aussi des allusions à des événements ambigus, à des lettres disparues, à des situations problématiques ou conjecturales, à des personnages qui autrement seraient demeurés inconnus. Ont été réglés des problèmes de numérotation pour certaines lettres, des problèmes de datation. Surtout, de fréquentes incidences sont mises en lumière, relevant de connaissances théologiques, philosophiques, historiques, artistiques, et bien entendu littéraires.

De cette somme inestimable que constitue la *Correspondance* d'Erasme, le tome VIII est le dernier paru et il nous livre les lettres envoyées ou reçues par Erasme entre le 6 janvier 1529 et le 31 juillet 1530. Donnons ici un bref aperçu de quelques lettres; ce simple échantillon suffira pour permettre d'apprécier le riche éventail de l'univers épistolaire d'Erasme. L'affaire du *Ciceronianus* y est soulevée, où l'humaniste condamne les "singes de Cicéron" ainsi que le paganisme de certains Italiens, alors qu'il défend sa propre conception des "bonnes lettres" (L. 2088). Ailleurs Erasme, préfaçant une édition des œuvres de Sénèque, nous offre un bijou de critique philologique et littéraire (L. 2091). Surviennent des anecdotes plaisantes sur les moines (L. 2126), et un éloge des femmes lettrées (L. 2133) qui ne surprend pas du tout sous la plume de l'humaniste pédagogue et proféministe. Bien entendu on pourra lire un bilan fait par Erasme de ses luttes passées et présentes contre Luther, de la situation troublante qui prévaut en Europe et aussi à Bâle qu'il songe à quitter (L. 2134). Malade, incertain de l'endroit où il irait se réfugier, inquiet et ne proie à une véritable détresse morale, l'humaniste restera fidèle à l'Eglise mêmes s'il est la cible de mille attaques venant de tous azimuts (L. 2136). Une fois réfugié à Fribourg, Erasme nous décrit la situation telle qu'elle évoluait à Bâle, ce qui nous renseigne sur les divisions intestines ayant cours partout dans l'Europe d'alors, et leurs répercussions sur la vie quotidienne (L. 2158). Une longue lettre raconte les circonstances de la condamnation et de la mort de Berquin, brûlé à Paris en place de Grèves comme fauteur d'idées nouvelles (L. 2188). Plus loin, Erasme renouvelle ses critiques contre des abus criants, la dégénérescence des institutions, les indulgences, la musique sacrée, la monachisme (L. 2205). Un ami d'Erasme, et grand juriste de l'époque, lui donne son opinion sur la question qu'il lui avait posée, à savoir la légitimité du divorce d'Henry VIII, roi d'Angleterre (L. 2267). Des renseignements nous sont fournis concernant le siège de Vienne par les Turcs au mois de septembre 1529 (L. 2313), concernant les monnaies de l'époque et la dévaluation générale qui sévit (L. 2352), concernant les positions respectives des partis à la Diète d'Augsbourg (L. 2355). Ainsi la *Correspondance* d'Erasme offre-t-elle un miroir où se reflètent distinctement pour nous toute une époque et tout un monde en ébullition.

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Records of Early English Drama: York. Volume 1: Introduction, The Records. Volume 2: Appendices, Translations, End-notes, Glossaries, Indexes. Edited by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979. Pp. xlix, 965 (volumes continuously paginated). \$69.96.

The inauguration of one of the most important publishing ventures in English literary history for many years is bound to be a notable event. During the last

decade and with ever increasing intensity, advance news of the progress of the exceptionally ambitious *Records of Early English Drama* (R.E.E.D.) series has been raising high hopes among a wide circle of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. How gratifying to be able to report at once that on the evidence of these first two volumes (hereafter cited as *York 1* and *York 2*) those hopes have now proved to be entirely fulfilled. On the face of it no editorial partnership would have seemed better qualified for so important a task than that of Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (née Dorrell), both already celebrated for the attention they have devoted to the unpublished records of the York drama and for their elucidation of many of its complex issues. The enthusiasm and scholarship with which they have now conducted this much more demanding enterprise absolutely justifies the confidence placed in them by their distinguished executive committee, by the Canada Council and by the University of Toronto Press. Nor could a series of volumes devoted to the publication of the records of the early English drama be more appropriately introduced than by an edition of the relevant primary sources for the city of York. Here, if anywhere in the country, there was an ideal opportunity to convince the sceptic that it might be possible "to locate, transcribe and publish systematically all surviving external evidence of dramatic, ceremonial and minstrel activity before 1642." Perfection in such a cause is no doubt never absolutely attainable; but that such an aim was within the bounds of practical possibility has indeed now been demonstrated. The writing of the history of the late medieval and early modern drama in York, and accordingly in England, will never be quite the same again.

In many ways these two volumes are best interpreted as the culmination of a tradition of antiquarian and literary scholarship which is well over a century old. Interest in the plays, and especially the Corpus Christi plays, of the city is almost as ancient as an interest in the history of York itself. In his massive *Eboracum; or the History and Antiquities of the City of York* of as long ago as 1736, Francis Drake published a translation of the famous "*Ordo Paginarum Ludi Corporis Christi*" compiled by the city's common clerk, Roger Burton, in 1415; and, naturally enough, the so-called "*ordo* gathering" in its present state of preservation within York City Memorandum Book A/Y now appears on pp. 16-26 of *York 1*. However the single most important predecessor of Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson was undoubtedly the nineteenth-century York town clerk, Robert Davies, whose fifty-page appendix on "The Celebration of the Corpus Christi Festival in York" appended to his *Extracts from the Municipal Records of York* (1843) can now be seen as the acorn from which has grown R.E.E.D.'s enormous oak tree. Davies' extensive knowledge of the York civic archives as they existed in the early nineteenth century enabled him to make what still seem among the most important discoveries in the field. His discoveries, supplemented by other references collected by Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith when she was preparing her *editio princeps* of the York Corpus Christi play text (1885), formed the essential basis for all the many interpretations of the York plays until quite recent years. Less trustworthy have been some of the contributions made to the history of the medieval plays by several twentieth-century York editors; and, to take a notoriously influential example, it is to Alexandra Johnston's critical eye (and the use of ultra-violet light) that we now know how

mistaken Miss Maud Sellers was in believing that the mercers' guild had any responsibility for mounting the Paternoster play as opposed to their own Doomsday pageant within the Corpus Christi cycle (*York* 1, 61; II, 871; cf. A.F. Johnston, "The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York: the Creed Play and the Paternoster Play," *Speculum* 50 (1975), 70). Much more recently, the extensive use made of unpublished York civic records, and especially of the chamberlains' accounts, by Professor Alan Nelson and others has been in danger of generating a good deal more heat than light on many critical issues relating to the staging of the Corpus Christi plays within the city. The time was certainly ripe for a more systematic presentation of both the published as well as unpublished evidence available on such and other matters; and perhaps the greatest tribute one can pay to these volumes is that they will still be in constant use by scholars long after the current controversies about the nature of the Corpus Christi plays at different periods of time have been forgotten and replaced by new ones.

How far, to ask what must clearly be the first question raised by the volumes, does this collection of excerpts fulfil *R.E.E.D.*'s self-imposed objective of printing all surviving documentary material relating to dramatic, ceremonial and minstrel activity? No objective is more difficult to attain than comprehensiveness; but Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson do indeed deserve congratulations on the thoroughness with which they have cast their nets very widely indeed. Of the three categories of public activity mentioned, ceremony clearly produces the greatest problems of definition as well as of evidence. In this sphere *York I* has done future historians of York a great service by printing a fascinating series of accounts of royal visits to the city from 1448 onwards; but it could be argued that some incidental information relating to the internal ceremonial events of the civic year, like the riding of the bounds of the city and the chamberlains' expenses on cleaning the mayor's swords, has had to be omitted. Much more complete is the evidence collected here for entertainment in York by the city's own as well as visiting minstrels; although the many references to minstrelsy in *York I* usually raise more problems than they solve, they are in many ways the single most remarkable revelation of this edition. Inevitably enough, however, it is the evidence relating to dramatic productions which will attract the attention of most readers of these two volumes. In this field it can be said that with a very few and understandable exceptions – like the great series of York archiepiscopal probate registers which are always capable of providing the novel and unexpected insight – all the appropriate sources for the history of the York drama have been very carefully investigated indeed. Future scholars are unlikely to discover more than the very occasional omission, like an unimportant additional reference to the £10 fine levied on the cordwainers "for noun bering of ther torches" in the 1490 Corpus Christi procession (*York City House Book*, B7, fo. 11). Of slightly more significance is the failure of *York I* to include the entry, "*Et solverunt hominibus portantibus torcheas in processione Corporis Christi ij s.*," in a mercers' account roll of 1472-3; although such expenditure is a regular feature of surviving fifteenth-century mercers' account rolls, the wording here is of some special interest because within four years (in 1476-7) there was to be the first unambiguous reference in these accounts to the carrying of torches "in *Crastino Corporis christi*" (*The York Merchants and Merchant Adventures, 1356-1917*, ed. M. Sellers, Surtees Society, cxxix (1918), 70; cf. *York I*, 103, 111).

However omissions of this type are few and far between; and they must certainly not be allowed to detract from the achievement of this edition in extracting a remarkable number of new documentary references from the York sources. Indeed one of the incidental but not unimportant reasons why these two volumes will be so valuable to future scholars is that they provide the best introduction available in print to the archives of the city and guilds of York. Despite their many deficiencies, and the many tedious repetitions correctly acknowledged by the editors, the surviving records of the late medieval and Tudor city also prove sufficiently informative to support an enterprise of these impressive dimensions. With the possible exception of the great Freeman's Register, whose several references to the names of minstrels admitted to the city's franchise are not collected here, pride of place amongst the archives of York must certainly go to its two earliest Memorandum Books (A/Y and B/Y, originally compiled from 1377 and 1371 respectively) and the long series of much more detailed House Books which begin to survive from 1476. Excerpts from these volumes form the single largest and historically most important constituent of *York I*, as will be no surprise to those who have long used the existing editions of these fundamental texts. What some readers will find a little surprising is the editors' decision not to indicate, even in the end-notes, which documents have been printed before; this is an omission which makes it a little more difficult than it need have been for a student to place a particular excerpt published in *York I* within the context of the original source. On the other hand the aim of re-transcribing and printing *in extenso* even those sources which have already been published turns out to be fully justified on grounds of scholarship as well as of *R.E.E.D.* policy. Although the Surtees Society editions of the Memorandum Books by Maud Sellers and Joyce Percy survive the comparison with the new and much more exact textual readings comparatively well, the same alas cannot be said of the late Angelo Raine's over-selective edition of the civic House Books (to 1588 only) for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Record Series. Of perhaps even greater interest, in view of the use made of them by recent contributors to the York Corpus Christi debate, are the many extracts, often printed here for the first time, from the official civic accounts, namely the chamberlains' annual account rolls, their paper books and the subsidiary series of bridgemasters' accounts. It is one of the minor curiosities of this edition that it is not made clear, either in the text or the introduction, that there are two series of York bridgemasters' accounts, those for Ouse and those for Foss Bridge. In fact all the extracts printed here are derived from the Ouse Bridge accounts and comprise a monotonous series of rent payments, usually of 1s.0d *per annum*, from eight or nine York mysteries for the leasing of pageant houses on Toft Green throughout two centuries after their first appearance in 1424-5. Much more exciting, and much more controversial, are the many cryptic references to the plays of Corpus Christi as well as to the city waits and visiting minstrels in the erratic sequence of chamberlains' account rolls and books. Although already summarised in Dr. Alexandra Johnston's review of Professor Alan Nelson's *The Medieval English Stage* and recently discussed in considerable detail by Miss Meg Twycross (A.F. Johnston, "The Medieval English Stage," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 44 (1975), 238-48; M. Twycross, " 'Places to hear the play': pageant stations at York, 1398-1592,"

R.E.E.D. Newsletter, 1978:1, 10-30), the all-important chamberlains' receipts "*pro luis Corporis Christi in certis locis habendis*" from 1454 onwards are at last available in a definitive version.

The official archives of the city corporation are well complemented by a wide variety of excerpts from the records of the York guilds. Appropriately enough, the most important survivals are those of the mercers' (later Merchant Adventurers') company, whose Doomsday pageant concluded the Corpus Christi cycle. Here again the editors are able to demonstrate the serious inadequacies of Miss Sellers's Surtees Society edition of various mercers' records published in 1918. The task of presenting extracts from the highly important series of mercers' account rolls as well as the texts of several miscellaneous pageant documents (including of course the now famous 1433 indenture inventorising the stage properties of the mercers' pageant) has involved a number of intricate dating problems, all most satisfactorily solved by the editors. Because they date from the late sixteenth century onwards, the miscellaneous documents of the York bakers, cordwainers, bricklayers, carpenters and weavers are of less inherent interest; but they nevertheless throw a vivid light on feasting activities on the part of the lesser York crafts and provide an excellent example of the way in which these *R.E.E.D.* volumes have blazed important trails for future historians of Tudor and Stuart York. Thanks to Robert Skaife's nineteenth-century edition of the register of the York Corpus Christi guild, the important role played by that prestigious religious fraternity in the pre-Reformation city is already well known; but the accounts and inventories published here add very greatly to our understanding of the fraternity as well as its connection with the Creed Play and the Corpus Christi procession. Despite two exceptionally interesting references to the watching of plays from a room '*supra portas clausi*' in the York Minster chamberlains' accounts of 1483 and 1484, the archives of York cathedral have a good deal less to contribute to the history of drama and entertainment in the city than one might have expected. Even more disappointing are the churchwardens' account of sixteenth-century York: few in number and all post-Reformation in date, except for those of St. Michael Spurriergate, they suggest that parish life within the city was singularly lacking in the folk plays, church ales and other informal entertainments so familiar in southern England during the Tudor period. At York the riding of St. George, first recorded by that name in 1546-7, was clearly directed and organized by the civic authorities and apparently provided little scope for spontaneous popular merriment. In over six hundred pages of text printed in *York I*, there is only one reference to the May (in 1554; p. 318) and none at all to Robin Hood.

When faced with such a mass of heterogeneous material, the decision to present the documents in chronological order seems to be entirely justifiable. Admittedly the lack of editorial numbers or descriptive headings to each extract slightly impedes ease of reference to particular entries; and in a generally immaculate text perhaps slightly more space could have been left between each document. However the editorial procedures are entirely and remarkably successful in conveying the appearance and lay-out of the manuscript originals. By any standards this is a punctilious edition in which the number of slips and errors has been reduced to a very respectable minimum. Positive mistranscriptions

seem very rare indeed and slightly more problems are raised by the conjectural extension of Latin case-endings. Among a few examples are "fructum" (65/1/2) *recte* "fructuum"; "Harralds" (74/25) *recte* "Harraldi"; "Iohanno" (84/40) *recte* "Iohanne"; "magistrum" (85/7) *recte* "manus"; "vigilia" (85/34) *recte* "vigiliam"; "Textorum" (179/40, 41) *recte* "Textor." Similarly in the chamberlains' account for 1454-5 (85/17) it was no doubt the tenants (*tenentibus*) rather than the tenement (*tenemento*) of William Gascoigne who paid rent for the eighth Corpus Christi station; the annual rewards to the three city minstrels in 1468 (101/33) total not 40s. 8d. but 11s. 8d.; and in the same year it was presumably in the chapter house of the Minster ("Capitulo" not "Capillo" at 102/8) that an Augustinian friar preached a sermon on the day after Corpus Christi. Such minor variations are hardly likely to mislead at all seriously; and the transcription of personal and place-names, potentially a much more hazardous matter, is of a very high standard indeed, even if it might be worth pointing out in passing that the correct spellings of Gyllington, Stalby and Nicholas Caton (on pp. 54/40, 93/36, and 180/29 respectively) should probably be Grillyngton, Scalby and William Caton. Equally reliable are the translations of all Latin and Anglo-Norman texts which constitute no less than 180 pages of *York 2*. Admittedly "quod absit" (5/26) should certainly not be translated as "because he was away"; "comitibus" and "prebendarii" (121/28; 133/19) should be rendered as "earls" and "prebendaries" rather than "counts" and "prebends"; and "aside from the attending magistrates" is an unhappy translation of an original phrase which should probably read "super *Maiorem* (not *Magistros*) *attendentes*" (187/37). Nor is the "tabula" hanging in the Minster and maintained by the Pater Noster guild in 1388-9 (646/29) very likely to have been a "drawing." The context of the tortuous Latin passage concerning Edward IV's visit to Yorkshire and York in September 1478 makes it clear that it was the magnates and not the king who "had come from the north towards Pontefract" (120/18). Many other, and more serious, problems are satisfactorily clarified by the three excellent glossaries which conclude, apart from two equally comprehensive indexes, *York 2*. No York texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have ever been printed so meticulously as those in this edition; and the value of this collection for future students of the transition from Latin to the vernacular (1535 in the case of the chamberlains' accounts) and for linguistic developments in the north of England is positively immense.

In the case of a documentary collection whose editors declare that "no attempt has been made to interpret the documents," even a long review can only raise a few of the many issues on which these two volumes will henceforward be essential reading. On the most important problem of all, the precise origins and early nature of the Corpus Christi play cycle, it has alas to be admitted that the evidence remains as intriguingly and vexatiously obscure as ever. Between the first recorded mention of a Corpus Christi pageant-house in 1376 and the ordinance *ludi Corporis Christi* of 1399, the references are just sufficiently precise to suggest that the pageants already made their annual progress through the streets of York and that the administration of the plays, whatever their form, was already closely supervised by the mayor and council. The collection of extracts from craft ordinances assembled in *York 1* and *2* is of particular value in reveal-

ing that from the late fourteenth century onwards compulsory contributions from individual craftsmen "to sustain and maintain the pageant" were very common indeed, a testimony not only to the cost of the plays but also to the civic *dirigisme* which informed the whole enterprise from its first recorded appearance. Indeed in the light of the frequency with which negligence in collecting pageant money was to be penalised by an amercement payable to the city chamber, it is perhaps a little curious that such fines are never explicitly mentioned in the later chamberlains' accounts themselves. How far the famous but often laconic references to the Corpus Christi procession and plays in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries may conceal a positive transformation of the play texts and their staging remains a much more formidable problem; and it would be idle to pretend that these two volumes have foreclosed on the possibility of such speculative theories as those recently put forward by Professors Martin Stevens and Alan Nelson. Nevertheless the case for revising the traditional hypothesis of a "true-processional" playing of the Corpus Christi cycle receives no positive support from the documents here. Some years have passed since Professor Stevens admitted, in respect of his own thesis, that "the civic records do not, as such, substantiate the existence of a larger, stationary, performance on the Pavement (M. Stevens, "The York Cycle: From Procession to Play," *Leeds Studies in English*, new series, 6 (1972), 53); and whatever the reasons for this (almost always) last of the stations on the processional route being so difficult to lease, this argument *ex silentio* now seems overwhelming. Nor does Professor Nelson's even more ingenious theory of an indoor performance of the Corpus Christi play before the mayor and councillors in the Chamber at Common Hall Gates now seem to be based on more than an over precise interpretation of the phrase "*videntes et intendentes ludum in hospico*" on its first (1478) and later variant appearances in the chamberlains' accounts. The inherent implausibility of an immensely long procession of players giving a private production to a civic party before it reached the end of its route has perhaps not been sufficiently emphasised hitherto.

Similarly the references in *York I* to the torches and procession of Corpus Christi tend to confirm the now popular although still not absolutely certain view that it was only in or shortly before 1476 that the latter began to be held on the day after the performances of the plays on Corpus Christi day itself. More certainly, the documents printed here fully support Alexandra Johnston's recent study of the evolution of the Creed and Paternoster plays during the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the dissolution of the religious guilds in 1547, control over both these plays passed into the hands of the civic corporation; and it is for this reason that the York records give the misleading impression that they were produced more frequently after the Reformation than before it. Despite the mass of documentation available, the fact is that the surviving records clearly under-represent the manifold dramatic activities of the late medieval city. Only from bequests of play books in the wills of William Revetour (1446) and Robert Lasingby (1455) do we learn of the *ludi* of St James the Apostle and of St Denys; and it is still as hard as ever to know what to make of solitary references to plays of sloth (*accidie*) and of the vineyard in 1399 and 1442 respectively. By contrast the documents printed in *York I* made it possible

to follow the fascinating story of the decline and final extinction of the medieval plays of York in greater detail than ever before. A controversial performance of the Paternoster play in June 1572 proved to be the very last of all productions of religious drama in the city, a performance at which one of the two aldermen who refused to participate in the enterprise was Christopher Harbert, shortly to become the first York Mayor to take action on Sabbatarianism. To the existing obstructionist pressure of Archbishop Grindal, Dean Hutton and other churchmen was now being added the first display of militant protestantism on the part of members of the civic élite. In other words the evidence collected here is absolutely consistent with Dr. David Palliser's recent suggestion that it was in the late 1570s that medieval survivalism yielded to religious conformity within the city. By February 1580, when the commons of York make their last recorded request "that Corpus christi play might be played this yere," the battle had been lost for ever.

In the years between 1580 and 1642, to which indeed a third of the documents in *York I* are devoted, it was the annual Midsummer "shewe of Armour" which partly replaced the Corpus Christi and other plays as the mayor and council's main ceremonial means of exercising social and political control over their urban subjects. As the citizens, after the preliminary inspection of their armour on the Knavesmire, marched through the streets of York to the sound of fife and drum, one can perhaps detect the final if much transformed survival of the old medieval processional ideal. But when responsibility for the Midsummer Show passed to the Council of the North in 1606 (and the event is accordingly no longer documented in *York I*), it is hard to resist the conclusion that the mayor and aldermen's determination to organise spectacle and pageantry within the city had at last been abandoned. Lavish feasting, accompanied by much minstrelsy, was by now of course a thoroughly well-documented feature of the social life of York craft guilds; and there is abundant evidence too of the popularity of visits by the professional companies of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. But the civic corporation, once the most important instigator of dramatic productions within York, had by this time become their greatest enemy. The House Books of the early seventeenth century reflect an unwillingness on the part of the mayor and aldermen to see plays performed at York at all; and they certainly put paid to the interesting prospect that in 1609 Richard Middleton and his partners might create York's first private "theater or playhowse." By that date York shows every sign of having become, in the pejorative sense of the word, a very provincial town indeed. The last pages of *York I* can make positively melancholy reading as they record the gradual pulling down of the old pageant houses and even (in 1616) the fact that "diverse of the Ainstymen do lye manyre and dung upon pagiant grene which never was heretofore permitted."

Accordingly if these two impressive volumes have any one general historical message to impart it is probably the gradual abandonment by the mayor and aldermen of any serious attempt to impose the claims of a corporate community on what became a much more pluralistic society as it developed from the late fourteenth to the early fifteenth century. To that broad generalisation there are nevertheless two highly interesting exceptions. Throughout the many chrono-

logical vicissitudes of the period between the 1390s and the 1640s, the continuously prominent role of the city's own three (four after 1566) waits or minstrels is especially notable. Whether or not, as the records seem to indicate, the professional standards of their musicianship improved considerably in the Tudor period, these two volumes prove to be a major source for the history of English music as well as of drama. Revealing in quite a different way are the detailed accounts of visits to the northern city by kings and members of the royal family. Throughout the period it was no doubt always true, as James I was alleged to have said when visiting York in 1603, that "the people are desirous to see a King"; and the citizens of York certainly never let slip these opportunities of cultivating the good will of a ruling sovereign from Richard II to Charles I. In particular the elaborate "shew" organised for Henry VII's entry into York in 1486 deserves to stand as a *locus classicus* of late medieval English urban pageantry quite apart from its incidental interest in incorporating the first known use of the Tudor Rose motif. After a long interval following Henry VIII's only progress to the north in 1541, visits by reigning English monarchs to York resumed in 1603 and reached a crescendo when Charles I increasingly used the city as his political headquarters in the early 1640s. As in the late fifteenth century, a royal visit provided the mayor and council with a good chance to engage in an exercise of national public relations. Their decision to send their own "cotype of the king's entertainment" of 1633 to "Mr Howes the Chronicler of London to be putt in print" also helps to explain why Edmund Howes's printed account of James I's visit to York twenty years earlier contains more interesting detail than the extracts from *The True Narration* printed in *York I*, 514-15. The speeches of welcome addressed to visiting kings of the early seventeenth century also testify to an increasing self-consciousness about the history of York itself. Tributes to York's past as an imperial city and to an antiquity "not inferiour to any other of this Realme" led to the climax of the Recorder's speech of 1639 with its learned references to York as the birthplace of Constantine and the site of Egbert's (*sic*) library. It is no surprise perhaps that the eloquent Recorder on that occasion was none other than Sir Thomas Widdrington, later to be the very first historian of York. By 1639 of course the once famous medieval plays of the city had joined those many other episodes in the history of York whose "very ashes . . . are not to be found." For discovering quite how much documentary evidence of York drama and minstrelsy does still survive and for presenting it so thoroughly and carefully future generations will long be beholden to the two editors of these admirable volumes.

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Various Authors. *Il Rinascimento. Interpretazioni e problemi*. Bari: Laterza, 1979. Pp. 398.

In celebration of Eugenio Garin's seventieth birthday, nine eminent scholars have been requested to contribute papers dealing with specific problems relating to humanism and the Renaissance. The result is a magnificent collection of essays which convey some of those scholars' most significant insights into the