unto the Deity,  
 I believe perfectly,  
 Impossible to be, there is nothing;  
 Howbeit, this work  
 Unto me is dark  
 In the operation or working.
- PROPHET I What more *reproof* *repriff*  
 Is unto belief  
 Than to be doubting?
- PROPHET II Yet doubt oftentimes hath derivation.
- PROPHET I That is by the means of communication  
 Of truths, to have a due probation  
 By the same doubts reasoning.
- PROPHET II Then to you this one thing:  
 Of what noble and high lineage is she  
 That might this *veritable* prince's mother be? *verabull*
- PROPHET I Undoubted she is come of high parrage, *(lineage)*  
 Of the house of David and Solomon the sage;  
 And one of the same line joined to her by marriage;  
 Of whose tribe  
 We do subscribe  
 This child's lineage.
- PROPHET II And why in that wise?
- PROPHET I For it was the guise  
 To count the parent on the man's line,  
 And not on the feminine,  
 Amongst us here in Israel.
- PROPHET II Yet can I not espy by no wise  
 How this child born should be without nature's prejudice.
- PROPHET I Nay, no prejudice until nature, I dare well say;  
 For the king of nature may  
 Have all at his own will.  
 Did not the power of God  
 Make Aaron's rod  
 Bear fruit in one day?
- PROPHET II Truth it is indeed.
- PROPHET I Then look you and read.
- PROPHET II Ah! I perceive the seed  
 Whereupon that you spake.  
 It was for our need  
 That he frail nature did take,  
 And his blood he should shed  
 Amens for to make  
 For our transgression;  
 As it is said in prophecy  
 That the line of Judah  
 Should spring a right Messiah  
 By whom all we  
 Shall have redemption.

- PROPHET I Sir, now is the time come,  
 And the date thereof run,  
 Of his Nativity.
- PROPHET II Yet I beseech you heartily  
 That ye would show me how  
 That this strange novelty  
 Were brought unto you.
- PROPHET I This other night so cold  
 Hereby upon a wold  
 Shepherds watching their fold,  
 In the night so far  
 To them appeared a star,  
 And ever it drew then *near*; *nar*  
 Which star they did behold  
 Brighter, they say, a thousand-fold *M. fold*  
 Than the sun so clear  
 In his midday sphere,  
 And they these tidings told.
- PROPHET II What secretly?
- PROPHET I Nay, nay, hardly;  
 They made thereof no *conceal*; *conseil*  
 For they sang as loud  
 As ever they could *cowde*  
 Praising the king of Israel.
- PROPHET II Yet do I marvel  
 In what pile or castle  
 These herdmen did him see.
- PROPHET I Neither in halls nor yet in bowers  
 Born would he be;  
 Neither in castles nor yet in towers  
 That seemly were to see:  
 But at his Father's will,  
 The prophecy to fulfil,  
 Betwixt an ox and an ass  
 Jesus, this king, born he was.  
 Heaven he bring us till!
- PROPHET II Sir, Ah, but when these shepherds had seen him there,  
 Into what place did they repair?
- PROPHET I Forth they went, and glad they were,  
 Going they did sing;  
 With mirth and solace they made good cheer  
 For joy of that new tiding.  
 And after, as I heard them tell,  
 He rewarded them full well:  
 He grant[ed] them heaven therein to dwell;  
 In are they gone with joy and mirth,  
 And there sung it is 'Noel'.

*There the prophets goeth forth, and Herod cometh in, and the messenger.*

## Herod and the Three Kings

NUNCIO *Faites paix, Dom Barons de grande renommée!  
Paix, seigneurs, chevaliers de noble puissance!  
Paix, gentiles hommes, compagnons petits et grands!  
Je vous commande de garder très tous silence.  
Paix, tant que votre noble Roi c'est ici présent.  
Que nulle personne ici non fasse point de déferrance.  
Ne se gardez de frapper; mais gardez toute patience;  
Mais gardez votre seigneur tout coeur révérence,  
Car il est votre roi tout puissant.  
Au nom de lui,<sup>1</sup> paix tous, je vous commande,  
Et le Roi Erode la grande — diable vos emporte!*

HEROD *Qui statis in Judea et Rex Israel,*  
And the mightiest conqueror that ever walked on ground;  
For I am even he that made both heaven and hell,  
And of my mighty power holdeth up this world round.  
Magog and Madrog, both them did I confound,  
And with this bright brand their bones I brake asunder,  
That all the wide world on those raps did wonder.  
I am the cause of this great light and thunder;  
It is through my fury that they such noise doth make.  
My fearful countenance the clouds so doth incumber  
That oftentimes for dread thereof the very earth doth quake.  
Look, when I with malice this bright brand doth shake,  
All the whole world from the north to the south  
I may them destroy with one word of my mouth!  
To recount unto you mine innumerable substance,  
That were too much for any tongue to tell:  
For all the whole Orient is under mine obedience,  
And prince am I of Purgatory, and chief captain of Hell.  
And those tyrannous traitors by force may I compel  
Mine enemies to vanquish, and even to dust them drive,  
And with a twinkle of mine eye not one to be left alive.  
Behold my countenance and my colour,  
Brighter than the sun in the midst of the day.  
Where can you have a more greater succour  
Than to behold my person that is so gay?  
My falchion and my fashion,<sup>2</sup> with my gorgeous array:  
He that had the grace alway thereon to think,  
Live they might alway, without other meat or drink.  
And this my triumphant fame most highest doth abound  
Throughout this world in all regions abroad,  
Resembling the favour of that most mighty Mahound,  
From Jupiter by descent, and cousin to the great God;  
And named the most renownèd<sup>3</sup> King Herod,  
Which that all princes hath under subjection,  
And all their whole power under my protection.

<sup>1</sup> *Anoñ de leo*: Some readings infer 'Au nom du loi'.

<sup>2</sup> *My fawcun & my fassion*: alternatively 'my falcon and my falchion'.

<sup>3</sup> *reydowndid*: 'renowned' seems more apt than 'redounded'.

And therefore, my herald here, called Calchas,  
 Warn thou every port that no ships arrive,  
 Nor also alien stranger through my realm pass,  
 But they for their *truage* do pay marks five. (tribute)

Now speed thee forth hastily,  
 For they that will the contrary,  
 Upon a gallows hanged shall be,  
 And, by Mahound, of me they get no grace!

NUNCIO Now, lord and master, in all the haste,  
 Thy worthy will it shall be wrought,  
 And thy royal country shall be passed  
 In as short time as can be thought.

HEROD Now shall our regions throughout be sought  
 In every place, both east and west;  
 If any caitiffs to me be brought,  
 It shall be nothing for their best.  
 And the while that I do rest,  
 Trumpets, viols, and other harmony  
 Shall bless the waking of my majesty.

*Here Herod goeth away, and the three kings speaketh in the street.*

KING I Now blessèd be God of his sweet *sond*, (message)  
 For yonder a fair bright star I do see.  
 Now is he *come* us among, comen  
 As the prophets said that it should be.  
 [And] said there should a baby be born,  
 Coming of the root of Jesse,  
 To save mankind that was forlorn;  
 And truly come now is he.  
 Reverence and worship to him will I do  
 As God and Man, that all made of nought.  
 All the prophets accorded and said even so,  
 That with his precious blood mankind should be bought.  
 He grant me grace  
 By yonder star that I see,  
 And into that place  
 Bring me  
 That I may him worship with humility  
 And see his glorious face.

KING II Out of my way I deem that I am,  
 For tokens of this country can I none see;  
 Now, God, that on earth madest man,  
 Send me some knowledge where that I be!  
 Yonder, methinks a fair bright star I see,  
 The which betokeneth the birth of a child  
 That hither is come to make man free;  
 He born of a maid, and she nothing defiled.  
 To worship that child is mine intent;  
 Forth now will I take my way.  
 I trust some company God hath me sent,  
 For yonder I see a king labour on the way.  
 Toward him now will I ride.

Hark! Comely king, I you pray,  
 Into what coast will ye this *tide*, (*time*)  
 Or whither lies your journey?

KING I To seek a child is mine intent  
 Of whom the prophets hath meant;  
 The time is come, now is he sent,  
 By yonder star here may [you] see.

KING II Sir, I pray you, with your licence,  
 To ride with you unto his presence.  
 To him will I offer frankincense,  
 For the head of all Holy Church shall he be.

KING III I ride wandering in ways wide,  
 Over mountains and dales; I *wot* not where I am. (*know*)  
 Now King of all kings, send me such guide  
 That I might have knowledge of this country's name.  
 Ah! Yonder I see a sight, beseeming all afar,  
 The which betokens some news, as I trow,  
 As methinks a child appearing in a star.  
 I trust he be come that shall defend us from woe.  
 Two kings yonder I see,  
 And to them will I ride  
 For to have their company;  
 I trust they will me abide.  
 Hail, comely kings augent! (*august?*)  
 Good sirs, I pray you, whither are ye meant?

KING I To seek a child is our intent,  
 Which betokens yonder star, as ye may see.

KING I To him I purpose this present.

KING III Sirs, I pray you, and that right humbly,  
 With you that I may ride in company.  
 To almighty God now pray we  
 That his precious person we may see.

*Here Herod cometh in again, and the messenger saith:*

NUNCIO Hail, Lord most of might,  
 Thy commandment is right;  
 Into the land is come this night  
 Three kings, and with them a great company.

HEROD What make those kings in this country?

NUNCIO To seek a king and a child, they say.

HEROD Of what age should he be?

NUNCIO Scant twelve days old fully.

HEROD And was he so late[ly] born?

NUNCIO Aye, Sir, so they shewed me this same day in the morn.

HEROD Now, on pain of death, bring them me before, *before*  
 And therefore, herald, now hie thee in haste,  
 In all speed that thou were dight (*equiped*)  
 Or that those kings the country be past;  
 Look thou bring them all three before my sight,  
 And in Jerusalem enquire more of that child.  
 But I warn thee that thy words be mild,

For there must thou heed, and crafty *wield*<sup>1</sup>  
 How to fore-do his power, (destroy)  
 and those three kings shall be beguiled.  
 NUNCIO Lord, I am ready at your bidding  
 To serve thee as my Lord and King;  
 For joy thereof, lo: how I spring  
 With light heart and fresh gambolling  
 Aloft here on this *mould*. (earth)  
 HEROD Then speed thee forth hastily,  
 And look that thou bear thee evenly;  
 And also I pray thee heartily  
 That thou do commend me  
 Both to young and old.

[The herald goeth to the Kings.]

NUNCIO Hail, sir kings, in your degree;  
 Herod, king of these countries wide,  
 Desireth to speak with you all three,  
 And for your coming he doth abide.  
 KING I Sir, at his will we be right *bane*. (willing)  
 Hie us, brother, unto that lord's place;  
 To speak with him we would be fain;  
 That child that we seek, he grant us of his grace.

[They go to Herod.]

NUNCIO Hail, Lord without peer!  
 These three kings here have we brought.  
 HEROD Now welcome, sir kings, all in *ferre*; (companionship)  
 But of my bright *blee*, sirs, *abash* ye naught! (colour, dismay)  
 Sir kings, as I understand,  
 A star hath guided you into my land,  
 Wherein great *ore* ye have found<sup>2</sup> (glory)  
 By reason of her beams bright.  
 Wherefore I pray you heartily  
 The very truth that ye would certify,  
 How long it is surely  
 Since of that star you had first sight?  
 KING I Sir King, the very truth to say  
 And for to shew you as it is best,  
 This same is even the twelfth day  
 Since it appeared to us to the west.  
 HEROD Brethren, then is there no more to say,  
 But with heart and will, keep ye your journey,  
 And come home by me this same way;  
 Of your news that I might know.  
 You shall triumph in this country  
 And with great concord banquet with me,  
 And that child myself then will I see

<sup>1</sup> *crafté wey*: Most readings suggest 'wield', to rhyme with 'mylde'.

<sup>2</sup> *grett harie*: 'har' is a variant of 'ore', meaning honour or glory.

And honour him also.

KING II Sir, your commandment we will fulfil,  
And humbly *abay* ourselves thereto. (*comply*)  
He that wieldeth all things at will  
The ready way us teach,  
Sir king, that we may pass your land in peace.

HEROD Yes, and walk softly even at your own ease.  
Your passport for a hundred days  
Here shall you have of clear command,  
Our realm to labour any ways  
Here shall you have by special grant.

KING III Now farewell, king of high degree,  
Humbly of you our leave we take.

HEROD Then adieu, sir kings all three;  
And while I live, be bold of me!  
There is nothing in this country  
But for your own ye shall it take.

*[The three kings leave.]*

Now these three kings are gone on their way;  
Unwisely and unwittingly have they all wrought.  
When they come again, they shall die that same day,  
And thus the vile wretches to death they shall be brought.  
Such is my liking.  
He that against my laws will hold,  
Be he King or Caesar never so bold,  
I shall them cast into *cares* cold (*sorrows*)  
And to death I shall them bring.

*There Herod goeth his way and the three kings come in again.*

KING I O blessèd God, much is thy might!  
Where is this star that gave us light?

KING II Now kneel we down here in this presence,  
Beseeching that Lord of high magnificence  
That we may see his high excellence,  
If that his sweet will be.

KING III Yonder, brothers, I see the star,  
Whereby I know he is not far;  
Therefore, lords, go we near  
Into this poor place.

*There the three kings go in, to the gesine,<sup>1</sup> to Mary and her child.*

KING I Hail, Lord that all this world hath wrought!  
Hail, God and man together in *fere*. (*companionship*)  
For thou hast made all thing of nought,  
Albeit that thou liest poorly here;  
A cupful of gold here I have thee brought,

<sup>1</sup> *Gesine* is a cot or childbed. It is spelled 'jesen' here and 'jeseyne' later on.

KING II           Betokening<sup>1</sup> thou art without peer.  
 Hail be thou, Lord of high magnificence!  
 Betokening of priesthood and dignity of office,  
                   To thee I offer a cupful of incense,  
                   For it behoveth thee to have such sacrifice.  
 KING III       Hail be thou, Lord long looked for!  
 I have brought thee myrrh for mortality,  
                   Betokening thou shalt mankind restore  
                   To life, by thy death upon a tree.  
 MARY           God have mercy, kings, of your goodness;  
 By the guiding of the Godhead hither are ye sent;  
 The provision of my sweet son your ways home redress,  
                   And ghostly reward you for your present.  
  
 KING I        Sir Kings, after our promise  
                   Home by Herod I must needs go.  
 KING II       Now truly, brethren, we can no less,  
                   But I am so *for-watched*, I wot not what to do.        (*tired*)  
 KING III      Right so am I; wherefore I you pray,  
                   Let all us rest awhile upon this ground.  
 KING I        Brother, your saying is right well unto my *pay*.        (*liking*)  
                   The grace of that sweet child save us all sound.

*[They lie down, and while they sleep, an angel appears.]*

ANGEL        King of Taurus, Sir Jasper;  
 King of Araby, Sir Balthasar;  
 Melchor, King of Aginare,  
 To you now am I sent.  
 For dread of Herod, go you west home;  
                   Into those parts when ye come down,  
                   Ye shall be buried with great renown;  
 The Holy Ghost this knowledge hath sent. *[Exit]*  
  
 KING I        Awake, sir kings, I you pray,  
                   For the voice of an angel I heard in my dream.  
 KING II       That is full true that ye do say,  
                   For he rehearsed our names plain.  
 KING III      He bade that we should go down by west,  
                   For dread of Herod's false betray.  
 KING I        So for to do it is the best;  
 The child that we have sought, guide us the way.  
 Now farewell, the fairest of *shape* so sweet                *schapp*  
                   And thanked be Jesus of his *sond*,                    (*messenger*)  
 That we three together so suddenly should meet,  
 That dwell so wide and in strange land,  
 And here make our presentation  
                   Unto this king's son, cleansed so clean,  
 And to his mother for our salvation;  
 Of much mirth now may we mean,

<sup>1</sup> *In tocynyng*: The source text uses this form for the first two kings, then '*in to cunying*' for the third.



There to will they be full fain.  
 SOLDIER I My lord, King Herod by name,  
 Thy words against my will shall be;  
 To see so many young childer die is shame,  
 Therefore counsel thereto getst thou none of me.  
 SOLIDER II Well said, fellow, my troth I plight.  
 Sir king, perceive right well you may,  
 So great a murder to see of young fruit  
 Will make a rising in thine own country.  
 HEROD A rising? Out, out, out!

*There Herod rages again and then saith thus:*

Out! Villain wretches; have upon you, I cry! <sup>1</sup>  
 My will utterly look that it be wrought,  
 Or upon a gallows both you shall die,  
 By Mahound most mightiest, that me dear hath bought!  
 SOLIDER I Now, cruel Herod, since we shall do this deed,  
 Your will needfully in this realm must be wrought;  
 All the childer of that age die they must need,  
 Now with all my might they shall be up-sought.  
 SOLIDER II And I will swear here upon your bright sword,  
 All the childer that I find, slain they shall be;  
 That make many a mother to weep and be full sore afeared  
 In our armour bright when they us see.  
 HEROD Now you have sworn, forth that ye go,  
 And my will that ye work both by day and night,  
 And then will I for fain trip like a doe!  
 But when they be dead, I warn you, bring them before my sight.

*[Herod and his train leave, and an Angel appeareth to Joseph and Mary in their sleep.]*

ANGEL Mary and Joseph, to you I say:  
 Sweet words from the Father I bring you full right.  
 Out of Bethlem into Egypt forth go ye the way  
 And with you take the King, full of might,  
 For dread of Herod's rede! (rage)  
 JOSEPH Arise up, Mary, hastily and soon;  
 Our Lord's will needs must be done,  
 Like as the angel us bade.  
 MARY Meekly, Joseph, mine own spouse,  
 Toward that country let us repair,  
 At Egypt to some kind of house,  
 God grant us grace safe to come there.

*Here the women come in with their childer, singing them; and Mary and Joseph goeth away clean.*

<sup>1</sup> *Owt velen wrychis har upon you I cry:* The exact meaning of 'har' has not been ascertained. Alternative readings include 'hereupon', 'harm upon'...

*Lully lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By by, lully lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By by, lully, lullay.*

*O sisters two, how may we do  
For to preserve this day  
This poor youngling for whom we do sing  
By by, lully lullay?*

*Herod the King in his raging  
Chargèd he hath this day  
His men of might in his own sight  
All young children to slay.*

*That woe is me, poor child, for thee,  
And ever mourn and may  
For thy parting neither say nor sing  
By by, lully lullay.*

- WOMAN I: I lull my child wondrously sweet  
And in mine arms I do it keep  
Because that it should not cry.
- WOMAN II: That babe that is born in Bethlem so meek  
He save my child and me from villainy.
- WOMAN III: Be still, be still my little child!  
That Lord of lords save both thee and me!  
For Herod hath sworn with words wild  
That all young childer slain they shall be.
- SOLDIER I: Say, ye wedded<sup>1</sup> wives, whither are ye away?  
What bear you in your arms, needs must we see.  
If they be man-childer, die they must this day,  
For at Herod's will all thing must be.
- SOLDIER II: And I, in hand once them *hent*, (*caught*)  
Them for to slay naught will I spare;  
We must fulfil Herod's commandment  
Else we be traitors and cast in all care.
- WOMAN I: Sir knights, of your courtesy,  
This day shame not your chivalry  
But on my child have pity,  
For my sake in this *stead*; (*place*)  
For a simple slaughter it were to *slew* (*slay*)  
Or to wreak such a child woe  
That can neither speak nor go,  
Nor never harm did.
- WOMAN II: He that slays my child in sight,  
If that my strokes on him may light,  
Be he squire or knight,  
I hold him but lost.  
See, thou false losinger, (*deceiver*)  
A stroke shalt thou bear me here

<sup>1</sup> *Sey ye wyddurde wyvis*: One reading is "Say ye whither, ye wives, whither are ye away"; though the repetition of whither seems ungainly.

And spare for no cost.  
 WOMAN III Sit he never so high in saddle,  
 But I shall make his brains addle  
 And here with my pot-ladle  
 With him will I fight.  
 I shall lay on him, as though I *wode* were, (mad)  
 With this same womanly gear;  
 There shall no man *stir*, *steyre*  
 Whether that he be king or knight.

[Here they kill the children.]

SOLDIER I Who heard ever such a cry  
 Of women that their childer have lost,  
 And greatly rebuking chivalry  
 Throughout this realm in every coast  
 Which many a man's life is like to cost  
 For this great wreak that here is done  
 I fear much vengeance thereof will come.  
 SOLDIER II Aye, brother, such tales may we not tell;  
 Wherefore to the king let us go,  
 For he is like to bear the peril,  
 Which was the cause that we do so.  
 Yet must they all be brought him to  
 With wains and wagons fully fright;  
 I trow there will be a careful sight.

[They come before Herod.]

SOLDIER I Lo, Herod, king, here must thou see  
 How many thousands that we have slain.  
 SOLDIER II And needs thy will fulfilled must be;  
 There may no man *assay* there again. *sey, (try)*  
 NUNCIO Herod, king, I shall thee tell:  
 All thy deed is come to naught.  
 This child is gone into Egypt to dwell.  
 Lo, sir, in thine own land what wonders been wrought!  
 HEROD Into Egypt? Alas, for woe!  
 Longer in land here I cannot abide;  
 Saddle my palfrey, for in haste will I go,  
 After yon traitors now will I ride,  
 Them for to slew.  
 Now all men hie fast  
 Into Egypt in haste!  
 All that country will I taste,  
 Till I may come them to.

Here finishes the play of the Shearmen & Taylors

This matter newly corrected by Ben Byram-Wigfield,  
 the xiv day of December, finished in the year of our Lord God MMXXIV.

# AS I OUT-RODE THIS ENDERES NIGHT

*Sung by three Shepherds*

(♩ = 60)

As I out rode this ende-res night Of three jol-ly shep-herds

6

I saw a sight, And all a-bout their fold a star shone bright. They saw a sight, And all a-bout their fold a star shone bright, a star shone bright. They saw a sight, And all a-bout their fold a star shone bright. They

11

sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!', they sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!' So mer-ri-ly the sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!', they sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!' So mer-ri-ly the shep-herds their pipes can sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!', they sang 'Ter-li, ter-low!' So mer-ri-ly the shep-herds their

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shep-herds their pipes can blow, their pipes can blow, so mer-ri-ly the shep-herds, so blow, so mer-ri-ly the shep-herds their pipes can blow, so mer-ri-ly the shep-herds their pipes can blow, their pipes can blow, so mer-ri-ly the

20

mer-ri-ly the shep-herds their pipes can blow, their pipes can blow. pipes can blow, their pipes can blow. shep-herds their pipes can blow, their pipes can blow.

# LULLY, LULLA

(♩ = 100)

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-6. The melody is in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Lul - ly lul - la, thou lit - tle ti - ny child, By by, lul - ly lul -".

7

Musical notation for the second system, measures 7-12. The melody continues with lyrics: "-lay, thou lit - tle ti - ny child, By by, lul - ly lul - la." The system ends with a double bar line and the word "Fine".

13

Musical notation for the third system, measures 13-18. The melody is in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "1. O sis - ters two, How may we do For to pre - serve this\_ 2. He - rod the King, In his rag - - ing, Char - gèd he hath this 3. That woe is me, Poor child, for thee, And ev - er mourn and".

19

Musical notation for the fourth system, measures 19-24. The melody is in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "whom we do 3: Da Capo al Fine day Our poor young - ling For whom we do sing By by, lul - ly lul - lay. day His men of might In his own sight All young chil - dren to slay. may For thy part - ing Neither say nor sing By by, lul - ly lul - lay." The system ends with a double bar line and the word "whom we do".