

been performed, although both were written by the Wakefield Master. Of all of his plays, *The Second Shepherds' Play* is undoubtedly the best. The play combines the serious story of the nativity with social commentary (from the perspective of the poorest members of society) and humor. The play is full of anachronisms: the shepherds reference the crucifixion, even though Jesus has only just been born; one of the gifts is a tennis ball; and the setting is clearly in the north of England (with a joke about Mak's strange southern accent). The farcical birth of Mak and Gill's "baby" (one of the highlights of the play) is a perfect contrast to the serious—and sweet—nativity scene at the end.

1.16.1 The Second Shepherds' Play

[The First Shepherd (Primus Pastor) enters.]

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Lord, but this weather is cold, and I am ill wrapped!
 Nigh dazed, were the truth told, so long have I napped;
 My legs under me fold; my fingers are chapped—
 With such like I don't hold, for I am all lapt
 In sorrow.
 In storms and tempest.
 Now in the east, now in the west,
 Woe is him has never rest
 Midday nor morrow!

But we seely shepherds that walk on the moor,
 In faith we're nigh at hand to be put out of door.
 No wonder, as it doth stand, if we be poor.
 For the tilth of our land lies fallow as the floor,
 As ye ken.
 We're so burdened and banned,
 Over-taxed and unmanned.
 We're made tame to the hand
 Of these gentry men.

Thus they rob us of our rest, our Lady them harry!
 These men bound to their lords' behest, they make the plough tarry,
 What men say is for the best, we find the contrary,—
 Thus are husbandmen oppressed, in point to miscarry,
 In life,
 Thus hold they us under
 And from comfort sunder.

It were great wonder,
If ever we should thrive.

For if a man may get an embroidered sleeve or a brooch now-a-days,
Woe is him that may him grieve, or a word in answer says!
No blame may he receive, whatever pride he displays;
And yet may no man believe one word that he says,
Not a letter.
His daily needs are gained
By boasts and bragging feigned.
And in all he's maintained
By men that are greater.

Proud shall come a swain as a peacock may go,
He must borrow my wain, my plough also.
Then I am full fain to grant it ere he go.
Thus live we in pain, anger, and woe
By night and day!
He must have it, if he choose.
Though I should it lose,
I were better hanged than refuse.
Or once say him nay!

It does me good as I walk thus alone
Of this world for to talk and to make my moan.
To my sheep will I stalk, and hearken anon,
There wait on a balk, or sit on a stone.
Full soon,
For I trow, pardie,
True men if they be,
We shall have company,
Ere it be noon.

[The First Shepherd goes out (or to one side). The Second Shepherd enters.]

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Ben'cite and Dominus! What may this mean?
Why fares the world thus! The like often we've seen!
Lord, but it is spiteful and grievous, this weather so keen!
And the frost so hideous—it waters mine een!
That's no lie!
Now in dry, now in wet,
Now in snow, now in sleet.

When my shoes freeze to my feet,
It's not all easy!

But so far as I ken, wherever I go,
We seely wedded men suffer mickle woe
We have sorrow once and again, it befalls oft so.
Seely Capel, our hen, both to and fro
She cackles.
But if she begins to croak.
To grumble or cluck,
Then woe be to our cock,
For he is in the shackles!

These men that are wed have not all their will;
When they're full hard bestead, they sigh mighty still;
God knows the life they are led is full hard and full ill,
Nor thereof in bower or bed may they speak their will,
This tide.
My share I have found,
Know my lesson all round,
Wo is him that is bound,
For he must it abide!

But now late in men's lives (such a marvel to me
That I think my heart rives such wonders to see,
How that destiny drives that it should so be!)
Some men will have two wives and some men three
In store.
Some are grieved that have any,
But I'll wager my penny
Woe is him that has many.
For he feels sore!

But young men as to wooing, for God's sake that you bought.
Beware well of wedding, and hold well in thought,
"Had I known" is a thing that serves you nought.
Much silent sorrowing has a wedding home brought,
And grief gives,
With many a sharp shower—
For thou mayest catch in an hour
What shall taste thee full sour
As long as one lives!

For—if ever read I epistle!—I have one by my fire,
 As sharp as a thistle, as rough as a briar,
 She has brows like a bristle and a sour face by her;
 If she had once wet her whistle, she might sing clearer
 and higher
 Her pater-noster;
 She is as big as a whale,
 She has a gallon of gall,—
 By him that died for us all,
 I wish I had run till I had lost her!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

“God look over the row!” like a deaf man ye stand.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Yea, sluggard, the devil thy maw burn with his brand!
 Didst see aught of Daw?

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Yea, on the pasture-land
 I heard him blow just before; he comes nigh at hand
 Below there.
 Stand still.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Why?

PRIMUS PASTOR.

For he comes, hope I.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

He’ll catch us both with some lie
 Unless we beware.
 [The Third Shepherd enters, at first without seeing them.]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Christ’s cross me speed and St. Nicholas!
 Thereof in sooth I had need, it is worse than it was.
 Whoso hath knowledge, take heed, and let the world pass,
 You may never trust it, indeed,—it’s as brittle as glass,
 As it rangeth.
 Never before fared this world so,
 With marvels that greater grow,
 Now in weal, now in woe,
 And everything changeth.

There was never since Noah's flood such floods seen,
 Winds and rains so rude and storms so keen;
 Some stammered, some stood in doubt, as I ween.—
 Now God turn all to good, I say as I mean!
 For ponder
 How these floods all drown
 Both in fields and in town,
 And bear all down.
 And that is a wonder!

We that walk of nights our cattle to keep,
 [Catches sight of the others.]
 We see startling sights when oilier men sleep.
 Yet my heart grows more light—I see shrews a-peep.
 Ye are two tall wights—I will give my sheep
 A turn, below.
 But my mood is ill-sent;
 As I walk on this bent,
 I may lightly repent,
 If I stub my toe.
 Ah, Sir, God you save and my master sweet!
 A drink I crave, and somewhat to eat.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Christ's curse, my knave, thou'rt a lazy cheat!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Lo, the boy lists to rave! Wait till later for meat.
 We have eat it.
 Ill thrift on thy pate!
 Though the rogue came late.
 Yet is he in state
 To eat, could he get it.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

That such servants as I, that sweat and swink,
 Eat our bread full dry gives me reason to think.
 Wet and weary we sigh while our masters wink,
 Yet full late we come by our dinner and drink—
 But soon thereto
 Our dame and sire,
 When we've run in the mire,
 Take a nip from our hire.
 And pay slow as they care to.

But hear my oath, master, since you find fault this way,
 I shall do this hereafter—work to fit my pay;
 I'll do just so much, sir, and now and then play,
 For never yet supper in my stomach lay
 In the fields.
 But why dispute so?
 Off with staff I can go.
 “Easy bargain,” men say,
 “But a poor return yields.”

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Thou wert an ill lad for work to ride wooing
 From a man that had but little for spending.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Peace, boy, I bade! No more jangling.
 Or I'll make thee full sad, by the Heaven's King,
 With thy gauds!
 Where are our sheep, boy? Left lorn?

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Sir, this same day at morn,
 I them left in the corn
 When they rang Lauds.

They have pasture good, they cannot go wrong.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

That is right. By the Rood, these nights are long!
 Ere we go now, I would someone gave us a song.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

So I thought as I stood, to beguile us along.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

I agree.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

The tenor I'll try.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

And I the treble so high.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Then the mean shall be I.

How ye chant now, let's see!
 [They sing (the song is not given).]
 [Tunc entrat Mak, in clamide se super togam vestitus.]

MAK.

Now, Lord, by thy seven names' spell, that made both moon and stars on high,
 Full more than I can tell, by thy will for me. Lord, lack I.
 I am all at odds, nought goes well—that oft doth my temper try.
 Now would God I might in heaven dwell, for there no children cry.
 So still.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Who is that pipes so poor?

MAK.

Would God ye knew what I endure!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Lo, a man that walks on the moor.
 And has not all his will!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Mak, whither dost speed? What news do you bring!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Is he come? Then take heed each one to his thing.
 [Et accipit clamiden ah ipso.]

MAK.

What! I am a yeoman—since there's need I should tell you—of the King,
 That self-same, indeed, messenger from a great lording,
 And the like thereby.
 Fie on you! Go hence
 Out of my presence!
 I must have reverence.
 And you ask “who am I!”

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Why dress ye it up so quaint? Mak, ye do ill!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

But, Mak, listen, ye saint, I believe what ye will!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

I trow the knave can feint, by the neck the devil him kill!

MAK.

I shall make complaint, and you'll all get your fill,
At a word from me—
And tell your doings, forsooth

PRIMUS PASTOR.

But, Mak, is that truth?
Now take out that southern tooth
stick in a flea

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Mak, the devil be in your eye, verily! to a blow I'd fain treat you.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Mak, know you not me? By God, I could beat you!

MAK.

God keep you all three! Me thought I had seen you—I greet you.
Ye are a fair company!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Oh, now you remember, you cheat, you!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Shrew, jokes are cheap!
When thus late a man goes.
What will folk suppose?—
You've a bad name, God knows.
For stealing of sheep

MAK.

And true as steel am I, all men know and say,
But a sickness I feel, verily, that grips me hard, night and day.
My belly is all awry, it is out of play—

TERTIUS PASTOR.

“Seldom doth the Devil lie dead by the way—”

MAK.

Therefore
Full sore am I and ill,
Though I stand stone still;
I've not eat a needle
This month and more.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

How fares thy wife, by my hood, how fares she, ask I?

MAK.

Lies asprawl, by the Rood, lo, the fire close by,
 And a house-full of home-brewed she drinks full nigh—
 Ill may speed any good thing that she will try
 Else to do!—
 Eats as fast as may be,
 And each year there'll a day be
 She brings forth a baby.
 And some years two.

But were I now kinder, d'ye hear, and far richer in purse,
 Still were I eaten clear out of house and home, sirs.
 And she's a foul-favored dear, see her close, by God's curse!
 No one knows or may hear, I trow, of a worse,
 Not any!
 Now will ye see what I proffer?—
 To give all in my coffer,
 To-morrow next to offer
 Her head-mass penny.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Faith, so weary and worn is there none in this shire.
 I must sleep, were I shorn of a part of my hire.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

I'm naked, cold, and forlorn, and would fain have a
 fire.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

I'm clean spent, for, since morn, I've run in the mire.
 Watch thou, do!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Nay, I'll lie down hereby.
 For I must sleep, truly.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

As good a man's son was I,
 As any of you!
 [They prepare to lie down.]
 But, Mak, come lie here in between, if you please.

MAK.

You'll be hindered, I fear, from talking at ease,
 Indeed!
 [He yields and lies down.]
 From my top to my toe,
Manus tuas commendo,
Poncio Pilato,
 Christ's cross me speed!
Tunc siirgit, pastorihus dormientibus, et dicit:
 Now 'twere time a man knew, that lacks what he'd fain hold,
 To steal privily through then into a fold,
 And then nimbly his work do—and be not too bold,
 For his bargain he'd me, if it were told
 At the ending
 Now 'twere time their wrath to tell!—
 But he needs good counsel
 That fain would fare well,
 And has but little for spending.

But about you a circle as round as a moon,
 [He draws the circle.]
 Till I have done what I will, till that it be noon.
 That ye lie stone still, until I have done;
 And I shall say thereto still, a few good words soon
 Of might:
 Over your heads my hand I lift.
 Out go your eyes! Blind be your sight!
 But I must make still better shift,
 If it's to be right.

Lord, how hard they sleep—that may ye all hear!
 I never herded sheep, but I'll learn now, that's clear.
 Though the flock be scared a heap, yet shall I slip near.
 [He captures a sheep.]
 Hey—hitherward creep! Now that betters our cheer
 From sorrow.
 A fat sheep, I dare say!
 A good fleece, swear I may!
 When I can, then I'll pay,
 But this I will borrow!
 [Mak goes to his house, and knocks at the door.]

MAK.

Ho, Gill, art thou in? Get us a light!

UXOR EIUS.

Who makes such a din at this time of night?
I am set for to spin, I think not I might
Rise a penny to win! Curses loud on them light
Trouble cause!
A busy house-wife all day
To be called thus away!
No work's done, I say,
Because of such small chores!

MAK.

The door open, good Gill. See'st thou not what I bring?

UXOR.

Draw the latch, an thou will. Ah, come in, my sweeting!

MAK.

Yea, thou need'st not care didst thou kill me with such long standing!

UXOR.

By the naked neck still thou art likely to swing.

MAK.

Oh, get away!
I am worthy of my meat,
For at a pinch I can get
More than they that swink and sweat
All the long day.

Thus it fell to my lot, Gill! Such luck came my way!

UXOR.

It were a foul blot to be hanged for it some day.

MAK.

I have often escaped, Gillot, as risky a play.

UXOR.

But "though long goes the pot to the water," men say,
"At last
Comes it home broken."

MAK.

Well know I the token,
But let it never be spoken—
But come and help fast!

I would he were slain, I would like well to eat.
This twelvemonth was I not so fain to have some sheep's meat.

UXOR.

Should they come ere he's slain and hear the sheep bleat—

MAK.

Then might I be ta'en. That were a cold sweat!
The door—
Go close it!

UXOR.

Yes, Mak,—
For if they come at thy back—

MAK.

Then might I suffer from the whole pack
The devil, and more!

UXOR.

A good trick have I spied, since thou thinkest of none,
Here shall we him hide until they be gone—
In my cradle he'll bide — just you let me alone—
And I shall lie beside in childbed and groan.

MAK.

Well said!
And I shall say that this night
A boy child saw the light.

UXOR.

Now that day was bright
That saw me born and bred!

This is a good device and a far cast.
Ever a woman's advice gives help at the last!
I care not who spies! Now go thou back fast!

MAK.

Save I come ere they rise, there'll blow a cold blast!

[Mak goes back to the moor, and prepares to lie down.]

I will go sleep.
 Still sleeps all this company,
 And I shall slip in privily
 As it had never been I
 That carried off their sheep.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Resurrex a mortuis! Reach me a hand!
Judas carnas dominus! I can hardly stand!
 My foot's asleep, by Jesus, and my mouth's dry as sand.
 I thought we had laid us full nigh to England!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Yea, verily!
 Lord, but I have slept well.
 As fresh as an eel,
 As light do I feel.
 As leaf on the tree.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Ben'cite be herein! So my body is quaking,
 My heart is out of my skin with the to-do it's making.
 Who's making all this din, so my head's set to aching.
 To the doer I'll win! Hark, you fellows, be waking!
 Four we were—
 See ye aught of Mak now?

PRIMUS PASTOR.

We were up ere thou.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Man, to God I vow.
 Not once did he stir.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Methought he was lapt in a wolf's skin.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

So many are happed now—namely within.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

When we had long napped, methought with a gin
 A fat sheep he trapped, but he made no din.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Be still!
Thy dream makes thee mad,
It's a nightmare you've had.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

God bring good out of bad,
If it be his will!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Rise, Mak, for shame! Right long dost thou lie.

MAK.

Now Christ's Holy Name be with us for aye!
What's this, by Saint James, I can't move when I try.
I suppose I'm the same. Oo-o, my neck's lain awry
Enough, perdie—
Many thanks!—since yester even.
Now, by Saint Stephen,
I was plagued by a sweven,
Knocked the heart of me.

I thought Gill begun to croak and travail full sad,
Well-nigh at the first cock, with a young lad
To add to our flock. Of that I am never glad,
I have "tow on my rock more than ever I had."
Oh, my head!
A house full of young banes—
The devil knock out their brains!
Wo is him many gains.
And thereto little bread.
I must go home, by your leave, to Gill, as I
thought.
Prithee look in my sleeve that I steal naught.
I am loath you to grieve, or from you take aught.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Go forth—ill may'st thou thrive!
[Mak goes.]
Now I would that we sought
This morn,
That we had all our store.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

But I will go before.
Let us meet.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Where, Daw?

TERTIUS PASTOR.

At the crooked thorn.
[They go out. Mak enters and knocks at his door.]

MAK.

Undo the door, see who's here ! How long must I stand?

UXOR EIUS.

Who's making such gear? Now "walk in the wen-yand."

MAK.

Ah, Gill, what cheer? It is I, Mak, your husband.

UXOR.

Then may we see here the devil in a band,
Sir Guile!
Lo, he comes with a note
As he were held by the throat.
And I cannot devote
To my work any while.

MAK.

Will ye hear the pother she makes to get her a gloze—
Naught but pleasure she takes, and curls up her toes.

UXOR.

Why, who runs, who wakes, who comes, who goes,
Who brews, who bakes, what makes me hoarse, d'ye suppose!
And also,
It is ruth to behold.
Now in hot, now in cold,
Full woeful is the household
That no woman doth know!

But what end hast thou made with the shepherds, Mak?

MAK.

The last word that they said when I turned my back

Was they'd see that they had of their sheep all the pack.
 They'll not be pleased, I'm afraid, when they their sheep lack,
 Perdie.
 But how so the game go,
 They'll suspect me, whether or no,
 And raise a great bellow.
 And cry out upon me.

But thou must use thy sleight.

UXOR.

Yea, I think it not ill.
 I shall swaddle him alright in my cradle with skill.
 Were it yet a worse plight, yet a way I'd find still.
 [Gill meanwhile swaddles the sheep and places him in the cradle.]
 I will lie down forthright. Come tuck me up.

MAK.

That I will.

UXOR.

Behind!
 [Mak tucks her in at the hack.]
 If Coll come and his marrow,
 They will nip us full narrow.

MAK.

But I may cry out "Haro,"
 The sheep if they find.

UXOR.

Hearken close till they call—they will come anon.
 Come and make ready all, and sing thou alone—
 Sing lullaby, thou shalt, for I must groan
 And cry out by the wall on Mary and John
 Full sore.
 Sing lullaby on fast,
 When thou hear'st them at last,
 And, save I play a shrewd cast,
 Trust me no more.

[The Shepherds enter on the moor and meet.]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Ah, Coll, good morn! Why sleepest thou not?

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Alas, that ever I was born! We have a foul blot.
A fat wether have we lorn.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Marry, God forbid, say it not!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Who should do us that scorn? That were a foul spot.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Some shrew.
I have sought with my dogs
All Horbury Shrogs,
And of fifteen hogs
Found I all but one ewe.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Now trust me, if you will, by Saint Thomas of Kent,
Either Mak or Gill their aid thereto lent!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Peace, man, be still! I saw when he went.
Thou dost slander him ill. Thou shouldest repent
At once, indeed!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

So may I thrive, perdie,
Should I die here where I be,
I would say it was he
That did that same deed!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Go we thither, quick sped, and run on our feet,
I shall never eat bread till I know all complete!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Nor drink in my head till with him I meet.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

In no place will I bed until I him greet,
My brother!
One vow I will plight,
Till I see him in sight,
I will ne'er sleep one night

Where I do another!

[They go to Mak's house. Mak, hearing them coming, begins to sing lullaby at the top of his voice, while Gill groans in concert]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Hark the row they make! List our sire there croon!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Never heard I voice break so clear out of tune.
Call to him.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Mak, wake there! Undo your door soon!

MAK.

Who is that spake as if it were noon?
Aloft?
Who is that, I say?

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Good fellows, if it were day—

[MOCKING MAK.]

MAK.

As far as ye may,
Kindly, speak soft;

O'er a sick woman's head in such grievous throes!
I were liefer dead than she should suffer such woes.

UXOR.

Go elsewhere, well sped. Oh, how my pain grows—
Each footfall ye tread goes straight through my nose
So loud, woe's me!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Tell us, Mak, if ye may,
How fare ye, I say?

MAK.

But are ye in this town to-day—
Now how fare ye?

Ye have run in the mire and are wet still a bit,
I will make you a fire, if ye will sit.

A nurse I would hire—can you help me in it?
 Well quit is my hire—my dream the truth hit—
 In season.
 I have bairns, if ye knew.
 Plenty more than will do,
 But we must drink as we brew.
 And that is but reason.

I would ye would eat ere ye go. Methinks that ye sweat.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Nay, no help could we know in what's drunken or eat.

MAK.

Why, sir, ails you aught but good, though?

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Yea, our sheep that we get
 Are stolen as they go; our loss is great.

MAK.

Sirs, drink!
 Had I been there.
 Some one had bought it sore, I swear.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Marry, some men trow that ye were,
 And that makes us think!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Mak, one and another trows it should be ye.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Either ye or your spouse, so say we.

MAK.

Now if aught suspicion throws on Gill or me.
 Come and search our house, and then may ye see
 Who had her—
 If I any sheep got.
 Or cow or stot;
 And Gill, my wife, rose not.
 Here since we laid her.

As I am true and leal, to God, here I pray

That this is the first meal that I shall eat this day.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Mak, as may I have weal, advise thee, I say—
“He learned timely to steal that could not say nay.”

UXOR.

Me, my death you’ve dealt!
Out, ye thieves, nor come again,
Ye’ve come just to rob us, that’s plain.

MAK.

Hear ye not how she groans amain—
Your hearts should melt!

UXOR.

From my child, thieves, begone. Go nigh him not,—there’s the door!

MAK.

If ye knew all she’s borne, your hearts would be sore.
Ye do wrong, I you warn, thus to come in before
A woman that has borne—but I say no more.

UXOR.

Oh, my middle—I die!
I vow to God so mild,
If ever I you beguiled,
That I will eat this child
That doth in this cradle lie!

MAK.

Peace, woman, by God’s pain, and cry not so.
Thou dost hurt thy brain and fill me with woe.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

I trow our sheep is slain. What find ye two, though?
Our work’s all in vain. We may as well go.
Save clothes and such matters
I can find no flesh
Hard or nesh,
Salt nor fresh.
Except two empty platters.
Of any “cattle” but this, tame or wild, that we see,
None, as may I have bliss, smelled as loud as he.

UXOR.

No, so God joy and bliss of my child may give me!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

We have aimed amiss; deceived, I trow, were we.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Sir, wholly each, one.
Sir, Our Lady him save!
Is your child a knave?

MAK.

Any lord might him have,
This child, for his son.

When he wakes, so he grips, it's a pleasure to see.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Good luck to his hips, and blessing, say we!
But who were his gossips, now tell who they be?

MAK.

Blest be their lips—
[Hesitates, at a loss.]

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Hark a lie now, trust me! [Aside.]

MAK.

So may God them thank.
Parkin and Gibbon Waller, I say.
And gentle John Horn, in good fey—
He made all the fun and play—
With the great shank.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Mak, friends will we be, for we are at one.

MAK.

We!—nay, count not on me, for amends get I none.
Farewell, all three! Glad 'twill be when ye're gone!
[The Shepherds go.]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

“Fair words there may be, but love there is none
This year.”

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Gave ye the child anything?

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

I trow, not one farthing.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Fast back I will fling.

Await ye me here.

[DAW GOES BACK. THE OTHER SHEPHERDS TURN AND FOLLOW HIM
SLOWLY, ENTERING WHILE HE IS TALKING WITH MAK.]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Mak, I trust thou'lt not grieve, if I go to thy child.

MAK.

Nay, great hurt I receive,—thou hast acted full wild.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Thy bairn 'twill not grieve, little day-star so mild,

Mak, by your leave, let me give your child

But six-pence.

[Daw goes to cradle, and starts to draw away the covering]

MAK.

Nay, stop it—he sleeps!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Methinks he peeps—

MAK.

When he wakens, he weeps;

I pray you go hence!

[The other Shepherds return.]

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout.

What the devil is this?—he has a long snout!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

He's birth-marked amiss. We waste time hereabout.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

“A weft that ill-spun is comes ever foul out.”

[He sees the sheep.]

Aye—so!
He is like to, our sheep!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Ho, Gib, may I peep?

PRIMUS PASTOR.

I trow “Nature will creep
Where it may not go.”

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

This was a quaint gaud and a far cast.
It was a high fraud.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Yea, sirs, that was’t.
Let’s burn this bawd, and bind her fast.
“A false scold,” by the Lord, “will hang at the last!”
So shalt thou!
Will ye see how they swaddle
His four feet in the middle!
Saw I never in the cradle
A horned lad ere now!

MAK.

Peace, I say! Tell ye what, this to-do ye can spare!
[Pretending anger.]
It was I him begot and yon woman him bare.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

What the devil for name has he got? Mak?—
Lo, God, Mak’s heir!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Come, joke with him not. Now, may God give him care,
I say!

UXOR.

A pretty child is he
As sits on a woman’s knee,
A dilly-down, perdie,
To make a man gay.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

I know him by the ear-mark—that is a good token.

MAK.

I tell you, sirs, hark, his nose was broken—
Then there told me a clerk he'd been mis-spoken.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Ye deal falsely and dark; I would fain be wroken.
Get a weapon,—go!

UXOR.

He was taken by an elf,
I saw it myself.
When the clock struck twelve.
Was he mis-shapen so.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Ye two are at one, that's plain, in all ye've done and said.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Since their theft they maintain, let us leave them dead!

MAK.

If I trespass again, strike off my head!
At your will I remain.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Sirs, take my counsel instead.
For this trespass
We'll neither curse nor wrangle in spite,
Chide nor fight.
But have done forthright,
And toss him in canvas.

[They toss Mak in one of Gill's canvas sheets till they are tired. He disappears
groaning into his house. The Shepherds pass over to the moor on the other
side of the stage.]

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Lord, lo! but I am sore, like to burst, in back and breast.
In faith, I may no more, therefore will I rest.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Like a sheep of seven score he weighed in my fist.
To sleep anywhere, therefore seemeth now best.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Now I you pray,
On this green let us lie.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

O'er those thieves yet chafe I.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Let your anger go by,—
Come do as I say.
[As they are about to lie down the Angel appears.]
Angelus cantat "Gloria in excelsis." Postea dicat: Angeliis.
Rise, herdsmen gentle, attend ye, for now is he born
From the fiend that shall rend what Adam had lorn.
That warlock to shend, this night is he born,
God is made your friend now on this morn.
Lo! thus doth he command—
Go to Bethlehem, see
Where he lieth so free,
In a manger full lowly
'Twixt where twain beasts stand.
[The Angel goes.]

PRIMUS PASTOR.

This was a fine voice, even as ever I heard.
It is a marvel, by St. Stephen, thus with dread to be
stirred.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

'Twas of God's Son from heaven he these tidings averred.
All the wood with a levin, methought at his word
Shone fair.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Of a Child did he tell.
In Bethlehem, mark ye well.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

That this star yonder doth spell—
Let us seek him there.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Say, what was his song—how it went, did ye hear?
Three breves to a long—

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Marry, yes, to my ear
There was no crotchet wrong, naught it lacked and full clear!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

To sing it here, us among, as he nicked it, full near,
I know how—

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Let's see how you croon!
Can you bark at the moon?

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Hold your tongues, have done!
Hark after me now! [They sing.]

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

To Bethlehem he bade that we should go.
I am sore adrad that we tarry too slow.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Be merry, and not sad—our song's of mirth not of woe,
To be forever glad as our meed may we know.
Without noise.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Hie we thither, then, speedily,
Though we be wet and weary,
To that Child and that Lady I—
We must not lose those joys!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

We find by the prophecy—let be your din!—
David and Isaiah, and more that I mind me therein,
They prophesied by clergy, that in a virgin,
Should he alight and lie, to assuage our sin,
And slake it,
Our nature, from woe,
For it was Isaiah said so,
"Ecce virgo
Concipiet" a child that is naked.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Full glad may we be and await that day
That lovesome one to see, that all might's doth sway.

Lord, well it were with me, now and for aye,
 Might I kneel on my knee some word for to say
 To that child.
 But the angel said
 In a crib was he laid,
 He was poorly arrayed,
 Both gracious and mild.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Patriarchs that have been and prophets before,
 They desired to have seen this child that is born.
 They are gone full clean,—that have they lorn.
 We shall see him, I ween, ere it be morn,
 For token.
 When I see him and feel,
 I shall know full well.
 It is true as steel,
 What prophets have spoken,

To so poor as we are that he would appear.
 First find and declare by his messenger.

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Go we now, let us fare, the place is us near.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

I am ready and eager to be there; let us together with cheer
 To that bright one go.
 Lord, if thy will it be.
 Untaught are we all three.
 Some kind of joy grant us, that we
 Thy creatures, comfort may know!
 [They enter the stable and adore the infant Saviour.]
 Primus Pastor,
 Hail, thou comely and clean one! Hail, young Child!
 Hail, Maker, as I mean, from a maiden so mild!
 Thou hast harried, I ween, the warlock so wild,—
 The false beguiler with his teen now goes beguiled.
 Lo, he merries,
 Lo, he laughs, my sweeting!
 A happy meeting!
 Here's my promised greeting,—
 Have a bob of cherries!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Hail, sovereign Saviour, for thou hast us sought!
 Hail, noble nursling and flower, that all things hast wrought!
 Hail, thou, full of gracious power, that made all from nought!
 Hail, I kneel and I cower! A bird have I brought
 To my bairn from far.
 Hail, little tiny mop!
 Of our creed thou art the crop,
 I fain would drink in thy cup,
 Little day-star!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Hail, darling dear one, full of Godhead indeed!
 I pray thee be near, when I have need.
 Hail, sweet is thy cheer! My heart would bleed
 To see thee sit here in so poor a weed,
 With no pennies.
 Hail, put forth thy dall,
 I bring thee but a ball.
 Keep it, and play with it withal,
 And go to the tennis.
 Maria.
 The Father of Heaven this night, God omnipotent.
 That setteth all things aright, his Son hath he sent.
 My name he named and did light on me ere that he went.
 I conceived him forthright through his might as he meant,
 And now he is born.
 May he keep you from woe!
 I shall pray him do so.
 Tell it, forth as ye go.
 And remember this morn.

PRIMUS PASTOR.

Farewell, Lady, so fair to behold
 With thy child on thy knee!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

But he lies full cold!
 Lord, 'tis well with me! Now we go, behold!

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Forsooth, already it seems to be told
 Full oft!

PRIMUS PASTOR.

What grace we have found!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Now are we won safe and sound.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Come forth, to sing are we bound.

Make it ring then aloft!

[They depart singing.]

Explicit pagina Pastorum

1.16.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. Find as many anachronisms as you can in the play. Which anachronisms seem most out of place in the story, and why? What role do the anachronisms play for the audience?
2. What complaints do the shepherds make about the social class system? Why begin a play about the birth of Jesus with social commentary?
3. How many songs are there in the play? Who sings them, and how do they contribute to the play? Do they add to the plot, change the mood, or something else?
4. Are the scenes with Mak and Gill only for comic relief, or do they serve some serious purpose? How does the parallelism of the two births contribute to our understanding of the play?
5. Why are the three shepherds chosen to visit the baby Jesus? What might their gifts to the baby symbolize? Why have the shepherds offer gifts, rather than the three kings in the Bible?

1.17 SIR THOMAS MALORY

(ca. 1415-1471)

Although there are three different men named Thomas Malory in the same general time period, scholars have (mostly) decided that Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel in Warwickshire is the most probable author of *Le Morte d'Arthur*. If so, the author led a life that does not necessarily correspond to the knightly values espoused by his work, and the text itself was most likely composed while Malory was in prison. The value of Malory's work is in part that it is a compilation of every previous Arthurian text that the author could find, including French works that he translated; evidently, he was given access to books while in captivity, and