



The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City (Westfield Medieval Studies)

Pamela M. King

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WINNER of the 2007 David Bevington Prize The York Play is the earliest near-complete English civic mystery cycle. It evolved constantly throughout its long performance history, but the text that was recorded in the York Register shows that it was already a mature and elaborate civic festival by the time it was written down. This study uncovers the Cycle's connection with worship in York, in the sense both of devotional practice and of civic honour, informing a particular period in the cultural history of the city. The pageants in the Register show in their different ways how the community which devised and performed the Cycle regarded the celebration of the great summer feast of Corpus Christi. Moreover the principles of selection that give the Cycle its structure reflect the broader pattern of the liturgical calendar, with its other feasts and fasts. The Cycle bears witness not only to the practices of religious observance in York, but also to the ecclesiastical politics in which the city was caught up from the very beginning of the fifteenth century. PAMELA KING is Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Bristol.

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