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## Clothing and the Postlapsarian Body in Early English Drama

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**MRDS Submission for the Johnston Prize**

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**Paper: Clothing and the postlapsarian body in Early English Drama**

When thinking of how early English drama would present the moments following the first parents' transgression, one would be forgiven for assuming that Genesis 3.21 (henceforth Gen 3.21), which states: 'And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them', would be a definitive guideline for staging the seminal moment in biblical history.<sup>1</sup> The translation of this verse into play text, however, is only to be found in Chester's *Creation and Fall*. The leaf containing this episode is missing from the sole manuscript that preserves the Wakefield or Towneley plays, and both the N-Town *Fall of Man* and York's *Fall* present the event differently, even from each other. This paper will thus analyse how the three extant plays envisage the body's movement from prelapsarian glory to liminal 'lapsarian' state and beyond, and will also consider how exegesis related to Gen 3.21 could have contributed to late medieval configurations of the body. As I will demonstrate, the plays present the fallen body in vastly different ways, particularly in relation to clothing, belying the influence of a wealth of seemingly conflictual interpretative traditions.

Clothing has been intrinsic to the negotiation and envisioning of the body's pre- and postlapsarian states from early Jewish exegesis onwards. The move from proximity

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: Douay Version* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1956).

to God to the wretched loss of divine grace is consistently and effectively rendered by stripping or covering the elect or debased human body, with Gen 3.21 sparking many of these divergent interpretations about the fallen body. The verse, which itself proffers a covering for the body as a consequence of the fall, has been subject to an extraordinary amount of exegesis, including by Christian, Neo-Platonic, and Gnostic writers, which combined with their Jewish counterparts provides a proliferation of different fall narratives, with each school of thought's particular version designed to reflect their theological or philosophical stance on the body.<sup>2</sup>

Within the Jewish context, the verse became troublesome for rabbinic exegetes because the suggestion raised by the 'tunics of skin' was that this could be a layer external to the human body, which inferred that an animal had been slain for this purpose. In the theological schema of Jewish postbiblical exegesis, however, such an outcome was in conflict with the biblical notion that murder did not enter the world until after Cain slew Abel. Thus, skins of dead animals were disruptive and problematic, and this interpretation was consequently rarely put forward. In place of this there is a wealth of exegetical literature which provides an alternative to the notion that Adam and Eve were created in splendid nakedness, and shows the progenitors as covered from the beginning.

Many of the earliest works of Jewish post-biblical exegesis, the pseudepigraphical or apocryphal texts, and the later rabbinic exegetical works – the Midrash and Targum – contain examples of the body being clad in an original 'garment of glory' or 'righteousness', or as having an outer skin composed of nail and/or emitting light. Eve, in the pseudepigraphical *Apocalypse of Moses* (c. 20 BCE-70 CE) recounts the fall to her children as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the limited focus of this paper I will not be considering the Neo-Platonic interpretations here. For more on this, however, see Sebastian Brock, 'Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition' in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter: Herausgegeben von Margot Schmidt in Zusammenarbeit mit Carl Friedrich Geyer*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1982).

And in that very hour my eyes were opened, and forthwith I knew  
that I was bare of the righteousness with which I had been clothed,  
and I wept and said to [Satan]: “Why hast thou done this to me in  
that thou hast deprived me of the glory with which I was clothed?”<sup>3</sup>

Eve explicitly presents her transgression as a stripping, implying that the first parents were not ‘naked’ as Gen 2.25<sup>4</sup> states, but were covered by a ‘glory’ and ‘righteousness’ which is configured here, and elsewhere, as a clothing. In *Genesis Rabbah*, produced circa 450 CE, the Midrash recounts the eating of the fruit by Eve as follows: ‘when she partook of the fruit, her glorious outer skin, a sheet of light as smooth as fingernail, had fallen away’.<sup>5</sup> What is evident from these works, which are separated by about five centuries, is that there is a prevalent understanding of the prelapsarian body in Jewish postbiblical and rabbinic exegesis as covered, and that ‘nakedness’ was a state unknown to the first parents precisely because of this.

John Elwolde explains that this interpretation came about in response to the aforementioned problem that early translators had with understanding Gen 3.21’s ‘tunics of skin’. Subsequently, he argues, ‘A lexico-grammatical solution was to interpret the skin as belonging to Adam and Eve, not to an animal, and to understand the genitive (‘of’) construction as conveying the sense of “for,” i.e. “tunics for their bodies.”’<sup>6</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) p. xx 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Holy Bible: Douay Version*. Gen 2.25: ‘And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed’.

<sup>5</sup> There are many other texts which contain this detail, but for the sake of space I have chosen only two as representative of the tradition. See Stephen Lambden, ‘From Fig-leaves to Fingernails: Some Notes on the Garments of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Bible and Select Early Postbiblical Jewish Writings’ in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> John Elwolde, ‘Language and Translation of the Old Testament’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J.W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 144-145.

understanding posits the ‘tunics of skin’ as being the flesh of the body from which the prelapsarian ‘tunics of light’ have been removed. The scriptural ‘tunics of skin’ are here presented as being simultaneously prelapsarian and postlapsarian, and Gary A. Anderson explains that the grammatical order of scripture was not read as fixed in exegesis, meaning that the ‘tunics’ of Gen 3.21 are not constrained to being worn before or after the fall: ‘Our peculiar Hebrew phrase עור תונתֶּךָ (tunics of skin) has been translated in twofold fashion: “garments of glory for the skin of their flesh”’. The fact that ‘light’ and ‘skin’ are homophones in Hebrew, and that the exegetical tradition began as an oral one is a further testament to the validity of this interchangeability which developed in and beyond the Hebrew language.<sup>7</sup> Biblical verse was thus interpreted as having the capacity to refer to both the pre-and postlapsarian condition, with light being attributed to the prelapsarian state, and human skin to the postlapsarian. This subsequently solved the issue of death entering the biblical landscape before scripture fully explained it, but also emphasises the lengths to which interpreters went in order to solve their theological quandary.

Christian theologians, on the other hand, almost exchanged problems and solutions with their Jewish counterparts. For while the dead skin of an animal was out of the question for most rabbinic thinkers, it was the prevailing interpretation proposed by the Christian orthodoxy. What could not be inferred from Gen 3.21 was that the ‘tunics of skin’ could in any way refer to the skin of the human body.<sup>8</sup> This was because Gnostics used this argument in order to deny the

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<sup>7</sup> Gary A. Anderson, ‘The Punishment of Adam and Eve’ in *Literature on Adam and Eve* (Brill: Leiden, 2000). 64-65.

<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that this interpretation was completely shunned. Gregory of Nazanzus understood the tunics of skin as being the human body, as did Didymus the Blind. They were, however, in the minority on this issue. For more, see Panayiotis Tzamalikos, ‘Doctrinal Decorum and Imperial Power: The Sixth Century Origenism’ in *The Real Cassian Revisited: Monastic Life, Greek Paideia, and Origenism in the Sixth Century*. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

doctrine of the resurrection, whereby upon judgment day the body is recomposed in its material entirety.<sup>9</sup> As Lucas F. Mateo-Seco explains:

The Gnostics used the image of the “tunics of hide” to reject the faith in the resurrection of the flesh: if the earthly body is identified with the “tunics of hide”, the resurrected body must be different from that which with man was clothed as a “tunic of hide”. In other words, if the “tunics of hide” were to designate the earthly body and not its mortal condition, in the resurrection there would be no material identity between the risen body and the earthy one.<sup>10</sup>

This material identity was intrinsic to the doctrine, and so the prevailing point of the orthodox interpretation of Gen 3.21’s ‘tunics of skin’ was that they were firstly skins of dead animals (thus signalling mortality), and secondly that these skins were a sign of the moral and spiritual corruption of the body, a move away from God and towards brute beast. There is also a firm emphasis on the skins, not just the body, being the surface that bears disgrace. The body alone is consequently not made to bear the shame of the fall, and a material layer which is both adjacent to but separate from the body articulated this state of being.

Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine are among the most prevalent thinkers who proposed this interpretation. Origen says of the ‘tunics of skins’:

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<sup>9</sup> For more on this, see Caroline Walker-Bynum’s *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, ‘Tunics of Hide’ in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 769.

It is said that God made those miserable garments with which the first man was clothed after he had sinned. “For God made ‘skin tunics’ and clothed Adam and his wife”. Therefore, those were tunics of skin taken from animals. For with such as these, it was necessary for the sinner to be dressed. It says, with skin tunics, “which are a symbol of the mortality that he received because of his own skin and of his frailty that came from the corruption of the flesh”.

(*Homilies on Leviticus*, 6.2.7)<sup>11</sup>

As Origen and his source-text show, the body is entirely distinguished from the ‘tunics of skin’, clearly understood to be an animal hide symbolic of humanity’s corrupt flesh. Furthermore, he points to the necessity of covering this fallen body, and that this was the only fitting solution available to their creator. Gregory of Nyssa adds to the idea of the flesh’s corruption in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* writing: ‘when I hear “skins” I interpret it as the form of the irrational nature that we have put on from our association with disordered passions’.<sup>12</sup> Key to Gregory’s comprehension of the skins is that they have been ‘put on’ and thus by contrast can be taken off, once more distinguishing the materiality of the ‘tunics of skin’ from that of the human body. Augustine, furthermore, develops this in his treatise *On the Trinity*:

[Adam and Eve], who were stripped of their first garment [of innocence], deserved by their mortality garments of skin. For the true honor of man is to be the image and likeness of God that is preserved

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Louth and Thomas C. Oden, ed. *Genesis 1-11* (Madison: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 98.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

only in relation to him by whom it is impressed. Hence, he clings to God so much the more, the less he loves what is his own. But through the desire of proving his own power, man by his own will falls down into himself as into a sort of [substitute] center. Since he, therefore, wishes to be like God, hence under no one, then as a punishment he is also driven from the center, which he himself is, down into the depths, that is, into those things wherein beasts delight. Thus, since the likeness to God is his honor, the likeness to the beasts is his disgrace.

(12.11.116.)<sup>13</sup>

Augustine, unlike his two counterparts, mentions both an original garment as well as one acquired through sin, and in his complex discussion of the movement away from God he distinguishes the pre-fall creation from the fallen one precisely according to the change in outward appearance. The ‘tunics of skin’ thus signal the move of man and woman to this bestial ‘depth’, and unsurprisingly for the bishop of Hippo influence outside of orthodox Christian interpretation is evident. In all three instances the ‘tunic of skin’ is clearly cited as a predominant facet of mankind’s fallen condition. The garment, which is understood to be separate to the body in its appearance and composition, marks a clear distinction between the predominant rabbinic conception of the fallen body, and the typological role of Christ as redeemer here becomes apparent. The redemptive capacity of Christ affords the option to enable the removal of this garment, whereas in Judaic exegeses the body alone, by contrast, is left to bear the full force of shame and mortality.

When it comes to the Chester and N-Town plays, a similar dichotomy is presented in the repercussions of the fall, but unlike the differences between Jewish and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 98.



Christian exegetes, the body is here placed in similar terms of understanding despite the very different relations to clothing that are constructed. Firstly, in Chester's *Creation and Fall*, the body is presented within the frame of prevailingly orthodoxy, and also features key details present in scripture. After the eating of the fruit a new capacity accorded to sight is enumerated as being the causal link between the primordial state of shamelessness (initially emphasised by the stage direction which, like Gen 2.25, reads that they shall 'stand naked and shall not bee ashamed') and the postlapsarian realization of bareness. The loss that the body has incurred in the moment of transgression is articulated by a change in embodied knowledge, and in the moments following Adam's taste of the fruit he cries 'Out, alas, what ayleth mee? / I am naked, well I see' (257-258), with vision clearly marking the difference between what is known about the body.<sup>14</sup> He further cites shame at the knowledge of having broken God's commandment for stirring this realization: 'I wotte not for shame whyther to flee, / for this fruite was forbydden mee' (261-2).

The penalty for the transgression comes in the form of the so-called 'dead beasts' skins', with God explicitly relaying that clothing has become intrinsic to the human condition by stating 'Hilled behoveth you to bee' (362). The Middle English Dictionary cites the verb 'bihoven' to mean 'necessary or inescapable (with respect to circumstances, destiny, logic, etc.)' and 'hilen' as meaning 'to clothe, put clothing on, or cover'.<sup>15</sup> In the aftermath of the fall the body is charged with being covered as a necessary part of its condition, just as Origen had insisted. God terms the items, which the stage directions show him to place directly on Adam and Eve, 'dead beaste skynes' precisely because the first parents have become 'deadly' or mortal.<sup>16</sup> The link made between the skins and

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<sup>14</sup> *The Chester Mystery Cycle, I*, ed. R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills (London: Oxford University Press), 1974.

<sup>15</sup> *Middle English Dictionary*, bihoven (v.) 1(b); hilen (v.) 1(b).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 'Tunc Deus induet Adam et Eva tunicis pelliciis (Then God, puttynge garments of skynnes upon them)'. 28.

death again recalls patristic commentary, connecting the newly mortal body of Adam and Eve to the ‘tunics of skin’ in both a figurative and literal sense.

The N-Town *Fall of Man* has been noted as having apocryphal influences from texts such as the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*, and its conception of the fall certainly seems to support these claims. The loss of divine grace suffered at the moment of the fall is not conveyed by a change in embodied knowledge in the manner of Chester, but by the loss of a primordial garment in the moment of the fall. At the N-Town Adam’s realisation of his transgression, he cries: ‘Alas, alas, for þis fals dede! / My flesly frend my fo I fynde. / Schameful synne doth us vnhede: I se vs nakyd before and behynde’ (165-168).<sup>17</sup> The change that Adam discovers in both his own and Eve’s body is here conveyed by means of a stripping, with the verb ‘unhidden’ meaning ‘to reveal, expose or uncover’, signalling the removal of a prelapsarian covering.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, sin and shame are compounded together in the subject of line 167, ‘schameful synne’, and are the active forces of this stripping, with sight merely observing as opposed to discovering the body’s essential change.<sup>19</sup> Evidence for this ‘stripping’ is further supported by Adam’s later, and more figurative lamentation: ‘I walke as worme, withouten wede, / Awey is schrowde and sho’ (209-210), with Adam’s connection to a more beastly state being made through the absence of clothing and a perverted gait as opposed to Chester’s ‘dead beast’s skins’. The loss of a covering, whether it is intended to be figurative or not, elicits the vulnerability of this lapsarian body, with nakedness here signalling the move toward beast and away from God, just as Chester’s clothing did. The N-Town God, instead of dressing his

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<sup>17</sup> *The N-Town Plays*, ed. Douglas Sugano. Tams Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications), 2007.

<sup>18</sup> *Middle English Dictionary*, unhidden (v).

<sup>19</sup> Eve, by contrast, and in many ways contradiction, does not mention any details connected to a stripping, and in a more conventional assertion says that ‘Oure flescly eyn byn al unlokyn, / Nakyd for synne, ouresylf we se’ (182-183).

fallen creations, curses them to go ‘nakyd, ungry and barefoot’ (247), once again clarifying that part of their punishment is to exist without clothing.

The N-Town play is not alone amongst vernacular medieval literature in utilizing the stripping motif as a means of portraying the fall. The tenth century Middle Irish poem *Saltair na Rann*, or Psalter of Quatrains, a narrative retelling of the creation to judgement, also includes the loss of clothing at the moment of transgression. The Irish poem reads:

Because their clothing had fallen from them, they were filled with misery and sorrow, they were sad for the ugliness of their bright bodies without a pure veil protecting them. Each of them saw the colour of his body, since they had been left stark naked; they took the leaves of the fig tree – to cover their nakedness (1353-57).<sup>20</sup>

Brian Murdoch has argued that the source for the *Saltair*’s apocryphal material was the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* and/or the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*, based on ‘distinctive traditions occurring uniquely’ in these texts, although Michael Stone has questioned the extent to which these traditions are unique, and suggests that a greater knowledge of the Jewish material is required.<sup>21</sup> In either case, such links are apparent between the Irish text and the *Life of Adam and Eve*, thus showing the presence of a tradition which extends from early post-biblical exegesis through to the high medieval period.

Later, and even more approximate evidence is also available, as this detail can also be found in other dramatic traditions, the closest to the English N-Town play being the

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<sup>20</sup> *The Irish Adam and Eve story from Saltair na Rann*, ed. Greene, David, trans. Fergus Kelly (Dublin: IAS), 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Stone. *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Armenian Studies, Volume I* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 49. See also Brian Murdoch. *Adam’s Grace: Fall and Redemption in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer), 2000. 26-27.

twelfth century *Jeu d'Adam*. The Anglo-Norman play contains extensive stage directions in Latin that reconstruct its production in minute detail. The prelapsarian Adam and Eve are dressed respectively in a red robe and a white silken dress and wimple, and at the moment of Adam's eating of the fruit the stage directions read:

Then let Adam eat part of the apple. When has eaten he will recognise his sin at once, and will bend over so that he cannot be seen by the people. And he will strip off his festive garments, and will put on poor clothes sewn together with fig leaves, and, manifesting exceedingly great sorrow he will begin his lamentation.<sup>22</sup>

The *Jeu d'Adam* clearly presents the fall through the loss of a garment, and the overt presence of clothing in this original state of bliss is clearly drawing on this long-standing Jewish exegetical tradition. The description of the garments, however, marks them as particularly Christian, with Adam and Eve likely to have been typologically connected to Christ and Mary by their costumes. The removal of the garments as part Adam's lamentation further elicits the strategic use of clothing by the playwright in order to evoke the loss of grace for the audience. In a similar manner to the N-Town play then, the stripping of a garment is used to parallel the recognition of sin, although in this instance gesture carries the meaning instead of language as no mention of this lost garment is found in the text.<sup>23</sup>

The *Vienna Passion* (1330, but Brian Murdoch notes that it is thought to be of thirteenth century origins) contains a similar detail, and like the N-Town play this is

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<sup>22</sup> David Bevington, ed. *Medieval Drama*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 96. 'Tunc comedat Adam partem pomi. Quo comesto cognoscet statim peccatum suum et inclinabit se, [ut] non possit a populo videri. Et exuet sollemnes vestes, et induet vestes pauperes consutas foliis ficus, et maximum simulans dolorem incipiet lamentationem suam'.

<sup>23</sup> There is also no mention of a 'tunic of skin' in the play text or stage directions, and Adam and Eve are expelled without being dressed in this play.

evident in language and not necessarily stage action. After Adam has eaten the fruit, the ‘persona Dominica’ asks:

Adam, Adam, quid fecisti?  
Quare stolam amisisti,  
Qua indutus immortalis,  
Angelis eras aequalis?

(Adam, what have you done? Why have you thrown away the robe of immortality that you wore; you used to be the equal of the angels.)<sup>24</sup>

While it is manifestly clear that Adam and Eve are physically dressed in the *Jeu d’Adam*, the stage action is unverifiable in the *Vienna Passion* and N-Town *Fall of Man*.<sup>25</sup> The figurative potential of these utterances must be carefully considered, particularly because of the lack of staging evidence, which means that costume cannot be assumed to match language in all cases. The loss of a garment, however this is staged, is specifically chosen to coincide with the loss of primordial bliss in either a literal and/or figurative capacity in all of these plays.<sup>26</sup> The power of this device, be it physically staged or left to the imaginative power of the reader/ spectator, must therefore be taken into account regardless of the extant staging evidence.

The York *Fall* bears many similarities to the N-Town play in that the protagonists appear to remain naked after the fall, but York does not contain any of the features present in the apocryphal tradition. What is distinctive about this play is that

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<sup>24</sup> Murdoch. *Adam’s Grace*. 139.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Murdoch also expresses doubt on how the prelapsarian progenitors might have been staged: ‘[H]ow Adam and Eve were actually portrayed in the play up to this point is unclear, but certainly after eating the fruit they are instructed in the stage directions to make aprons’.

<sup>26</sup> Because of the lack of evidence surrounding the N-Town plays, it is not even possible to prove that they were staged at all. Penny Granger. *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009) argues that the plays may have been read in small circles, and performed in that manner, while Douglas Sugano, *The N-Town Plays*, insists that they were performed. Evidence within the manuscript is conflicting, and the fact that it is a compilation of various plays rather than a coherent cycle like York does not help to clarify matters.

neither a stripping nor a covering is overtly used as an articulation of the loss of grace or as a punishment for breaking God's commandment. Adam's response to his knowledge of his fallen condition is:

Allas, what have I done, for shame?  
Ille counsaile, woo worthe thee.  
A, Eve, thou art to blame;  
To this entysed thou me,  
Me shames with my lyghame,  
For I am naked, as methynke.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike either Chester or N-Town, the realisation of nakedness is not accorded to a new capacity of sight, or because of a lost garment. Adam is ashamed of his body as a direct consequence of following Eve's advice, and the body and thus his knowledge of it is presented as the cause of his shame.

One source for the York *Fall* is thought to be the *Cursor Mundi*, and the proximity in some of the language suggests that this could be the case. The realisation of the first parent's new condition is recounted as follows:

Quen þai lokeð on þer licam  
Aieþer thoght of oþere scham;  
ffor quen þai sagh ham self al bare,  
þat welth and blis had cleped ar,  
þai cled þam þan in þat mister  
Wit leues brad bath o figer. (799-804)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Clifford Davidson. Teams Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> *Cursor Mundi (The cursor o the world). A Northumbrian poem of the XIVth century in four versions*, ed. Rev. Richard Morris (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2006).

The use of the noun ‘licam’ and ‘lyghame’ for body, which is cited as the source of shame in both texts, suggests that the *Cursor Mundi* may have influenced the York play. Similarities end there, however, as line 802 refers to Adam and Eve being formerly ‘clethed’ or clothed by wealth and bliss, but now by ‘mister’, distress and peril, and fig leaves.<sup>29</sup> The *Cursor Mundi* furthermore has God dress his sinful creations, again which neither the N-Town or York Play do: ‘God mad þam kyrtels þan of hide/ And cled þar flexs (flesh) wit for to hide’ (935-6).

Iconography, perhaps, provides the key to this divergence from scripture, orthodox traditions, and source texts. In a note on the moment of the fall in York, which suggests a parallel with the *Cursor Mundi*, the editor Clifford Davidson also mentions the Expulsion scene from the York Minster glass in the Great East Window where Eve covers her breast and genitals as she leaves Paradise.<sup>30</sup> In fact, as Gary Anderson has observed, this is the predominant way of depicting the Expulsion in medieval iconography, despite the scriptural detail that God dressed both before leaving the Garden.<sup>31</sup> Anderson, in an email exchange, explains this detail as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> This is an example of an emotional state and a material reality coinciding, thus showing the range and potential of clothing for portraying beyond the literal.

<sup>30</sup> In Davidson’s note to the fall in the York play, line 110-111 reads: ‘See Genesis 3:7; compare *Cursor Mundi*: “For shame thei stode bothe and quaked” (line 800, 1:55). In the Expulsion scene in York Minster glass in the Great East Window, Eve holds one hand over her breast and another over her genitals (French, *York Minster: The Great East Window*, p. 51). In the pageant, at her suggestion (line 131), they will cover themselves with “fygge leues,” for which, on account of their unavailability in medieval York, another type of leaf would necessarily have been substituted in production’. <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/davidson-play-5-the-fall>. Accessed 03.01.2014.

<sup>31</sup> For examples of this found in English church paintings, see the Expulsion Scene in Easby, N. Yorkshire, c. 13th century, and in Kelmscott, Oxfordshire, c. 1280, at [paintedchurch.org](http://www.paintedchurch.org). An example of this in a psalter is the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1416. Chantilly, France, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 25v; and *The Hunterian Psalter*, c. 1170, Glasgow University Library MS Hunter 229, fol. 8r. An English picture Bible also contains this detail: *The Holkham Picture Bible*, BL Add MS 47682, fol. 4v. Continental paintings also features this. Massacio’s *The Expulsion*, fresco, c.1427, Florence, Italy, Sta. Maria del Carmine, Brancacci Chapel, has a naked Adam and Eve exit Eden; Hieronymus Bosch’s *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* from the *Haywain Triptych*, painting, dated 1485-1500, Madrid, Spain, Prado, has Adam and Eve forced from Eden without garments, and again in *The Last Judgment*, 1485-1500, Vienna, Austria, Akademie der Bildenden Künste, the same detail is included. The later work by Michelangelo, the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve*, fresco, 1508-1512, Vatican, Sistine Chapel, likewise has the same detail.

[M]ost depictions of the eviction from Eden depict Adam and Eve as naked. A surprising datum really. Where are the garments of skin? My own hypothesis is that this artistic convention/tradition follows from an exegetical notion that at the moment of transgression Adam and Eve lost their angelic-like bodies and were vested with mortal flesh. Hence the departure from Eden does depict the garments of skins but not in a way most modern readers of the Bible might have expected. The depictions of garments of skins can be found (see San Marco for example) but they are so rare they constitute “exceptions that prove the rule.” Or so I would argue.<sup>32</sup>

Anderson’s hypothesis is convincing, particularly because it provides a plausible theory for why two out of three extant ‘Fall of Man’ plays do not have Adam and Eve dressed before they are expelled. Notably, Chester’s *Creation and Fall*, which as well as its strict adherence to both scripture and orthodoxy, is listed as being put on by the Draper’s Guild, who would have had a keen interest to emphasise (and advertise) the necessity of clothing the fallen body.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, a naked Eve is charged by Adam at the close of the play to spin clothing in N-Town, (And wyff, to spynne now must thu fonde,/ Oure nakyd bodyes in cloth to wynde (326-7)) and in the York *Expulsion* no hope of clothing is offered to replace what has been lost:

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<sup>32</sup> Dated to 09.11.2013. See also Gary A. Anderson. ‘Garments of Skin’ in *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in the Jewish and Christian Imagination* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). On 119 Anderson shows one of the rare pieces of iconography which depicts the ‘tunics of light/glory’ from the Russian Orthodox Stroganov Icons. Although at the time I gave this paper at Kalamazoo, May 2013, I said that there were examples of this in Western Christianity, to date I have been unable to find a single one. The tradition, however, does seem to exist in Orthodox iconography.

<sup>33</sup> Christina M. Fitzgerald. *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval Guild Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Fitzgerald notes that the use of clothing in this play is more apparent than in others, to the point that it diverges from theological exegesis. ‘It is significant, too, that the Demon takes on the form of an adder with a woman’s face to make himself more sympathetic to Eve (ll. 193-96). Chester is the only cycle to borrow this odd detail from Peter Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica*, and in doing so, the play depicts the Demon “untheologically” donning a disguise and playing a role rather than transforming himself’.



Adam: To see it is a sytfull syghte:  
We bothe that were in blis so brighte,  
We mon go nakid every ilke a nyghte  
And dayes bydene. (129-133)

That two out of three plays, and the majority of medieval iconography, conceive of the protoplasts as leaving Paradise naked cannot be mere coincidence, and again conceptions of the fallen body which should be rejected outright on theological grounds form a vast amount of artistic renderings of this very body. The prevalence of this naked body, which is to be found in iconography ranging from paintings on church walls to illustrations in psalters, clearly did not disturb the viewer, nor should we assume that the play's lack of 'tunics of skin' did.

To conclude, the Chester, York and N-Town 'Fall of Man' plays betray vastly different exegetical influences, which when explored open up a complex network of ideas and interpretations about the fallen body. Each playwright utilizes different traditions and ideas in order to communicate the experiential and epistemological change that impacts the body after God's commandment is broken, and as I have demonstrated, clothing is continually called on in order to convey this complex process. While Chester's Adam and Eve leave the stage with skins that bear witness to their sin, evidence of the progenitor's culpability in N-Town and York is transmitted by their naked bodies. All three couples, however, anticipate a new covering that can be acquired only through salvation, with this Christian message uniting all three plays in spite of the numerous discrepancies that have been noted.

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