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STAGING THE YORK CREATION, AND FALL OF LUCIFER

The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer by the York Realist was intended to provide a spectacular opening for the Corpus Christi cycle, of which the city of York felt very proud in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Since the York Realist appears to have been particularly sensitive to the conditions of production, this opening play provides a useful focus for attention to the staging used in the York cycle. The internal evidence of the Realist's Creation, and Fall of Lucifer demonstrates that he was not writing a mere literary exercise, but kept in mind the specifics of stage production.

On the whole, cycle play production at York and elsewhere differed sharply from the production techniques of the liturgical drama. Presentation of the vernacular drama drew upon the trend in late medieval art which stressed the visualizing of iconography and of the particulars of biblical events with the purpose of generating experiences at once pious and emotionally moving. Therefore, if we put aside the older view, now fairly well discredited, that the late medieval vernacular plays evolved gradually out of the liturgical drama, we may recognize the craft or cycle plays as a new form. This form developed rapidly in the fifteenth century and brought to life the biblical story in terms of a new aesthetic, which invites the audience to participate in the illusion of the play.1 Recently certain critics of these plays have revived the idea that they might well have grown out of the tableaux vivants presented as part

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of the Corpus Christi procession—an idea particularly attractive in that it explains the rationale behind the pageant wagons used as stages in some localities. Furthermore, we see the development of plays from *tableaux vivants* as indicative of the historical thrust toward verisimilitude, which has also been documented in the art of the period.3

If the plays are rooted in the *tableaux vivants*, they must therefore be studied in relation to the forms and techniques of the visual arts. External evidence from painted glass, sculpture, wall paintings, and other popular arts becomes the means by which we are able to extend our knowledge of production. Though it is obviously not possible in the twentieth century to experience such a play as *The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer* precisely as it was experienced by an audience in York in the late Middle Ages, we feel that today we can indeed know a great deal about how such a play as this appeared to a contemporary spectator. In other words, we believe that a great deal of the spectacle can be reconstructed. Admittedly, our task leads us at times along the paths of speculation and compels us in some instances to rely on our intuition. Nevertheless, we feel that students of drama ought not be so intimidated by twentieth-century positivism as to preclude some conjectures along the way toward visualizing the impressive spectacle originally presented by the play.

I

The stage of *The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer* was the pageant wagon, a portable acting area that, as noted, apparently originated during the fourteenth century in the *tableaux vivants* of the Corpus Christi procession. We are, to be sure, skeptical of the view that the plays at York were all presented in their entirety upon such wagons at every one of the stations appointed for playing between Holy Trinity Priory and the Pavement. Nor can we accept Margaret Dorrell's time scheme, which depends upon estimates that do not stand scrutiny. For example, she posits a duration of ten minutes for the performance of *The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer*. Our estimate indicates that this play would take at least twelve minutes to perform before an audience of any size out of doors, with one or two minutes added for the singing of the angels, who perform a portion of a polyphonic setting of the *Te Deum* after line 24 and again after line 40.4 Our current thinking therefore tends to favor Martin Stevens' hypothesis of a full-scale performance of the cycle only at the last station, at the Pavement.5 Although in this paper we shall confine ourselves to matters of production independent of the current argument about processional vs. fixed stage, we must insist upon be-
lieving that the pageant wagon was indeed used as the basic scenic unit. We reject Alan Nelson's hypothesis of indoor production.6

The only records describing a pageant wagon at York appear among the documents left by the Mercers, who were responsible for the elaborate Last Judgment play. We may be especially grateful for these records, particularly the recently discovered 1433 indenture which has been made available by Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Dorrell.7 On the basis of this indenture, Johnston and Dorrell are able to provide a useful but not entirely accurate conjectural drawing of the Judgment pageant.8 Naturally, the Mercers, as the most affluent guild in the city, would have had a pageant much more impressive than the Barkers, who were responsible for the first pageant in the cycle. Yet from our knowledge of the Mercers’ pageant and from the available internal evidence in The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer, we can arrive at a fairly accurate description of the Barkers’ pageant wagon.

The Creation play must have available two loca: heaven, with a throne for God raised somewhat above the level of the angels; and hell mouth, which might be mounted apart from the pageant cart but also possibly attached instead at ground level to the front end of the wagon. (See Figure 1.) If the latter were the case, the hell mouth would have opened under the wagon. In any event, a platea of limited size in front of and perhaps at the left side of the wagon would also be essential. Over at least part of the wagon there was certainly a roof or canopy of some sort, and a painted cloth probably closed off the back of the pageant from view—an effect that likely was borrowed from the visual arts, which often show groups of figures against a background of formalized design. Such a cloth, identified as “A grete coster of rede damaske payntid for the bakke syde of pe pagent,”9 was placed across the back of the Mercers’ wagon. The Barkers’ pageant wagon itself would need minimally to be approximately seven by ten feet, or considerably smaller than that suggested by M. James Young in his article on the topic of the York wagons.10

Near the back or rear of the pageant cart is the most logical location for God’s throne, which undoubtedly was somehow enclosed and set off from the rest of the scene, probably by means of a raised platform fitted with conventional pillars and canopy overhead. Since space was an important consideration, the throne would have occupied no more of the stage than absolutely necessary.11 The angels had to have room to move freely both before and behind the throne in this drama. As in the Chester Pagina Prima, the angels should be able to walk about God; God encircled by angels is an important iconographic detail (illustrated in painted glass at Fairford12) that is capable of being adapted to very
Figure 1.
Conjectural drawing of pageant with attached hell mouth in open position. The hell mouth rests on the wagon tongue, and contains a manually operated mechanism for opening and closing. On the side of the wagon is a banner with the arms of the company sponsoring the play. At the back of the wagon is a curtain. The throne for the deity is under the small dome in the canopy.

good effect in the York play.

In the York Creation there must, of course, be movement between the level of heaven and ground level near the mouth of hell. No evidence in the play points to the use of flying machines such as were probably used at Wakefield; instead, Satan’s fall was surely a tumbling downward—a movement which in the N. Town Cycle involves a slide, perhaps utilizing a ramp similar to the one shown in the well-known martyrdom of Apollonia illumination by Jean Fouquet in the Hours of Etienne Chevalier. The hypothetical location of the hell mouth at the front of the wagon with the playing area to the rear and above representing heaven is consistent with such illustrations as the illumination in the Holkham Bible Picture Book, fol. 2'. There, the Creator is seated in the center of the cosmos, while above small figures of angels show themselves either faithful or rebellious, and directly below hell mouth awaits Lucifer and his band. The design of hell mouth is, of course, familiar to all students of medieval drama and art. The York hell mouth, whether attached to
the wagon or on its own separate pageant, surely must have been much like the one represented in the fifteenth-century wall painting of the Harrowing at Pickering, Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{13} For purposes of dramatic effect, it is essential that the jaw should be hinged so that the mouth can open and close. Allardyce Nicoll quotes a stage direction in the Cornish Creation, 1. 243: "Lett hell gape when y\textcircled{e} father nameth yt."\textsuperscript{14} And as at Coventry, smoke must have been issuing forth from the hell mouth during the play presented at York. Here as elsewhere in the work of the York Realist, there was a conscious attempt to present the scene in a manner which would captivate the audience by means of the conscious manipulation of illusion; hence the audience is invited to imagine that it is indeed looking at the entry to hell.

II

From his throne, God must appear as the One from whom all life flows and to which all life returns:

\textit{Ego sum Alpha et Omega vita via Veritas primus et nouissimus.}

The five words which open these lines also appear on the open Book of Creation held by God at the very top of the Great East Window in York Minster.\textsuperscript{15} It is indeed highly likely that the York Realist's God would have held a similar Book of Creation (destined, according to orthodox iconography, to be burned at the Last Judgment) in the early performances. A leather-bound dummy volume could easily have been provided by the Barkers, who were closely associated with the Tanners. A set of open pages could well have displayed at least the letters A and \(\Omega\). But again, the book might also have been closed, as in the marginal illumination in Bodleian MS e. Mus. 36, p. 1, and in British Library MS Egerton 1894, fol. 1r.\textsuperscript{16}

The appearance and costume of God can also be reconstructed with some measure of accuracy on the basis of extant English art, especially painted glass from York itself. He was presented in the best anthropomorphic tradition as a man of grandfatherly age—a tradition which is indeed curious in the light of the medieval theological opinion that often gave the credit for the Creation to the Son rather than the Father. York glass (Figure 2) originally installed in St. Martin-le-Grand, Coney Street, about 1420 (now in imperfect condition and located in the south transept of York Minster) gives the Creator an archaic garment—a mantle, which seems richly embroidered along the edges, held together with some kind of a clasp at his waist.\textsuperscript{17} The golden face, beard, and hair are distinc-
Figure 2.

God the Creator, with compasses. Now in York Minster, but formerly in St. Martin, Coney Street. Photograph: C. Davidson; used with the permission of the Dean and Chapter.

tive, and would have been represented in The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer play by means of a mask and wig such as appear in the Norwich Grocers' inventory of 1565 ("A face & heare for the Father"). As in the properties described in the 1433 Mercers' indenture from York, the mask of God was gilded. Also gilded was the cross-nimbus worn by God in the painted glass originally in St. Martin-le-Grand and in other English illustrations of God as Creator (e.g., British Library MS Egerton 1894, fol. 1').

The famous instrument held by God in the glass originally in St. Martin-le-Grand, in an illumination in the Sherbourne Missal, in the illustration of the Creation in the Holkham Bible Picture Book, and in the Creation panel in the glass in the Great Malvern Priory Church apparently was not used in the York play. The set of compasses, the circumscribing instrument used by the Creator as late as Paradise Lost ("One foot he centred, and the other turn'd/ Round through the vast profundity obscure," VII, 228-29), has no warrant in the text of the York Realist's play. What does seem to be required is that God during his very long
first speech should adopt various appropriate gestures familiar in medieval art, culminating in the extension of his hand in blessing upon the angels below him and upon this terrestrial sphere. Such a gesture is illustrated in the Sherbourne Missal.  

III

The creation of the angels might have been effected in one of two ways. Either the angels were lying out of sight on the platform representing heaven, from which they rose when God created them, or, more likely, they appeared processing up a ramp from behind the wagon (or even through a trap door) when God spoke the words “Nyen ordres of aungels full clere . . . .” (l. 23). This is the point at which the angels do obeisance to the deity and sing the Te Deum, a composition that suggests the identity of the actors who take the roles of angels. Presumably here as elsewhere in the York cycle, at least four or five of those who were destined to remain angels eternally were professional singers and musicians, some of whom were probably associated with the cathedral. Mere Gregorian chant would surely not have been sufficient, for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries firmly believed that their polyphonic music was the music of heaven. And it is highly unlikely that merely vocal music was involved, since in iconography angels appear very often with various instruments such as organs (both portative and positif), rebecs, trumpets, psalteries, etc. We see them playing their instruments in painted glass in the Minster and parish churches at the city and on the hammer beams at All Saints, North Street.

The angels probably group themselves behind the figure of God in the tight ranks common to background figures in the art of the period. The actors with speaking parts would have been arranged on the left and right of God, with the angels who were to fall located on God’s left. The tight grouping not only suggests the close association of God and his angels, but also has the practical function of accommodating ten bodies on a pageant wagon and still allowing Satan elbow room for his later speeches and antics.

Certainly, as in the above analysis, we must assume that at least nine actors portraying angels were present on the pageant stage. The text in the Register has speaking roles for only two orders of angels—in addition, of course, to the evil angels. We note that in the Chester Pagina Prima speaking roles are present for all nine orders called for by tradition, in addition to the evil angels. When the actor playing God in the York Creation, and Fall of Lucifer spoke of the nine orders he had created, more than four or five angels must have been made to appear on
the stage. Assuming that after the fall two or three angels would have been removed from the heavenly choir, six or seven out of the original nine would have remained—a number not much larger, incidentally, than the number of live actors that seem to have participated as angels in the Judgment pageant, in which they were augmented with puppets.24

The presentation of the angels could have been fairly flexible in fifteenth-century York, though here the audience would have been conditioned nevertheless to expect certain elements of costume. Angels were, of course, a very common subject in ecclesiastical art of the period, and furthermore artists also seemed even fond of setting them forth according to their rank in painted glass. Even today representations of the nine orders of angels survive in three windows in parish churches as well as in the tracery of the Great East Window in the Minster. None of the examples of parish church glass follows exactly the description of the angelic orders in, for example, the Golden Legend, 25 but each offers something to our understanding of the iconography of angels as it must have informed the York Creation. In the fragmentary window at All Saints, North Street—a window of which fortunately a valuable drawing was made in the seventeenth century before it was jumbled during a careless re-leading job—we find that the angels had golden wings and feathered bodies.26 In some cases, the bodies were also covered by rich robes or, in the case of the Powers, by armor. The Dominations and Principalities wore crowns. In far better condition today is the glass in the tracery of the St. Martin window in St. Martin-le-Grand, Coney Street. Here we see various orders of angels clothed in different kinds of garments, including tunics, an alb, dalmatics with amices, a cope and amuce, and plate armor.27 But it should be noted that here again some angels, probably the Cherubim and Seraphim who are the highest among the unfallen angels, are made to appear without any outer garments over their bodies. In the glass in St. Michael, Spurriergate, where the identification of the individual orders is more definite than in the St. Martin-le-Grand glass, white or gold wings and white feathered coats appear, along with some standard symbols (e.g., the book associated with the Cherubin [Figure 3] and a set of balances with the Thrones).

The evidence from English dramatic records from Coventry and Norwich is that the players costumed each of their angels in a set of leather stockings, which would not have covered the feet, and a leather coat, upon which gold or white feathers could be fastened and wings attached. M. D. Anderson suggests that stage angels in general may have had much in common with the appearance of the carvings of angels at Beauchamp Chapel, Warwick, where these heavenly creatures are grandly set forth
Figure 3.

Cherubim, from Nine Orders of Angels Window, St. Michael, Spurriergate, York. Photograph: C. Davidson.
with “pointed rays [of light] hang[ing] from their collars” and with “feathered tights with richly jeweled belts and collars.” But it is likely that at York, as at Coventry, liturgical garments and appropriate properties were added. The Coventry Cappers’ accounts list albs and “surplisses” for angels, while the Drapers’ accounts for 1556 list “iiij dyadymes.” There is also no warrant at York for collars from which rays of light extend, though such rays are indeed not inconsistent with the text of the play.

IV

What happened, then, to the bad angels once they had rebelled against the Creator? At the highest point of his proud bragging, Lucifer suddenly cried out—a reaction that might have been motivated by the sudden turning by God and his worshipping angels so that at this point their eyes are fixed upon the renegades. As Lucifer explains, “all goes downe” (l. 92). He is falling. It is as if an invisible force, which, of course, is the real power of God, had taken hold of him and his cohorts. Satan tumbled, followed by the others, onto the platea and into the mouth of hell, which opened to receive them. In the drama, it is not possible that they could have changed from angels into ugly demons before they reached hell, though some evidence from the visual arts would seem to suggest otherwise. In the first Old Testament panel in the Great East Window of York Minster, the change has already taken place in mid-air and Lucifer, apparently accompanied by another falling demon, is pictured as “a horrific red beast with the head of a monkey, the breast of a serpent and the legs of a bird.”

Satan’s fall, the most dramatic and certainly the most kinetic moment in the play, could have been effected by the use of a ramp, a slide, or a trap door, but it is far more likely that the actors working on the pageant stage would have used the most direct and simplest technical methods. An actor gymnast utilizing a carefully executed series of pratfalls, flips, and forward rolls could easily have executed the fall from wagon to hell mouth; hence the action could have overwhelmed an audience without any dependence on machines. As Glynne Wickham indicates, professional English actors were known for their acrobatic dexterity. This type of blocking would also have allowed the actor an opportunity to exploit and emphasize the images of brightness and light vs. darkness and filth which are repeated throughout the text as it appears in the Register. The sight of Satan, the mirror of God, groveling and struggling in the dirt at the spectators’ feet, is the embodiment of the most powerful image in the play. Through all of this, the angelic costumes of Lucifer
and the other bad angels must have been able to sustain such acrobatics. As hell mouth closed behind them, they shouted and made sounds as if pummeling each other. In contrast to the normal harmony of heaven, hell’s cacophony was heard. Whenever the actors possessed adequate musical skill, they would surely have exploited the tritone, the diabolus in musica against which medieval music theorists warned. Smoke issued in abundance from the closed mouth, and finally at least two demons (and more likely three) lurched from hell mouth, which at last had opened again. Some idea of the extent of the transformation which Lucifer and his cohorts have undergone may be derived from the fifteenth-century glass (Figure 4) in one of the lights of the East Window, South Aisle, of St. Michael, Spurriergate. It illustrates, above, the woman clothed with the sun of the Apocalypse and, below, Lucifer fallen but as yet in his feathery costume among fully altered and hairy demons. The chief of demons here seems to answer the description in the Chester banns: “the devill in his fethers, all ragger and rente.” The glass contains the text from Isaiah 14:12, which was believed to describe Lucifer’s fall: “Quomodo cedidisti de cado Lucifer mane orieborus corrusti in terram qui melitbas gentes?” (“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations,” AV.) Obviously, upon arrival within the hell mouth, the actor playing Lucifer must have quickly changed his garment or pulled something over it so that he indeed might appear “all ragger and rente.” When he issued forth, he complained that he was now most loathly who previously had been most beautiful. “My bryghtnes es blakkeste and bio nowe,” he announces (l. 101). The second angel, who has had a slightly longer period of time to effect his change, surely will be even more completely transformed, and will appear in thoroughly typical demonic garb. (There is even a chance that this second demon involved a switch of actors, with the fallen angel merely disappearing beneath the wagon and the demon waiting there ready until the time for his cue.) For dramatic effect, these two were possibly also joined by a third demon, who had no lines but would have added to the spectacle through his shouting and through his thoroughly devilish appearance. This third demon might well have been present even if only two angels had fallen from the wagon which represented heaven.

Evidence for coats and masks for demons at York comes from the records of the Mercers. The 1433 indenture calls for “iij garmentes for iij deuels vj deuelles faces in iij Vesernes,” while the 1526 inventory mentions “ij dewell cottes” and “ij dewelles heddes.” The earlier document proves that the York plays utilized the practice of having two faces per
Lucifer (center) and two other fallen angels. St. Michael, Spurriergate. Photograph: C. Davidson.

demon, with the second attached presumably in a not quite respectable location, as in the figure on the right in the glass from St. Michael, Spurriergate, where both faces are bestial. Similar garments apparently prevailed at Coventry, where in 1477 “the demons Garment” needed mending and in 1498 “the demons hed” required “peynttyng.”35 We learn also from the Coventry records that, like the angels’ coats, the devils’ coats were at least in part made of leather. That hair was not merely painted on is also shown by the Coventry Drapers’ accounts, which specify “heare for the demons cotts & hose.”36 At York another demon with body covered with hair may also serve as a model of demonic costume; this example is the demon who appears standing before St. Martin in the St. Martin window in St. Martin-le-Grand.
From lines 101-02 of the York Creation, and Fall of Lucifer comes evidence that the demons also may have carried clubs or staffs, which they used to beat each other. Both staff and club appear in the Coventry accounts; the demon in the Smiths' pageant apparently used a staff, while the Cappers' devil carried a club made of canvas and painted. The latter, of course, would underline the foolishness or absurdity of the devil's actions. Such emphasis may be detected in the illustration of the fool holding a bauble like a limp club, apparently made of cloth, in an illumination accompanying Psalm 13 (Vulgate) in a manuscript which has been associated directly with York (Bodleian MS Don. d. 85, fol 35v). Instead of inheriting eternal bliss, the fate of the fallen angels is to be beaten and burned.

It seems apparent from the structure of the play that the playwright was dealing with parallels and juxtapositions of characters which could have been easily embodied by the actors. For instance, God's early speech about divine attributes is later paralleled by Satan's speech in which he equates his own glory to the glory of God. In Satan's rant we must see some rapid parodying of God's earlier gestures, postures, and tones. In accord with the account in Isaiah 14, Lucifer, overly impressed with himself as the mirror of God's might, begins in his pride to believe that he is the source of his own brightness. He begins to mimic God's actions, to become a play-actor imitating the true "grunde of all grace" (l. 74). And, as R. W. Hanning has pointed out, Lucifer "not only pretends to be God, but, because his will is now self-instead of God-directed, he believes in his imitation." Hanning thus properly calls our attention to the words of warning spoken to Lucifer by the Dominations in the Chester play: "You have begone a parlous playe" (Pagina Prima, l. 207). Lucifer would need to have moved downstage for his speeches, away from the divine assemblage, to preen himself before the audience and his own followers, who also in their fallen state could not have been able to focus their attention on their leader, but only on themselves. There must have been a strong visual statement in the contrast between the worshipping angels being "fede with pe fode of [God's] fayre face" (l. 76) and the rowdy, self-centered demons and their mock-god in the close proximity necessitated by the pageant wagon.

The text in the Register also provides parallel speeches for the good and evil Seraphin and the good and evil Cherubin. The intent would seem to be a conscious contrast of attitudes and actions. The first Seraphim praises God, admires his creation, and returns his attention to God. His movement would undoubtedly have followed the same pattern—that is, praising, turning away to admire the creation, and returning to praise
God. Lucifer, on the other hand, clearly focused his attention on himself, then on his peers, before returning back again to himself. The good Cherubim praised God, gave thanks for protection from filth and fear, and pledged good behavior. The evil Cherubim admired himself and denied that discomfort could touch him. In each instance, the good angels apparently moved from God to the world and back to God. The evil angels moved away, back to their peers, and again away. In the final speech of praise by the good Seraphim, the angels might even have moved to complete an angelic circle around God, thereby excluding the evil ones at the edge of the stage and hence providing foreboding before Lucifer's fall.

V

The final scene of The Creation, and Fall of Lucifer re-establishes the condition of heavenly harmony, with the good angels showing proper obedience and respect to their Maker through gesture and tone of voice. They again must give thanks to their Maker, surely adopting postures quite close to what may be observed in an important Apocalypse panel in the Great East Window of the Minster where the angels are shown offering their gratitude (Row 6, No. 6). God, who had remained the sedate and somewhat distant figure in the first scene of the play, now actively restored order and offered reassurance in this section. After condemning Lucifer and his cohorts, he focused attention on the earth—i.e., on the audience. At this point, he might have moved downstage to the location earlier occupied by Satan. Such movement, while entirely conjectural, would have been theatrically effective, for it would have placed Him physically closer to the audience—a location which would have made most appropriate his promise to prepare earth for man. He proceeded to bid the angels to give the earth light, at which point they too might have moved toward the audience in attitudes of blessing. God's focus has moved from the audience and to the sky as he has separated day and night in a symbolic demonstration for the earth of his earlier separation of good and evil. "And all his warke lykes me ryght wele" (l. 159). The play ended with a blessing on the cosmos of which the audience was made to feel a vital part.

On the whole, the York Creation, and Fall of Lucifer represents the way in which traditional iconography is brought together with a new movement toward perspective that encouraged the spectator to participate imaginatively in the events depicted. The precision of the language and the interest in particulars, including precise and carefully motivated actions on the part of the characters, helped to provide a new experience
for fifteenth-century spectators, who were expected to look upon the action of the play much as viewers of the same age were encouraged to see the paintings of the Northern artists of the continent.  

Furthermore, in response to those who would follow Émile Mâle, M. D. Anderson, and others in the belief that the artists were in fact drawing, painting, and carving what they had seen in the theaters of the streets, we would like to point out that the theater itself is essentially a more conservative art form than the visual arts. By its nature as a spectacle that depended on stimulating people to respond with pious imagination to the events of the Christian story, the drama of the cycle plays at York and elsewhere derived its basic tableau from scenes that people had seen elsewhere thousands of times before. But at this point the drama took a new departure not possible to the visual arts: through actors who would bring the tableau to life, the plays would breathe new life into the religious images of Christianity. And within a festival setting, such lively plays could only, the city fathers believed, bring honor to God and glory to the noble city of York.  

NOTES


2See especially Martin Stevens, "The York Cycle: From Procession to Play," Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 6 (1972), 37-61; Stanley J. Kahrl, Traditions of Medieval English Drama (London, 1974), pp. 31-52; Alan H. Nelson, The Medieval English Stage (Chicago, 1974), passim. For earlier studies, see Charles Davidson, Studies in the Early Mystery Plays (New Haven, 1892), and Merle Pierson, "The Relation of the Corpus Christi Procession to the Corpus Christi Play in England," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, 18 (1916), 110-60. Our understanding of the origin of the York plays may, however, be modified by the publication of the York records by the University of Toronto Press next year.

3See Erwin Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), I, passim.

4Richard Rastell of the University of Leeds has suggested to us that the portion of the Te Deum utilized in the play might have involved "instant polyphony" achieved through the use of English discant, which could have been easily provided by musicians from the cathedral. Such practice would have cut down the performance time for the angels' music to a minimum—i.e., to approximately one minute for both segments of the Te Deum.  

5Stevens, pp. 52-55.
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6 Nelson, pp. 65-78. Nevertheless, we are very much indebted to Professor Nelson since he has forced us to examine every facet of production with regard to the York plays.


8 Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Dorrell, “The York Mercers and their Pageant of Doomsday, 1433-1526,” Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 6 (1972), 10. The angels should be made to form a moving circle behind Christ the Judge, as in painted glass at Fairford. See Oscar G. Farmer, Fairford Church and Its Stained Glass Windows, 8th ed. (Fairford, 1968), pp. 27-29. The Johnston-Dorrell reconstruction, furthermore, would have been extremely clumsy to move into place from station to station, and also would have been useless as a platform from which to show a tableau vivant: only persons on one side of the street would be able to view it. See also footnote 9, below.

9 Johnston and Dorrell, “The Doomsday Pageant of the York Mercers, 1433,” p. 29. Johnston and Dorrell clearly misread “the bakke syde,” which should indicate the rear of the wagon (see OED, s.v. backside). Having the painted cloth on the rear of the wagon also would give the advantage of providing a thrust stage, rather than the less satisfactory shallow stage posited by Johnston and Dorrell.


11 If the stage were unusually cramped for space, we conjecture that the throne could even be as small as two feet square if the seat of the throne were placed very high and were given the shape of a misericord; hence God though appearing to be seated would actually have been leaning back on a support. This arrangement would also have eliminated the need for more than a nine-inch platform under the throne, and yet God would have appeared to be at a higher level than the angels he had just created.

12 Farmer, pp. 27-29.


20 Gibson, p. 126; James, p. 23. On the cross-nimbus in English art, cf. C. J. P. Cave, Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches (Cambridge, 1948), p. 25: “It is not always possible to distinguish between the Father and the Son. An aged figure with a cross-nimbus may quite well represent the Son. But there are a few cases where it is possible to say that the Father is intended.” According to the tradition established by Hebrews 1:10, the Son was given credit for the Creation of the world. The text of the York Creation supports the practice of art, which normally saw a single God doing the creating of the angels and the world; this God was the Father, though he included some of the iconography of the Son.


22 Sherbourne Missal, Pl. XXIXb.
23 Cave, Roof Bosses, p. 222; An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, III (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1972), 6, Pl. 43. See also Christopher Woodforde, The Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century (London, 1950), pp. 142-43.


26 E. A. Gee, “The Painted Glass of All Saints’ Church, North Street, York,” Archaeologia, 102 (1969), 170-74, Pls. XXXII-XXXV.


28 M. D. Anderson, Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches (Cambridge, Eng., 1963), p. 167, Pl. 18. See also the thorough study of the carved angels at Warwick in Philip B. Chatwin, “The Decoration of the Beauchamp Chapel, Warwick, With Special Reference to the Sculptures,” Archaeologia, 77 (1927), 313-34. The collars which represent rays of light are only utilized at Warwick for the very highest orders, the Cherubin and Seraphin. See Chatwin, Pls. LVIII-LX. On costumes for the angels, see also Rushforth, p. 25.

29 Thomas Sharp, A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry (Coventry, 1825), pp. 55-56, 71. Cave notes that the most common garments worn by angels on roof bosses are the alb and amice; however, the higher orders of angels, which would be represented in resplendent feathers and without a covering garment, are not very often shown on bosses (Roof Bosses, pp. 50-51).


33 Chester Plays, Banns, 1. 122. See also Gibson’s discussion of the glass in St. Michael, Spurrierigate, pp. 202-03.


35 Sharp, p. 31.

36 Sharp, p. 69.

37 Sharp, pp. 56-57.

38 This fifteenth-century manuscript contains illuminations which connect it with the painted glass in All Saints, North Street, York. See Pächt and Alexander, No. 803.

39 R. W. Hanning, “’You have begun a parlous playe’: The Nature and Limits of Dramatic Mimesis as a Theme in Four Middle English ‘Fall of Lucifer’ Cycle Plays,” Comparative Drama. 7 (1973), 29.


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