

Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Margaret Dorrell, 'Two Studies of the York Corpus Christi Play',
Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 6, (1972), 63-111

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=121838&siloleft_library=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

TWO STUDIES OF THE YORK CORPUS CHRISTI PLAY

By MARGARET DORRELL

I

PROCESSION AND PLAY: CORPUS CHRISTI DAY IN YORK BEFORE 1427

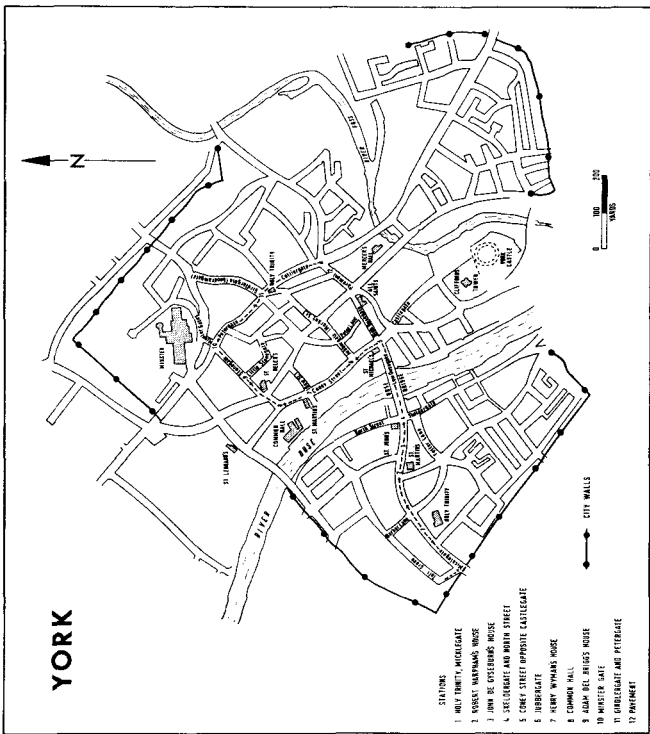
Up to and including the year 1426 both a religious procession with the sacred host and a dramatic procession of pageants were seen in the city of York on Corpus Christi day.¹ Of the few records which document the period before 1427 only the *A/Y Memorandum Book* contains detailed information about the celebration. The following entries are found in *A/Y*:

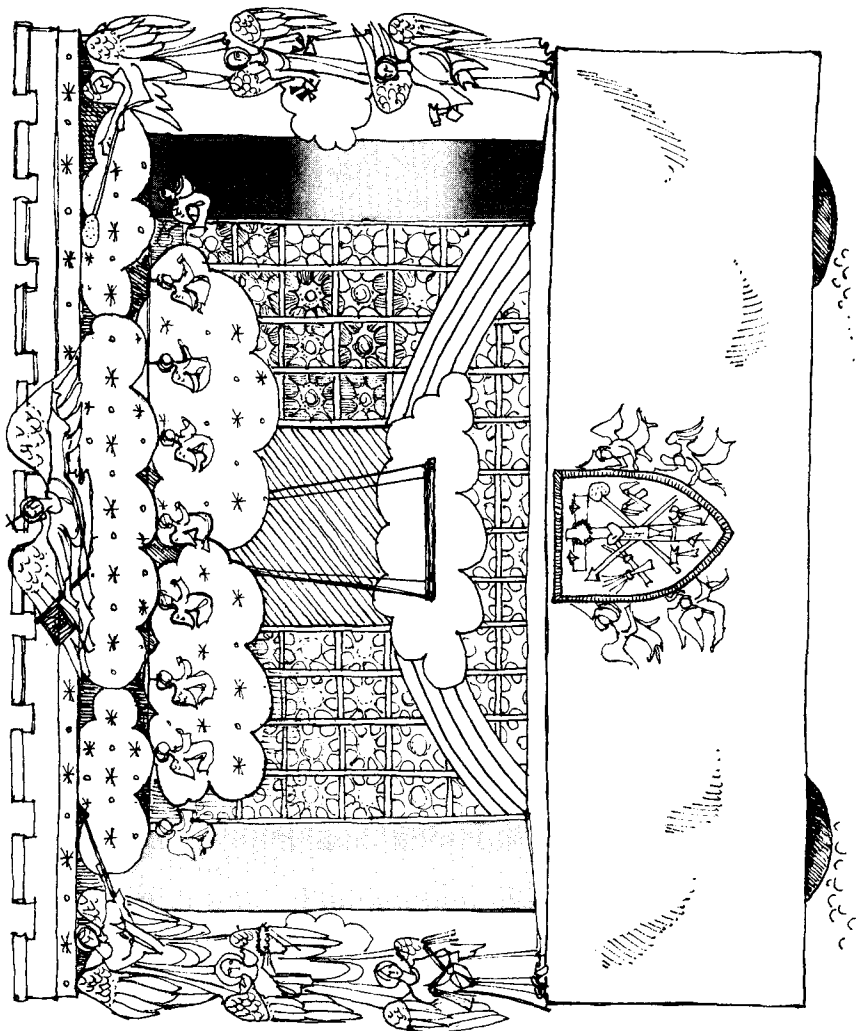
1. An ordinance for the play, 1398-9.
2. An ordinance for the procession, 1399.
3. (a) Roger Burton's *ordo paginarum*, processional instructions and torch list, and the proclamation, 1415.
(b) A second list of pageants and a list of processional torches, c. 1420.
4. A report of a riot in the procession, 1419.
5. An account of the circumstances which led to the decision to hold the procession on one day and the play on another, 1426.²

Each of these is discussed below and it is argued that on the evidence available certain conjectures about the procession and play and the relationship between them can be made for the period before 1427. It is suggested that when they were held on the same day the procession and play were separate entities and that the procession preceded the play along the route through the streets.

1. *An ordinance for the play, 1398-9*

The craftsmen who were responsible for pageants in the Corpus Christi play complained in 1398-9 that it was impossible to complete the performance on the day of the feast. It appears from the account in *A/Y* that the performance exceeded a reasonable time-limit because the pageants were played in too many places. The remedy advocated was to restrict the number of places to twelve, and it is stated that twelve places had been appointed before 1398-9.³





York Mercers' Wagon, 1433

1398-9

Ordinacionem Ludi Corporis Cristi anno regni Regis Ricardi secundi xxij^o et plus de eodem in secundo folio secedente et de torcheis bonorum hominum habendum in iiij folio secedente et de Buckler-makers et Shethers in viij^o folio precedente et de pagina de Moyses et Pharaon in xij^{mo} folio sequente et ordo paginarum in fine huius libri⁴

Al honorables homines le Meir et les Aldermans de la citee Deuerwyk suppliount les communes demesme la citee qe com ils fount grandes espences et costages entour le Iuer et les pagentz de la iour de Corpore Cristi les queux ne pourront estre iuez ne perfournez mesme le iour solounc ces com ils deueront estre a cause que les pagentz suisditz sont jueez en si plusours lieux a grande damage et disease a les ditz communes et a les estraungers repiraunces a la dite citee mesme le iour pur mesme la cause que pleise a vous considerer que les ditz pagentz sont mayntenez et sustenez par les communes et artificers demesme la citee en honour et reuerence nostre seignour Jhesu Crist et honour et profit de mesme la citee de faire ordeigner que les pagentz suisditz soient jueez en les lieux quelles furent limitez et assignez par vous et les communes suisditz deuant ces heures les quelles lieux sont annexis a ceste bille en vne cedulle ou en autre lieux chescun ane al disposicon et volonte de le Mair et Conseil de la chambre et que il ou ascun qi encountre les ordeignaunces et establissementz auantditz ferra ou ferrount encourge ou encourgent en payne de xl s pour estre forfait a la chaumbre de counsale de la dite citee et que si ascuns de les pagentz soient targiez ou delaiez par default ou necligence de les juers qils encourgentz en payne de vj s viij d a mesme la chaumbre Et ces matiers suisditz suppliount quelles soient perfourneez ou autrement la dite jue ne serra my jueez par les comunes suisdite Et ces priount pur Dieu et en ouere de charitee pour le profite de les ditz comunes et de les estraungers repirauncez a la dite citee a lonour de Dieu et nuresaunce de charitee parentre mesme les comunes Loca vbi Ludus Corporis Cristi erit lusus In primis ad portas Sancte Trinitatis in Mikelgate Secundo ad ostium Roberti Harpham Tercio ad ostium Johannis de Gyseburne Quarto apud⁵ Skeldergatehend et Northstrethend Quinto ad finem de Conyngstrete versus le Castelgate Sexto ad finem de Jubretgate Septimo ad ostium Henrici Wyman in Conyngstrete Octauo ad finem Conyngstrete iuxta Aulam Communem⁶ Nono ad ostium Ade del Brigg Decimo ad portas Monasterii Beati Petri Vndecimo ad finem de Girdlergate in Petergate Duodecimo super Paviamentum Et ordinatum est quod vexilla ludi cum armis ciuitatis liberentur in pagina Corporis Cristi per Maiorem ponenda in locis vbi erit ludus paginarum et quod vexilla ipsa annuatim in crastino Corporis Cristi reportentur ad cameram ad manus Maioris et Camerariorum ciuitatis et ibidem custodiantur per totum annum sequentem sub pena vj s viij d soluendorum ad opus communitatis per illum et illos

qui vexilla illa ultra crastinum illum detinuerint et ea non liberauerint modo quo prefertur.

(*A/Y*, f.19v)

(Ordinance for the Corpus Christi Play, 1398-9.

More about the same matter in the second folio following; about the torches of the honourable citizens in the fourth folio following;⁷ about the Bucklermakers and Sheathers in the eighth folio before this; about the pageant of Moses and Pharaoh in the twelfth folio following; and about the order of the pageants at the end of this book.

The commons of the said city beg the honourable men, the Mayor and the Aldermen of the city of York, that as they [the commons] incur great expenses and costs in connection with the play and the pageants of Corpus Christi day, which [pageants] are not able to be played or performed on the same day as they ought to be because the said pageants are played in so many places to the great discomfort and inconvenience of the said commons and strangers coming to the city for the same purpose: may it please you to consider that the said pageants are maintained and upheld by the commons and craftsmen of the same city in honour and reverence of Our Lord Jesus Christ and for the glory and benefit of the same city [and may it please you] to make an ordinance that the abovesaid pageants be played in the places assigned and restricted by you and the abovesaid commons previously, which places are attached to this document in a list, or in other places, each according to the inclination and will of the Mayor and Council. Anyone who goes against the ordinances and customs aforesaid shall incur a fine of 40s. to be forfeited to the chamber of the Council of the said city. And if any of the abovesaid pageants is late or delayed through the fault or negligence of the players, they shall incur a fine of 6s. 8d. to the said chamber. And they [the commons] submit that these abovesaid matters be attended to or the play shall not be played by the abovesaid commons. And they ask this for God and as a work of charity, for the benefit of the said commons and of strangers coming to the said city, in honour of God and for the promotion of charity among the said commons. Places where the Play of Corpus Christi shall be performed: First at the gates of Holy Trinity in Micklegate; Second at Robert Harpham's house; Third at John de Gyseburn's house; Fourth at the intersection of Skeldergate and North Street; Fifth at the end of Conyng Street opposite Castlegate; Sixth at the end of Jubbergate; Seventh at Henry Wyman's house in Conyng Street; Eighth at the end of Conyng Street next to the Common Hall; Ninth at Adam del Brigg's house; Tenth at the gates of the Cathedral of Blessed Peter [i.e. the Minster]; Eleventh at the end of Girdlergate in Petergate; Twelfth on the Pavement. And it is ordained that the banners⁸ with the arms of the city will be delivered by the Mayor for the Corpus Christi pageant, to be placed in the places where the play of the pageants will be performed.

And each year on the day after Corpus Christi the banners will be returned to the chamber to the hands of the Mayor and Chamberlains of the city and kept for the following year, under penalty of 6s. 8d. to be paid to the use of the community by anyone who keeps the banners any longer and does not give them up in the manner aforesaid.)

The above ordinance suggests that the play must have been a lengthy one.

The references to the twelve places and the official banners set up to mark their positions imply that each pageant was to stop and perform at each officially appointed place.

2. *An ordinance for the procession, 1399*

In 1399 it was enacted that servants of civic dignitaries who had suits of summer livery were to carry torches in the Corpus Christi procession. It is stated that the procession went to the Minster and then to the Hospital of St Leonard. The 1426 entry which records the decision to separate the procession and play by holding them on different days (below, p. 72) indicates that the procession began at Holy Trinity Church in Micklegate. The Corpus Christi Play also began at Holy Trinity and progressed to the Minster gates. But at the Minster the play turned to the right along Petergate to the Pavement, whereas the procession turned to the left to St Leonard's. The procession ordinance is as follows:

1399

De ordinacione torcheorum qui habent de liberacione ciuitatis proborum hominum

Memorandum quod vicesimo septimo die Aprilis anno regni Regis Ricardi secundi post conquestum Anglie vicesimo secundi fuit et concordatum in Gilda Aula coram Maiore Vicecomitibus et Aldermannis ciuitatis Eborum cum consensu tocius communitatis tunc ibidem congregate quod omnes homines qui habent et qui habebunt ex nunc garniamenta estivalia de secta liberacionis estivalis proborum hominum ciuitatis predicte quod quilibet eorum eat cum Maiore et probis hominibus in festo Corporis Cristi in processione vsque Ecclesiam Sancti Petri et ad Hospitale Sancti Leonardi et quod quilibet eorum habeat torcheam suam portatam et illuminatam ante dictam processionem singulis annis in festo predicto et qui defecerit in hac parte soluet ad opus communitatis vj s viij d.

(A/Y, f. 16v)

(About the ordinance of the torches of those who have the livery of honourable men of this city.⁹

Memorandum that on 27th April, 1399, it was ordained and agreed in the Guildhall in the presence of the Mayor, Sheriffs and Aldermen of the city of York with the consent of the whole community then

assembled in the same place that all those who have summer livery of the honourable men shall go with the Mayor and honourable men in the procession on the feast of Corpus Christi to the Church of St Peter [i.e. the Minster] and the Hospital of St Leonard, and that each of them have their torches illuminated and carried in the said procession every year on the said feast. And whoever defaults in this will pay 6s. 8d. to the use of the community.)

It was customary in the Corpus Christi celebrations that a mass, during which the host was consecrated, was said before the procession set off.¹⁰ It seems logical that the mass before the York procession would have taken place in the church of Holy Trinity in Micklegate. Since the times of the mass and of the hours on feast days could be rearranged to suit each particular occasion, the Corpus Christi mass could have been celebrated at any time before noon.¹¹

3. (a) *Procession and play, 1415*

Roger Burton, the Common Clerk, recorded a series of entries relating to the Corpus Christi Play in 1415. The first of these is the *ordo paginarum*, which consists of a list of craft names and brief descriptions of the pageants for which each was responsible. The *ordo* is followed by a list of names of those taking part in the religious procession and the number of torches to be carried:

1415	Portours	vij torcheae	Chaloners	iiij torcheae
	Coblers	iiij torcheae	Fullers	iiij torcheae
	Cordwaners	xiiij torcheae	Girdellers	[blank] torcheae
	Cottellers	ij torcheae	Taillours	[blank] torcheae
	Weuere seruauntz	iiij torcheae	Et lvij ciues ciuitatis	
	Carpenters	vj torcheae	habuerunt torcheas similiter	
			die Corporis Cristi.	

(A/Y, f.254v)

After the torch list is a set of instructions about the order of the participants in the procession:

Ordinatum est quod Portours Coblers eant antea primo Et tunc a dexteris Websterseruauntz et Cordwaners Et ex opposito Fullers Cuttellers Girdellers Chaloners Carpenters Taillours Et tunc boni cives et postea xxiiij xij maior et iiij^{or} torcheae magistri Thome de Bukton.¹²

(A/Y, f.254v)

This entry is followed by the proclamation which refers mainly to the conduct of those involved with the play but also makes an appeal for general good conduct:

þat no mann go armed in þis Citee with swerdes ne with carlill axes
ne none othir defences in disturbaunce of þe kynges pees and þe play
or hyndering of þe processiou of Corpore Cristi.

(*A/Y*, f. 154v)

Although Burton entered information about procession and play in the one section of the manuscript, he gave no indication of the relationship between them. In the proclamation they are mentioned separately: "in disturbaunce of þe kynges pees and þe play" and "hyndering of þe processiou of Corpore Cristi." On the evidence of the ordinances of 1398–9 and 1399 (see above) it seems that the procession and play were separate entities. The procession is not mentioned in the play ordinance nor the play in the procession ordinance. In 1415 Burton left spaces in the manuscript between the *ordo paginarum*, the torch list and processional instructions, and the proclamation. Their order in *A/Y* cannot be seen to reflect an order of events in the Corpus Christi celebration because the proclamation, which was entered last, was issued on the vigil of the feast.

(b) *Procession and play, c. 1420*

Following Burton's 1415 entries in *A/Y* is a second list of pageants, giving only the names of crafts and titles of pageants, and a second list of participants in the Corpus Christi procession and the number of torches they carried.¹³ As in the case of the 1415 record, there is no evidence of the relationship between procession and play.

4. *Riot in the procession, 1419*

An account of an attack on the Skinners and their torches in the procession of 1419 suggests that the Corpus Christi procession preceded the play. The riot which resulted from the attack is said to have hindered both procession and play. Several members of the Carpenters' and Cordwainers' crafts attacked the Skinners with Carlisle axes in defiance of the order in the 1415 proclamation. The offenders were put on a good behaviour bond of £100.

1419

Congregati fuerunt in Camera Consilii super Pontem Vse huius
ciuitatis Eborum die crastina festi Corporis Cristi in anno domini
millesimo ccccix^o regni vero Regis Henrici quinti septimo contingente
vbi venerunt diuersi artifices de Skynnercrafte et grauem querelam
fecerunt quod diuersi artifices Carpentariorum et Allutariorum ciuitatis
predicte in festo Corporis Cristi annis predictis ipsorum torcheas
accensas et vt portarentur in processione dicti festi coram corpore

Cristi ibidem presenti fregerunt et deorsum traxerunt cum fustibus suis et Carlelaxaes quos illuc portauerunt et alia enormia fecerunt in grauem perturbacionem pacis domini Regis et impedimentum ludi et¹⁴ processionis Corporis Cristi Super qua quidem querela capti fuerunt et imprisonati Simon Calton et Benedictus Williamson carpentarij et Thomas Durem cordewaner et predicti Simon et Benedictus coram Maiore et Consilio ciuitatis hic in camera venientes obiecta sibi transgressione predicta recognouerunt se predicta fecisse et posuerunt se in misericordia gracia et ordinacione Maioris et Consilii camere ciuitatis et ad hoc faciendum predicti Simon et Benedictus necnon Johannes Mosse Johannes Bolron Willelmus Kyrkeby Ricardus Ferrour Willelmus Cunsby Johannes Haxeby Thomas Cunnysburgh et Johannes Shathelok wryghts et ciues Eborum per scriptum suum obligatorium obligantur in centum libris sterlingorum vt in eodem plenius continentur.

(*A/Y*, f.201r)

(The day after Corpus Christi day, 1419 [16th June].

Assembled in the Council Chamber of this city of York on Ouse Bridge,¹⁵ when various members of the Skinners' craft came and made a serious complaint that various members of the Carpenters and Cordwainers of the said city had on the feast of Corpus Christi in the said year broken their [the Skinners'] torches which were kindled to be carried in the procession of the said feast before the host and attacked them with clubs and Carlisle axes which they had taken there, and perpetrated other outrages which seriously disturbed the peace of our lord the King and hindered the play and the procession of Corpus Christi. As a result of this complaint Simon Calton and Benedict Williamson, carpenters and Thomas Durem, cordwainer, were arrested and imprisoned. And the said Simon and Benedict came before the Mayor and Council of the city in the chamber and, when their said offences were named, admitted that they had committed them and submitted themselves to the grace, mercy and ruling of the chamber of the city. And in doing so the said Simon and Benedict and also John Mosse, John Bolron, William Kyrkeby, Richard Ferrour, William Cunsby, John Haxeby, Thomas Cunnysburgh and John Shathelok, wrights and citizens of York by their written obligation were bound to pay £100 as is more fully contained in the same [written obligation]).

It is stated in the above extract that the disturbance caused chaos in both procession and play. It can therefore be argued that the procession must have preceded the play along the route to the Minster. If the procession had followed the play it seems unlikely that the commotion would have hindered the pageants to any great extent. The riot would have halted the procession while the play continued along the route, and perhaps only the last pageant need have been disturbed by the attack. But if the play followed the procession,

its whole progress would have been disrupted by a halt in the procession. The pageants would have caught up with the procession and become backed up along the streets, with the result that the performance would have come to a standstill. As the 1419 disturbance was a serious one which did indeed hinder the progress of the play, it can be inferred that the procession went along the streets before the play.

5. *Procession and play no longer to be held on the same day, 1426*

In 1426 the Council passed an ordinance whereby the Corpus Christi procession was to be held on the feast day itself and the play on the vigil. This action was initiated by Friar William Melton, who approved the play but regretted that people were distracted from the religious services of the festival. Friar William's comments on the matter and the reports of the meetings at which the ordinance was framed and passed are recorded. The meetings were held in June 1426, after Corpus Christi day which fell on 30th May in that year.

1426 [6th June]

De festo Corporis Cristi

In nomine Domini Amen Ex consuetudine quadam per nonnulla annorum et temporum curricula vsitata vniuersi artifices ciuitatis Eborum suis sumptibus annis singulis ludi fecerunt quemdam ludum sumptuosum in diuersis paginis compilatum Veteris et Noui Testamenti representationum per diuersa loca predicte ciuitatis in festo Corporis Cristi quamdam processionem solempnem ad tunc similiter facientes ob reuerenciam¹⁶ sacramenti Corporis Cristi incipiendo ad magnas portas Prioratus Sancte Trinitatis Eborum et sic processionaliter eundo ad Ecclesiam Cathedralem Eboracensem et deinde ad Hospitale Sancti Leonardi Eborum sacramento predicto ibidem relicto precedentibus numero lumine torcheorum et magna multitudine sacerdotum in superpeliciis indutorum et subsequentibus Maiore et civibus Eborum cum alterius magna copia populi confluentis Super hoc quidam vir maxime religiosus Frater Willelmus Melton ordinis Fratrum Minorum sacre pagine professor verbi Dei famosissimus predicator ad istam veniens ciuitatem in suis sermonibus diuersis ludum predictum populo commendauit affirmando quod bonus erat in se et laudabilis valde dicebat tamen quod ciues predicte ciuitatis et alij forinseci in dicto festo confluentes ad eandem non solum ipsi ludo in eodem festo verum eciam comessacionibus ebrietatibus clamoribus cantilenis et alijs insolencijs multum intendunt seruicio diuino officij ipsius diei minime intendentes et quod dolendum est ea de causa amittunt indulgencias in ea parte per felicis recordacionis per Vrbanum Papam quartum graciouse concessas illis videlicet Cristi fidelibus qui in matutinali officio festi eiusdem in ecclesia in qua idem festum celebratur interfuerint centum dies qui vero misse totidem qui autem in primis ipsius festi vesperis interfuerint similiter centum qui vero secundis totidem illis

vero qui prime terciæ sextæ et nonæ ac completorij officijs interfuerint pro qualibet horarum ipsarum quadraginta dies illis autem qui per octabas illius festi matutinalibus vespertinis misse ad predictarum horarum officijs interfuerint centum dies singulis octauarum ipsarum diebus sicut in sanctis canonibus inde editis plenius continetur et ideo ipsi Fratri Willelmo salubre videbatur et ad hoc populum ciuitatis inducebat vt ludus ille fiat in vna die et processio in die altera sic quod populus conuenire possit ad ecclesias in festo predicto et interesse seruicio ecclesiastico pro indulgenciis consequendis

[10th June]

Qualiter ludus in festo Corporis Cristi mutatur in vigilia ita quod fiat in ipso festo

[A list of the people present at the meeting follows.]

Congregati fuerunt hic in camere consilij huius ciuitatis sexto die Junij anno gracie millesimo quadringentesimo vicesimo sexto regni vero Regis Henrici sexti post conquestum Anglie anno quarto et per dicta exhortaciones et monita salubria predicti Fratris Willelmi prepensius excitati et optime aduertentes quod delictum non est nec Deum offendit si bonum in melius commutetur habito igitur inter eos diligenti tractatu de materia prelibata suum vnanimum et expressum dederunt consensum quod casus iste primitus communitati in Aula Communi publicetur et habito communitatis assensu quod extunc premissa in melius reformatur Super quo Maiore predicto et communitate istius ciuitatis in Aula Communi eiusdem congregatis x^{mo} die predicti mensis Junij anno predicto factaque ibidem publicatione solempni premissorum ordinatum erat de communi assensu quod ludus ille solempnis qui vt prefertur ludi consuevit in ipso festo Corporis Cristi amodo ludatur singulis annis die Mercurii vigilia eiusdem festi et quod processio fiat semper modo solempni in die ipsius festi sic quod vniuersus populus tunc in predicta ciuitate constitutus vacare possit deuote matutinis misse vesperis et alijs horis eiusdem festi et particeps fieri indulgenciarum in ea parte a predicto Romano pontifice Urbano Papa quarto graciosius concessarum

Burton R.

(A/Y, f.278r-v)

(Concerning the feast of Corpus Christi.

In the name of God, Amen. According to a long-established custom obtaining for a great length of time, every year at the feast of Corpus Christi all the artificers of the city of York have presented, at their own expense, in various places in the said city an elaborate play consisting of various pageants representing the Old and New Testaments. At the same time likewise [i.e. on the feast day] they make a solemn procession in reverence

of the sacrament of Corpus Christi, beginning at the great gates of the Priory of Holy Trinity and so going processionally to the Cathedral Church of York [i.e. the Minster] and then, having left the said sacrament in that place, to the Hospital of St Leonard, preceded by men with a great light of torches and a large number of priests dressed in surplices and followed by the Mayor and citizens of York with another large gathering of people. A certain very devout man, Friar William Melton of the Order of Friars Minor, a Doctor of Divinity and a very famous preacher of the word of God came to the city [and spoke] on this subject. He commended the said play to the people in a number sermons saying that it was good in itself and worthy of praise. But he said that the citizens of the city and other non-citizens coming to the same city on the said feast were deeply engrossed not only in the play on the same feast but also in eating, drinking, shouting, singing and other rowdiness and paid very little attention to the divine service of the Office of the day. And [he said] that it was a great pity that because of this they lost the indulgences granted by the gracious decree of Pope Urban IV of happy memory, that is, 100 days to the faithful in Christ who attend Matins of the same feast in the church in which the feast is celebrated; and the same number of days to those who attend Mass; also 100 days to those who attend the first Vespers of the same feast; and 100 to those who attend the second Vespers; 40 days to those who attend the offices of the hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, None and Compline; and to those however who, throughout the octaves of this feast, attend the Matins, Mass, Vespers and the offices of the said hours, 100 days for each day of the same octaves of the same feast, as is more fully explained in the holy canons issued on the matter. It seemed beneficial to Friar William; and he urged the people of the city [to agree]: that the play should be on one day and the procession on another, so that the people could gather in the churches on the aforesaid feast and be present at the services so as to receive the indulgences.

How the play which had been on the feast was thus changed to the vigil of the feast of Corpus Christi.

[These] were assembled in the chamber of the Council of the city on 6th June and were very deeply moved by the words, exhortations and good advice of the said Friar William. They were especially opposed to what was undesirable and [did not wish] to offend God if [what was] good could be made better. Therefore after careful consideration of the matter they decided unanimously and gave their consent that it should be put publicly before the whole community in the Common Hall and a common vote be taken that an improvement be made. The Mayor and the community of the city assembled in the Common Hall in 10th June and the facts were made public. It was ordained by common assent that from then on the solemn play, which had customarily been played on the feast of Corpus Christi be played each year on the

Wednesday before the said feast and that only the procession be held solemnly on the day of the feast, so that all those who were then in the said city would be free devoutly to attend the Matins, Mass, Vespers and other hours of the said feast and be able to take advantage of the indulgences granted by the very gracious concession of the Pontiff of Rome, Pope Urban IV.)

The above account of Friar William's remarks does not imply that either procession or play had become too lengthy for both to continue being observed on the same day. It is clear that the only objection to the play was the distraction from religious services caused by the general merrymaking.

Theoretically, the separation of procession and play could have been enforced in 1427. There are no records extant for this year; but six years later, in 1433, it appears that the play was performed on the feast day and not on the vigil as instructed in the 1426 ordinance. This is indicated by the Chamberlains' Roll¹⁷ for 1433-4 which makes the following reference to one of the pageants:

1433-4

Et ludentibus in pagina Coronacionis Beate Marie in festo Corporis
Cristi xx s.

(CR 1:1,m.1)

(And to the players in the pageant of the Coronation of the Blessed Mary on the feast of Corpus Christi, 20s.)

In an entry in the first of the extant House Books it is stated that the procession was held on the day after the feast:¹⁸

1476

Concordatum est et ordinatum ex communi assensu et consensu dicti Consilii ac tocius communitatis ibidem quod deinceps quilibet Aldermannorum et de xxiii^{or} eiusdem civitatis habeat vna torcam per suum servientem portatam annuatim in processione die veneris in crastino festi Corporis Cristi.

(HB 1, f.19v)

(It was agreed and ordained by common assent and consent of the said Council and the whole community that each of the Aldermen and twenty-four¹⁹ of this city have a torch carried by a servant each year in the procession on the Friday after the feast of Corpus Christi.)²⁰

The play was held on the feast day itself in 1476, for it is recorded that the

Linen weavers agreed to perform *Fergus* "vpon Corpus Cristi day" (HB 1, f.20v).²¹

The records thus indicate that at some time after 1426 it became customary to hold the procession and play on different days. By 1476 the play had been fixed on the feast day and the procession on the Friday after. The 1433 reference to a pageant acted on Corpus Christi day suggests that the 1476 arrangement of the play on the feast day and the procession on the day after was already in force. But although it seems likely, it cannot be assumed that the 1426 ordinance was put into effect in 1427. In the absence of definite proof, the possibility cannot be dismissed that the procession and play continued to be held on the same day for some years after 1426.

Although the documentation of the play and procession before 1426 is not extensive, it seems possible to draw some conclusions from the evidence available. As separate ordinances were made for the play and the procession in the same regnal year, 1389-9, it is likely that they were not parts of a combined celebration but separate events which happened to be celebrated on the same day. From the account of the riot in the 1419 procession it seems possible that the play followed the procession along the streets. Furthermore, the 1398-9 ordinance suggests that the play was a lengthy one. This being so, it would scarcely have been proper for the religious procession with the host to take up the rear and so suffer delays on the route to the Minster.

On Corpus Christi day before 1427 the Mayor and other civic dignitaries carried torches in the religious procession.²² After the procession they were expected to attend a feast at the Common Hall station, where they witnessed a performance of the play. It is known that the Mayor and his brethren saw the play from their banqueting room in the years after 1427.²³ Given the times calculated for a performance of the pageants,²⁴ it can be seen that if the procession preceded the play the Mayor could have attended the sacred host and returned to the Common Hall in time for the arrival of the first pageant. According to the 1415 proclamation,²⁵ the pageants were to be ready at 4.30 a.m. By 4.30 Matins and Mass could have been said in Holy Trinity and the torch bearers could then have set off just as the first pageant began to play at the first station. The religious procession would thus have had an unimpeded progress to the Minster and then to St Leonard's. Even allowing for a ceremonious leaving of the host in the Minster, the whole procession need not have taken more than an hour (until 5.30 a.m.). The progress of the first pageant was meanwhile much slower since it had to stop along the route to perform. The first pageant did not reach the eighth station at the Common Hall until 6.02 a.m. If the Mayor and his fellow dignitaries completed their duty at the Minster and St Leonard's not later than 5.30 a.m., they would have had ample time to return to the Common Hall before the first pageant arrived.

It appears, then, that the evidence about the procession and the play on

Corpus Christi day before 1427 can be interpreted to suggest that the procession and play were separate and that the procession preceded the play along the streets to the Minster.

II

PERFORMANCE IN PROCESSION: A MEDIEVAL STAGE FOR THE YORK CORPUS CHRISTI PLAY

The performance of the York Corpus Christi Play has been traditionally regarded as a processional one. The late Canon Purvis stated this view when he wrote the following of the general conduct of the play:

A series of some fifty short plays . . . were performed one after the other at a series of stations in the city which varied in number at different times from eight to sixteen but rarely less than ten or more than twelve. The performance was annually on Corpus Christi day, beginning at 4.30 in the morning and ending at twilight.²⁶

But the suitability of the York play for the mode of presentation described by Purvis has been thrown into some doubt by a mathematical study recently made by Alan H. Nelson.²⁷ From the results obtained Nelson argues that "true-processional" performance is an impossibility; that even if it began "promptly at five o'clock in the morning . . . the last play cannot possibly finish at the last station before quarter past two the following morning."²⁸

It will be seen from the discussion below that neither opinion is likely to be correct. While Nelson has pointed out major obstacles to an efficient performance in the processional mode, he has failed to consider the many entries in the medieval records of the city which indicate that those who presented the Corpus Christi pageants in York did in fact successfully overcome these obstacles. It is argued below that processional performance was the rule at York and that Nelson's calculations are inaccurate because they do not allow for the topography of the pageant route or the variation in distances between the stations. On the other hand, it is argued that although Purvis's version of the traditional view of the York presentation comes closer to the truth, evidence in the contemporary documents shows that his statement that "twilight" saw the play completed is too conservative. Purvis did not take into account the evidence in the Masons' complaint about *Fergus* in 1431-2 that often at least four pageants were still being performed after dark.²⁹

The following discussion has been divided into three sections:

1. *The Mode of Performance*, in which extracts from the civic documents about the method of staging the play are set out.

2. *The Stations*, in which the pageant route and the leasing of stations are considered.

3. *Performance in Procession: a Reconstruction*, in which an attempt is made to reconstruct a processional performance which could be "true" in the York situation. For the purpose of this reconstruction the pre-1427 situation of the procession with the sacred host and the play being held on the same day is not considered.

1. *The Mode of Performance*

The extracts below indicate that the mode of performance of the York Corpus Christi Play was a processional one. From the evidence of ordinances instructing masters of the performing crafts to attend their pageant (a, below), it is clear that presentations were given at more than one station. References to the stations in various records (b, below) establish that these presentations were spoken ones. It is also evident from the records (c, below) that the performance was a lengthy one, that occasionally it exceeded a reasonable time-limit, and that the crafts presenting pageants, as well as the city council which was responsible for the general supervision of the play, took steps to ensure that all possible speed was exercised to achieve efficiency (d, below).

(a) *Masters of the crafts ordered to attend their pageant at repeated performances*

An ordinance of the Armourers which came into force in 1475 establishes that their pageant, Adam and Eve driven from Eden (Play 6), was performed at more than one station. The masters were obliged to be present at each performance until "þe playnge ande settyngefurth" had been completed at the last station. The ordinance is as follows:

1475

Item that alle the maisters of the same crafte frome nowefurth yerely on Corpus Cristi day in the mornyng be redy in thair owen propre personnez euery one of thayme with ane honest wapyn to awayte apon thair Pagende Maisters and pagende at þe playnge ande settyngefurth of thair saide pagende³⁰ at þe firste place where they shall begyns and so toawayte apon þe same thair pagende thurgh þe cite to þe play be plaide as of þat same pagende³¹ And who so [it] be of the saide maisters as hereafter makyth defalt in þis partie shall forfait vj d to be paide in the fourme before writen³² withoute he haue a reasonable excuse.

(*B/Y Memorandum Book*, f. 140r)

The above ordinance contains evidence for repeated performances of the Armourers' pageant. This obligation of the masters to attend the pageant is also recorded in a sixteenth-century register of guild ordinances. In the sixteenth-century version, the masters were instructed to be present "at all tyme and tymes of the playeng and publishing" of the pageant:

Item that euery yeare that the play shalbe plaed within the said cyttie in which the pageant of the said occupacion shalbe set out all the maisters of the said occupacion shalbe ready attending with the Pageant Maisters vpon the said pageant at all tyme and tymes of the playeng and publishing thereof vpon payne eche of them to forfayt ij s iij d³³ to the chamber and said occupacion equallie to be devided.

(E 22, f.81r)

An ordinance of the Spurriers and Lorimers similar to those of the Armourers quoted above provides further evidence that processional staging was customary at York. The Spurriers and Lorimers were officially amalgamated in 1493-4 and ordinances binding on both parties were ratified by the council.³⁴ The duty of the masters to attend their pageant, Christ and the Doctors in the Temple (Play 20), is given special attention. The wording of the ordinance suggests that the pageant was performed at the first station ("þe mateir of play be bequite at þe furst place") and then at successive stations along the route ("þe said play be played and funshed thugh the toun at þe last playse"):

1493-4

Item it is ordeyned and ennacted þat euery maister of the said craftes opon Corpus Cristi day yerely shall attend vppon þer paiaunt frome þe mateir of play be bequite³⁵ at þe furst place vnto such tyme as þe said play be played and funshed thugh the toun at þe last playse and who soo is absent at eny place except he be seik or haue oþer excuse reasonable shall forfeit and pay in fourme toforesaid ij s.

(HB 7, f.109v)

It can be assumed that "þe mateir of play" refers only to the pageant of Christ and the Doctors and not to the whole Corpus Christi Play, and that the masters were free to leave when their pageant had been played at the last station.

The duty of attendance on the pageant seems to have been common to members of all the performing crafts. This is indicated by a revised version of the Plasterers', Tilers', and Bricklayers' ordinances entered in the *B/Y Memorandum Book* in 1572,³⁶ where it is stated that the members ("Artificers") were to be present "as [are those of] other occupacions":³⁷

1572

Item that the Artificers of the said craft shall goo with their pageantes throughe the citie as other occupacions and Artificers doeth.

(B/Y, f.230r)

The same item for the Plasterers and Tilers is recorded in the council's sixteenth-century register of ordinances:

1572

Item that the Artificers of the saide crafte shall goe with ther pageantes aforesaid thorough the cytie as other occupacions and Artyficers doe.

(*E* 22, f.144v)

The above references to the duty of pageant-attendance, and in particular those in the Armourers' and the Spurriers' and Lorimers' ordinances, constitute evidence of repeated performances at stations through the city. It is therefore clear that the York Corpus Christi Play was performed in a processional mode, i.e. that there was more than one performance of each pageant at different stations along a route through the city.

(b) *Pageants "heard" at the stations*

References to the stations at which the play was performed indicate that the presentation was a spoken one, for in these entries it is stated that audiences at the stations were to "hear" the play. There is nothing to suggest that the spoken performances were confined to brief extracts from the text at any of the stations.

Evidence of spoken performance is to be found in the headings of the station lists in the Chamberlains' account books and rolls. In the second half of the sixteenth century the stations are described as places to "hear" the play:

1561-2

Leases of places to heare Corpus Cristi Play
Item received for places to heare Corpuscristy
Play this yere

xxxiiij s.

(*Roll C* 7:1,m.2)

1565-6

Leases of places to here Corpus Crysty Play.

(*Book C* 5, f.47r)

1576-7

Leases of places to heare the playe.³⁸

(*Roll C* 7:2,m.2)

A list of fourteen stations in the House Book for 1569 specifies spoken performance:

1569

And nowe was appoynted places for hearyng³⁹ Corpus Christi Play on Wytson Tewisday next

(*HB* 24, f.140r)

The Chamberlains' accounts of the expenses of the Lord Mayor's banquet on Corpus Christi day also indicate that spoken performance was customary. It is clear that the Lord Mayor and his fellow officials and dignitaries watched and listened to the play from the room where the banquet was held. The accounts describe the Lord Mayor and his fellows as "videntes et intendentes" (seeing and hearing) the pageants. The references to the Lord Mayor's banquet are as follows:

1478-9

Et in expensis factis hoc anno pro Maiorem Aldermannos et quamplures alios de Consilii Camere in festo Corporis Cristi videntes et intendentes ludum in hospicium Nicholi Bewyk.

(Roll C 3:7, m.1, dorse)

(And in expenses incurred this year on behalf of the Mayor, Aldermen and many others of the Common Council seeing and hearing the play in Nicholas Bewyk's house on the feast of Corpus Christi.)

(?) 1499-1500

Et in expensis factis hoc anno super Maiorem Aldermannos et alios quam plures de Consilii Camere in festo Corporis Cristi videntes et intendentes ludum in hospicium Communi Guyhall ex consuetudine.

(Roll C 4:3, m.1, dorse)

(And in expenses incurred this year for the Mayor, Aldermen and many others of the Common Council seeing and hearing the play in the house of the Common Guildhall as is customary.)

The expense lists for the Lord Mayor's feast in 1501-2, 1506-7, 1508-9, 1518-19, and 1520-21 contain the same words as the (?) 1499-1500 list.⁴⁰

The Lord Mayor's banqueting room is sometimes specified as being in the Common (Guild)hall, as in (?) 1499-1500, and sometimes, as in 1478-9, as being in a private house. Thomas Fleming's house, from which the Mayor saw the play in 1539-40 and 1542, appears to have been at the Common Hall station:

1539-40

Item paid to Thomas Flemyng for the chamber there as my Lord Mayer and his brederyn stonidith yerely to here the play vj s viij d.

(Roll C 6:11)

1542

Item paid for nayles þat was occupyed in the hangyng of the chambre at Thomas Flemynges where as my Lorde Mayer and his bredern herd the sayd play iij d.

(Book C 4, f.88r)

Item the ixth place at the Common Halle for my Lorde Mayer and his bredern whiche place is free perfore etc.

(Book C 4, f.36r)

In 1542 the Lord Mayor's station is referred to as both "the chambre at Thomas Flemynges" and the "place at the Common Halle". Fleming's house must therefore have been near the Common Hall. It seems likely that the pageants were performed in the square (now St Helen's square) onto which the Common Hall faced, and that Fleming's house overlooked the square. It is reasonable to assume that civic dignitaries were usually placed at the Common Hall station, although they were not necessarily always at the gate of the Hall itself.

The Mayor's expenses for 1539-40 and 1542 quoted above show that the play was "heard" at Fleming's house and that the performances were spoken.

The House Book for 1543 also refers to the Lord Mayor "hearing" the play:

1543

Item it ys agreyd by the sayd presens þat the Chamberleyns of this city shall pay suche costes and expensys as was mayd to my said Lord Maior his brederin Chamberleyns and the Common Clerk of this city of Corpus Cristi day last past provyded always þat the Chamberleyns of this city for the tyme beyng shalnot excede hereafter of Corpus Cristi day in makyng expensys at the place ther as my Lord Maior of this city shall here the play above iiij markes.⁴¹

(HB 77, f.14r)

In 1547-8 the Mayor exceeded the amount of four marks specified in 1543 when he feasted as he "heard" the play:

1547-8

Item paid for the charges and expensys of the seyde Lord Maior and his bredern Aldermen Shyryffes xxiiij^{or} Chamberleyns and the Common Clerk at the place ther as they hard the seyde play of Corpus Cristi as yt apperyt partyclarly in the papir booke of the seyde accomptances

iiij li iiij s iiij d.

(Roll C 6:15)

The last reference to the Lord Mayor's feasting at a place where he "heard" the play is recorded in 1561-2:

1561-2

Item paid for the chardges of my Lord Mayour Aldremen and others of the Counsell of this citie hearyng Corpus Christi Play ageynst the Common Hall gates this yere as doeth planyly and particularly appere in the papir booke of theis accomptantes

ix li viij d.

(Roll C 7:1, m.4)

The station at the Minster gates is also specifically mentioned as one at which there were spoken performances of the play. In 1483 and 1484 the Dean and Chapter occupied this station and "heard" the Corpus Christi Play there:

1483

Et pro firma camere supra portas clausi vbi dominus Decanus et confratres sui ludum Corporis Cristi iij s iiii d et ludum vocat Credplay audierunt iij s iiii d
vj s viij d.

(Dean and Chapter accounts,
Roll *E* 1:52)⁴²

(And for the rent of the room above the gates of the Cathedral Close where the Dean and his brothers heard the Corpus Christi Play, 3s. 4d., and the play called the Creed Play, 3s. 4d.;⁴³ 6s. 8d.)

1484

Et pro firma camere supra portas clausi vbi dominus Decanus et Capitulum cum domino Archiepiscopo ludum Corporis Cristi audierunt
v s.

(Dean and Chapter accounts,
Roll *E* 1:47)

(And for the rent of the room above the gates of the Cathedral Close where the Dean and Chapter and the Lord Archbishop heard the Corpus Christi Play, 5s.)

From the references to the playing stations in general and to the Lord Mayor's and Dean's in particular it can be concluded that there were spoken performances of the pageants. It is also implied in these entries that each of the pageants in the play was presented at each of the stations in turn.

(c) *Duration of processional performance*

Since the records show that performances of the York Corpus Christi Play were spoken presentations of pageants at various stations, the supposition that they must have been lengthy is inescapable. There was a large number of pageants, forty-eight in the register,⁴⁴ fifty-one in the *ordo paginarum* of 1415 and fifty-seven in the *c.* 1420 list.⁴⁵ The number of stations is also impressive: there was a minimum of ten in 1462-3, 1528-9 and 1551,⁴⁶ and a possible maximum of seventeen in 1569.⁴⁷ One is inclined to wonder that a processional performance under these conditions could have been confined to a single day. But it is clear from the records that this was the case and that measures to ensure efficient playing were enforced.

There is evidence that the performance began early and finished very late. In the proclamation to be issued on the vigil of the feast, the Mayor gave instructions about procedure immediately before the play was to begin. The 1415 proclamation orders the actors to be ready at 4.30 a.m.⁴⁸ This can be interpreted to mean that the wagons were already marshalled and that the first pageant began to play at the first station at that time. A House Book

entry for 1484 records a payment made by the city to four men employed to organize the pageants:

1484

Regardia data iiij hominibus

Item the same xxviiij day of Septembris it was agreed by thassent and consent of þe Counsell afore named þat [blank] shald haue for thair reward in labouring about the setting forward and ordoring of the pageantes vpon Corpus Cristi daye by þe handes of the Chaumbrelayns

vj s viiiij d.

(*HB* 2-4, f,136v)

The 1415 proclamation, then, suggests a 4.30 a.m. start. Moreover, it is clear from another record dated 1431-2 that some actors were still performing after dark. In 1431-2 the Masons complained about their pageant of *Fergus* and listed among its faults the fact that it could "rarely or never" be "brought out and played" in daylight ("paginam suam raro vel nunquam potuerunt producere et ludere clara die sicut faciunt pagine precedentes").⁴⁹ According to the 1415 *ordo paginarum*, *Fergus* was followed by three other pageants.⁵⁰ It is therefore clear that the performance would have continued long after dark. The 1431-2 entry shows that the play could not, as Canon Purvis suggests, have been completed by "twilight".

A Coventry *Leet Book* record seems to imply that the Corpus Christi Play at Coventry did not continue after dark.⁵¹ Queen Margaret came to the city in 1457 and was placed at the first station, where she saw "alle the pageantes pleyde save domes-day, which myght not be pleyde for lak of day". On the evidence of this record alone it should not be assumed that performances of the play at Coventry were always limited to the daylight hours. As the 1457 performance was favoured by the Queen's presence, it is possible that the play was curtailed at her pleasure.

But whatever the situation at Coventry, it is clear from the Masons' complaint about *Fergus* that the York play was still in progress after dark.

(d) *Measures to limit duration of performance*

The records indicate that the time needed for a presentation of the Corpus Christi Play caused concern. Both the number of pageants and the number of stations affected the duration of the performance and it is evident that steps were taken to reduce them.

(i) *The number of pageants*

In 1421⁵² an order was made for the pageant owned by the Painters and Stainers to be removed from the play and its subject-matter to be combined with that of the Pinners' and Latoners' pageant. The four crafts involved came to the Mayor and used as their main argument for the amalgamation the excessive length of the play caused by the large number of pageants. The Mayor applauded the sentiments of the craftsmen and passed the necessary

ordinances. The following is an extract from the report of the matter in the *A/Y Memorandum Book*:

1421

Novit ille qui nichil ignorat et plebs conqueritur vniversa quod ludus in die Corporis Cristi in ista ciuitate cuius institutio ob magnam deuocionis causam et viciorum extirpacionem morumque reformationem antiquitus facta fuit heu plus solito impeditur pro multitudine paginarum et nisi celerior et melior prouideatur cautela timendum est multo magis breuissime processu temporis impediri Et artifices de lez Payntours Steynours Pynners et Latoners ciuitatis predicte ad diuissim ludendum duas paginas in ludo predicto antea assignati vnam videlicet de expansione et clauacione Cristi ad crucem alteram vero de leuacione crucifixi super montem intelligentes quod materie ambarum paginarum simul in vna pagina possent in ludi abbrevacionem commodius ludencium oracula audienti populo demonstrari consenciebant pro se et alijs coartificibus suis in futurum quod vna paginarum suarum amodo deleatur et altera secundum quod Maior et Consilium camere voluerint ordinare.⁵³

(*A/Y*, f.247r)

(He who is ignorant of nothing knows, and the people in general complain, that the play on Corpus Christi day in this city, which was instituted by ancient custom as a special cause of devotion and for the uprooting of vices and the reforming of morals, is, alas, more [and more] impeded by the multitude of pageants, and, unless some better provision is made very quickly, it is feared that in a short period of time it will be much more impeded. And the artificers of the Painters, Stainers, Pinner, and Latoners of the said city, who were previously assigned two pageants to be played separately in the said play, that is to say, one about the stretching and nailing of Christ on the cross, the other, indeed, about the raising of the cross on the hill, being aware that the matter of both pageants could be [condensed] into one pageant and that the shortened playing of the scripture could be exhibited more beneficially to the people listening, have decided that they and their fellow craftsmen who succeed them will delete one of their pageants from now on and retain the other, according to the ordinance that the Mayor and Council will see fit to make.)

It is clear, then, that these two pageants were combined into a single unit to reduce the number of pageants and so shorten the play. It is possible that the amalgamation in 1421-2 of four pageants into a single unit to be called "pagina condempnacionis Jhesu Cristi" was also prompted by the desire to limit the duration of the performance.⁵⁴

(ii) *The number of stations*

In 1398-9 all the commons involved in the Corpus Christi Play brought

before the council the matter of the time taken up by the whole performance. Their complaint was that the play was being presented in too many places and as a result could not be completed in a single day.

1398-9

ne pourront estre iuez ne perfournez mesme le iour solounc ces com
ils deueront estre a cause que les pagentz suisditz sount jueez en si
plusours lieux.

(*A/Y*, f. 19v)⁵⁵

(The pageants are not able to be played or performed on the same day [i.e. on Corpus Christi day] because the pageants are played in so many places.)

From the above extract it appears that the play was intended to be completed in one day. To ensure that the play was confined to Corpus Christi day, the council limited the number of stations to twelve. As there are no further complaints about there being too many stations, it can be assumed that the steps taken by the council were adequate. It seems therefore that Nelson's claim that the play could not be completed in one day is contrary to the evidence of the records.

The earliest reference to the Corpus Christi stations can be interpreted as demonstrating concern that the performance should not be prolonged unduly by the playing of any pageant at an unauthorized station. It is stated in 1394 that each pageant was to play in the "places appointed by ancient custom and not anywhere else":

1394

De ludo Corporis Cristi

Plus in secundo folio sequento

Eodem die concordatum est quod omnes pagine Corporis Cristi ludent
in locis antiquitus assignatis et non alibi sed vt sicut premunientur per
Maiorem Ballivos et ministros suos et si qua pagina in contrarium fecerit
gentes artificij dicte pagine soluent ad opus communitatis in camere
Maioris

vj s viij d.

(*A/Y*, f. 17v)⁵⁶

(Concerning the Corpus Christi Play.

More in the second folio following [i.e. f. 19v; see above, p. 67].

On the same day [28th April, 1394]⁵⁷ It was agreed that all the pageants of Corpus Christi be performed in the places appointed by ancient custom and not anywhere else, but [only] as they shall be prearranged by the Mayor, the Bailiffs⁵⁸ and their officers. And if any pageant does otherwise, the members of the craft of that said pageant shall pay 6s. 8d. to the chamber of the Mayor for the use of the community.)

It appears, then, that both the 1394 and 1398-9 entries in the *Memorandum Book* record measures to limit the duration of the performance.

Restricting the number of stations seems to have shortened the play considerably. Thus in one of the plague years, 1551, the limit of ten stations was imposed to avoid "confluence and blyndyng togiders" and "long taryeng", that is, to reduce the number of large gatherings and of delays in the performance.

1551

Assembled in the Counsell Chambre of Ousebrig of this cite the day and yere above wrytten whan and where it was agreed by the said presens that for soo moche as the sykenes hath ben latly within this cite and to avoyde somme occasion of lyk this somar by reason of confluence and blyndyng togiders of euery sort of people at Corpus Cristi Playe with long taryeng abowt it no more pagiantes shalbe played thys yere but in tenne certayne stations.

(HB 20, f.57r)⁵⁹

The 1398-9 limit of twelve stations was often exceeded in the sixteenth century. In 1569, for example, seventeen stations were offered by the Council (see below, p. 94). But, possibly, in those years when more than twelve stations were offered for lease, the number of pageants being performed was small enough for the presentation to be confined within reasonable limits.

The council's concern to limit the duration of the play is demonstrated not only by measures restricting the number of stations but also by an insistence that the crafts exercise all possible speed in moving their pageants from one station to the next. In the 1415 proclamation the crafts were ordered to take their wagons along the route as quickly as they could, "fast folowyng ilkon after oþer as þer course is without tarieng". The fine for disobedience was 6s. 8d. in 1415, but when the Girdlers held up the performance in 1554, they had to pay 10s.

1554

pro camere x s

Item for that the Girdlars on Corpus Cristi day did not forthwith folowe with their pageant in dewe course accordyng to thordynance and proclamacion⁶⁰ þerof made but taried an wholle hower and more in hyndrans and stoppyng of the rest of the pageantz folowyng and to the disorderyng of the same It is therfor agreed by theis presentz that the saied Girdlars shall pay for the sayd default x s to the chambre vse.

(HB 21, f.46v)⁶¹

As it is stated that the Girdlers violated both ordinance and proclamation, they must have failed to follow the preceding pageant as quickly as they ought and may also have given unauthorized performances of their pageant.

To sum up: it is clear that the council intended that the play should be completed in a single day, and that by playing at a limited number of

stations and by exercising all possible speed between stations the performing crafts were able to accomplish this.

2. *The Stations*

(a) *The route*

The route followed by the pageants seems to have been a long-established one, for in 1394 (see above, p. 86) the stations were described as "antiquitus assignatis" ("appointed by ancient custom"). The first record of the locations of the stations is dated 1398-9 (*A/Y*, f.19v, see above, p. 67). The route was along the main streets of the city. The procession began near Micklegate Bar, the main entrance to the city from the south, progressed across Ouse Bridge, passed the Common Hall and the Minster and finally halted on the Pavement, one of the principal market areas.⁶¹ Although the crafts did not always perform at exactly the same stations, the same general route was followed from 1398-9 to 1569. This route was followed by the royal entry of Henry VII in 1486⁶³ and Henry VIII in 1541,⁶⁴ by the Creed Play in 1525-6⁶⁵ and Pater Noster Play in 1572,⁶⁶ and by Grafton's Interlude in 1585.⁶⁷

(b) *The leasing of the stations*

The Chamberlains' accounts indicate that the city derived revenue from leasing the stations at which the play was to be performed. The earliest record of stations for the Corpus Christi Play in the extant Chamberlains' series is for 1454-5⁶⁸ and the latest for 1576-7.⁶⁹

The procedure followed for leasing the stations is explained by a report in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* of two meetings held in June, 1416. At the first meeting on 7th June, the 1398-9 ordinance containing the official station list was reaffirmed.⁷⁰ The list of stations and the instructions about the banners set up to mark the official playing places were restated. The use of the banners indicates the control the council exercised over the performance. The pageants were to be acted only where there was evidence of official authorization. Another matter discussed at both the 1416 meetings was the proposal that those who had a station near their house or other property held by them should have to make a payment to the city for that privilege. The *A/Y* account shows that audience scaffolds were erected at the stations and that money was taken from those who had seats on them ("illi qui pro skafaldis quas ante eorum ostia . . . monetam recipiunt"). It appears that before 1416 only those who erected the scaffolds derived any financial gain from the Corpus Christi Play, and that before this year no steps had been taken to direct profits from the celebration into the city treasury.⁷¹ In the extant documents there is certainly no record of payments made for stations to the city Chamberlains before 1416. Nor was there any reference to a previous method of payment when the proposal was made on 7th June, 1416, that scaffold owners should pay every third penny they collected to the city ("soluant tercium denarium monete sic recepte camerarijs ciuitatis ad vsum communitatis ejusdem"). Furthermore, the paying of every third penny was

no more than a proposal, and by the time the next meeting to discuss the matter was held five days later, the council had apparently changed its mind and decided to lease the stations to the highest bidders ("qui vberius et melius camere soluere et plua pro commodo tocius communitatis facere voluerint"). If the scaffold owners had paid every third penny as proposed on 7th June, they would have had to keep an account of monies received on Corpus Christi day and pay a third of the total to the city at a later date. To settle the amounts to be paid before Corpus Christi day was obviously more convenient for both council and scaffold owners. The council was thereby certain of its revenues and the scaffold owners were spared the trouble of keeping a record of the money they collected and of handing over the appropriate amount to the Chamberlains. The report of the two meetings is as follows:

7th June, 1416⁷²

De gubernacione Ludi Corporis Cristi

Omnes isti congregati fuerunt in Aula Communi vna cum multitudine aliorum civium vij^{mo} die mensis Junii anno domini millesimo ccccxvij^{mo} regni autem Regis Henrici quinti post conquestum Anglie anno quinto et licet contineatur in quadam constitucione seu ordinacione antiqua facta tempore Roberti Talkan dudum Maioris Eborum anno regni Regis Ricardi secundi xxij^{do} et ibidem perlecta de ludo in festo Corporis Cristi in ciuitate Eborum sustinendo videlicet quod ob commodum ciuium eiusdem ciuitatis et omnium extraneorum illuc veniencium in festo predicto omnes pagine Ludi vocati Corpus Cristi Play sint sustentate et producte suo ordine per artifices dicte ciuitatis ad honorem precipue et reuerenciam Domini nostri Jesu Cristi et comodum ciuium predictorum et ludus singularum ipsarum paginarum esset Primo ad portas Prioratus Sancte Trinitatis in Mikelgate Secundo ante ostium Roberti Harpham Tercio ante ostium quondam Johannis Gyseburn Quarto apud Skeldergatehend et Northstretchend Quinto ad finem de Conyngstrete versus Castlegate Sexto ad finem de Jubritgate Septimo ante ostium quondam Henrici Wyman in Conyngstrete Octauo ante Aulam Communem in fine Conyngstrete Nono ad ostium quondam Ade del Bryg in Stayngate Decimo in fine de Stayngate ad portam Monasterij Beati Petri Vndecimo ad finem de Girdelergate in Petergate Duodecimo et vltimo super Pauimentum prout in constitucione ista antiqua in registro isto versus principium scripta plenius continetur Nichilominus Maior probi homines et tota communitas predicta eorum vnanimi consensu et assensu ordinarunt quod omnes illi qui pro skafaldis quas ante eorum ostia super solum communitatis edificatis in locis predictis de supersedentibus monetam recipiunt soluant tercium denarium monete sic recepte camerarijs ciuitatis ad vsum communitatis ejusdem applicandum et si huiusmodi tercium denarium soluere vel alias cum camera honeste concordare recusauerint quod tunc ludus transferatur ad alia loca ad disposicionem et voluntatem Maioris qui pro tempore fuerit et consilii camere ciuitatis nemine ordinacioni

huiusmodi contradicente paucis possessoribus skaffaldorum in Mikelgate dumtaxat exceptis Et vltorius ordinatum erat communi consensu quod vexilla ludi Corporis Cristi sub armis ciuitatis depicta libarentur annuatim in vigilia Corporis Cristi ponenda in locis vbi erit ludus paginarum die sequente et quod vexilla ipsa singulis annis reportentur ad cameram Consilii ciuitatis sine mora in crastino dicti festi Corporis Cristi ad manus Maioris et camerariorum ciuitatis et ibidem custodiantur per totum annum proximo sequentem sub pena vj s viij d ad opus communitatis applicandorum per illum et illos qui vexilla illa ultra crastinum detinuerint et ea non liberauerint modo qui prefertur

12th June, 1416

Et quia propter dicti festi Corporis Cristi propinquitatem et temporis breuitatem dicta materia non potuit plene execucioni mandari predicti igitur congregati in camere consilii xij^{mo} die Junii annis domini et Regis supradictis considerantes quod indecens esset et contra comodum communitatis quod ludus predictus annuatim luderetur in eisdem certis locis et in nullo alio cum vnusquisque iuxta statum suum onus suum portet pro ipso ludo sustinendo vnanimiter igitur ordinarunt pro vtilitate communitatis quod loca ad ludendum ludum predictum mutentur nisi ipsi ante quorum loca antea ludebatur aliquod certum quid soluerint communitati pro ipso comodo suo singulari sic annuatim habendo et quod in omnibus annis sequentibus dum ludus ille ludi contigerit ludatur ante ostia et tenementa illorum qui vberius et melius camere soluere et plus pro comodo tocus communitatis facere voluerint pro ludo ipso ibidem habendo non impendendo fauorem alicui persone pro aliquo comodo singulari sed tantum quod consideretur vtilitas publica tocus communitatis Eborum Et reverendus vir Johannes Moreton supradictus pro tenementis suis se submisit totaliter disposicioni et regimini Maioris et Consilii camere quantum ad ludum supradictum pro ludo ante portam habitacionis sue in vico de Mikelgate et in alijs tenementis suis in civitate.

(*A/Y*, ff.187v-188r)⁷³

(Concerning the organization of the Corpus Christi Play.

All these⁷⁴ and a multitude of other citizens were gathered in the Common Hall on 7th June, 1417. It was declared that instructions about the organization of the play on the feast of Corpus Christi were included in a certain ancient decree or ordinance made in the mayoralty of Robert Talkan, 1398-9, and the same ordinance was read through. The substance of the matter is that all the pageants of the play called Corpus Christi Play be conducted and brought forth in order by the crafts of the said city for the benefit of the citizens of the said city and all strangers coming there on the said feast, and for the special honour and reverence of the said citizens. And the play of the individual pageants shall be: First at the gates of Holy Trinity Priory in Micklegate; Second at Robert Harpham's house; Third before John Gyse-

burn's house; Fourth at the intersection of Skeldergate and North Street; Fifth at the end of Conyng Street opposite Castlegate; Sixth at the end of Jubbergate; Seventh before Henry Wyman's house in Conyng Street; Eighth before the Common Hall at the end of Conyng Street; Ninth at Adam del Bryg's house in Stonegate; Tenth at the end of Stonegate at the gates of the Cathedral of the Blessed Peter; Eleventh at the end of Girdlergate in Petergate; Twelfth and last on the Pavement, with respect to the ancient decree and ordinance originally written in this register to continue. Nevertheless the Mayor, honourable men and all the said community by unanimous consent and assent ordained that all those who receive money from people sitting on scaffolds which are built before the above houses of the community, only in the places aforesaid, shall pay every third penny of money so received to the chamber to be applied to the use of the same community. And if they refuse to pay this third penny or anything else lawfully agreed by the chamber, the play will be transferred to other places at the will and inclination of the Mayor holding office at the time and the council of the chamber of the city. No-one shall go against the ordinance in this respect with the exception of a few holding scaffolds in Micklegate.⁷⁵ And furthermore it was ordained by common assent that the banners of the Corpus Christi Play with the arms of the city be delivered each year on the vigil of Corpus Christi to be placed in the places where the play of the pageants shall be performed on the following day, and that each year the banners will be brought back without delay to the chamber of the council of the city on the day after the said feast to be given to the Mayor and Chamberlains of the city and kept by them for the following year, under penalty of 6s. 8d. to be applied to the use of the community by anyone who keeps the banners any longer and does not give them up in the manner aforesaid.

And because of the closeness of the said feast of Corpus Christi and the lack of time, the said orders were not able to be fully carried out and executed. Therefore those assembled in the chamber of the Council on 12th June considered that it was inconvenient and not to the benefit of the community that the said play be performed in these places and no others each year, since everyone bears his charge towards the upholding of the said play according to his estate. It was therefore unanimously ordained that for the benefit of the community the places for the performance of the said play be changed unless those before whose places the play is performed pay a fixed sum each year to the community for its own use. And it was ordained that in all years afterwards while the play continues it will be played before the houses and tenements of those who will pay best and most generously to the chamber and give more for the benefit of the whole community for having the same play, not giving favour to any individual for his personal benefit but rather in consideration of the general benefit of the whole of the

community of York. And the said very reverend gentleman John Moreton, in the matter of his tenements, submitted himself completely to the disposition and ruling of the Mayor and the Council of the chamber as to how much he should pay towards the said play for having the play before the gate of his house in Micklegate and at other tenements of his in the city.)

The above report of the two 1416 meetings suggests that until that time the council had no method of securing direct profit from the Corpus Christi performance. It is also of interest that the proposal of a third-penny levy was rejected in favour of an agreed lease.

In 1554 the following order was made at a council meeting on 11th May:

1554

pageant places

Item that thofficers of euery warde gyve warnyng that suche as woll haue pageantz played before ther doores shall come in and agreee for theym before Trynytie Sondag next or elles to haue none and the places to be appoynted by discrecion of my Lord Maior accustomed.

(*HB*, 21, f.44r)⁷⁶

It is clear from the above entry that in 1554 the amounts were agreed before Corpus Christi day.

(c) *A station lease, 1478*

More detailed information about the method of leasing stations is afforded by a copy of one such lease entered in the *A/Y Memorandum Book*. In 1478 two fishmongers, Henry Watson⁷⁷ and Thomas Diconson, agreed to pay the city eleven shillings that year and for the next twelve years (1478-90) to have the pageants performed at a station in Ousegate.⁷⁸

1478

Omnibus hoc scriptum visuris vel auditoris Maior et communitas ciuium ciuitatis Eborum salutem in Domino sempiternam Noueritis nos concessisse et ad firmam dimisisse Henrici Watson et Thome Diconson Pikemongers ludum siue lusum Corporis Cristi annuatim ludendum in alta strata de Ousegate inter tenementa modo in tenura prefatorum Henrici et Thome scilicet scilicet apud finem Pontis Vse ex parte orientali habendum et tenendum dictum ludum siue lusum a festo Corporis Cristi anno domini millesimo cccclxxvij^o vsque finem duodecim annorum proximo sequentum plenare reddendo inde annuatim nobis prefato Maiori et successoribus nostris videlicet ad manus Camerariorum qui pro tempore fuerint vndecim solidos legalis monete Anglie ad opus communitatis ciuitatis predicte annuatim durante termino predicto scilicet infra sex dies proximo sequentes festi Corporis Cristi predictum sub pena amissionis ludi predicti presenti dimissione in

aliquo non obstante ita scilicet quod dicte ludus siue lusus ad stallagium minime ludatur Et nos predicti Maior et communitas et successores nostri dictum ludum siue luseum pro firma xj s predicta vsque ad finem xij^{im} annorum predictorum est contra omnes gentes warantizabimus et defendemus In cuius rei testimonium etc.

(*A/Y*, f.33IV)⁷⁹

(The Mayor and citizens of the city of York salute you in [the name of] eternal God. To all who read and hear this decree let it be known that we grant and lease annually to Henry Watson and Thomas Diconson, fishmongers, the play or game of Corpus Christi to be played in the high street of Ousegate between [i.e. in front of both] the tenements now leased by the aforesaid Henry and Thomas; that is, on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1478 and for the following twelve years, the said play or game shall be performed at the eastern end of Ouse Bridge, and they shall pay in full eleven shillings in legal English money each year for the said length of time for the use of the community of the said city, that is to the hands of the Chamberlains holding office at the time, that is within six days after the said feast of Corpus Christi, under penalty of losing [the right to have] the said play, to be given up to another party which does not thus refuse, that is, that the play or game be performed at this charge. And we the said Mayor and community and our successors warrant and defend against all men the said play or game for the rent of eleven shillings till the end of the twelfth year as is stated.

Witness in this matter etc.)

The station list for 1486–7 mentions this agreement for the fifth station:

1486–7

Et de xj s recepti de Henrico Watson per indentura pro firma v^{ti} loci.
(Chamberlains' Roll *C* 4:1, m.2)

(And of 11s. received from Henry Watson according to the indenture for the lease of the fifth place.)

The 1478 agreement was not an isolated occurrence. The station lists for (?) 1499–1500 and 1501–2 mention indentures for the tenth and eleventh stations respectively:

(?) 1499–1500

Et de firma decimi loci dimittit Nicholo Caton et alijs per indenture etc v s.⁸⁰

(Chamberlains' Roll *C* 4:4, m.1)

(And for the rent of the tenth place given to Nicholas Caton and others according to the indenture etc., 5s.)

1501–2

Et de firma xj^{mi} tenementi dimittit Willelmo Catterton et alijs per indenture v s.⁸¹

(Chamberlains' Roll *C* 5:1, m.2)

(And for the rent of the eleventh tenement to William Catterton and others according to the indenture, 5s.)

(d) *Reduction in station revenues in the sixteenth century*

The revenues collected from the stations fell in the sixteenth century. Anna J. Mill attributes this to a general decrease in the amounts paid for stations during this century and to the establishing of lease-free stations for certain civic dignitaries.⁸² The Common Clerk's station at Holy Trinity Church,⁸³ the Lord Mayor's station at the Common Hall⁸⁴ and the Lady Mayoress's station on the Pavement were often exempt from payment. It is not clear whether scaffolds were erected at these free stations and money collected from people watching the pageants there, or whether the audience saw the play without paying. But the decline in revenue for the city resulted from smaller amounts being paid for the lease of the stations rather than from the granting of free stations. Furthermore, it seems that although the council was willing to lease a large number of stations, not all of these were taken up. Very often stations were available for leasing, but it is not always clear from the Chamberlains' accounts whether they were actually taken up and paid for. It seems possible that the reduction in station revenue was caused by the general decline in York trade in the sixteenth century. The city had ceased to be a centre of commerce and its wealth was considerably less than it had been in the previous century.⁸⁵ It would seem likely that the reduction in amounts paid for the stations as well as the failure to lease all the available places were a result of the decline of the city as a trading centre.

(e) *Seventeen stations offered in 1569*

The ordinance of 1398-9 authorized twelve stations, but the number offered in later years varies from ten (see above, p. 87) to a possible seventeen in 1569. A House Book entry for this year lists fourteen stations.⁸⁶ In previous years the final station was on the Pavement, but in 1569 the fourteenth station was beyond this point:

1569

xijth one the Pavement betwene Maister Harbertes and Maister Shirefes howsez The xijth betwene Maister Pacoke and Maister Allen places.

(*HB* 24, f.140r)

Fourteen stations were offered on 26th May, 1569, but at another council meeting on 27th May, three additional stations, making a total of seventeen, were offered by the council:

1569

Agreed furthermore that the Cowper in Myklegate Maister Fawkes in Conystreet and John Chambre in Coliargate shall haue the pageantz played afore their doores if they will agree with the Chaumberlaynes for the same.

(*HB* 24, f.140v)

(f) *The Common Clerk's station at Holy Trinity Church*

The station lists indicate that the Common Clerk occupied the first station at Holy Trinity Church from 1501-2 onwards. In 1501-2, 1506-7, and 1508-9 this place was leased to scaffold owners but from 1516-17 onwards it seems to have been free.⁸⁷ It is stated expressly in the station lists of 1538-9, 1542, and 1554-5 that the Common Clerk kept the register of the pageants at this particular station:

1538-9

In primis the ffyrst place at Trentyte yaites where as the Common Clerke kepys the registre wherefore that place goith free nihil.
(Chamberlains' Book C 3(3), f.9r)⁸⁸

1542

In primis the furst place at the Trinyte yaittes where þat the Common Clerk kes the regester and þefore þat place hathe been accustomed to goe free nihil.
(Chamberlains' Book C 4(1), f.37r)⁸⁹

1554-5

The ffurst place at the Trinitie yaites where the Clerke kepys the register [blank.]
(Chamberlains' Book C 4(2), p.59)⁹⁰

In 1527-8 and 1542 the Chamberlains' accounts indicate that the Common Clerk's function at the first station was fulfilled by a deputy.

1527-8

Item in expensis factis de Thoma Clerk deputatur Communis Clerici custodioni registrum ultra panem fructam et vinum ij s iiij d.
(Chamberlains' Book C 3(1), f.159r)

(Item in expenses made for Thomas Clerk deputizing for the Common Clerk in keeping the register, in bread, fruit and wine, 2s. 4d.)

1542

Item paid to the servaunt of the Common Clerk for kepyng of the register at the furst place where as the play of Corpus Cristi was played of Corpus Cristi day this yere accustomed xx d.
(Chamberlains' Book C 4, f.88r)⁹¹

It is apparent, then, that the Common Clerk or his deputy had a duty to perform at the first station, but what the "keeping of the register" entailed is not specified. From the 1547-8 record (see above, p. 82) it is evident that the Common Clerk was among the officials who saw the play at the Common Hall station. As the Common Clerk was a civic dignitary and so would have been expected to attend the Lord Mayor's feast, it is possible that he usually appointed someone to deputize for him at the first station.

3. *Performance in Procession: a Reconstruction*(a) *The calculations based on a performance at twelve stations of the forty-eight plays of the register*

Since it is clear from the records discussed in section 1 above that the Corpus Christi Play was performed processionally at York, and that the performance, when it was limited to the officially approved stations, could take place in a single day, the following attempt has been made to calculate the timing of such a performance. It should be emphasized that no reconstruction of this nature can be more than approximate. The variables are too many and too great to be taken fully into consideration. Thus the number of stations for the performance altered from year to year, and the content and length of the pageants changed over the two centuries of their known existence. Nor is it certain that all the pageants in the extant register were performed each year the play was presented. For example, in the register there are two Herod pageants (Plays 16 and 17) which have 144 lines in common; and Lucy Toulmin Smith suggested the possibility that both plays may not have been performed in any one year.⁹² Again, it is recorded that in 1548, and for each performance until 1553-4, the three pageants of Our Lady (Plays 45, 46 and 47) were excluded and that they were forbidden again in 1561.⁹³

It was decided to base a set of calculations on the timing of a processional performance of the forty-eight pageants of the register at twelve stations. Twelve stations only were considered because this is the number specified in the authoritative ordinance of 1398-9, and it is also the number most frequently recorded in the Chamberlains' accounts.

Eight of the stations listed in 1398-9 can be located exactly (see Map, p.64);⁹⁴

1. Holy Trinity Church, Micklegate.
4. Intersection of North Street, Skeldergate and Micklegate.
5. End of Conyng Street, opposite Castlegate.
6. Intersection of Conyng Street and Jubbergate.
8. Common Hall.
10. Minster.
11. Intersection of Girdlergate and Petergate.
12. Pavement.

The other four stations (2, 3, 7, and 9) were assigned to their positions after a consideration of the topography of the pageant route. There has been little change in the general outlay of the streets followed by the pageant wagons since the time of the earliest extant plan of the city made in 1610.⁹⁵ Robert Harpham's house, station 2, and John Gyseburn's house, station 3, stood somewhere on Micklegate between Holy Trinity Church and North Street. It was decided to place these at St Martin's Church and at the Crown Inn, just beyond the present Railway Street, respectively. It should be noted that the hill which falls from Holy Trinity to Railway Street is the steepest incline on the pageant route, and so the wagons might be expected to move more

quickly between the first and second stations and the second and third stations than they would between stations which were on a flat stretch or between the fourth and fifth stations where they had to negotiate Ouse Bridge. The first relatively flat position on the hill from Holy Trinity is at St Martin's Church and for that reason this seemed a suitable location for station 2. The site of station 3 was chosen simply because it provided a suitable mid-point between St Martin's and North Street. Henry Wyman's house, station 7, was placed at the intersection of Conyng Street and the present New Street⁹⁶ because this position is about halfway between Jubbergate, station 6, and the Common Hall, station 8. Adam del Brigg's house, station 9, was taken as being near the corner of Little Stonegate, about halfway between the Common Hall and the Minster gates, station 10.

Once positions for all twelve stations had been assigned, an estimation of the time needed for a pageant wagon to travel between the stations was made. Allowance had to be made for one major difference between the pageant route as it was in the fifteenth century and the route as it is now in 1972. Ouse Bridge, which was crowded with buildings in the fifteenth century,⁹⁷ was arched and so presented a hill which had to be negotiated by the pageants. Progress on the upward grade must therefore have been retarded somewhat. The pageant route was timed on foot and extra time allowed for manoeuvring the wagons at stations and street corners and on Ouse Bridge. The estimated times taken by journeys between stations are as follows:

Station 1 to 2,	3 minutes.
2 to 3,	2 minutes.
3 to 4,	2 minutes.
4 to 5,	5 minutes.
5 to 6,	2 minutes.
6 to 7,	3 minutes.
7 to 8,	5 minutes.
8 to 9,	3 minutes.
9 to 10,	4 minutes.
10 to 11,	4 minutes.
11 to 12,	5 minutes.

This timing of the journeys between stations conflicts with Nelson's claim that each journey took the equivalent of 100 lines⁹⁸ which, at the rate of 1,000 lines per hour, would be six minutes. None of the times recorded in York equalled this too generous allowance. It is clear that Nelson was in error in allowing an equal length of time between all the stations. Some stations are much closer together and the journeys are not always along a flat stretch; e.g. the journeys from station 1 to 2 and from station 2 to 3 are downhill, and the journey from station 4 to 5 is up and downhill over the bridge.

Nelson added 20 lines (1.2 minutes) to each journey for setting up at each station after the departure of the preceding pageant. This seems unnecessary, and in the calculations below it is assumed that pageants could begin and

end simultaneously. Many pageants opened with a soliloquy and so the speaker could walk into the station and begin playing while the wagon drew up. The noise made on the streets need not have offended the medieval audience.

For the estimate of the playing time of each pageant (see p. 102) Nelson's rate of 1,000 lines per hour and his suggestions for the length in lines of Plays 25 and 28 were accepted, as was his decision not to attempt to restore lines missing from Plays 34 and 35.⁹⁹ In the timing of the performance, the Purification pageant (registered as Play 41)¹⁰⁰ was restored to its proper chronological position as Play 18, and both the Herod pageants (Plays 16 and 17) were included. It cannot be asserted that the times thus calculated for each pageant are entirely accurate, as it is impossible to make sufficient allowance for extra business in the production or for music and singing.

It was assumed that the first performance of the first pageant began at Holy Trinity at 4.30 a.m., with the following pageants lined up behind it along Micklegate waiting to move into place as quickly as possible. The Table was compiled to show the time required for a complete performance of the play, assuming that the forty-eight pageants of the register were presented at each of the twelve stations listed in 1398-9.¹⁰¹ There are three times given for each pageant at each station: the first is the arrival time at the station; the second is the time the pageant began its performance; and the third is the time the performance was concluded at that station and the pageant began to move to the next station.

It can be seen from the Table that actors in every pageant except 1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 18, 26, and 31 had short breaks after they reached the station at which they were to perform next. There were breaks for all the audiences, except at station 1, between pageants 4 and 5, 8 and 9, 9 and 10, 10 and 11, 17 and 18, 25 and 26. It should also be noted that although many pageants were delayed between stations because of a long-playing pageant ahead of them, the calculations show that at no time were there more than two pageants waiting between any two stations; e.g. at station 5, pageant 39 is playing while pageants 40 and 41 wait in the street. As pageant 39 finishes and moves off, pageant 40 comes to the station, pageant 41 waits and pageant 42 arrives to wait.

(b) *Conclusions*

A number of points arise from a consideration of the calculations. It is clear that the whole play could be performed within a reasonable time-limit. If it began at 4.30 a.m. on Corpus Christi day and, if the crafts obeyed the instructions about moving as quickly as possible between stations, the last pageant would finish playing at the last station at about twenty-nine minutes past midnight.

Actors in forty of the forty-eight pageants had time for resting between stations. The Mercers' accounts of the expenses of their pageant of the Last Judgment (Play 48) frequently mention food and drink for the actors:

e.g. 1461

Item for a dener to þe players	xj d
Item for a brekfast to þe players	xj d ob
Item a sopper to þe players and þe mynstrelles at euyn	i j s vj d
Item for drynke to þe players	v d. ¹⁰²

Although the Mercers' pageant did not begin to play at the first station until 5.25 p.m., the actors were required to be ready on Toft Green at 4.30 a.m. according to the 1415 proclamation. The actors were apparently provided with breakfast after they had turned out for the marshalling of the pageants; later they had a dinner; and their supper could have been after their final performance, perhaps in the Mercers' Hall in Fossgate (see Map). The drink could have been consumed in the ten-minute breaks when the pageant was waiting to move to the next station.¹⁰³

Eleven of the twelve audiences also had breaks of varying lengths between pageants when they no doubt refreshed themselves with food and drink. At the first station there was an unbroken performance lasting for 13 hours 18 minutes; the audience there must obviously have had refreshment during the course of the play.

The calculations can be seen to clarify four entries in the contemporary documents:

(i) *Fergus*

The Masons' complaint that performances of *Fergus* took place after dark is substantiated by the calculations.¹⁰⁴ *Fergus* does not appear in the register and so it is impossible to calculate its performing time.¹⁰⁵ But it would have been Play 46 in the series according to the 1415 *ordo paginarum*; and so, on the basis of the calculations, it can be hazarded that at least four of the performances of *Fergus* would have been after dark, i.e. after approximately 9.30 p.m.

(ii) *Nativity pageants*

There is the following description of the Journey to Bethlehem: Birth of Jesus (Play 14) in the *ordo paginarum*:

Maria Ioseph obstetrix puer natus iacens in presepio inter bouem et azinum et angelus loquens pastoribus et ludentibus in pagina sequente.
(*A/Y*, f.253r)¹⁰⁶

(Mary, Joseph, a midwife, the child born lying in the manger between the ox and the ass, and the angel speaking to the shepherds and to the players in the following pageant.)

The words "to the shepherds and to the players in the following pageant" are clarified by the results in the Table. Because Play 15, The Angels and the Shepherds, always had to wait to move into the station at which Play 14 was still playing, it was possible for an actor in the earlier pageant to address the

actors waiting with Play 15 as well as those in his own play.¹⁰⁷ The angel's speech was not included in the register but a marginal note in a later hand reads as follows:

Hic caret pastoribus sequitur postea.¹⁰⁸

(Here is missing [the speech] which follows afterwards to the shepherds.)

On the evidence of the *ordo paginarum* description it can be suggested that the missing speech was assigned to an angel, even though there is no such character in the *dramatis personae* of the registered play. As there are no shepherds in Play 14, it can be suggested that the speech mentioned in the marginal note in the register was addressed to the shepherds following after in Play 15. The angel's speech would link the two pageants and establish a continuity between them.

(iii) *The second station in 1538-9*

In the station list for 1538-9,¹⁰⁹ the payment for the second station is noted as follows:

1538-9

Item the second place in Mykkylgate lattyn by the Chamberleyns to
Edmond [blank] glasier for þat ther was certen pagiantes past or he
tuyk it xx d.

(Chamberlains' Book C 3(3), f.gr)

Since the stations were agreed on and the banners set up to mark their positions before Corpus Christi day, Edmund must have contracted to take the station before the play began and could not have decided to rent a station on the day of the performance. It seems likely that Edmund was allowed the station at a reduced rate because not all the pageants were performed there. But the reason for some of the pageants passing the second station without performing is not given. Perhaps the first station was not a performing station in 1538-9, but merely a check point where the Common Clerk or his deputy checked off the pageants with the register. It is possible that when the first few pageants arrived at the second station they found that the audience had not yet assembled to witness the performance. Waiting for an audience to arrive would have caused disastrous delays, and the actors and pageant masters may therefore have decided to go down the hill to the third station. Even allowing for a performance at station 1, according to the calculations the first pageant should have arrived at Edmund's station at 4.43 a.m. If the weather was bad the audience may have been late, and if they did not assemble until, say, 5.00 a.m., they would find that the first three pageants had gone on to the third station.

(iv) *Actors to play "but twice," 1476*

An entry in the House Books which seems to be an order against the

doubling of parts can be more fully appreciated in the light of the calculations.

1476

And þat no plaier þat shall plaie in þe saide Corpus Cristi plaie be conducte and reteyned to plaie but twise on þe day of þe saide playe And þat he or thay so plaing plaie not ouere twise þe saide day vpon payne of xl s to forfet vnto þe Chaumbre asofen tymes as he or þay shall be founden defaultie in þe same.

(*HB*, I, f. 14v)¹¹⁰

It is stated that no actor should be hired by the crafts to play in more than two pageants. This rule against playing more than two parts can be understood when the times of the performance of the individual pageants in the Table are considered. The actors of Play 1 would be finished at 7.08 a.m., at which time they could leave the wagon, cross the river by ferry from Stonegate landing behind the Common Hall (the bridge was probably reserved for one-way traffic for pageants), and join another play, perhaps Play 16, at 7.30 a.m. Play 16 finished at 12.44 p.m., giving the same actors ample time to return to Holy Trinity to perform in Play 34, beginning at 1.17 p.m. The actors of Play 1 could thus theoretically take three parts. Similarly, the actors of Play 2 could also perform in Plays 17 and 35; those of Play 3 in 18 and 38; those of Play 4 in 19 and 39; those of Play 5 in 20 and 40; those of Play 6 in 21 and 41; those of Play 7 in 22 and 42; those of Play 8 in 23 and 43; and those of Play 9 in 24 and 44. There are clearly opportunities for playing more than two parts in the reconstructed performance. The instruction of 1476 can therefore be seen as a necessary one. If the progress of the pageants was delayed for any reason, the fine timing needed for playing three parts could have been upset and the performance plunged into confusion.

In the above discussion it has been argued that the performance of the York Corpus Christi Play was processional and that it took place within a reasonable time-limit. The records show that the performance was a spoken one and imply that each pageant was performed at each station. The calculations indicate that the conjectured performance of the forty-eight plays of the register at the twelve stations of the 1398-9 ordinance could have finished at twenty-nine minutes past midnight. Some points in the records can be clarified by the calculations: the playing of *Fergus* after dark, the *ordo paginarum* description of Play 14, the reduced rent of the second station in 1538-9, and the 1476 order against playing more than two parts.¹¹¹

STATIONS

PAGEANT	Performing Time in Mins.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Creation, Fall of Lucifer	10	4.30	4.43	4.55	5.07	5.22	5.34	5.47	6.02	6.15	6.29	6.43	6.58
		4.30	4.43	4.55	5.07	5.22	5.34	5.47	6.02	6.15	6.29	6.43	6.58
		4.40	4.53	5.05	5.17	5.32	5.44	5.57	6.12	6.25	6.39	6.53	7.08
2 Creation to the Fifth Day	5	4.40	4.48	5.00	5.12	5.27	5.39	5.52	6.07	6.20	6.34	6.48	7.03
		4.40	4.53	5.05	5.17	5.32	5.44	5.57	6.12	6.25	6.39	6.53	7.08
		4.45	4.58	5.10	5.22	5.37	5.49	6.02	6.17	6.30	6.44	6.58	7.13
3 God creates Adam & Eve	6	4.45	4.54	5.06	5.18	5.33	5.45	5.58	6.13	6.26	6.40	6.54	7.09
		4.45	4.58	5.10	5.22	5.37	5.49	6.02	6.17	6.30	6.44	6.58	7.13
		4.51	5.04	5.16	5.28	5.43	5.55	6.08	6.23	6.36	6.50	7.04	7.19
4 Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden	6	4.51	5.00	5.12	5.24	5.39	5.51	6.04	6.19	6.32	6.46	7.00	7.18
		4.51	5.04	5.16	5.28	5.43	5.55	6.08	6.23	6.36	6.50	7.04	7.19
		4.57	5.10	5.22	5.34	5.49	6.01	6.14	6.29	6.42	6.56	7.10	7.25
5 Man's disobedience & Fall	11	4.57	5.11	5.24	5.37	5.53	6.06	6.20	6.36	6.50	7.05	7.20	7.36
		4.57	5.11	5.24	5.37	5.53	6.06	6.20	6.36	6.50	7.05	7.20	7.36
		5.08	5.22	5.35	5.48	6.04	6.17	6.31	6.47	7.01	7.16	7.31	7.47
6 Adam & Eve driven from Eden	10	5.08	5.21	5.34	5.47	6.03	6.16	6.30	6.46	7.00	7.15	7.30	7.46
		5.08	5.22	5.35	5.48	6.04	6.17	6.31	6.47	7.01	7.16	7.31	7.47
		5.18	5.32	5.45	5.58	6.14	6.27	6.41	6.57	7.11	7.26	7.41	7.57
7 Sacrificium Cayne et Abell	8	5.18	5.29	5.42	5.55	6.11	6.24	6.38	6.54	7.08	7.23	7.38	7.54
		5.18	5.32	5.45	5.58	6.14	6.27	6.41	6.57	7.11	7.26	7.41	7.57
		5.26	5.40	5.53	6.06	6.22	6.35	6.49	7.05	7.19	7.34	7.49	8.05
8 Building of the Ark	9	5.26	5.38	5.51	6.04	6.20	6.33	6.47	7.03	7.17	7.32	7.47	8.03
		5.26	5.40	5.53	6.06	6.22	6.35	6.49	7.05	7.19	7.34	7.49	8.05
		5.35	5.49	6.02	6.15	6.31	6.41	6.58	7.14	7.28	7.43	7.58	8.14

9	Noah & the Flood	19	5-35	5-57	6-18	6-39	7-03	7-24	7-46	8-10	8-32	8-55	9-18	9-42
			5-35	5-57	6-18	6-39	7-03	7-24	7-46	8-10	8-32	8-55	9-18	9-42
			5-54	6-16	6-37	6-58	7-22	7-43	8-05	8-29	8-51	9-14	9-37	10-01
10	Abraham's Sacrifice	23	5-54	6-20	6-45	7-10	7-38	8-03	8-29	8-57	9-23	9-50	10-17	10-45
			5-54	6-20	6-45	7-10	7-38	8-03	8-29	8-57	9-23	9-50	10-17	10-45
			6-17	6-43	7-08	7-33	8-01	8-26	8-52	9-20	9-46	10-13	10-40	11-08
11	The Israelites in Egypt, the Ten Plys. & pass. of R. Sea	24	6-17	6-44	7-10	7-36	8-05	8-31	8-58	9-27	9-54	10-22	10-50	11-19
			6-17	6-44	7-10	7-36	8-05	8-31	8-58	9-27	9-54	10-22	10-50	11-19
			6-41	7-08	7-34	8-00	8-29	8-55	9-22	9-51	10-18	10-46	11-14	11-43
12	Annunciation, & visit of Elizabeth to Mary	14	6-41	6-58	7-34	7-50	8-19	8-45	9-12	9-41	10-08	10-36	11-04	11-33
			6-41	6-58	7-34	7-50	8-19	8-45	9-12	9-41	10-08	10-36	11-04	11-33
			6-55	7-22	7-48	8-14	8-43	9-09	9-36	10-05	10-32	11-00	11-28	11-57
13	Joseph's trouble about Mary	18	6-55	7-16	7-42	8-08	8-37	9-03	9-30	9-59	10-26	10-54	11-22	11-51
			6-55	7-16	7-42	8-08	8-37	9-03	9-30	9-59	10-26	10-54	11-22	11-51
			7-13	7-40	8-06	8-32	9-01	9-27	9-54	10-23	10-50	11-18	11-46	12-15
			7-22	7-49	8-15	8-41	9-10	9-36	10-03	10-32	10-59	11-27	11-55	12-24
14	Journey to Bethlehem: Birth of Jesus	9	7-13	7-25	7-51	8-17	8-46	9-12	9-39	10-08	10-35	11-03	11-31	12-00
			7-13	7-25	7-51	8-17	8-46	9-12	9-39	10-08	10-35	11-03	11-31	12-00
			7-13	7-40	8-06	8-32	9-01	9-27	9-54	10-23	10-50	11-18	11-46	12-15
			7-22	7-49	8-15	8-41	9-10	9-36	10-03	10-32	10-59	11-27	11-55	12-24
15	The Angels and the Shepherds	8	7-22	7-33	7-59	8-25	8-54	9-20	9-47	10-16	10-43	11-11	11-39	12-08
			7-22	7-33	7-59	8-25	8-54	9-20	9-47	10-16	10-43	11-11	11-39	12-08
			7-22	7-49	8-15	8-41	9-10	9-36	10-03	10-32	10-59	11-27	11-55	12-24
			7-30	7-57	8-23	8-49	9-18	9-44	10-11	10-40	11-07	11-35	12-03	12-32
16	Coming of the Three Kings to Herod	12	7-30	7-45	8-11	8-37	9-06	9-32	9-59	10-28	10-55	11-23	11-51	12-20
			7-30	7-45	8-11	8-37	9-06	9-32	9-59	10-28	10-55	11-23	11-51	12-20
			7-30	7-57	8-23	8-49	9-18	9-44	10-11	10-40	11-07	11-35	12-03	12-32
			7-42	8-09	8-35	9-03	9-30	9-56	10-23	10-52	11-19	11-47	12-15	12-44
17	Coming of the Three Kings, the Adoration	20	7-42	8-05	8-31	8-57	9-26	9-52	10-19	10-48	11-15	11-43	12-11	12-40
			7-42	8-05	8-31	8-57	9-26	9-52	10-19	10-48	11-15	11-43	12-11	12-40
			7-42	8-09	8-35	9-01	9-30	9-56	10-23	10-52	11-19	11-47	12-15	12-44
			8-02	8-29	8-55	9-21	9-50	10-16	10-43	11-12	11-39	12-07	12-35	1-04

STATIONS

PAGEANT	Performing Time in Mins.	STATIONS											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
18		8.02	8.33	9.03	9.33	10.06	10.36	11.07	11.40	12.11	12.43	1.15	1.48
Purification of Mary:	28	8.02	8.33	9.03	9.33	10.06	10.36	11.07	11.40	12.11	12.43	1.15	1.48
Simcon and Anna prophesy		8.30	9.01	9.31	10.01	10.34	11.04	11.35	12.08	12.39	1.11	1.43	2.16
19		8.30	8.47	9.17	9.47	10.20	10.50	11.21	11.54	12.25	12.57	1.29	2.02
Flight into Egypt	14	8.30	9.01	9.31	10.01	10.34	11.04	11.35	12.08	12.39	1.11	1.43	2.16
		8.44	9.15	9.45	10.15	10.48	11.18	11.49	12.22	12.53	1.25	1.57	2.30
20		8.44	9.04	9.34	10.04	10.37	11.07	11.38	12.11	12.42	1.14	1.46	2.19
Massacre of the Innocents	17	8.44	9.15	9.45	10.15	10.48	11.18	11.49	12.22	12.53	1.25	1.57	2.30
		9.01	9.32	10.02	10.32	11.05	11.35	12.06	12.39	1.10	1.42	2.14	2.47
21		9.01	9.18	9.48	10.18	10.51	11.21	11.52	12.25	12.56	1.28	2.00	2.33
Christ with the Doctors in the Temple	14	9.01	9.32	10.02	10.32	11.05	11.35	12.06	12.39	1.10	1.42	2.14	2.47
		9.15	9.46	10.16	10.46	11.19	11.49	12.20	12.53	1.24	1.56	2.28	3.01
22		9.15	9.29	9.59	10.29	11.02	11.32	12.03	12.36	1.07	1.39	2.11	2.44
Baptism of Jesus	11	9.15	9.46	10.16	10.46	11.19	11.49	12.20	12.53	1.24	1.56	2.28	3.01
		9.26	9.57	10.27	10.57	11.30	12.00	12.31	1.04	1.35	2.07	2.39	3.12
23		9.26	9.42	10.12	10.42	11.15	11.45	12.16	12.49	1.20	1.52	2.24	2.57
Temptation of Jesus	13	9.26	9.57	10.27	10.57	11.30	12.00	12.31	1.04	1.35	2.07	2.39	3.12
		9.39	10.10	10.40	11.10	11.43	12.13	12.44	1.17	1.48	2.20	2.52	3.25
24		9.39	9.56	10.26	10.56	11.29	11.59	12.30	1.03	1.34	2.06	2.38	3.11
The Transfiguration	14	9.39	10.10	10.40	11.10	11.43	12.13	12.44	1.17	1.48	2.20	2.52	3.25
		9.53	10.24	10.54	11.24	11.57	12.27	12.58	1.31	2.02	2.34	3.06	3.39
25		9.53	10.12	10.42	11.12	11.45	12.15	12.46	1.19	1.50	2.22	2.54	3.27
Woman taken in Adultery Raising of Lazarus	16	9.53	10.24	10.54	11.24	11.57	12.27	12.58	1.31	2.02	2.34	3.06	3.39
		10.09	10.40	11.10	11.40	12.13	12.43	1.14	1.47	2.18	2.50	3.22	3.55

26		10.09	10.45	11.20	11.55	12.33	1.08	1.44	2.22	2.58	3.35	4.12	4.50
Entry into Jerusalem	33	10.09	10.45	11.20	11.55	12.33	1.08	1.44	2.22	2.58	3.35	4.12	4.50
		10.42	11.18	11.53	12.28	1.06	1.41	2.17	2.55	3.31	4.08	4.45	5.23
27		10.42	11.03	11.38	12.13	12.51	1.26	2.02	2.40	3.16	3.53	4.30	5.08
Conspiracy to take Jesus	18	10.42	11.18	11.53	12.28	1.06	1.41	2.17	2.55	3.31	4.08	4.45	5.23
		11.00	11.36	12.11	12.46	1.24	1.59	2.35	3.13	3.49	4.26	5.03	5.41
28		11.00	11.18	11.53	12.28	1.06	1.41	2.17	2.55	3.31	4.08	4.45	5.23
The Last Supper	15	11.00	11.36	12.11	12.46	1.24	1.59	2.35	3.13	3.49	4.26	5.03	5.41
		11.15	11.51	12.26	1.01	1.39	2.14	2.50	3.28	4.04	4.41	5.18	5.56
29		11.15	11.36	12.11	12.46	1.24	1.59	2.35	3.13	3.49	4.26	5.03	5.41
The Agony and Betrayal	18	11.15	11.51	12.26	1.01	1.39	2.14	2.50	3.28	4.04	4.41	5.18	5.56
		11.33	12.09	12.44	1.19	1.57	2.32	3.08	3.46	4.22	4.59	5.36	6.14
30		11.33	12.00	12.35	1.10	1.48	2.23	2.59	3.37	4.13	4.50	5.27	6.05
Peter denies Jesus; Jesus examined by Caiaphas	24	11.33	12.09	12.44	1.19	1.57	2.32	3.08	3.46	4.22	4.59	5.36	6.14
		11.57	12.33	1.08	1.43	2.21	2.56	3.32	4.10	4.46	5.23	6.00	6.38
31		11.57	12.33	1.08	1.43	2.21	2.56	3.32	4.10	4.46	5.23	6.00	6.38
Dream of Pilate's Wife; Jesus before Pilate	33	11.57	12.33	1.08	1.43	2.21	2.56	3.32	4.10	4.46	5.23	6.00	6.38
		12.30	1.06	1.41	2.16	2.54	3.29	4.05	4.43	5.19	5.56	6.33	7.11
32		12.30	12.57	1.32	2.07	2.45	3.20	3.56	4.34	5.10	5.47	6.24	7.02
Trial before Herod	24	12.30	1.06	1.41	2.16	2.54	3.29	4.05	4.43	5.19	5.56	6.33	7.11
		12.54	1.30	2.05	2.40	3.18	3.53	4.29	5.07	5.43	6.20	6.57	7.35
33		12.54	1.20	1.55	2.30	3.08	3.43	4.19	4.57	5.33	6.10	6.47	7.25
Second accusation before Pilate; Remorse of Judas; Purchase of Field of Blood	23	12.54	1.30	2.05	2.40	3.13	3.53	4.29	5.07	5.43	6.20	6.57	7.35
		1.17	1.53	2.28	3.03	3.41	4.16	4.52	5.30	6.06	6.43	7.20	7.58
34		1.17	1.49	2.24	2.59	3.37	4.12	4.48	5.26	6.02	6.39	7.16	7.54
Second trial continued; Judgement on Jesus	29	1.17	1.53	2.28	3.03	3.41	4.16	4.52	5.30	6.06	6.43	7.20	7.55
		1.46	2.22	2.57	3.32	4.10	4.45	5.21	5.59	6.35	7.12	7.49	8.27

STATIONS

PAGEANT	Performing Time in Mins.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
35 Christ led up to Calvary	21	1.46	2.10	2.45	3.20	3.58	4.33	5.09	5.47	6.23	7.00	7.37	8.15
		1.46	2.22	2.57	3.32	4.10	4.45	5.21	5.59	6.35	7.12	7.49	8.27
		2.07	2.43	3.18	3.53	4.31	5.06	5.42	6.20	6.56	7.33	8.10	8.48
36 Crucifixio Christi	18	2.07	2.28	3.03	3.38	4.16	4.51	5.27	6.05	6.41	7.19	7.55	8.33
		2.07	2.43	3.18	3.53	4.31	5.06	5.42	6.20	6.56	7.33	8.10	8.48
		2.25	3.01	3.36	4.11	4.49	5.24	6.00	6.38	7.14	7.51	8.28	9.06
37 Mortificacio Christi	25	2.25	2.53	3.28	4.03	4.41	5.16	5.52	6.30	7.06	7.43	8.20	8.58
		2.25	3.01	3.36	4.11	4.49	5.24	6.00	6.38	7.14	7.51	8.28	9.06
		2.50	3.26	4.01	4.36	5.14	5.49	6.25	7.03	7.39	8.16	8.53	9.31
38 Harrowing of Hell	24	2.50	3.17	3.52	4.27	5.05	5.40	6.16	6.54	7.30	8.07	8.44	9.22
		2.50	3.26	4.01	4.36	5.14	5.49	6.25	7.03	7.39	8.16	8.53	9.31
		3.34	3.50	4.25	5.00	5.38	6.13	6.49	7.21	8.03	8.40	9.17	9.55
39 Resurrection; Fright of the Jews	27	3.14	3.44	4.19	4.54	5.32	6.07	6.43	7.21	7.57	8.34	9.11	9.49
		3.14	3.50	4.25	5.00	5.38	6.13	6.49	7.27	8.03	8.40	9.17	9.55
		3.41	4.17	4.52	5.27	6.05	6.40	7.16	7.54	8.30	9.07	9.44	10.22
40 Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection	9	3.41	3.53	4.28	5.03	5.41	6.16	6.51	7.30	8.06	8.43	9.20	9.58
		3.41	4.17	4.52	5.27	6.05	6.40	7.16	7.54	8.30	9.07	9.44	10.22
		3.50	4.26	5.01	5.36	6.14	6.49	7.25	8.03	8.39	9.16	9.53	10.31
41 Travellers to Emmaus	12	3.50	4.05	4.40	5.15	5.53	6.28	7.04	7.42	8.18	8.55	9.32	10.10
		3.50	4.26	5.01	5.36	6.14	6.49	7.25	8.03	8.39	9.16	9.53	10.34
		4.02	4.38	5.13	5.48	6.26	7.01	7.37	8.15	8.51	9.28	10.05	10.43
42 Incredulity of Thomas	12	4.02	4.17	4.52	5.27	6.05	6.40	7.16	7.54	8.30	9.07	9.44	10.22
		4.02	4.38	5.13	5.48	6.26	7.01	7.37	8.15	8.51	9.28	10.05	10.43
		4.14	4.50	5.25	6.00	6.38	7.13	7.49	8.27	9.03	9.40	10.17	10.55

43		4.14	4.34	5.09	5.44	6.22	6.57	7.33	8.11	8.47	9.24	10.01	10.39
The Ascension	17	4.14	4.50	5.25	6.00	6.38	7.13	7.49	8.27	9.03	9.40	10.17	10.55
		4.31	5.07	5.42	6.17	6.55	7.30	8.06	8.44	9.20	9.57	10.34	11.12
44		4.31	4.47	5.22	5.57	6.35	7.10	7.46	8.24	9.00	9.37	10.14	10.52
Descent of the Holy Spirit	13	4.31	5.07	5.42	6.17	6.55	7.30	8.06	8.44	9.20	9.57	10.34	11.12
		4.44	5.20	5.55	6.30	7.08	7.43	8.19	8.57	9.33	10.10	10.47	11.25
45		4.44	4.59	5.34	6.09	6.47	7.22	7.58	8.36	9.12	9.49	10.26	11.04
The Death of Mary	12	4.44	5.20	5.55	6.30	7.08	7.43	8.19	8.57	9.33	10.10	10.47	11.25
		4.56	5.32	6.07	6.42	7.20	7.55	8.31	9.09	9.45	10.22	10.59	11.37
46		4.56	5.18	5.53	6.28	7.06	7.41	8.17	8.55	9.31	10.08	10.45	11.23
Appearance of Our Lady to Thomas	19	4.56	5.32	6.07	6.42	7.20	7.55	8.31	9.09	9.45	10.22	10.59	11.37
		5.15	5.51	6.26	7.01	7.39	8.14	8.50	9.28	10.04	10.41	11.18	11.56
47		5.15	5.28	6.03	6.38	7.16	7.51	8.27	9.05	9.41	10.18	10.55	11.33
Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin	10	5.15	5.51	6.26	7.01	7.39	8.14	8.50	9.28	10.04	10.41	11.18	11.56
		5.25	6.01	6.36	7.11	7.49	8.24	9.00	9.38	10.14	10.51	11.28	12.06
48		5.25	5.51	6.26	7.01	7.39	8.14	8.50	9.28	10.04	10.41	11.18	11.56
The Judgement Day	23	5.25	6.01	6.36	7.11	7.49	8.24	9.00	9.38	10.14	10.51	11.28	12.06
		5.48	6.24	6.59	7.34	8.12	8.47	9.23	10.01	10.37	11.14	11.51	12.29

NOTES

The views in section 1 above were crystallized after reading a draft of the article "The York Cycle: From Procession to Play" by Professor Martin Stevens of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. I would like to thank Professor Stevens for allowing me to consider his stimulating work before its publication.

¹ The earliest reference to the Corpus Christi celebration in York is dated 1325:

Statuerunt etiam ad honorem dei quod festum corporis cristi sub officio duplici in choroet mensa decetero celebretur.

(York Minster Library, Miscellaneous Register M2(4)g, f.28v.)

² Entries published: (a) Maud Sellers, *York Memorandum Book*, 1, Surtees Soc., CXX (1911), pp. 50-2. (b) Sellers, 1, p. 44. (c) i. Lucy T. Smith, *York Plays* (Oxford, 1885), pp. xix-xxvii; Sellers, 2, Surtees Soc., CXXV (1915), p. 118; *York Plays*, p. xxxiv. ii. R. Davies, *Extracts from the Municipal Records of the city of York* (London, 1843), pp. 233-6; A. Raine and M. G. Frampton, in Frampton, "The Date of the Wakefield Master: Bibliographical Evidence," *PMLA*, LIII (1938), 102-3, note 79; Sellers, 2, p. 118. (d) Sellers, 2, p. 79. (e) Sellers, 2, pp. 156-8. The transcriptions below differ in some respects from those published; important differences are noted.

³ In an *A/Y* ordinance of 1394 the places were already described as "antiquitus assignatis" (appointed by ancient custom); see above, p. 86.

⁴ This marginal note was omitted by Sellers. It must have been inserted after 1415 as it mentions the *ordo paginarum*.

⁵ "Loca . . . apud" written in a different hand over an erasure.

⁶ "Aulam Communem" written in a different hand over an erasure.

⁷ The 1399 ordinance; see above, p. 66.

⁸ The banners are mentioned in the Chamberlains' accounts:

1478-9

Et soluti pro vno baner Thome Gaunt pro ludo Corporis Cristi apud
hostium Henrici Watson

iiij d.

(Roll C 3:7, m.2)

(And paid to Thomas Gaunt for one banner of Corpus Christi play at
Henry Watson's house, 4d.)

Et soluti Margarete Sutrici pro emendacione vexillorum ludi Corporis
Cristi

iiij. d.

(Roll C 3:7, m.2)

(And paid to Margaret, seamstress, for mending the banners of the Corpus
Christi play, 3d.)

⁹ This ordinance is mentioned in the marginal note to the 1398-9 play ordinance; see above, p. 66.

¹⁰ Davies, *Extracts*, p. 227. *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1967), IV, 347.

¹¹ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX, 419.

¹² Thomas de Bukton made provision for these torches in his will, 1366:

Item lego ad sustentacionis solempnitas corporis Cristi in Civitate
Ebor singulis annis celebratae centum solidos.

See L. Baker, *Testamenta Eboracensia*, 1, Surtees Soc., IV (1885), p. 79.

¹³ Dated c. 1420 by Frampton, "The Date of the Wakefield Master," 102-3.

¹⁴ Sellers, *YMB*, 2, p. 79, "ludi processionis."

¹⁵ A list of people present is given on the left-hand side of the entry.

¹⁶ "Corporis" crossed out between "reuerenciam" and "sacramenti."

¹⁷ Three elected Chamberlains had charge of the city treasury. During the year they kept their accounts in a paper book, and at the end of the year they entered them on a vellum roll which was audited and signed.

¹⁸ The House Books contain brief summaries of matters agreed at council meetings.

¹⁹ i.e. the Councillors.

- ²⁰ A translated summary of the whole entry is in A. Raine, *York Civic Records*, 1, Yorkshire Archaeological Soc., Record Series, XCVIII (1939), pp. 5-6.
- ²¹ Raine, *YCR*, 1, pp. 6-7.
- ²² *A/Y*, f. 254v, see above, p. 69.
- ²³ See above, p. 81.
- ²⁴ See p. 102.
- ²⁵ *A/Y*, ff. 254v-255r.
- ²⁶ J. S. Purvis, *From Minster to Market Place* (York, 1969), p. 20.
- ²⁷ "Principles of Processional Staging: York Cycle," *MP*, LXVII (1970), 303-20.
- ²⁸ Nelson, 315 and Table 4, 310.
- ²⁹ Discussed further, above, p. 99.
- ³⁰ See A. Raine, *YCR*, 3, YAS, CVI (1942), p. 178. Raine omitted "pe playnge . . . pagende."
- ³¹ "to the play . . . pagende," i.e. until their pageant had been performed for the last time and their contribution to the Corpus Christi play was over.
- ³² All craft fines were divided equally between the craft and the city treasury.
- ³³ In the *B/Y* ordinance of 1475 the fine is 6d. All offences in the later copy of the Armourers' ordinances were subject to higher fines.
- ³⁴ Raine, *YCR*, 2, YAS, CIII (1941), pp. 104-5; Smith, *York Plays*, p. xli.
- ³⁵ Raine, Smith, "begune."
- ³⁶ The Plasterers and Tilers were made one craft in 1422 and had two pageants, Creation to the Fifth Day (Play 2) and Journey to Bethlehem: Birth of Jesus (Play 14). *A/Y*, f.258r; see Sellers, *York Memorandum Book*, 2, Surtees Soc., CXXXV (1915), p. 126.
- ³⁷ Ordinances of other crafts mention this duty; e.g. Cordwainers, *A/Y*, f.78r and Tapiters, *A/Y*, f. 292v; see Sellers, *YMB*, 1, p. 189 and 2, p. 191.
- ³⁸ Although the last recorded performance of the Corpus Christi Play was in 1569, the clerk making up the accounts inserted the usual heading in 1576-7 and entered "Item as for any suche leases this yere nihil." The "playe" need not have been the Corpus Christi Play, as other plays in York used stations.
- ³⁹ Raine, *YCR*, 4, YAS, CVIII (1945), p. 149, "havyng."
- ⁴⁰ Rolls *C* 3:1, m.3, dorse; *C* 5:2, m.4; *C* 5:3, m.4; *C* 6:3; *C* 6:4.
- ⁴¹ Raine, *YCR*, 4, p. 93.
- ⁴² The Dean and Chapter Chamberlains' Rolls are held in York Minster Library. All other documents transcribed are held in the archives of York City Library.
- ⁴³ In 1483 there was a special performance of the Creed Play when Richard III visited York; Raine, *YCR*, 1, pp. 81, 83.
- ⁴⁴ BM Add. MS 35290; ed. Smith, *York Plays*.
- ⁴⁵ See above, note 2(c).
- ⁴⁶ Chamberlains' Roll *C* 3:3, m.1; Anna J. Mill, "The Stations of the York Corpus Christi Play," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XXXVII (1951), 493-4. Chamberlains' Book *C* 3, p. 232; Mill, "Stations," 499. House Book 20, f.57r; Raine, *YCR*, 5, YAS, CX (1946), p. 56.
- ⁴⁷ See above, p. 94.
- ⁴⁸ *York Plays*, p. xxxiv.
- ⁴⁹ *A/Y*, f. 257r-v. Sellers, *YMB*, 2, pp. 123-4. The entry can be dated by reference to the Mayor, Thomas Snowdon, who held office in 1431-2.
- ⁵⁰ Weavers, Appearance of Our Lady to Thomas; Innholders, Coronation of the Virgin; Mercers, the Last Judgment. It can be assumed that crafts still performing after dark would have done so by torch light. Those crafts with pageants at the beginning of the play would also have used torches in the early hours of the morning. There are no records of torches used specifically for this purpose.
- ⁵¹ H. Craig, *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, EETS, ES, LXXXVII, 2nd. ed. (1957), pp. 74-5.
- ⁵² The naming of the Mayor, Richard Russell, dates the entry 30th January, 1421. Russell was Mayor from 3rd Feb., 1420 to 2nd Feb., 1421; see F. Collins, *Register of the Freeman of the City of York*, 1, Surtees Soc., XCVI (1897), p. 130.
- ⁵³ Sellers, *YMB*, 2, pp. 102-3.
- ⁵⁴ The Saucemakers' pageant of the Hanging of Judas; the Tilemakers', the Condemna-

- tion of Christ by Pilate; the Turners', Hayresters' and Bollers', the Flagellation; and the Millers', the Division of Christ's garments: all were combined to form Play 34 which was to be the joint responsibility of the Saucemakers and Tilemakers. *A/Y*, f.283v. See Sellers, *YMB*, 2, pp. 171-3.
- ⁵⁵ See above, p. 66.
- ⁵⁶ Sellers, *YMB*, 1, p. 47.
- ⁵⁷ This date in the preceding entry.
- ⁵⁸ The two Bailiffs were replaced by two Sheriffs in 1396 when Richard II's charter made York a county by itself.
- ⁵⁹ See Raine, *YCR*, 5, p. 56.
- ⁶⁰ The proclamation was probably that of 1415 and the ordinance that of 1398-9.
- ⁶¹ Raine, *YCR*, 5, p. 108.
- ⁶² See Map, p. 15.
- ⁶³ Raine, *YCR*, 1, pp. 155-9; A. H. Smith, "A York Pageant, 1486," *London Mediaeval Studies*, 1 (1939), 386-95.
- ⁶⁴ Raine, *YCR*, 4, p. 60.
- ⁶⁵ Chamberlains' Book *C* 2, f.228r.
- ⁶⁶ Raine, *YCR*, 7, YAS, CXV (1950), pp. 48-9.
- ⁶⁷ Raine, *YCR*, 8, YAS, CXIX (1953), p. 103.
- ⁶⁸ Mill, "Stations," 493.
- ⁶⁹ See above, note 38.
- ⁷⁰ See above, p. 66.
- ⁷¹ The city gained indirect revenue from the leasing of land on which storehouses for the pageant wagons were built.
- ⁷² The naming of the Mayor, William Bowes, dates the meetings June, 1416. Bowes was Mayor from 3rd Feb., 1416 to 2nd. Feb., 1417; see Collins, *Freemen*, 1, p. 124. The entry is dated internally 1417, but this must have been the year of the entering of the statute in the Memorandum Book, not the year of the meetings, since John Moreton, who made submissions to the Mayor about his stations at the second meeting, was himself Mayor in 1417; see Collins, *Freemen*, 1, p. 126.
- ⁷³ Sellers, *YMB*, 2, pp. 62-5.
- ⁷⁴ The officials present are mentioned by name; Sellers, *YMB*, 2, p. 62.
- ⁷⁵ The reason for the Micklegate stations being exempt from payment is not evident.
- ⁷⁶ Raine, *YCR*, 5, p. 106.
- ⁷⁷ In 1478-9 a banner was made for the station at Henry Watson's house; see above, note 8.
- ⁷⁸ Probably station 5, at the intersection of Conyng Street and Ousegate; see Map, p. 64.
- ⁷⁹ Sellers, *YMB*, 2, p. 239.
- ⁸⁰ Possibly the station at the Minster gates.
- ⁸¹ Possibly at the intersection of Girdlergate and Petergate.
- ⁸² Mill, "Stations," 499-500.
- ⁸³ See above, p. 95.
- ⁸⁴ See above, p. 82.
- ⁸⁵ C. B. Knight, *A History of the City of York*, 2nd. ed. (York and London, 1944), p. 416.
- ⁸⁶ Raine, *YCR*, 6, YAS, CXII (1948), p. 149.
- ⁸⁷ Chamberlains' Rolls *C* 5:1, m.2; *C* 5:2, m.2; *C* 5:3, m.1; *C* 6:1, m.1.
- ⁸⁸ Mill, "Stations," 495.
- ⁸⁹ "Stations," 496.
- ⁹⁰ Davies, *Extracts*, p. 264.
- ⁹¹ Mill, "Stations," 500.
- ⁹² *York Plays*, p. 215, note.
- ⁹³ 1548. Raine, *YCR*, 4, p. 176; Davies, *Extracts*, p. 263; Mill, "The York Plays of the Dying, Assumption and Coronation of Our Lady," *PMLA*, LXV (1950), 874. 1561. Raine, *YCR*, 6, p. 8.
- ⁹⁴ Based on a map of York published by Geographia Ltd., London.
- ⁹⁵ Plan of York published with John Speed's map of the West Riding of Yorkshire in *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1611-18).

- ⁹⁶ It should be noted that there is not a street corresponding to New Street on the 1610 plan.
- ⁹⁷ Raine, *Medieval York* (London, 1955), pp. 279-81.
- ⁹⁸ Nelson, "Principles of Processional Staging," 311.
- ⁹⁹ Nelson, *op. cit.*, Table 5, 312.
- ¹⁰⁰ *York Plays*, p. 433, note.
- ¹⁰¹ See above, p. 66.
- ¹⁰² See above, p. 27.
- ¹⁰³ The Mercers' pageant expenses for 1462 mention drink consumed:
 Item in espenses for drynk vpon corpus cristi day be þe way vj d.
 There are similar expenses for the Bakers' pageant of the Last Supper:
 1549-50
 Item payd to the players ffor thare soperd and dener
 off Trenete Sondag and Corpus Cristi day xiiij d
 Item payd ffor drynke þat qwene we dyd sset fforth
 the pagand more than the Pagand Masters dyd vj d
 (BM Add. 33852, f.10r)
- See also Anna J. Mill, "The York Bakers' Play of the Last Supper," *MLR*, XXX (1935), 153.
- ¹⁰⁴ See above, p. 84 and note 49.
- ¹⁰⁵ *York Plays*, p. xxvii, note 1.
- ¹⁰⁶ *York Plays*, p. xxi.
- ¹⁰⁷ The backing up of pageants along the streets is referred to in the Travellers to Emmaus pageant:
 Here may we notte melle of more at þis tyde,
 For prossesse of plaies þat precis in plight.
- See *York Plays*, p. 432, ll.191-2.
- ¹⁰⁸ *York Plays*, p. 117, note 1.
- ¹⁰⁹ Mill, "Stations," 495.
- ¹¹⁰ Raine, *YCR*, 1, p. 5.
- ¹¹¹ I would like to thank Professor A. C. Cawley of the University of Leeds, and Professor Alexandra F. Johnston of Victoria College, University of Toronto, for their help in the preparation of this article.