

crucifixion, the stigmata in his palms had become roses without thorns, and the blood that he shed now became rose petals. When the play was over and the wagon was being pulled to the next station, the rose petals remained on the earth as a final reminder of Jesus's continuing presence.

MARY ELIZABETH ELLZEY

**'Your saviour nowe in your sight': Vassar College's 'Coming of the Antichrist'**

'Prophets of the Antichrist' concludes with the Expositor declaring 'he comes — soon you shall see' (340), so audiences are unlikely to be baffled for long about the identity of the character in 'Coming of the Antichrist' who claims to be '*Christus, vester Salvator*' (9). While the play-text strongly suggests that medieval and Elizabethan performers presented the Antichrist as a figure whom the audience could momentarily mistake for Jesus, the Vassar students working under the direction of English professor Dorothy Kim made production choices that allowed for no doubt that their Antichrist was demonic, not divine. In other ways, though, their performance demonstrated that this play — the only medieval English Antichrist play — confronted its audiences with the challenge of favouring true faith over outward shows of piety, wealth, and power.

The production alluded to the play's original connection to the Dyers guild by conspicuously employing colourful, rich-looking fabric. Costumes for the kings, the Antichrist, and the Antichrist's chief counsellor suggested an Elizabethan-era performance by relying on doublets and hose. The Antichrist (played by Callie Beusman) was a stylized cross between the devil as depicted in Lutheran pamphlets, complete with furry tail and codpiece, and the Whore of Babylon, flaunting scarlet lips and a bare belly. Her beauty and charisma explained her power over the two kings (Michael Masure and Gwendolyn Collaco). The miracles this Antichrist performed never seemed more than stage tricks as they were carried out with theatrical aplomb, yet they managed to echo in parodic ways those Jesus undertook in other Chester plays. For instance, while the figures the Antichrist raised from the dead (Nick Greenberg and Ashlei Hardenburg) seemed monstrous because of



Fig. 10. Antichrist (Vassar College). Courtesy of Heather S. Mitchell.

their curling horns, they were no more ashen-skinned or dirt-smearred than Kent State's Lazarus.

Presumably, women played Elijah and Enoch because talented female performers were available to take these roles. This happenstance, coupled with the choice to present these figures (played by Marya Bernovsky and Laura Lebow) in Middle Eastern-style dress, visually linked them with other saintly women, particularly with the previous day's representations of the women at Christ's tomb. Elijah and Enoch entered the playing space through the audience and thus helped to establish the pageant wagon as the Antichrist's realm where all might be deceived and the ground around it as a space from which one could achieve proper perspective on religious truth and falsity.

The performance complicated this dichotomy, however, in its most unusual segment, when the sword-bearing angel Michael engaged in a vigorous swordfight with Antichrist. According to production notes, Vassar College based Michael's costume in part on a fifteenth-century painting by Raphael showing the archangel slaying a devil. Because the performer cast in the role (Gabriel Gottlieb) was a petite woman, her multi-coloured Roman soldier's skirt and tunic and painted face initially suggested a 1980s video performer, not a fierce warrior. Her strong voice and forceful fighting, however, left an impression of angelic power different than that featured in previous plays; this angel was otherworldly and ultimately fearsome.

Prior to the resurrection of Enoch and Elijah, the audience had the pleasure of seeing Antichrist's soul and dead body dragged off to hell. Devils in brocade and fur doublets paired with skirts generated equal amounts of disgust and delight as they threatened to eat the Antichrist's soul, which the group chose to represent visually as a blob of black slime. The play concluded with Michael, the kings, and the prophets on the upper level of the pageant wagon singing God's praises. As the corpse of the Antichrist lay limp on the ground, the conceptual geography of the production flipped so that lower levels were once again associated with hell, but in such a way that the audience found itself further from the divine and having to look past the figure of the Antichrist to view God's representatives.

This production is one that I thought about long after the end of the Chester 2010 performance. For those not fortunate enough to attend that event, I am happy to report the availability of the production blog, a site that includes video clips and production stills as well as a cast list and discussion of the production design process.<sup>1</sup> With their surprising performance choices, the group that presented 'The Coming of the Antichrist'

suggested the powerful thematic and structural functions of this play within the Chester cycle.

ERIN E. KELLY

## Notes

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- 1 'Chester Cycle 2010: Vassar College English 215 performs the Antichrist', <<http://blogs.vassar.edu/chestercycle/>>.

## Miracles and Marvels: A View from the Third Station

David Mills argues that the 'dramatic interest of the cycle focuses upon the different responses of characters to prophecy' and such 'dislocations of nature'<sup>1</sup> as miraculous signs. Alexandra F. Johnson's edition of the 1572 text<sup>2</sup> strongly suggests that spectacular stage effects were called for in the representation of such miraculous signs of God's power and Christ's divinity, and these effects would probably have been instrumental to a given play's pedagogical and dramatic efficacy. The third day of pageants, set squarely in the time of the 'holy spirit', offered several interesting staged representations of miracles, 'false', and 'true', and provided an illuminating index of the disparate approaches the participating groups took.

'The Road to Emmaus' dramatizes Christ's visitation of the disciples following his resurrection and the subsequent episode of Thomas's doubt, and is punctuated throughout with the fantastic disappearances and reappearances of the newly-risen Christ. Redeemer College produced 'Emmaus', and their modest intention to honour the play's 'storytelling and teaching component'<sup>3</sup> was served well enough. But the group's attempt 'to catch some of the wonder the disciples must have felt in that brief period when the risen Christ was appearing to them, and share it'<sup>4</sup> was arguably less successful. These moments were cleverly blocked and made ample use of the simple set that consisted of a dressed table concealing a trap in the floor of the pageant wagon and a break in the curtain behind that was painted to look like the brickwork of the third station's mansion. Following one of Jesus's disappearances, the pilgrims swept the table away, demonstrating that he