

end, so to speak, was the west end, while Simeon's episode took place at the east end in front of the altar. This contrast helped to show up well the opposing interests. The dancing took place in the central aisle where the choir was also placed. The references by the Poet to last year's performance showing the joy of the Shepherds, and to the disputation with the Doctors to come next year suggest that the play was part of a longer enterprise, perhaps a lost cycle. If it was, the stage directions seem to point to a *platea* with distinct areas. For example, one of the directions at the end of the episode in which Herod sets up the murders requires the Knights and Watkyn to walk about the place until Mary and Joseph are conveyed into Egypt (sd at 232). This suggests that in one performance, at least, it was intended that they should remain visible, perhaps to strengthen the threat of what was yet come. Another direction says Mary and Joseph are to go out of the place (280), and they do eventually reach the Temple (428).

The play offers different kinds of dramatic style. The Herod episode is rather grotesque, with comedy in the character of Watkyn, who aspires to become a Knight, and is beaten by the mothers. It may be matched in style with other comic episodes in the extant mystery cycles. The Simeon episode also has analogues in some of them. This part of the play has very little action, and in this performance it was sustained by the music, some of which was liturgical.

The performance worked well, particularly on an emotional level. It was given a particularly gentle atmosphere for the most part, and this helped to modify the horror which may be found in the murders. At the same time it promoted reflection upon some of the puzzles in the manuscript. It looks as though the latter is eclectic. While it records many things which are identifiable as typically late medieval, it may be an accumulation of information from different times or performances. The alternative order of episodes may be part of this. The stage direction *Hic occident pueros* (314), which seems rather superfluous, was added in the margin by a different scribe. Another passage of twenty-five lines spoken by Herod and including Watkyn's first entrance is cancelled in the manuscript (separately numbered after line 80). This effectively removes him until he speaks again at line 133.

The programme note interestingly suggested that the play was written for Candlemas when the Presentation was traditionally commemorated, and the overall effect of this production was distinctly appropriate to such an origin.

*University of Southampton*