

# Leeds Studies in English

## Article:

Arthur C. Cawley and Martin Stevens, 'The Towneley Processus Talentorum: Text and Commentary', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 17 (1986), 105-30

## Permanent URL:

[https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=123666&silos\\_library=GEN01](https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123666&silos_library=GEN01)



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

## THE TOWNELEY *PROCESSUS TALENTORUM*: TEXT AND COMMENTARY

In the following pages we have attempted to edit and comment on the text of the Towneley pageant of the *Talents*.<sup>1</sup> It lends itself to independent treatment because it is an odd-man-out in several ways, and we hope that this separate edition will stimulate further interest in it. Apart from its unusually full and lively treatment of the episode, which involves Pilate in the action, it is the only English Corpus Christi pageant devoted entirely to the gaming for Christ's seamless coat. Even within its own cycle it is an anomaly, since the drawing of lots for the coat has already been briefly dramatised in the preceding pageant of the *Crucifixion* (23/498-515).<sup>2</sup> From this it appears that the *Talents* is a later addition to the Towneley cycle. M.G. Frampton<sup>3</sup> and Peter Meredith<sup>4</sup> have both argued that the original of the *Talents* must be sought in the York cycle. Certainly, there is evidence that before 1422 the York Millers had a separate pageant similar in subject-matter to the *Talents*, "vbi Pilatus & alij milites ludebant ad talos pro vestimentis Iesu & pro eis sortes mittebant & ea partiebantur inter se<sup>5</sup> (in which Pilate and the other soldiers played at dice for Jesus' garments and cast lots for them and parted them among themselves)".

The episode in the Towneley *Crucifixion* differs from the *Talents* in three essential details: (1) In the *Crucifixion* the Torturers draw lots for Christ's coat; in the *Talents* they reject the drawing of lots in favour of dicing.<sup>6</sup> (2) In the *Crucifixion* a fourth Torturer, not Pilate, is involved in the episode; in the *Talents* Pilate takes a full share in the dicing together with the three Torturers. (3) In the *Crucifixion* the Torturers draw lots while Christ is still on the Cross; in the *Talents* the dicing for the coat takes place after the removal of Christ's body from the Cross by Joseph and Nicodemus at the end of the *Crucifixion*. In these details the *Crucifixion* episode follows the Gospels (cf. Matthew xxvii 35, Mark xv 24, Luke xxiii 34, and John xix 23-4).<sup>7</sup> Although no source is known for the *Talents* version or its putative York original, it is evidently influenced by the legend of the evil Pilate found in numerous medieval writings, including the Cornish Resurrection play<sup>8</sup> and English works such as *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*<sup>9</sup> and *Mirk's Festial*.<sup>10</sup>

The *Talents* contains three distinct stanza forms, related to different parts of the pageant and possibly reflecting different stages of composition. The basic pageant may be represented by the

seven-line stanzas used in the central episode of the dicing (190-351). This stanza, in its most regular form, rhymes abab<sup>4</sup>c<sup>2</sup>bc<sup>4</sup>; <sup>11</sup> it is often anapaestic in movement, has many unaccented syllables and feminine endings, and makes use of structural alliteration. A second stratum in the pageant, introducing the three Torturers, consists of several eight-line tail-rhyme stanzas, rhyming aaabaaab or aaabcccb, with ornamental alliteration (72-159). A third stratum is made up of 9 nine-line stanzas of the familiar Wakefield form at the beginning and end of the pageant (1-45 and 358-93): these seem to be the work of the Wakefield Master, who was probably one of the revisers of the pageant.

The manuscript of the *Talents* presents a number of difficult editorial problems, most of which involve misshapen seven-line stanzas. These problems are the result of various scribal irregularities. For example, brackets normally used to connect rhyme-words are sometimes missing (notably on f.95v). Conversely, some lines are connected by a superfluous bracket which apparently does not mark rhyme (see note to 272). Because of such irregularities, certain stanzas cannot be reconstructed with complete certainty. This edition accepts rhyme brackets as the best guide to the correct stanza form, and where such markers are omitted or wrongly placed, the stanzaic pattern of the immediate context has been used as a guide. The seven-line stanzas on f.95v (267-73, 274-80, 281-7, 288-94) have been reconstructed in this way.<sup>12</sup>

Several other stanza forms occur which are difficult to account for. These include: 1 three-line stanza (295-7); 11 quatrains with alternate rhymes (46-9, 64-7, 68-71 etc.); 4 five-line stanzas (59-63, 164-8, 169-73, 215-19); and 2 variants of the nine-line Wakefield stanza, in which the first four lines rhyme abab and lack the customary internal rhyme (50-8, 394-402). Some of these stanzas may be fragments of larger structures which have been broken down by successive revisions. But while it is certain that the *Processus Talentorum* was much edited in its day and that it sometimes suffered in the process, it is nevertheless not as metrically formless as the England and Pollard text makes it appear.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In doing so we have anticipated its appearance in a new edition of the whole Towneley cycle to be published by the Early English Text Society, and we are grateful to the Council of the Society for permission to print this extract in advance.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Towneley Plays*, ed. G. England and A.W. Pollard, EETS ES 71 (1897) pp.273-4; see also *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile of Huntington MS HM 1*, ed. A.C. Cawley and Martin Stevens (Leeds, 1976) ff.92-7. Two other English cycles dramatise either the drawing of lots or the dicing for Christ's coat as an incident in the *Crucifixion* pageant. In York 35/290-8, four Soldiers draw lots for Christ's garment; see *The York Plays*, ed. R. Beadle, York Medieval Texts, 2nd ser. (London, 1982) p.322. In Chester 16A/71-148, four Jews dice for the coat; see *The Chester Mystery Cycle I*, ed. R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS SS 3 (1974) pp.306-10. N-Town does not dramatise the incident.
- <sup>3</sup> Mendal G. Frampton, "The *Processus Talentorum* (Towneley XXIV)", *PMLA* 59 (1944) pp.646-54.
- <sup>4</sup> "The York Millers' Pageant and the Towneley *Processus Talentorum*", *Medieval English Theatre* 4 (1982) pp.104-14.
- <sup>5</sup> York, ed. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, *Records of Early English Drama*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979) I, p.48.
- <sup>6</sup> This also happens in *Le Mystère de la Passion d'Arnoul Greban*, ed. G. Paris and G. Raynaud (Paris, 1878) ll.25618 ff.
- <sup>7</sup> Both Matthew and John describe the casting of lots for Christ's garments as a fulfilment of scripture; cf. Psalm xxii 18 (A.V.).
- <sup>8</sup> *The Ancient Cornish Drama*, ed. E. Norris, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1859) II, pp.121-79.
- <sup>9</sup> Ed. F.A. Foster, EETS OS 166 (1926) pp.219-31.
- <sup>10</sup> Ed. T. Erbe, EETS ES 96 (1905) pp.120-1. For the legend of the evil Pilate see A. Williams, *The Characterization of Pilate in the Towneley Plays* (East Lansing [Mich.], 1950) pp.7-11. See below, notes to 19, 21, 106 and 206-7.
- <sup>11</sup> Not otherwise found in Towneley, although York has two passages in the same stanza, viz. seven stanzas (ll.37-85) of pageant 15 (Beadle, pp.130-1) and two stanzas (ll.129-42) of pageant 32 (Beadle, p.286). Frampton (p.653) used this as further evidence that the basic *Talents* pageant was borrowed from York.
- <sup>12</sup> See also the restoration by Frampton (pp.649-50) of misshapen seven-line stanzas in the *Talents*.



## PROCESSUS TALENTORUM

### NOTE ON THE EDITED TEXT

The readings and spellings of the manuscript are reproduced as exactly as possible except for the emendations indicated in footnotes to the text. Punctuation, capitals, and word-division are modern. The stage directions are added and, together with all other editorial additions, are marked off by square brackets. The strokes and flourishes added to a number of final letters in the manuscript seem to have no significance and are therefore not reproduced. Abbreviations are expanded without the use of italic: these include the hook after *d*, *f*, *g*, *k*, *t(t)* which is expanded as *ys*. Numbers written in full as parts of speakers' names are changed to Arabic numerals, e.g. *Primus Tortor* becomes *1 Tortor*. For the arrangement of stanzas, the use of metrical marks, and the position of speakers' names in the manuscript, see *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile of Huntington MS HM 1*, ed. Cawley and Stevens, p.x.



# Inuocet pater taliter

Currite qui statis: qd misce sim pbritate  
Hec catholice: hos adam in tuncatit

Pūcti dicitur: quasi sūam dicitur dicitur  
Et ma: pūcti: ma: pūcti: do no ueritate  
Pone leguatur: sine dicitur  
posuere pūcti: dū pūcti pūcti

Et pūcti pūcti pūcti: qm pūcti dicitur  
Et pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Et pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Dicitur pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Dicitur pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti

Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti

Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti  
Pūcti pūcti pūcti: pūcti pūcti pūcti

in latz  
Hec mudo mudo

Sanctus

Inde

Inde

Plate I. Huntington Library MS HM 1, f.92. (Reproduced by permission.)

[*Pilatus*                      *Primus Tortor*  
*Consultus*                    *Secundus Tortor (Spyll-payn)*  
                                   *Tercius Tortor*]

[*Pilate harangues the audience.*

*Pilatus.*                    Cernite qui statis quod mire sim probitatis;  
                                   Hec cognoscatis, vos cedam ni taceatis.  
                                   Cuncti discatis quasi sistam vir deitatis  
                                   Et maiestatis; michi fando ne noceatis,  
 5                                Hoc modo mando.  
                                   Neue loquaces  
                                   Siue dicaces,  
                                   Poscite paces  
                                   Dum fero fando.

10                                Stynt, I say! gyf, men, place quia sum dominus dominorum;  
                                   He that agans me says, rapietur lux oculorum.  
                                   Therfor gyf ye me space ne tendam vim brachiorum,  
                                   And then get ye no grace, contestor iura polorum.  
                                   Caueatis!

15                                Rewle I the Iuré  
                                   Maxime pure;  
                                   Towne quoque rure,  
                                   Me paueatis!

20                                Stemate regali, kyng Atus gate me of Pila;  
                                   Tramite legali am I ordand to reyn apon Iuda.  
                                   Nomine vulgari Pownce Pilate, that may ye well say;  
                                   Qui bene vult fari shuld call me fownder of all lay.  
                                   Iudeorum

25                                Iura gubernó:  
                                   Please me and say so.  
                                   Omnia firmo  
                                   Sorte deorum.

30                                Myghty lord of all, me Cesar magnificauit.  
                                   Downe on knees ye fall! Greatt god me sanctificauit,  
                                   Me to obey ouerall regi reliquo quasi Dauid.  
                                   Hanged hy, that he sall, hoc iussum qui reprobauit,  
                                   I swere now.

1-2 *Written in MS in a formal variant of the main Anglicana hand.*  
 4 noceatis] *MS* neceatis.                    21 vulgari] *MS* wlgari  
 22 vult] *MS* wlt



35 Bot ye youre hedys  
Bare in thies stedys,  
Redy my swerde is  
Of thaym to shere now.

Atrox armipotens, most myghty callyd in ylk place, f.92v  
Vir quasi cunctipotens, I graunt men girth by my good  
grace.

40 Tota refert huic gens that none is worthier in face;  
Quin eciam bona mens doith trowth and right bi my trew  
lays.

Silete,  
In generali  
Sic speciali;  
Yit agane byd I,  
45 Iura tenete!

Loke that no boy be to bustus, blast here for to blaw,  
Bot truly to my talkyng loke that ye be intendyng;  
If here be any boy that will not loutt till oure law,  
By myghty Mahowne, hygh shall he hyng!

50 South, north, eest, west -  
In all this world in lengthe and brede -  
Is none so doughty as I, the best,  
Doughtely dyntand on mule and on stede.  
Therfor, I say,

55 Loke that ye lowte to my lykance,  
For dowte of dynt in greuance;  
Dilygently ply to my plesance,  
As prynce most myghty me pay.

60 And talke not a worde;  
For whoso styrres or any dyn makys,  
Deply in my daunger he rakys,  
That as soferan me not takys  
And as his awne lorde.

65 He has myster of nyghtys rest that nappys not in noynyng;  
Boy, lay me downe softly and hap me well from cold.  
[Pilate lies down, helped by his attendant.]  
Loke that no laddys noy me, nawder with cryyng nor with  
cronyng,  
Nor in my sight ones greue me so bold.

70 If ther be any boyes that make any cry,  
Or els that will not obey me,  
He were better be hanged hy  
Then in my sight ones mefe me.

f.92v *The first line on this folio, preceding 37, reads: Atrox armipotens I graunt men girth by my good grace; apparently a false start, the English words anticipating the second half of 38.*

[First Torturer approaches.]

- 1 Tortor. War, war! for now com I,  
The most shrew in this cuntry.  
I haue ron full fast in hy  
75 Hedir to this towne;  
To this towne now comen am I  
From the mownt of Caluery,  
Ther Crist hang, and that full hy,  
I swe[re] you bi my crowne.
- 80 At Caluery when he hanged was,  
I spuyd and spyt right in his face,  
When that it shoyn as any glas,  
So semely to my sight;  
Bot yit, for all that fayr thyng,  
85 I loghe hym vnto hethyng  
And rofe of his clethyng;  
To me it was full light.
- And when his clothes were of in fere,  
Lord, so we loghe and maide good chere,  
90 And crownyd that carle with a brere,  
As he had bene a kyng.  
And yit I did full proprurly -  
I clappyd his cors by and by;  
I thought I did full curiously,  
95 In fayth, hym for to hyng.
- Bot to Mahowne I make avowe,  
Hedir haue I broght his clethyng now,  
To try the trowthe before you  
Euen this same nyght:  
100 Of me and of my felowse two,  
With whom this garmente shall go.  
Bot Sir Pilate must go therto,  
I swere you by this light.
- For whosoouer may get these close,  
105 He ther neuer rek where he gose,  
For he semys nothyng to lose,  
If so be he theym were.  
Bot now, now, felose, stand on rowme,  
For he commes, shrewes, vnto this towne,  
110 And we will all togeder rowne,  
So semely in oure gere.
- [Second Torturer approaches.]
- 2 Tortor. War, war! and make rowme,  
For I will with my felose rowne,  
And I shall knap hym on the crowne  
115 That standys in my gate.

I will lepe and I will skyp  
 As I were now out of my wytt;  
 Almost my breke thay ar beshyt  
 For drede I cam to late.

120 Bot, by Mahowne, now am I here! f.93v  
 The most shrew, that dar I swere,  
 That ye shall fynde awwhere;  
 Spyll-payn, in fayth, I hight.  
 I was at Caluery this same day,  
 125 Where the kyng of Iues lay,  
 And ther I taght hym a newe play;  
 Truly, me thocht it right.

The play, in fayth, it was to rowne  
 That he shuld lay his hede downe,  
 130 And sone I bobyd hym on the crowne -  
 That gam me thocht was good!  
 When we had played with hym oure fyll,  
 Then led we hym vnto an hyll,  
 And ther we wroght with hym oure will,  
 135 And hang hym on a rud.

No more now of this talkyng,  
 Bot the cause of my commyng:  
 Both on earnest and on hethyng  
 This cote I wold I had;  
 140 For if I myght this cote gett,  
 Then wold I both skyp and lepe,  
 And therto fast both drynke and ete,  
 In fayth, as I were mad.

*[Third Torturer approaches.]*

3 Tortor. War, war! within these wones,  
 145 For I com rynyng all at ones;  
 I haue brysten both my balok-stones,  
 So fast hyed I hedyr.  
 And ther is nothyng me so lefe  
 As murder a mycher and hang a thefe;  
 150 If here be any that doth me grefe,  
 I shall them thresh togedir.

For I may swere with mekill wyn  
 I am the most shrew in all myn kyn  
 That is from this towne vnto Lyn.  
 155 Lo, here my fellowse two!  
 Now ar we thre comen in  
 A new gam for to begyn,  
 This same cote for to twyn  
 Or that we farther go.

160 Bot to Syr Pilate, prynce, I red that we go [in] hy  
 And present hym the playnt how that we ar stad;

Bot this gowne that is here, I say you forthy,  
By myghty Mahowne I wold not he had.

165 1 Tortor. I assent to that sagh, by myghty Mahowne! f.94  
Let vs weynde to Sir Pilate withoutten any fabyll.  
Bot, syrs, bi my lewté, he gettys not this gowne;  
Vnto vs thre it were right prophetabyll.  
Spill-payn, what says thou?

2 Tortor. Youre sawes craftely assent I vnto.  
170 1 Tortor. Then will I streght furth in this place  
And speke with Sir Pilate wordys oone or two,  
For I am right semely and fare in the face;  
And now shall we se or we hence go.

[They come to Pilate's hall and meet his Consultus.]

3 Tortor. Sir, I say the, by my lewtée,  
175 Consultus. Where is Sir Pilate of pryce?  
Consultus. Sir, I say the, as myght I the,  
He lygys here in the devyll seruyce.

1 Tortor. With that prynce - [Aside.] fowll myght he fall! -  
Must we haue at do.  
180 Consultus. I shall go to hym and call,  
And loke what ye will say hym to.

Pilatus. My lord, my lorde!  
What, boy? Art thou nyse?  
Call no more; thou has callid twyse.  
185 Consultus. My lord!

Pilatus. What mytyng is that, that mevys me in my mynde?  
Consultus. I, lord, youre counselloure, pight in youre saw.  
Pilatus. Say, ar ther any catyffys combred that ar vnkynde?  
Consultus. Nay, lord, none that I knawe.

190 Pilatus. Then noy vs no more of this noyse!  
You carles vnkynde, who bad you call me?  
By youre mad maters I hald you bot boyes,  
And that shall ye aby, els fowll myght befall me!  
I shall not dy in youre dett.  
195 Bewshere, I byd the vp thou take me, [To Consultus.  
And in my sete softly loke that thou me sett.

Now shall we wytt, and that in hy,  
If that saghe be trew that thou dyd say.  
If I fynde the with lesyng, lad, thou shall aby, f.94v  
200 For to mell in the maters that pertenyth agans the lay.

Consultus. Nay, sir, not so! Withoutten delay,  
The cause of my callyng is of that boy bold,

196 me] se *crossed out before this word in MS.*

- 205 For it is saide sothely, now this same day  
That he shuld dulfully be dede,  
Certayn;  
Then may youre cares be full cold,  
If he thus sakles be slayn.
- Pilatus.* Fare and softly, sir, and say not to far;  
210 Sett the with sorow, then semys thou the les,  
And of the law that thou leggy's be wytty and war,  
Lest I greue the greatly with dyntys expres;  
Fals fatur, in fayth I shall flay the!  
Thy reson vnrad I red the redres,  
Or els of these maters loke thou no more mell the.
- 215 *Consultus.* Why shuld I not mell of those maters that I haue you  
taght?  
Thoug ye be prynce peerles withoutt any pere,  
Were not my wyse wysdom, youre wyttys were in waght;  
And that is seen expresse and playnly right here,  
And done in dede.
- 220 *Pilatus.* Why, boy, bot has thou sayde?  
*Consultus.* Yee, lorde.  
*Pilatus.* Therfor the devyll the spede, thou carle vnkynde!  
Sich felowse myght well be on rowme;  
Ye knaw not the comon cowers that longys to a kyng. [To  
Torturers.
- 225 1 *Tortor.* Mahowne most myghtfull, he mensk you with mayn,  
Sir Pilate pereles, prynce of this prese,  
And saue you, sir, syttand semely suffrayn!  
We haue soght to thy sayll, no sayng to sesse  
Bot certyfie sone:  
230 Ye wote that ye demyd this day apon desse;  
We dowte not his doying, for now is he done.
- Pilatus.* Ye ar welcom, iwys, ye ar worthy - [Aside.] nowar;  
Be it fon so of that fatur, in fayth then am I fayn.
- 2 *Tortor.* We haue markyd that mytyng, no more shall he mar. f.95  
235 We prayed you, Sir Pilate, to put hym to payn,  
And we thought it well wrought.
- Pilatus.* Lefe syrs, let be youre laytt and loke that ye layn;  
For no thyng that may be, nevy'n ye it noght.
- 3 *Tortor.* Make myrth of that mytyng full mekyll we may,  
240 And haue lykyng of oure lyfe for los of that lad.  
Bot, Syr Pilate peerles, a poynt I the pray:  
Hope ye with hethyng that harnes he had  
To hold that was hys?

232 nowar] MS no war, with no badly worn and indistinct.

- Pilatus. That appentys vnto me - mafa! art thou mad? [Snatches  
 245 I ment that no mytyng shuld mell hym of this. gown.
- 1 Tortor. Mefe the not, master, more if he mell,  
 For thou shall parte from that pelfe; thar thou not  
 pleyte.
- Pilatus. Yit styrt not farer for noght that ye fell.  
 250 I aske this gowne of youre gyfte; it is not so greatt,  
 And yit may it agayn you.
- 2 Tortor. How, all in fageyng? In fayth, I know of youre featte!  
 For it fallys to vs four, fyrst will I frayn you.
- Pilatus. And I myster to no maner of mans bot myn.
- 3 Tortor. Yee, lord, let shere it in shredys.
- Pilatus. Now that hald I good  
 skyll.
- 255 Take thou this, and thou that, and this shall be thyn,  
 And by lefe and by law this may leyfe styll.
- 1 Tortor. O, lordyng, I weyn it is wrang!  
 To tymely I toke it, to take it the vntyll,  
 The farest, and the fowllest thy felowse to fang.
- 260 Pilatus. And thou art payed of thi parte, full truly I trowe.
- 1 Tortor. It is shame for to se I am shapyn bot a shrede.
- 2 Tortor. The hole of this harnes is holdyn to you,  
 And I am leuerd a lap is lyke to no lede,  
 Fortatyrd and torne.
- 265 3 Tortor. By myghty Mahowne that mylde is of mode,  
 If he skap with this cote it were a great skorne.
- Pilatus. Now sen ye teyn so at this, take it to you, f.95v  
 With all the mawgré of myn and myght of Mahowne.
- 1 Tortor. Drede you not doutles, for so will we dow.
- 270 Grefe you not greatly, ye gett not this gowne,  
 Bot in iiii as it fallys.
- 2 Tortor. Had I a fawchon, then craftely to cutt it were I bowne.
- 3 Tortor. Lo it here that thou callys!
- It is sharp with to shere, shere if thou may.
- 275 2 Tortor. Euen in the mydward to marke were mastré to me.
- 1 Tortor. Most semely is, in certan, the seym to assay.
- 2 Tortor. I haue soght all this syde and none can I se  
 Of greatt nor of small.
- Pilatus. Bewshers, abyd you, I byd you let be!
- 280 I commaunde not to cutt it, bot hold it hole all.

253 *The MS dividing rule above this verse is a thin, crudely drawn black line as far as the speaker's name Pilatus, but to right of Pilatus it is red.* 265 3 Tortor] S (first letter of Secundus) crossed out in red before Tercius tortor in MS.

270 [O]mnipotentis in left margin, written by a later hand in brown ink, the O mostly cut off at edge of leaf. 272 craftely . . . bowne] MS were I bowne craftely to cutt it

- 1 Tortor. Now ar we bon, for ye bad, withhald on youre hud?  
 Pilatus. We, harlottys, go hang you, for hole shall it be!  
 3 Tortor. Grefe you not greatly, he saide it for gud.  
 Pilatus. Wyst I that he spake it in spytyng of me,  
 285 Tytt shuld I spede for to spyll hym.  
 2 Tortor. That were hym loth, lord, by my lewté;  
 Forthi grauntt hym youre grace.  
 Pilatus. No greuans I will hym.
- 1 Tortor. Gramercy thi gudnes!  
 Pilatus. Yee, bot greue me no more;  
 Full dere beys it boght, in fayth, if ye do.  
 290 1 Tortor. Shall I then saue it?  
 Pilatus. Yee, so saide I or;  
 To draw cutt is the lelyst, and long cut, lo,  
 This wede shall wyn.  
 3 Tortor. Sir, to youre sayng yit assent we vnto;  
 Bot oone assay - let se who shall begyn.
- 295 Pilatus. We! me falles all the fyrst, and forther shall ye.  
 2 Tortor. Nay, drede you not doutles, for that do ye not;  
 O, he sekys as he wold dyssaue vs, now we se!  
 3 Tortor. Bewshers, abyde you; heder haue I broght  
 Thre dyse vs emang.
- 300 1 Tortor. That is a gam all the best, bi hym that me boght,  
 For at the dysyng he dos vs no wrang.  
 Pilatus. And I am glad of that gam. On assay - who shall f.96  
 begyn?  
 1 Tortor. Fyrst shall ye, and sen after we all.  
 Haue the dyse and haue done, and lefe all youre dyn;  
 305 For whoso has most, this frog shall he fall  
 And best of the bonys.  
 Pilatus. I assent to youre sayng; assay now I shall,  
 As I wold at a wap wyn all at ones. [Throws dice.
- 2 Tortor. Aha, how now! here ar a hepe.  
 310 Pilatus. Haue mynde then emang you how many ther ar.  
 3 Tortor. xiii ar on thre, thar ye not threpe.  
 Pilatus. Then shall I wyn, or all men be war.  
 1 Tortor. Truly, lord, right so ye shall;  
 Bot grefe you not greatly, the next shall be nar  
 315 If I haue hap to my hand - haue here for all! [Throws  
 dice.
- Pilatus. And I haue sene as greatt a freke of his forward falyd;  
 Here ar bot viii turnyd vp at ones.

285 [C?]reator in left margin, written by a later hand in faded brown ink, The below it.

- 1 Tortor. Aght? a, his armes, that is yll! whatso me alyd?  
I was falsly begylyd with these byched bones;  
320 Ther cursyd thay be!
- 2 Tortor. Well I wote this wede bees won in these wones;  
I wold be fayn of this frog, myght it fall vnto me.
- Pilatus. It bees in waght, in fayth, and thou wyn.
- 2 Tortor. No, bot war you away. [Throws dice.]
- 325 3 Tortor. Here is baddyst aboue, by Mahownes bonys!  
vii is bot the seconde, the sothe for to say.
- 2 Tortor. We, fy, that is shortt!
- 3 Tortor. Do shott at thi hud!  
Now fallys me the fyrst,  
And I haue hap, to this gowne. Go now on gud,  
330 The byched bones that ye be - I byd you go bett! [Throws  
dice.]
- Felowse in forward, here haue I xv!  
As ye wote, I am worthi; won is this wede. [Takes gown.]
- Pilatus. What whistyll ye in the wenyande? Where haue ye beyn?  
Thou shall abak, bewshere; that blast I forbede.
- 335 3 Tortor. Here ar men vs emang, f.96v  
Lele in oure lay, will ly for no leyd,  
And I wytnes at thaim if I wroght any wrang.
- 1 Tortor. Thou wroght no dyssaytt, forsothe, that we saw;  
Forthi thou art worthi, and won is this weyd at thyn  
awne wyll.
- 340 Pilatus. Yee, bot me pays not that playng to puf nor to blaw.  
If he haue right, I ne rek or reson thertyll;  
I refe it hym noght.
- 3 Tortor. Haue gud day, sir, and grefe you not yll,  
For if it were duble, full dere is it boght.
- 345 Pilatus. Sir, sen thou has won this weyd, say will thou  
vowchesafe  
Of thi great gudnes this garment on me?
- 3 Tortor. Sir, I say you certan, this shall ye not haue.
- Pilatus. Thou shall forthynk it, in fayth; fy, what thou art fre!  
Vnbychid, vnbayn!
- 350 3 Tortor. For ye thrett me so throlé, were it sich thre,  
Here I gif you this gud. [Hands over gown.]
- Pilatus. Now, gramercy agayn!

335-6 Written as one line in MS; a curving stroke above the line after emang functions as rhyme bracket and corresponds to a stroke below the line after wrang (337). 340 puf] a stroke resembling a large comma (first stroke of letter b?) before this word in MS. 350 throlé] sore crossed out in red before this word in MS.



- Mekill thank and myn, and this shal be ment.  
 1 Tortor. Bot I had not left it so lightly, had play me it lent.  
 Pilatus. No, bot he is faythfull and fre, and that shall be ment;  
 355 And more if I may -  
 If he myster to me, amend hym I mon.  
 3 Tortor. I vowchesafe it be so, the sothe for to say.
- 1 Tortor. Now this dyse that ar vndugthy for los of this good,  
 Here I forswere hertely, by Mahownes blood!  
 360 For was I neuer so happy, by mayn nor by mode,  
 To wyn with sich sotelty to my lyfys fode,  
 As ye ken.  
 These dysars and these hullars,  
 These cokkers and these bollars,  
 365 And all purs-cuttars -  
 Bese well war of these men!
- 2 Tortor. Fy, fy, on this dyse, the devill I theym take!  
 Vnwytty, vnwyse, with thaym that wold lake. f.97  
 As Fortune assyse, men wyll she make:  
 370 Hir maners ar nyse, she can downe and vptake;  
 And rych  
 She turnes vp-so-downe,  
 And vnder abone;  
 Most chefe of renowne  
 375 She castys in the dyche.
- By hir meanes she makys dysers to sell,  
 As thay sytt and lakys, thare corne and thare catell;  
 Then cry thay and crakkys, bowne vnto batell.  
 His hyppys then bakys no symnell  
 380 For-hote;  
 Bot fare well, thryfte!  
 Is ther none other skyfte  
 Bot syfte, lady, syfte?  
 These dysars thay dote.
- 385 3 Tortor. What commys of dysyng, I pray you hark after,  
 Bot los of good in lakyn and oft-tymes mens slaughter?  
 Thus sorow is at partyng, at metyng if there be laghter;  
 I red leyf sich vayn thyng and serue God hereafter,  
 For heuens blys.  
 390 That lord is most myghty  
 And gentyllyst of Iury;  
 We helde to hym holy.  
 How thynk ye by this?
- Pilatus. Well worth you all thre, most doughty in dede!  
 395 Of all the clerkys that I know, most conyng ye be,

375 She] S, partly blotted, crossed out before this word in MS.

\

By soteltés of youre sawes, youre lawes for to lede.  
 I graunt you playn powere and frenship frelé,  
 I say;

400

Dew vows [garde], monsenyours!  
 Mahowne most myghty, in castels and towres  
 He kepe you, lordyngys, and all youre,  
 And haufs all gud day.

EXPLICIT PROCESSUS TALENTORUM

399 monsenyours] MS mon senyours

COMMENTARY

- Talentorum* (in title): this word, which also occurs in the explicit, is evidently an error for *talorum*, gen. pl. of *talus* 'die, dice'.
- 1-2 For the significance of the distinctive handwriting at the beginning of pageants 23-9 and 12, see Cawley and Stevens, *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile* pp.xiii-xiv.
- 1-9 "Notice, you who stand [by] that I am of wondrous valour;/ know this, I will slay you unless you keep quiet. / Learn, all of you, that I am a man of god-like nature / and majesty; do not harm me by speaking, / thus I command. / [Be] neither talkative / nor garrulous, / demand peace / while I speak." This stanza is wholly in Latin; the following four Wakefield stanzas are in macaronic - mixed Latin and English - verse.
- 10 *quia . . . dominus dominorum*: "because I am lord of lords". The words *dominus dominorum* are used in Rev. xvii 14 to describe the Lamb of God. Pilate's misappropriation of a title proper only to God or Christ is paralleled in *Magnus Herodes*, where Nuncius describes Herod as *Chefe lord of lordyngys* (16/38).
- 11 *rapietur . . . oculorum*: "the light of [his] eyes shall be plucked out".
- 12 *ne tendam . . . brachiorum*: "lest I put forth the strength of [my] arms".
- 13-14 *contestor . . . Caueatis*: "I call the powers of heaven to witness. / Beware!"
- 16-18 "Wholly, entirely; / [those of you living in] town and country, / tremble before me!"
- 19 "Of royal lineage, King Atus begot me on Pila". The legend of the evil Pilate made him the illegitimate son of King Atus and Pila, a miller's daughter, who named him by joining her own name to that of the king. In some versions of the legend Pilate's father is King Tirus or the Emperor Caesar, while Atus is the name of Pila's father; see York 30/10-18.
- 20 *Tramite legali*: "in legal fashion".
- 21 "My name in the vernacular [is] Pownce Pilate, which you can easily say". According to the legend, Pontius (vernacular *Pownce*) is the forename taken by Pilate after he had served as Justice on the isle of Pontus.
- 22 *Qui . . . fari*: "he who wishes to speak well".

- 23-4 "I govern the laws / of the Jews".
- 26-7 "I settle all things / by the oracle of the gods".
- 28-9 *me Cesar . . . sanctificauit*: "Caesar has exalted me / . . . The great god has sanctified me". The *Greatt god* is presumably Mahowne (see note to 49).
- 30 *regi . . . Dauid*: "like a latter-day (*reliquo*) King David".
- 31 *hoc . . . reprobauit*: "who[ever] has refused to obey this command".
- 37-8 *Atrox . . . cunctipotens*: "terrible and warlike . . . / a man all but omnipotent".
- 39 "The whole nation tells this man [i.e. Pilate] that none is nobler of face". For *worthier in face*, cf. *fare in the face* (172).
- 40 *Quin . . . mens*: "yea, indeed, [my] good mind".
- 41-3 "Be silent, / in general / and in special", i.e. be silent, one and all.
- 45 "Obey the laws!"
- 49 *Mahowne*: the pagan god who is also referred to at 96, 120, 163-4, 225, 265, 268, 325, 359 and 400. Any non-Christian character, whether Egyptian, Roman, or Jewish, may swear by or pray to Mahowne; cf. 8/412, 9/122, 16/1.
- 64 Proverbial; cf. York 30/195 "For he hase mystir of a morne-slepe þat mydnyght is myssand"; and see B.J. Whiting, *Proverbs in the Earlier English Drama* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1938) p.15.
- 64-5 These lines, and also 99, establish that the action of the play was supposed to be at night.
- 65 *Boy*: Pilate's attendant is apparently the same person as his *Consultus* or *counselloure* (187). Pilate also uses *boy* in addressing *Consultus* at 183 and 220.
- 67 "Nor once before my eyes offend me so impudently".
- 72 *War, war*: all three Torturers introduce themselves with these words; cf. 112, 144. Further, each calls himself *the most shrew* (73, 121, 153) and two of them *lepe* and *skyp* (116, 141).
- 75 *this towne*: presumably Jerusalem is meant within the action of the play (cf. 76, 109, 154), but the audience must easily have identified it with Wakefield (or wherever else the play

- was performed); cf. note to 154.
- 79 you: i.e. the audience, as also at 98, 103.
- 97 *his clethyng*: Christ's clothing (or *close* "clothes" 104), brought in by the First Torturer, includes the seamless coat which is later described as a *garmente* (101), *cote* (139-40, 158, 266), *gowne* (162, 166, 249, 270, 329), *harnes* (242, 262), *frog* (305, 322), and *wede* (332) or *weyd* (339, 345).
- 98-102 "To find out the truth before you this very same night: with whom, of me and my two mates, this garment shall go. But Sir Pilate must get to work".
- 106 "For he seems to lose nothing". This apparently refers to the belief that Christ's seamless coat had the power to protect its wearer from harm or loss of life; cf. the Death of Pilate episode in the Cornish play of the Resurrection (*The Ancient Cornish Drama II*, ll.1864-6) and in *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, ll.6697-705.
- 108 *on rowme*: "at a distance"; cf. 223.
- 108-9 *felose, shrewes*: i.e. the audience, whose proximity is again indicated at 112.
- 110 *all togeder*: anticipating the arrival of the Second and Third Torturers.
- 111 *oure gere*: an allusion to the distinctive costume known to have been worn by Christ's torturers, e.g. the "iiij Jakkettes of blake bokeram for þe tormentors with nayles & dysse upon þem" in the Coventry Smiths' accounts for 1490; see *Coventry*, ed. R.W. Ingram, *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto, 1981) p.73.
- 114 This line recalls his torture of Christ, from which he has come directly; cf. 130.
- 123 *Spyll-payn*: "waste-bread"; cf. 168. *OED* (Spill- 1), which interprets *payn* (F *pain*) as 'bread', also records the compound *spille-bred*. Similarly, *MED* (*pain* n.) records the nickname *Wastepayn*.
- 126ff. *a newe play*: a reference to the game of Hot Cockles; cf. 21/344. The *newe play* of Hot Cockles and the *new gam* (157) of dividing up Christ's coat (or, more precisely, of dicing for its ownership) are in fact ancient games given a new application by the Torturers.
- 138 *on ernest and on hethyng*: a variant of *in ernest and in gam(e)* "seriously and in jest", i.e. by all means.

- 154 *Lyn*: possibly King's Lynn in Norfolk. If *this towne* is identified with Wakefield (see note to 75), *from this towne vnto Lyn* means in effect "for miles and miles".
- 161 "And present to him the complaint [about] how we are placed". The Third Torturer presumably means that they should complain to Pilate about the difficulty of dividing one coat among three.
- 168 This line is not part of the rhyme scheme. In the manuscript it is placed to the right of the rhyme brackets joining *Mahowne, gowne* and *fabyll, prophetabyll*. Frampton (op.cit. p.647) considers both this line and the next an "actor insertion".
- 169 *craftely*: "craftily, cunningly". In using this word the Second Torturer may mean that he is cunning enough to agree with his companions that Pilate must not be allowed to get Christ's coat.
- 170 *place*: refers to the *platea* or acting area near Pilate's hall.
- 173 "And now shall we see [Pilate] before we go hence".
- 180 The Consultus enters Pilate's "hall" (*sayll* 228), which evidently contained a bed (65, 177) as well as a dais (230) and a throne (196).
- 186 *mytyng*: "puny fellow, shrimp". This word seems to be applied humorously to the Consultus, who was in fact strong enough to lay Pilate down on his bed (65) and later lift him up and place him on his throne (195-6). Cf. note to 209.
- 187 *pight in youre saw*: "placed at your command".
- 192 "Because of your mad activities, I think you no better than rascals"
- 191-2 These lines may be addressed to the Torturers. However, it is not clear that they are standing close by at this point, nor do they say anything to Pilate until 225. It is therefore possible that Pilate is addressing two or more attendants, only one of whom (Consultus) had a speaking part. Cf. Pilate's *thou carle vnkynde* (222) in speaking to Consultus.
- 193 The second part of this line humorously echoes the second part of 178.
- 200 "For meddling in matters that pertain against the law", i.e. that pertain to what is illegal. The verb *pertain* is usually followed by (un)to.

- 206-7 Consultus seems to be anticipating Pilate's wretched end. In the legend Pilate commits suicide in order to escape a worse death at the hands of the Emperor Tiberius, who is angry with him for his part in killing the innocent Christ.
- 209 "Sit down, bad luck to you, and then you will seem smaller". This line suggests that a tall person acted the part of Consultus.
- 210 It is not clear what law Consultus has appealed to. Pilate is obsessed with the law; cf. note to 200.
- 217 *in waght*: "in danger"; cf. 323. This may be the same word as *woth* "danger" (3/416); see *OED* *Wothe*.
- 220 *has thou sayde*: "have you finished speaking?".
- 224 *Ye*: Pilate regularly uses *thou* in speaking to his Consultus, so that *Ye* may refer to the Torturers (the *felowse* of line 223), whose ignorance of court etiquette annoys Pilate. But cf. note to 191-2.
- 226 *Sir Pilate pereles*: cf. 241.
- 227 This line is addressed to Pilate, who is now seated (see 196).
- 228 "We have paid a visit to your hall, not to stop talking" (i.e. not to be silent). The First Torturer occasionally uses the sg. pron. (*thou, thee, thy*) in addressing Pilate as a way of expressing his annoyance (as also at 246-7).
- 230 *that*: "the one whom", with reference to Christ.
- 231 "We fear not his deeds, for now he is done for".
- 232 *nowar*: "nowhere" (as a sarcastic aside). The first two letters, which are badly worn in the manuscript, can hardly be *ay* (the EETS reading), but they may be read as *no*. For the sarcastic aside cf. 178.
- 233 *Be . . . fatur*: "if it is found [to be] so concerning that impostor", i.e. that he really is done for (see 231).
- 237 "Dear sirs, end your visit and see that you keep silent". The meaning "visit" for *laytt* (*MED* *leit* n.(2)) receives some support from 228.
- 246-7 "Don't get excited, master, if he meddles [even] more, for you shall give up that booty; you need not plead [for it]".
- 248 "Yet don't go further for [i.e. in defence of] anything you got". For *styrt* "go" see *OED* *Start* v. 4b.

- 252 "Because it [i.e. the gown or coat] belongs to us four, first I will ask you [to divide it]".
- 253 "And I serve (*myster to*) no man at all but my own [vassal, retainer]". Pilate seems to mean that he will do nothing to help the Torturers unless they recognise his authority by giving him the gown. See *OED* *Mister* v.<sup>1</sup> 6, and cf. 356.
- 255 Pilate, still holding the gown, points to the three small parts that would be the Torturers' share if the garment were divided, and to the very large part that would be his. The gown in fact remains in one piece (see 280).
- 256 "And by consent and by law this [i.e. the rest of the gown] may still remain [with me]".
- 258-9 "I took it [i.e. Christ's gown] too soon, to give the best to you, and your partners to get the worst". *fares* (259) is in apposition to *it* (2nd) at 258.
- 263 "And I am given a rag [which] is suitable for no man".
- 268 "With all my displeasure and the might of Mahowne [against you]".
- 269-71 "Never fear certainly [lest we take the gown], for we will do so. Don't vex yourself greatly, you won't get this gown, but [only your share] as it divides up in four". The formula *drede you not doutles* is repeated at 296, and *greffe you not greatly* at 283, 314 (cf. 343).
- 272 The MS word order has been corrected to preserve the rhyme. After this miswritten line the scribe apparently became confused, writing 273 and 274 as one line and omitting all rhyme brackets on the rest of f.95v, except for one bracket wrongly linking *no more* (288) and *boght* (289).
- 273 "See, here's what you ask for".
- 275 "To mark [it] exactly in the middle would be a notable feat for me".
- 276 "It is surely most fitting to try [dividing it at] the seam".
- 277 *none*: i.e. no seam. For Christ's seamless coat, see John xix 23.
- 281 "Now are we obliged, because you ordered [us], to hold back, by your hood?" The asseveration *on youre hud* seems to be a variant of *by thi hooode* (13/235).
- 290 *sauē it*: i.e. keep the coat whole.
- 293 *assent*: is usually followed by *to* or *vnto* (as at 164, 169,



- 307), but not used with both as it is here.
- 294 *Bot oone assay*: "just one try", i.e. just one drawing of lots; cf. 302.
- 295 "The first [draw] of all belongs to me, and afterwards you shall [have your turn]".
- 300 "This is the best game of all, by him who redeemed me". The blasphemous irony of the First Torturer's allusion to Christ recalls Cain's *bi hym that me dere boght* (2/114). Cf. the First Torturer's use of *his armes* (i.e. by God's arms) at 318.
- 301 The implication here is that Pilate will not be able to cheat the Torturers at dice as he might by the drawing of lots, which Pilate himself has proposed (see 291-2).
- 305-6 "For whoever has most [i.e. the highest score], he shall get this coat and the best from the dice".
- 311 "There are thirteen [spots] on three [dice], there's no room for argument [lit. you need not argue]". Pilate's score of thirteen betokens faithlessness and betrayal; see below, p.135.
- 314 *the next shall be nar*: "the next [throw] shall be nearer", i.e. the First Torturer's throw will be nearer than Pilate's to the winning score.
- 315 *haue here for all*: "here's a throw that will win all".
- 316 "And I have seen as great a man [as you are who] failed to keep his word".
- 318 *whatso me alyd*: "whatever was wrong with me?"
- 319 *byched bones*: this abusive description of dice, here and at 330, is otherwise found only in the *Pardoner's Tale*, 656. (Chaucer references are to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson (2nd ed., Cambridge [Mass.], 1957.)
- 323 *It bees in waight*: "it [the coat and its owner] will be in danger"; cf. 217.
- 324 "No, but take care to keep away". The Second Torturer is asking for more room to make his throw.
- 325 *baddyst aboue*: "worst of all". *Mahownes bonys* recalls the other sense of *bonys* "dice" at 306, 319.
- 326 *vii is bot the seconde*: "seven [spots on the dice] is only second", i.e. to the First Torturer's throw of eight.
- 327 *Do shott at thi hud*: "shoot at thy hood!", apparently

- abusive; cf. 281.
- 328 This line, which should rhyme with 330, may be corrupt.
- 328-9 "Now it falls to my lot to be the first, if I am lucky, to [get] this gown. Go well now". The words *Go* and *on* are related; *gud* is an adverb.
- 331 *Felowse in forward*: "partners to the agreement", i.e. the agreement to settle the ownership of Christ's garment by dicing for it.
- 333-4 "What are you whistling for, confound you? What have you been up to? You shall [draw] back, good sir; I forbid that puffing". Pilate is accusing the Third Torturer of standing over the dice and blowing on them in order to turn up a high score; cf. 340.
- 336 The relative pronoun is understood before *will*.
- 337 *I wytnes at thaym*: "I bear witness by them", i.e. they will bear witness for me.
- 340 "But to puff or to blow on that playing [i.e. to blow on the dice] doesn't please me".
- 344 "For even if it were [worth] double, it is very dearly bought". The Third Torturer means that he has won Christ's garment at the price of Pilate's ill will.
- 348 *what thou art fre*: "how generous you are!" Pilate is being heavily sarcastic.
- 349 *Vnbychid, vnbayn*: "wicked, unwilling".
- 350 *were it sich thre*: "even if it were [worth] three times as much"; cf. 344.
- 355 "And [I shall do] more if I can".
- 357 *vowchesafe*: seems to have the unusual meaning "hope, trust" in this context.
- 359 *by Mahownes blood*: cf. 22/238, where the same oath is used by the Second Torturer.
- 360-1 "For I was never so lucky, with all my efforts, to earn my livelihood by such craftiness".
- 369 *men . . . make*: i.e. make men or mar them. The rhythm of the following lines seems to imitate the turning of Fortune's Wheel. For the connection between dicing and the false goddess Fortune, see G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1966) p.182.

- 378 "Then they cry and bawl, ready to do battle" - describing the desperate behaviour of dicers when Fortune turns against them.
- 379-80 "He then bakes no simnel-bread piping hot". In other words, the dicer, once a rich man eating *simnel* (bread made of fine flour), is now impoverished. For *His hyppys* as a comic equivalent of "he", cf. 13/558, where *hys hyppys* is equivalent to "him".
- 382-3 "Is there no other way, lady [Fortune], but to make constant trial (*syfte . . . syfte*) [of dicers]?"
- 386 *los of good . . . mens slaughter*: cf. similar description of evils of dicing in *Parson's Tale*, 793 ("wast of goodes . . . manslaughter") and *Pardoner's Tale*, 593-4.
- 387 Proverbial; see B.J. and H.W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1968) S515. The meaning here seems to be: if there is laughter when men meet to play at dice, there is sorrow (*los of good, mens slaughter* 386) by the time they part company.
- 390 *That lord*: i.e. Christ.
- 395 *clerkys*: Pilate's sarcastic use of this word in addressing the Torturers seems to be prompted by his astonishment at hearing them condemn the evil consequences of dicing.
- 399 Pilate's scrap of French and his use of *Bewshere* (195), *Bewshers* (279, 298) are reminiscent of Herod's *ditizance doutance* (16/171) and *Bewshere* (16/273). Both are examples of little French, great pretensions.
- 400 *Mahowne most myghty*: echoing *most myghty* (390), used of Christ.
- 400-1 *in castels . . . He kepe you*: the meaning is ambiguous since castles not only protect their owners but have dungeons for incarcerating prisoners.

Our best thanks are due to Emeritus Professor Ronald H. Martin (University of Leeds) for helping us with Pilate's Latin.