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UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Site-Specific Performance and the Fictive Localities of the York Corpus Christi Play

by

Tamara Naiel Haddad

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT  
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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the *York Corpus Christi Play* as a site-specific text that relies on its placement in medieval York to create meaning for its audiences. The study examines the physical and social context of these pageants from the 1370s until the 1560s and uses human geography as the theoretical framework to situate the performances of the *Play* in their urban environment. Issues of site, place, staging, and the interaction that these elements have with the fictive localities presented in the pageants are central to this understanding of the *Play* as a site-specific text.

The study begins with an exploration of the topography and archaeology of medieval York with a focus on the pageant route as well as the places that were significant centres of meaning for its citizens. This is followed by an examination of the extant documentary evidence from the medieval performances and the mechanics of the productions in order to show how the practical details of staging are affected by the playing space. The three case studies at the close of the thesis show how different groups of pageants from the *Play* engage with its performance space to articulate the importance of site for the reception of the medieval performances. These case studies will show that the relationship between the fictive localities in the pageants and the architectural sites of the performances in York are an essential part of the audiences' experience of the *Play*.

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Place is a powerful stimulus to memory, and places seem to function as a kind of palimpsest, retaining traces of different periods, different occurrences, and the overlapping histories of occupation that characterize modern societies. Site-specific performance, engaging with place, activating memories and ghosts, permitting stories to be told and voices to be heard, is part of a cultural act of recognition of who we are.

Gay McAuley, "Site-Specific Performance: Place, Memory, and the Creative Agency of the Spectator" 49.

The atmosphere of disorientation furnishes the conditions that allow the city to speak.

Laura Levin, "Can the City Speak? Site-Specific Art After Poststructuralism"

## Introduction

There is magic to great streets. We are attracted to the best of them not because we have to be there but because we want to be there. The best are as joyful as they are utilitarian. They are entertaining and they are open to all. They permit anonymity at the same time as individual recognition. They are symbols of a community and of its history; they present a public memory. (Jacobs 11)

In his study of fifty cities around the world, Allan B. Jacobs examines the physical make up of individual streets and how these streets come together to form the urban layout of a city. The physical features of these streets – if designed well – serve the purpose of creating communities of people that live and work together in a place of belonging. Each street has its own unique features and, over time, the appearance of these streets changes as a result of the demands of history. The shape of the street might change because of a new building, or a street may be widened to allow for the passage of cars in what was once a pedestrian zone; each change to these individual units affects the whole network and those who use the street and the larger urban environment that surrounds it. Urban planners seek to control the movement of people in these streets while also making the streets liveable: creating pathways for pedestrians, situating small commercial zones nearby to residential areas, placing park benches in green spaces to promote meetings between people, and providing facilities for integrating transportation. Each element works with the larger system and affects the lifestyles of those who use the streets, shaping their movements and interactions through their urban environment. The shape of a city is to a certain extent dependent on its foundations: as time passes its shape changes and those who occupy it adapt their movements and habits to these changes.



The city of York, with its Roman foundations and its later medieval infrastructure, maintains the skeleton of its medieval streets where among the paved roads and rows of modernized buildings the traces of its past are still visible. The city is no longer the centre of power in the North but many of the structures that belong to these bygone days are still standing: York Minster looms above the narrow streets and sections of the city walls and gates into the city remain visible. From the late fourteenth century until the end of the sixteenth century York flourished as a powerful centre of both civic and ecclesiastical power. It is during this period that the city's laity and civic and ecclesiastical elite joined together to celebrate the liturgical feast of Corpus Christi in a dramatic commemoration of Christ's suffering body and the Eucharist. The *York Corpus Christi Play*<sup>1</sup>, a series of pageants that depict various biblical stories – the Creation, the Flood, the Passion, the Crucifixion, and Doomsday, to name a few – were assigned to the trade and craft guilds by the civic authorities and were performed in York's streets at assigned playing stations. The civic festivities began with a liturgical procession of the Host that followed much of the same route through the city as the *Play* and that was composed of representatives from the trade and craft guilds as well as some of the city's ecclesiastical authorities. The celebrations that took place on Corpus Christi in York and especially the pageants that were sponsored by the trade and craft guilds are some of the most well known survivals of English medieval drama.

The feast day of Corpus Christi originated in Liège during the early thirteenth century as a result of two mystical visions received by Juliana of Cornillon (c.1193-

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of brevity, the title will be referred to interchangeably as the *York Play* or the *Play*. The standard convention is to refer to the episodes within the *Play* as 'pageants' and all citations will be taken from Richard Beadle's most recent *Early English Text Society* edition of the text.

1258)<sup>2</sup> and, although it was celebrated in the late thirteenth century, it became a universal feast day by 1317. By the next year the feast had arrived in England and was established in the York province by June 1322 (Rubin, *Corpus Christi* 199-200). The feast is celebrated on the Thursday after Pentecost and, since it is a moveable feast, it can take place anytime between 21 May and 24 June every year. It is not known how soon after the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi in York that the *Play* became an annual event but the earliest surviving record of performance dates to 1377. The onset of the Reformation in the sixteenth century meant that the last medieval performance of the pageants took place in 1569 and it was not until the *Play* was revived for the Festival of Britain in 1951 that the performances of the pageants once again became a regular feature in York.

In the following study I will examine the *York Play* as a site-specific text: I will argue that the pageants rely on their placement within the city's topography and its social context and that the positioning of the performances on the pageant route is integral to its audiences' reception of the *Play*. In their discussion of theatre's relationship to archaeology, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks define site-specific performances as "conceived for, mounted within, and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused: sites of work, play, and worship" (Pearson and Shanks 23). These types of performances are, importantly, situated within locales that are not proscenium arch theatres or studio spaces and as such the histories of these places and their uses outside of the performance become integral to the audience's reception of the production. Furthermore, these performances

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<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of the establishment of Corpus Christi, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* 164-212.

rely, for their conception and their interpretation, upon the complex coexistence, superimposition and interpenetration of a number of narratives and architectures, historical and contemporary, of two basic orders: that which is of the site, its fixtures and fittings, and that which is brought to the site, the performance and its scenography: of that which pre-exists the work and that which is of the work: of the past and of the present. They are inseparable from their sites, the only contexts within which they are intelligible. Performance recontextualises such sites: it is the latest occupation of a location at which other occupations – their material traces and histories – are still apparent: site is not just an interesting, and disinterested, backdrop.

(Pearson and Shanks 23)

What is brought to the site – in this case the pageants that are performed along the pageant route in York – and the site itself – the infrastructure, the materiality of the streets, and the history of the city – are at once dependent on one another and essential parts of the experience. The *Play*, by such a definition, is dependent on the places of its performance in medieval York as a way of creating meaning. If removed and performed elsewhere, even within the modern city of York, the meaning of these pageants and, by extension, the audience's reception of the performance would no longer benefit from the material traces and histories of the medieval pageant route. The performances of the *Play* in medieval York, in turn, recontextualize the city: the dramatic space of the pageants – the fictive localities that are presented by the players – transforms the streets of York into a site of biblical history.

The following chapter will present some of the extant documentary records of performance for the *York Play* with a focus on piecing together a history of the performances from 1377 to 1569. This will be followed by a discussion of some important scholarship of the *Play* and its broader themes in order to situate this study among others within the discipline. The discussion of the theoretical sources at the end of the following section will lay the foundations for how the *Play* will be addressed especially in relation to the work of human geographers. The terminology that will be used throughout this study to describe the places of performance and the *Play*'s various interactions with the city will be defined in the discussion of the theoretical sources. A more detailed examination of the records of performance and more specific discussions of the pageants and their performances will take place in the case studies at the close of the thesis.

Following this literature review, the next chapter on "Mapping the City" will lay out the topography and archaeology of medieval York in order to provide an overview of the city and a study of the places of performance along the pageant route. It is not the aim of this chapter to provide an intensive re-telling of York's medieval archaeology but instead to discuss some of the important sites in the city for those who participated as sponsors, players, and audiences of the pageants. This discussion of the city's medieval topography and archaeology lays the groundwork for the following chapter on "The Mechanics of Performance" which is an examination of the practical relationship between the performance space and the dramatic productions. Much of this discussion of the mechanics focuses on the pageant wagons that were employed by many of the trade and craft guilds and how these vehicles could have been employed in the productions of the pageants during different periods in the *Play*'s medieval performance history.

The last section of the thesis is composed of three case studies of pageants from the *Play*. These studies show how the performances are dependent on the specificity of the city of York in three different ways: first, in how consecutive pageants could be performed in relation to one another; second, in how specific stopping places on the pageant route could enrich an audience's experience of the pageants; and third, in how the dramatic setting for the pageants could dictate the pageants' relationship to its mechanics and its performance space. The *Play*'s engagement with its surroundings will be the central, unifying feature of these three studies and issues of stage geography, of the players' use of the performance space and audience's engagement with the performance, and the archaeology of the streets is highlighted in these case studies. The first case study focuses on the possibilities of tandem performances of two groups of pageants: the Tile Thatchers' *Nativity* (14) and the Chandlers' *Shepherds* (15); and the Masons' and Goldsmiths' *Herod and the Magi* (16), which was two separate pageants until 1432-33. These two groups of pageants are examined as tandem performances that involved players from both pageants speaking to one another during the production to create a continuous production; this shows how different playing groups were cooperating with one another in the performances and how such a relationship could be a model for other pageants in the play where the dramatic spaces are shared in consecutive pageants. The second case study argues that the trial pageants – *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas* (29), *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife* (30), *Christ Before Herod* (31), and *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement* (33) – are enriched by the resonances of the ecclesiastical courts within the Minster when they are performed at the playing station in front of the Minster Gates. The documentary evidence shows that the Dean and Chapter heard the performances from the chamber

above the Minster Gates during some years of the *Play*'s medieval performances; for those in the audience down below, the visibility of the clergy and the Minster meant that this stopping place articulates the resonances between the legal battle of Christ's trial and the boundaries that the ecclesiastical courts balanced against the secular courts in York. At this playing station the performance of Christ's trial echoes the struggle of jurisdictional boundaries in medieval York through the depiction of this struggle in the biblical setting of the *Play*. The final case study examines the Shearmen's *Road to Calvary* (34) and the Windedrawers' *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39) as performances that are situated within undefined spaces since the dramatic spaces of these pageants is between two important locales. I will show how such a model would be dependent on the use of the street in order to create meaning in the performances and I will address the possibility that pageant wagons were not an essential part of the performances of these pageants.

The aim of this approach to the *York Play* is to challenge the ways of thinking about the performance space as more than just a venue for the productions: the pageants rely on their relationship to York and the pageant route in order to create meaning. By employing the work of human geographers as the theoretical basis for this model of site specificity and by examining the *Play* as a piece of performance rather than solely as a literary text, the intention is to synthesize the discussions of practical performance with the history and topography of the pageant route. The fictive localities that are presented in these pageants and the means through which they are performed and received rely on the materiality of the city, its infrastructure, and its history; the ephemeral performances are dependent on the architectural and historical traces of their performance space in order to create meaning.

## Literature Review

### The Manuscripts and Textual Editions

The text of *The York Play* survives in two manuscripts that were compiled well after the first recorded performances of the pageants: London British Library Additional MS 35290 (the Register) and York City Archives Acc. 104/G.1 (the Sykes Manuscript).<sup>3</sup> The Register contains 47 pageants from the *Play*, some of which are missing parts of the text, and the latter is believed to be an original prompt copy of the Scriveners' *Incredulity of Thomas* (41). The Register has been dated to sometime between 1463 and 1477 based on pageant ownership by the different groups (*York Plays*, Vol. 1 xii) and the Sykes Manuscript was completed sometime between 1525 and 1575 perhaps from the same source as the text of the Scriveners' pageant in the Register (*York Plays*, Vol. 1 xxxii). Richard Beadle's study of documents external to the Register has shown that the dating of the manuscript can be narrowed further and that it was most likely begun during or shortly after 1476 (*York Plays*, Vol. 1 xvii).<sup>4</sup> There is no extant evidence for an official order for the compilation of the Register but an ordinance in the *York House Books* from 3 April 1476 can shed some light on the dating and purpose of copying the pageant texts. The ordinance charges "iiij of þe moste Connyng discrete and able playeres within þis Citie to serche here and examen all þe plaiers and plaies pagentes throughte all þe artificeres belonging to corpus christi Plaie" (*REED: York* 109). The purpose of

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<sup>3</sup> Beadle's discussion of the Register and the Sykes MS in his introduction to the most recent edition of the *Play* provides a detailed exploration of both manuscripts (*York Plays*, Vol. 1 xi-xxxiv). Lucy Toulmin Smith also discusses the Register in her edition of the *Play* (Smith xi-lx) but the most detailed study of the Register can be found in the introduction to Beadle and Meredith's facsimile of the Register. Smith, Beadle, and others have also shown similarities between some of the pageants from the Register and those in the Towneley Manuscript (San Marino, California Henry E. Huntington Library HM 1) that contains the text of the so-called Towneley plays. Five pageants from *The York Play* have been closely associated with Towneley text (1, 20, 37, 38, and 47). For further details on the Towneley association with the *Play* see *York Plays*, Vol. 2 xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>4</sup> See also Twycross, "Organising Theatricals in York Between 1461 and 1478: Seventeen Years of Change".

the charge was to have these players examine the text of the pageants as well as to seek out other players for the *Play* who were “sufficiant in persone and Connyng to þe honour of þe Citie and Worship of þe saide Craftes” (*REED: York* 109). Beadle points out that, in order to examine both the players and the pageants themselves, those who were charged with the task would require a copy of the text. The external evidence therefore suggests that the compilation of the Register must have begun during or shortly after 1476 by the office of the city’s Common Clerk, the most senior paid civic official after the mayor.

The study of the scribal hands and provenance of the Register reveals that the pageants were copied out of sequence and were assembled in the correct playing order during the last half of the sixteenth century (*The York Plays*, Vol. 1 xvii and xxi). Some of the pageants were not copied into the Register perhaps because they were either defunct (like the now-lost Millers’ *Playing of the Dice*) or were in the process of being revived at the time that the manuscript was assembled. Blank pages were included in the Register for the future addition of pageants that had not yet been included in the manuscript. Headings were placed in the appropriate position for the Vintners’ *Marriage at Cana* (22A), the Ironmongers’ *Jesus at the House of Simon the Leper* (23A), and the Linenweavers’ *Funeral of the Virgin* (44A). Unfortunately these texts were never copied into the Register and as such we can only speculate about their plots more generally.

The earliest known owner of the Register after the Tudor period was Henry Fairfax in 1695 after which time the manuscript was given to Richard Thoresby whose library was sold at auction in 1764 to Horace Walpole (*York Plays*, Vol. 1 xxii-xxiii; Cawley 82). The Register remained at Strawberry Hill until the second quarter of the nineteenth century when it was passed to Revd. Thomas Russell in



1844 and was first identified as being the text of the *Play* by Sir Frederic Madden (Cawley 82). Lord Ashburnham then purchased the manuscript in 1847 before it was acquired by the British Museum in 1899.

An edition of the *Play* was first published by Lucy Toulmin Smith in 1885 and Smith's edition of the *Play* was the only complete publication of the text from the Register until Richard Beadle's 1982 edition; between the publication of Smith's copy and Beadle's edition only select pageants from the cycle were printed in anthologies. A facsimile of the Register was edited by Beadle and Meredith in 1983 and includes a detailed history of the manuscript and the *Ordo Paginarum*. The most recent edition of the complete text is Beadle's *Early English Text Society* edition and it has become the standard edition of the *Play*.<sup>5</sup>

#### Records of Performance

The *Records of Early English Drama (REED)* volumes for the city of York were compiled by Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson from records that cite evidence of dramatic activity from the thirteenth century until 1642. These draw on several archival sources: the House Books (or minute books) from the city council; civic memorandum books which also contain guild documents; civic accounts including the Chamberlains' Account Rolls and the accounts of the various Bridgemasters; documents from crafts and religious guilds; as well as hospital records, wills, and other miscellaneous items.<sup>6</sup> These records are mainly composed of references to ceremonial and dramatic activity in York and reproduce the records related to the *York Play*, the *Creed Play*, minstrel activity and civic and royal

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<sup>5</sup> All references to the *Play* will be from this edition. The commentary and critical material will be referenced by volume and page number while the pageants will be cited by the pageant numbers assigned by Beadle and followed by line number(s).

<sup>6</sup> Johnston and Rogerson provide a more detailed description of the documents printed in the volumes in the introductory material (ix-xlvi). The *REED* volumes for York will be referred to as *REED: York* and, as the pagination is continuous throughout both volumes, only the page numbers will be given.

processions. The publication of these records in this format has allowed a wider audience of scholars to examine the dramatic and ceremonial activity that took place in York during the medieval and Tudor period and, within the context of this study, has allowed for an examination of the extant history of the performances of the *York Play* from the end of the fourteenth century until its suppression in the last half of the sixteenth century. Some of the important historical sources that relate to the broader details of the performances will be addressed in this section; detailed examination of these and other extant material that is contemporary to the *Play* will take place in the main body of the thesis and in the relevant chapters to avoid duplication.

The performances began at the gates of Holy Trinity Priory (A3) near Micklegate Bar, the main entrance to York from the south, and followed Micklegate across Ouse Bridge (B3) before turning left at the corner of St. Michael's church at Spurriergate (B3).<sup>7</sup> The route continued along Coney Street and turned right on Stonegate (B2) before turning at the Minster Gates at Low Petergate (B2). After following the street to Colliergate (C2), the pageant route turned right at Pavement (C3) where the final stopping place of the performance took place each year. The number of stopping places on the pageant route differed from year to year – anywhere from ten in 1462 to sixteen in 1542 and 1554 – but the route was usually made up of twelve different locations. Four of these stations remained the same over the course of the *Play*'s medieval performance history: Holy Trinity Priory (A3), the end of Coney Street (later referred to as the Common Hall Gates) (B3), the Minster Gates (B2), and Pavement (C3). The rest of the stations changed location depending on the leaseholder. Most of these stations were leased by craftsmen or other well-to-do individuals or syndicates and Meg Twycross has charted the extant lists of station

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<sup>7</sup> Locations in York will be referenced by grid against Stell's map which has been reproduced in Appendix A. A copy of Meg Twycross' map showing the pageant route with twelve stopping places is also included in Appendix A.

leases from 1398 to 1572 which shows a continuity of leaseholders across several years (Twycross, "Places" 28-33). The four locations that continued to be stopping places until the end of the *Play*'s medieval history were not leased by private citizens by the sixteenth century: Micklegate Bar (the gates of Holy Trinity Priory) (A3), Common Hall gates (Guildhall) (B3), the Minster Gates (B2), and Pavement (B3).<sup>8</sup> Each pageant was played at each stopping place before moving on to the next location and as such it was critical for the groups performing the pageants to keep to a tight schedule.<sup>9</sup>

The first records of performance that are associated with the *Play* appear in a 1377 entry from the *A/Y Memorandum Book* that mentions rent paid for "one building in which three Corpus Christi pageants are housed per annum" (*REED: York* 689).<sup>10</sup> The owners of the wagons that would have been stored in this pageant house are not identified in the memorandum. When read against the other extant evidence for the *Play*, this first record of a Corpus Christi play at York reveals that wagons were a part of the performance from early in the history of the performances and the extant material shows that by the end of the fourteenth century there were at least nine different groups involved in the production.<sup>11</sup> The evidence of wagon

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<sup>8</sup> To see the extent to which charting the station leases can provide conclusions about the pageants, see Twycross, "Places" 16-25.

<sup>9</sup> The playing of the pageants at each stopping place is the commonly held belief among scholars of the *Play* but there have been suggestions by Salvador-Rabaza and Stevens that do not agree with this scheme. Based on her study of the 1476 entry from the *House Books*, Salvador-Rabaza has suggested that the pageants would have been mimed for much of the performance and that each pageant was only performed twice: once at one of the first eleven stations and again at Pavement (Salvador-Rabaza 187). (The entry states that "no plaier þat shall plaie in þe saide Corpus cristi plaie be coducte and Reteyned to plaie but twice on þe day of þe saide playe" (*REED: York* 109).) Nelson has proposed processional staging of *tableaux vivant* as well as a complete indoor performance of the pageants but this proposition is not supported by the dramatic records and has since been refuted (see Johnson, "Review").

<sup>10</sup> The date of this document in *REED* is mis-referenced as 1376. For details on the dating of this document see Meredith, "The City of York and its 'Play of Pageants'" 40-41. References to the *Records of Early English Drama* will be made in translation where available.

<sup>11</sup> This includes the Skinners, Bakers, Dyers (1387 or earlier); Tailors (1386-87); Fletchers (1388); Plasterers (1390); Bowers (1395); Saddlers (1398); and Hosiers (1399) (*REED: York* 691, 690-91, 692, 694, 695, 696, and 697). All of these groups are mentioned by name except the Hosiers who are

storage and the possible designs of the wagons and their role in the performances of the pageants will be addressed in the “Mechanics of the Performance” chapter below. It should be stated here that the survival of these leases shows the level of financial commitment that the guild and craft groups had to the productions even at such an early stage in the performances. By 1394 the pageants were played at “places appointed from ancient times...just as they shall be prearranged by the mayor, the bailiffs, and their officers” (*REED: York 694*) which, together with the first extant list of the stopping places from 1398 (*REED: York 697-98*), suggests that the model of performance at different stopping places had become established by the end of fourteenth century.

Twycross and others have noted other observations about the station leases from the sixteenth century especially in relation to the leaseholders. The extant records show that the station holders often paid different amounts for the lease of a station and that several of the stations were, at any one time, hired by more than one individual (Twycross, “Places” 17-18; 21). The Common Clerk was not the only individual who was affiliated with the civic government as well as with a stopping place for the *Play*. The mayor and alderman were variously responsible for hiring a room on Corpus Christi from as early as 1433 though the first time that they are associated with the lease of a station is in 1516 (the exact location of which is unknown) (Twycross, “Places” 22; *REED: York 815*). At various times in the 1520s, the mayor and aldermen are sometimes associated with the Common Hall station (B3) (Twycross, “Places” 23) and previously the same group hired a chamber for “seeing and observing the play in the lodging belonging to the Common Guildhall according to custom” (*REED: York 800*). The placement of the station that is

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indirectly referred to by their pageant, *Moses and Pharaoh* (11).

rented by the mayor and alderman cannot be pinpointed more specifically than Coney Street until 1538 when the station leases show that the sixth station that was rented by the Lord Mayor was located at the Common Hall (*REED: York 264*) and that they hired a chamber near the Common Hall Gates (*REED: York 265*).<sup>12</sup> The Dean and Chapter did not lease a station on the pageant route though they did variously rent the chamber above the Minster Gates (B2) on Corpus Christi at different times: 1483, 1484, and 1546 (*REED: York 132; 135; and 289*). Many of the station leases also show evidence that the Lady Mayoress leased a stopping place on the pageant route and that she often hosted her own entertainments on Corpus Christi separate from the Lord Mayor. The area near Pavement (C3) was the favoured place of the Lady Mayoress' entertainments which is unsurprising given that Pavement was one of the wealthiest areas in York and home to many of city's mayors (Twycross, "Places" 23-24).

The leases for the places of performance provide some insight about the role of the Common Clerk in the *Play* during the sixteenth century and well after the completion of the Register. An entry in the *City Chamberlains' Rolls* from 1501 notes that the first playing station that was leased to an individual came "beyond the station of the common clerk" (*REED: York 801*) which was at the gates of Holy Trinity Priory (A3) in Micklegate. From this time until the end of the extant records, the Common Clerk occupied the first playing station of the pageants and his position at this station was made clear in the records in 1538. In this year the entry in the *City Chamberlains' Rolls* for the payments of the leases shows that, at the first station at

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<sup>12</sup> Twycross has shown that then rental of the chamber by the Lord Mayor and the alderman in 1538 is likely the same as that rented on their behalf by Thomas Fleming in 1535 (see "Places" 23). A chart compiled by Johnston in her review of Alan H. Nelson's *The Medieval Stage: Corpus Christi Pageants and Plays* shows a chart that compares the station leases by the Lord Mayor and aldermen with the chamber rentals on Corpus Christi (Johnston, "Review" 242-244). See also White, "The Tenements at the Common Hall Gates: The Mayor's Station for the Corpus Christi Play in York".

the gates of Holy Trinity Priory, “the Comon Clerke kepys the Registre” (*REED: York* 263). This phrasing is used again in 1542 and 1554 and, although the meaning of “keeping the Register” is vague, the role of the Common Clerk at this station has been understood as a kind of inspector of the first performance of each pageant against the texts that were entered in the Register. Indeed John Clerk, who is mentioned in the station leases from 1554 (*REED: York* 313), is known to have made notes in the Register about the performances themselves.<sup>13</sup>

Among the plethora of extant material related to the *Play* is the 1415 *Ordo Paginarum*, a document that lists the names of the guilds and a description of their pageants in running order followed by a list of torch bearers for the procession of the Host. The *Ordo* was updated over the course of the following two decades to show any changes to pageant ownership as well as changes to the pageants themselves (Twycross, “Forget” 108). Several of the descriptions of each pageant differ from the extant material in the Register and as such the *Ordo* can in some cases be an indicator of how the plot of a pageant was altered from when it was originally compiled at the beginning of the fifteenth century until the compilation of the Register in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The relevant entries from the *Ordo Paginarum* for each pageant will be discussed in the case studies and some examination of the document in relation to the *Play*’s staging mechanics will be addressed in the “Mechanics of the Performance” chapter.

The opening of the *Ordo* describes how the performers were asked to play their pageants each year: “the billets of pageants must be delivered in succession in the subscribed form to the craftsmen by six sergeants-at-arms of the mayor in the first or second week of Lent, yearly, [and] are to be written by the common clerk”

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion about John Clerk and the appearance of his hand in the Register, see Meredith, “John Clerk’s Hand in the York Register”.

(*REED: York 703*). This ordinance shows that the city's involvement in the performance was as a host to the players through its invitation to the craftsmen for the playing of their pageants. Recent work by Twycross and others has shown that the *Ordo Paginarum* was very much a living document and that a number of revisions were made to it throughout the *Play*'s pre-modern history. Twycross' digital study of the *Ordo* has shown that the document was compiled and altered by a number of different hands and that the document was perhaps last edited just before the Cardmakers' and Fullers' pageants were amalgamated in 1529 (Twycross, "The *Ordo Paginarum* Revisited" 108). Twycross' work on the document as a part of the DIAMM project has revealed that some of the entries – such as the Ironmongers' *Jesus in the House of Simon the Leper* (23A) – are later additions or alterations while the entries for some of the pageants – such as the Smiths' *Temptation* (22) – are original ("The *Ordo Paginarum* Revisited" 113). This allows scholars to assess the dating of some of the pageants at least in so far as when the pageants became a part of the *Play* and how the plots of these pageants may have been altered over time. The work has also uncovered a number of textual erasures on areas of the document that were overwritten or damaged by water; the proclamation that asks the players to be ready for their performances has been overwritten and the recovery of the original proclamation shows that the later edits to the *Ordo* were more concerned with the quality of the performances and a production that was perhaps more complex (Twycross, "Forget the 4:30am Start" 141).<sup>14</sup>

An extant record from the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1417 provides a list of the stopping places for that year as well as an addition that might provide some clue as to how some of the audiences of the *Play* may have experienced the

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<sup>14</sup> For a side-by-side comparison of the original proclamation with the overwritten version see Twycross, "Forget the 4:30am Start" 140.

performances. The entry states that

the mayor, the honourable men, and the whole said commons, by their unanimous consent and assent, order (that) all those who receive money from scaffolds which they may build in the aforesaid places before their doors on public property at the aforesaid sites from those sitting on them shall pay the third penny of the money so received to the chamberlains of the city to be applied to the use of the same commons. (*REED: York 713-714*)

This is the only surviving record that mentions the use of scaffolds being erected at the stopping places and being used by members of the audience who paid to watch the pageants.<sup>15</sup> The cost that audiences paid to sit on these scaffolds and the length of time in relation to the cost is unknown; were these scaffolds normally rented for the duration of the *Play* or for short intervals? How many people could fit on the scaffolds? How might this affect the performance of the pageants and where the rest of the audience was situated? None of these questions can be answered definitively but it can be conjectured from this record that those who were in the immediate area of a playing station benefitted financially from the location of their houses and the placement of these scaffolds. Such a record also indicates that enough people were involved in this practice that a tax was collected to benefit the city which implies that the practice was not seen as a hindrance to the mechanics of the performance; so long as the city was paid, the citizens were welcome to collect a fee for providing scaffolds for the audiences. The positioning of audiences and wagons in the streets in relation to the action of the performances will be discussed in more detail in the

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<sup>15</sup> Scaffolds are mentioned elsewhere in the records in relation to the entries of various kings to the city in 1486 (Henry VII), 1541 (Henry VIII), 1603 (James I), and 1639 (entry of Charles I from 1638) (*REED: York 790, 271, 507, 606*). The exact use of the scaffolds in these cases is not mentioned except in the record from 1603 which states that scaffolds were erected at Bootham Bar to be used by the city waits.



chapter on “Mechanics of the Performance” and the individual case studies.

At its centre the *Play* offered its audiences a living production of the Passion and is fitting for the theological framework of Corpus Christi in medieval York. The depictions of the biblical figures and themes in the performances were inherently linked to the devotional context of the liturgical feast day so the pageants should be seen as a tradition that augmented the liturgical practices rather than as a separate event. During the early history of the *Play*, the performance took place on Corpus Christi day and followed the civic procession of the Host that was led by “a great multitude of priests dressed in surplices” (*REED: York 728*). The route followed by the procession of the Host was the same as the *Play* except that, upon reaching the Minster Gates, the ecclesiastical procession would enter the Minster precincts – though perhaps not the Minster itself – and would exit the precincts from the south west gates before reaching St. Leonard’s Hospital in time for a mass (Cowling 8). The civic procession of the Host also involved the Mayor and a number of York’s citizens and as such the procession highlighted the role of liturgical practices in the city’s civic community. While the secular civic authorities primarily sponsored the *Play*, the commemoration of Corpus Christi through a civic procession of the Host highlights the relationship between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities in medieval York. For William Melton – a Friar Minor – the feastings on Corpus Christi were not deemed suitable for such an important feast day and his complaints about the festivities are noted in an entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* on 6 June 1426:

the citizens of the aforesaid city [York] and the other foreigners coming in to it during the said festival [Corpus Christi], attend not only to the play on the same feast, but also greatly to feastings,

drunkenness, clamours, gossipings, and other wantonness, engaging the least in the divine service of the office of that day and that, alas, for that cause, they lose the indulgences granted to them in that manner by Pope Urban IV. (*REED: York 718*)

Melton's argument against having the performance of the pageants on the same day as Corpus Christi is that, because the citizens and visitors to the city are watching the *Play* and taking part in the festivities, they are not attending mass. According to Melton's calculations, if one were to attend all of the services offered by the Church on Corpus Christi, one could receive up to five hundred days of indulgence. Under this pretence, Melton suggests that "this play should take place on one day and the procession on the other, so that the people could come together in the churches on the aforesaid feast and attend divine service for the consequent indulgences" (*REED: York 718*). There is no indication that the separation between the *Play* and the procession took place until 1476 when an ordinance in the House Books shows that the *Play* was performed on Corpus Christi and the procession of the Host was performed the day after (*REED: York 776-777*).<sup>16</sup> This continued until the end of the medieval performances and the relocation of the liturgical procession to the day after Corpus Christi shows the prominence of the civic activities over the ecclesiastical authorities in York during this period in history

While the *Ordo Paginarum* lists 52 pageants and the Register includes the texts of 47 pageants, scholars have long been concerned with the logistics of how the *Play* would have been performed each year. The length of the performance has been a particular point of contention since, as Margaret Rogerson has shown in her

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed studies of the relationship between the procession and the *Play*, see Dorrell, "Two Studies" 63-77; Johnston, "The Procession and Play of Corpus Christi in York after 1426"; and King, "The York Plays and the Feast of Corpus Christi: A Reconsideration". A discussion of the liturgy of Corpus Christi can be found in Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* 185-96.

seminal study of the *Play*, the complete performance of the pageants as they appear in the Register would take over 19 hours to perform from start to finish if each pageant was played twelve times (once at each of twelve stopping places) (Rogerson, “Two Studies” 102-107). This includes the time it would take for each group to travel to each station to begin their performance but does not account for the any delays to the production. Rogerson’s study is based upon the assumption that each group that owned a pageant or was involved in the *Play* would perform every year that the billets for the performances were distributed. There are two extant entries from 1535 that touch on this assumption and are found in the *City Chamberlains’ Books* (REED: York 257-259; 260-261). These entries list the pageant money that was given to the Common Chamber by the craft and trade guilds that were responsible for performing the pageants. These groups total 35 in number and represent pageants from across the *Play*. Although the *Play* was cancelled in favour of the *Creed Play* in 1535 (REED: York 257), the fact that not every group had paid their pageant money could indicate that not every group was accustomed to performing their pageant annually. This would, of course, shorten the length of the performance over the course of the day though only by a few hours since three quarters of the guilds had agreed to perform. Since 1535 is the only year in which such records have survived from the *Play*, we can only hypothesize that, if not all of the groups performed annually, enough interest was shown in the *Play* at this stage of its history to make the production a large-scale event. Whether this evidence can be applied to other years cannot be deduced from the records except that the participation of so many groups in the *Play* over the course of two centuries should be evidence enough to demonstrate the significance of the play for medieval York.

The onset of the Reformation in England during the mid-sixteenth century

would eventually cost York its annual Corpus Christi performances. York remained a Catholic stronghold for several decades after the Dissolution and the *Play* continued to be performed until 1569. Although many of the groups continued to pay rents for the storage of pageant wagons after this date, the final attempt at the performance of the *Play* in 1579 failed. An entry in the *House Books* from 1579 shows that

it is agreed by theis presens that Corpus christi play shalbe played  
this yere And that first the booke shalbe caried to my Lord  
Archebisshop and Mr Deane to correcte, if that my Lord  
Archebisshop doo well like theron. (*REED: York 390*)

The Register was given to the Dean and Archbishop for correction – presumably in an attempt to reconcile the texts with post-Reformation teachings – but the manuscript did not resurface again until its acquisition by Henry Fairfax at the end of the seventeenth century. In the following year, a request was made for the performance of the *Play*:

the Commons did earnestly request of my Lord Mayor and others this  
worshipfull Asseblee that Corpus christi play might be played this  
yere, wherapon my Lord Mayour [and theis] answered that he and his  
bretherin wold conside of their request. (*REED: York 392-93*)

This request would prove to be unsuccessful and, until the publication of Lucy Toulmin Smith's edition of the pageants at the end of the nineteenth century, the *Play* would remain in the hands of private collectors. The first modern performances of the pageants in the twentieth century would eventually put the performances of the *Play* back into the hands of York's citizens in a different form but the players and guilds who were responsible for the medieval productions would not see the

*Play* returned to its former glory.

### Critical Foundations

The extensive documentary evidence for the performances of the *York Play* from the end of the fourteenth century until well into the sixteenth century is unmatched by other civic drama from the period and, as such, it has received much scholarly attention. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship that the *Play* had to its performance space and how this relationship was presented in the pre-modern productions: to understand how, in practical terms, the dramatic space of the *Play* appears on stage and how an understanding of human geography and staging practices can provide insight into these early performances. This involves a study of the extant historical documents as well as a discussion of the social and historical context of the performance space and the pageants themselves. My argument draws on several threads in the larger corpus of material on the *York Play* and its historical context: on the role of the trade and craft guilds in the performances, on the social context and topographical history of York, on the mechanics of performance, and on the broader role of the Church in the medieval period. The theoretical grounding is based in human geography and its relationship to performance: how can space affect audience reception and how treating the *York Play* as a site-specific text can lead to new insights into the pageants. A complete review of the full corpus of scholarly discussion on the *Play* would not be suitable given the length of this study so the following is a summary of some of the foundational studies that lay the groundwork for my argument. The scholarly and theoretical material is discussed more thoroughly in the relevant chapters and case studies in the interest of avoiding repetition.

The performances were an important part of the feast of Corpus Christi and

the role that the trade and craft guilds played in the production of the pageants is one that has been addressed extensively in studies of the *Play*. The trade and craft guilds themselves – independent of their sponsorship of the pageants – played an important role in York from the middle ages.<sup>17</sup> The civic structure during the time of the *Play* was determined heavily by the guild culture that was a part of York’s day-to-day activities from the lowest classes up to the head of governing body. In order for a citizen of York to hold civic office, one had to acquire the freedom of the city either through birth-right or by completing an apprenticeship in a trade or craft.<sup>18</sup> After acquiring the freedom of the city, one would have to make their way through the ranks before eventually becoming mayor:

the regular ladder of promotion for the potential officeholder was the assumption of an accounting office like bridge- or muremaster, then election to chamberlain, then advancement to the council of twenty-four, and, finally, for the most successful, to alderman – a position that would automatically lead to at least one term as mayor. (Stevens, *Four* 23-24)

The mobility that the freedom of the city enabled through the completion of an apprenticeship meant that members of the trade or craft guilds were heavily represented in the civic offices in cities like York. Not all of those who acquired the freedom of the city became involved in its civic politics but the sixteenth century records show that out of the 106 aldermen, 60 were merchants while the remainder belonged to other crafts (Stevens, *Four* 24); the number of mayors in medieval York who were a part of the Mercers’ fraternity were more represented than any other

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<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth exploration on guild activities in medieval York, see work by Swanson especially *Craftsmen and Industry in Late Medieval York*.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics for the number of freedoms given to trade and craftsmen from 1272 to 1509 are printed in P.M. Tillott’s chart in *A History of the County of York: The City of York* 114-116. See also Dobson, “Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages”.

craft. Sarah Beckwith's seminal study of the *Play* discusses York's civic structure and its relationship to the pageants and recognizes how vital the relationship between these groups and the governing body is to the presentation of the pageants (*Signifying God* 42-58). This relationship between the trade and craft guilds and the governance of medieval York meant that those who sponsored the pageants held a lot of control over the day-to-day running of the city.

In their study of the civic cycles in York and Chester, Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano discuss the relationship between the guilds and the pageants in relation to the political environment and argue that "the plays became the major means for artisans to participate in civic polity, and the drama served as a vehicle through which local artisans made public claims to status" (Rice and Pappano 4). By this logic, the status of the artisans is directly connected to their involvement in the pageants and a means of engaging with the political sphere without holding a position in the civic government. Rice and Pappano push this argument further by arguing that the pageants

worked to bolster artisanal claims to local identity: they produced and reproduced artisans' notions of themselves as not only belonging but commanding the very terms of belonging to a particular place, inserting themselves in the city's providential history and recreating civic space as they paraded through the streets. (Rice and Pappano 20)

Through the guilds' involvement in the performances, the artisans showed their affinity to the city and hence their sense of belonging to the locale in which they performed their pageants. This understanding of the relationship between the guilds and their local surroundings serves as a base for discussing the *Play* as a site-specific

text: the trade and craft guilds that sponsored the pageants were heavily invested in their local government and their operational boundaries were very much tied to the city of York. The guilds had to operate within the boundaries of the civic legal system and the members of these guilds were local to the city where they practiced their craft or trade. The relationship of the trade and craft guilds to the city of York and its government means that the pageants are inherently tied to a particular place; the members of the trade and craft guilds that sponsored these pageants cannot be separated from their locality and thus the historical significance of the pageants themselves cannot be separated from the city of York.

There have been a number of key studies on York's medieval topography and archaeology that help to situate the pageants in their architectural surroundings. This material will be summarized and discussed in the following chapter on "Mapping the City" though some studies that address the pageants and their physical surroundings should be highlighted here. As has been pointed out by Kathleen Ashley, "processional routes are the clearest maps to the significant power structures within a community, since they are always deliberately designed with references to places that are important" (Ashley and Hüskin 17). The topography of medieval York includes a number of areas that would have been difficult to manoeuvre or, indeed, completely inaccessible to a pageant wagon which could explain one reason for the path taken by the *Play*. Other civic and ecclesiastical processions followed the same route from Micklegate across Ouse Bridge (B3), turned left on Spurriergate, and then right on Stonegate (B2) though at this stage they either went left towards Bootham Bar (B2) (as the Corpus Christi procession did) or into the Minster through Minster Gates (B2) (as did Henry VII's 1486 procession through York). It makes sense that the pageants follow the same route as other processions but turned right at the



Minster Gates and made their way across Low Petergate to Pavement (C3) for the final performances since this was one of the main open spaces within the city and would provide a turning point for those wagons that would need to make their way back to Toft Green for storage. The bridge across the River Ouse was only eighteen feet wide and follows a steep slope towards the river which means that the wagons making their way from Micklegate would have difficulty stopping depending on the exact location of the playing station (White 59).<sup>19</sup> This also meant that the groups of performers with pageant wagons who had completed their performances at Pavement would have to keep their wagons in that area of the city because of traffic until the final performance of *Doomsday* (47) had cleared Ouse Bridge.

Eileen White's study of York's topography focuses on the pageant route and the stopping places of the *Play*, providing basic details about the route including the measurements of the widths of each street.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear at what stage the pageant route was fixed but the earliest surviving list of stopping places for the *Play* from 1398 reveals that the route did not change throughout the nearly two hundred years of the play's early history. White's examination of the route begins with the observation that, if the city had wanted the *Play* to be performed in a fixed-place manner at a static location, an open area like that at Knaresmire, a grazing pasture outside the city that was open to freemen, would have been an ideal location (White 51). There does not appear to have been an attempt to stage the performances at a static location and if there were any concerns about employing pageant wagons for processional staging then they were not included in the early records. White's contribution to the scholarship of the *Play* raises some important questions about practicality in the performance and acts as a foundation for thinking about the

<sup>19</sup> White points out that the performance of the *Play* was cancelled one year because of an interruption to the pageant route when Ouse Bridge had to be rebuilt in 1564-65 (White 59).

<sup>20</sup> For additional discussion of the pageant route in York see also Lilley, *City and Cosmos* 172-74.

relationship between the pageant route and the performances: the sizes of the streets and how these might relate to wagons and audiences, how the topography could affect where the pageants could be performed, which parts of the pageant route were connected to which groups trade or craft guilds, and who may have watched the pageants from which stopping place. Along with the archaeological studies of medieval York that are addressed in the chapter entitled “Mapping the City”, White’s study serves as a base for understanding these practical details about the pageant route and helps to situated the *Play* within its topographical context. Studies by Gareth Dean and Sarah Rees-Jones have been used to show more detailed material about the areas around the city that have a particular association with certain groups of individuals who would have an influence on the sponsorship of the pageants and the audiences of the performances.

The issue of how the topography of York was made up of different jurisdictional boundaries has been addressed in some broader studies of medieval York and in some studies of the pageants. These discussions have formed the basis for understanding the separation between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities in medieval York. A more detailed study of this separation in jurisdictional boundaries – especially with relation to the legal system in medieval York – will be tackled in the second case study (“Particularity and Locality”) but it is worth recognising here that the boundaries were not always clear. The demarcation of the physical boundaries was something of a celebration in itself with the beating of the parish bounds during Rogationtide:

with crosses, banners, and bells, all parishioners joined together to beat the bounds of their parish and religious community. This ritual was about more than demarcation, however. It was also a ceremony

of purification, in which demons were exorcised from the parish and its animals and fields cleansed and blessed. The Rogationtide procession was a powerful assertion of parish identity and unity.

(Higgins 83)

The boundaries between these parishes and York's three main liberties – St. Peter's (Minster) (B2), St. Leonard's Hospital (B2), and St. Mary's Abbey (A2) – as well as the priories were also important for those who practiced a trade or craft: "craftsmen who lived in the districts of the Minster, St. Mary's Abbey, Saint Leonard's Hospital, or any of the seven priories in the city...were not obliged to join guilds, and were free to buy and sell without regard to city regulation" (Stevens, *Four* 82). Craftsmen located in districts that were governed by the civic authorities had to abide by civic regulations but those who lived within the boundaries of the liberties or priories could practice their trade or craft without joining a guild. Those who lived within the liberties were also under the legal jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities in certain areas of law where those who resided in the parishes would be under the secular legal system. The understanding of these divisions in jurisdictional boundaries and the relationship between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities helps to contextualise the *Play*'s own portrayal of jurisdictional boundaries.

A number of studies of the pageants have focused on how a performance of the *Play* on the city streets is a vehicle for superimposing the biblical Jerusalem on medieval York.<sup>21</sup> Pamela King argues that a variety of inflections such as having female characters played by men or the anachronism of Jews played by Christians is precisely what allows Jerusalem and York to be equated with one another (King,

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance Beckwith, *Signifying God* 26; Evans, "Signs" 32; King, "Seeing" 61-64; and Stevens, *Four* 57. My own work on the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem* (25) has sought to address how such a reading could be a starting point for examining the pageant as a site-specific performance when viewed from the first playing station at Micklegate Bar (Haddad, "Locating the Drama: Micklegate Bar and the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem*").

“Seeing” 161). Stevens suggests an alternative reading where the popular practices of travelling to the Holy City is simulated by the movement of the *Play* through York and its mimicry of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Stevens, *Four* 65-67). Such an interpretation suggests that those who were restricted by the financial burden of travel to Jerusalem could engage with the *Play* as a substitute. Stevens argues that the topography of York and the movement of the pageants through the pageant route resembles a progression from good to bad: a movement from Holy Trinity Priory to Pavement, a sacred site to the place of public punishments, like the advance from *The Creation* (2) to *Doomsday* (47). The focus on ways of moving through the city has also been addressed by Ruth Evans who argues that the language in *The Fall of the Angels* (1) “marks out a series of spatializing actions that not only conjure up places but also make available their history, by not effacing – as maps do – the operations that brought those places into being” (Evans, “Signs” 32). These ways of seeing the pageants and their relationship to place situates the performances of the *Play* as an important medium for understanding how York’s streets are affected by the productions of the *Play*. These studies acknowledge the pageants’ relationship to York’s architectural landscape; the notion that the *Play* is a site-specific text that relies on its performances in York’s medieval streets in order to enrich its purposes has not, however, been addressed in these studies. By examining the pageants through the lens of site-specificity, this study will expand the understanding of the *Play*’s relationship to its performances on the pageant route and in the medieval city.

In addition to the studies of the relationship between the guilds and the pageants and on the *Play*’s relationship to its topography, much of the scholarship is concerned with the mechanics of the performances. Concerns with how the pageant wagons were used for staging the pageants date back to early studies of the *Play* and

the chapter on the “Mechanics of the Performance” will outline the use of pageant wagons in the medieval performances and the possible designs of these vehicles in relation to the *Play* in detail. Much of this work has been focused around the extant documentary evidence for the pageants and modern productions of the pageants have gone a long way to answering some of the questions about the possibilities for staging. These include studies by Twycross, Mckinnell, Meredith, Rogerson, and others: specific studies and references to some of the modern productions will be reserved for the chapter on the “Mechanics of the Performance”. What evidence has not survived in the documentary material has been supplemented by modern productions of the pageants and these studies form the basis of this study’s understanding of how the wagons could have been used in the medieval productions. These studies have played an important role in realising the relationship between the city’s topography and the mechanics of the performances and in showing how the performance can be read as site-specific.

The work of Clifford Davidson seeks to recognise the relationship between drama and iconography and he examines glass from the Minster and other parish churches in York in an attempt to understand positional symbolism in the pageants (*From Creation to Doomsday*). Davidson argues that the audiences’ familiarity with these images may have resulted in a situation where the gestures of the figures in the images as well as their positioning could have been reproduced in the performances of the *Play*. As a part of the visual culture of the pageants’ medieval audiences, the images could serve as reference points for associating the pageants with the wider conventions of symbolism. King’s treatment of the issue of positional symbolism in the *Play* furthers this way of thinking about the performances especially when thinking about how the symbolism is tied to authority: for King, positional

symbolism can draw the audience's attention to particular parts of the performance space as a way of articulating certain characters or action in the production (King, "Seeing and Hearing" 159). Although such a study of the visual culture and the relationship between positional symbolism and gesture to drama provides an important avenue for exploring the wider milieu of the pageants, it is important to remember that the *Play* is a piece of stagecraft and, as the writer of the *Treatise of Miracles Playing* has said about the relationship between images and drama, "þis is a deed bok, þe toþer a qu[i]ck" (Walker 198.73): the study of "dead" images can provide some insight into the study of positional symbolism in drama or, indeed, about possible costuming, but the relationship between performance space and dramatic space that comes with presenting a narrative on the stage is more complex serves a different purpose than the positioning of figures in a two-dimensional space as King has shown. This way of thinking about the *Play* in performance will be addressed in the discussions of staging in the case studies and will underpin the treatment of the relationship between the dramatic spaces of the *Play* and its performance space.

The issue of religious reform in the sixteenth century has already arisen in relation to the suppression of the *Play* by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1579. A broader understanding of the Church in the medieval period is key to understanding the relationship of the pageants to their historical context and studies by Dobson on the Church in the North serve as background material for the wider study. Heather Hill-Vasquez's study focuses on the monastic reform that has come to characterize the late sixteenth century and how this influences the pageants as they were performed in the late medieval period. Hill-Vasquez argues that the coterminous existence of Catholicism and Protestantism in this period allowed religious drama to

function outside of a Catholic setting for much of the sixteenth century; this was more complicated in York where Catholicism continued to flourish for some time after the Dissolution. This study of the *Play* demonstrates the complexity of the Reformation and some of the grey areas around the division between Catholicism and Protestantism in relation to lay religious practices. King's study on the relationship between liturgy and the *York Play* provides some important insight into the liturgical content in the pageants (*The York Mystery Cycle*); the lay understanding of medieval theology is very much a part of the performances and King's exploration of how such theology impacts the composition and reception of the pageants serves as a foundation for examining the pageants as religious drama. These studies of the broader religious context in medieval England and in relation to the pageants speaks in part to the relationship between those who sponsored the pageants – the laity – and the ecclesiastical authorities who represented the Church. These studies are employed as a way of thinking about the *York Play* as a form of popular devotion in the late medieval period and into the early decades of the Reformation in England.

The role of the trade and craft guilds in the performances, the social context and topographical history of York, the mechanics of performance, and the broader role of the Church in the medieval period all come together in the performance of the *Play* and enrich the modern audience's understanding of the pageants and their context. While these elements of the *Play's* history overlap with one another, they are all linked strongly by their association with the city of York itself: the craft and trade guilds' strong association with the civic government; the mapping of how the different areas of the city were used and who they were associated with; the understanding of how the pageants could be performed given the city's topography;

and how the teachings of the Church and popular traditions influenced the pageants. All of these threads come together as important elements of the *Play*'s performance history and, by extension, impact how the audiences of the pageants engage with its performances. The purpose of this study is thus to examine these varying elements of the pageants as a way of thinking about the *Play* as a localized and site-specific event. The reception of these pageants is enriched by the performance spaces in the city: the dramatic space is influenced by the history of the performance spaces and the social fabric of those who participated in the pageants is amalgamated with the experience of the *Play*'s architectural surroundings.

#### Theoretical Foundations

The following section will outline the theoretical foundations for the larger argument that the *York Play* is a site-specific text that is dependent on its localization within medieval York and, in turn, that the performances of these pageants influence the city itself. This work will draw on discussions of place in human geography and performance studies with the aim of showing how such an approach to the *Play* can add to its current scholarship. The particularities of the theoretical foundations will be examined more closely in the three case studies where the association between the *Play* and its environment will be discussed in three ways: first, how fictive localities in the dramatic space are shared between the pageants (“Intersecting Places”); second, how the performances of some of the pageants are enriched by specific stopping places on the pageant route (“Particularity and Locality”); and third, how the concept of place is defined in relation to space and how this is presented in some of the pageants (“Movement Through the City”). The theoretical terminology will also be defined to show how it will be used throughout this study and to show consistency of meaning: the terminology will borrow heavily from some of the



standard definitions used by human geographers and, where necessary, from philosophers of space.

As an example of urban design, the modern city of York is an especially well-preserved example of its medieval predecessor. The pageant route itself remains, for the most part, in the same position as it was in the middle ages aside from the replacement of some buildings, the rebuilding of Ouse Bridge, and the narrowing of some streets. The medieval city – built on Roman foundations – remains pedestrian friendly and the demarcation of the medieval city by what remains of its outer wall is a reminder of an architectural structure’s ability to survive and retain history. In his study of place and memory, Paul Connerton builds on the foundations of scholars of memory and the classical example of Cicero’s memory palace as a way of exploring how the relationship between place and memory has been affected by modernity.<sup>22</sup> Connerton’s argument begins with two assertions about the dependence of memory on places: first, that memory “depends essentially upon a stable system of places” and, second, that “remembering relates implicitly to the human body and that acts of memory are envisaged as taking place on a human scale” (Connerton, *Modernity* 5). The suggestion that places must be stable implies that the physical features must remain recognizably similar over time. If places remain recognizable over an extended period of time – several years or decades – then one’s ability to recall events, occurrences, or even people who are situated in a place remains strong. Memory, then, is eye-dependent<sup>23</sup> and for

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<sup>22</sup> Connerton’s foundations include the work of Frances A. Yates’ *The Art of Memory* and her assertion that place and memory have been integral to one another in systems of memory in the western tradition. Yates’ discussions of the Latin sources (17-41) and her exploration of memory in the middle ages (63-113) provides a broad introduction into systems of memory. Mary Carruthers discusses the use of architectural *loci* and other influences on memory practices in the medieval period in her broad study *The Book of Memory: A study of Memory in Medieval Culture* 25-26 and 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> See also Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* 31.

Connerton the consistency of spatial aesthetics over time implies that “what is visible is also stable” (Connerton, *Modernity* 117). Unlike infrastructure and recognizable features in the natural landscape, acts – like the act of walking or moving through a place – are unstable.

The association of the act of remembrance with the human body and the “scale of emplacement” (Connerton, *Modernity* 99) is key to understanding placement within the urban landscape. For instance, a Gothic cathedral in a medieval city exploits this sense of human scale in order to achieve a particular purpose: to depict the “limitless quantities of an infinite God through the soaring verticality of arches and vaults which [are]...a deliberate antithesis to human scale” (Sheldrake 52). While the urban area in a medieval community is dependent on pedestrian accessibility, the “spatial memorability” (Connerton, *Modernity* 101) of these sites relies in part on the planning of the city. The perimeter of medieval communities – often demarcated by an outer wall – and a central focal point – the Gothic cathedral – contributes to the memorability of the layout since the clearly marked perimeter acts as both deterrent to outsiders and enclosure to its inhabitants while the scale of the cathedral allows it to be visible from most areas within the walled city.

Connerton notes that

Enclosed within their clearly demarcated perimeter, this orientation of the city towards one single building created an effect of spatial cohesion, and hence of memorability, which remain in force whether the cathedral was viewed from a distance or whether it was viewed from close up, and the sense of cohesion persisted from every vantage point. (*Modernity* 101)

The grand architecture of the cathedral in a medieval city becomes not just a

reminder of one's placement in relation to its architecture but, also, as a physical reminder of the Church's doctrine. The looming cathedral and the boundaries of the city walls act as points of reference for the city's layout and by this logic would make easy work of knowing one's place within the city.

Pierre Nora's discussion of *lieux de memoire* examines how history and memory can be embodied by places and how meaning can be localized in these places. Nora argues that history is concerned with "temporal continuities", or events, while memory is bound to "spaces, gestures, images, and objects" (Nora 9). The embodiment of these characteristics is what makes a site a *lieu de memoire*: sites are imbued with meaning because they contain memories (collective or individual) and events. For Nora, these locales must be "material, symbolic, and functional" (Nora 19) and not imagined places; the materiality of a place and an event are necessary for the *lieu de memoire* to operate as such. Nora argues that "it is the exclusion of the event that defines the *lieu de memoire*" (Nora 22) since the event must be a part of history in order for the meaning in these places to be experienced: the event cannot take place at the same time as the site is experienced. The act of experiencing a *lieu de memoire* is hence twofold in that it is both the experience of a material locale and the recollection of an event (or events) that results through the experience of the site.

The work of Connerton, Sheldrake, and Nora show why studies of place and geography are important: place is connected to memory, emplacement is a way of thinking about one's relationship to the outside world, and the materiality of a place is an important part of how that place operates and is experienced. Sarah Beckwith employs Nora's terminology in her study of the *Play* in relation to the pageant route and suggests that the body of the actor, not the performance space, is the *lieu de memoire*. Beckwith problematizes the importance of the route when she argues that

“the acting area had no inherent symbolic significance” (Beckwith 31). The actor’s body, for Beckwith, recalls the material body of Christ (or the other characters) and the events that led to Passion; the actor stands as a substitute for the character they represent and the events of that character’s life resonate through the body of the actor in the performance. What this reading of Nora’s work neglects to address is the relationship between the dramatic space – the fictive localities of the *Play* – and the performance space – the physical locations where the drama is acted out in the street. The dramatic space that is represented through the pageants is made up of a series of biblical localities that are brought to life through the performances whether on the pageant wagons or in the street. The performance space – the pageant route – is rife with its own history and memories and these affect how the audiences receive the performance. Sites like Pavement, as Higgins has shown, offer an opportunity for the dramatic space to be enriched by the performance space and vice versa; the Mercers’ *Doomsday* sheds light on Pavement as a *lieu de memoire* since the materiality of the site and the events that are a part of its day-to-day use are experienced by the audience of the pageant. While the body itself can be a *lieu de memoire* – perhaps as the result of experiencing an event that leaves physical traces – in the case of the *Play*, a reading of the actor’s body as such a site in these performances neglects to see the relationship between the pageants and their theatrical context. This study will use the work of Connerton and Nora as the foundation for understanding the importance of the physical environment of the performances of the pageants: by thinking about the relationship between the performance space and its relationship to the dramatic space depicted in the pageants this study works towards an understanding of the *Play* as a situated performance that cannot be separated from the pageant route.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau explores the materiality of places and how memory plays a role in the construction of places. De Certeau argues that pedestrian movement plays a key role in the experience of place but that this movement is forgotten as a result of the trace that becomes a part of a place's infrastructure:

Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by. The operation of walking...is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map...Itself visible, it had the effect of making invisible the operation that made it possible. These fixations constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten. (de Certeau 97)

The fixation with maps and with examining the trace of experience – whether footsteps, a paved pathway, or a skyscraper – is, for de Certeau, an act of forgetting since the action of surveying the physical features of a place privileges trace over experience. The tangible infrastructure, even in the form of ruins, is privileged over the long invisible act of walking through a space since experience can only be measured by trace and memory. A route, although now paved and surrounded by buildings, can be measured. In this vein de Certeau emphasizes that memories are a part of these places and as such “haunted places are the only ones people can live in” (de Certeau 108). The experiences of spaces, the memories that are contained there and that tie a person to a locale and through event(s), create liveable places because of these associations. What is forgotten by this creation is the experience that was

responsible for this transformation. De Certeau's effort to think about the inception of places as originating in an act – a movement through a space and the trace that such a movement creates – is the basis for understanding that all places are created and imbued with meaning through the act of human interaction with a space. This understanding of human geography is the foundation for understanding why places are important: places are created through acts and thus the topography of the pageant route – and, by extension, medieval York – is a product of lived experience.

What de Certeau's discussion of place emphasizes is the difference between how a space is defined in relation to a place and this is a key part of how this study will treat geography in relation to the pageants. In Tim Cresswell's survey of human geography, he defines space as abstract and void of meaning while place is the result of experience and meaning: "when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way...it becomes a place" (Cresswell, *Place* 10). Place, too, is constructed through experience since the movement through space is the first step to this investment. A place need not have a built environment in order to qualify; the association is based on experience and, by extension, memory so its main condition is that it is a meaningful location. A *lieu de memoire* is only one type of place though place, by its most basic definition, is the antithesis of space: "spaces have areas and volumes. Places have space between them" (Cresswell, *Place* 8). As Yi-Fu Tuan has shown, 'space' and 'place' as concepts can also be associated with time: "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 6). These distinctions between the definitions of 'space' and 'place' will be employed throughout this study as a way of distinguishing between different ways of thinking about site in the performances.

John Agnew's categorization of places is useful for this study in that it allows for a more specific application of terminology that is especially useful in a study of site-specific material. Agnew describes three ways of thinking about place: location, locale, and sense of place. Location refers to the 'where' – in the sense of co-ordinates – while locale refers to the "material setting for social relations" (Cresswell, *Place* 7) – the concrete form that makes up the place. Sense of place, then, is the "subjective and emotional attachment that people have to place" (Cresswell, *Place* 7). The first two terms are especially useful when attempting to situate the *Play* within its material setting though the third will be less explicitly addressed since it is beyond the scope of this study to assume the exact sense of place that a medieval audience of the *Play* might experience over the course of a performance. Assumptions about audience experience can only be limited to the available documentary and archaeological evidence and therefore the sense of place for such a performance can only be speculative at best.<sup>24</sup> What should be mentioned, however, is that this study will seek to address two of the three main strands of scholarship about the study of place: the descriptive approach and the social constructionist approach. The first is characterised by the study of the physical features of a place including the architecture and infrastructure of a place. This will be a part of the study of the archaeological material in "Mapping the City" and practical issues of staging in "Mechanics of Performance". The second is characterised by examining how these physical features and particularities could be "instances of more general underlying social processes" (Cresswell, *Place* 51). How a particular building is designed or used can tell us about wider socio-economic factors such as social demographic. The phenomenological approach to place – that

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<sup>24</sup> John McGavin and Greg Walker discuss audiences and spectatorship in their most recent publication *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage*.

which “seeks to define the essence of human existence as one that is necessarily and importantly ‘in-place’” (Cresswell 51) – will not be a major focus in this study but is partly the basis for why the second strand of scholarship – the social constructionist approach – is an important factor for examining the *York Play* through the lens of human geography. Those who were a part of the pageants – whether as players, patrons, or audiences – were inherently associated with the places where these performances took place and hence their daily interactions with these places – as locations, locales, *lieux de memoire* – influence their reception of the pageants.

Since these are the generally accepted definitions of these terms among human geographers, I will be employing ‘space’ and ‘place’ accordingly and not as interchangeable terms throughout this study. Phrases such as ‘spatial aesthetics’ and ‘architectural space’ will refer to the material area (whether of the audience or the performance space) and neither implies that the site in question is a ‘space’ void of meaning. Likewise, as has been mentioned above, the term ‘performance space’ will be used to refer to the physical and practical place where the performance occurs (in the street) while ‘dramatic space’ will refer to the fictive locality that is a part of the fictional setting of the performance (such as Bethlehem or Jerusalem) (McAuley, *Space in Performance* 18-19).

Robert Weimann’s work on the *locus* and *platea* has had a major influence on how concepts of space have been addressed in the scholarship of medieval drama but often the usage of these terms is restricted to stage geography. Weimann’s definitions echo the differences in stage geography to a certain extent: *locus* refers to “a more or less fixed and focused scenic unit” while *platea* refers to “an entirely nonrepresentational and unlocalized setting” (Weimann 79). In the case of cycle drama, the *locus* might refer to the structures on a pageant wagon such as the manger



or Herod's court while the *platea* refers to the broader area that includes the street occupied by the audience. For Weimann, certain characters take on particular characteristics based on whether they are associated with the *locus* or *platea* (Weimann 80-83) and, although the differences between these two types of space are significant in terms of audience reception and interaction, their treatment as geographical locations is problematic: "both *locus* and *platea* are related to specific locations and types of action and acting, but each is meaningless without the functioning assumptions of the other" (Weimann 81). When used to address stage geography, these terms become problematic because they imply a clear separation between the two types of location. In reality, the performance space and its relationship to the dramatic space is ever changing during a performance even in short productions: it is difficult to draw a strict division between the *locus* and the *platea* especially in instances where a performance takes place entirely in the street or without tangible set pieces. Even the suggestion that certain characters take on particular characteristics because they occupy either the *locus* or *platea* implies that, when a character moves from one to other – across a threshold, so to speak – that the character's attributes are altered in some way. Weimann employs a range of examples from drama across genres from liturgical drama, pageant performances, interludes, and productions from early modern theatres but such a broad study seems to ignore the differences between methods of performance. While a performance in a theatre might demarcate stricter boundaries between audience and player, the *York Play's* audience does not follow such a model especially since these audiences occupied different areas simultaneous (the street, the scaffolds, or the indoor chambers for example); the mechanics of street performance with or without pageant wagons follows different conventions from those in the commercial theatre of the

early modern period.

Erika Lin critiques Weimann's model when she offers the suggestion that seeing these terms as "presentational dynamics of performance" (Lin 294) rather than as stage geography allows for a more nuanced use of the terminology than the manner that is often employed by scholars of medieval drama. The fact that, as Weimann himself notes, "the permanent tension between fictive locality and public place" (Weimann 80) is ever present in performance, is argument enough to revisit these boundaries in how the performance space interacts with the dramatic space in the performances of the *York Play*. In this study, *locus* and *platea* will not be used to refer to the staging conventions of these pageants as they are often used in discussions of stage geography. The terminology offered by the human geographers and philosophers presented above provide a more succinct language for discussing the relationship between the pageants and their performance space during the medieval period. Furthermore, the terminology offered by these texts are more often than not the basis for how place is addressed in archaeology and theatre studies especially in the work of Mike Pearson, Michael Shanks, and Gay McAuley, cited in the introduction. For the sake of continuity and in an attempt to explore how the pageants interact with their performance space and how the fictive localities from the dramatic space are at play with the city's archaeology, it seems more appropriate to move ahead with such a study by using the terminology employed by those who are concerned with practical performance and its intersection with geography.

The next chapter on "Mapping the City" will address the topography of York and will outline some of the key features of the urban landscape in an attempt to lay the groundwork for the larger discussion of the city's relationship to the performances of the *Play*. Particular sites along the pageant route will be explored

and the general uses of these sites will be examined as locales that were a part of the physical makeup of the day-to-day places that the players and audiences of the pageants occupied. The chapter that follows on from the discussion of topography will address the “Mechanics of Performance”: the use of pageant wagons and the practical details that were essential to turning these texts into performances. A detailed look at the extant documentary evidence as well as some discussion of the modern productions of the pageants will help to situate the practical details that come together in the performances. The three case studies that are the climax of this study synthesize the study of the medieval topography and archaeology of York, the mechanics of performance, the documentary evidence from the extant records, and the theoretical material on human geography to show how the performances of specific groups of pageants interact with medieval York and its pageant route. Each case study will address a different element of the *Play*’s spatial relationship to the pageant route. “Intersecting Places” will focus on the relationship between the dramatic spaces in consecutive pageants and how tandem performances of these pageants presents an opportunity for the different groups to work together on their productions. “Particularity and Locality” will focus on how an audience’s experience of the trial pageants is particularly enriched by the particularity of a performance at the stopping place in front of the Minster Gates. The final case study on “Movement Through the City” explores the possibilities when the dramatic spaces of the pageants are situated between places.

At the heart of the study is an understanding that the primary audience for the *York Play* are those spectators who watched and heard the pageants as they played in the streets of medieval York; the streets that bore the productions were an integral part of these audiences’ experiences of the pageants. While the architectural space of

the pageant route evolved over the nearly two hundred years of extant evidence for the pageants, the *Play* itself was shaped by the city. The streets of medieval York shaped how the *Play* was performed, who saw or heard the pageants, and the experiences of both audiences and players of these pre-modern productions. This study negotiates a balance between a theoretical understanding of space and human geography with the practical understanding of staged performance.

## Mapping the City

In his discussion of places and their significance Tim Cresswell posits that places are “centers of meaning” and that “they are combinations of the material and mental and cannot be reduced to either” (*In Place/Out of Place* 13). Within this theoretical framework the significance of a place is articulated through our experience of it as a thing that is both physical – a narrow cobbled street, a timber-framed house with jettied storeys, a closed gate preventing entry to a site – and at once a thing that is constructed in our minds – through memories, past experiences, or even our imagination. The transformation of a space into a place is one that is most easily articulated by the presence of physical traces: we can tell if someone has experienced a site or if an event has occurred at a locale because of alterations to its physicality. In the simplest of terms, “placeness” – that which endows a space with meaning – can be seen through material trace.

The presence of a cobbled street suggests the need for a pathway as well as the means to create it: the pathway is used regularly enough to require paving, access to the material required to construct the pathway is made possible through trade or proximity, and such a physical structure is made possible through the employment of a craftsman capable of constructing the street. A timber-framed house can be seen in similar terms: there is a need for enclosed domestic space, wood is readily available as a natural resource, and a craftsman capable of constructing such a property is present to build the house. A gate, too, requires the presence of skilled labour and specific materials, but its general function is to block access to a building or a street – a physical embodiment of exclusion from a place. All of these things – the street, the house, and the gate – are material objects that cannot exist outside of their practical function. Although the street provides a roadway between places, it

also suggests to the user that he or she has the freedom to move between these places and that the paved pathway is the easiest way to get to these other locales. A house is at once a shelter from the elements but can also function as a workplace – a locale where money and goods exchange hands – as well as a haven from society. When closed, a gate excludes those who do not have a key from entering a locale and it prevents those on the other side of the gate from leaving – in either scenario, its closure implies exclusion.

Because of this strong relationship between the materiality of a place – that which is evident through physical traces – and its function, in this section I will explore the general topography of York by looking at archaeological documents that trace the physical evidence of its placeness. These sites cannot be studied independently of their association with memory or even cultural meaning because of their status as places: their materiality and their social significance are intertwined. Medieval York was a very important city not just as a gate to the Northern provinces: as Rees Jones argues, “the evidence for York suggests an initial thoroughgoing attempt to create an infrastructure that could have turned York into a royal capital in the north” (Rees Jones, *York* 102). In the time when Corpus Christi was making its way into the cultural memory of York in the later fourteenth century “the designers of the Gough map still depicted York as the central place in Greater Britain and it was the only city other than London to have its name written in gold” (Rees Jones, *York* 127). The importance of York and its relationship to the rest of Britain as a centre for trade and ecclesiastical wealth should not be understated but the local communities and particularity of its infrastructure plays a key role in the performances of the Corpus Christi pageants. The aim of this section is to examine the medieval city of York with a specific focus on evidence within the timeframe of

the known performance dates of the *Play*: 1377 to 1569. Where necessary there will be some references to York's archaeology before this period in cases where a site's significance continues through the period of the *Play*.

My exploration of the city's topography will focus on the various guildhalls, religious houses, and other more public *lieux de memoire* because of the wider social significance of such structures. There will be some discussion of domestic buildings in relation to the communities that were concentrated around York but much of the discussion will be around the varied non-domestic sites that would have been widely known to the citizens of York as a way of highlighting the city's placeness. The *Corpus Christi Play* is itself a public civic event and as such it is appropriate that the focus of this archaeological exploration is on buildings and areas within the city whose functions were widely known to the *Play*'s audiences. Because of the length of this study it is not possible to go into great detail about the physical features of each site. The five volumes of the *Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York*<sup>25</sup> provide details about the types of materials used for each building as well as floor plans where possible. I will be summarizing information from these volumes and those by Angelo Raine, Barrie Dobson, Gareth Dean, Sarah Rees Jones, and others, as well as some evidence from the *Victoria County Histories* where appropriate.

Angelo Raine's study of York's medieval topography is especially valuable in that it traces through the medieval (and, sometimes, Roman) uses of particular buildings and streets. Raine's exploration excludes archaeological evidence within the liberty of the Minster and includes extant evidence from wills that name parish churches as beneficiaries. For the most part, there is a consensus that Raine's study

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<sup>25</sup> I will be using *RCHME* to refer to *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York* (as it was produced by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England), using reference to volume and page number.

is accurate but where new evidence has come to light I have cited material from the *RCHME*. The *RCHME* consolidates evidence from archaeological digs as well as documentary evidence both from archival material and in previous studies of York<sup>26</sup> and the material is arranged geographically and by building type and where possible photographs and plans of some buildings have been included. Gareth Dean has produced the most current study of medieval York and his exploration incorporates evidence from the *RCHME* as well as more recent studies of York's archaeology to create a more complete picture of the city's social history in relation to its topography. Dean's approach moves beyond the *RCHME*'s study of the materiality of buildings towards an examination of evidence such as where in the city particular crafts or guilds were concentrated. Sarah Rees Jones' recent study of York in the period just prior to the performances of the pageants will also be consulted heavily especially where it provides context for York's topography in the fourteenth century.

The main difficulty with examining such material lies in the presentation of topographical data in a narrative format. I will begin by describing the area of York that makes up the pageant route and its infrastructure and the pageant route will form the structural outline for the first section. The second part of the chapter will address some of the city's important religious houses, parish churches, guildhalls, and the relationships that the guilds had to particular areas of the city. I will briefly explore the concept of jurisdiction but this will feature more heavily in the second case study "Particularity and Locality". The complexity of jurisdictional boundaries is such that without fixed boundary markers and gates that prevent the entrance of certain citizens, boundaries are necessarily more fluid than we might perhaps assume.

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<sup>26</sup> An invaluable list of antiquaries and historians of York (with a critical evaluations of these studies) as well as a list of maps produced throughout the years is included in the *RCHME* (*RCHME* III.xxx-xxxiv; *RCHME* III. xxxiv-xxxvi)



Over time many of these buildings were adapted for several purposes and have more than one function owing to the fact that structures such as guildhalls were often connected with a trade or craft guild as well as a religious fraternity. Through this exploration I hope to highlight the *Play*'s physical context in order to further the discussion of how the pageants influence and are influenced by the particularity of medieval York. One reason for exploring these places is to work towards an understanding of why the pageant route follows the path that it does and to explain how that might affect audience reception. By looking at each of these locales and their function within the social context of medieval York we can reconstruct the importance of the places that York's citizens would have engaged with on a daily basis and can explore how an audience of the *Play* might have engaged with its performance sites given its cultural context. The ephemeral nature of performance is such that we cannot know exactly how the *Play* might have looked or the exact mechanics of its delivery; we can, however, explore the meanings behind its physical locale in order to understand the relationship between the pageant route and the placeness of the city. The *Play*, in turn, contributes to the place memory of the pageant route, and the ephemerality of its performance becomes integral to the placeness of the city.

#### The Built Environment and the Pageant Route<sup>27</sup>

In his examination of York's medieval archaeology Angelo Raine tells us that the city walls are set on the Norman mound and that the four main bars – Micklegate (A3), Bootham (B2), Monk (C2), and Walmgate (D4) – as well as some of the posterns are mentioned in documents from the middle of the twelfth century

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<sup>27</sup> A copy of Twycross' map with an outline of the pageant route marked with twelve playing stations has been reproduced in Appendix A. Sites will be accompanied by a grid reference from Stell's map which has also been reproduced in Appendix A. A list of street names in medieval York can be found in Stell, *York Bridgemasters' Accounts* 478-84.

(Raine xi). The building of the medieval walls began in the early thirteenth century except for those around Walmgate which were not constructed until 1345 and the bars were initially arched openings in the mound that had superstructures added to them during Edward III's reign (Raine xi).<sup>28</sup> Near to each gate was a watchman's house where keys to the gates were kept after dark and jurisdiction over the walls was under the respective parish through which they passed and were kept under the supervision of a Muremaster (Raine xi).<sup>29</sup> Records show that the bars were sometimes used as prisons as Monk Bar was in 1577 (Raine 9) and that they emphasized the legal authority of the city through the stocks and whipping posts that were placed next to them (Dean 49).<sup>30</sup> We also know that "royal authority was shown through the display of heads and body parts of traitors and rebels on the gates, normally Micklegate" – the heads of Sir Henry Percy (Hotspur), killed in 1403, and Richard Duke of York, killed at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460, were both displayed here (Dean 50).

The medieval performances of the *York Play* were bound within these walls and the complicated history of the gates as both through-ways to the city and as markers of the legal consequences of transgression makes sites like Micklegate Bar interesting *lieux de memoire* in relation to the *Play*.<sup>31</sup> Micklegate is the only bar that is visible from any point on the pageant route and was perhaps the most significant

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<sup>28</sup> Each gate had a barbican and a portcullis that could be lowered in an emergency and today the portcullis survives on all four bars though only the one on Monk Bar is in working order (Dean 59). Only Walmgate Bar retains its barbican, portcullis and inner wooden gates that probably date from the fifteenth century (Dean 60).

<sup>29</sup> A list of the city officials that were responsible for maintaining the walls can be found in *RCHME* II.174.

<sup>30</sup> There were also gallows located at the outer limits of the jurisdictional boundaries beyond the walls: St. Leonard's gallows were located at Garrow Hill (SE of the city walls), St. Mary's Abbey had one close to Burton Stone Lane (NW of the city walls), and the city had one in Knavesmire (SW of the city wall) (Dean 44) and these were meant to pose a warning to those who wished to cause trouble.

<sup>31</sup> See Haddad "Locating the Drama: Micklegate Bar and the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem*" for a discussion of the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem* in relation to Micklegate Bar.

of the bars because of its location: it is the main entrance to the city from the south and those travelling through York from London – including the numerous royal entries – would have to enter the city at Micklegate. The bar was the strongest of the four in 1569 and after a house was built above the archway its rent was higher than any of the other bars in the city (Raine 27).<sup>32</sup> From a military standpoint breaching Micklegate was difficult and, if successful, gave intruders access to one side of the city; in order to attack the other half intruders would have to cross the Ouse which at that stage had only one bridge connecting the two parts of the city. Most importantly for the *York Play*, Micklegate was also the bar that is nearest to the starting point of the pageant route and was visible from the first stopping place of the *Play*. After the players assembled near Toft Green (A3) – which is also the place where many of the wagons were stored during the year – each group would make its way down Micklegate and stop to perform within sight of the bar and in front of the gates of Holy Trinity Priory (A3), one of the largest religious houses in the city.

Holy Trinity Priory was established as a Benedictine monastic house before the Norman Conquest and it remains the only monastic church in York that is still in use today (Dean 88). From 1538 until its last medieval production this is where the Common Clerk would stand to check the Register against the performances of the *Play*. It is worth suggesting here that although the priory was under alien rule until the first half of the fifteenth century it is on account of both its location – just within the city walls and on the only main road that led to the centre of York – and its close ties to its local vicinity that its gates were used as a stopping place for the *Play*.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Rents paid for the house above Micklegate Bar can be found throughout the Bridgmeasters' account rolls edited by Phillip Stell.

<sup>33</sup> In 1089 Holy Trinity Priory was given to the abbey of Marmoutier in France (Dean 88) and it was under foreign control until 1426, when it was granted independence from its parent abbey on the continent (Dean 90). Holy Trinity was a small house with only about a dozen monks who were mostly drawn from the close vicinity: the last prior, Richard Speght, was ordained in 1510 and was probably

Bishopshill (A3), the area behind Holy Trinity Priory, is home to two parish churches and in the fifteenth century the neighbourhood became “largely dominated by gentry houses” (Rees Jones, *York* 131).<sup>34</sup>

The route for the *Play* continues down Micklegate – a steep hill that would require some consideration from those who designed and operated the pageant wagons – and passed in front of several parish churches. Although there is no stopping place on Ouse Bridge (B3), the history of the bridge itself in relation to York’s local history is worth mentioning here. As Sarah Rees Jones points out,

the construction of a stone bridge on the site of Ouse Bridge is firmly associated with the re-entry of Archbishop William Fitzherbert into York in 1155, his miraculous intervention in restoring to life a boy killed as the old timber bridge collapsed, and the subsequent development of his cult as a saint after 1170 (Rees Jones, *York* 95).

The cult of William of York was an important part of York’s medieval history and is the subject of a window in the Minster; as far as the bridge is concerned, a stone bridge was built following the collapse and by 1228 the chapel – located on the north side of the bridge near Bridge Street – was rededicated to St. William. As Rees Jones argues, this history of the bridge is particularly important in relation to York’s social history in the Middle Ages since the chapel, dedicated to the late archbishop, is located

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born in the parish of Micklegate (Dean 90). The Priory held many properties throughout the city whose rents were used to provide an income for the priory, including Nos. 99-111 Micklegate (A3) (along the precinct wall), Nos. 85-89 Micklegate (A3), and Jacob’s Well in Trinity Lane (A3) (built in the fifteenth century perhaps to house a chantry priest or someone of similar standing) (*RCHME* III.lxii). The priory also held the advowson to at least one parish church, St. Cuthbert’s in Peaseholme Green (C2), from 1238 until the patronage passed to the Crown in the dissolution (*RCHME* V.12).

<sup>34</sup> See also Rees Jones, “Richard Scrope, the Bolton Hours and the Church of St Martin in Micklegate”, 230–2.

on the stone bridge midway between the royal house and castle, in the very centre of the king's fee, [and] was a powerful reminder of the continued allegiance to and influence of the church and its local saints...the very narrative of the reconstruction of St William's Bridge in the turbulent years of the later twelfth century, and the fact of its endowment as a place of civic government in the decades around 1300, emphasized the triumph of the citizens in their control of urban space in York, and enabled them to assert their independence from the secular lordship of the crown, and eventually the church too.

(Rees Jones, *York* 233)

The earliest evidence of the performances of the *Play* survives from the late fourteenth century and this association of an important local saint with such an important piece of the city's infrastructure is a part of the collective place memory of the local audiences of the *Play*. To the west of the chapel on the bridge stood the City Council Chamber, which could be reached through the chapel, and there were a number of gaols, houses and shops situated on the bridge as well as an alms-house for women (*RCHME* III.49). During the week fishermen sold fresh and salted fish such as salmon, herring, oysters and mussels on Ouse Bridge (Dean 152). In the winter of 1564-65 the bridge collapsed another time and although it was eventually reconstructed from stone the *Play* was not performed in that year because the bridge could not be used.

After crossing Ouse Bridge, the *Play* turned left on to Spurriergate (B3) which turns into Coney Street (the King's Street) and which in the late twelfth century included a number of properties that were owned or rented by royal officials

(Rees Jones, *York* 107).<sup>35</sup> By the fourteenth century, however, houses that were occupied by the gentry were dispersed around the city in areas around Monkgate (C2), Walmgate (D4), and Aldwark (C2), as well as Petergate (B2) and Bootham (B2) and these areas “replaced Coney Street as the preferred places for gentry town houses” (Rees Jones, *York* 131). Towards the end of Coney Street lies the Common Hall (or Guildhall) (B3). There had been a guildhall at this location since at least 1256 and the civic administration of the city was divided between this location and the Council Chamber on Ouse Bridge. In 1445 and 1448 the mayoral elections took place at the Franciscan Friary (B3) which suggests that the Guildhall was being reconstructed at that stage and the reconstruction was not yet complete (*RCHME* V.77). The cost of the hall was raised through various bequests but it was the shared partnership between the Guild of St. Christopher (recently united with the Guild of St. George) and the Mayor and Commonality of York who provided the adequate funds for the rebuilding project. The land belonged to the Corporation but the agreement with the Guild of St. Christopher was such that

the guild should have the right to use the hall, buttery and pantry on the feast day of St. James, when the feast of St. Christopher was also celebrated in York, and five days before and after, to keep wine in the cellar, and share the rents of the cellar if it were let. The guild also received a grant from the Corporation of land E. of the Guildhall on which its chapel and a *maison dieu* were later built. (*RCHME* V.77)

The building was complete enough in 1459 to hold a meeting (*RCHME* V.77). This was, of course, the site where the mayoral party held its feast during Corpus Christi:

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<sup>35</sup> Until the late thirteenth century there was a synagogue located on Coney Street and in the late twelfth century many Jewish families also “settled in Coney Street, or the adjacent street of Bretgate (which took on the prefix Jew in reflection of the number of Jewish homes in the neighbourhood: Jewbretgate now Jubbergate)” (Rees Jones, *York* 108).

the east elevation of the hall runs parallel to Common Hall Lane and faces the intersection of Coney Street with Stonegate (B3).<sup>36</sup>

From the end of Coney Street the *Play* would turn right on to Stonegate (B2) and make its way past St. Helen's, the parish church of the glaziers. In the first half of the fourteenth century the top of Stonegate was occupied by some of the wealthier family mansions (Rees Jones, *York* 309) and the industry in this area, as well as some of the northern suburbs of the city around Monk Bar (C2), was heavily influenced by the Minster community:

parchment-making, metal-working, goldsmithing, and high-end retail and hospitality services catered to some degree to the consumption patterns of the Minster community and its many visitors, but they also developed their own independent commercial momentum, almost ensuring (with some slight poetic licence) that Stonegate was to remain the most expensive shopping street in northern England down to the present day. (Rees Jones, *York* 314)

There is a logic to the placement of the retail and hospitality services that were available in this part of the city since the Dean and Chapter would employ many of these shops and services in the daily running of the Minster community. At the end of Stonegate is the Minster Gates (B2), one of the main entrances into the Minster precincts and one of the stopping places of the *Play*. The chamber above the Minster Gates is where the Dean and Chapter are known to have hosted their Corpus Christi celebrations on a number of occasions – a discussion I will return to in my case study of the Trial pageants – and in at least one instance the Archbishop of York attended these celebrations.

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<sup>36</sup> Plans of the main building are available in *RCHME* V.81.

The Minster Gates were located at Lop Lane (B2) at the intersection with Petergate and this main gate, which is no longer standing, was once “part of a range of buildings including the Peter Prison, the gaol of the Dean and Chapter” (Dean 73). Within the Close were buildings that housed the holders of some of the main posts of the Dean and Chapter: the archbishop, dean, precentor, chancellor, and treasurer among others. The Minster – located within the northernmost point of the city walls – was, of course, the most powerful of the religious houses in York during the height of the *Play*’s popularity and is dedicated to St. Peter. The Liberty of St. Peter – the area of the city where the Minster was located – “was independent from the civic authorities and comprised the Archbishop’s holdings within the city” (Dean 73). The Archbishop’s control to a certain degree did, however, extend beyond the liberty of the Minster to include the various parish churches whose advowson was held by the Dean and Chapter. The present building, which was begun in the eleventh century, is constructed atop the Roman fortress, the remains of which can be seen today in the crypt, and was reconsecrated in 1472 when it was considered complete (Dobson 131). Unlike the usual north-east/south-west alignment of York’s churches the Minster is aligned east-west. Attached to the Minster is the Chapter House which houses some of the most intricately worked medieval stained glass to survive the Reformation. Inside the Minster itself are a number of noteworthy survivors of the Reformation, not the least of which is John Thornton’s Great East Window in the Lady Chapel which takes as its subject the first and last books of the bible and is the largest piece of medieval stained glass to survive the Reformation.

In addition to its large scale and the intricate detail of its fabric the Minster is the seat of the Archbishop of York and, to some degree, it is still in competition with its rival, Canterbury. Dean has suggested that one way of competing with Canterbury



was for York to secure the canonisation of Archbishop William FitzHerbert in order to rival the canonisation of Thomas Becket in 1173 (Dean 71). Becket's shrine drew pilgrims from all over the country and it was perhaps with this in mind that efforts were made to heighten York's status on the pilgrimage radar by acquiring a high-status saint. William FitzHerbert was canonized in 1226 and his body was moved to a new shrine behind the high altar in 1284 and some of the fragments of the shrine have been found in Precentor's Court (B2) where they were presumably buried during the Reformation (Dean 72).<sup>37</sup> Although the shrine of St. William never achieved the status of Becket's shrine at Canterbury, his canonisation did, nevertheless, affect the fabric of the Minster: Dean posits that the building of the transepts in the early thirteenth century may be explained by the Minster's acquisition of a saint (Dean 72).<sup>38</sup> The enlargement of the Minster during this period was perhaps done in order to accommodate the projected pilgrims that would visit the shrine.

On reaching the Minster Gates at the end of Stonegate (B2), the pageants would turn right on to Low Petergate which was also associated with more upmarket shops including goldsmiths and apothecaries as well as a number of taverns (Rees Jones, *York* 304). In this period Low Petergate was not, however, an area that was made up of exclusively respectable dealings: the pageant route passed the intersecting street of Grapecuntlane (now Grape Lane) which had a reputation for its resident sexworkers (Rees Jones, *York* 309). After moving through Low Petergate and passing Holy Trinity church (B2), the wagons turned on to Pavement (C3) at the

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<sup>37</sup> The Saint William Window in York Minster, c. 1414, tells the story of his miracles. Christopher Norton discusses the competition between York and Canterbury in more detail in his exploration of one miracle of St. William that claims a pilgrim who was not healed at Becket's shrine decided to travel to York where he was healed at the shrine of St. William (Norton 153).

<sup>38</sup> It is surprising that although York's patron saint is St. William, the extant records from wills reprinted in Raine's text suggest that there were more altars dedicated to St. Thomas Becket in York than those dedicated to St. William.

end of Colliergate and reached the site of St. Crux (C3). St. Crux is one of the few churches in York that is mentioned in the Domesday Book and in the middle ages the church was the second most popular church for the burial of mayors at 29 (Raine 177). By the twelfth century its advowson was held by St. Mary's Abbey (A2) until it was passed to the crown in the Dissolution (*RCHME* V. 11). The area of Pavement was also home to All Saints', Pavement (B3) which was founded in the tenth century and its advowson was initially held by the Prior of Durham until the Dissolution when it was passed to the Crown (*VCH: York* 365-404). All Saints', Pavement is said to have been one of the wealthiest parishes and indeed has the highest number of York mayors buried within its walls: 43 (Dean 85). Its location near the marketplace heightened its importance and during the fifteenth century council meetings were frequently held at the church (Dean 85). The fact that both of these churches have such a high number of burials of mayors tells us that they were favoured as places of burial by those who held high offices within the civic structure of medieval York. The location of these churches is, however, also a major factor in their wealth. Pavement (C3) – located between these two churches – was the main marketplace in medieval York as well as the location of punishments and public proclamations in the city. There was a pillory here and it was here that, in 1572, the Duke of Northumberland was beheaded for his part in the Rising in the North (Raine 178). Pavement was also one of the wealthiest areas in the city and was "lined with houses, shops and storehouses of rich York merchants" (Raine 177). Given the Mercers' involvement in York's civic governance, it is not surprising that these two parishes were chosen for burials by York's elite mercantile class: Dobson tells us that "of the eighty-eight different individuals who held the office of mayor between 1399 and 1509, three were drapers, four were grocers and five were dyers – but no

less than sixty-eight were merchants or mercers of the city” (Dobson, “Late Medieval York” 127). The proximity of these churches to the living spaces of the city’s ruling class is thus an important factor in their success throughout the period of the *Play*’s performance.

### Beyond the Pageant Route

While understanding the *Play*’s pageant route and its built environment is an important part of realizing the relationship between the performances and the city of York, there are a number of other important sites in the city that should be mentioned in order to present a fuller picture of the *Play*’s setting. Among these sites is the largest medieval hospital in York that was established just before the conquest and was known as St. Peter’s Hospital until the thirteenth century when it became St. Leonard’s (A2). We know from thirteenth and fourteenth-century records that there were thirteen chaplain brothers (Austin Canons), eight regular sisters, thirty choristers, as well as several servants (*RCHME* V.94). The records also show that there were “206 beds for the sick, endowed by private benefaction, and in 1346 the ‘barnhouse’ under the infirmary was to be converted into a nursery for children” (*RCHME* V.94). The hospital held the advowson for at least two parish churches in York and after the Dissolution the site became the royal mint for a short time.

Perhaps most importantly, St. Leonard’s role in the Corpus Christi procession is first mentioned in the civic records in 1388 (*REED: York* 5-6).<sup>39</sup> As has already been mentioned, the procession of the Host followed the same route as the pageants until the end of Stonegate (B2), where the procession entered the Minster precincts through the Minster Gates. Although what occurred while the procession was in the

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<sup>39</sup> For details about the procession of Corpus Christi in York see Johnston, “The Guild of Corpus Christi and the Procession of Corpus Christi in York”; Cowling, “The Liturgical Procession of Corpus Christi in Medieval York”; and Weissengruber, “The Corpus Christi Procession in Medieval York: A Symbolic Struggle in Public Space”.

Minster is unknown, the procession would move from the Minster to St. Leonard's along Lop Lane (now Duncombe Place) where the Host was placed in the hospital church in a spectacular combination of civic and liturgical representation:

Torch-bearing representatives of the crafts and the Corpus Christi gild, together with the mayor and the corporation and a multitude of priests, must all therefore have arrived annually at St Leonard's for the termination of the procession. (*The York Plays*, Vol. II 138)<sup>40</sup>

As the final stopping place for the procession of the Host, St. Leonard's could easily be seen as a holy site second only to the Minster in its importance during the Feast of Corpus Christi in medieval York.

Unlike most of the other pageants listed in the *Ordo Paginarum* that were produced by a trade or craft guild, the *Purification of the Virgin* (17) was produced by St. Leonard's hospital from the early fifteenth century until perhaps the mid-fifteenth century when the hospital's financial situation became problematic.<sup>41</sup> St. Leonard's also occasionally leased the playing station at the intersection of Coney Street with Stonegate in association with a number of other groups in 1454, 1468, 1499, and 1516 (*REED: York* 85, 101, 180, and 213). The Austin friars were one of the groups included in the lease of the same stopping place in 1454 and the Fraternity of St. Christopher was included in the lease in 1468 and in both cases this

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<sup>40</sup> See also *REED: York* 12, 42-43.

<sup>41</sup> There were no provisions for inclusion of *The Purification* in the Register when it was compiled in the mid-1470s which suggests that for a short time the pageant was not a part of the annual performance. The pageant was reassigned to the Masons with contributions from the Labourers and a group of other crafts sometime in 1477-78 and a version of the pageant – which differs from the description given in the *Ordo* – was recorded in the Register by John Clerke in 1567 (see Beadle, *York Plays*, Vol. II 136-39). Another religious community with strong ties to the pageants is the Vicars Choral of York Minster who were based in Bedern and who owned two tileworks: one near North Street Postern (in 1410) outside the walls (A3) and another east of the Foss at Spitalfields (by 1416). There is strong evidence to suggest that the Vicars Choral contributed financially to the Tilemakers' *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement* (33) even though they were not practitioners of the craft (see Chambers, Albert F. "The Vicars Choral of York Minster and the Tilemakers' Corpus Christi Pageant"; and *REED: York* 36, 37, and 44).

is unsurprising given that the both groups held property in the area. The Augustinian Friary (B2) was the last of the four mendicant orders to be established in York when it was founded in 1272 and was located on a very small site near the Guildhall between Lendal (then called Old Coney Street) and the Ouse.<sup>42</sup> The gate to the friary faced Old Coney Street so the fact that it is mentioned as one of the lease holders to the station with St. Leonard's is appropriate although the vague description of those who held the station lease with St. Leonard's after this date suggests that the Austin friars may or may not have continued their involvement as station holders before the house was suppressed in 1538 (*RCHME* V.50). The inclusion of the Fraternity of St. Christopher in the lease of the same playing station is a nod to the fraternity's affiliation with the Guildhall that faced the playing station and suggests that the members of the fraternity were perhaps also a part of the festivities at the Guildhall that year. The joint lease-hold between these groups suggests that they had some working relationship even if under the guise of a mutually beneficial financial incentive to lease the station as a group. The choice to lease this particular station on the pageant route would act as a kind of advertisement of these groups' association with this particular area of the city while simultaneously exhibiting the support of the Corpus Christi festivities by St. Leonard's hospital, the Austin friars, and the Fraternity of St. Christopher if only for a short time during the middle ages.

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<sup>42</sup> The Dominicans were the first to arrive in York in the early thirteenth century and in 1228 Henry III gave them an area of land near Tanner Row (A3) as well as the former Royal Free Chapel that was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene (Dean 91). The friary had two gates, one facing Toft Green on the west side and the other facing the River Ouse (Dean 91). The Franciscans arrived in York just after the Blackfriars and in 1243 occupied a site just east of the Ouse near Clifford's Tower (B3). The gate opened into Castlegate and was situated near St. Mary Castlegate; Dean also tells us that the friary "was use by the king for accommodation when he visited York and [that] there was a king's chamber within the precinct" (Dean 91). The Carmelites were originally established outside of the walls but in 1295 moved to a site within the walls near Foss Bridge (C3). The gate to the friary was located on its northern end near Pavement (*RCHME* V.50) and although its total area was about the same size as Holy Trinity Priory – larger than the area of any of the other mendicant orders in the city – upon its suppression in 1538 there was only a prior, nine priests and three novices (*RCHME* V. 51). The Carmelites owned a tilery and some have speculated that this might be the one referred to in 1384 in Bakeners Lane, Walmgate (*RCHME* V. xcvi).

This association of St. Leonard's with the procession of the Host as well as the association with the *Play* – as both producers of the *Purification* for a short time and as lease holders of a stopping place – demonstrates one model of how some of the religious communities in York were affiliated with the civic celebrations at Corpus Christi and with the performance sites. Though not a continuous practice across the *Play*'s medieval history, the practice of jointly holding a lease at one of the playing stations near to the hospital certainly is a reminder to audiences (and, indeed, the civic authorities who benefitted financially from the station leases) that the community of St. Leonard's was a strong presence in York even during times of financial hardship. There were a number of other hospitals located in York and just outside the city walls but the other major ones within the walls were located in the various guildhalls which made St. Leonard's the main hospital that was run by a religious community in medieval York.

Outside York's city walls were a number of parish churches and religious houses including St. Clements Priory (B4) and St. Andrew's Priory (C4).<sup>43</sup> The most important of these is St. Mary's Abbey (A2), located just outside Bootham Bar and on the other side of the city wall from St. Leonard's hospital. St. Mary's was by far the most influential of the religious houses in York aside from the Dean and Chapter of the Minster and was established just after the conquest; it was the wealthiest Benedictine monastery in the north of England during the Middle Ages. The abbey held the advowson for several parish churches in York including St. Crux and its precincts rivalled the other monastic houses in York in size at around twelve acres

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<sup>43</sup>Both St. Andrew's Priory and St. Clement's Priory were established during the twelfth century and of the various religious houses in York were the least favoured among those who wished to be buried in either a friary or a monastery (Dean 158). St. Andrew's was a house of Gilbertine monks whose hall was appropriated to the Chapter of York Minster since its first mention in 1194, and in 1586 its parish was united with St. Saviour's after the former was declared redundant (RCHME V. 10). St. Clement's, or Clementhorpe Nunnery, was a small Benedictine house established around 1130 and by the time it was suppressed in 1536 it housed only a prioress, eight nuns and nine servants (Raine 318).

making the abbey an imposing presence on the outside of the city wall and in relation to the other religious communities in York. The abbey was not involved in the performances of the *Play* and did not participate in the procession of the Host since it had its own Corpus Christi procession<sup>44</sup> but its reputation and influence did extend beyond its bounds on a number of occasions: when a dispute arose between the Weavers and the Cordwainers in 1493 over their placement in the civic Corpus Christi procession Henry VII asked Abbot William of St. Mary to mediate the dispute (*REED: York* 169-74).<sup>45</sup> The Mayor was not pleased by the interference of a religious authority in a civic matter but the appeal for the Abbot of St. Mary's to resolve an issue outside of his jurisdiction sends a clear message that the abbey's sway extended beyond its walls. Indeed a number of surviving documents from before this period record a number of disputes between the civic authorities and the abbey (Dean 86) but in the context of York's archaeological history it is important to mention the abbey community as a looming presence outside Bootham Bar and as a locale that both shared a jurisdictional boundary with the city and was at once was isolated from it. Although the influence of the abbey was stifled when it was dissolved and reverted to the crown in 1539, the fact that such an important monastic house was within a few hundred metres of the pageant route but was not involved in such an elaborate annual celebration is worthy of mention.

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<sup>44</sup> An early fifteenth century ordinal from St. Mary's describes the rite of Corpus Christi that was used by the community and which included an outdoor procession (weather permitting) and makes reference to the use of the Palm Sunday procession as the model (Cowling 6-7; '. . . modo quo dictum est Dominica in Ramis Palmarum,' Abbess of Stanbrook and J. B. L. Tolhurst, eds. *The Ordinal and Customary of the Abbey of St. Mary York*, Vol. 75 (1937): 344.

<sup>45</sup> See also Weissengruber's discussion of this incident in "The Corpus Christi Procession in Medieval York: A Symbolic Struggle in Public Space" 128.

For the most part the street names in York tell us a lot about which crafts were practiced and where.<sup>46</sup> The Butchers were concentrated in the Shambles (B3) and their guildhall – while no longer standing – was located near Little Shambles (*RCHME V.xxxv*). On the other side of Shambles is Colliergate (C3), thus named by the fourteenth century after the colliers, while Girdlergate (now Church Street) (B3), Hosier Lane (C3), and Spurriergate (B3) were also named after the resident craftspersons. The mercers and drapers were localized around Fossgate (C3) and many of the textile workers were situated in Walmgate (D3) (though the Merchant Taylors' hall was located near Monk Bar)<sup>47</sup> which is also where the Haberdashers' guild hall was located (*RCHME V.xxxv*). The Tanners were located near North Street on Tanner Row, Barker Tower and Tanners' Moat (A3) while the dyers were also in North Street and on the south west side of the Ouse during the twelfth and fourteenth centuries because of the proximity to water. The skimmers were based near St. Martin, Coney Street (B3) and the glaziers were based around St. Helen's (B2). Other crafts such as cordwainers, bakers, cooks, innkeepers and smiths were scattered in most parishes because they were in constant demand.<sup>48</sup> These guilds made their mark on York's topography, economic and social history through their daily operation but also through their associations with religious fraternities and parish churches that are scattered throughout the city. While York's citizens and visitors were mostly permitted to move freely through the city and between the parish boundaries, the association of particular areas of the city with particular guilds

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<sup>46</sup> A detailed placement of various crafts within the city is available in Gareth Dean's discussion of medieval York (esp. Pp. 117-136). A discussion of guild hierarchies in Europe across the Middle Ages can be found in Sylvia Thrupp's "The Gilds."

<sup>47</sup> The Merchant Taylors' Hall was constructed around 1400 and early on the guild of tailors was associated with the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist; in the sixteenth century the terms "Tailors' Hall" and "St. John's Hall" were interchangeable (*RCHME V.88*). From 1446 there is mention of a *maison dieu* of St. John Baptist in several wills but no early evidence of such a building has been found. Plans of the main building are available in *RCHME V.90*.

<sup>48</sup> The Cordwainers' guild hall – which is no longer standing – was located in Hungate between Haver Lane and Pond Lane (C3) (*RCHME V.xxxv*).



reflects an affiliation with a locale (or a series of locales). This localized connection with a particular area as a result of one's occupation reflects a shared experience of those who participate in a similar trade or craft. The concentrations of particular trade and craft persons in certain areas might to some degree reflect the types of audiences that might be watching the pageants in the area and is one element of the cultural memory of a locale that can be imposed on the production by the audiences.

The known guild halls in medieval York were all located within the bounds of the medieval walls and on the east side of the Ouse, within the main artisanal liberty of the city. Not every craft or trade guild in medieval York was associated with a guild hall and, of the guild halls that were in operation in York during this period, many were not restricted to the use of only one guild. St. Anthony's Hall (C2), for instance, was constructed in the fifteenth century initially for the guild of St. Martin; in 1556 the hall began to be used by guilds that did not have their own guildhall and in 1567 arrangements were made to use the hall as "a workhouse where the poor would be put to weaving" (*RCHME V.91*).<sup>49</sup> Many of the guilds that did not have a hall met in parish churches or even in private houses: it was not a necessity for a guild to have a dedicated building in order for it to operate successfully. The lack of extant evidence has made a general comparison between the wealthy guilds and their less financially secure counterparts impossible so it is difficult to say whether the ownership of a hall by a guild was due to financial standing or in response to operational necessity. Several of the trade and craft guilds were associated with religious fraternities (like the Carpenters and the Fraternity of the Resurrection) and were also affiliated with particular parish churches in which they carried out services or maintained a benefice.

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<sup>49</sup> Plans of the main building are available in *RCHME V.92*.

The Merchant Adventurers' Hall (C3) was constructed during the last half of the fourteenth century and the origin of the company can be traced to the Guild of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary that was licensed in 1357. A hospital was founded in the undercroft of the guild hall almost two decades after the company was licensed and although altered after many years of use the hall still stands today.<sup>50</sup> By the early fifteenth century the mercers were the dominant craft within the guild and in 1430 a new charter was obtained to change the religious guild into a mercers' company (*RCHME* V.82). The hall itself is not visible from the pageant route and unlike the chamber in the Common Hall it was never an optimal location to watch the *Play*. Its position with relation to Pavement (B3) is important because of its proximity to the city's main marketplace and to the grand houses of many members of the mercers' company. Its position near Foss Bridge is ideal because of the fish market that was held there each week and the relationship that the Merchant Adventurers had to the fishing industry. Because of the Mercers' standing in the guild hierarchy and their involvement in York's civic governance, this building is more than just a site that was used by the company for its company matters or affiliated feast days: it marked the centre of a wealthy guild in one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in York and is symbolic of the wealthy ruling class that made up a large portion of the civic government. The Mercers, too, were the producers of the *Doomesday* pageant at Corpus Christi and while their hall is not specifically mentioned in relation to the production it is worth speculating that the hall is perhaps where the decisions about the production – from its finances to the details of the performance – may have been made. Unlike the Common Hall in Coney Street which was used by the Mayor, Aldermen, and other civic officials, this

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<sup>50</sup> Plans of the main building are available in *RCHME* V.85.

hall served the wealthiest of those who were a part of York's trade industry as well as its civic government and the producers of, arguably, one of the most spectacular pageants of the *York Play*.

If we take into account the forty parish churches, the chapels inside and within the immediate vicinity of the city walls, and the various religious houses, it is clear to see that religious communities occupy a large portion of York's medieval topography. Many of these were on the *Play*'s immediate route or at least had gateways or walls that were visible to its audiences from the stopping places: the gates of Holy Trinity Priory (A3); the precinct wall of the Dominican Friary visible from the intersection of Barker Lane with Micklegate (A3); the Minster Gates from Petergate (B2); and the precinct wall of the Carmelite Friary from Pavement (C3). About eleven of the thirty-two parish churches located within the medieval walls are either located on the pageant route or would have been visible from it.<sup>51</sup> Although the parish churches and religious houses were not the explicit performance sites of the *Play*, the general fabric of these buildings was visible to audiences of the *Play* and the significance of these sites – their uses as sacred spaces and locales of congregation – is inherently a part of their material fabric. The material fabric and the daily uses of these buildings impose themselves on the pageant route and for the *Play*'s audiences these buildings are a part of the placeness of the city. Studies of parish records and the fabric of the churches – how and when they were constructed, what possessions were held by the parish (both land as well as moveable inventory), and who paid for these things – emphasize the important relationship between parishioners and their local church. Patronage to one's local parish was not just a sign of religious devotion but a way of advertising one's wealth: indeed, many

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<sup>51</sup> See Dean 79 for a list and map of the parish churches and principal chapels in York.

medieval patron windows survive in York (as they do in other medieval towns) and often these depict images of the patron(s) or a coat of arms to show a kind of ownership over the fabric. An exploration of parish records in York suggests that “most of the donors were local merchants and parochial clergy rather than the nobility” (*RCHME* V.lii), emphasizing that those who lived in the city or within its immediate vicinity were responsible for the material fabric of the parish churches. It was also the local citizens who were responsible for sponsoring the performances of the *Play* during Corpus Christi and, importantly, those who were responsible for the fabric of the churches were also responsible for the performances of the *Play*.

#### Beyond the Built Environment

What is clear in an exploration of York’s medieval topography is that the city is necessarily built upon the relationships between each of the buildings that were constructed within it. As we saw with the examples of St. Crux and All Saints’, Pavement, the clustering of particular citizens in certain parts of the city affects the fabric of the buildings and, in turn, the fabric and ordering of the city as a whole. We know that certain crafts were clustered around particular areas out of practical necessity – the tanners and dyers were both located near the Ouse because of their need for water. Other crafts were located in certain areas out of practicality or, even, as a result of suave marketing – the fish market on Foss Bridge is convenient given the locale of the Merchant Adventurers’ Hall, and the location of goldsmiths, glaziers and booksellers in the centre of the artisanal liberty of the city and near the Minster meant that those responsible for purchasing such wares for the Dean and Chapter (and, indeed, the other religious houses) need not travel far in order to access these crafts. It should be emphasized that although some of the crafts were concentrated in certain parts of the city, this did not mean that the citizens did not

travel between parish boundaries. It is true that each craftsperson was responsible for paying a parish tax in order to practice their craft (aside from those living in the liberties of St. Leonard's, St. Mary's Abbey or the Minster) but this did not necessarily prevent those from different parishes from purchasing their goods from elsewhere.

By looking at some of the important features of the city's topography it is clear to see why the *Play's* pageant route takes the path that it does. For practical reasons there must be as few turns as possible because of the pageant wagons – this route was used by other processions as well – and because the straighter the path through the city, the more the spectacle could be seen by onlookers. The path through Micklegate is to some degree determined by tradition since it was the main entrance to the city from London but it is also a practical one since it leads to the only bridge that crosses the Ouse and is thus the only path to the artisanal core of York. Without forgetting the locale of the city's main warehouses on Toft Green (A3) in relation to Micklegate and their use as a storage space for many of the pageant wagons, we note that from here the pageants would pass by Holy Trinity Priory – one of the largest religious houses in the city and one that had numerous local connections. The *Play* would then cross Ouse Bridge (B3), passing St. William's Chapel, and upon reaching the street of the spurriers the pageants would turn left, passing through one of the wealthiest areas of the city until they arrived at the Common Hall (B3). From here the pageants would turn right, passing through the street that provided the religious houses with their stained glass windows, their rich ornaments and their holy books until they reached the gate of the Minster (B2) – the church that competes only with Canterbury in its status. After turning right at the Minster Gates, the only direction possible because of jurisdictional boundaries

between the Archbishop's liberty and the civic space, the pageants pass through the street of the colliers (C3) before turning right at Pavement, another wealthy area and the site of the public marketplace. The other marketplace in the city – Thursday Market, later called St. Sampson's Square (B3) – was not accessible to the pageants because of its location right in the centre of the city and the narrow roads leading to the square. Many of the important locations in the city were covered by the pageant route: the main gate, the bridge (and site of St. William's miracle), the centre of the civic government, the head of the ecclesiastical houses, and the place of public proclamations and punishments at Pavement.

The main purpose of exploring this topography is to show how the particularities of these buildings – both their fabric as well as their day-to-day uses – affects the direction of the pageant route and also how an audience's reception of the *Play* itself can be affected by its performance in York. I will look at particular examples of such affect in more detail in the case studies but from a general standpoint it is worth reiterating that the guild structure<sup>52</sup> that is present in medieval York – not just within its civic government or performances of the *Play* – is inherently associated with its placeness. Some of the guilds are localized to a particular area of the city and some are not – if guilds or crafts are not localized to a particular area it is because they are more readily a part of the citizens' daily life.

The difficulty with dealing with the archaeology of a medieval city is necessarily that much of the fabric of the buildings that were once known to have existed in the city is no longer standing because of deliberate destruction or the passage of time. We must remember that the *Play* was performed over a period of almost two centuries when the fabric of the city was constantly changing although at

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<sup>52</sup> For studies about labour and guild practices see Rosser's *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages*.

a very slow rate. The Dissolution, as has already been mentioned, was responsible for the suppression of many of the religious houses and the reallocation of various parish advowsons to the Crown. This shift must be considered especially when discussing the later years of the medieval performances. Although the *Play* was performed until the late sixteenth century, the fabric of many of the buildings that it passed by was either deteriorating or being put to other uses from the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The fact that many of the buildings that were discussed here were altered over the medieval period (and later) not just in fabric but also in use is perhaps significant in our discussion of drama. One of the main anxieties of discussing a performance is its ephemerality, as something that cannot be retained because it lacks a material trace and cannot be reconstructed because our memory fails to recall its every detail. Although the exploration of archaeology would at first appear to be a study of permanent structures, we can see from this study of York – a city better preserved than most other English towns – that architecture is itself ephemeral. It is, however, the ephemerality of events and performances that instils a space with meaning and that endows a locale with placeness: there must at once be a trace of something material that can be pitted against the ephemeral so that the ephemeral can be recalled. Without the ephemeral, the material has no value – both are necessary contributors to audience reception and each relies on the other to create meaning.

## The Mechanics of Performance

Having constructed a basic outline of York's medieval topography, I will now turn my attention to some practical matters of staging that are necessarily related to the issue of site-specific performance. One of the primary difficulties of working with the extant evidence of the *Play* is the lack of information related to the construction of the pageant wagons themselves and how precisely they were used in the performances. Outside of the Mercers' indenture of 1433 and a later indenture from 1526 there is very little that survives in the documentary evidence that can tell us how the wagons were constructed and even these documents only give us a very vague description. This lack of evidence has been the primary concern of those who have been involved with modern productions of the pageants since, to a certain extent, it is difficult to even begin blocking a performance without any knowledge of how the playing platform might be designed. The first two volumes of *Medieval English Theatre* were dedicated to the task of exploring pageant wagons and therefore it is not an exaggeration to suggest that in modern criticism the mode of performance has always been brought to the fore of any study of the *York Play*. It is thus worth bringing together some of the documentary evidence in conjunction with the topographical information about medieval York in order to discuss how the latter might influence the construction of the wagons.

In the following pages I will examine the role of the pageant wagons in the *Play* and how these apparatuses help to create the fictive localities of the performance. Historical evidence of how the pageants were staged in the medieval period is limited and the manner in which the wagons were constructed and employed in the *Play* has been hypothesized based largely on testing through modern production. The extant material includes indirect evidence that can help to



construct a picture of how the pageants were staged: rents collected on pageant houses, the Mercers' indentures listing the property given to the company's pageant master, the *Ordo Paginarum*, and an examination of how York's topography might affect the design of the pageant wagons. A consideration of this material can help piece together the practical elements of these wagons such as their size, the types of fixtures that may have been affixed to the wagons, their overall design, how they may have been employed by the actors, and, ultimately, how these practical elements come together to create the imagined places of the *Play*. There have been a number of studies on the modern productions of the *Play* and in the interest of not reproducing such material only some references will be made to modern productions of the pageants where they relate to York's topography, audience sightlines, and stage mechanics. More detailed discussion of the staging of particular pageants in the pageant will be reserved for the case studies that follow.

#### Wagon Storage: The Evidence

The earliest surviving reference to the *Play* appears in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* in 1377 and it notes the payment of rent towards the cost of storing pageant wagons: "For one building in which three Corpus Christi pageants are housed per annum" (*REED: York* 689).<sup>53</sup> The location of this building is unclear: the ownership of the building was under the civic government who held land throughout the city. Scholars have long since argued that this entry from the *A/Y Memorandum Book* indicates that the *Play* – at least in some form – was already being played in York by the second half of the fourteenth century. It is unclear from this entry whether the wagons or the performances took on the same form as their successors or which craft or guild paid the rents or owned the wagons; there is nothing to indicate which

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<sup>53</sup> The extant records refer to the staging apparatuses of the *Play* as "pageants"; in order to avoid confusion with shorter episodes of the *Play* and in following traditional conventions I will be referring to the vehicles that were used to perform the *Play* as "wagons" rather than "pageants".

pageant they were used for or, indeed, how long they had been stored at the pageant house prior to or after the date of this record.

That this record denotes the storage of wagons tells us two things about the *Play* and its playing space. First, that wagons were used in the performances even as early as 1377; even though the Register has been dated to the second half of the fifteenth century<sup>54</sup>, the 1377 entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* tells us that wagons were an integral part of the *Play* from its inception and that the wagons were an essential part of the performance even if only a few of the guilds had dedicated wagons. Second, this record shows that, because a building was used to store wagons specifically for the pageants, these particular wagons were not used regularly for purposes aside from the *Play*.<sup>55</sup> The fact that the wagons had to be stored somewhere in the city indicates that this particular aspect of the performance – at least for those crafts or guilds who paid to store their wagons – was dedicated to the cause of the *Play* rather than adapted each year from wagons that were used for other purposes. This use of purpose-fit structures could indicate that the wagons were designed differently from those used by the crafts or trades for their daily business or were not suitable for use except during such special occasions.

The locations of a number of pageant houses are known and while the highest concentration of pageant storage is located in Toft (or Pageant) Green (A3), the wagons were also stored variously in the hall of the Archbishop's Palace (in the Minster precincts) (B2), in the grounds of Holy Trinity Priory (A3), and properties in Barker Lane (A3), Fetter Lane (B3), and Peter Lane Little (B3). The earliest record that places pageant storage in Toft Green is from 1387 and refers to an agreement

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<sup>54</sup> Beadle dates the Register to the period between 1463 and 1477 based on a compilation of internal and external evidence and argues that the most likely date is 1476-77 (*The York Plays*, Vol.1 xii).

<sup>55</sup> One such example include the use of wagons for the entry of Henry VII in 1486 described as "A paiaunt with dyuers personages And mynstrelsyez" (*REED: York* 147).

between a carpenter and members of the Skinners, Bakers, and Dyers companies for the construction and repair of a pageant house that would be used to store three pageants for their companies (*REED: York 5*, 691). The Skinners and the Bakers continued to pay the Ouse Bridgemasters for wagon storage well into the seventeenth century while the Dyers seem to have disappeared from the leases of a pageant house after 1468, a point that I will return to in a moment.

According to the notice of an inquisition from 1388, a number of pageant wagons from various craft guilds were being stored in the hall of the archbishop's palace in York (B2).<sup>56</sup> The names of the crafts and the number of wagons are not noted in the record and there is no later evidence that pageant wagons continued to be stored on the Minster grounds after this date; there is also no indication of how long the wagons had been stored in the hall or for how much longer they would remain there.<sup>57</sup> While many of the guilds and crafts did pay for the storage of their pageant wagons elsewhere in the city, this record is evidence that the wagons were not exclusively stored in purpose-built storage spaces throughout the city at least in the late fourteenth century. A record from 1396 also shows the storage of a pageant wagon on ecclesiastical property at the other end of the city in Holy Trinity Priory (A3). The exact building in which it was stored is unknown but the record – from the City Chamberlains' Rolls – notes that the wagon was cumbersome enough to require payment to “8 porters guiding and moving a pageant” (*REED: York 695*). The reference to “railings before the king” (*REED: York 695*) is too vague to confirm the

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<sup>56</sup> The record was discovered after the publication of the *REED: York* volumes and a transcription and translation of the pertinent section of the notice can be found in Johnston, “York Pageant House: New Evidence”.

<sup>57</sup> While there is little to suggest how long the wagons were stored in the hall of the palace, it is noteworthy to mention that in the year 1388 Corpus Christi fell on May 28 and the date of the document is from May 14. It is possible that the wagons were being stored in the hall as a short-term solution since the hall would likely be in use when the Archbishop was in residence. It is therefore possible that the wagons in questions could have been ones that were newly built for the crafts or had been assembled ahead of Corpus Christi and kept in the hall if their usual storage situation was inadequate for a decorated wagon.

pageant that the wagon was used for or, indeed, the ownership of the wagon. Both of these records are a reminder that, at the least during the early history of the pageants, the storage of the wagons was not necessarily relegated to secular storehouses that were built especially for the storage of the wagons.

The Tailors owned a pageant house in Barker Lane (A3) where their wagon was stored and the Mercers had property in Fetter Lane (A3) and Peter Lane Little (B3) that was leased by the Butchers and the Bowyers between 1487 and 1589.<sup>58</sup> The Mercers paid to store their own wagon in Toft Green at the rate of 12d per year and this prompts the question of why the Mercers did not use their own property for the storage of their pageant wagon. The Mercers likely held a long-term lease with the Ouse Bridgemasters (their wagon appears to have been stored in property administered by the Bridgemasters from 1424 until 1593) and, perhaps, the property held by them in either Fetter Lane or Peter Lane Little was unavailable or not yet obtained by the Mercers at the time of their agreement with the Bridgemasters. The Bakers' records show that space inside their pageant house was sub-let to other crafts usually at the rate of 1s (12d) per year: the Cooks (from 1503); the Weavers (1546, 1549 and 1550); the Bowyers (1549); and the Painters and Pinner (1565-86).<sup>59</sup>

The highest concentration of wagon storage is recorded in the Bridgemasters' Account Rolls for the lease of property that was located in Toft Green (A3) and is extant from 1424 until the second quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup> The proximity of these pageant houses to Micklegate Bar (A3) and Holy Trinity Priory (A3) would certainly have made it easier for the performing groups to make their

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<sup>58</sup> See for example the Mercers' Account Rolls from 1554 for rent collected from the Butchers (12d) and the Bowyers (16d) (*REED: York* 319).

<sup>59</sup> See *REED: York* 191-193 (for the agreement between the Bakers and the Cooks); 288, 293 and 296 (for the Weavers); 293 (for the Bowyers); and 345, 350, 355, 358, 363, 373, 376, 382, 384, 390, 392, 395 and 424 (for the Painters and Pinner).

<sup>60</sup> Much of these have been reprinted in *REED: York* but the complete list of extant records from the Bridgemasters' Accounts can be found in Phillip Stell's edition.

way to the first stopping place on the pageant route if, indeed, the groups made their way to Micklegate directly from the Tofts.<sup>61</sup> A survey of the Bridgemasters' Account Rolls reveals that, over the course of the *Play's* history, money was collected by the Ouse Bridgemasters for the storage of fifteen wagons in Toft Green for which a guild could be identified.<sup>62</sup> Not all of the groups who paid for a pageant house in the Tofts continued to do so regularly throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but the majority of those who held a lease for a pageant house continued to do so for much of the *Play's* medieval performance history.

Whether there were other guilds that had wagons associated with their pageant and stored these in Toft Green during this period is unclear from the records although one interesting set of entries from the Ouse Bridgemasters' Accounts warrants further examination. From 1501 to 1543 an entry appears "for the rent of a pageant house of diverse crafts" in the amount of 18s (*REED: York* 803). The amount paid for the lease of this space is eighteen times more than the amount paid by many of the other crafts for the storage of their wagons in Toft Green and given that such a large sum of money was paid yearly over several decades it is possible that a group of guilds leased the property as a syndicate, a practice that often occurred with the leaseholders of the stopping places. These entries note leases to "diverse crafts" – specific crafts are not named in the records – and it is possible that a building became available or, perhaps, was built with the intention of housing the

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<sup>61</sup> While the *Ordo Paginarum* tells us that the pageants and players would have to be ready for their performances early on Corpus Christi, there is no sense of where exactly they were required to assemble or present themselves (if at all) so the proximity of these pageant houses to Micklegate Bar is not necessarily related to the pageant route itself. See Twycross "Forget the 4:30am Start: Recovering a Palimpsest in the York *Ordo Paginarum*" for an in-depth discussion of the start time of the *Play*.

<sup>62</sup> Throughout the period 1424 – 1627 the following crafts paid the Bridgemasters for the storage of a pageant wagon: Skinners, Dyers, Tanners, Mercers, Tapiters, Carpenters, Cordwainers, Wrights, Bakers, Goldsmiths, Girdlers, Coopers, Waxchandlers, Weavers, and Fishers (with the Mariners). From 1501 to 1533-34 the accounts also include entries for payment by "diverse crafts" (*REED* 188 and 803) at a rate of 18s which is eighteen times what most of the other crafts paid and perhaps suggests that a group of guilds rented a large property as a syndicate.

wagons as demand for storage space rose and the *Play*'s popularity increased during the late medieval period. We know that at least one group, the Dyers, owned a wagon and leased space in the Tofts in tandem with the Skinners until 1468 though there is no reason to assume that after this date the Dyers were no longer responsible for *Christ Before Herod* (31): none of the other guilds were reassigned to this pageant and a note in the House Books from 1477 states that money was still being collected for the Dyers' pageant (*REED: York* 112). It is possible that the Dyers and, by extension, some of the other guilds who previously leased property on their own and whose records are no longer extant, rented this larger property as a group to house their wagon(s) collectively.

We cannot speculate whether there were eighteen or more guilds who belonged to this syndicate and whether the Dyers belonged to this group is hypothetical; the Dyers, indeed, are not mentioned in the Ouse Bridgemasters' records after 1468 so, if they were a part of a group lease during the period of 1501-1543, we do not definitively know where they stored their wagon after that date or, indeed, between 1468 and 1500. It is also unclear whether they chose to scrap their wagon during their later performances since the note in the York House Books from 1477 states that funds from the Dyers should contribute to the "vphaldyng of the pageant" (*REED: York* 111-112) but it is uncertain whether the ambiguous term 'pageant' refers in this case to the wagon itself or the performance as a whole. Groups like the Goldsmiths and the Coopers paid less for the storage of their wagons than the Skinners so it is also possible that more than eighteen different groups rented this large space together. In any case, the late-fifteenth-century records do not contain any entries about whether this building was intentionally commissioned by the Council or the Mayor to store the wagons of the guilds who could not find

storage elsewhere or if the building became available and was thus repurposed for the *Play*. Either way, where the wagons owned by these “diverse crafts” came from prior to 1501 and where they went after 1543 is unanswered by the records. What is likely, however, is that a group of guilds decided for whatever reason that they should store their wagons in one large property and that they should pay the Ouse Bridgemasters the full rent each year as one lump sum payment rather than as individual guilds.

To add to this point about the possibility of renting wagon storage as a syndicate, an entry from the City Chamberlains’ Book from 1535 shows a list of guilds that contributed towards the cost of the *Play* (which was later replaced by a performance of the *Creed Play*). Upon comparing this list to the surviving text of the *Play*, a surprising number of guilds – thirty-six in total – contributed to the performance with the intention of presenting their pageant. The list is likely incomplete but, out of the thirty-six guilds listed, twelve guilds were paying for wagon storage in 1535, six guilds paid for wagon storage during a different period, and the remaining eighteen guilds have no extant records of wagon storage during any period of the *Play*’s history.<sup>63</sup> If one assumes that most if not all of the guilds employed a wagon for their pageant in the mid-sixteenth century, then it is not a stretch to suggest that at least a portion of the guilds whose wagon storage records are not extant could have been included in the 1501-1543 “diverse crafts” entry from the Ouse Bridgemasters’ Accounts. It is also possible that these guilds adapted an

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<sup>63</sup> One of these – the Apothecaries – does not appear to have any association with the *Play*. That the list is incomplete is owing to the fact that several of the pageants such as the Plasters’ *Creation* (2), the Tile Thatchers’ *Nativity* (14), the Shearmen’s *Road to Calvary* (34) and several Marian pageants are missing from the list of possible pageants based on the guilds who contributed to the Chamberlains’ accounts. This is not to assume that every guild performed their pageant every year – indeed, financial trouble may have prevented this from occurring – but that several pageants that might be considered crucial to the message of the *Play* are missing and that the decision to replace the *Corpus Christi Play* with the *Creed Play* after the Chamberlain had already collected some of the funds could account for the absence of a number of guilds who had not yet had the opportunity to contribute to the accounts.

existing wagon for the duration of the performance or that they stored their wagon in property they owned (and thus did not have to record payment for a lease of space), or that, as Rogerson has also suggested, some of these guilds may have also rented storage space from a church – perhaps even the guild’s own parish church – and the records have not survived.<sup>64</sup> Of these eighteen, some may have opted not to use a wagon for their performance at all.

These complicated records tell us, moreover, that the guilds paid differing amounts for the rental of storage. Some, like the Skinners, Mercers, and Tanners, paid 12d annually for wagon storage while others paid slightly more or slightly less. The Weavers, for example, paid 16d while the Goldsmiths and Waxchangers each paid 8d and the Coopers paid 4d: the difference suggests that the sizes of the properties and perhaps their condition varied to some degree. Some entries for the Coopers state that the property leased to them was an “owtshott” (*REED: York* 350), which either refers to a projecting upper floor or an extension added to a building; the latter seems more likely if it was used for storage of a wagon. This indicates that perhaps the Coopers were unable to cover the cost of the higher fees paid by the other guilds for storage space and thus opted for a different type of building than the other crafts.

The use of an outshot and its low cost might suggest that the space is also much smaller than that used by the other groups. We know that at one stage the Joiners contributed to the Coopers’ pageant before the former began contributing to the Carpenters’ pageant in the late fifteenth century (*REED: York* 126-7). An undated document that follows the Joiners’ disassociation with the Coopers’ pageant

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<sup>64</sup> Work on the Hull Mariners’ guild by Diana Wyatt has show that a pageant structure – perhaps in the form of a small ship – used for a Plough Monday pageant was stored hanging in Holy Trinity Church in Hull (see Wyatt, “Wheeling the Ship, Bearing the Car: Variations on the Theme of Moving Stages” 4; see also Rogerson, “Some Practical Details”).



outlines the financial hardship and “impoverished state” of the Coopers’ guild (*REED: York* 843-44) and might explain why they chose to store their wagon in an outshot. Such a low rent might also suggest that the Coopers did not have a wagon that required very much space to store. The text of the Coopers’ *Fall of Man* (5) and the description of the pageant in the *Ordo Paginarum* requires only a tree as the main set-piece for the performance, perhaps one surrounded by some foliage to represent the Garden of Eden. Such a set would not take up as much space to store as, for instance, the wagon used by the Weavers for the *Assumption of the Virgin* (45). In his reconstructions of the Weavers’ pageant, John McKinnell has shown that such a wagon required two levels as well as a mechanism that was used for raising Mary at the end of the performance (McKinnell, “Producing the York Mary Plays”). Presumably a wagon like that used for the Weavers’ pageant would necessitate more space to store than that required by the Coopers’ performance which, coupled with the Coopers’ “impoverished state”, would explain the discrepancy in the amounts paid to the Bridgemasters for the rental of storage space.

The records of wagon storage from the Ouse Bridgemasters’ Account Rolls, the Bakers’ Company, the Mercers’ guild, the Tailors’ guild, and the mention of wagon storage at the Archbishop’s Hall (B2) and Holy Trinity Priory (A3) tell us a great deal. While most of the known storage locations of the wagons are concentrated around Toft Green (A3), there is nothing in the records to suggest that this was the most desirable location for the storage of wagons and this concentration might be due to the availability of property in the period of rising popularity of the *Play*. What is clear, however, is that this location became increasingly important for the guilds as the number of wagons stored there began to increase in the fifteenth century. Wagons were an integral part of the *Play*’s performances throughout two

centuries of its medieval production history and the guilds were committed enough to own and repair dedicated wagons and to sign long-term leases for storage of the wagons during the year.

There is definitive documentary evidence of the storage of twenty-one wagons that can be identified as belonging to a craft or trade guild and that were connected with the *York Play* at any one time. The Register, however, records and leaves room for fifty pageants while the *Ordo Paginarum* lists fifty-two different pageants. As mentioned previously, it is possible that the “diverse crafts” that leased a pageant house collectively from 1501-1543 may account for an additional eighteen wagons – none of which can be conclusively tied to any specific pageant or guild – but even with this additional estimation that brings the number of wagons that were stored and, importantly, dedicated to the performances, to somewhere around thirty-seven. This number is significant because it shows evidence that, depending on the period of the *Play*’s history, a large portion of the guilds owned or at least contributed to the cost of a wagon whose only purpose was its use in the performances. Even when, as the Coopers’ records show, a guild suffered financially, owning a wagon that was dedicated to the *Play* was an important aspect of pageant ownership and performance. It is possible and, indeed, likely that many of the guilds whose records do not survive still had wagons of some sort for performing the *Play*. It is even more likely that such guilds may have repurposed wagons for the performances that were used throughout the year for other guild or craft activities. A number of the records highlight the financial difficulties that many of the guilds faced when mounting the performances (as the Coopers did) and perhaps the guilds that were less prosperous would adapt one of their wagons for the performance. Needless to say the role of the wagons in the *Play* makes up a large portion of the

evidence of performance and understanding how these vehicles may have been designed and used in the productions is important in a discussion of the relationship between York's topography and the *Play*.

#### Wagon Design: Moving Through the City

None of the extant records denotes measurements for the wagons that were used by the guilds for the performances but we can glean an appropriate size for the wagons based on indirect documentary evidence, the city's topography, and practical experiments of performance. Understanding how the wagons may have been constructed and how they may have been employed in the productions at various times in the *Play*'s history goes some way to constructing an understanding of how the performance space is created and how the relationship between the players, the audiences, and the dramatic space affect and are affected by the performance space. The fictive localities in the performance rely on the relationship that is created between these elements of the performance and the places of performance have an important affect on what is dramatically possible within a locale. The practicalities of performance – how large the performance space is, where the audience is placed, how the setting is constructed – all affect the ways in which the dramatic space is constructed and how the fictive localities of the performance are presented within a particular setting. The maximum or minimum size of a pageant wagon, its height, where it is placed in the street, how it is decorated, and how it is used in the performance are all a part of the question of how the pageants interact with the pageant route and the city at large; the productions work within the physical limitations that are imposed by the practicalities of performance and in a discussion of the *York Play* the wagons are at the heart of the staging.

In 1418, the Bakers took an eighty-year lease of a property along the wall of

the Dominican Friary (A3) at the cost of 12d per year. The size of the property was six yards by five and a half yards and was the largest property used to store pageant wagons from the three instances where the measurements of the properties are known in York.<sup>65</sup> The Goldsmiths' indenture of 1420 lays out a lease of property from the mayor and commons to the Goldsmiths' guild for a piece of land in the Tofts "along the side of the wall of the Friars Preacher (Dominicans) of York" (*REED: York 721*). This lease is for a piece of land

four royal ells in width [approx. 15'] and five and three-quarters royal ells in length [approx. 21 ½'] for building a house there for sheltering and having the pageant [wagon] of the Goldsmiths of the said city in it. (*REED: York 721*)

The lease is for a term of eighty years and, based on the fact that the Goldsmiths continued to pay their lease until 1524, indicates that a wagon was associated with their pageant for a significant portion of the *Play's* medieval performance history. Although the size given in the Goldsmiths' indenture is for the piece of land, we can extrapolate from this a maximum size for the building and, in addition, the maximum size of the wagon that can be stored in this space.<sup>66</sup> The wagon could have been dismantled for storage in order to ease the pressure on the wheel axels during the months when it was not in use. In any case this record tells us that the wagon could not have been very large (or had to be easily broken down) and, as well, that the Goldsmiths were committed enough to the performance of the *Play* to sign an eighty year lease for a dedicated storage space. While the size of the building is unknown,

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<sup>65</sup> This record has not been included in *REED: York* but is printed in Percy 56. Anna Jean Mill has discussed the rental of space in the Bakers' pageant house by other crafts in "The York Bakers' Play of the Last Supper" 155. See also White, *People and Places* 138-39 for comparisons of measurements between the known sizes of these pageant houses and the structure of the leases.

<sup>66</sup> Philip Butterworth examines similar instances of pageant storage at Coventry for the Weavers, Drapers and Smiths where the properties are listed as 13 ½' X 17 ½', 19 ½' X 9' and 13 ½' x 13 ½' respectively (*Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* 35-36).

there is evidence that other guilds who rented spaces in the same area paid either the same amount or slightly more than the Goldsmiths for their annual rent (the Goldsmiths paid 8d. annually while other guilds, such as the Mercers, paid 12d.). The Mercers' property is the only other site whose measurements are known and in 1584 these measurements are noted as being approximately 15' x 15' (qtd. in White, *People and Places* 148).<sup>67</sup> These three properties – the Goldsmiths' house, the Bakers' house, and the Mercers' house – were similar in size and suggests that the basic structure of the wagons such as that given by the Mercers – four wheels as well as some removable mechanisms where necessary – could apply to many if not all of the wagons.

There are two indentures from the Mercers' records that provide some information about how some of the pageant wagons may have been designed. The first of these is from 1433 and it includes a list of the properties of the Mercers' pageant of *Doomsday* (47) including a list of costumes with some very minimal description of the wagon itself. The second is an indenture from 1526 and refers to a later wagon, perhaps the one designed by Thomas Drawswerd in 1501, and does not include as extensive a list of pageant properties. Since scholars have discussed both indentures extensively, I will focus here on the evidence that relates to the design of the wagons rather than the portion of the records that relates to the costumes. It should be noted here that the Mercers' guild was one of the wealthiest in York during the medieval period and that, although these documents can provide two possible models for the wagons, the other guilds – those who were less affluent and those whose pageants do not require such complex mechanics – probably had wagons that bore resemblance to the Mercers' only in their skeletal structure. These

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<sup>67</sup> The measurement is recorded in York City Archives: E 76, f.2 in reference to the eventual purchase of the property later in 1584 by Alderman Moseley.

documents are a legal record of the pageant's properties and suggest that, if the records of the other guilds had survived, we would see that the other groups took the same care and responsibility with their wagons and with playing their pageants as the Mercers did.

The 1433 indenture notes "a Pagent [wagon] with iiij wheles [and] helle mouthe", "iiij Irens to bere uppe heuen", four iron brackets and an iron pin ("coterelles"), a "brandreth of Iren þat god sall sitte vppon when he sall sty vppue to heuen with iiij rapes at iiij corners" (*REED: York* 55). The indenture also lists a variety of cloth as well as properties such as clouds, angels, and rainbows that could have either been attached to the wagon or used by the actors. The mention of four iron posts that held up heaven indicates that the wagon had more than one storey or level and that there was a mechanism involving four ropes that was used to raise Christ up to heaven at the end of the play. In addition to this basic structure, cloth and other props were used to decorate the wagon. This shows that the performances were not just crude representations but rather that a significant amount of care and money went into the performances that could be attributed to guild pride. While many of the other pageants do not require two levels and the use of mechanics to raise actors from one level to another, this record shows that such mechanisms were employed in the productions by at least the first half of the fifteenth century.

The 1526 indenture refers to a later wagon which may have been the one designed by Thomas Drawswerd in 1501 in which partial payment for the wagon included admission to the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity in Fossgate, the religious fraternity associated with the Mercers' guild (*REED: York* 188-189). This later document is significantly shorter than the 1433 indenture and does not list cloth for decorating the wagon as one of the items in the list of properties. This might be

attributed to Drawswerd's profession as a carver which would have allowed him to use carvings to decorate the wagon rather than the textiles that were used in the earlier design (Johnston and Dorrell, "The York Mercers" 19). Drawswerd's wagon maintains the use of "ye yren sett with iiij Rappes" (*REED: York* 242) which, by comparison to its earlier counterpart, suggests that the later wagon also made use of a mechanism to raise God and was thus also constructed of two storeys. The vast number of angels listed as properties in both indentures suggests that many of the detachable props were similar across nearly a century of performances.

The list of "hell dure" (*REED: York* 242) as a separate item in the 1526 indenture suggests that hellmouth, like that in the 1433 list, remained separate or at least detachable from the main wagon. Interestingly, the 1526 indenture also lists a "pagand dure" (*REED: York* 242), "j chartt" (*REED: York* 241), as well as an entry that reads "Wants j chartt" (*REED: York* 242); this list of three items – a door, a cart, and, perhaps, a second cart that is missing – in addition to the "hell dure" entry suggests that the sixteenth-century performances of the Mercers' pageant could have been composed of a main wagon and two additional carts, one that was associated with "hell dure" and a second, missing cart, that was associated with the "pagand dure". These two carts could have been large enough for the actors who, after the good and bad souls are divided at the end of the pageant, could have climbed into their respective carts (or, indeed, the carts could have been constructed with false backs to allow the actors to walk through to the other side).<sup>68</sup> A record from 1463 noting the request for an additional wagon "for ye sallys to syse oetof" (*REED: York* 95) supports the claim that a secondary apparatus – perhaps one that was much smaller than the wagons described in the 1433 and 1526 records – was used for some

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<sup>68</sup> Johnston and Dorrell contend that these two carts could have been a hellmouth and a coffin for the souls to rise from during the pageant (Johnston and Dorrell, "The York Mercers and their Pageant" 19).

of the pageants where necessary.<sup>69</sup> In any case, if the carts mentioned in the 1526 indenture were part of Drawswerd's original design then it is possible that they were each carved with images that represented Hellmouth or Heaven.

Johnston and Dorrell's early discussion of the Mercers' 1433 indenture is one example of how early scholars of the *Play* initially considered the performances to have taken place on wagons that were enclosed on more than one side and that were performed side-on. Indeed the Mercers' 1526 indenture lists "iiij wendows" (*REED: York* 242), a detail which led Johnston and Dorrell to assume that the later wagon was also enclosed on several sides ("The York Mercers and their Pageant" 19) and this type of wagon design – after several modern reconstructions – has proven to be problematic from a practical perspective. Twycross has argued that the windows might have been a part of the 'heaven' enclosure on the wagon but the inclusion of windows does not necessitate the enclosure of the wagon (Twycross, "The Left-hand-Side Theory" 90). The 1998 production of the *Play* in Toronto saw the reconstruction of all forty-eight surviving pageants at four playing stations using eleven wagons that were reused over the course of the performance. While one should be cautious about comparing the performance space in modern Toronto with that in medieval York, Johnston's summary of the findings point out an important conclusion from the reconstruction: "it seems sensible that each guild should have a set design that suited their performance time" (Johnston, "York Cycle 1998" 201). Because the pageants run throughout the course of the day – perhaps from dawn until well into the evening – the time of day when a performance took place had a great deal to do with how much of the wagon could be enclosed. With the pageants that were performed earlier in the day, the wagons could be enclosed on several sides

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<sup>69</sup> David Crouch discusses this possibility in his exploration of the station leases (Crouch, "Paying to See the Play" 99-100).



because sufficient sunlight would be available to light the interior of the wagon.<sup>70</sup> Later pageants such as *The Assumption of the Virgin* (45) and *Doomsday* (47) do require a second storey to support the mechanism used to raise Mary or God; these wagons were perhaps designed to be as open as possible to afford the audience a clearer view of the action in low light (perhaps with the aid of candlelight where possible).<sup>71</sup> One extant record suggests that some groups – in this case, the Masons and their *Funeral of the Virgin* (or *Fergus*) (44A) – were unhappy with performing later in the day because of the lighting conditions although in cases such as the Mercers' *Doomsday* (47) the lack of daylight would work to enhance the effect of the performance.<sup>72</sup> The documentary evidence for the Drawswerd wagon is not sufficient to get a clear picture of its design and thus there is very little to support the claim that this later wagon was enclosed on any side; modern reconstruction, however, shows that this is sometimes necessary for structural reasons.<sup>73</sup>

Twycross' early discussion of the station leases contends that, because most of the lease holders were positioned to the left-hand-side of the pageant route, the wagons performed side-on with the actors facing the audience from the long edge of

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<sup>70</sup> In a recent study Twycross has examined the question of how much sunlight would have been available on Corpus Christi during the period when the pageants were produced and how this might affect the performances. I am grateful that she has provided me with a copy of the paper with her preliminary findings ("The Sun in York: Illumination and Timekeeping for the Corpus Christi Play").

<sup>71</sup> Johnston has also noted that the last four pageants performed at Toronto (*The Death of the Virgin* (44), *The Assumption of the Virgin* (45), *The Coronation of the Virgin* (46), and *Doomsday* (47)) articulate *tableaux* and sound because of the lighting effects (sometimes using the roof or back wall of the wagon as a sounding board). Johnston's conclusion is that "the York wagons were not all enclosed but only those few that needed an enclosed space for lighting effects, sound projection for singing, and the solidity needed to hoist an adult from one level to another and have that second level there to function as 'heaven'" (Johnston, "York Cycle 1998" 200-201).

<sup>72</sup> An entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1431-2 mentions the Masons' unhappiness with performing *Fergus* "because the subject of this pageant is not contained in the sacred scripture and used to produce more noise and laughter than devotion. And whenever quarrels, disagreements, and fights used to arise among the people from this, they have rarely or never been able to produce their pageant and to play in daylight as the preceding pageants do" (*REED: York* 732, 47-48).

<sup>73</sup> Twycross' exploration of wagons for Northern European performances have not revealed proscenium type stages that are enclosed (like booth stages) except in the case of some Royal Entry scaffolds which, by extension, suggests that pageant wagons used for the *Corpus Christi Plays* were most likely not designed as proscenium stages ("The Left-Hand-Side Theory" 79, 90-91).

the wagon (Twycross, “Places to Hear the Play”). While this type of performance allows for a wider performance space than presenting the pageants end-on, Twycross and others have increasingly come to the conclusion that end-on performance lends itself better to both the design of the wagon as well as the *Play*’s interaction with the city space. More importantly, two practical solutions arise with employing an end-on wagon: first, machinery for lifting the actors can be affixed along the centre of the wagon at right angles to the wheels; and, second, the space around the wagon can be used more effectively by the actors and audience (McKinnell, “Producing the York Mary Plays” 114). By performing end-on, the wagons could approach the playing station with the set facing the audience and, when the wagon is positioned to the centre of the street, “there is little chance of it taking side-swipes at overhanging jetties” (Twycross, “The Left-Hand-Side Theory” 86). The use of end-on staging is therefore better suited to the stage mechanics since the position of any machinery can be better situated on the wagon and because of the sightlines that it affords the audience in York’s medieval streets.

The size of the wagons has been explored by Twycross in relation to both the streets of York and to extant evidence of medieval and early Renaissance pageant wagons used elsewhere in Europe. In her exploration of the Flemish *Ommegang*, Twycross notes that nearly all of the wagons used for these productions were less than eight feet wide (Twycross, “The Flemish *Ommegang*” 83). The records of other European pageant wagons, in combination with the width of York’s streets, led Twycross and others to design their wagons for the modern productions at about 8’ wide by between 10’ and 15’ long, with a ceiling height of about 8’ and a total height of approximately 20’6” (Twycross, “The Left-Hand-Side Theory” 85 and 91). These dimensions – differing from pageant to pageant depending on production

needs and overall design – when used in conjunction with end-on staging allows for about 5’ on either side for the audience to stand in addition to several feet in front of the wagon when performing along the station on Ouse Bridge which was the narrowest street on the route at only 18’6” (White, “Places to Hear the Play” 57). The area available for performance in the street would have been made even narrower by the possible inclusion of scaffolds for the audience and may also mean that at some stations the standing room would have been limited to the area behind the scaffolds.<sup>74</sup> From a practical point of view, Twycross has addressed the issue of audiences with relation to the size of the wagons and points out that an end-on configuration allows for a larger audience with better sightlines than a side-on performance and, in addition to the stability offered for stage mechanics and the evidence from other performances, may be evidence enough that end-on performances could have been the norm in York.<sup>75</sup>

In his experiment with staging the York Mary pageants, McKinnell points out the challenges of designing a wagon that can move easily through the streets of York – around the tight corners and up and down the hills, especially Micklegate (A3) – as well as provide a large playing space that can be used by the actors. McKinnell argues for the use of end-on staging and a detachable steering column to allow for control over the wagon’s movements and to provide space in the street for additional

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<sup>74</sup> The only extant reference to scaffolds with relation to the *York Play* and its audiences is from 1417 and states that “all those who receive money for scaffolds which they may build in the aforesaid places before their doors on public property at the aforesaid sites from those sitting on them shall pay the third penny of the money so received to the chamberlains of the city to be applied to the use of the same commons” (REED: *York* 713-14, 29). There is no way to know whether scaffolds were common – although the document does say that “a few holders of scaffolds in Micklegate” were opposed to the tax (REED: *York* 714, 29) – and how often they were used before or after this date. All other mentions of scaffolds in the extant documents refer to those used for a king’s visit (1486 and 1501), for musicians to stand on (1603), or for use in the north aisle of the Minster (1639) (REED: *York* 145, 271, 507, and 606).

<sup>75</sup> See also Twycross’ argument that the 1417 record, which suggests that scaffolds were erected in York for audiences to watch the performance, does not necessarily mean that the wagons performed side-on because clear sight-lines could be achieved from the side of a wagon with an open stage (“The Left-Hand-Side Theory” 88-91).

action without obstruction. He points out that “when a wagon is steered by its front axle, the steering circle and undercarriage take up a lot of space under the front of the wagon and effectively rule it out as an acting space” (McKinnell, “Producing the York Mary Plays” 116).<sup>76</sup> While having a wagon with a steering circle limits the use of the space underneath the platform, it nevertheless allows those who are responsible for moving the wagon to manoeuvre the vehicle around tight corners. In instances like the 2010 and 2014 performance in York, the steering column for the *Crucifixio Christi* (35) pageant performed an important function for the mechanics of the production. The steering column, which in this instance was not detachable, served to stabilize the hoisting of the cross by the soldiers. This example shows how the designs for the wagons probably did differ depending on the pageant for which they were employed.

A wagon with two storeys moving through York’s streets creates a kind of difficulty for movement as well as storage. While the list of individual parts that combine to “bere uppe heuen” (*REED: York* 55) suggests that at least a portion of the wagon could be dismantled for storage, these parts also greatly increase the height of the wagon and introduce the practical issue of balance. Meg Twycross and John McKinnell both discuss the importance of using a heavy wagon to offset its height as a way of lowering the wagon’s high centre of gravity. In order to safely steer a two-storeyed wagon and to ensure that the actor being raised to the second storey is not in danger of physical harm, the base of the wagon should be heavy enough to withstand the pressure of turning around tight corners, be able to support the pressure of a mechanism to raise an actor, as well as support the remaining set. In modern reconstructions, double storeyed wagons – such as that used by McKinnell

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<sup>76</sup> Prior to this modern testing of the *Play*’s practical elements John Marshall had suggested that ‘stangs’ (or poles) were used to turn the wagons at each corner (see Marshall, “The Chester Pageant Carriage – How Right Was Rogers?” 51-52).

in his 1988 production of the York *Assumption of the Virgin* (45) – have been constructed to weigh nearly two tons and are upwards of 20’6” high (McKinnell, “Producing the York Mary Plays” 113 and Twycross, “The Left-Hand-Side Theory” 85). This height accounts for both the height of the wheels on the ground as well as the upper height of the second storey to allow for the full upright stature of an actor on the first storey of the wagon. The weight of the wagons in McKinnell’s reconstruction is significantly less than the estimated weight of the same wagon from the medieval period that would have been constructed of harder woods and, though very stable, is difficult to move along the streets and around corners (“Producing the York Mary Plays” 113). The payment of the labour costs for eight porters to move a pageant wagon into the storage areas in Holy Trinity Priory in 1396 (*REED: York* 695) is therefore understandable when considering the weight and size of such an apparatus.

The approximate size of the wagons, the stage mechanics that they might contain, and how their placement is affected by the pageant route are important considerations in a discussion of the *Play* as a performance. The wagons should be large enough to provide the necessary playing- and set-space without compromising on manoeuvrability around the pageant route and by remaining practical enough to store when they are not required during other times of year. The modern productions of the pageants cannot reconstruct the original practices of the medieval performance; nor, indeed, can such productions assume that what was true during the productions in the late fourteenth century was also true at the end of sixteenth century. What these experiments of the practical elements of the performance can seek to answer – the possible design of the wagons, their placement in the street, and practical considerations of mobility and storage – is to move closer to an

understanding of what practical decisions work in such an environment and, inversely, what is impractical given the physical confines of the playing area and the relationship between the players and the audiences. The modern productions of the *Play* and the evidence from continental drama have shown that the extant measurements of the proprieties for the Goldsmiths', Bakers', and Mercers' pageant houses would be sufficient to store the pageant wagons if they were about 8' wide and ranged from 10' to 15' long and still provide enough storage space for additional properties or a dismantled second storey. Performance is always inherently tied to its physical placement therefore the practicality of the apparatuses that are central to the performance of the *Play* should be interrogated. The size and height of a wagon dictates how much set-dressing can be incorporated onto the wagon and, by extension, how much the players and audience might rely on other elements of performance – such as descriptive language, costume, audience engagement – in order to complete the production. While the wagons themselves need not replicate an exact representation of the fictive localities that are presented in the performances, a well-designed wagon that takes into account its architectural surroundings will do more to enhance the performance than one that ignores the practicalities of performance.

#### The *Play*: Timing and the City

The extant evidence of the various stopping places along the pageant route from 1398 until 1572, in addition to outlining where the *Play* stopped, also shows which direction the wagons moved through the city. The route did not change over the course of the *Play*'s medieval performance history although some of the stopping

places shifted depending on who chose to pay for the station leases.<sup>77</sup> Early work on the *York Play* attempted to answer some of the questions around the movements of the wagons on the pageant route and, by extension, the issue of timings: how and where each pageant performed, how often, and, of course, how long it would take to perform the pageants from start to finish given the pageant route and the mode of performance. The records do not indicate what happened to the wagons after they completed the route. Did the wagons, for instance, return to the Tofts (A3) by crossing paths with the oncoming wagons at Ouse Bridge (B3) and Micklegate (A3)? Were they parked somewhere at the end of the route near Pavement (B3) and left there until the final performance of *Doomsday* (47)? Or, in the spirit of logistical efficiency, were the wagons returned to the Tofts by another route? If we consider that a good portion – if not all – of the guilds employed wagons at some stage during the *Play*'s history, then certainly we can assume that the return of the wagons to their storage location was no easy feat. The extant records cannot answer this last point but the former questions of where each performance took place and some hypothetical evidence of timings can be addressed given the city's topography, the surviving material in the civic records and the text from the Register. The question of timing is an important one since the pageants themselves were a part of the main entertainments of the day: this was an important feat for the trade and craft guilds and the pageants are a reflection of the guilds' involvement in the city's civic celebrations. If the pageants were lengthy, if they were delayed, if they took place out of order, then the overall performance of the *Play* would suffer; likewise, these factors are affected by the mode of performance since moving wagons from one station to the next would take up additional time as would adding stopping places to

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<sup>77</sup> Meg Twycross has studied the leaseholders of the stopping places and has created a chart of the leaseholders and the stopping places found in the surviving records (“Places to Hear the Play” 28-33).

the pageant route. What is true of the performances in the late fourteenth century may also not be true by the time the productions were suspended in the late sixteenth century; the *Play* as it was in the time of the *Ordo Paginarum* may not reflect the more extensively scripted pageants in the late fifteenth century survival of the text in the Register. We do not definitively know whether the early performances were as scripted as those from the Register – they may, in fact, have begun as *tableaux vivants* (Twycross, “Forget” 106) and become more scripted as time went on. Furthermore, how these performances looked on the stage as they processed through York’s central area could certainly differ to some extent from the written playtexts that survive. In any case such questions are related to how the playing stations and the city at large plays a role in creating the imagined places of the *Play*. The practicality involved with moving such a production through the city of York is key to understanding how the fictive localities of the pageants are fashioned for the audiences of the *Play*.

Margaret Dorrell’s work with timing each pageant and its movement through the city has produced some invaluable analysis that is helpful when one is considering the city as a site of performance. Dorrell’s calculation of the pageants – although not taking into account musical additions or “extra business in the production” (Dorrell, “Two Studies” 98) – shows that the pageants range in length from five minutes to over thirty minutes depending on the pageant.<sup>78</sup> The calculations and placement of each stopping place on the pageant route also shows

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<sup>78</sup> Dorrell calculates that the shortest pageant is the Platerers’ *Creation* (2) while the two longest pageants are the Skinners’ *Entry into Jerusalem* (25) and the Tapiters and Couchers’ *Dream of Pilate’s Wife* (30). See “Two Studies” for a chart outlining the timings for each pageant and the start/stop time for a twelve-stopping-place-production (102-106). Although Dorrell assumes that the pageants begin performing at 4:30am – a point that has been since refuted by Twycross in “Forget the 4:30am Start” – the timings are nevertheless valuable if each pageant’s timing is examined in relation to the other pageants. Alan Nelson’s “Principles of Processional Staging: York Cycle” also grapples with issues of timing though his argument is more concerned with definitions of “true” processional performance and how that might affect timing which under his definition cannot be applied to the *York Play*.



that, depending on the pageant and the stopping place, pageants often had to wait between performances for the group ahead to complete their performance. An examination of the timings shows that a full production of the *Play* at twelve stations takes twenty hours (without delays caused by music or further embellishment) and that the only station that did not have breaks between performances was station one (Dorrell, “Two Studies” 98). Furthermore, Dorrell found that in all but eight of the pageants the actors had resting time between the performances.<sup>79</sup>

The concern with timings is important given that in some years there were up to sixteen stopping places for the pageants. The documents show concerns for delays and impose fines on those groups who are found responsible for the delays. An entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1399 institutes a fine of 6s 8d “if any of the aforesaid pageants be delayed or held back through fault or negligence on the part of the players” (*REED: York* 11, 698) and a version of this fine appears to have been enforced in 1554 when an entry in the *House Books* shows the Girdlers being fined 10s for delaying the pageants by more than an hour (*REED: York* 312). Another concern related to delays involves the actors themselves performing in more than one pageant. An infamous entry in the *House Books* from 1476 points to this issue:

no plaier þat shall plaie in þe saide Corpus Cristi plaie...but  
twise...vpon payne of xl s to forfeit vnto þe Chaumbre asoften tymes  
as he or þay shall be founden defautie in þe same (*REED: York* 109).

While some have argued that this document provides a basis for assuming that each pageant was only played twice over the course of the production as a whole, Dorrell

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<sup>79</sup> These pageants are the Barkers’ *Fall of the Angels* (1), the Coopers’ *Fall of Man* (5), the Fishers’ and Mariners’ *Flood* (9), the Parchmentmakers’ and Bookbinders’ *Abraham and Isaac* (10), the Hosiers’ *Moses and Pharaoh* (11), the Hatmakers’, Masons’, and Labourers’ *Purification of the Virgin* (17), the Skinners’ *Entry into Jerusalem* (25), and the Tapiters’ and Couchers’ *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate’s Wife* (30) (Dorrell, “Two Studies” 98). Numbering of the pageants follows that found in Beadle’s most recent edition of the *Play* rather than the numbering shown in Dorrell’s study.

posits that the entry refers to actors playing more than one role in different pageants throughout the day.<sup>80</sup> The playing times of the pageants would have allowed actors from many of the pageants enough time to return to Toft Green after playing a pageant at twelve (or up to sixteen) stations but one slight delay to any of the pageants anywhere along the route could have caused considerable delay to the performance in the long run. Dorrell concludes that delays from the actors returning to Micklegate Bar (A3) to perform a third pageant would cause a domino effect and result in having “the performance plunged into confusion” (Dorrell, “Two Studies” 101). It seems surprising, then, that so few documents related to the timing of the pageants have survived<sup>81</sup> which suggests that the guilds did their utmost to avoid delays since the fines could cost the guild considerably more than the yearly rent on their pageant house.

An unusual note in the *Ordo Paginarum* points to a performance tactic that might explain how the staging in some of the performances could have had an effect on the timing of the production. The description of the Tilehatchers’ *Nativity* (14) pageant from the *Ordo Paginarum* highlights its relationship to the Chandlers’ *Shepherds* pageant that follows: “the angel speaking to the shepherds and the players in the following pageant” (*REED: York* 704, 18). Neither surviving pageant includes the angel’s speech but a note in a later hand mentions this missing speech in the Register following the *Nativity*: “hic caret pastoribus [sequitur postea]” (‘here is wanting [something] by the shepherds [it follows hereafter]’) (*York Plays*, Vol. 2

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<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, Salvador-Rabaza’s discussion in “A Proposal of Performance for the York Mystery Cycle” and Martin Stevens “The York Cycle: From Procession to Play”.

<sup>81</sup> An entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1422 also concerns itself with timing although this time the document states that the pageants of the Painters, Stainers, Pinners, and Latteners should be combined together because of length (*REED: York* 37, 722-3). The document appears to be referring to the surviving *Crucifixio* (35) pageant from the Register which at one stage was made up of two separate pageants, “one on the stretching out and nailing of Christ on the cross, and the other... the raising up of the Crucified upon the Mount” (*REED: York* 722, 37).

100; translation from Beadle).<sup>82</sup> Twycross has proposed that such a note – in addition to showing how one pageant carried on from the next – suggests that “one front- and one back-oriented waggon might explain how the York *Shepherds* and *Nativity* plays would have played in tandem” (“The Left-Hand-Side Theory” 82). This overlapping action between the two pageants is certainly a good use of the overlapping timing of *The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15) that is evident in Dorrell’s analysis and means that the performers can create a seamless production of the two pageants as an alternative to the players of *The Shepherds* waiting idly for *The Nativity* to finish. This highlights the possibility that other pageants may have done the same in the interests of time although the entry from the *Ordo Paginarum* that mentions this overlap is unique. This note also emphasizes the possibility of performance outside of the strict use of the pre-selected stopping places: if the angel from *The Nativity* (14) is to address the shepherds in the following pageant immediately after Mary’s final speech, then there is no opportunity for the Tilehatchers’ wagon to be moved ahead to the next station before the Chandlers’ pageant begins. The fact that the Tilehatchers’ pageant also had to wait for the Pewterers’ and Founders’ *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary* (13) also leaves room for the possibility that the Tilehatchers and Chandlers performed both pageants together using one acting troupe with only one wagon; this is possible since the surviving records show that, of both the Tilehatchers and the Chandlers, only the latter contributed towards the rental of a pageant house.<sup>83</sup>

The long opening speech in some pageants could perform a practical function

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<sup>82</sup> This note is written in two different hands: “hic caret pastoribus” is in one hand while “sequitur postea” is in the hand of John Clerke. For more details about this note and the two different hands see *The York Plays*, Vol. 2 100.

<sup>83</sup> The Waxchandlers pay the Ouse Bridgemasters towards the rental of a pageant house from 1501-1528 while the Tilehatchers remain absent from any records of payments towards pageant houses in the Ouse Bridgemasters’ Rolls or elsewhere (*REED: York, passim*).

that is similar to the combination of the Angel's speech in *The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15). Many of the pageants begin with long speeches that would serve to provide the audience with a focal point for their attention while some of the other players arranged the set or a wagon, if one was being used. In the opening of the Spicers' *Annunciation and the Visitation* (12), the Doctor's speech lasts for a full 144 lines and is followed by a choir of angels before the focus is turned to Mary. While the Spicers may not have employed a wagon or, indeed, a secondary set, had they chosen to do so the lengthy opening speech would have allowed the players to begin their play immediately after *Moses and Pharaoh* (11). This pattern appears several times in the *Play* and has perhaps been used by the writers as a purposeful tactic to maintain the flow of the pageants and to avoid the fines that would have resulted from delays to the performances.

#### Wagons and Audiences

Jill Stevenson's work on audience reception argues that conceptual blending in performance – the merging together of the real and the fantastical on stage – is strongly evoked in the *York Play* through its “synaesthetically oriented staging conventions” (Stevenson, “Embodied Enchantments” 96). The pageants are staged in the city streets with the spectators around the wagons and inside the surrounding buildings and these audiences respond to the players as they present an imagined reality on the very real pageant route. The use of pageant wagons as the apparatuses through which the biblical narrative is presented is very much key to the relationship that audiences have to the *Play* in that the wagons contribute to the imagined setting of the play: while a wagon's design – its size, set dressing and, in some instances, stage mechanics – offers a practical platform for the players, the wagons are only one element of the performance. The wagons are part of the conceptual blend

between the medieval city of York – its architectural space, its history, and the daily practices that define its placeness – and the imagined places and events that are presented through the pageants. The size of the wagons cannot exceed the very real streets and each wagon is customised to the performance of a particular pageant with certain staging requirements. A wagon with different levels will present a different effect to audiences than one that is composed mainly of a mechanism that is used to raise the cross in the *Crucifixio* (35) pageant; audiences in the streets experience the pageants differently from those in the surrounding buildings because of sightlines, sound, or, indeed, their relationship to the other spectators in their vicinity. Wagons of different designs will also interact differently with their setting: a wagon made up of one level and that is open on all sides will have a different relationship to the narrow streets than a wagon with a second level that depicts the bedroom in which Pilate's wife is deceived by Satan. Both of these wagons help the audiences to construct the imagined places of the *Play* while also playing with human scale to achieve a desired response to the performance.

Some of the practical components of the pageant wagons can be pieced together from the extant material and while we can extrapolate that pageant wagons were an important part of the *Play* for much of its medieval history we cannot know for sure how the wagons were employed or, even, whether what was true of pageant wagons at the end of the fourteenth century was also true at the end of the sixteenth century. The *Play* is not a fixed text; the compilation of the Register took place nearly a century after the first extant record of a pageant house lease and the last recorded performance was nearly a century after the assembly of the play-text. Some of what is possible to achieve with pageant wagons has been revealed through modern production and in light of these revelations scholars are right to continue

interrogating the practical components of the medieval productions. The number of guilds that are associated with pageant wagons by proxy through the payment of leases for pageant houses is evidence that a good number of the groups were invested enough in their pageants to contribute financially to their productions for much of the middle ages. This is perhaps evidence enough that most groups employed a wagon or staging apparatus of some sort on which to present their pageant while there is some evidence that this may not be restricted to a total separation between consecutive pageants. The fact that performance is a combination of fictive localities and imagined events that are superimposed on an architectural space is enough justification to warrant an examination of the staging practices of the pageants and their relationship to the city of York.

As the practical experiments with the modern productions of the *Play* have shown, the city's streets and geography play a large part in how the wagons could have been constructed and how the pageants were staged. The wagon size, the shape of the streets, the number of stopping places, and the use of performance space in the streets are certainly some of the factors that affect how the wagons were used in these productions. It is important to emphasize that "the fact that a particular method of performance 'works' does not conclusively prove that it was the original way: but at least it substitutes real theatre for the theatre of the imagination" (Twycross, "The Left-Hand-Side Theory" 85). What is at the heart of this examination of the *Play* is that it was a performance mounted on a religious festival by trade and craft guilds that played an important role in the governance and daily operations of York. The performances took place in a real location, with streets, buildings, and history that all intermingle with the re-enactment of biblical events and these factors affect how it was performed and received.

What has not yet been mentioned is the possibility that some guilds did not use a wagon because some of the pageants simply do not require a wagon for their performance. Peter Holding's assertion that "the implications of several plays being presented without a pageant wagon are worth considering" (Holding 56) has largely remained unpursued since it was made in 1980. In his discussion of the *Play* Holding mentions the Shearmens' *Road To Calvary* (34) as one such example and I will be discussing this pageant and its staging in the case study on "Movement Through the City". Although the rental of wagon storage and, by extension, the use of wagons is an important facet of the *Play*'s medieval history, nowhere in the records is the use of pageant wagons made obligatory. There belies no extant evidence that mandates the compulsory use of a wagon for each pageant and it is remarkable that the assumption of such use has not been examined. What both Twycross – in her suggestion that *The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15) are played in tandem – and Holding have posited is a way of rethinking how these wagons could have been used in the *Play*.

This brief examination of the records, taken together with the topography, makes clear that how these wagons were used and where they fit within the course of the *Play* is very complicated; simply assuming that every guild had a pageant wagon – whether dedicated to the performance or adapted each year from another wagon – is not perhaps the ideal place to begin an examination of the *Play*. Instead, an exploration of the records should be sensitive to the possible differences between the mode of performance that is possible for each pageant in relation to the *Play* as a whole. What could work for one pageant – like a two-storey wagon with a crank – is not necessarily appropriate for another. Another pageant, such as the *Road to Calvary* (34), may benefit from the site-specificity that is brought out through a

street-based performance rather than one that employs a constructed set. Over the course of two centuries, some guilds may have opted to perform without a wagon for financial or even practical reasons; what may have worked one year may not have been the norm in the following year. In the larger discussion of site-specific performance and the *Play* these practicalities are an essential part of how the pageants interact with the architectural space of the pageant route.

The following case studies will consider the issue of site specificity in three different groups of pageants. The first study will examine the tandem staging of *The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15) as well as *Herod* (16) and *The Magi* (16). The evidence for these two pairs of pageants shows that at some point in the history of their performances they were played in immediate succession and that the separate performance groups came together to produce their pageants in tandem. The second case study will address the Trial pageants and the response that is created when these pageants are performed at the stopping place in front of the Minster Gates (B2). The way that these pageants are enriched by a performance at the Minster Gates station is well beyond the happenstance of an interesting setting and the history of the surrounding locale is brought to life through the performances. The final case study will address the issue of two pageants that do not require the use of a wagon: *The Road To Calvary* (34) and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39). Both pageants rely on their setting between places and the result is an exercise in the relationship between space and place on which a study of site and performance is contingent. Each set of pageants will be addressed in the way that it engages with York's topography as well as the particularities of each pageant's known performance history. Where appropriate the modern staging of the pageants will be discussed and these elements will be brought together in order to propose some



avenues for exploring the site specificity of the *York Play*.

### Intersecting Places: Tandem Performances of

*The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15) and *Herod and The Magi* (16)

Some scholars have suggested different possibilities of pageants being performed in a manner that is more complex than the widely accepted position that each group, equipped with their wagon, would perform at every stopping place before returning their wagons to the storage facilities at the end of the *Play*.<sup>84</sup> My aim is not to challenge the assumption that each group performed as often as there were stations;<sup>85</sup> it is to show nuances in the possibilities of staging that can allow the audience to think about how these performances are enriched by the performance space itself.

In this case study I will examine two pairs of pageants that offer an interesting possibility of performance: the Tile Thatchers' *Nativity* (14) and the Chandlers' *Shepherds* (15); and the Masons' and Goldsmiths' *Herod and the Magi* (16), which was two separate pageants until 1432-33. Both pairs of pageants invite a staging of the performances in tandem whereby characters from one group could speak to the other group during the performance. This is more apparent in the Masons' and Goldsmiths' pageant(s) since the texts were amalgamated in its later history but a similar model could easily apply to *The Nativity* and *The Shepherds*. This model of shared performance articulates the relationship between the dramatic places that are presented in these pageants and that are reflected in the performance space. The appearance of the angel from the Tilers' *Nativity* in the Chandlers' *Shepherds* and the likely appearance of the shepherds from the Chandlers' pageant at

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<sup>84</sup> For a chart outlining the known locations of the places that were leased to citizens and to civic and ecclesiastical officials see Twycross' "Places to Hear the Play: Pageant Stations at York, 1398-1572".

<sup>85</sup> The assumptions made by Salvador-Rabaza ("A Proposal of Performance for the York Mystery Cycle: External and Internal Evidence") and Stevens ("The York Cycle: From Procession to Play") about each pageant performing only twice or, in the latter case, once at the first group of stations and again at Pavement, have not been widely accepted and thus will not be considered in these case studies.

the stable that was used in the Tilers' pageant extends the dramatic space of each pageant to include Bethlehem and the surrounding area. The overlap in the performance also extends to the sharing of players between the two groups when the shepherds from the Chandlers' pageant likely arrive at the stable to greet the infant Christ from the Tilers' pageant. The localities of Herod's court and the house that is visited by the Magi are pitted against one another when the Magi travel from one place to another in the Masons' and Goldsmiths' pageants. Herod does not meet Christ in his infancy either at his court or in the house and the unsuccessful outcome of the Slaughter of the Innocents is foreshadowed in these two pageants: the Magi's refusal to return to Herod's court is a refusal to re-enter the locale from which Herod will order the slaughter. In both pairs of pageants, the stable is a dramatic locale where outsiders – the shepherds and the Magi – travel from other, non-descript spaces like the fields outside of Bethlehem and other exotic places and are welcomed to the stable by the holy family.

The possibility of these pageants playing in tandem with one another also serves to show the fluidity of theatrical space. The performance space remains fixed in that the pageant route remains the physical location of the performances; the dramatic space that is created by the performance is imposed on different parts of the route depending on the pageant at play and therefore the theatrical space – what is created by the interaction of the dramatic and performance spaces with the locale and its placeness – takes on an important role in the production. The players create dramatic space through their performance and the relationship between actor and audience is a part of the relationship between performance space and the dramatic locales that are presented in the performance. The audience is a part of both the dramatic space (as the citizens of Jerusalem in the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem*

(25)) and the performance space (as spectators). The history and uses of the locales on the pageant route – the stopping places where the pageants are performed – enrich this relationship by adding another layer to the audience’s experience. Like Dox’s suggestion that the *Croxtton Play of the Sacrament* offers the audience a series of “coterminous realities” (Dox 181), the pageants performing in tandem with one another allow for the production to employ coterminous localities that are brought in and out of focus by the actors who move between them. Stevenson’s suggestion that the pageants offer a performance where the audience experiences conceptual blending while watching the performances serves to show how the fictive localities of the *Play* and the city’s topography interact on stage. The dramatic space, the performance space, and the locale with its sense of place are all contributors to the *Play* and the tandem performances are instances where the narrative of the pageants are most clearly interlinked with one another through the players and the sharing of these places.

The processional mode of these performances mirrors the movement of the Magi and the shepherds as they make their way from the outskirts of Bethlehem and from Herod’s court to the house. The distance between the fictive localities in the dramatic space of the pageants is significantly longer than the distance between the locales as they appear in the performance space and the scale of emplacement of the dramatic space is condensed to the topography of York for the duration of each performance. Whether presented as *tableaux vivants* or as fully scripted productions, the fictive localities of the pageants are actively imposed on the pageant route; as each group makes its way through the pageant route these localities are created by the performance and are overwritten each time a new pageant is presented in the performance space. Extant evidence from the early fifteenth century shows that the

relationship between the fictive localities in some of the pageants is enriched by the possibility of tandem performances; tandem performance privileges the fictive localities over the journey between those localities.

The tandem performances highlight the relationships between the places in the *Play* and the continuity of the narrative that runs through the cycle as a whole. Scholars have written comparatively about the pageants, examining recurring characters and themes that resurface throughout the *Play*.<sup>86</sup> The use of shared performance space in these two pairs of pageants serves as another means of tying the narrative together to show the coterminous places that appear in the pageants and how these locations are defined by one another. It is one thing to posit that, for instance, Herod's court is a significant location because of its association with Roman rule and with the brutality of a ruler who orders the death of "all withinne two ȝere" (19.187). It is another to examine how other places relate to Herod's court and lend meaning to or are pitted against it at a particular moment in the *Play*'s performances. The Magi themselves recognize Herod's civic rank (16.119-120) and request his permission to travel through his jurisdiction (16.187-88) in order to seek the "kyng | Of Jewes, and of Judé" (16.175-76). Following their visit to the holy family in the house the Magi later recognize, based on their instruction from the angel, that revisiting his court would cause harm to the Christ-child so they choose to travel back to their lands by a different route. When set against the house and its association with the humble kingship of Christ and his role in the salvation of Man, the court of Herod the Great becomes a site that exudes harmful damage on the future "kyng | Of Jewes, and of Judé" (16.175-76). Judea becomes more than just a localised area that is ruled by Herod (and, later, Christ) since it is depicted in relation

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<sup>86</sup> See for example Erich Auerbach's work on the relationship between Old and New Testament figures in *Scenes From the Drama of European Literature* and Rosemary Woolf's "The Effect of Typology on the English Mediaeval Plays of Abraham and Isaac."

to the stable in Bethlehem; the sense of place that is represented by Herod's court in Judea becomes altered when it is pitted against the humble stable occupied by the holy family in Bethlehem.

I will begin by examining the Tile Thatchers' *Nativity* and the Chandlers' *Shepherds* and how these two pageants offer the possibility of tandem performance.<sup>87</sup> The history of ownership of the Masons and Goldsmiths' *Herod and the Magi* will then be discussed and the tandem performance of the pageant(s) will be examined within the context of shared performance space as well as the movement of actors between the localities. In the case of these pageants, each pair of pageants will be treated as a narrative unit where the analysis will focus on how tandem performance can affect the reception of the production in relation to the placeness of the performance. The final section of the case study will address how the tandem performances can be read against the backdrop of York's topography.

#### The Tile Thatchers' *Nativity* (14) and the Chandlers' *Shepherds* (15)

The Tile Thatchers were primarily responsible for laying roof tiles which was the preferred material for roofing (over straw thatch) in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.<sup>88</sup> The craft was also involved in other areas of building including plastering and the production of wall tile and this places them in an optimal position to produce the *Nativity* considering the references that the pageant makes to the ruinous stable.<sup>89</sup> The first mention of the Tile Thatchers' pageant is found in the *York Memorandum*

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<sup>87</sup> The possibility of performing the *Nativity* and *Shepherds* in tandem has been observed by Twycross, Dorrell, and Beadle based on the extant evidence though the details of how this might work from a practical point of view and in relation to the performance space has not been posited. See Twycross, "The Left-Hand-Side Theory", 82; Dorrell, "Two Studies", 100; and *York Plays*, Vol. 2, 99-101 and 102.

<sup>88</sup> Harvey posits that York may have prohibited the use of straw thatch by this period (like London) in the wake of many fires (*Medieval Craftsmen* 140).

<sup>89</sup> See Swanson, *Building and Craftsmen in Late Medieval York*, 20-21; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, 88-89; and Harvey, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 142-145.

*Book* in 1411/12<sup>90</sup> and *The Nativity* remained with the Tile Thatchers until the *Play* ceased to be performed at the end of the sixteenth century. The entry for the Tile Thatcher's pageant in the *Ordo Paginarum* differs in one detail from the extant text found in the Register in that the 1415 description includes a part for a midwife that is absent from the later version. Beadle posits that this removal of the midwife from the later version of the text is "more likely the complete replacement of an earlier text" (*York Plays*, Vol. 2, 99) rather than the result of revisions.<sup>91</sup> An entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1422-23 shows that the Plasterers and Tile Thatchers began to contribute jointly to the pageants owned by both crafts so evidently the costs for *The Creation* (2) and *The Nativity* (14) were shared by the same group of individuals (*REED: York* 39, 724-25). In 1475 the Tile Thatchers and Plasterers began collecting pageant silver together following the registration of joint ordinances (*REED: York* 104, 370-71).

The Chandlers were craft workers and dealers in wax objects ranging from candles to wax images for religious use. They were often associated with the Spicers and the Barbers "since wax was used extensively for medical purposes in ointments and dressings for wounds" (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 108).<sup>92</sup> The Chandlers were active in York from the middle of the fourteenth century until the first quarter of the sixteenth century when between ten and twelve were active at any one time (*VCH: York* 116; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* 99). Their numbers began to decline after this period with the decline of Catholicism and the Tallow Chandlers – who made candles from animal fat rather than wax – began to prosper more in the sixteenth and seventeenth

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<sup>90</sup> The record is printed in Sellers, *York Memorandum Book* vol. 1, pp. 59-60.

<sup>91</sup> See also Beadle's discussion of the Shrewsbury Fragment for details about dating this text (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 113).

<sup>92</sup> See also Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* 98-100.

century (Palliser, “Trade Guilds of Tudor York” 94).<sup>93</sup> The first mention of the Chandlers’ *Shepherds* pageant is from the turn of the fourteenth century which refers to the institution of a fine collected when a chandler “first holds shop and occupies it as master...half for the use of the said guild to maintain their said pageant, and the other half to the Council Chamber for the use and profit of the commonality” (*REED: York* 618; 842).<sup>94</sup> This one-time fee of 6s 8d was in addition to the pageant silver collected each year by the guild. The ownership of the *Shepherds* remained in the hands of the Chandlers until the end of the *Play*’s medieval performance history and the entry from the *Ordo* reflects the same structure of the extant text from the Register which suggests that the basic plot of the pageant likely remained fixed for about a century.

Sometime between the initial compilation of the *Ordo* and 1435, the Common Clerk, Roger Burton, made revisions to the *Ordo* entry for the Tile Thatchers’ pageant that provides some clues about how the performance of the *Nativity* may have occurred with relation to the pageant of the *Shepherds* that follows. Burton’s revisions (in square brackets) reveal the changes to the entry: “Maria <cum + *deleted word*> Joseph . ob^s^tetric puer [natus iacens in presepio] inter bouem et azinum [et] angelus loquens [pastoribus et ludentibus in pagina] sequente” (*REED: York* 18; “Mary with...Joseph, the midwife, the [new born] boy [lying in a manger] between the ox and the ass, [and] the angel speaking [to the shepherds and to the players in the following pageant]” (*REED: York* 704)). The entry shows that the figure of the angel from the *Nativity* also appeared in the

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<sup>93</sup> The separation between the wax chandlers and the tallow chandlers was observed strictly in York and some guilds (such as the Butchers, Skinners, and Saucemakers) often made tallow candles from byproducts of their principal craft (see Swanson, “Craftsmen and Industry in Late Medieval York”, 149). The Tallow Chandlers became a craft in 1606 (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 108).

<sup>94</sup> This record from the *A/Y Memorandum Book* is undated and remains as such in *REED: York* but Beadle has suggested a dating of around the turn of the fourteenth century with additions made during the first mayoralty of William Bowes, Sr. in 1417-18 (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 109).



*Shepherds* pageant and suggests that the performance space between the two groups of performers was near enough to warrant such a practice. The appearance of the angel in *The Nativity* is not explicitly marked in the play text but Beadle asserts that the space in the Register between the end of the Tile Thatchers' pageant and the Chandlers' pageant could have been intended for the addition of a speech from the angel as was common in contemporary nativity pageants (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 101).<sup>95</sup> It is also possible that the angel appeared with the lighting effects in the middle of *The Nativity* after Christ's birth (14.78-79).

Burton's edits to the *Ordo Paginarum* opens up the possibility that the performances of *The Nativity* and *The Shepherds* in the first half of the fifteenth century were tandem productions which suits the processional mode of the *Play* very well. The angel from *The Nativity*, having made its appearance at the birth of Christ, could then make its way to the players in *The Shepherds* pageant to announce the arrival of the Messiah. The space between the two separate locations in the tandem performances – the stable in *The Nativity* and the outskirts of Bethlehem in *The Shepherds* – is condensed by the appearance of the same player in both pageants. As a messenger and a witness to the events, in this model of performance the angel is the spatial link that brings the shepherds in the Chandlers' pageant to the locale where Mary painlessly gives birth to Christ in the stable. The shepherds are transported from the unspecific location outside of Bethlehem to the locale that becomes the model for the social relations between a king and his subjects. The shepherds, like the Magi in the following Masons' pageant, bring gifts for Christ and the area that the shepherds occupy in this act of exchange is one that intensifies the importance of the stable in the larger narrative of the *Play*. In this amalgamation of

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<sup>95</sup> For examples of this see *Towneley* 12.699-71 and 13.1063-75, *N-Town* 16.151-54, and *Chester* 7.508-15.

the two settings in a tandem performance of the *Nativity* and the *Shepherds* pageants, the movement of the shepherds from the outskirts of Bethlehem to the stable is reminiscent of the arrival at the court of a king and foreshadows the visit of the Magi to Herod's court. In the lowly stable, however, shepherds and Magi alike are welcomed and the reverence given to the Christ-child far exceeds the physical luxury of the locale.

The pageant of *The Nativity* begins with Joseph's prayer for "gode herberow" (14.6) for himself and Mary as they arrive in Bethlehem. They have been travelling from Nazareth and have not been able to find suitable lodging: "we haue sought bothe vppe and doune, | Thurgh diuerse stretis in þis cité" (14.9). Joseph complains that the reason they have not been able to find a suitable place to spend the night is because the city is too full of people, a complaint that is, for the audience watching the pageant, a perhaps all too familiar situation. Like those who may have travelled from a distance to celebrate Corpus Christi in York,<sup>96</sup> Joseph and Mary have a difficult time finding a resting place in Bethlehem. The audiences watching the pageant from the streets are – in this moment of reflection by Joseph – simultaneously the crowds who have flocked to Bethlehem as well as those who have populated the streets of York for the celebrations. As Stevenson argues, the conflation between dramatic space and audience space in the *Play* creates a "conceptual blend" that is heightened by these references to the contemporary audience's shared experience with Mary and Joseph (Stevenson, "Embodied Enchantments" 93; *Performance* 102). Mary's assurance that "in þis place borne will [Christ] he be" (14.30) is evidence of a knowledge that is not shared by Joseph

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<sup>96</sup> Margery Kempe's alleged visit to York during Corpus Christi in 1413 is one example of the distance that some could have travelled in order to join the celebrations at York and, by extension, to watch the *Play*. For a discussion of this episode from book 55 of *The Book of Margery Kempe* and Margery's devotional relationship to drama, see Sponsler, "Drama and Piety".

whose only concern is the poor conditions of the building itself (14.14) and that the building contains animals.

The relationship of the subject of the *Nativity* to the craft of the Tile Thatchers is likely the stable that is described in the pageant. Joseph's mention of "pere bestes" (14.14) at the opening of the *Nativity* serves, as Beadle notes, to "identify the superstructure of the pageant wagon as a stable or byre [because of the animals], rather than the cave mentioned in the early apocryphal accounts of the Nativity" (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 104).<sup>97</sup> Joseph goes on to describe the stable in terms that articulate the undesirability of the location: "Þe walles are doune on ilke a side, | Þe ruffe is rayued aboven oure hede | Als haue I roo" (14.17-19). The damaged walls and hole in the roof – the latter, perhaps, employed later in the pageant for shining a light onto the Christ-child (14.91, 111) – paint a grim picture of the birthplace of God's son while at once presenting an excellent example of an instance where the Tile Thatchers and Plasterers might be employed to undertake such repairs. Joseph also announces that "here is nowthir cloth ne bedde" (14.23) which, in a late fifteenth-century performance of the pageants preserved in the Register, produces a visual juxtaposition against the "bedde arayed of þe beste" (30.153) in Dame Procula's bedroom. There is nowhere in the stable where Mary can comfortably give birth to Christ and nowhere that the latter can be laid following his birth.

The birth of Christ takes place during the course of five lines while Joseph is offstage seeking "light forthy, | And fewell fande with me to bring" (14.43-44). This swift birthing of Christ mimics the scene of the birth in the revelations of St. Bridget and the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and makes it possible for very simple stage business where "the actor playing the Virgin need only part his cloak to reveal the

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<sup>97</sup> For possible designs of the *Nativity* wagon based on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pageants used in the Low Countries, see Twycross "The Flemish *Ommegang* and its Pageant Cars".

child on the ground” (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 105).<sup>98</sup> The actor playing Mary could kneel in prayer and the child could be revealed from under the costume. Upon Joseph’s return to the stable – presumably he has returned with some fuel and light – he mentions a light “Ȇat comes shynyng þus sodenly” (14.79) perhaps from one of the holes in the roof of the stable. This lighting effect, which is mentioned again in *The Shepherds*, has been noted by Beadle as a possible association between the Chandlers and the subject of the pageant (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 109).

Although the Tile Thatchers’ pageant provides some clues that a pageant wagon was used for their performance, there are no extant records that the Tile Thatchers themselves ever owned or stored a wagon. The Plasterers – who partnered with the Tile Thatchers to co-sponsor *The Creation* and *The Nativity* – are assumed to have owned a wagon in order to allow them to achieve the stagecraft of the *Creation* pageant though there are also no records that they owned a dedicated wagon for their pageant (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 10). Even if the Plasterers did own a wagon, it could not have been borrowed by the Tile Thatchers for their own pageant because of the timeframe between the last performances of *The Creation* at Pavement and the first performance of the *Nativity* at the first station in Micklegate.<sup>99</sup> Though it would not be impossible for the Tile Thatchers to perform their pageant without a wagon or to have owned or employed an undocumented wagon, the Bridgemasters’ Account Rolls show several entries from the sixteenth century that may shed some light on what may have taken place during a short period of the pageant’s later history. From 1501 to 1528, the Chandlers – who were

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<sup>98</sup> For a comparison between the representations of the birth of Christ in St. Bridget’s *Revelations* and the *Meditationes vitase Christi* with the Tile Thatchers’ pageant see *York Plays*, Vol. 2 105-106.

<sup>99</sup> See Dorrell, “Two Studies” 102-107 for a list of start times for each pageant throughout the day based on performances at twelve stations. These times should be taken as suggestions rather than fixed times since they do not account for delays or for setup time that may be required for each pageant.

responsible for the pageant following the Tile Thatchers' pageant – paid for the lease of a pageant house in Toft Green. The subject of the Chandlers' pageant does not, at least on paper, allude to the use of a wagon and the action does not necessitate the use of a wagon unless the angel speaks to the shepherds from above. While this information does not necessarily mean that the Chandlers' wagon was designed as a stable and employed by the Tile Thatchers for *The Nativity*, the overlap in the action between the Tile Thatchers' pageant and the Chandlers' performance would allow such use of a pageant wagon to work in practice: the sharing of the angel as noted in the *Ordo* would allow for the possibility that the Chandlers' wagon was, in fact, the same wagon employed by the Tile Thatchers for their pageant if the two groups continued to perform in tandem in the century following the revisions made by Burton in the *Ordo* (and following the compilation of the Register and during the first quarter of the sixteenth century). This would, again, suit the processional mode of the production since the pageants would play in succession and the groups could combine their resources to perform *The Nativity* and *The Shepherds*.

The Chandlers' pageant as it follows from *The Nativity* depicts the angel's visit – the same angel from the Tile Thatchers' pageant – to three shepherds and the subsequent visit of these shepherds to the stable. It is clear that the shepherds' placement is no more specific than somewhere near Bethlehem (15.11 and 15.13-14) and the audience is told that the shepherds “walke þus, withouten were” (15.3). We are told that they will travel to Bethlehem to visit Christ following a visit from the angel (likely after 15.55). A leaf missing from the Register likely contained the text of the angel singing *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is hinted at by one of the shepherds in the extant text: “An aungell brought vs tythandes newe | A babe in Bedlem is shulde be

borne, | Of whom þan spake oure prophecies trewe” (15.72-74).<sup>100</sup> After hearing the news from the angel, the shepherds travel to the stable and present the Christ child with gifts. These gifts – a brooch and a bell (15.104), two cobble nuts on a band (15.111), and a horn spoon (15.124) – are given by each of the shepherds to Christ at the end of the extant text.<sup>101</sup> There is a note at the end of the pageant made in John Clerke’s hand that reads “Here wants the conclusion of this matter” which suggests that when the performances were checked against the Register in the sixteenth century it was found that the text was missing additional material which might include a speech by Mary.<sup>102</sup>

If the Chandlers’ wagon was constructed as the stable and employed in the Tile Thatchers’ pageant as the locale for Christ’s birth, then it is possible that the shepherds’ began their wanderings on the street rather than on a raised platform. Their mention of the prophecies from Hosea, Isaiah, and Balaam – also recalled by Mary and Joseph in *The Nativity* and echoed by the Magi in the Goldsmiths’ pageant – indicates the scope of their knowledge: they are humble shepherds but their wisdom extends beyond their station. This knowledge allows them to recognise the significance of their encounter with the angel – missing from the text though the subject is clearly the announcement of Christ’s birth – and is the driving force behind their journey to Bethlehem.<sup>103</sup> The shepherds make their way through the street to the wagon that represents the stable in Bethlehem and upon their arrival

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<sup>100</sup> For a discussion about the missing leaf and the possible speech from the angel, see *York Plays*, Vol. 2 111-112 and 116.

<sup>101</sup> These gifts are similar to those presented by shepherds in other pageants (see *York Plays*, Vol. 2 117).

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion about John Clerke’s annotations to the Register, see Meredith, “John Clerke’s Hand in the York Register”, *Leeds Studies in English* 12 (1981): 245-71. See also *York Plays*, Vol. 2 110 for the suggestion that a speech from Mary might be missing from the pageant text such as that found in the *Second Shepherds’ Play* from Towneley.

<sup>103</sup> The annunciation to the shepherds in Luke’s gospel (Luke 2:8-20) does not suggest that the shepherds were aware of any prophecies about the coming of the messiah. This mention of Hosea, Isaiah, and Balaam – repeated in many of the pageants – is perhaps therefore a didactic strategy to emphasize the importance of these prophecies that are also mentioned later by the three Magi.

mount the wagon to present their gifts. Because of Burton's revision to the *Ordo*, we know that the angel from *The Nativity* appeared to the shepherds and the processional mode makes this apparition practicable. There are two likely explanations for how the angel may have presented itself to the shepherds. First, if the angel appeared from the same position as in the Tile Thatchers' pageant – perhaps from atop the roof of the stable on the wagon – the initial placement of the shepherds from the Chandlers' pageant would have to be near enough to the Tile Thatchers' pageant to engage with the angel. This means that, because of the distance between most of the stopping places, the shepherds would not be able to begin their pageant at the station before: both *The Nativity* and *The Shepherds* would have to perform in tandem at the same stopping place as an extended pageant that is initially composed of two main dramatic spaces that come together at the close of the pageant. Following the end of *The Nativity*, the audience's attention would be drawn to the players from *The Shepherds* pageant who are elsewhere in the street. The communication between the angel from *The Nativity* and the shepherds – if it takes place from above the stable – could only allow for a tandem performance in one stopping place; if, however, the same angel were to position itself elsewhere and not atop the pageant wagon but a separate platform placed elsewhere in the street – even at the previous stopping place – the Chandlers' pageant could have begun at the previous stopping place and ended at the location where the stable was positioned. This latter method of performance might allow the performances to occur half as many times as there were stations though there is no documentary evidence for this. This sharing of the angel between the Chandlers and the Tile Thatchers would go some way to explaining the 1476 entry in the House Books that “no plaiier þat shall plaiie in þe saide Corpus christi plaiie be conducte and Reteyned to plaiie but twise on

pe day of þe saide playe” (*REED: York* 109). In any case, the sharing of the angel between the two pageants allows for some added continuity between the pageants and is a practical bonus that allows the two groups to share the financial responsibility of the players and the costume.

The stage directions in the Register note that the shepherds sing twice in the pageant: once following the visit from the angel (15.64+) and again while traveling to Bethlehem (15.85+).<sup>104</sup> The Second Shepherd exclaims that they will “make myrthe and melody | With sange to seke oure savyour” (15.84-85) which signals the beginning of their movement from their original position in the street to where the wagon for *The Nativity* pageant is located. Rastall speculates that these lines might indicate the inclusion of music in the pageant (Rastall, *Minstrels Playing* 15) and the inclusion of music in other extant shepherds’ pageants – sung by angels and shepherds – is common.<sup>105</sup> The length of the song is unknown but the extant text suggests that the shepherds arrive at the stable soon after the song ends and when the Second Shepherd says “Loo, here is the house, and here is hee” (15.91). The members of the holy family do not address the shepherds (and nor do the shepherds address Mary and Joseph) but the shepherds themselves address Christ as they present their gifts. The shepherds likely sing for a third time following the presentation of the gifts since the Third Shepherd says that they “make mirthe as we gange” (15.131). The use of singing provides embellishment to the performance when the shepherds move from their starting place, perhaps somewhere on the pageant route behind the stable, to their destination at the locale of Christ’s birth and

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<sup>104</sup> Beadle suggests that the shepherds sing an imitation of the *Gloria* that was sung by the angel (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 115). On the missing music see Rastall, *Heaven Singing* 256-58 and *Minstrels Playing* 14, 50; on the possible performance of the music see Rastall, *Heaven Singing* 352-53 and *Minstrels Playing* 14.

<sup>105</sup> See for example the N-Town *Shepherds* (16.82-89); Towneley *First Shepherds’ Play* (12.433+) and *Second Shepherds’ Play* (13.667); and Chester *Shepherds* (7.450+).



echoing the processional mode. The use of song signals the passage through space over time and draws the audience's attention to the shepherds as they move towards Bethlehem. The music consolidates the distance between the places that the shepherds occupy at the beginning of the pageant and the stable with the holy family.

Knowing which pieces of music are sung by the shepherds and the length of these songs would go some way to indicating how far the shepherds travel between their starting place and the stable but unfortunately neither the music itself or the title of the songs has been included in the Register. Even without this information, however, it is clear that the music is not just an element of the spectacle intended to impress the audience or to showcase the players' talent; the music allows the shepherds to move from one dramatic space to another (and, indeed, one area of York to another) without the difficulty of acoustics that dialogue would present if the shepherds were speaking to one another as they moved through the street. By using music, the players are not required to face one another as they would with dialogue and the passage of time between the two places in their journey is heightened. With dialogue, the passage of time remains real – the time it would take to have a conversation is the time it would take for the shepherds to travel from their starting place to the stable. With the use of music during the journey, the passage of time becomes abstract and the time it takes the players to walk from one part of the pageant route to another is subverted by musical time. In this instance the “scale of emplacement” (Connerton, *Modernity* 99) shifts so that the distance that the shepherds' journey to Bethlehem is superimposed on the pageant route through the medium of song. The shepherds initially occupy a location that is characterized by its placelessness – it is not given a name, there is no sense of its geographical location except in that it is near Bethlehem, and, by extension, it reflects the

shepherds' spiritual wanderings before Christ's arrival. This movement between a position that indicates placelessness and spiritual wandering to a locale that contains the holy family and a sense of place that embodies the consequences of a virgin birth in humble surroundings provides the audience with a concentrated version of the *Play's* wider narrative arc: as the audience witnesses each pageant, the performance moves from the historical and distant past of the Old Testament to the stories of Christ's redemption of humanity in the New Testament. The stories become more focused around the character of Christ and the importance of his redemption through his physical presence in the world and, like the shepherds' movement from a place reminiscent of spiritual wandering towards the fixed locales of Christ's life (Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, etc.) to a sense of place that reflects the good and bad souls in the depiction of heaven and hell in *Doomsday*.

The Masons' *Herod* (16) and the Goldsmiths' *The Magi* (16)

The Masons and Goldsmiths seem to have developed an interesting alliance in the fifteenth century with the aim of performing their pageants of *Herod* and *The Magi* in tandem with one another. The Masons' skills in stonework ranged from cutting and setting stone, carving, and sculpting, to master masons carrying out architectural design and the completion of major construction projects of ecclesiastical buildings and castles. Much of the stonework completed by the Masons during the medieval period is still extant in York's current infrastructure with the surviving stonework in the liberty of the Minster demonstrating the height of the craft's skill. Although a number of masons were permanently resident within York, the majority of the masons who were employed in York during the medieval

period were itinerant.<sup>106</sup> It is important to recognise that masons – in York and elsewhere – were not a “conventional craft organization” (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 122) in that much of the workforce was dependent on the progress of their projects and thus their numbers fluctuated according to demand.<sup>107</sup> The Masons’ craft in York was most active from the second half of the fourteenth century until the first quarter of the fifteenth century after which time the number of Masons admitted to the freedom of the city decreased greatly.<sup>108</sup> It is not known how the Masons were governed since they did not have any registered ordinances unlike other crafts in the city so the process by which pageant silver would have been collected is unknown. It seems likely, however, that they would have still been presented with the pageant billet from the common clerk in Lent (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 123). The craft was associated with a number of pageants throughout the *Play*’s medieval performance history including *The Funeral of the Virgin* (44a, until around 1432-33), *Herod and the Magi* (16, 1432-33 to around 1477), and *The Purification of the Virgin* (17, from around 1477 onwards).

The Goldsmiths worked with silver and gold and more generally in the production of luxury goods that were bedecked in jewels and precious metals. A high portion of their business was with the ecclesiastical community – especially the Minster – and many of the Goldsmiths had premises in Stonegate (B2) near the Minster Gates (Raine 119 and Dean 122-24). There was a high proportion of Goldsmiths admitted to the franchise in York during the medieval period relative to other provincial towns and a number of Goldsmiths were also admitted to the

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<sup>106</sup> Work routines and employment conditions for masons in the Minster are found in the fabric rolls (Raine, *Fabric Rolls of York Minster* 181-82; Salzman, 57-8); For details of the practices of the Minster masons see Coldstream, *Medieval Craftsmen: Masons and Sculptors*, 25-9, 31-2.

<sup>107</sup> See Knoop and Jones, *Medieval Masons*, 141-42; and Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540* 33.

<sup>108</sup> For details of the number of Masons admitted to the freedom of the city in the middle ages see *VCH: York* 115 and Swanson, *Building Draftsmen in Late Medieval York*, 40-1.

prestigious Mercers' fraternity (Wheatley 12).<sup>109</sup> The craft was composed of some of the city's wealthiest and most powerful citizens with a high number of them in civic office during the fifteenth century (Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* 78-9; Palliser, *Tudor York* 164-5). The Goldsmiths' early ordinances (1410-11) "are concerned exclusively with the searchers' responsibilities in assaying, and make no specific mention of the pageant" (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 120)<sup>110</sup> though it is not difficult to see why the craft would be associated with the pageant of *The Magi*: the crowns for the three kings and the vessels for their gifts to the Christ-child call for goods and skills that would allow the Goldsmiths to show off their craft.<sup>111</sup>

The original *Ordo Paginarum* entry for *Herod* and *The Magi* distinguishes the portion of the pageants involving the nativity scene and the presentation of the gifts from the visit to Herod: "Tres Reges venientes ab oriente / herodes interrogans eos de puero Iesu / et duo consiliarij | Maria cum puero et stella desuper et tres Reges offerentes munera" (*REED: York* 19) ("The three kings coming from the East, Herod asking them about the boy Jesus and two counsellors" and "Mary with the boy and the star above, and the three kings offering gifts" (*REED: York* 704)). This suggests that the two distinct episodes noted in the *Ordo* under the Goldsmiths (together with the Goldbeaters and Money-makers)<sup>112</sup> were separate before the Masons took over the episode of *Herod*. The plot description from the *Ordo* differs from the surviving text(s) in so far as the omission of the opening episode of *Herod* involving Herod's

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<sup>109</sup> For details of the admission of Goldsmiths to the franchise see *VCH: York* 115 and Swanson, "Craftsmen and Industry in Late Medieval York" 183-84.

<sup>110</sup> See *YMB* i.74-75 for the ordinances.

<sup>111</sup> In play cycles at Beverley, Newcastle, and Norwich the same pairing between Goldsmiths and the Magi was also made (Justice, "Trade Symbolism in the York Cycle" 50). In Chester, the Vintners were responsible for *The Three Kings Come to Herod* (8) and the Mercers for *The Offering of the Three Kings* (9).

<sup>112</sup> Around the turn of the fourteenth century the Goldbeaters were associated with the Painters and Stainers' pageant of the nailing of Christ on the cross (see no. 35).

boasting to his son and his courtiers, a section that is in a different metre from the rest of the pageant(s).

A note in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1432-33 states that the Goldsmiths wished to “be relieved of one of their pageants” (*REED: York 732*) because of the cost of performing two pageants in the cycle.<sup>113</sup> The same document states that, conveniently, the Masons could take up responsibility of *Herod* from the Goldsmiths since the former group wished to be relieved of *The Funeral of the Virgin* (or *Fergus*) (44A) for practical reasons unrelated to financial responsibility:

the subject of this pageant is not contained in the sacred scripture and used to produce more noise and laughter than devotion. And whenever quarrels, disagreements, and fights used to arise among the people from this, they have rarely or never been able to produce their pageant and to play in daylight as the preceding pageants do. (*REED: York 732*)

The issue of whether the subject of *The Funeral of the Virgin* was contained within scripture shows that, even during the early fifteenth century, the producers and the audiences of the pageants were attuned to the role of the *Play* as a vehicle for presenting an (allegedly) authoritative version of the biblical material. Indeed, although much of the minor details in the other pageants were extra-biblical – often from apocryphal sources like the *Gospel of Nicodemus* or other non-scriptural material like the *Northern Homily Cycle* – the story of *Fergus* appears to have been derived entirely from outside the traditional canon.<sup>114</sup> The anxiety over how it was

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<sup>113</sup> The date given to this document in *REED: York* is 1431-32 but Beadle and Meredith have shown that, based on the dates of Thomas Snauden’s mayoralty, the date of the document should be amended to 1432-33 (Beadle and Meredith, “Further External Evidence for Dating the York Register (BL Additional MS 35290)” 51).

<sup>114</sup> The text of the *Funeral of the Virgin* (44A) was not inserted into the Register but Beadle has suggested a summary of the plot (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 424-429). For a discussion of the visual

greeted – as a fictitious addition to an otherwise verifiable account of Christ’s life – appears to have diminished the role of the Masons in York and resulted in an undesirable response to the pageant. The issue of status is still at the fore in the 1432-33 document: “On the one hand, they [the Masons] desired a pageant with more suitable content that would not inspire inappropriate laughter; on the other, they wanted to ensure their own literal visibility, playing in daylight so that their production efforts would not be wasted” (Christie, “Bridging the Jurisdictional Divide” 63). The latter complaint alludes to the practical issue of performing a pageant at night: Dorrell’s timings for the pageants suggest that the performances of *Fergus* would take place between 5:00pm and 12:00am depending on its length which results in many of the performances taking place between dusk and total darkness (Dorrell, “Two Studies” 107). This would of course affect the audience’s view of the pageant and, as Sheila Christie points out, these two reasons “are tactics designed to appeal to the interests of the civic elite” (Christie, “Bridging the Jurisdictional Divide” 63) because of the interest in efficient running times as well as scriptural authority. A delay because of a problematic pageant would be a hindrance to the pageants that followed and presenting material that was not perceived to be authoritative in light of the religious feast day could be seen as a compromise of the souls of the less knowledgeable audience members and, indeed, the performers and their patrons. Although delays to the pageants are rarely mentioned in the records, they were enough of an issue that entries in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1399 and 1422 state that performances should only occur at the assigned stopping places while in 1554 an ordinance in the *City Chamberlain’s Book* notes a fine issued to the Girdlers for causing a delay (REED: *York* 697-98, 722-24, and 313).

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depictions of the episode in York, see also Evans, “When a Body Meets a Body: Fergus and Mary in the York Cycle” 200-2 and Hardwick, “The Monkeys’ Funeral in the Pilgrimage Window, York Minster” 294.

There are no extant records for pageant wagon ownership directly connected to the Masons though it is possible that the Masons did have a wagon that they stored in one of their lodges in York or perhaps even within the liberty of the Minster.<sup>115</sup> Since the text of *The Funeral of the Virgin* does not survive, it is unclear whether the Masons would have employed a wagon during performances of that pageant and hence whether the same wagon was later adapted for the needs of *Herod*.<sup>116</sup> That said, the Goldsmiths paid for the lease of a pageant house in Toft Green from 1424-25 to 1523-24 and the size of the property is also known.<sup>117</sup> The 1432-33 entry from the *A/Y Memorandum Book* that establishes the handover of *Herod* from the Goldsmiths to the Masons does not clearly state whether the Goldsmiths were in possession of two pageant wagons; furthermore, the details of whether the wagon that would have been employed for *Herod* was given to or, indeed, purchased by the Masons upon their takeover of the pageant are also unknown. If prior to the division of ownership two wagons were owned by the Goldsmiths then the one employed for the *Herod* portion of the performance could have continued to be stored in the Goldsmiths' pageant house after the transfer of ownership to the Masons (though evidence of a contribution from the Masons for the payment of the pageant house does not survive). It is also possible that, as Beadle has pointed out, the Masons employed a wagon on a smaller scale like that recorded in the Mercers' indenture of 1526 that mentions two carts in addition to the larger

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<sup>115</sup> A 1388 reference to the storage of wagons in the hall of the archbishop's palace could be evidence of wagon ownership (see Johnston, "York Pageant House: New Evidence"). See also the Bridgemaster's Account Rolls for Ouse Bridge and the references to rents paid by "diverse crafts" from 1501-2 to 1543-44 (see *REED: York*).

<sup>116</sup> The Linenweavers were assigned *The Funeral of the Virgin* in 1476 and there are no records that show an association between the craft and a dedicated pageant wagon. The craft previously contributed to the Tapiters and Couchers' *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife* (30) from 1470 but the Linenweavers joined the other two groups after they had already been performing the pageant for some time.

<sup>117</sup> The Goldsmiths' indenture of 1420 states that the property was approximately 15' by 21 ½' (*REED: York* 721).

wagon designed by Drawswerd (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 130).<sup>118</sup> In any case, the use of two separate wagons – either of the same scale or one of slightly smaller proportions than the other – could be used to display the division between Herod’s court and the scene of the nativity.

The ownership of *The Magi* remained with the Goldsmiths until the end of the pageant’s medieval performance history but the ownership of *Herod* and the role of the Masons in the later history of the *Play* remain contested. An entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1477 states that the Masons – as well as the Labourers – would “bear the burdens and expenses” (*REED: York 778*) of the *Purification of the Virgin* (17) without any added note about who would be responsible for performing *Herod*. The *Purification* originally belonged to St. Leonard’s Hospital and although St. Leonard’s is mentioned in the 1477 document, it is not obvious whether the hospital relinquished control of the *Purification* pageant entirely or, indeed, whether it continued to be involved in the performances in some way. There is textual evidence that *Herod* continued to be played after 1477 since amendments and annotations to the text in the Register were made by John Clerke in the 1550s (Meredith, “John Clerke’s Hand in the York Register” 262). The 1535 list in the *City Chamberlains’ Rolls* that lays out the names of the groups who had paid their lease in order to play their pageant lists the Goldsmiths but does not list the Masons as having contributed any money towards the cost of performing their pageant (*REED: York 257-61*). Since the *Play* was cancelled in favour of the *Creed Play* that year this document does not necessarily adequately reflect all of the groups who intended to perform in 1535. It is therefore unsurprising that receipt of the Masons’ lease is not

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<sup>118</sup> Johnston and Dorrell’s discussion about the use of these two carts to represent hellmouth and a coffin for the souls to rise from during the Mercers’ pageant (Johnston and Dorrell, “The York Mercers and their Pageant” 19). A copy of the Mercers’ 1526 indenture is available in *REED: York 241-42*.



recorded in the 1535 list since the list was likely abandoned once the council decided to reallocate the funds towards a performance of the *Creed Play*. The absence of the Masons from the 1535 collection of the pageant leases is thus not an indication that the Masons did not intend to perform *Herod* or *The Purification of the Virgin* that year.

A note in the *House Books* from 1561 states that the Minstrels “shall of their chardges yerely bryng forth the pageant of herod Inquyryng of the iij kynges for the child Jesu somtyme brought forth by the late Masons of the said Citie” (*REED: York* 334). This document shows the transfer of ownership of *Herod* from the “late Masons” to the Minstrels, the phrasing of which suggests that the pageant had not changed hands from the time it was first given to the Masons by the Goldsmiths in 1432-33. Sheila Christie posits that the Masons continued to be responsible for *Herod* from this time but that, following the 1477 writ, became responsible for two pageants (which, as demonstrated by the Goldsmiths’ previous ownership of two pageants, was certainly a possibility) (Christie, “Bridging the Jurisdictional Divide” 73). Christie notes that the financial burden of having one group perform both *Herod* and *The Purification* was likely made feasible by the existence of two separate Masons’ lodges in the city: one at the liberty of the Minster and a second at St. Leonard’s Hospital. Her argument is that the Masons’ lodge that was based at the Minster was responsible for *Herod* (and, previously, *The Funeral of the Virgin*) while the lodge at St. Leonard’s became responsible for *The Purification of the Virgin* which goes some way to explaining how the former pageant continued to be played in the mid-sixteenth century under Clerke’s supervision (Christie, “Bridging the Jurisdictional Divide” 73). The *Ordo Paginarum* – which was amended regularly over the *Play*’s medieval productions – does not indicate a change in ownership for

*Herod* and this implies that the ownership of the pageant remained unchanged until the takeover by the Minstrels in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Given the dating of the Register to three decades after the Masons' acquisition of *Herod* in 1432-33, the version of the episode that survives in the Register is likely from the time after the Masons took over the pageant. The Masons' version of the pageant comes with the added boasting from Herod that was not included in the description of the episode in the *Ordo Paginarum* and the first 56 lines of the pageant are composed in three types of alliterative stanzas that are not found elsewhere in the text (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 131). The extant text of *The Magi* does not differ from the description of the pageant(s) in the *Ordo* which suggests that it is similar to (if not the exact version) of the Goldsmiths' pageant from before 1432-33. The original scribe of the Register copied both pageants in order under their own headings and did not integrate the texts to show that they were performed in tandem. Lines 129-272 of the shared portion of the *Herod* text – where the Magi appear at Herod's court – are duplicated in the Register nearly word for word. This goes some way to explaining which portion of the pageant was shared by the two groups though John Clerke's later annotations to the Register provide a clearer illustration of how the two groups played in tandem.<sup>119</sup> From the text it appears that the performance began at Herod's court with the players from the Masons' pageant. The performance then cuts to the Magi from the Goldsmiths' pageant at line 57 who were perhaps located at some distance from Herod's court. The two groups are brought together when the Magi appear at Herod's court to confer with Herod and his councillors about the location of the "kyng | Of Jewes, and of Judé" (16.175-

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<sup>119</sup> Beadle discusses Clerke's confusion about how the texts appear in the Register and these notations are supposed to have been made while he checked the manuscript against the performance at the first station. A Maltese cross now appears around line 129 of the Masons' text that corresponds to a second Maltese cross at the start of the Goldsmiths' text to show the overlap (see *York Plays*, Vol. 2 125-27).

76).<sup>120</sup> The two groups of players are then separated again when the Magi travel to find the holy family at a third location. Herod's court does not resurface in the pageant following this episode and the Magi leave the holy family at the end of the pageant to return to their places of origin via a different route.

This sharing of the locale of Herod's court in both pageants is intensified by the processional mode of the performance: the Magi, following their visit to Herod, must travel to the stable to deliver their gifts to the Christ-child. Like the pageants that move through the pageant route from Micklegate to Pavement, the Magi continue to the next stopping place and arrive at the stable. This last step in their journey is taken together and they are not directed, as the shepherds were, by an angel but rather by the star. The star acts as messenger for the Magi and leads them to the house which, with its poorly-maintained structure and the two animals, is the antithesis of Herod's court. The house is the locale where the now-converted kings solidify their conversion to Judaism by presenting the messiah with precious gifts. The journey of the Magi from various and distant lands ends in a final procession to the stable to celebrate the birth of the messiah and this procession from Herod's court to the pseudo-court of the Christ-child mirrors the movement made by the players from the beginning of the pageant route, around the artisanal centre of the city, to the final stopping place at Pavement.

The opening of the Masons' pageant begins with Herod's exclamation that he is "Þe prince of planetis" (16.12), a boast that shows Herod's desire to have command over the whole of creation. Though Herod claims to have power over the

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<sup>120</sup> Beadle's edition merges both pageants together to emphasise that they were played in tandem and hence assigns them both the same pageant number (16). Where the Masons' text is played in tandem with the Goldsmiths' text, the Masons' version will be cited. If the text differs between the two pageants in more than spelling, the citation will be noted as "M" for the Masons' text or "G" for the Goldsmiths'. Significant differences between the two texts will be cited and discussed in the footnotes.

cosmos, his true jurisdiction is as a vassal of Rome; his title as king of Judea is placed under threat when the Magi appear at his court and reveal that they have travelled to seek the Christ-child because of the prophecies revealed to them through astrological study echoed in Herod's claim to the planets. The significance of the narrative in these two pageants is the revelation of Christ's incarnation to the gentiles – exemplified by the Magi – and the recognition by the world that Christ is the ruler of the Jews.<sup>121</sup> As the current king of Judea, Herod the Great sees this message from the Magi as a warning that he could be deposed in favour of another ruler. His son, Herod Antipas, who will later meet Christ when the latter is brought before the Tetrarch's court in *Christ Before Herod* (31), is also concerned for his father's position. When the Magi tell Herod that they are seeking the new king, his son defends Herod's power over Judea:

Naye, he is kyng and non but he,  
 þat sall 3e kenne if þat 3e craue,  
 And he is jugge of all Jurie,  
 To speke or spille, to saie or saffe. (16.181-184M)<sup>122</sup>

Young Herod's appearance in the Masons' pageant not only foreshadows his actions in *Christ Before Herod* but it also highlights the establishment of the Herodian Dynasty: Herod the Great already has a son who is heir to the throne of Judea. The Magi's declaration that they are seeking a king "þat is new-borne" (16.164) is a threat to the Herodian Dynasty and, by extension, the Romans who bestowed the kingdom of Judea upon Herod the Great.

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<sup>121</sup> The story of the Magi's visit to Herod is based in Matthew 2:1-12. Michael D. Coogan notes that the Magi seek the king of the Jews rather than the king of Israel because they are gentiles themselves (Coogan note to Matthew 2:2, *Holy Bible*)

<sup>122</sup> Herod Antipas only appears in the Masons' version of the episode and not in the Goldsmiths' text. In the Goldsmiths' *The Magi*, the lines read "Nay, I am kyng and non but I, | Þat shall 3e kenne yff þat 3e craue, | And I am juge of all Jury, | To speke o[r] spille, to saie or saffe. (16.181-184G).

Herod's characterization as vain continues from his obsession over his jurisdiction to how his power is reflected by his appearance. When told that the Magi have come to Judea, he asks his servants to "rewle vs þan in riche array" (16.147M)<sup>123</sup> so that the visitors to his court can see Herod's status reflected in his clothing. The messenger who greets Herod calls him "kyng with croune" (16.129) and evidence from other Corpus Christi pageants seems to suggest that Herod could have been presented in a mask or painted face and devil's crown (Twycross and Carpenter 216-19).<sup>124</sup> Herod's appearance is perhaps also affected by his depiction as a kind of Saracen leader: Herod greets the Magi with "Mahounde, my god and most of might...saffe you, sirs, semely in sight" (16.157-59). The anachronism here serves to typify the first-century leader as a medieval antagonist which provides the audience with more reason to despise the figure who would later agree to the murder of new born children in *Slaughter of the Innocents* (19) in an attempt to retain his power. Herod's vanity and his depiction as a medieval antagonist are further nourished by his tempestuous sensibility: when the Magi ask for "poure to passe" (16.188) through Judea in order to seek the king of the Jews, Herod calls them "Fals harlottis" (16.191) and one of his counsellors asks him to "stably vndirstande" (16.196) their request in an attempt to calm Herod's temper.<sup>125</sup> The other characters – the Magi, Herod Antipas, and the rest of the court – recognise Herod's jurisdiction and yet Herod himself attempts to highlight his power through his clothing and his

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<sup>123</sup> "dresse vs in riche array" (16.147G)

<sup>124</sup> For a discussion about representations of Herod wearing a demon crown see Skey, "Herod's Demon-Crown".

<sup>125</sup> In an attempt to "stably vndirstande" (16.196) how the Magi have heard about the arrival of the new king of the Jews, Herod asks his visitors to reveal the source of their findings. Each of the Magi mention a prophecy that supports their conclusion: Balaam (16.215-16), Isaiah (16.217-24), and Hosea (16.225-32). The prophecies that are mentioned in the visit of the Magi in Matthew's gospel come instead from Micah (5:1-3) and 2 Samuel (5:2).

temper. Herod's concern with maintaining his jurisdiction over Judea has, ironically, become the problem with his kingship.

The three Magi are eager to meet the new king of the Jews and, in contrast to Herod and to their biblical counterparts, are not presented as gentiles or Parthian priests; instead, they are depicted as converted Jews. In the Goldsmiths' pageant, the Magi profess their worship for God as the maker of all things (16.69-70G) though they acknowledge that they must seek permission from Herod before searching for Christ in Bethlehem: "Sir Herowde is kyng of this lande, | And has his lawes her for to leede" (16.119-20G). Before they enter his court, the Magi recognize Herod's authority which, in turn, makes Herod's show of power through his clothing and his temper all the more ridiculous. There is little indication within the text of how the Magi are dressed; they themselves do not make reference to their clothing and the only textual evidence for how their status is relayed to Herod's court is the observation from Nuncius that "thre kyngis carpand togedir... And þei hight to come hiddir" (16.138-40). There are slight indications as to their appearance and race: the second Magus is from "riche Arabie" (16.72G) and the first Magus is permitted to present his gift of gold to Christ before the others because of his seniority (16.307G).<sup>126</sup> There are no extant records that suggest the use of masks for the Magi in the *York Play* but a note in the *B/Y Memorandum Book* from 1561 tells us that the crowns and gowns that were a part of the Goldsmiths' costumes at York were rented out by the Goldsmiths for a fee of no less than 8d each (*REED: York* 334). In the medieval artistic tradition the Magi are presented as three kings, wearing crowns on

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<sup>126</sup> Beadle has pointed out that black magi were not found in continental vernacular drama until the sixteenth century but that there is an artistic tradition of depicting black magi (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 132; see also Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* 37, 71, 85). For a discussion about the representation of the Magi and their age see Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi* 95ff.

their heads and bearing their gifts in elaborately decorated vessels.<sup>127</sup> Beadle notes that “later medieval vernacular representations, following iconographic tradition, regularly presented [the Magi] them on horseback” (*York Plays*, Vol. 2 131). There is no indication in the text that the Magi in the *Play* employed horses as they did in the Towneley, Chester, and N-Town versions; the *Ordo Paginarum* entries from other pageants in the *Play* note the presence of animals – such as the ox and ass in the Tile Thatchers’ *Nativity* (14) – but the entries for *Herod* and *The Magi* do not mention the use of animals. It is perhaps likely, then, that the Magi – although dressed as kings and bearing elaborate gifts for the Christ-child – did not appear on horseback as they often did in the iconographic tradition. What is apparent from the text, however, is that by not mentioning their own appearance or clothing the Magi’s attitude towards how their outward appearance reflects their authority is pitted against Herod’s need for adornment; even if the Magi are bedecked in “riche array” (16.147M), the Magi’s lack of reference to their own appearance shows that they are more concerned with the spiritual reward of seeking the Christ-child than with earthly opulence.

Upon first appearing in the pageant the Magi have clearly travelled from different locations when they meet each other on the road. The third Magus asks the other two what country they are from and why they are travelling (16.93-96G). They confirm that they, too, have seen the star and are seeking the king and the first Magus states that “of felashippe are we fayne” (16.109G) confirming that the three are united in their purpose. The audience is told that the Magi have arrived at Jerusalem (16.113G) and that “beyonde is Bedleem” (16.115G). They are just outside of Herod’s court, which is most likely situated on a pageant wagon and have

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<sup>127</sup> One early fourteenth-century depiction of the Magi shows the Magus who is presenting his gift with his crown around his wrist to show his reverence to Christ while Mary and the other Magi look on (BL MS Arundel 83 II (De Lisle Psalter) ff.124).

arrived – perhaps on foot or on horseback – from three different directions when they meet in the street.<sup>128</sup> At some point Nuncius – Herod’s messenger – has met the Magi either offstage, before their appearance in the pageant, or in an unscripted exchange upon their arrival at court. Herod’s admission of the Magi to his court is an essential crossing of the threshold between the rest of the world and the locale of Herod’s jurisdiction; the Magi recognize that in order to achieve their goal of seeking the new king of the Jews and Judea, they must first meet with the old king. Upon telling Herod the purpose of their visit and crossing the threshold of his court, the Magi are delivering the news of the messiah’s birth to Judea.

The physical separation among the three locales presented on stage in *Herod* and *The Magi* is fundamental to the performance. Each locale has its own function and only the Magi travel to and between all three locales; upon arriving from the elsewhere of their origin, they enter Herod’s court in Jerusalem and are given permission to travel to Bethlehem where Christ has been born in a stable. The elsewhere from which they arrive – attributed to only one of the three Magi as “riche Arabie” (16.72G) – is assigned as just that: anywhere but Judea. That only one Magus is identified as being from a particular place emphasises that the origin of the Magi is only necessary in that they are not locals to Jerusalem or Bethlehem and to show the importance of their journey because of its distance; they do, however, recognise the local authority of Herod and as such abide by local customs.

The placement of the two main locales – Herod’s court at Jerusalem and the stable in the nativity scene at Bethlehem – in relation to the movement of the Magi and the progress of the other pageants is at once a practical issue and one that relies on defining how a locale is created: once attention has been drawn to them through

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<sup>128</sup> See the movement of three Magi in the *Officium Stellae* in Rouen who arrive from three different directions before converging and processing to the altar (King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City* 109; and Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, Vol. 2 42-50).



the performance, these locales are inscribed with particularity by the main figures who occupy them and, at the same time, the locales exist in relation to the other performances on either side of the stopping place. Herod's court is a locale imbued with a sense of threat and turbulence that is reflective of his temper and fear of being stripped of his kingdom. Like his vestments, his court and the wagon bearing this locale is presumably richly adorned to emphasize his status, as with the wagon that is reflective of his son's court in *Christ Before Herod* (31). The house in the nativity scene that follows is the antithesis of Herod's court: the sacredness of the stable is reflected in the Magi's recitation of praises to Christ that echo contemporary levation prayers<sup>129</sup> while Mary's statement that she "bare hym [Christ] here withouten payne" (16.349) heightens the peacefulness of the stable even during the act of childbirth. The "house" (16.283) where Christ is born is only marked as his birthplace by the star that reappears when the Magi arrive and, even then, the Magi are guided to the nativity scene by the maid (16.293-94) through a kind of *quem quaeritis* exchange. The fact that the Magi do not recognise the "house" as an obvious place for Christ's birth demonstrates that the house is not marked by the same opulence as Herod's court: it is not a locale that is distinct from the surrounding buildings. The silent childbirth and the maid that stands before the unmarked door instead evoke the later visit of the three Marys to the empty tomb in *The Resurrection* (38). The prayers of the Magi and the presentation of their gifts at once echo the practice of pilgrimage to a sacred site and the act of fealty to Christ in a humble locale. The depiction of the stable – perhaps on a wagon that is on a smaller scale than that of Herod's court – is thus likely to be free of the conventional attributes of a contemporary medieval pilgrimage site like Becket's tomb at Canterbury. The rich costuming of the Magi

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<sup>129</sup> For contextual material on levation prayers in eucharistic devotion in York see King, *The York Mystery Cycle and Worship of the City* 19-24.

against the backdrop of such a modest birthplace serves to heighten the significance of the house as a sacred space because of the presence of Christ rather than because of its rich appearance.

The main locales in the pageant are thus presented in visual opposition to one another on York's streets and the placement of these locales – on two separate apparatuses – is key to achieving the tandem performance of *Herod* and *The Magi*. Following the departure of the Magi from Herod's court, the latter speaks of how the Magi "shall be slayne" (16.265) and a note in John Clerke's hand from the mid-sixteenth century provides the following stage direction: "The Harrode passeth, and the iij kynges commyth agayn to make there offerynges" (16.272+). Since Herod and his court do not feature in the rest of the pageant, it is apparent from Clerke's note that the pageant wagon bearing Herod's court as well as the cast from *Herod* would begin moving their wagon to the next playing space at this stage. The movement of the performances from Micklegate across Ouse Bridge and clockwise around the city to Pavement would logically situate the wagon for *Herod* in front of whatever stage would have been used for *The Magi*. This would allow the Masons to set up their wagon and allow the playing of *Herod* to commence at the next station while the Goldsmiths continued to perform *The Magi*. This would allow for a seamless and continuous performance of *Herod* and *The Magi* especially if the Masons' wagon could be set up while the Chandlers were completing the preceding pageant.<sup>130</sup> This movement of the *Herod* wagon also means that the cast from the Masons' pageant

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<sup>130</sup> Dorrell's timings for the performance of *Herod* and *The Magi* suggest that the combined playing time of the episodes is 32 minutes (Dorrell, "Two Studies of the York Corpus Christi Play" 103). Since each episode is marked separately, it is unclear from Dorrell's chart whether the timings for each episode take into account the overlap between the two performances or the addition of music to account for the length of the performance. Without further clarification, the timings in this case seem unreasonably lengthy though the playing time of the previous pageant (*The Shepherds* (15) – if played in tandem with *The Nativity* (14) – would allow the Masons to be at the following stopping place just as the Chandlers' pageant ends.

could not be doubled for the nativity episode but, rather, that separate actors would have to depict Mary, Joseph, and Ancilla from those at Herod's court. When the Magi leave the scene of the Nativity and return back to their native lands, their movement towards the next playing station would allow them to re-join the players from *Herod* with the stage for the nativity following behind. Whether they left in different directions to show their returns to different lands could be dependent on the location of the next playing station (this would, for instance, be easier to accomplish at nearly every playing station except the two stations that straddle Ouse Bridge) but in any case such an arrangement would mean that the players from both groups could perform continuously. The continuous movement demonstrates the importance of adherence to strict timing by all of the playing groups since any delay by the performers ahead of the *Herod* pageant would cause issues for the start of *The Magi*.

#### Tandem Performance and Place

The two pairs of pageants being addressed here demonstrate evidence that some of the pageants played in tandem and this illustrates the level of cooperation that was required between some of the trade and craft guilds in order for such an undertaking to occur. These relationships extend beyond the sharing of the financial burden of performing these pageants: the sharing of the performance and dramatic spaces articulates a unique relationship between stage geography and the wider issues of place in the *Play* as a whole. While the locations of the playing stations are fixed throughout the day, the issue of the dramatic space – that which is represented by the performance including the locales within the pageants – and how it is situated within the performance space is affected by these tandem performances. How and when each group moves from one performance space to another is dictated by how the playing groups interact with each other over the course of the performance and,

of course, how they work together to present a series of fictive localities to the audience in the very real city of York. Unlike a fixed-place performance that might lay out the stage geography in a series of fixed locations on a stage, the ever-moving pageants in the *Play* present a challenge because of the re-playing of these pageants at different stopping places throughout the day. The dialogue between performance space and dramatic space has to allow for the movement of the players from one station to the next and the examples of *The Nativity* (14) and *The Shepherds* (15) and *Herod* (16) and *The Magi* (16) demonstrate how such a relationship can function in the *York Play*.

In both pairs of pageants locale is pitted against space: the Magi and the shepherds have to make their way to the stable and both groups use the street to travel to the place where the Christ-child is born. The placement of the shepherds and Magi in the street situates these players on the same plane as the audiences, blurring the relationship between the dramatic space occupied by the players and the area used by the spectators. The street, too, is a place of nowhere in the imagined geography of the pageants – it is a means by which the shepherds and the Magi can travel to the locale rather than a material setting for the social relations between king and subject. The shepherds employ the street to make their way to the stable while the Magi make their way to Herod's court and, later, to the place of the nativity. The locales in both pairs of pageants draw the audiences' eyes up from the street: the stable sits above the area where the shepherds are situated at the beginning of their pageant and Herod's court sits in juxtaposition to the house in the later Masons' and Goldsmiths' pageants. Unlike the characters in the *Road to Calvary* (34) and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39), the shepherds and the Magi who are making their way to the stable are not met by another player in the street and their journey is

uninterrupted; travel through the street is, for the shepherds and the Magi, a way of arriving at a locale. The shepherds and the Magi are also the only characters in these two pairs of pageants who travel in the street: the Holy Family remains in the stable for the duration of these pageants and the members of Herod's court are fixed in their locale.

The use of the street in these pageants echoes the processional mode of the *Play* and the Corpus Christi procession that is a part of the ecclesiastical celebration of Corpus Christi. The tandem performances work to consolidate dramatic space: the distance between locales is shortened by the movement of the shepherds and the Magi through the blending of fictive locality with the performance space. The shepherds' travel from outside Bethlehem to the stable is far longer in the imagined geography of the pageant than the distance between two stopping places on the pageant route. The distance that the Magi travel in the imagined geography of *Herod* and *The Magi* is also much longer than the movement of the players between two stopping places. The scale of emplacement of the dramatic space is adjusted to match the scale of emplacement in York through the processional mode so that the vast distances travelled by the Magi and the shepherds is scaled down to fit the pageant route. In the dramatic space of the *Play*, the movement between fictive localities in these pageants is shortened even further when they play in tandem and the significance of the journey taken by the shepherds and the Magi is placed on their arrival at the stable rather than the length of their travel from elsewhere.

The spatial logic of the performances in these two pairs of tandem pageants illustrates how players from different pageants could interact with one another. This demonstrates how the pageants at York did not always duplicate similar characters and fictive localities that appear in concurrent pageants but rather could continued

from one pageant into the next to create overlaps in the cast and the shared dramatic spaces. Unlike the longer pageants from Chester and Towneley, those from *The York Play* are notably shorter and more numerous which can partly be explained by the number of trade and craft guilds that were operational in York during the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The tandem performances might go some way to explaining how this model of shorter and more numerous pageants at York could have produced units of performance throughout the day that are closer in length to the pageants from Chester and Towneley especially from the late fifteenth century. While documentary evidence for the tandem performances cannot be shown for all of the pageants and while the extant evidence does not necessarily show that these pageants performed in tandem throughout the whole of the *Play*'s pre-modern history, it is possible that this could have happened organically in instances where the narrative and cast of two or more concurrent pageants overlap with one another.<sup>131</sup> This occurrence of tandem performances could also explain the 1476 entry from the *House Books* that “no plaier þat shall plaie in þe saide Corpus Cristi plaie...but twice” (*REED: YORK* 109): if actors were playing the same role over a series of concurrent pageants that were played in tandem, this entry might restrict the performances so that only pairs of pageants could play in tandem. In any case the instances where pageants were played as a longer joined unit demonstrate the ways in which the dramatic space of the *Play* and the streets of York come together in the performance. The tandem performances serve to articulate the relationships between the fictional localities within the *Play* and the role that these localities play in the audiences' understanding of the Corpus Christi narrative.

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<sup>131</sup> Some instances where tandem performances could take place include *Fall of Man* (5) with *The Expulsion* (6) and *The Building of the Ark* (8) with *The Flood* (9). The Mary pageants towards the end of the *Play* (44-46) might also offer the possibility of tandem performances though the lost text of *The Funeral of the Virgin* (44A) means that one must rely on the description of the pageant from the *Ordo Paginarum*.

Particularity and Locality:

The Trial Pageants and the York Minster Gates

*Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas (29), Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife (30), Christ Before Herod (31), and Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement (33)*

As an important site on the pageant route and as the locale that is associated with the daily operations of the Minster itself, the Minster Gates are the physical boundary between the civic jurisdiction and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction: it is at this boundary that the clergy who control the ecclesiastical courts in York heard the pageants on several occasions. This association is made more powerful when the trial pageants are experienced from this stopping place on the pageant route because much of Christ's trial is based around the difficulty of finding a court that will adequately charge him with a crime that will result in his death. The medieval jurisdictional divide between the ecclesiastical courts and the secular courts is one that is mirrored throughout the pageants: the high priests do not have the credentials to charge Christ with a felony and as such they are required to convince the appropriate secular court that such a charge should be applied. Annas and Caiaphas require either Herod or Pilate to charge Christ with treason in order to achieve their goal and in the courts of medieval York a similar division in jurisdictional boundaries is at play. The Minster was not the only legal locus in medieval York: the secular courts met at the castle since it was the centre of the King's power and civil law within the city. While the courts that met at the castle were just as important as the ecclesiastical courts, the interest in the Minster as a centre of legal practice within the city is an important one given the subject matter of the trial pageants in the *York Play*. The Mayoral courts in the Common Hall also played an important

role in the civic governance of York and as a secondary locale of secular power its jurisdictional authority could sometimes overlap with the city's other legal courts.

There are four pageants that are of interest here: the Bowers and Fletchers' *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas* (29); the Tapiters and Couchers' *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife* (30); the Litsters' *Christ Before Herod* (31); and the Tilemakers' *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement* (33). These pageants encompass the lengthy dispute between the priests of the Temple, Annas and Caiaphas, with Pontius Pilate – the Roman prefect of Judea – and Herod Antipas, the tetrarch and ruler of Galilee and Perea, over which body of power can prosecute Christ for his crimes. The dispute over jurisdiction is important in these pageants since it is Annas and Caiaphas who initiate the trial of Jesus by complaining about him to Pilate in *The Conspiracy* (26) while the latter refuses to prosecute Christ until after a charge of treason is brought forward by the high priests in the final trial pageant. The priests of the Temple bring Jesus to Pilate who passes the accused to Herod since the places where Jesus was most active in his ministry fall under Herod's jurisdiction. Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate, again citing jurisdiction, and Pilate finally sentences Christ to flagellation and crucifixion after he is convinced of the treason charge by the high priests. Annas and Caiaphas are persistent in their goal to have Jesus executed since treason is a felony and, because they are aware that their status as priests of the Temple does not give them the power to execute Christ, they are eager to find another court that has the power to do so.<sup>132</sup> Without charging Christ with a felony in the civil court, the high priests cannot ensure that he will be executed (see King, "Contemporary Cultural Models", 209).

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<sup>132</sup> For details of how a felony was tried see King, "Contemporary Cultural Models" 201-10.



I will begin by looking briefly at the jurisdictional boundaries between the three main legal *loci* in medieval York: the Minster, the castle, and the Common Hall. These courts each dealt with different legal issues and the general running of these courts was left to different groups of individuals depending on the circumstances. The second section in the chapter will address the stopping place in front of the Minster Gates (B2) and its use as the site of the Dean and Chapter's Corpus Christi feast at different times during the *Play's* medieval performances. The chamber above the Gates was used by members of the Minster clergy on several occasions during Corpus Christi and, as the main entrance to the Liberty, would have been one of the places where the audience of the pageants could have included a higher proportion of clergy. This examination of the different courts in York and the stopping place in front of the Minster Gates will inform the last section of the chapter where the trial pageants will be examined as site-specific performances. The focus will be on how the performances of the four trial pageants in front of the Minster Gates are informed by both the locale and the sense of place: the Gates and the looming Minster beyond as well as the Minster's association with the ecclesiastical courts in York during the middle ages. The representations of Annas and Caiphas as bishops – a visual allegiance with the clergy who sit in the chamber above and who reside and work within the Liberty of the Minster – and the struggle over jurisdictional boundaries are especially resonant with these pageants which are enriched by the site-specificity of a performance at this station. The appearance of false witnesses and their role in Christ's trial presents some of the issues with the legal practices contemporary to the early audiences of these productions and the trial pageants act as a critique of the medieval legal system. The resonances between the dramatic space and performance space is fuelled by the sense of place at this

stopping place: Pilate and Herod's courts, the associations with contemporary clergymen, and the presence of the ecclesiastical courts beyond the Gates all meld to create a performance that is enriched and informed by the stopping place.

#### Situating the Legal System in Medieval York

Three main locales in medieval York were affiliated with the legal system at large: the Minster was the main locus of the ecclesiastical courts while the secular courts were based at the castle and the Common Hall. The division in jurisdiction was complex but was largely based on the type of alleged wrongdoing, the place where the alleged wrongdoing occurred, and, to some extent, the parties involved in the alleged wrongdoing.<sup>133</sup> These divisions were further complicated by the establishment of liberties within the city and in some cases those who lived within the liberties answered to different authorities than those who lived in the parishes. This complicated network of legal jurisdiction in medieval York is reflected in the trial pageants: Annas and Caiaphas spend a good portion of the trial pageants trying to convince the secular authorities that Christ has committed a crime that would result in a conviction that would ensure his death. The narrative of Christ's trial centres around the legal *loci* in the *Play* and these *loci* function as centres of legal jurisdiction in much the same manner that the Minster, castle, and Common Hall in medieval York acted as centres of legal power during the *Play*'s medieval performance history. The temple in Jerusalem, Pilate's court, and Herod's court stand in for the different legal jurisdictions at play in Christ's trial and the jostling between these *loci* is an attempt to negotiate these legal boundaries in a manner that would result in a felony conviction.

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<sup>133</sup> For an exploration of the legal system in medieval England see Harding, *The Law Courts of Medieval England* esp. pp.86-124.

The three main locales of legal power in medieval York stood in different areas within the city walls. The Guildhall stood in the artisanal liberty of the city and by the fifteenth century its gates stood on the boundary facing the pageant route at the end of Coney Street (B3). The courts that met at the Guildhall were under the jurisdiction of the Mayor, with the aldermen and bailiffs, and therefore the locale was the centre of civic legal power in medieval York. Much of the city's administration took place in the Guildhall or at the Council Chamber on Ouse Bridge (B3) and – like the clergy who heard the pageants from the Minster Gates – the Mayoral party held its Corpus Christi feast at the Guildhall from at least the middle of the sixteenth century if not earlier.<sup>134</sup> This meant that while the Minster clergy heard the pageants from the chamber above the Minster Gates, the Mayoral party did the same in the chamber at the Common Hall gates. Although the distance between these two locales runs just over 300m, the curvature and width of Stonegate does not allow those who were positioned at one locale to see the other site and therefore the jurisdictional rivalry is highlighted by the Trial pageants themselves rather than the visibility of both locales from the stopping places at either set of gates. The castle is situated at the south end of the city and out of sight from the pageant route (C3) and its placement as a rival locale of jurisdiction in relation to the Minster is also highlighted by the narrative that is played out in the Trial pageants rather than its locale in relation to the pageant route. The castle held the secular courts that were not overseen by the Mayor and other civic officials and many of the cases that were heard at the castle were also related to matters beyond the city walls.

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<sup>134</sup> A memorandum in the House Books from 1558 notes that food would be provided for the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and the Council of Twenty Four “as hath ben accustomed at Corpus christi play in the Chambre at the Common hall yates” (*REED: York 328*); this suggests that this practice had been going on for some time even for lack of extant evidence before this period. A second extant entry from the City Chamberlains’ Rolls notes a second instance in 1561 when payment was again made towards expenses made by the Mayor, Aldermen, and Councilors for “hearyng Corpus Christi play ageynst the common Hall gates” (*REED: York 339*).

The Minster itself was not just a site of worship or, indeed, an important religious institution in the city; the clergy, citizens of York, and those who passed through the city could congregate here for daily services but the ecclesiastical courts also met within the walls of the Minster. The west aisle of the north transept was the location of the Consistory Court by at least the fifteenth century if not earlier (Brown, *York Minster* 35) and it is possible that the Court of Audience – when it was not travelling with the Archbishop – also met in the north transept near the door to the chapter house.<sup>135</sup> The ecclesiastical court was also made up of the Chancery Court,<sup>136</sup> the Court of Exchequer, and the Prerogative Court and, since York was also made up of peculiar jurisdictions, it was affiliated with a number of smaller courts that were a part of the complex system of Canon law. J.S. Purvis has pointed out that “the Dean and Chapter as a corporate body, the Dean alone, the Precentor, the Chancellor, the Treasurer, and every individual of the thirty-six Canons of the Chapter, maintained separate courts” (Purvis 26); the Prebendal Courts – with extant documents from the beginning of the fourteenth century until well into the second quarter of the nineteenth century – resembled in practice the Court of Audience of the Archbishop.

The courts of the Archbishop of York – the Court of Audience, the Consistory Court, the Chancery Court, the Exchequer, and the Prerogative – as well

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<sup>135</sup> The mention of the court of audience meeting at the entrance to the chapter house is made by Sandra Brown in “The Medieval Courts of the York Minster Peculiar” (6) though this is based on Francis Drake’s assertion that the “archbishop’s confessorial court is in one of the fide illes to this part of the building. As also the dean and chapter’s near the chapter-house doors” (Drake 532). How far Drake’s suggestion that the court of the Dean and Chapter met in the same transept but in a different aisle to the consistory court is based in documentary evidence has yet to be discovered. Purvis’s study of the court books notes that the court of audience is a part of the archbishop’s court and is thus separate from the court of the Dean and Chapter (“The Ecclesiastical Courts of York” 25). Purvis also notes that the court of audience sometimes travelled with the archbishop when necessary (“The Ecclesiastical Courts of York” 22).

<sup>136</sup> There is evidence that the Chancery Court met in the Minster “with a general preference for some place in or near one or other of the transepts” (Purvis 23). King has argued that the trial before Pilate in *Christ Before Pilate I* appears to have been modelled after a Chancery hearing (King, “Contemporary Cultural Models” 207-208).

as the court of the Dean and Chapter and the Prebendal Courts were responsible for overseeing a wide range of subjects across Canon law. These range from wills and testamentary disputes to jurisdictional disputes (both ecclesiastical and involving the liberty of St. Peter), from perjury to excommunication and all the way through to marriage and sexual relations. Purvis calculates that out of the 3,640 cases entered into the court books for 1387-1494, 3,236 cases were for adultery, fornication, or similar offences (Purvis, "A Medieval Act Book" 4). The separate responsibilities of each court are not always clear and the over 200 extant court books that record the proceedings from 1301-1840 are often in a different form than the Cause Papers that record the definitive acts of the court which makes it difficult to trace how each case was tried (Purvis, "The Ecclesiastical Courts of York" 20-21). What is clear, however, is that the ecclesiastical court held a fair amount of jurisdiction over the day-to-day law enforcement in York. The breadth of the ecclesiastical courts shows the oft-forgotten responsibilities of the Minster clergy who held active roles in the religious community of the church and were also a part of this system of Canon law and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The Minster held the advowson for a number of parish churches before the Reformation and maintained primacy over other churches within the diocese; the Minster's power over the diocese was yet another aspect of the church's jurisdiction that the Minster clergy held over the laity in the city. These clergy were responsible for the faith of the lay community and for trying disputes through the ecclesiastical courts.

The castle and the Common Hall were both sites of the main secular courts that played rival to the ecclesiastical courts at the Minster at various points in the *Play's* history. The Court of King's Bench sat in the little hall of the castle several times at the end of the fourteenth century though its residency in York only

overlapped with the medieval history of the *Play* in 1393 (*VCH* 521-31).<sup>137</sup> The Court of the Exchequer also met in the little hall of the castle six times at the end of the fourteenth century and the last time it met there was in 1392 (Broome 291-92). The court of Common Pleas met in the great hall of the castle (Hastings 20-22) and the assize and county courts were meeting regularly in the little hall by the second half of the fourteenth century (*VCH* 521-31). The circuit and local courts met in the castle from the end of the fourteenth century until well into the fifteenth century and the justices of the peace sat in the castle at York from 1392 (*VCH* 521-31). The sheriff's offices were also housed at the castle and the main gaol was located there from the end of the twelfth century (*VCH* 521-31). In the middle of the fourteenth century the mayor and bailiffs set up a court at the Guildhall to deal with matters of assault; from the end of the fourteenth century the court of the mayor and alderman had jurisdiction over violations of customs and ordinances of the city as well as issues surrounding craftsmen and civic officials (*VCH* 521-31). By the time the Guildhall was completed in the fifteenth century it housed several other courts that were presided over by the mayor including the court of recognizances of debts (established in the thirteenth century) and the court of common pleas (*VCH* 521-31). These secular courts had jurisdiction over a variety of civic matters and therefore the castle and the Guildhall operated as rival locales of jurisdiction in relation to the ecclesiastical courts that were housed at the Minster.

There was a division between the charges that could be brought forth in the secular courts in relation to the ecclesiastical courts and the resultant punishment was also dependent on the jurisdiction of the court; while a charge in the ecclesiastical court might result in imprisonment or excommunication (Tiner 142), in

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<sup>137</sup> For the sessions of the King's Bench in York see Sayles, *Select Cases in King's Bench VII* xcix-cv, and Putnam, *Proceedings Before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* 29-32.

the common courts the sentence for a crime could be as severe as capital punishment. As in the trial pageants, those who ran the ecclesiastical courts in medieval York could not charge someone with a crime that would result in the “punishment of blood” (Pattenden 153); this was highlighted clearly in canon 18 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which states that members of the clergy were forbidden from officiating an ordeal or “from association with punishments which resulted in death or mutilation” (Pattenden 152).<sup>138</sup> The boundaries of jurisdiction were made more complex by the formation of the city’s three liberties in the late thirteenth century: the tenants of the liberties of St. Peter’s (the Minster), St. Mary’s Abbey, and St. Leonard’s Hospital fell under the governance of their respective liberty and thus did not fall under the jurisdiction of the city courts (*VCH* 38-40). The tenants of these liberties were not required to take up formal membership in a guild in order to practice their trade or craft; they were also excluded from the sessions of the king’s justices for the pleas of the city such that special sessions of pleas were held at the doors of St. Leonard’s, St. Mary’s, and the Minster (*VCH* 38-40).

The legal boundaries between secular and ecclesiastical law were therefore also dependent on whether those who were charged with an offence were tenants of one of the city’s liberties or one of the other parishes. The annual ceremony of beating the bounds of the parishes, liberties, and common lands was key to maintaining the physical boundaries of jurisdiction since the beating of the bounds was an act of demarcation of the dominions that each group of individuals would maintain control over in the following year. Thus the jurisdictional boundary that is

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<sup>138</sup> Prior to the Fourth Lateran Council, the Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) and the Assize of Clarendon (1166) had attempted to deal with issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the law which in practice led to instances where the clergy would simply withdraw prior to the judgement (see Pattenden 153-54 on the Constitutions and the involvement of clergy in criminal trials). For a translation of canon 18 see Pattenden 153.

established by the nature of the crime was not the only marker that dictated which court would issue a charge: the boundary line established by the beating of the bounds of the parishes, liberties, and common lands could also dictate which court might hear a plea. The complexity of these boundaries of jurisdiction – both the physical boundaries and the legal division between the ecclesiastical courts from the secular courts – highlights how the medieval legal system was marred by the same complexities as those presented in the trial pageants: Annas and Caiphas, in their desire to find a means by which to rid themselves of Christ, have to navigate the complexities of the legal system in order to achieve their goal.

The Common Hall gates and the Minster Gates were both located on the pageant route and were thus visible to audiences of the pageants who were located on the streets at these playing stations. What is particularly poignant about this arrangement in an exploration of the site-specificity of the *York Play* is the relationship of these two locales with the dramatic locales in the trial pageants. For the medieval audiences of the pageants the gates of the Common Hall would have stood as a reminder of the power of the Commonality of the city and as a locale where some of the legal privileges of the civic government were enacted. Like Pilate's *praetorium* and Herod's court in Jerusalem, the courts at the Common Hall stood as a site of civic power in the centre of the city. The Mayoral party that is present in the chamber of the Common Hall Gates on Corpus Christi in the medieval period is a part of the system of trade and craft guilds that produced the pageants for the civic celebrations. The Minster Gates were a boundary marker of the liberty of St. Peter's and the entrance to the site that held the highest ecclesiastical authority in the North. Although Christ is eventually tried and convicted in the civic courts in Pilate's *praetorium*, the high priests of the Sanhedrin who are the Biblical



counterparts to the Minster clergy are the instigators of his trial. The positioning of the Minster Gates on the pageant route and the use of its chamber by the Minster clergy for their Corpus Christi feast creates an interesting relationship between the city's ecclesiastical authorities and the trial pageants as they are played in the streets. At their centre the trial pageants present a jostling of legal boundaries and the positioning of the Minster Gates in relation to the performances of these pageants highlights the separation between the civic celebrations and the ecclesiastical celebrations of Corpus Christi in York. As an ecclesiastical power and as a separate liberty the Minster was not involved in the civic celebrations beyond the clergy's role as spectators of the pageants. This engagement with the performances took place from the chamber above the Minster Gates and the depictions of the high priests of the Sanhedrin in the pageants when played at this playing station works to associate the Minster clergy with their biblical counterparts. The poor representation of the high priests in the pageants works, at the playing station in front of the Minster Gates, to highlight the contemporary issues that York's citizens endured with the Minster's clergy and its legal jurisdiction.

#### The Minster Gates and the Trial of Christ

The site of the present Minster (B2) overlaps the site of the Roman *principia* – the foundations of which are still visible in the crypt – and a church has stood at the site since c. 627 when King Edwin of Deira was baptised there on Easter Day in a wooden church dedicated to St. Peter (Brown, *York Minster* 1). There are no extant remains of the Anglo-Saxon building but the construction of a church at this site suggests that little was left of the Roman *principia* by the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Evidence of a stone structure from the time of Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux (1070-1100) survives and the numerous reconstructions and additions to the medieval Minster and

the precincts continued well into the sixteenth century. These building works meant that the Minster was a building site full of activities by craftsmen ranging from masons and carpenters to glaziers and painters throughout the medieval period and that the audiences of the *Play* would experience the Liberty of the Minster as a constantly evolving locale. This includes many notable buildings like the Canons' houses, Peter Prison (the gaol of the Dean and Chapter), the Deanery, the Archbishop's Palace and chapel, as well as the Chapterhouse that is connected to the north transept of the Minster via a vestibule.

The Minster Gates (B2) were located at the intersection of Stonegate with Low Petergate and were the main entrance to the Liberty of the Minster from the city centre.<sup>139</sup> The building is no longer extant and there are no surviving illustrations of the gates or the gatehouse as it appeared in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; in around 1470 this area was known as Bookland Lane and then later as Bookbinders Alley (*RCHM* 160). The Minster Gates were an important boundary marker between the liberty of St. Peter and the civic space in York and the parochial clergy and the laity (namely the Council, members of the Corporation, and the guild torch bearers) crossed this boundary during the civic procession of the Host on Corpus Christi. As has already been mentioned, the performances of the *York Play* did not enter the Liberty of the Minster; the civic procession of the Host preceded the *Play* and made its way from the great doors of Holy Trinity Priory (A3) to the Minster precincts along the pageant route. The exact details of the civic procession are not extant so we do not know exactly what happened while the procession was within the Minster

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<sup>139</sup> A second gate to the precincts was located at the intersection of Lop Lane and Petergate (B2) and was attached to a range of buildings that were connected to the northwest side of the Minster. This range of buildings included the Peter Prison and had a door that connected it to the Minster from both the gatehouse and at ground level (see Dean 73 and Brown, *York Minster: An Architectural History, c. 1220-1500* 276). Another gate was located at the intersection of Ogleforth and Chapterhouse Street (C2) (Brown, *York Minster* 276) while a fourth gate was located at the intersection of Goodramgate and College Street (C2) to allow access to Bedern which housed the Vicars Choral (Richards 397).

precincts although there is no record of a mass taking place at the Minster as a part of the civic procession (Cowling 8). The senior clergy in York would have been bound to their own churches on Corpus Christi and Cowling suggests that on entry to the Minster precincts the civic procession did not enter the Minster proper and instead would have made its way out again through the southwest gates (Cowling 8). After leaving the Liberty of St. Peter, the procession made its way to St. Leonard's Hospital (B2) where the sacrament was deposited and a mass was said "with the light of many torches and a great multitude of priests dressed in surplices preceding, and the mayor and citizens of York with a great abundance of other people flowing in following" (*REED: York 728*).

The yearly Corpus Christi procession was the Corporation's ecclesiastical contribution to the feast and the division between the procession and the *Play* seems to have remained clear throughout the period of the *Play*'s medieval performances. While the civic procession crossed the Minster Gates, the *Play* remained within the civic boundaries; the *Play* was neither an ecclesiastical procession nor was it under the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter and the entrance of the wagons into the Liberty of the Minster would both challenge the authority of the Minster clergy and would delay the performances further since it would require the addition of yet another stopping place.

The fact that the *Play* did not perform within the precincts during its recorded history from 1377 to 1569 does not mean that the Dean and Chapter were not involved in the performances but, rather, that their role was as audiences of the pageants. The records tell us that the Dean and Chapter variously rented the chamber above the gates in order to "hear" the *Creed Play* in 1483 as well as the *York Corpus Christi Play* in 1483, 1484, and 1546 (*REED: York 132; 135; and 289*). The entry

from the York Minster Chamberlains' Rolls in 1483 shows payment for 3s 4d for each day of rental (once for Corpus Christi and another time for the *Creed Play* totalling 6s 8d) while the entry from 1484 shows a higher payment of 5s for just the use of the chamber on Corpus Christi day. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that the attendants from the previous year did not include "the lord archbishop" (*REED: York* 135; 788) and that this somehow necessitated a higher expenditure. An entry in the York Minster Chamberlains' Rolls from 1546 also shows payment for rental of the chamber above the Minster Gates on Corpus Christi though unlike the two previous entries it does not include a description of who might have attended (*REED: York* 289; 839). These three records of payment by the Minster for use of the chamber above the Minster Gates shows that the Dean and Chapter's association with the pageants – at least in the years 1483, 1484, and 1546 – was mediated through their presence in the chamber, high above street level, and that their experience as audience members was not as those who experienced the pageants in the streets. The Dean and Chapter were also obliged to attend various services in the Minster throughout the day as well as to perform their own Corpus Christi procession in the precincts so at what time they would have been present in the chamber on the day is unclear and thus which pageants they would have heard from their position in the chamber is also unknown.

The payment of rents from the Dean and Chapter for use of the chamber in the Minster Gates echoes practices at Corpus Christi by the Mayor and Aldermen's rental of the chamber near the Common Hall gate as well as the rental for a chamber in various properties in Pavement by the Lady Mayoress in different years to watch the pageants. The leases of these three properties – the chambers in the Minster Gates, the Common Hall gate, and in Pavement – is an extension of the renters'

status: each of these three properties are localities that have an association with their respective renters and who were a part of the audiences that did not participate in the performances at the street level. The members of the clergy who would have occupied the chamber in the Minster Gates were a part of the upper echelons of the ecclesiastical community in York and who heard the pageants from the boundary of the Liberty of the Minster. This group likely included the canons who oversaw many of the legal disputes as well as the Archbishop who was the highest ecclesiastical authority in the diocese. The fact that these chambers were used by such audiences as locales where they could participate as spectators of the pageants also emphasizes that these audiences of the pageants – and, indeed, of the civic procession of the Host – were not necessarily concerned with watching the pageants but, rather, that their participation in the pageants was as those who “heard” the performances while engaging in their own festivities. In the case of the Dean and Chapter, the Minster Gates were on the boundary between the pageant route and the Liberty of St. Peter and the locale situates them in a visible position above the audiences watching the pageants in the streets below.

The four trial pageants make up a large portion of the playing time at just under two hours which is nearly as long as the performance time of all of the Old Testament pageants combined.<sup>140</sup> The five pageants that make up the rest of the Passion sequence – from the Shearmen’s *Road to Calvary* (34) to the Carpenters’ *Resurrection* (38) – take up almost the same playing time as the trial pageants. The fact that the trial takes up nearly half of the Passion sequence suggests that, although the focus of the day is on Corpus Christi, the trial leading to the guilty verdict is just as important as the physical suffering that Christ experiences from the end of the

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<sup>140</sup> Modern re-enactment has shown that the trial pageants take a total of 110 minutes to perform while the Old Testament sequence in its entirety takes 131 minutes (see Dorrell, “Two Studies of the York Corpus Christi Play” 102-107).

Tilemakers' pageant until his death. This suffering is brought about as a result of Annas' and Caiaphas' insistence on charging Christ with a crime that would result in his execution and, after several attempts to do so through the various Roman and civic courts, they are finally successful.

As religious leaders, the figures of Annas and Caiaphas are particularly interesting with regard to the trial pageants since in many ways they reflect the contemporary religious leaders who make up the Dean and Chapter of the Minster. The Jewish priests – like the Minster clergy – are members of an institution that has some legal authority over its community of followers. While the exact workings of the Sanhedrin in Second Temple Judaism is hazy at best,<sup>141</sup> the historical figures of Annas and Caiaphas would have been involved in the legal activities of the Temple at Jerusalem and, like the Minster clergy, would have been responsible for passing judgement in certain cases. As members of the Sanhedrin, Annas and Caiaphas would have been responsible for charging an offender with breaking Mosaic Law and for carrying out legal proceedings through trial.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Lester L. Grabbe has pointed out that definition of a Sanhedrin as we have come to understand it comes from the New Testament, the writings of Josephus, and the second-century Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin* and as such there is “no description of a national council or Sanhedrin before the rabbinic period” (Grabbe 15). After reviewing the extant evidence, Grabbe has offered a convincing hypothesis about how the governing body of the Temple at Jerusalem probably operated before the rabbinic period:

[the high priest] was assisted in his role of governor and leader by some sort of larger body, though its status and even its formal designation may well have varied over the centuries. The powers and influence of this body probably also varied... The membership of this advisory body included other leading priests but also members of the non-priestly nobility. Exactly how this body functioned is uncertain though, once again, its exact functioning probably varied over time. Whether it had regular scheduled meetings with an agenda or was only called together irregularly, whether there was a precise membership, how the membership was chosen, its precise jurisdiction—these are all questions that cannot be answered in the light of present knowledge. (Grabbe 16; see also Grabbe 17-19)

<sup>142</sup> Although the exact proceedings of the first-century legal practices under the Sanhedrin that was contemporary to Christ is unknown, the general operation of the Sanhedrin by the middle ages was the system laid out in the Sanhedrin tractate found in the second century *Mishnah*. Found in the *Nezikin* order of the *Mishnah*, the order that deals with Jewish criminal and civil law as well as the Jewish court system, the Sanhedrin tractate lays out the punishments and court proceedings for the Sanhedrin (the high court).

Parallel to the Minster clergy meeting within the Minster for the various ecclesiastical courts, the members of the Great Sanhedrin also met in the centre of Jewish authority at the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple in Jerusalem while the Lesser Sanhedrin met both in Jerusalem and elsewhere. The Temple in Jerusalem, like the Minster at York, was thus a centre of legal power and therefore the importance of the Minster for those watching the pageants at York in some manner mimics the importance of the Temple at Jerusalem from the biblical sources. The involvement of Annas and Caiphas in Jesus' trial and the extensive focus on the trial within the *York Play* suggests that this portion of the biblical account of Christ was particularly important for the contemporary audience in York. While the lay audience of the pageants may not have understood the details of the daily operation of the Sanhedrin or its relationship to the Temple in Jerusalem, the narrative content of the trial pageants suggests that the composer(s) of these pageants was aware of these details as they relate to the trial of Christ. The Minster clergy – with their theological and scriptural training – would have some knowledge of the High Priests' relationship to the legal system and Temple in Jerusalem in the first century. For the Minster clergy, their first-century counterparts, Annas and Caiphas, are entangled in the litigation of the trial of Christ in the same manner that the medieval clergy are entangled in the ecclesiastical system of law; how the priests of the Sanhedrin navigated the legal system in first-century Jerusalem and the jurisdictional boundaries between clerical and civic authority in medieval York – though not necessarily the same – would be a familiar exercise for the Minster clergy.

In her discussion of English law in the trial pageants, Eliza Tiner highlights the association of Annas and Caiaphas with the Dean and Chapter of the Minster because of the associations of the high priests with bishops (Tiner 141). The high

priests are referred to as bishops throughout the trials in the *Play* (29.183, 327; 30.481; 32.58, 376; 34.108) and, indeed, visual sources like the *Holkham Bible* depict the high priests in episcopal mitres (ff.30r). Given the textual references and the cultural context of the pageant, the high priests could have been costumed as bishops to show both their association with corrupt ecclesiastical power as well as to highlight the problem of jurisdiction that is such an integral part of the trial.

Although the high priests are first-century Jewish leaders from the Temple, the conflation of their roles and responsibilities with the late-medieval Minster clergy places them within the familiar contemporary context both as religious figures and as members of the ecclesiastical courts. The high priests are presented both visually and within the dialogue as the stand-ins for the medieval clergy which is an image that is enriched by the performance locale in front of the Minster Gates. While the high priests stand before the audience in the wake of the Liberty of the Minster – in their bishops' garb and with their involvement in Christ's trial – their association with the medieval clergy is particularly pertinent. The added spectatorship of the clergy from the chamber above the Minster Gates as well as the costuming of the high priests as bishops was perhaps a point of contention for those watching from above; the architectural surroundings – with the foiling of the Dean and Chapter on stage in the form of Christ's judges – would make it difficult to ignore the significance of performing such a pageant at the stopping place in front of the Minster. Those who watched from the chamber in the Gates were in effect watching caricatures of themselves and their colleagues participate in the trial that in many ways was responsible for their role in the community. The boundaries between the dramatic space and the performance space are blurred and the trial pageants take on the site and its sense of place in an association between performance and locale that is



unmatched when the trial pageants are performed elsewhere on the pageant route. When performed at the Minster Gates, the role of the high priests in the trial pageants is highlighted by the presence of the Minster and the clergy who were a part of the institution; the site and the pageant speak to one another in the performance.

### The York Trial Pageants

The first pageant in the trial sequence is the Bowers and Fletchers' *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas* (29) and takes place on the heels of Judas' betrayal of Christ. The Bowers and Fletchers were responsible for the pageant from the end of the fourteenth century – the Fletchers from 1388 and the Bowers from 1395 (*REED: York* 6, 8-9) – and they continued to be responsible for the same pageant well into the sixteenth century. The Bowers and Fletchers were highly skilled craftsmen who manufactured and imported bows and arrows for military and leisure activities including hunting and archery. The Bowers appear to have been “the senior partners in the relationship” (Beadle, *The York Plays* II.239) though both groups maintained ownership of the pageant until the end of the sixteenth century. Both guilds paid their annual contribution to the City Chamberlain in 1535 when the performance of the *Play* was substituted for the *Creed Play* and the groups rented “pageant roime” from the Bakers in 1547 and from the Mercers from 1554 until after the performances ceased at the end of the sixteenth century (*REED: York* 291-391). The wagon could have represented Caiaphas' court as a contrast to Christ's presence in the street with the soldiers and Peter. The *Ordo Paginarum* entry for the pageant states “Jesus, Annas, Caiaphas and four Jews striking and buffeting Jesus; Peter, a woman accusing Peter, and Malchus” (*REED: York* 707) and the second half of the entry (“Jesus...Malchus”) is a later addition to the *Ordo* (Beadle, Vol. 2 239). This

addition to the *Ordo* entry is perhaps an indication that the earlier version(s) of the pageant did not include the episode of Peter's denial of Christ.

At this stage in the *Play*, Christ has been arrested by the soldiers and taken to the high priests' palaces. Caiaphas is boasting at the beginning of the pageant that he is "lerned in þe lawe" (29.14) and that he has "þe renke and þe rewle of all þe ryal[té] / To rewele it by right" (29.18-19). Caiaphas accuses Christ of witchcraft and sorcery (29.58) though this is not enough to result in a punishment of death. The action that follows shows how Caiaphas' knowledge of the law is not, in fact, adequate since it takes several attempts for the high priests to find a charge that will stick: a more learned man would have suggested treason right from the start.<sup>143</sup> While it is true that Caiaphas is a high priest in the Temple and as such he has considerable control over the Jewish people, he is unable to convict Christ of a felony since the secular court falls outside of his jurisdiction; Caiaphas' statement that he is a learned man is made ridiculous by his declaration that he is the most powerful ruler since he requires the aid of the Romans in order to have Christ executed.

The credibility of Caiaphas before Christ appears at the palace is precarious which is illustrated by his participation – like Pilate and Herod in the following pageants – in the *voidée*.<sup>144</sup> This appears to have gone too far when the soldier declares "we counsaile you this cuppe sauerly for to kisse" (29.80) which, as Beadle points out, implies Caiaphas' "propensity to drunkenness" (Beadle, *The York Play*

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<sup>143</sup> The theme of witchcraft and sorcery as it relates to contemporary legal practice has been discussed by Nicholson, "The Trial of Christ the Sorcerer in the York Cycle" *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986): 125-69. For more on the accusation of treason see King, "Contemporary Cultural Models" (esp. 209).

<sup>144</sup> Pilate does so in the following pageant (30.92ff) while Herod does so in the Litsters' pageant (31.33ff).

II.245) when he has to ask for help from his servants in order to get into bed.<sup>145</sup> Even though they are members of the clergy – Jewish in the biblical context and Christian through the contemporary episcopal costuming – Caiaphas and Annas are presented in the pageants as figures that are similar to Pilate and Herod in their inability to control their alcohol consumption. Given that the high priests are meant to act as religious leaders for their community of followers, this association between these figures and the similarly characterized leaders of the Roman law presents the issue of inadequate leadership: how can those who act in such a manner be responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the community? Like the clergy who are responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the community in York and who are watching the performances from the chamber above the Minster Gates, the actions of the high priests should not be taken as an adequate example of Christly conduct.

Perhaps York's clergy – like the high priests from the *Play* – also have a propensity to act in a manner not appropriate to their position as spiritual advisers and the audiences watching from street level at the Minster Gates have a direct view of this misbehaviour in the chamber above. The participation of the high priests in the *voidée* could be a tacit reference to the indulgent practices of the medieval clergy in York and their excessive spending on feasting and hospitality (Dobson “The Residentiary Canons” 151-52);<sup>146</sup> certainly the enthronement of George Neville as

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<sup>145</sup> In the Dutch *The Historie van Jan van Beverley* printed by Thomas van der Noot in 1512, John of Beverley is visited by the devil (in the form of an angel) and is told that he must commit one of three sins: drunkenness, rape, or murder. John chooses drunkenness and while in a drunken stupor he rapes and murders his sister. Perhaps the representation of the high priests, Pilate, and Herod as figures that take part in the excesses of the *voidée*, like John of Beverley, commit the greater sins of slander against Christ which results in his death through the perceived “lesser sin” of drunkenness. For a discussion and English translation of *The Historie* see Ben Parsons and Bas Jongenelen, “In Whiche Land Were You Born?": Cultural Transmission in the *Historie van Jan van Beverley*. *Medieval English Theatre* 34 (2012): 30-76.

<sup>146</sup> The chapter's excessive spending on hospitality and feasting from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century was well known and despite this excessive spending the wealth of York Minster's medieval residentiary canons remained vast and is evidenced by the inventories of the prebendal

archbishop of York in 1465 was occasion enough for a banquet that could easily rival any other in the North (Dobson, *Church and Society* 229-30). The performances of the trial pageants at the Minster Gates with the Dean and Chapter's occupation of the chamber above situates the audiences watching the pageants from the street level in a prime position to scrutinize the Minster clergy's excessive spending on feasting. The clergy are positioned on the jurisdictional boundary of their liberty and from that boundary their less-than-modest feasting and their association with the high priests in the *Play* is on display; the chamber in the Minster Gates acts as a vessel for the gourmandizing clergy and as a clear physical marker of separation between the ecclesiastical authorities and the audiences below.

Following on from the *voidée* in the opening of *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas*, Christ is brought to Caiaphas' court where a woman accuses him of sorcery (29.95-98) and where he is interrogated by the high priests. The soldiers act as witnesses to Christ's crimes: they complain that Christ has healed the sick on the Sabbath (29.258-62) and that he claims that he will rebuild the Temple in three days when it is destroyed (29.266-29). The accusations from the woman and the soldiers highlight the issue of witness throughout the pageant since during the course of his trial Christ must defend himself against false witnesses (29.329). In medieval law the relationship between witnesses and juries differs from the current system of law such that "the act of witnessing an action or event potentially qualified a man...for service on an inquest or jury" (Horner, "Us Must Make Lies" 28); this arrangement meant that the jurors would act as witnesses to the facts and as such held a great deal of power in a trial. If the judge believed the witnesses – whether the information they presented was true or not – then the defendant could be convicted of a crime they did

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houses and the bequests that were made in their wills (Dobson, "The Residentiary Canons" 151-52 and 167-68).

not commit. The concern over false witnesses presents yet another problem with the medieval legal system – one that goes beyond the issues of jurisdictional boundaries – and in this pageant and those that follow the high priests jostle through the system and take advantage of the systemic grey areas. In an attempt to accuse Christ of blasphemy – again, a crime that would not result in a felony charge – Caiaphas then asks Christ if he is the son of God (29.292) and when the high priests are unsatisfied with the response they decide to send Christ to Pilate, the “domysman nere and nexte to þe king” (29.341). Caiaphas asks the soldiers to “lerne yone boy bettir to bende and bowe” (29.349) and the soldiers take this as a sign to mock and buffet Christ in a game of “play popse” (29.355) before he is taken to Pilate’s court the following morning. This punishment by the soldiers at Caiaphas’ palace is certainly outside of the boundaries of the high priests’ jurisdiction but since the high priests do not directly order the buffeting then it falls within another grey area in the law. The high priests take advantage of the legal system and for the audiences these complexities of the legal system in the biblical narrative mirror the medieval legal system. The depictions of false witness and the high priests’ indifference to their indirect involvement in a punishment of blood are both critiques of the medieval legal system and for the contemporary audiences the pageants reflect the complexities of the contemporary law.

In the following pageant the Tapiters and Couchers present the beginning of the formal secular trial against Christ in *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate’s Wife* (30). The Tapiters and Couchers dealt in household textiles such as bedspreads, curtains, tapestries, and other upholstery and it is assumed that the prominence of bedding in the pageant – through both Pilate and Dame Procula’s bedrooms – is the reasoning behind the association of this pageant with these crafts

(Justice 53). The Tapiters and Couchers leased space that abutted the wall of the Dominican Friary (A3) in Toft Green for the storage of a pageant wagon from 1424 until well into the seventeenth century and they maintained ownership of the pageant from the late fourteenth century.<sup>147</sup> The description of the pageant in the *Ordo* describes “Jesus, Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas, two councillors, and four Jews accusing Jesus” (*REED: York 707*); the description leaves out Dame Procula as well as her infamous dream which suggests that these details were added to the text sometime between the first quarter of the fifteenth century and the compilation of the Register in the 1470s.

Although Dame Procula and her dream are a later addition to the text, it is important to note how the inclusion of this episode in the pageant could affect the audience watching the performance from the Minster Gates. Dame Procula appears on stage just as Pilate is completing his opening speech and she enters with her own praise of Pilate’s celebrated lineage and his position as “juge in þis Jurie” (30.28) and “prince withouten pere” (30.38). She is portrayed as vain when she states that “þe coloure of my corse is full clere, | And in richesse of robes I am rayed” (30.41-42). The audience is immediately presented with a woman who is concerned with the appearance of her skin and the richness of her robes: from her opening speech, Pilate’s wife is already a figure whose character is pitted against the humble Virgin of the preceding pageants. The following interaction that she has with Pilate is one that articulates her sexual prowess when her husband declares that “in faith, I am fayne | Of this lippis so loffely are lappid— | In bedde [sho] is full buxhome and bayne” (30.50-52). Dame Procula’s response that “All ladies, we coveyte þan bothe to be kyssid and clappid” (30.54) shows that it is not just Pilate who is interested in

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<sup>147</sup> See Beadle’s discussion about this dating and the fair copy of the Tapiters’ ordinances from the fifteenth century that describe a series of fines from the 1380s that were designed to fund the performance (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 251-52).

their sexual escapades. This characterization of Dame Procula is problematic not just because she acts as a foil for Pilate: the depiction of her as a figure that is vain and willing to declare her sexual activities before an audience in such a manner is key to understanding Pilate's swift rejection of her advice not to execute Christ. The infamous dream consists of Dame Procula being visited by the devil while she sleeps in her bedroom, perhaps represented by the pageant wagon that is lavishly decorated with fabrics and textiles made by the skilled Tapisters and Couchers. The devil is concerned that, if Christ is condemned to death, "He will saue man saule fro oure sonde" (30.163); it is in the interest of the devil to keep Christ alive and to prevent his condemnation so as not to "refe vs þe remys þat are rounde" (30.164). The logic is that the devil must convince Dame Procula to prevent Christ's death since, if Christ is crucified, then the devil will lose control over his realm. The passage relaying this episode from the gospel of Matthew – the only gospel that mentions the dream – is much shorter and omits the presence of the devil: "While he [Pilate] was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him'" (Matthew 27:19). The inclusion of the devil in the Tapiters and Couchers' pageant echoes the appearance of Satan to Eve in the Garden of Eden and provides an explication of how following the devil's advice would affect the outcome of the story. By ignoring the advice from his wife, Pilate allows for and, indeed, becomes responsible for the fulfilment of the messianic prophecy: without his judgement, there is no Resurrection.

Furthermore, there is an element of mysticism that Kimberley Fonzo points out in her study of the pageant and that is augmented by watching the pageant at the Minster Gates. Fonzo states that the dream of Pilate's wife is a "commentary on the

unreliability of feminine mystical spirituality” (Fonzo 14). Because Pilate’s wife does not recognise the figure of her dreams as the devil, by the same token Dame Procula cannot distinguish whether the advice of this unwanted visitor should be followed or ignored. Dame Procula blindly assumes that, because she is “drecchid with a dreme full dredfully to dowte” (30.176), she must listen to the speaker’s advice. This is precisely the problem with mysticism: how is one to know that the visions that one sees are, in fact, from God and not from the devil? Mystics would have had to contend with such suspicion and contemporary female mystics like Julian of Norwich would have come under greater scrutiny than their male counterparts. Julian’s contemporary Margery Kempe is one famous example of a female mystic who was berated for her actions and constant state of emotional turmoil that, she claims, resulted from her visions.<sup>148</sup> Margery, throughout her autobiography, shows the different ways in which her mystical experience is interrogated by various members of the clergy as well as by the larger religious community. While Margery’s histrionics are perhaps largely to blame for these reactions to her beliefs, those who question her actions are undoubtedly concerned with whether the visions that she receives are, in fact, from God: she can only be a good example if the visions that she receives are from him and, in order to prove this, her visions must be interrogated.

Dame Procula does not interrogate the nature of her dream or the motivations of the figure that delivers the message to her while she is asleep. Fonzo highlights the significance of this problem with relation to its position during the trial of Christ:

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<sup>148</sup> There has been a suggestion that Margery visited York during Corpus Christi in 1413 and that she may have seen a production of the *Play* (Sponsler, “Drama and Piety” 129). The purpose of Sponsler’s study of Margery’s visit to York is to highlight the importance of drama as a vehicle through which to understand religious experience; religious experience, as Gail McMurray Gibson has shown in her seminal study of East Anglian devotional culture, takes place through different media and theatre is just one of many avenues of participating in a faith community.



The addition of Procula's unreliable dream counterbalances the scrutiny of heresy trial practices depicted in Christ's own trial both by demonstrating the value of rational legal inquiry into spiritual matters and by emphasizing the importance of Christ's conviction to salvation. In this way Procula's episode affirms the authority of the law, allowing Pilate to shine as a model of reason and probity. (Fonzo 14)

While watching from the Minster Gates, the audience is observing a trial in which members of the ecclesiastical community are attempting to have Christ executed for a crime that he, arguably, did not commit. The high priests, who do not have the authority to charge Christ with a felony, fabricate the charges and so they must accuse him in the formal setting of a courtroom that belongs to the Roman prefect. Pilate and, later, Herod, interrogate Christ in order to determine his guilt which is complicated by the fact that the high priests do not allow Christ to respond to the questions that he is asked. Christ thus cannot be interrogated fully nor is he able to provide a satisfactory response to the Roman authorities about why he should not be executed. Christ's silence<sup>149</sup> in the trial pageants problematizes the dynamic that should take place in an interrogation and, as a result, the normal procedure of an interrogation breaks down: if the defendant does not respond to questioning, then a *de facto* charge of guilty – whether it is appropriate or not – is the charge laid on the accused. In the same vein, Dame Procula's choice not to question her dream results in an incomplete interrogation: she accepts that the figure who is speaking to her is relaying a warning that she or, indeed, Pilate will be harmed by the outcome if Christ “unjustly be juged” (30.168). The devil plays to her vanity when he says that the

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<sup>149</sup> Alexandra Johnston has written about the importance of Christ's silence in these pageants in “‘His langage is lorne’: The Silent Centre of the York Cycle”. *Early Theatre* 3.1 (2000): 185-195.

outcome of such a judgment would deprive her of her wealth (30.174).

This depiction of a missing interrogation on the part of Pilate's wife is especially poignant when the Minster is towering above the station at the Minster Gates. As a site of ecclesiastical power, the Minster is a place of worship and learning for the ecclesiastical community and the clergy has a responsibility to ensure that the faithful are kept within the dogmatic boundaries of the Church. The clergy, by extension, must be responsible for the "legal inquiry into spiritual matters" (Fonzo 14). Should a figure like Julian of Norwich or Margery Kempe appear before the Minster clergy and claim that they received mystical visions, the clergy would be responsible – if those who received the visions were unable to do so or were perceived to be, in Julian's word, "lewd" or uneducated – for interrogating the visions on their behalf. Indeed, Julian's revisiting of her visions in her second text, *A Revelation of Love*, does precisely this; Margery Kempe's visions, on the other hand, are interrogated by members of the clergy. It is this lack of interrogation by Dame Procula herself or by an ecclesiastical authority that makes her dream so challenging; it also cannot be perceived as an adequate reason for dismissing the charges against Christ because its origin is abstract. What is perhaps more troubling is her unknowing proximity to the high priests who are in the *praetorium* to bring forth charges against Christ. Appropriately enough, the positioning of the pageant at the Minster Gates also places Pilate's wife within close proximity of the ecclesiastical figures who are capable of interrogating her dream in medieval York.

This pageant is the first instance in the *Play* where the audience sees the formal setting of a courtroom through the portrayal of Pilate's *praetorium* on stage which, because it is the place where trials are conducted, is a different physical space

than the portion of Pilate's house that is presented in *The Conspiracy* (26).<sup>150</sup> In the Tapiters and Couchers' pageant, Pilate sits on the bench in the Stone Pavement – where Pilate's judgement seat was located – and he invites Annas and Caiaphas “to þe benke [bench] brayed yowe” (30.275).<sup>151</sup> The high priests refuse to enter the Stone Pavement perhaps, again, because it is Passover, and Pilate speaks directly to Christ: “þou art welcome, ewys, as I wene, | Be noȝt abasshed, but boldely boune þe to þe barre” (30.398-99). Pilate calls Christ to the bar in front of the judgement seat in order to ask him about the accusations that are made by the high priests and, after questioning Christ about his alleged crimes, Pilate receives unsatisfactory responses from Annas and Caiaphas rather than from the accused. Pilate uncovers that Christ was most active in Galilee, where Herod Antipas has jurisdiction, and he has the high priests and the soldiers take Christ to Herod for judgement (30.513-21). In the case of Pilate's court, then, the issue of conviction is one that lies in where the alleged crimes took place: if Christ is accused of criminal activities that took place in Galilee, then the trial should not be held in the courtroom of the Prefect of Judea.

In the following pageant of *Christ Before Herod* (31), Christ arrives at Herod's court since his alleged crimes have taken place within Herod's jurisdiction in Galilee. The Litsters, the craft that was made up of dealers in dyestuffs as well as the skilled artisans who dyed garments, were responsible for the pageant. These guildsmen – of the mercantile and artisanal classes – were concentrated around areas near the rivers in the parishes of All Saints (North Street) (A3), St. John's (Ouse Bridge, Micklegate) (B3), and St. Denys in Walmgate (C3) (Dean 117). Herod's

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<sup>150</sup> In the gospel of John, Annas and Caiaphas take Christ to Pilate's headquarters but they do not enter the *praetorium* because of Passover (John 18:28).

<sup>151</sup> In the gospel of John, Pilate has to constantly move between the Stone Pavement and the part of the *praetorium* that is occupied by Annas and Caiaphas since the high priests are not permitted to enter a house that contains unleavened bread during Passover. For the gospel versions of the trial at Pilate's court, see Matthew 27:1 and 11-26, Mark 15: 1-15, Luke 23:1-7 and 11-25, and John 18:28-19:16.

flashy clothing and the white fool's habit that is put on Christ places the Litsters in a good position to show off the wares of their craft. The earliest known date of the Litsters' involvement in the *Play* is from a 1387 memorandum of a dispute between the Litsters, Skinners, and Bakers with a carpenter "about the building and repair of a certain house on the Tofts for housing their Corpus Christi pageant" (*REED: York* 691). The memorandum states that Robert de Waghen would build the pageant house for the storing of all three pageant wagons and that a barker would act as guarantor to build the house if it was not completed by de Waghen. The Litsters paid rent jointly with the Skinners from 1424-25 until 1468-69 and, although interim records from the late fifteenth century until the early sixteenth century do not mention wagon storage, the craft still had a wagon in 1585 when it was used for another production (*REED: York* 419).<sup>152</sup> The entry for the pageant in the *Ordo* confirms the presence of some characters and not others: "Herod, two councillors, four soldiers, Jesus, and three Jews" (*REED: York* 707). The two councillors perhaps refers to the two dukes in the extant text while the three Jews do not appear in the surviving version of the pageant; the addition of Herod's sons suggests that the extant text was altered by the time it was copied into the Register in the third quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>153</sup>

Interestingly enough, although the two pageants concerning Christ's appearance before Pilate include the presence of the high priests, in this pageant Annas and

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<sup>152</sup> These are recorded in the Bridgemasters' Account Rolls in *REED: York* (40-102) with the entries from 1462 and 1464 recorded in Stell (359-60 and 383-84).

<sup>153</sup> In her discussion of alliterative verse Ruth Kennedy discusses *Christ Before Herod* and the earlier pageant of *The Conspiracy* (26) in relation to other verse forms found in Middle English texts. In both pageants the "fourteen-line compositions in rhyming verse share one defining feature, the clear split into an octet of alliterating long lines and a sestet of short lines based on two new rhymes" (Kennedy xxx). Kennedy describes the particularity of these stanza on the following page and highlights the survival of this type of verse form in the middle ages but it would be unfair to date the composition of these pageants based on their use of the alliterative verse form since the only extant copy of both texts is the late fifteenth century copy in the Register; it is therefore impossible to know whether these pageants were originally composed in a different verse-form than what is contained in the Register and as such only the late fifteenth century copying of the pageants into the Register can be applied with some certainty.

Caiaphas are not mentioned in the script either through their own dialogue or the dialogue of the other characters. This suggests that they were either not a part of this pageant in any capacity or, perhaps, that they chose to remain on the street outside of Herod's court for the same reason that they refuse to enter the Stone Pavement in the previous pageant.

As in the previous two pageants, the *voidée* features in *Christ Before Herod* and the Tetrarch is presented as an overindulgent drunkard who requires the help of his dukes in order to get to bed. The soldiers arrive with Christ shortly after Herod is put to bed and they relay that Pilate has sent them because of a jurisdictional problem: Christ's ministry mainly took place in Galilee and thus his alleged crimes would have fallen under Herod's jurisdiction rather than Pilate's (31.127-30). Christ remains totally silent in this pageant while the two soldiers and the two dukes act as witnesses against Christ. The dukes tell Herod of the feeding of the five thousand and the raising of Lazarus to which Herod responds "why, there hope Y be dedis of þe deuyll" (31.226).<sup>154</sup> The soldiers then relay that Christ "claymes to be a kyng of Jewis" (31.230), an allegation that is taken from Caiaphas' accusation in the Bowers and Fletchers' pageant (29). The situation is compounded by the appearance of Herod's sons who aggressively cross-examine Christ to no avail and who request that he is clothed in white (31.337-38). Unlike at the Stone Pavement, Herod's court is full of characters who interject while he is questioning Christ; the various witnesses feel that they can speak freely before Herod even in the midst of his interrogation of the accused – at Pilate's court only the high priests make the claims against Christ. The fact that there are so many voices of false witness at Herod's court and that even his sons have the authority to request particular treatment of the

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<sup>154</sup> Clare Wright has analyzed the alliterative verse in this pageant and how Herod's "erratic metre and aggressive alliteration" (Wright 17) affects those who are positioned closest to Herod on stage as he attempts to project his voice to those at the back of the crowd (see Wright, "Acoustic Tyranny").

accused shows that Herod is not in control of his court; it also shows his lax approach to following the normal system of proceedings. At Pilate's court, the biggest concern is working out the evidence for Christ's alleged crimes and the jurisdictional boundaries of those crimes; at Herod's court, the voices of false witnesses accuse Christ without evidence in a mocking tone that is juxtaposed against Christ's silence.

The absence of Annas and Caiaphas at Herod's court means that they are not able to convince Herod to convict Christ of a felony but rather that this portion of the trial is left in the hands of the false witnesses. Annas and Caiaphas cannot be in the centre of Herod's court because of the Sabbath though it is also worth mentioning that the following pageant of *The Remorse of Judas* (32) by the Cooks and the Waterleaders appears to take place conterminously with the Litsters' *Christ Before Herod* (31). In *The Remorse of Judas* Annas and Caiaphas are speaking to Pilate about Christ's role as a challenger to Pilate's authority when Judas enters to return the thirty pieces of silver that he was given in *The Conspiracy* (26). The presence of Annas and Caiaphas in the Cooks and Waterleaders' pageant suggests that the setting is outside of the Stone Pavement though still at the *praetorium* in Pilate's court and Christ's absence from the pageant seems to suggest that the action in *The Remorse of Judas* is taking place while Herod is berating Christ in the previous pageant. Though Annas and Caiaphas are attempting to convince Pilate that he should condemn Christ to death in *The Remorse of Judas*, the main focus of the pageant appears to be on Judas' return of the blood money and the purchase of the Field of Blood.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> The concern in the pageant is with Pilate's involvement in the exchange of blood money and the events leading to the now-lost Saucemakers' *Hanging of Judas* pageant that follows. In *The Remorse of Judas*, as in the biblical source in Matthew 27:3-10, Judas returns the thirty pieces of silver and the high priests – who cannot return the silver to the treasury because it is blood money – use the funds to

The dramatic space in the Litsters' *Christ Before Herod* is a crowded one: Herod, his three sons, the two dukes, the two soldiers, and Christ are on stage at once in contrast to the previous trial pageants where fewer characters are in focus at any given time. The soldiers and dukes try to convince Herod that Christ should be sentenced while Herod's sons tell Herod to have Christ dressed in white (31.337); although drunk from the *voidée*, Herod is clear that those around him should "telle vs no tales but trewe" (31.78) and despite the crowded court Herod follows protocol and calls out for additional witnesses (31.371-74) when he is not convinced that Christ's alleged crimes fall under his jurisdiction. This chaotic presentation of Herod's court – the numerous voices of false witness and opinion about Christ's alleged crimes – illustrates the importance of the role of the judge in a court of law: discerning the truth and following the letter of the law under the given jurisdictional boundaries. Despite his characterization as a drunkard in the pageant, Herod listens to Christ's accusers and the numerous voices in his court while following the appropriate protocol and sending Christ back to Pilate's court. This representation of the operations of the legal courts upholds the jurisdictional boundaries under which Herod's secular court can try Christ and the judgment given by Pilate in a quieter court stands in stark contrast.

In the final trial pageant, Christ is accused of treason and scourged before he is taken to Golgotha to be crucified in the Tilemakers' *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement* (33). The Tilemakers led a consortium of crafts that, together, made up

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purchase the Field of Blood. Acts 1:18-20 states that the Field of Blood is where Judas hanged himself which presumably makes up the main portion of the now-missing *Hanging of Judas*. Pilate is absent in the biblical analogues of *The Conspiracy* and *The Remorse of Judas* and in both pageants there is a suggestion that the money that was given to Judas came from Pilate (rather the high priests) and that Pilate was responsible for purchasing the Field of Blood (26.276; 32.328-371). The Armiger in the *Remorse of Judas* who sells the field to Pilate and the high priests refers to the piece of land as "Calvary-locus" (32.350) which is an interesting conflation between the place of Judas' hanging and the place of the crucifixion. References to the place of the crucifixion after this pageant do not bring up the association between Calvary and the Field of Blood.

the group responsible for putting forth the pageant. This included the Saucemakers, the Millers, the Turners, the Sievers, the Bollers (bowlmakers), the Ropers, and the Hairesters (makers of haircloth and horsehair rope). In 1515 the Millers become the leaders of the consortium of crafts after the Tilemakers were unable to lead the group (*REED: York* 212).<sup>156</sup> Most of the tileworks in York during the middle ages were in ecclesiastical ownership, “notably that of the archbishopric, the vicars choral of the Minster, and the Carmelite friars” which meant that they were not under jurisdiction of the city (Beadle, *The York Play* II.289). The locations of many of the tilehouses in medieval York are known: near Clifton and Bishopsfields (NW of the city walls), by Walmgate Bar (C3), outside the walls at Barker Tower and North Street Postern (A3), and in Layerthorpe (D2) (Raine 29, 296, 311-12; *VCH York* 89, 317).<sup>157</sup> The original 1415 entry from the *Ordo Paginarum* that describes the pageant that was overseen by the Tilemakers has been erased and overwritten by Robert Burton (the Common Clerk from 1415-1435) though the more concise list at the end of the *Ordo* lists “The condemnation of Christ by Pilate” by the Tilemakers and “The scourging and crowning with thorns” by the Turners and Bollers (*REED: York* 711). In 1422-23<sup>158</sup>, an entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* mentions the combining of several pageants together under the Saucemakers and Tilemakers with the Millers and other crafts making financial contributions to the pageant silver:

the pageant of the Saucemakers in the Corpus Christi Play, in which Judas used to hang himself and burst in the middle, and the pageant of the Tilemakers, in which Pilate has condemned Jesus to death, and the

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<sup>156</sup> The complicated history of the ownership of the pageant has been discussed at length in Meredith, “The *Ordo Paginarum* and the Development of the York Tilemakers’ Pageant”.

<sup>157</sup> The last two (in Layerthorpe and at Barker Tower and North Street Postern) were owned by the Vicars’ Choral of the Minster.

<sup>158</sup> See Meredith, “The *Ordo Paginarum* and the Development of the York Tilemakers’ Pageant”, 71 for the dating of this document under Henry Preston’s mayoralty (February 1422 – February 1433) rather than the dating of 1432 given in *REED: York*.



pageant of the Turners, Hayresters, and Boilers, in which Jesus had been bound to the pillar and flogged, and the pageant of the Millers, in which Pilate and other soldiers used to play at dice for the clothing of Jesus and to cast lots for them and to divide them among themselves, were combined together in one pageant, after the other aforesaid pageants were stopped forever, which pageant indeed will be called the pageant of the Condemnation of Jesus Christ (*REED: York 733*).

The second part of this entry states that none of the crafts “may place any signs, arms or insignia upon the aforesaid pageant, except only the arms of this honourable city...[and]... no member of the aforesaid four crafts shall litigate or make any quarrel with any (member) of the same crafts...under penalty of 3s 4d” (*REED: York 734*). The institution of these restrictions anticipates discord between the groups and forces the crafts to perform under the auspices of the city’s arms rather than the insignia of their own crafts. While ownership, compilation, and production of the pageant continued to be revised into the sixteenth century, the copy that was entered in the Register contains parts of the individual episodes described in the 1422-23 document though it may have been revised by the time ownership was transferred to the Millers in the early sixteenth century. There is no evidence that space for wagon storage was leased by any of the groups though the 1422-23 memorandum suggests that a wagon may have been used during the early fifteenth century through its wording that only the arms of the city could be displayed “upon the aforesaid pageant” and in the 1432 amendment that states that repairs to the pageant would be overseen by two craftsmen from each of the Tilemakers and Saucemakers (*REED: York 734*).

In this pageant, the dramatist presents the final trial of Christ following Judas' return of the blood money and his hanging in the now lost *Hanging of Judas* pageant. Christ is returned to Pilate after being accused by false witnesses and being clothed in white at Herod's court. Pilate's opening speech reiterates his power through the law and he commands the attention of the audience:

Tharfore 3e lusty ledes within þis length lapped,  
 Do stynte of 3oure stalking, and of stoutnes be stalland.  
 What traytoure his tong with tales has trapped,  
 That fende for his flater yng full foul sall be falland. (33.13-16)

The Pilate of this opening speech is reiterating his control over the citizens of Judea who, through the coterminous reality of the performance, are the audience watching the production in medieval York. This is not the domestic Pilate from the *Tapiters and Couchers'* pageant who is boasting of his marital sexual exploits: it is Pilate the judge who, in his previous appearance in the *Play*, called Christ to the bar while he sat at the bench in the Stone Pavement. It is through this lens that we see Pilate's anger at Annas and Caiaphas for their constant insistence that Christ be accused of a crime that would result in his death. In previous pageants, Pilate accuses the high priests of hatred towards Christ (26.40, 93, 95; 30.301, 452-53, 483, 506); in this pageant, however, Pilate accuses them of contriving a malicious prosecution: "If 3e fayne slike frawd is I sall felle 3ou, | For me likis noght youre langage so large" (33.130-31; see also Tiner 148-49, n. 25). Annas and Caiaphas have attempted to charge Christ with any number of broken laws and Pilate can see that their insistence on bringing forth charges in such a manner engenders doubt in Christ's guilt.

Within the trial pageants, Tiner points out that "Caiaphas is clearly the leader while Annas functions like a legal advisor" (Tiner 141). Caiaphas makes several

attempts to have Christ charged with a crime that would result in his execution and Annas reminds the former that he would be violating canon law if he attempts to put Christ to death: “Nay sir, þan blemysse yee prelatis estat[e]; ʒe awe to deme no man to dede for to dyng[e]” (29.336-37).<sup>159</sup> The condemning of a man to death can only be done in this situation by appealing to Pilate since, as Annas points out, “he is domysman nere and nexte to þe king” (29.341). Throughout the trials Annas and Caiaphas attempt to charge Christ with breaking a number of ecclesiastical laws ranging from false preaching (26.86-90; 32.67; 32.70-71; 33.96-101), apostasy (36.77), defamation (29.297), effecting conversions (30.444; 36.77; 36.113), and witchcraft/sorcery (29.58; 30.293; 33.288-89).<sup>160</sup> While these charges would all result in excommunication (Tiner 142), they would not result in the most desirable outcome according to the high priests: death. This is not achieved until after much coming and going in the trials when Caiaphas claims in *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgement* that Christ is not faultless since “To be kyng he claymeth, with croune” (33.329). Caiaphas continues that “whoso stoutely will steppe to þat state / ʒe suld deme, ser, to be dong doune / And dede” (33. 330-32). It is not until this moment – after more than 90 minutes of performance of the trial pageants alone – that the defendant is accused of a crime that is suitable for the proposed punishment. It is also not until this moment that Pilate is convinced enough of Christ’s guilt that he is able to condemn him to scourging (33.336-39) though he does not condemn him to death until after he releases Barabbas at the end of the Tilemakers’ pageant, an episode that is missing from the extant version of the pageant.

As the soldiers scourge Christ, they repeat the emphatic “hail” from the Tile Thatchers’ *Nativity* (14) and the Skinners’ *Entry into Jerusalem* (25) (33.409-15).

<sup>159</sup> See also Woolf, *English Mystery Plays* 252.

<sup>160</sup> For additional details about the charges brought against Christ with regards to witchcraft and sorcery, see R.H. Nicholson’s “The Trial of Christ the Sorcerer in the York Cycle”.

This repetition in the Tilemakers' pageant changes the meaning of the word through the soldiers' mocking tone to one that no longer praises Christ's holiness but that highlights his treason against the Roman authorities. The soldiers are repossessing the word from a traitor as he is being punished for his supposed crime (King, *The York Mystery Cycle* 27). Pilate, at the end of the pageant, delivers his final judgement that Christ will be taken to Golgatha to be crucified and it is from this part of the story that the characters' affiliation with the places that they occupy is challenged in the Shearmen's *Road to Calvary* (34), the subject of the following chapter.

In the trial pageants, the relationship that the performance has to its surroundings and to its positioning at the Minster Gates is particularly poignant for the subject of Christ's trial. When played at the Minster Gates, the trial pageants highlight the importance of the legal jurisdictional boundaries in medieval York as it relates to the legal system in Christ's Jerusalem. The Minster Gates were situated on the boundary wall of the liberty of St. Peter and the courts within these walls enforced Canon law and oversaw some of the legal elements of its tenants in a different court to those who lived in the nearby parishes. The ecclesiastical courts in medieval York as in Christ's Jerusalem were not able to convict anyone of treason or, indeed, a felony: this was left up to the secular courts. Pilate and Herod are the secular authorities in these pageants and have the power to convict an individual of treason in the same manner that the secular courts in medieval York could convict an individual of a crime that would result in a death sentence. The ecclesiastical powers in these pageants appear in the guise of bishops and manipulate the secular authorities into convicting Christ of a felony. The Minster itself as a *lieu de memoire* provides a locus for ecclesiastical authority that is outside of civic jurisdiction: the

pageants, under the civic jurisdiction of the city and operating only on the public streets, did not enter the Liberty of St. Peter. In the trials, however, the ecclesiastical powers – those who are watching the pageants from the chamber in the Minster Gates – have the power to charge those who live outside its walls with crimes that fall under their jurisdiction.

Experiencing the trials of Christ at the Minster Gates does not emphasize the sacredness of the Minster or its use as a place of worship but, rather, as a separate entity whose power is limited by its boundaries. In the Cutlers' *Conspiracy* (26), the Janitor does everything in his power to keep Judas from entering the *praetorium* and joining the discussion about Christ that takes place between the high priests and Pilate. Judas insists on entering the *praetorium* and, although the Janitor resists for two thirds of the pageant, the “churle þat can chyde” (26.180) is finally permitted entry to Pilate's house. It is the Janitor, it seems, who first breaks the threshold – upon Pilate's request – between the disciples and the ecclesiastical and civic authorities and makes it possible for the trial to commence. The person responsible for keeping the boundaries in check is aware that Judas is up to no good; the breaking of the boundaries in this situation results in suffering and death though this is the desired result for the Christian audience. Without the breaking and interrogation of these jurisdictional boundaries, the resurrection would not be possible and the audience – both in the streets and in the chamber above the Minster Gates – would not be celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi. In *The Remorse of Judas* (32), the breaking of the boundary between the disciples and the ecclesiastical and civic authorities comes full circle when Judas is permitted entrance to the *praetorium* without resistance. Judas is free to enter and speak to Pilate and the high priests in an attempt to return the blood money that he is given in *The Conspiracy*.

The return of the money does not, however, achieve the desired result and from this point in the *Play* the breakdown of the jurisdictional boundaries between the ecclesiastical and civic authorities becomes irreparable. The high priests – dressed as medieval bishops and not as the first-century figures that they represent – are, with Pilate, co-conspirators in Christ's death. Although it is Pilate's orders that ultimately result in the scourging and the crucifixion, in these pageants the high priests are as much responsible for the resultant suffering because of their determined appeals to Pilate's authority.

For those watching the trial pageants from outside the Minster Gates, the Minster itself is a visible reminder of both its function as a place of worship as well as the site of the ecclesiastical courts. The grounds beyond the Gates were an ever-changing building site and included the Archbishop's palace as well as the prison of the Dean and Chapter; this locale was not just a site of worship and pilgrimage. The power of the ecclesiastical courts is prominent in the trial pageants and, when seen in the wake of the Minster and with the Dean and Chapter watching from the chamber above the Gates, the performance's concern with Christ's trial highlights the Minster as the centre of ecclesiastical power. The Dean and Chapter – those who oversaw the ecclesiastical and legal practices at the Minster – are visible from the streets below and their presence mirrors the high priests who ask the civic leaders to embroil themselves in a matter that is arguably outside of civic jurisdiction. The struggle between the civic and ecclesiastical powers in the pageants mirror the boundaries between the civic and ecclesiastical courts in York – between the Minster and the secular courts in the castle and the Common Hall – and the distance between dramatic space and performance space is reduced by the performances of these pageants at the Minster Gates. The Minster Gates, with the reminder of the

ecclesiastical courts in the Liberty and with the Dean and Chapter on display in the chamber, are at once the medieval locale as well as the first-century site of the pageants. While the trial pageants were, like the rest of the *Play*, performed elsewhere on the pageant route, there is nowhere else in the city where such a strong association between locale and performance takes place. In front of the Minster Gates, the trial pageants mimic the struggle between the civic and ecclesiastical courts in medieval York and, for the audience, this display of legal practice perhaps confirms the litigious and, arguably, unfair manner in which a case might be tried in the courts.

The performances of the trial pageants at the Minster Gates are informed by the locale and its sense of place: the gates are the entrance to the place where ecclesiastical law was enacted and enforced and the liberty was the site of ecclesiastical authority in the North. The visual similarities between Annas and Caiaphas and their medieval clerical counterparts is heightened at this playing station by this association and by the presence of the Dean and Chapter who heard the pageants from the chamber above the gates. The site-specificity of this imagery is strengthened by the concern over jurisdictional boundaries and is strongest at this playing station. The narrative elements and the rich imagery of the performance work with the locale to place the first century trial in medieval York and the pageants are informed by the performance space. In the following chapter, the relationship that the *Road to Calvary* (34) and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39) have to the performance space is discussed as an antithesis to the particularity and locality of the trial pageants at the Minster Gates; the importance of space in relation to locality is examined in relation to the pageants in the following chapter since locality and space are defined by their relationship to one another. For

the performances of the trial pageants, the particularity of the Minster Gates – the sense of place and their function as a physical boundary between the ecclesiastical liberty and the city – is key to understanding the performances of the *York Corpus Christi Play* in its medieval context. The trial pageants present a first-century trial that reflects many elements of the medieval legal process and for the audiences at the Minster Gates the trial cannot be separated from their own experience of the legal system in medieval York.



### Movement Through the City:

#### *The Road to Calvary* (34) and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39)

Of a number of other pageants included in the *Play*, two pageants of note are in the position of not being connected to any pageant wagons in the surviving records: the Shearmen's *Road to Calvary* (34) and the Windedrawers' *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39). In the case of both groups, there is no evidence of accommodations for wagon storage, that payments for wagon repairs were ever made, and there is no extant indenture that records the properties for either pageant (as with the case of the Mercers' pageant). As shown in the previous discussion about pageant wagons, this is not necessarily an unusual situation since nearly half of the pageants are in a similar position. Many of the records that may have once shown payments toward the building of wagons, wagon repairs or, indeed, payments toward the rental of wagon storage were perhaps lost to us over the course of time. Scholars have long assumed that this absence of wagons from the records indicates that some groups would have employed wagons that were not necessarily purpose-built for the performance and were adapted for day-use during the production each year. Others have assumed that such records are no longer extant since some groups were not as good at record keeping as others and that, perhaps also likely, the records related to the performances of these pageants were not deemed worthy of note in the formal records of some of the performance groups. Scholars have even shown that some groups responsible for the performances were not formal guilds outside of the purposes of the performance and as such records for these groups were not kept in the format common to formal craft or trade guilds.<sup>161</sup>

What has not been widely acknowledged in the studies of the *Play* is the possibility

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<sup>161</sup> Examples include the Vicars Choral, St. Leonard's Hospital, the labourers, and the masons (for the labourers, see Swanson, *Building Craftsmen in Late Medieval York* 26; for the masons, see Christie "The York Play: Expanding the Boundaries of Civic Drama").

that some groups may not have used a pageant wagon for their performance because the action and narrative of their pageant did not require such a vehicle. There is no extant ordinance or other record stating that the use of a wagon was a requirement of performance in the *Play* and there is no extant document that shows a fine being paid by any group to the city council for not using a wagon for their performance in the same way that there are records of groups being fined for delaying the production. It has long been assumed that every group employed a wagon for their pageant because the records related to wagon storage and use are numerous; but it would be, as I will show below, not a massive stretch of the imagination to suggest that the lack of records for wagon-use for many of the groups may, in fact, be due to the fact that not every pageant required the use of a wagon. Just because the records are incomplete, it does not mean that wagon use was the *de facto* mode of performance for these pageants.

This brings me to the point of why the *Road to Calvary* and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* are interesting within the context of the absence of recorded wagon-use for these two pageants. Both of these pageants<sup>162</sup> are in a somewhat unique position among the pageants included in the cycle in that they have three important features that suggest strongly that they were performed in a manner that is different from how scholars have traditionally viewed the medieval performances of the *Play*. First, there are no records to show that wagons were ever involved in the production of either pageant. We have no surviving evidence that rents were paid for the storage of wagons, that payments were made towards the cost of building a wagon, or that costs for repairs to a wagon were ever recorded in relation to either of these pageants. This evidence on its own is not unusual for many

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<sup>162</sup> Peter Holding has suggested that not all of the pageants were necessarily in want of a wagon and he mentions the *Road to Calvary* as one such example though he does not elaborate in such detail (Holding, "Stagecraft in the York Cycle").

other groups involved in the production of the *Play*. Second, the action and narrative flow of both pageants makes the use of a wagon superfluous and, indeed, a hindrance to the movement of the actors. The dramatic space in neither pageant requires a constructed set or elaborate properties that would need to be affixed to or located on a wagon. Both of them take place on the streets – one on the road from Pilate's *praetorium* to Golgotha and the other near the empty tomb and on the way to Galilee – with no direct references to a fixed set. Third, both pageants rely on the necessity of employing the street as a performance space. The street is integral to the *Road to Calvary* and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* in that the characters constantly refer to their own presence on the road and the significance of being placed in such a position with relation to the other fictive localities within the *Play*. The characters place emphasis on their location in the street and the importance of moving through the street is essential to articulating the significance of both pageants within the larger narrative of the whole performance. The street, in both of these pageants, is crucial to the narrative and is an essential part of the performance that is not possible to achieve if the performances were to take place on a wagon.

In this case study I will address these three features of the pageants as well as some background information that is present and, indeed, absent from the performance records. A look at Bakhtin's discussions of depicting and employing places will be addressed with relation to the significance of the journey that each pageant highlights through its narrative. An exploration of how each pageant could have been performed and a look at the dialogue's references to the fictive locality of the setting will also be addressed. Following the close reading of each pageant, I will address how these two shorter sections of the *Play* fit into the larger performance and why their staging on the streets of York is a more effective means of articulating

their significance for the larger story of Corpus Christi than employing a wagon that does not add to the production. The use of the street serves to lessen the distance between dramatic space and performance space in both pageants. The streets of York are at once a locale within the medieval city as well as the roads between Pilate's court and Calvary and between the tomb and Galilee; these pageants blur the lines between York's streets as the streets of first-century Palestine by making little reference to the precise location of the action that is taking place. Such a performance articulates the coterminous realities and, by extension, the coterminous localities that are presented in the performance.

The Shearmen's *Road to Calvary* (34) and the  
Windrawers' *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39)

The Shearmen were known for their involvement in the finishing stages of broadcloth production during the medieval period and this production of broadcloth was also associated with the work of the Fullers who were responsible for cleansing and thickening cloth and wool. The first mention of a pageant owned by the Shearmen is found in an entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* from 1405, nearly three decades after the first mention of the *Play*. The document lays out an ordinance by the city council and the masters of the guild that stipulates the implementation of a fine in the case of improperly made cloth:

henceforth the searchers of the said guild will present to the mayor of the said city the faults found and approved by the said searchers and two other competent masters of the same guild elected to judge the alleged fault and that, wherever a fault is found, he who is found at fault will pay 3s 4d, one half to the Council Chamber and the other half to their pageant of Corpus Christi (*REED: York*, 14-15; 700-701).

Those who chose to produce poorly made cloth and who were members of the guild would be fined with half of the penalty benefitting the guild itself via a contribution to the pageant. This was not an uncommon way for guilds to raise money towards their pageants as a supplement to the collection of pageant silver. The ordinance goes on to state that masters who take on apprentices would have to contribute to the pageant on their apprentice's behalf which, again, is not uncommon. Most importantly, the document states that when the billet for the pageant is sent,

all the masters of the said guild should assemble in a certain place at the assigned time, and there they shall take order for their pageant and their light, for properties and equipment of the same, and whoever is found rebellious towards the assembly as mentioned above and toward the said ordinances will pay 3s 4d as mentioned before.

(REED: *York* 14-15; 701)<sup>163</sup>

It is possible that this portion of the ordinance is suggesting, firstly, that the Shearmen were newly inducted into the performances of the *Play* in 1405 since the city council found it fit to add this stipulation to the same ordinance that spoke of the poor-quality cloth that was produced by some of the members of the guild. In practical terms, members of the guild – in this case the masters – would have to meet the billets when they arrived from the mayor in order to officially confirm their involvement in the pageant. There is no mention of the guild's involvement in the *Play* before this stage and hence nothing that suggests that even the *Road to Calvary*

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<sup>163</sup> Beadle has pointed out that the ordinances of the other crafts involved in the *Play* do not include a similar note about the billets but “it is possible that they would have followed some comparable procedure early in Lent, when the billets authorizing the Play were normally issued” (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 305). By producing an ordinance requiring the masters of each guild to meet the billets from the mayor's office at a particular place and time on pain of a fine, the mayor's office would not be caught in the position of chasing down guild masters to deliver the billets and would not be caught in the awkward position on Corpus Christi day of not having all of the different groups appear for the performance.

as a pageant was a part of the *Play* in any form prior to the date of this document. It is also possible that, secondly, if the pageant was already being performed during Corpus Christi prior to 1405, at least some of the masters of the guild were not taking the guild's involvement in the production seriously enough to receive the billets from the city council "in a certain place at the assigned time". The fact that half of each fine that is laid out in the document is strictly marked as a contribution towards the cost of the pageant implies that the city council knew that the cost of performance was already high and that they could use the implementation of such fines as an incentive for the guild to take the production of the pageant seriously. In any case, this is the first instance where the Shearmen are mentioned in relation to the *Play*.

The description of the *Road to Calvary* as it appears in the *Ordo Paginarum* is the first time that the pageant appears in the records with relation to the Shearmen and, for the most part, the entry plots the same narrative that appears in the surviving pageant from the Register.<sup>164</sup> The entry provides a detailed description of the pageant:

Jesus covered with blood carrying the cross to Calvary, Simon of Cyrene, the Jews constraining him to carry the cross, Mary the mother of Jesus, then John the apostle first relating the condemnation and journey of her son to Calvary, Veronica wiping blood and sweat from the face of Jesus with a veil on which is imprinted the face of Jesus, and other women lamenting Jesus. (*REED: York 707*)

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<sup>164</sup> Beadle notes that the entry for the *Road to Calvary* was made in the hand of Roger Burton between 1422-23 and 1435 and was made at the same time as the Tilemakers' *Christ Before Pilate II: The Judgment*, the pageant that comes just before the Shearmen's text in the cycle (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 306). This entry is slightly later than the original note that appeared in the *Ordo* from around 1415 that was erased and written over by Burton (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 306).

The only difference in the description provided in the *Ordo* is the naming of Veronica as the woman who wipes Christ's face with the veil and who is named in the text as III Maria. The renaming of the Veronica figure of the *Ordo* and the New Testament is not necessarily of consequence when it appears as III Maria in the Register since none of the women in the pageant are addressed by their names except for the Virgin Mary.<sup>165</sup> The association of the Shearmen with their pageant has been linked to the stripping of Christ at the end of the pageant in preparation for the crucifixion. Beadle has pointed out that during the stripping of Christ the "soldiers begin to wrangle for possession of his seamless coat (often imagined as a fine robe, and an important symbol of Christ's body) to which the audience's attention is drawn in the course of the dialogue" (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 305).<sup>166</sup>

Although the Shearmen were the only known owners of the *Road to Calvary* at any given time during the medieval period, the Fullers also contributed to the pageant in the form of a fine according to a council decision noted in the *A/Y Memorandum Book*: "if these Fullers took it upon themselves customarily to shear any (pieces of) cloth large or small which were not of their own fulling, they should then be contributors with the Shearers to their pageant and to their other burdens" (*REED: York* 41; 726). This indicates that the Fullers could have contributed financially to the Shearmen's pageant if they chose to shear cloth that was fullled by foreign fullers. No such records survive, unfortunately, so it is not certain how often this happened and therefore to what extent the Fullers contributed financially to the

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<sup>165</sup> Since Veronica is not addressed by name in the dialogue, the label of III Maria is probably a scribal error in the Register (see *The York Plays*, Vol. 2 314-15). The *Towneley* pageant of the *Resurrection* attributes this action of the veil to Mary Magdalene.

<sup>166</sup> This stripping of Christ was once a part of the now lost Miller's *Play of the Dice* that is mentioned in the list at the end of the *Ordo Paginarum* as "the division of the vestments of Christ" (*REED: York* 711). This was later amalgamated with a number of other pageants under a pageant entitled *The Condemnation of Christ by Pilate* (see the 1422-23 entry in the *A/Y Memorandum Book* printed in *REED: York* 733 and Meredith, "The *Ordo Paginarum* and the Development of the York Tilemakers' Pageant", 71 for the dating of this document under Henry Preston's mayoralty (February 1422 – February 1433)).

Shearmen's pageant. In 1517 the common Carters were noted in the *House Books* in relation to the Shearmen's pageant and were also ordered to contribute towards the cost of the pageant "for lyke consideracion as is afforesaid" (*REED: York* 214) which is to say in the same manner that the Vestmentmakers were asked to contribute to the Skinners' *Entry into Jerusalem* (25) (because of financial reasons). Though the guild relationship between the Fullers and the Shearmen is clear because of the overlap in their crafts, it is less obvious how the Carters became involved in the financial contribution to the pageant.

The Winedrawers are an interesting group given that their association with the story of *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* is not obviously connected with the narrative of the pageant. It appears that the term 'winedrawer' refers to "a shipper or transporter of wine...[and] originated in the fourteenth century partly as a means of distinguishing members of the mercantile community involved in the overseas trade in wine from the local retailers who at that time were usually called taverners" (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 374). Beadle points out that the appearance of the Winedrawers in the civic records is very limited: outside of the *Play*, they appear once in the Freeman's Roll in the first half of the fourteenth century to refer to three men (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 373).<sup>167</sup> As such, this has led Beadle to suggest that the use of the name solely in relation to the *Play* implies that the Winedrawers were "some kind of informal or voluntary fraternity, not otherwise under civic purview ...[and thus] it is possible that the bringing forth of the pageant was its principal *raison d'etre*" (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 373). There is no indication within the narrative of the pageant of how such an association might be forged between the craft of winedrawing – if, indeed, the title refers loosely to those who traded wine

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<sup>167</sup> See also Swanson, *Craftsmen and Industry in Late Medieval York* 164.



overseas – and the subject of the pageant. The loose mention by Beadle that the attribution of the pageant was given to the winedrawers because the narrative was set in the garden and could have included a vine seems vague at best (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 375).<sup>168</sup> The plot of *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* does not indicate any mention of wine either within the pageant or within the description given in the *Ordo Paginarum* and hence one might conclude that the name attributed to those who were responsible for the pageant was perhaps only associated with the pageant because it was deemed necessary for the production of each pageant to be made the responsibility of a named group of individuals.

The entry for the Winedrawers' pageant in the *Ordo Paginarum* appears as "Jesus, Mary Magdalene with spices" (*REED: York 22; 708*) and the following list notes "The appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene" (*REED: York 26; 711*). Given that these notes on the pageant as well as the playtext in the Register attribute the pageant to the Winedrawers, it is safe to assume that the ownership of the pageant remained with the Winedrawers between at least 1415 and the 1470s when the Register was compiled. The descriptions of the pageant in the *Ordo* – as vague as they are – do not seem to vary from the text in the Register and as such there is no indication of how the original text that is mentioned in the 1415 list could be different from the extant playtext. Beadle discusses the notation and then erasure of 'winedrawers' in the Register for the entry of the following pageant of the *Supper at Emmaus* (40) and states that the lack of a gap between *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* and the *Supper at Emmaus* could indicate that the scribe was noting an

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<sup>168</sup> The image of Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Holkham Bible Picture Book (BL MS Add. 47682, fol. 35v) shows a vine in the background of the scene. This is a common iconographical feature of this meeting between the two figures though this was also a common enough association with Christ as the true vine (John 15:1) that it appeared in many other images; this vague association could extend to a countless number of other pageants that are not attributed to the winedrawers or, indeed, the vintners.

early amalgamation of the two pageants (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 374). Since the attribution of the *Supper at Emmaus* to the Winedrawers was erased in the Register, Beadle has suggested that the possible amalgamation of these pageants was highly unlikely by the late fifteenth century.<sup>169</sup>

Outside of the Register and the *Ordo Paginarum*, there are no records relating to *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* either with relation to the ownership of a pageant wagon or in connection with another group who contributed to the performance financially. This pageant, like the *Road to Calvary* and several others, is not included in the 1535 list and this absence – taken in association with the lack of additional evidence about the pageant's ownership or performances – implies that perhaps the pageant was no longer being performed by the sixteenth century. It is possible that a version of the story was added to the earlier *Resurrection* (38) pageant as a way of including the narrative within the larger performance in the sixteenth century but without a later copy of either the play-text or of other extant material there is no way to know whether this pageant was played in any form in the later renderings of the *Play*.

#### Space in the *Road to Calvary*

For both of these pageants, the location is important in so far as the setting functions as an in-between space that is used to articulate the movement from the pageant before to the narrative in the pageant that follows. The space of the street – or the locality that is void of meaning – is central to the action of these pageants. The

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<sup>169</sup> The *Supper at Emmaus* was variously owned by the Sledmen, the Woolpackers (woad dealers), and the Woolbrokers. For additional details about the headnotes for the *Supper at Emmaus* and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* in the Register, see *The York Plays*, Vol. 2 pp. 381-86. In the *Towneley Plays* and the *Chester Plays*, Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene takes place as a part of the pageant of the resurrection (no. 26 and no. 18, respectively) in the presence of other figures – notably the two other Maries who visit the tomb – rather than as a part of the Emmaus narrative or with Christ and Mary Magdalene appearing alone on stage. The appearance to Mary Magdalene in the *N-Town Plays* takes place as a separate pageant (no. 37) that carries on from the visit of the three Maries (of which Mary Magdalene is one), Peter, and John to the sepulcher (no. 36).

fact that the setting for these pageants is given meaning through its attribution of the places that are located on either side heightens the important lack of fictive locality: the space of the street sits between two other significant places and is the vehicle by which the characters travel from one place to another. The street itself stands between two *lieux de memoire* and since the purpose of the street is as an instrument for movement of the characters the focus is on the meetings that take place in the street. The representation of geography in these two pageants articulates the notion that space – the area between places – is as much about location as it is about meaning.

The street in the *Road to Calvary* is the path that Christ must travel in order to complete the Passion sequence and arrive at the site of the crucifixion at Golgotha. The street in this pageant is where Christ continues to be mistreated by the soldiers who have transported him from the garden of Gethsemane, between Herod's court and Pilate's *praetorium*, who are responsible for enacting the flagellation and buffeting, and who will strip Christ of his clothing before crucifying him in the following pageant. The street is where Christ meets the "doughteres of Jerusalem" (34.160) and where the Sudarium is imprinted with his face; this is where the apostle John reiterates how the judgement for the crucifixion was passed in the previous pageants; it is where Christ speaks to the Virgin Mary before his final address to her from the cross in *Mortificacio Christi* (36). The street is where Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry the cross to Calvary by the soldiers and where the soldiers list the tools that they will use to achieve Pilate's order to crucify Christ. The two thieves, though silent throughout the pageant, are present and are a constant reminder of the silent witnesses of the replaying of several stations of the cross on the Via Dolorosa that are enacted within this pageant.

The pageant opens with a speech by the first soldier who asks the audience to remain still and heed his directions not to help Christ as he is taken to his death:

Pees, barnes and bachillers þat beldis here aboute,  
 Stirre noȝt ones in þis stede, but stonde stone stille,  
 Or be þe lorde þat I leue on I schall gar you lowte. (34.1-3)

This opening directs the audience to watch what is happening before them without getting involved – the audience is only allowed to operate as silent spectators to the action and not as active participants. The audience’s attention is drawn to the reason why Christ is being crucified and those watching are told that they should not “suppowle þis traytoure” (34.11) while he is on the road to Calvary. Following this description of why Christ is being taken to Calvary, the first soldier employs the common trope used by actors in numerous medieval performances to clear the acting area of the audience.<sup>170</sup> As he clears the acting area, it becomes clear from the text that the actors are entering the performance from the street itself since there is no reason to ask the audience to clear space if the action has started atop a pageant wagon:

Therefore make rome, and rewle you nowe right,  
 That we may with þis weried wight  
 Wightely wende on oure way. (34.17-19)

The soldier has to clear the way for the characters that will form the narrative of the pageant and is controlling the actions and placement of the audience in the street with his speech. First, the audience is asked to remain still and is warned against helping Christ as he struggles with the cross; then, they are asked to clear the way so that the soldiers can fulfil Pilate’s order to have Christ crucified before the Sabbath

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<sup>170</sup> See for example the opening to the pageant of *The Temptation* where the Devil clears space in the audience for his entrance (22.1-4)

(34. 22-25). This opening speech puts the soldiers in charge of the performance space in that they are responsible for creating the pathway for Christ's entrance through the crowd and they remain in control through to the next pageant when he is nailed to the cross.

In preparation for the *Crucifixio Christi* (35) pageant that follows, the soldiers here begin their description of the necessary tools for following through Pilate's orders – namely various ropes and nails (34.52-55; 89-95) – and III Miles enters with the cross that he has made in preparation for the event. The audience is told that the soldier responsible for making the cross “toke þe mesure...Bothe for þe fette and hende” (34.80-81) and one of the other soldiers remarks about the precision of the design:

Beholde howe it is boorede,  
Full euen at ilke an ende.  
This werke will wele accorde,  
It may not be amende. (34.82-85)

This reference to the boring of the holes for the nails is of course a reference that the soldiers will return to in the *Crucifixio* pageant when they discover that the holes were bored incorrectly and that Christ's arms have to be stretched in order to fit him to the cross. These details about the practical design of the cross is not relevant to the biblical story of the road to Calvary; the only details about the cross that are required for the pageant's narrative to be advanced is highlighted in the later dialogue between the soldiers:

III MILES: ...But whiche of yowe schall beere þis tree,  
Sen I haue broughte it hedir?  
I MILES: Be my feithe, bere it schall hee

Pat þeron hanged sone schall bee,

And we schall teeche hym whedir. (34.97-101)

Having prepared and brought the cross to the assembled party, it must now be transported to Calvary by Christ so that the crucifixion can take place and so that the other important meetings – between Christ and Veronica, John and the Virgin Mary, and the taking of the cross by Simon of Cyrene – can take place on the road to Golgotha. Here the soldiers have cleared the performance space for the other actors, have told the audience about how they have “bene besie all þis morne | To clothe hym and to croune with thorne” (34.26-27), and are now on to the practical business of transporting the action to Calvary for the final act of the Passion. It seems superfluous to extend an already long play by including lines in this pageant about the design of the cross and the tools needed unless the focus of this pageant is meant to be the action that follows in the next pageant. These descriptions of the boreholes do not explain why Christ is unable to carry the cross the distance of the road to Calvary but it is an important detail for the *Crucifixio Christi* (35). The strength and weight of the cross are important for the action at hand – as is the description of Christ’s exhaustion at the opening of the pageant – since they go some way to explaining the soldiers’ conscription of Simon to carry the cross.

In the version of the pageant that is extant in the Register, Christ interacts with several important figures on his way to Calvary. Though John and the Virgin Mary are present on the road and speak to one another, Christ does not address them directly; nor, in fact, does he address the Soldiers or Simon of Cyrene as the latter takes the cross. He speaks only once to address the three Marys (the “doughteres of Jerusalem”) and to tell them to “mournes no more for me” (34.161) because his suffering is his “fadirs will” (34.178). In his discussion of the relationship between

space and time in generic conventions, Mikhail Bakhtin addresses the motif of meeting and its significance within the chronotope (or time-space) of a narrative. Bakhtin states that the motif of meeting between two characters is significant because within the narrative this is the point at which two or more characters share the same space and time (Bakhtin 97-99). For Bakhtin, this motif is the most important in a discussion of space and time in a text and “it can serve as an opening, sometimes as a culmination, even as a denouement (a finale) of the plot” (Bakhtin 98). Christ’s address to the Daughters of Jerusalem is one such significant culmination of the plot in the *Road to Calvary*: the speech that he delivers upon meeting the women on the road serves to remind the women and, by extension, the audience, that the suffering that has taken place up to this point and that will continue to take place in the following pageant is a necessary facet of the Christian narrative since without the Passion there can be no Resurrection. The meeting of Christ and the women on the road to Calvary is the pivotal moment in the pageant where the otherwise silent figure of Christ interacts with the audience to draw their attention away from the practicalities of the crucifixion towards the larger meaning of the resulting Resurrection.

On the same road, another important meeting takes place between the soldiers and Simon of Cyrene who is forced to take up Christ’s cross after the latter is found unable to carry it the length of the journey. Within the motif of meeting, Bakhtin discusses the chronotope of the road in narrative:

On the road (‘the high road’), the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial

distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another. On the road the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the collapse of social distances.

(Bakhtin 243)

This description of the chronotope of the road is a more nuanced reading of the motif of meeting in that it speaks to the meeting of individuals within a narrative that would not normally interact with one another in a different place – they are required to meet in the abstract space that is between two places. In this pageant, the company that is taking Christ to the place of his crucifixion meet with several important figures. Christ is met by the daughters of Jerusalem, one of whom (Veronica/III Marie) wipes his face with a veil that takes on the image of his face, the Virgin Mary, the apostle John, and Simon of Cyrene. Although the meeting with Veronica is apocryphal rather than biblical, the story of her encounter with Christ from the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was integrated into the Stations of the Cross and the Sudarium became an important holy relic because of its status as an *acheiropoieton*, a miraculous image not made by human hands. Christ's meeting with his mother is incomplete in the Register because of a missing leaf but the missing text could have included dialogue from Christ to reassure the Virgin that his crucifixion was necessary;<sup>171</sup> this, too, was extra-biblical material that became a part of the Stations of the Cross as well as the fourth of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. The meeting with John the apostle is a reminder that John was the only disciple present at the Crucifixion and that he is charged with looking after the Virgin following Christ's

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<sup>171</sup> Beadle has posited that the missing leaf could have included 54 lines (four to complete lines 135-141 and another five ten-line stanzas) and that the extant version of the Towneley text might offer some clue as to what was included in York (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 313).



death. The meeting of the crucifixion party with Simon of Cyrene and his role in the taking of the cross to Calvary is discussed below but his only appearance in the *Play* or, indeed, in the Gospels is this seemingly chance interaction. Aside from the “daughters of Jerusalem” – whatever their make up – these figures are not characters that appeared together prior to this moment in the narrative; the Virgin and John the apostle have not appeared on stage together before and this is the only appearance of Simon of Cyrene. The road allows each of these characters to meet with Christ within a short span of time and because of the locale of the action the characters can interact with Christ or one another and continue to move on.

How or why the assembled company in the *Road to Calvary* appears in this pageant is not up for debate; the characters from the pageant all appear in the canonical gospels or apocryphal material though the soldiers are not given as large a role.<sup>172</sup> What is important here with relation to the chronotope of the road is the significance of Simon of Cyrene within the context of the road as an abstract space that is defined as an area that is between two places, or centres of meaning. In the *Road to Calvary*, as in the gospels, the soldiers search for a figure to carry the cross after Christ “swounes” (34.225). The soldiers see Simon walking on the road and ask him to carry the cross three times before he agrees, at first giving the excuse that he is in a rush (34.248-60) and then later agreeing after he is told that he “schalte rew[e] [regret] it full ille” (34.276) if he does not comply with their request. In his study of the biblical figure of Simon of Cyrene, Richard Westall has shown that

this individual was not merely another witness to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, he was a privileged member of the Jewish community who had been treated in scandalous fashion by

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<sup>172</sup> See Matthew 27:32-33; Mark 15:21-22; Luke 23:26-32; and John 19:16-17. The version that is closest to the pageant and that includes the address to the Daughters of Jerusalem is found in the gospel of Luke.

representatives of the Roman state of which he was also a member.

Preservation of the historical memory of Simon of Cyrene is rooted in the fact that he was a Jew of the Diaspora who, despite his having acquired the Roman citizenship, had been placed on a par with a provincial from the rural back water of Galilee. (Westall 499)

The mistreatment that Westall is referring to is based on *angaria*, a term that refers to the “furnishing of transportation under compulsion” (Westall 498). Under such a law, those who were not Roman citizens but were Roman subjects could be compelled by the Roman authorities to transport goods with their own means of transportation and at their own cost. Those who were Roman citizens – which Simon of Cyrene was<sup>173</sup> – were not required to comply with the Roman authority’s requests to requisition means of transportation. Although Simon was a Roman citizen, his treatment is the same as would be expected of a citizen of Galilee (i.e. a Roman subject) and as such his status is put into question when he is forced to carry the cross to Calvary.

What is interesting with regards to this mistreatment of Simon in the context of the *Road to Calvary* is that, though he is a Roman citizen, his appearance on the road is heightened by the “collapse of social distances” (Bakhtin 243) that Bakhtin discusses in his study of the chronotope. The fact that he is compelled by the soldiers to carry the cross to Calvary in some sense shows that the road, by its status as an abstract space between centres of meaning, is a kind of equalizer. The difference in status between Rome’s subjects and those who hold its citizenship is ignored by the Roman authorities in the pageant as in the Bible; the soldiers are not interested in the technical difference between the two but, rather, they are interested in the time

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<sup>173</sup> For Westall’s full argument that Simon of Cyrene possessed Roman citizenship, see his discussion on the names of his children noted in Mark 15:21 (Westall 492-95).

constraint placed on them by Pilate who has asked that Christ be crucified by noon (34.264-65), a fact that is repeated in the *Crucifixio Christi* (35.15). Simon does not appear elsewhere in the *Play* or in the bible outside of this narrative and as such his presence is an interesting one. He is not a disciple and yet his role is an important one for moving the action to Calvary<sup>174</sup>: without his help, Christ cannot transport the cross to the site of his crucifixion. By extension, it seems as through the participation of Simon in the Passion narrative is one that articulates the possibility that anyone in the audience could come to the aide of Christ by carrying the cross to the place of the crucifixion.

At the end of the pageant, III Miles reminds the audience of where they are going when the viewers are told that “If anye aske aftir vs, | Kenne þame to Caluarie” (34.348-49). The soldiers have led Christ through the crowd and on the way up to Calvary throughout the pageant; although the dialogue clearly stipulates that the soldiers, Christ, the two thieves, and Simon – who becomes responsible for bearing the cross during the last third of the pageant – are moving through the crowd, the figures have not yet reached their destination by the end of the pageant. In so far as the pageant emphasizes the localities from the episode before (Pilate’s *praetorium*) and the pageant that follows (Calvary in the *Crucifixio Christi*), the *Road to Calvary* only refers to places that are not in the pageant itself. The audience does not have a place to attach the narrative to aside from the vague location of “road” and as such the lack of a place – in so far as a location can be deemed unimportant – becomes the important feature of this pageant. This, too, articulates

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<sup>174</sup> Some early traditions position Simon as a “model of discipleship” (DelCogliano 320) and “as a symbol of the conversion of the Gentiles” (DelCogliano 319) but Gregory the Great’s position that Simon is “an example of begrudging Christian practice” (DelCogliano 320) is interesting given that his role as the transporter of the cross was instrumental in allowing the crucifixion to take place. Gregory’s position on Simon is also interesting given the later history of the *York Play* within the Reformation context.

the significance of the meetings that take place on the road; such a space allows for the overlap of the chronotopes of different characters with Christ as he makes his way to Calvary. The audience is not given a place in its own right with which to associate the action of the pageant: the pageant's location is significant because it is a space, a void between two places that are important for the Christian narrative and for the following of the Via Dolorosa. The first of these is the *praetorium* where the judgement of Christ is brought forward by Pilate at the behest of Annas and Caiphas and where Christ is flogged and crowned with thorns. The second is Calvary, the place of the crucifixion and a location that is significant in that the events that take place there are the culmination of the Passion sequence of the *Play* and, given the celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi, is in many ways the climax of the production. Without the Passion, the emphasis on the Resurrection is somewhat less significant since the Resurrection cannot become the salve for the suffering of the body. The place of the judgement that is enacted by the Roman authorities articulates the bodily suffering and the humanity of Christ; the Resurrection near the end of the *Play* works to enact and reiterate his divinity which is not made clear to the disciples until after he appears to them in the later pageants.

The final feature of the pageant that is not addressed in the dialogue and that is integral to the meshing of the audience with the events in the *Road to Calvary* are articulated in Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. In the Friday meditations Love includes the story of the road to Calvary and encourages his audience to focus on one particular element of the story: those who are watching Christ make his way through the crowd. Love describes the countless figures that had a hand in the events of the crucifixion (Love 172.32-173.9) and the final walk to Calvary:

Now foeþermore beholde þi lorde Jesu, so goyng forþe with his  
 crosee on his bake, & how þanne out of þe cite at alle 3ates rennene  
 boþe citesenes & strangers of alle degres, not onely gentiles. But also  
 þe foulest Ribawdes & wyne drinkers, not to haue compassion of  
 him, bot to wonder vpon him, & scorne him.

Pere is none þat wole knawe him by pitevous affeccion bot raþer with  
 þe fenne & oper vnclannes, alle þei despisene & reþrouene him.

...

þus was he drawene & hastede bygrete violence, without rest til he  
 came to þat foule stinking place of Caluarie. (Love 173.19-33)

This description of the crowd of people watching Christ as he made his way to Calvary momentarily draws the reader's attention away from Christ and to those who, through their lack of compassion, play a role in scorning him. The spectators are, in their own way, just as responsible for the crucifixion as those who are responsible for the judgement and his buffeting. While Love's audience is not necessarily the audience of the performance, the same principles of audience still apply – those who line the road to Calvary are foreigners and citizens, as is the audience of the *Play*. Those who are watching the performance on the street and who are viewing the actors from their windows are simultaneously playing the same role as those who watched the historical Christ get crucified. The use of the street for this performance enriches and, indeed, is essential for making this element of the pageant work within the context of the larger *Play*. The abstract space of the road – the necessity of only localising this pageant within the context of the judgement at Pilate's *praetorium* and the crucifixion at Calvary – heightens the focus of the pageant on the meetings and spectators of Christ's walk to his death.

*Space in Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene*

The Winedrawers' *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* pageant takes place following the Carpenters' *Resurrection* and before the Woolpackers and Woolbrokers' *Supper at Emmaus*. It is a retelling of Mary Magdalene's encounter with Christ after she visits the empty tomb. The biblical story appears in all four gospels although those who visit the tomb with Mary Magdalene in the gospels vary depending on the book. Each version of the visit to the empty tomb in the gospels provides a different list of women of which the figure of Mary Magdalene is the only common denominator. These include Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (Matthew 28:1); Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James (Jacobi), and Salome (Mark 16:1); Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James (Jacobi), Joanna, and other women (Luke 24:10); and Mary Magdalene (John 20:1). The latter appearance in the book of John is the closest version to the events presented in *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene*. In the version of the story from the *Play*, the three Marys – identified only as I Mary, II Mary, and III Mary – have already visited the empty tomb in the previous pageant and hence the only two figures that are present in the Winedrawers' pageant are Mary Magdalene and Christ. Other versions of the story from Chester, N-Town, and Towneley identify the three Marys who visit the tomb as Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacobi (mother of James) and Mary Salome. Given that there is a considerable similarity between the Towneley and York versions of the *Resurrection*, it is likely that the three Marys from York were meant to be presented as the same three from Towneley.<sup>175</sup> There are no similarities, however, between the Towneley and York versions of Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene.

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<sup>175</sup> For similarities between the two Resurrection pageants see *The York Plays*, Vol. 2 362.

The exact setting of *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* is not entirely clear from the pageant and, given that the *Resurrection* (38) already shows the empty tomb – perhaps on the pageant wagon<sup>176</sup> depending on where Pilate's *praetorium* was located – it seems unlikely that this pageant would have duplicated the set from the *Resurrection*. As has already been mentioned, there are no records that the Winedrawers ever owned a pageant wagon or, more importantly, that they were an officially sanctioned guild outside of the auspices of the *Play*. The only records that refer to their pageant are the entry from the *Ordo Paginarium* and the extant text of the pageant from the Register from the last quarter of the fifteenth century; there are no other records that refer to its performance and the pageant is absent from the 1535 list of groups who contributed to the cancelled performance of the *Play*. Since there is also no mention of other groups contributing to this pageant we can either assume that the Winedrawers who originally took on the duty of performing the pageant and those who inherited it in later years were wealthy enough not to ask for payment from another group (as so often happened)<sup>177</sup> or that the production of this pageant was done in such a way as to cost much less than, perhaps, a performance that required a wagon. If, in fact, the absence of such information from the extant material – including the ambiguous setting of the pageant – is evidence that the performance would have taken place on the street then, like the *Road to Calvary*, this pageant provides an interesting perspective on the performance space of the *Play*.

The pageant opens with Mary Magdalene lamenting Christ's death and the disappearance of his body from the empty tomb. She speaks of how her "doulfull

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<sup>176</sup> The Bridgemasters' Account Rolls show that the Carpenters leased a pageant house in the Tofts from 1424-25 until 1503 with the Cordwainers and from 1504 until 1626-27 on their own.

<sup>177</sup> There is no indication that the Taverners, Vintners, or other groups whose activities might overlap with the Winedrawers ever contributed to the pageant or performed a task that somehow threatened the professional activities of the Winedrawers (as was the case with the relationship between the Fullers and Shearmen in the records for the *Road to Calvary*).

herte is euere in drede” (39.13) and asks God to “graunte [her] me grace to haue a sight | Of my lorde, or ellis his sande” (39. 20-21). She is greeted by Christ, whose identity at this stage is unknown to her and who asks why she is weeping (39.22-23). She relays the events of his death and his missing body and states that she “wolde loke both ferre and nere | to fynde my lorde” (39.34-35). She asks whether he knows where Christ has been taken, all the while referring to the figure as “goode gardener” (39.42).<sup>178</sup> This reference suggests that the location of the pageant is just outside the tomb though it is the only indication of the setting for the pageant; the mistaken identity of Christ as a gardener does not necessitate the presence of the tomb itself and since the concern of the pageant is for Mary Magdalene to recognize Christ and to tell the disciples about his resurrection it seems unnecessary to show the tomb that the audience has just seen in the previous pageant. It is more likely that Christ is disguised as a gardener rather than that the setting is within a garden.

As in the version of the story from John’s gospel, Mary Magdalene recognizes the figure speaking to her as Christ after he calls her by name (39.61) and she refers to him as “Robony” (39.70) in recognition of his role as a teacher. It is likely that Mary Magdalene would have appeared wearing red in the way that she is often depicted in art and Beadle has argued that the figure of Christ could have been represented as the Man of Sorrows (*The York Plays*, Vol. 2 377). While this could have been the case, Christ’s own speech about his appearance says otherwise:

Be crowne of thorne þat garte me blede,  
 Itt bemenes my dignité.  
 Mi diademe sais, withouten drede,  
 Þat ded schall I neuere be. (39.106-109)

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<sup>178</sup> Mary Magdalene’s mistaken identification of Christ as a gardener is found in John 20:15.



While the crown of thorns is on Christ's head for the duration of the *Crucifixio Christi* (35) pageant and, perhaps, during the *Harrowing of Hell* (37), here Christ is wearing a diadem rather than the crown of thorns in order to show his resurrection from the dead. While his wounds are visible and, Mary Magdalene remarks, still wet (39.80-81), the symbolism of his appearance is no longer of the figure that is dragged from Pilate's *praetorium* to Calvary to be crucified. Instead, the iconography suggests a figure that has completed his suffering and has returned to show his disciples that he has been raised from the dead before his final ascension in the Tailors' pageant. The iconography of Christ in this pageant is one that echoes his return from the dead and, equally, the harrowing of hell. This iconography is also a foreshadowing of his ascension and the taking of his place in heaven in *Doomsday* (47). If anything, Mary Magdalene's mistaking of Christ as a gardener indicates that some sort of change to his appearance takes place before he speaks her name – perhaps he removes a hood that covers his head and the diadem – which results in the revelation. In any case, the setting of the pageant does not seem to add to the performance since Christ's own reference to his appearance and how it has changed from previous pageants is enough to remind the audience of where they are in the story.

What seems clear about this pageant is that the meeting between Christ and Mary Magdalene is significant for the larger *Play* in that the narrative is the first time that Christ speaks on earth following his crucifixion.<sup>179</sup> When he does speak for the first time following the Harrowing, it is to Mary Magdalene alone and she is charged

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<sup>179</sup> A stage direction in the *Resurrection* (38.186+) with an added marginal note by John Clerke suggests that two angels marked the Resurrection on the appearance of the three Marys at the tomb with the Easter antiphon *Christus resurgens* (see *The York Plays*, Vol. 2 369). Woolf states that Christ could have appeared to the Maries and Soldiers at this stage in the tradition of the early Latin plays (Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* 375) though the first time he speaks after the *Harrowing of Hell* (37) appears to have been reserved for his appearance to Mary Magdalene in the Windedrawers' pageant.

with the task of travelling to Galilee to tell the other disciples about the Resurrection, articulating her position as the *apostola apostolorum* (39.142-45). Their current location is not mentioned and as such the focus is on their meeting rather than on their location. Unlike the meeting of Simon of Cyrene with the company escorting Christ to Calvary, the meeting between Mary Magdalene and Christ is not a chance encounter; she is searching for Christ though unlike the narrative in John 20:11-18 it is not clear that the meeting takes place at the tomb. After lamenting his death, Mary Magdalene asks for help to find Christ:

Thou lufsome lede in ilke a lande,  
 As þou schope both day and nyght,  
 Sonne and mone both bright schynand,  
 Pou graunte me grace to haue a sight  
 Of our lorde, or ellis his hande. (39.17-21)

The three Marys from the *Ressurrection* have already visited the tomb and found it empty but, since Mary Magdalene is unaware of the Resurrection at the start of the Winedrawers' pageant, the inclusion of Mary Magdalene as one of the three Marys from the Carpenters' pageant is perhaps substituted for Mary of Bethany.<sup>180</sup> From this passage and Christ's address to her in the following stanza, however, it is apparent that Mary Magdalene has already been to the empty tomb and has begun looking for Christ elsewhere. Christ – appearing as a gardener – asks Mary why she is in “þis waye” (39.22), addressing her weeping and, perhaps, their meeting place. She tells the disguised Christ that she “wolde loke both ferre and nere | To fynde my lorde” (39.34-35) which highlights her eagerness to travel any distance to find him. Her unexpected meeting with Christ and lack of recognition is perhaps due not just

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<sup>180</sup> The Mark is the only gospel that names the three Marys who visit the tomb of Christ: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Salome (Mark 16:1).

to how he initially appears or his clothing; Mary does not expect to see Christ in the space that they both occupy in this pageant and it is perhaps this mis-placement of Christ that is partially responsible for her mis-recognition of him as the gardener rather than the man she seeks. Christ is not in the tomb where she expected to find him and, though she swears that she will search “ferre and nere” (39.34), she meets him in an unexpected locale and this hinders her ability to recognize him.

Mary is concerned with the physical absence of Christ’s body though, interestingly, both characters only relate his body to the physical harm that it received through the crucifixion and buffeting but not to the places where this suffering took place. She is not permitted to touch him even after she sees that his “woundes þai are nowe wette” (39.81) and while this is at his request – he has not yet ascended (39.84-85) – this physical contact is arguably what she is seeking by searching for his body. Aside from the burial in the tomb, the last physical contact that Christ had while he was alive was from the soldiers who were responsible for the crucifixion and although both characters describe the harm that this caused to his body, both are careful to only refer to the cross (39.47,103, 120, 137) and not to the place of the crucifixion. The only place that is mentioned by name is Galilee (39.143) and only in reference to Mary’s journey to the disciples to tell them about the Resurrection and her meeting with Christ. She cannot tell them that she touched Christ to confirm that he was not an apparition; this is something that is reserved for Thomas in the Scriveners’ pageant (41). Mary can only confirm that she saw Christ and his wounds and that he had risen from the dead.

Like the Shearmen’s pageant, the plot of *Christ’s Appearance to Mary Magdalene* is reliant on the narrative flow from the previous pageant and the pageants that follow. Without the pageant of the *Resurrection*, the story of Christ

appearing to Mary Magdalene is not one that can stand on its own very easily; without the trial at Pilate's court and the later pageant of the crucifixion, the meetings between Christ and the other characters in the *Road to Calvary* have little significance. The distinction between 'space' and 'place' in Yi-Fu Tuan's discussion of human geography is noteworthy given the two pageants. Tuan provides a nuanced reading of this distinction by equating space with movement and place with pauses:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan 6)

The locations where both pageants are situated are spaces and not places in the sense that the main characters do not treat the dramatic setting as a place of pause. In the Shearmen's pageant, Christ moves through the crowd as he makes his way to Calvary; although the road to his crucifixion is lined with meetings, his movement through the road prevents the path to Calvary from becoming a place. The road is a vehicle for movement to the site of the crucifixion and, like the meeting point between Christ and Mary Magdalene, is significant because it permits the continued movement to the next pageant. The pauses – or places – before and after the movement – or space – that is a part of the geography of these pageants is precisely what distinguishes the Shearmen and Winedrawers' pageants from the other extant texts in the *Play*. The co-dependent definitions of 'space' and 'place' results in a situation wherein the presence of one relies on the absence of the other and,

moreover, each is defined by the other. Where ‘place’ in the pageants are at play in the performances, ‘space’, too, demands to be present.

The unnamed locations of the dramatic space in these pageants are only a part of situating the pageants in relation to the others in the *Play*. The assertion that “naming is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become place” (Cresswell, *Place* 9) is yet another way of examining how the dramatic space in these pageants differs from the others in the cycle. While these ways of transforming space into place is one of the building blocks of human geography, the lack of extant evidence for the use of a pageant wagon by either group begs the question of how the representation of ‘space’ as an abstract concept can be presented on the stage. The possible use of a pageant wagon in a performance of the *Road to Calvary* and *Christ’s Appearance to Mary Magdalene* would not, in practical terms, permit the players to present a dramatic space that seeks to show the area in between two locales that are highlighted before and after each pageant. The use of a pageant wagon would mean localizing a dramatic space in one position for the duration of the performance in a manner that presents the characteristics of a place: a (named) meaningful locale where social relations take place and that is imbued with a sense of attachment for the characters. Pilate’s *praetorium*, Calvary, or Christ’s tomb do not function as sites in the same way as the spaces in the Shearmen’s and the Winedrawers’ pageants: these places – both as locales and the social relation that they rely on to create meaning – are integral to the action in the pageants. The trial of Christ is situated in a setting that is governed by civic authority and the place of his crucifixion is one that, similarly, is meaningful since it is the last place of his suffering; the tomb, in as far as it is a meaningful place of social relations, is both the final resting place for Christ’s earthly body and the site where the three Marys learn

about his resurrection. These pageants employ wagons to show representations of the places where these actions take place out of necessity: although one could perform the actions of these pageants without a complete representation of these locales on a pageant wagon, the importance of situating the narrative in their setting highlights the significance of the locales for the action of the pageants.

The spaces of the *Road to Calvary* and *Christ's Appearance Before Mary Magdalene* are ones that are defined by the meetings that take place between the characters rather than the associations that these characters have with the site of the meetings. The presence of space by definition relies on the existence of places; the in between spaces that are depicted in these two pageants serves as a way of heightening the importance of the places in the *Play* and this can be accomplished most clearly by a performance without the use of a wagon. The specific "where" of Christ's meeting with the Daughters of Jerusalem or Simon of Cyrene is only important in that it lies between the place of Christ's trial and buffeting and the place of his crucifixion. Where Mary Magdalene meets Christ is important because he is not located in the tomb because of the Resurrection. The space in these pageants is therefore not defined by the attachment of event to the setting but, rather, by the setting as it is defined by the places outside of these pageants and that punctuate the characters' social relations.

## Conclusion

This study has taken as its starting point the contention that the topography, infrastructure, and history of a place play an important role in how the occupants of that place interact with it. The understanding of place is more than the sum of its descriptive features: the material traces that are a part of a place are the result of the “hauntings of past inhabitation” (Cresswell, *Place* 2). These ‘hauntings’ arise from the transformation of space into place which, as has been argued by de Certeau, substitutes the operation of walking, the first step in the experience of a place, in favour of materiality. In de Certeau’s model, this privileging of the trace over the practice that first allowed for this transformation results in the act of forgetting those who first transformed the abstract into the tangible. These hauntings include more than the infrastructure at a fixed location since history and memory – those that are attached to event and place, respectively – are affiliated with one’s relationship to place. The role of memory is very much a part of the study of place since, as numerous scholars and philosophers have shown, memory is dependent on geography. In situating events and people in places, one’s memory can more easily recall these people and events. Inversely, place can be a *lieu de memoire*, storing collective and individual memories for those who engage with the site.

In the same vein, the study of places as centres of memory highlights the significance of the infrastructure that retains these memories and that act as *aide memoire*. Through their design and function, places are instances of wider social processes – who engages with these places and how the site is used is an important part of ‘place’. The parish churches that are a part of a medieval city’s infrastructure are designed for purpose – to be a place of worship for its parishioners – but those who are a part of its congregation also impact how the building is used and its

physical make up. If the church is located in a parish where a number of its congregants are a part of a religious or secular fraternity, for instance, that fraternity might choose to hold their meetings at the church where they might also host special services for the feast day of their patron saint. Furthermore, these members of the fraternity might keep an altar at the church for their patron saint or bequeath devotional paraphernalia such as altar cloths, statues, or glass in the name of the fraternity; these items – though they were not a part of the church’s original foundation – mark the building with references to the fraternity. The building hosts memories and traces of the fraternity of both its individual members and the group as a whole. In medieval York, the wealthier citizens who were often members of the merchant classes and who, upon receiving the freedom of the city, would often become members of York’s civic government and occupied certain places in the city. The result of these social processes – that the wealthiest citizens lived within a stone’s throw of other wealthy citizens – became important for All Saints’, Pavement when it became the place with the highest number of medieval mayors buried within its bounds. The parish church with the second highest number of York’s mayors from the same period was St. Crux, nearby. These two parish churches show, through the material traces, the underlying social processes of the locale that they occupy; their location is only part of the story of their archaeology.

As Cresswell points out, the phenomenological approach to human geography focuses on the notion that being ‘in place’ is what defines human existence (Cresswell, *Place* 51). Though this is not the main focus of this study, what this approach brings to an exploration of site-specific performance is the observation that placement is at the centre of human interaction. This is true for player as for audience in as much as sense of place is as significant as reception of place. The



emotional response to drama – a contrived series of actions that depict narratives and fictive localities from a different time – is as much a part of the devotional act of performing these pageants. These pageants were contrived as a part of the larger devotional culture that included practices of affective piety and, with the performance of Christ's passion on Corpus Christi, the audiences watch a living book play before them and they could participate in these devotional practices through the drama. John McGavin and Greg Walker address the matter of placement (in the sense of geography) as being an important factor in the wider association with a performance: "to put the issue at its simplest and most practical, where one sits or stands, and how one sees and hears a production, profoundly influence what a play means in performance and how one responds to that performance as a thinking, feeling witness" (McGavin and Walker 6). Their argument is to say that the physical engagement with a performance is responsible for how an audience responds to it and, one might add, that this 'sense' of performance (to borrow Cresswell's term) is as much about the players as it is about the places that these performances are located. Whether these are *lieux de memoire*, locales, or, indeed, spaces, the areas of performance are a part of the production and thus play an important role in the audience's reception of drama.

By beginning the study with an overview of York's medieval archaeology and topography, the aim was to show how the urban landscape – with its physical and invisible boundaries – is constructed of important locations and to show some of the wider social processes at play in the time that the pageants were performed. The plethora of parish churches both along the pageant route and in the city at large as well as the religious houses show that the Church's influence in the city was very much visible even to an outsider. These religious houses act as places of worship and

places of meeting, as centres of pastoral care and as enforcers of authority. The guildhalls, too, were very much a part of the social culture that many of York's citizens were involved with as trade and craftspeople; these guildsmen were, conversely, responsible for patronage of some of the hospitals in York. Certain crafts and tradespeople were concentrated in particular areas of the city whether because of convenience (as with the case of crafts that relied on proximity to water) or because of the desire to be nearby to others who were also in the same field. The liberties within the city would allow those who were not a part of the guild structure to work as craftspeople though by this arrangement they would be practicing under the ecclesiastical authorities. The pageant route passed some of the most important places within the city including several of the religious houses, the artisanal centre of the city, the Minster, and Pavement, missing only the castle. These features of the city and pageant route during the period of the performances of the *York Play* show the places and some of the social processes that are at play for the audiences, players, and patrons of the pageants. This infrastructure and its uses are a part of the building blocks that form the sense of place for the participants of the *Play*.

The lengthy focus on the means of performance – the mechanics of moving the pageants through the city on wagons and of the storage of these structures in dedicated buildings – is an attempt to show the influence of not just the city on the design of the wagons but, also, the impact this has on the urban landscape. The wagons were, for some of the groups, an essential part of the performance and their designs could have been as varied as the number of extant texts. These would have had to withstand the demands of the city streets both in size and in their quality while also serving their function as set pieces. The need for storage of these wagons led to the building of several properties around the city, in Toft Green and elsewhere,

whose primary purpose was to contain these structures during the rest of the year. The records of pageant storage also show a portion of the financial commitment that the various groups made to the *Play* as well as evidence that many of the groups worked together to lessen the financial responsibility by sharing storage space. The mechanics of the performance are important to a reading of the *Play* as a site-specific text: how the pageants engaged with the performance spaces was, for many of the groups, dependent on the use of these wagons to present the fictive localities of the dramatic space. The means by which the players engage with the performance space while playing a role on stage is thus central to how the wagons were employed in the *Play*.

The purpose of the cases studies is to synthesize the work of the human geographers with the extant performance records and playtexts in order to show how place affects and is affected by the *York Play*. The first case study on the Tile Thatchers' *Nativity* (14) and the Chandlers' *Shepherds* (15), and the Masons' and Goldsmiths' *Herod and the Magi* (16), shows how some of the groups performed in tandem. In both cases, the groups were responsible for performing pageants with overlapping fictive localities and they worked collaboratively to present a continuous narrative between two concurrent pageants. The purpose of focusing on pageants that were performed in tandem is to show how the shared fictive localities in these texts were necessarily dependent on a cohesive sense of stage geography when it came to the practical issue of employing the performance space. It is well known that York's cycle of pageants was made up of far more trade and craft groups than those in other cities and that its cycle was also made up of a higher number of shorter pageants perhaps to account for the variety of the guilds. Although some of the smaller guilds may have come together to perform one pageant, in this case study the

groups contributed to their own pageant and came together to perform. Even after *Herod* and *The Magi* amalgamated into one pageant in the fifteenth century, it was still copied into the Register as two separate texts to show the different performance groups.

The next case study follows the trial pageants and their performances at the Minster Gates, where members of the Dean and Chapter were sometimes present during the Corpus Christi festivities. This reading of the trial pageants situates the *Play* within the coterminous reality that is visible at this particular performance space in front of the Minster and the centre of ecclesiastical power in the province of York. The trial, at this station, benefits from and fuels the drama that is at play on stage when the high priests are attempting to convince the civic authorities – Pilate and Herod – to charge Christ with a felony so that he will be crucified. What results is an interplay between the fictive localities of Pilate and Herod’s courts (the centres of civic power) against the very real ecclesiastical courts that were run by the clergy and that met at the Minster. The boundaries of authority between the civic and ecclesiastical powers plays out in the biblical pageants and are simultaneously visible at the medieval boundary between the civic space and the Liberty of St. Peter. The pageants in this case study act as *aide memoire* of these boundaries of power while the Minster acts as *lieu de memoire*: the trial is simultaneously the trial of the biblical Christ while also the trial of a contemporary. The collective and individual memories of the audience would associate the struggles of Christ in the pageants with the jurisdictional divide between York’s civic and ecclesiastical authorities.

The final case study takes as its starting point the notion that not all of the trade and craft guilds show records of wagon ownership and that two pageants in particular are better suited to a performance without a pageant wagon: *The Road to*

*Calvary* (34) and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (39). Neither pageant shows evidence of ever having an affiliation with a wagon and, in both cases, the narrative is not suited to the use of a stage or set-pieces beyond the city streets. The fictive localities in both pageants is presented as a space rather than a place; the places that are discussed in the pageants are ones that the characters have come from and are travelling to but they are not situated within a place themselves. The relationship between space and place – that the existence of one necessitates the other – is one that is reciprocal; the *Play*, too, relies on the presence of space between places in the fictive localities in order to heighten the importance of the places in the performance. The place of the crucifixion is Christ's final stopping place before his death and his movement through the space on the road to Calvary is a building towards the event that makes the feast of Corpus Christi possible. In this reading, the emphasis is on how presenting these pageants in the street can harness the performance space as a means of synchronizing it with the fictive locality and without the distraction of a built environment. Additional set-pieces beyond the city of York itself would hinder the narrative that these two pageants are presenting to the audience and as such the distance between fictive locality and the city is repressed if a pageant wagon is used.

In her discussion of site-specific performance, Laura Levin addresses one element of such performances that makes them unique:

the unplanned eruption of the world into the performance frame.

When we attend a site-specific performance, we become all too aware of the world's facticity, its stubborn refusal to adhere to the theatrical illusion. I am reminded of those unrehearsed moments that are

fundamental to site-specific shows, when the ephemera of daily life cannot help but collide with the planned event. (Levin 250)

The places of the *Play* and the places of the city collide during the performances of the pageants on Corpus Christ day and the examples cited in this study show that these places are more than just locations or locales that are backdrops to the productions. The city itself is an essential part of the performance and supplies both the material setting for the *Play* and the experiences contained within itself: the memories that rely on audience reception of the performance in order to be recalled. The city is not a silent vessel for the production and, indeed, the breakdown of the theatrical illusion that results from this participation of the performance spaces is what makes the *York Corpus Christi Play* a site-specific text. Levin argues further that this “atmosphere of disorientation furnishes the conditions that allow the city to speak” (Levin 252). The visibility of the city’s infrastructure is only part of this process; the performance’s engagement with the wider social processes and the memories triggered by the performance work hand in hand to make the particularity of York an integral part of the understanding of how the pageants would have been received by its audiences.

The study of human geography is as much an examination of the material trace as it is an exploration of the ephemeral, of the social interactions and performances that leave no physical trace and of the places that are a part of invisible convergences. Such a fixation with place is at the heart of the relationship between the archaeology of a site and the ephemerality of performance: place, after all, requires both the physical trace and the erasure of experience, as de Certeau argues. Place is more than a quantity of its physical features.

The archaeology can, too, become ephemeral as the ruins of countless monastic houses from the time of the Dissolution have shown: St. Mary's Abbey in York remains little more than a crumbling wall. The preservation of the trace is not always possible and sometimes it is the ephemeral that acts as *aide memoire* to a crumbling site. The modern productions of the *Play* at the site of St. Mary's Abbey have attempted to capitalize on the notion that the presence of medieval ruins as a backdrop to the performance somehow lends credence to the practice of historical reproduction. The implication that a site that in many ways was not a part of the pageants' medieval heritage could somehow be transformed through these performances is a misled attempt to manufacture a fictional history for these performances; in many ways the medieval productions of the pageants in York were a means of imposing the biblical places of the *Play* on the medieval city to arguably achieve the same purpose. What results from these modern productions at places like St. Mary's Abbey and, more recently, the Minster is that the modern performances have imposed themselves on these sites and have created a new chapter in the history of the *Play*. In these settings the pageants operate as museum pieces, showcasing to audiences the hauntings of York's medieval streets, and attempt to recall the memories contained in these places but that have little association with the texts themselves.

Unlike the modern productions, the medieval performances of the pageants grew out of the performance spaces that are a part of their history. The dramatic spaces in the pageants – the fictive localities represented on stage – were informed by and are a part of the archaeology and memories of the performance spaces. The pageants relied on the city as much as the city itself relied on the pageants; the secular authorities that were responsible for ensuring that these pageants were played

in the correct places and in a timely manner are as much responsible for this association between place and performance as the groups who played the pageants. The *York Corpus Christi Play*, with its coterminous realities, acts as a meeting place between its fictive localities and the city.



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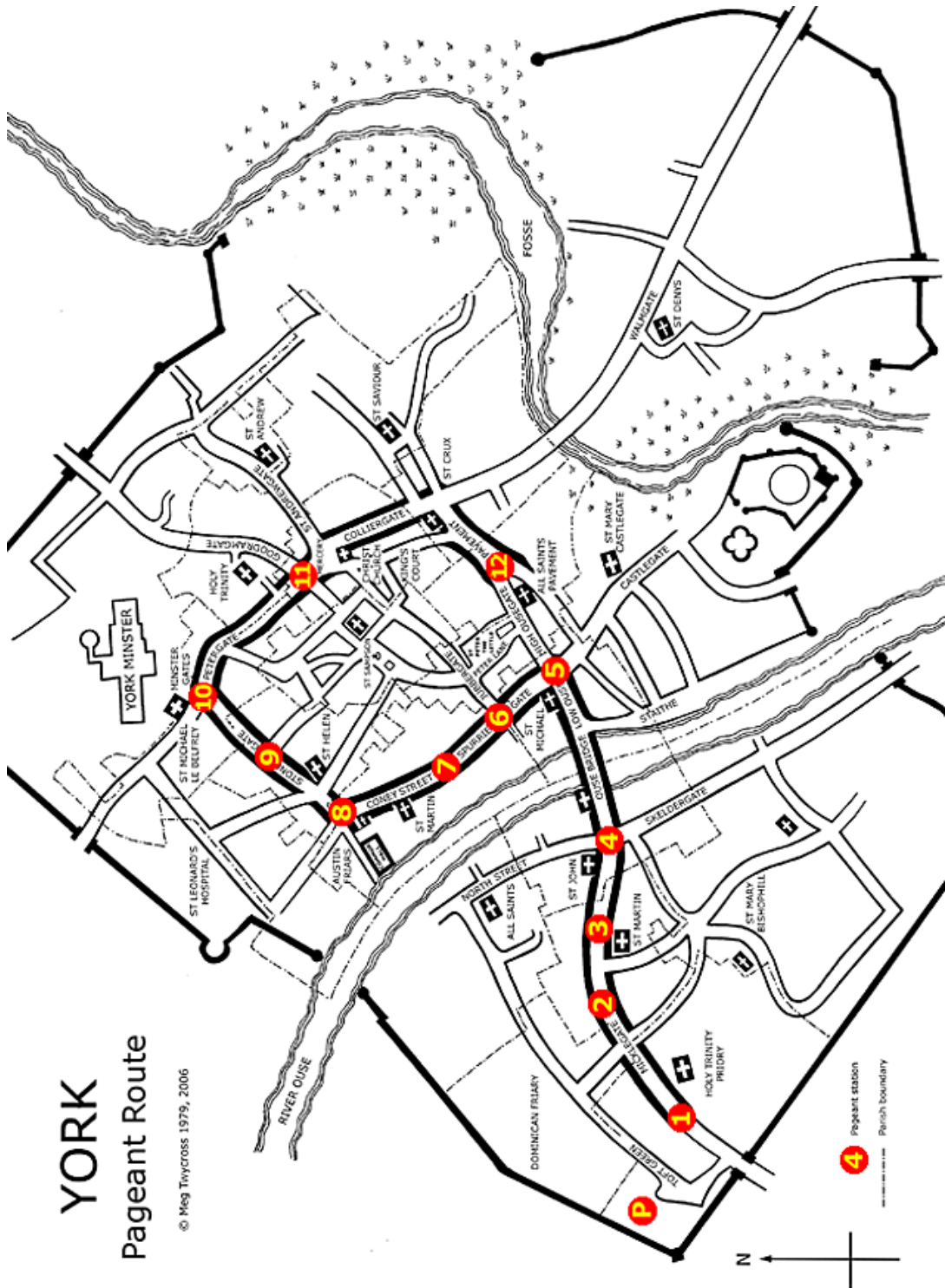
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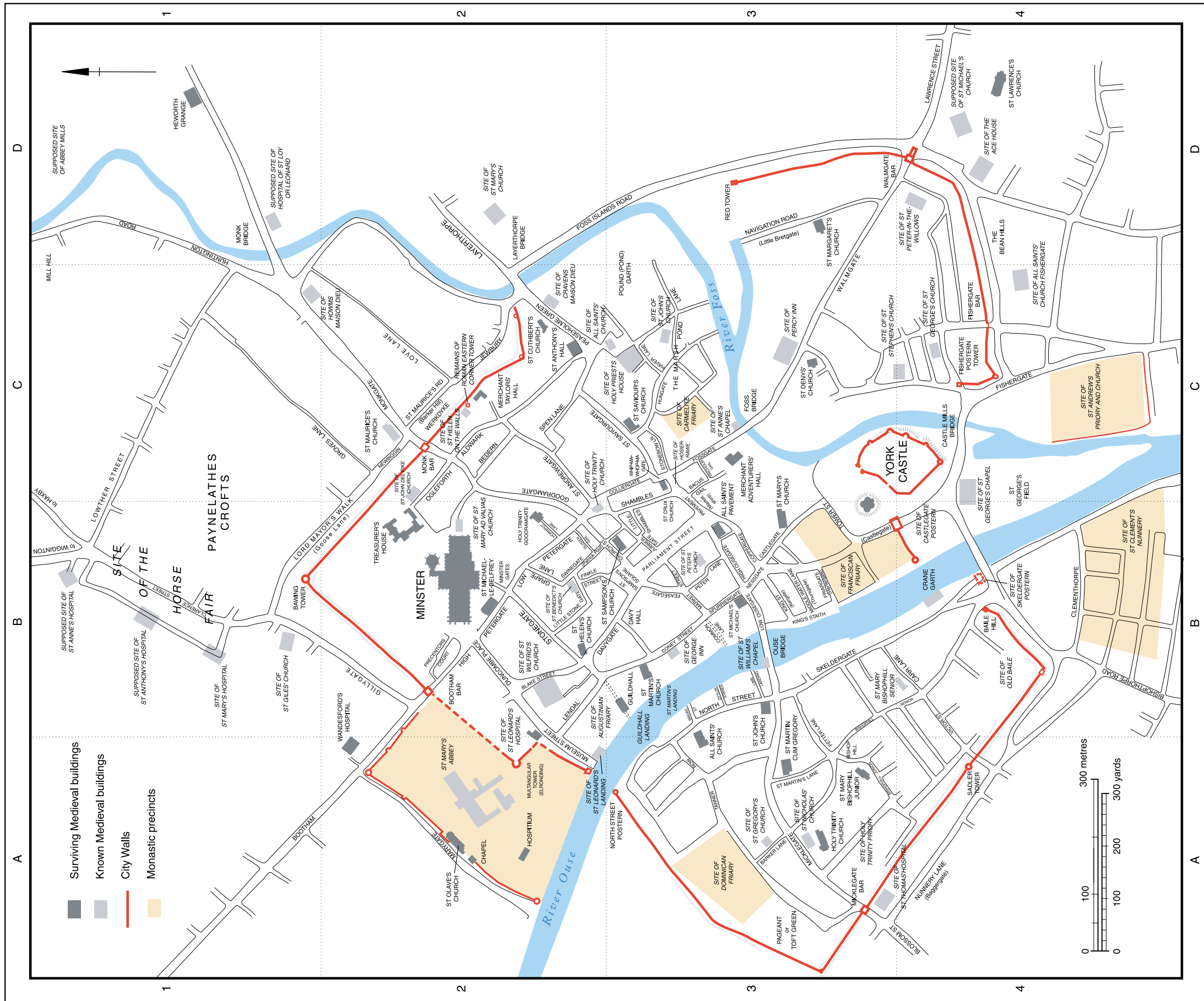
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Appendix A: Maps







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