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Civic Historical Imagery and the Construction of Identity in York, c. 1486-c.1603

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Abstract

Civic Historical Imagery and the Construction of Identity in York, c. 1486-c.1603

Jason McLinton

The author examines the effect that the English Reformation had on the civic historical imagery of York. This imagery was the outward physical manifestation of collective memory. The changes which the Reformation affected to civic drama, processions, regalia and record-keeping, to name but a few, are considered at length. For the elite of a great many English urban communities, the break with Rome meant a break with politically-useful Catholic traditions, traditions which were geared to instil civic order and deference. Many of them responded by creating a new civic and secular imagery, but York already had strong civic and secular traditions by the time of the split with Rome in 1534. Though a shift in emphasis had certainly occurred from the religious to the secular, York's historical imagery remained remarkably similar throughout the sixteenth century.

TO GREAT GRANDMOTHER HAMILTON

whose photographs and stories
first inspired me
to pursue the art of history

Acknowledgements

Over the course of the last few years, my pen has spent countless hours scratching marks onto paper in the serenity of libraries and archives where tall stacks of dusty volumes lie on even dustier shelves. My mind and spirit, however, have wandered Athena's resplendent gardens, pausing every so often to relish the fruit, appreciate a vista or feel the warmth of the sun as the mellifluous dancing of the Heliconian Muses could be heard in the distance. I take great pleasure in strolling here, pursuing thoughts and ideas, oftentimes so carelessly as to lose my bearings. It is with great honour that I offer my thanks to Robert Tittler for having volunteered to be my guide, always helping me to keep my interests and pursuits in focus. I am very much indebted to Shannon McSheffrey as well, who has been a true source of inspiration and encouragement since my first undergraduate class in European history in the fall of 1993. I must also thank them, as well as Concordia University's Department of History, for their financial assistance over the past two years, without which this project would not have been possible.

Many others have been of help to me in perhaps less formal but no less important ways. I would like to thank Karen, Leonard, Tania and Thelma McLinton and all other family members for their pecuniary, emotional and spiritual support. It is with the deepest respect that I offer gratitude for the love and guidance given to me by my parents Ward and Noëlla.

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How does one offer thanks for inspiration? Perhaps simply by acknowledging that Claude Bernard, Tony Emond, Eric H.B. MacDonald and Souren Tchakmakian have assiduously challenged and strengthened my ideas over the years. I would also like to thank my brother by choice as well as by birth, Philip. He has already proven himself to be a bright young scholar, and I would like to offer him my continuing encouragement. *Alii studio pecuniae atque laudis trahuntur; nos debemus amore veritatis sapentiaeque trahi.*

Perhaps only Plato's Aristophanes could understand the bond that I share with Cynthia Desnoyers. Her love and patience have been of more help than I could ever transcribe.

Jason McLinton
Montreal, 1999

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Abbreviations

REED: York	Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, Eds. *Records of Early English Drama : York.* 2 vols. (Castlegate: University of Toronto Press, 1979.)
VCH: York	P.M. Tillot, Ed. *Victoria County History: A History of Yorkshire: The City of York.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.)
YCR	Angelo Raine, Ed. *York Civic Records.* 13 Vols. Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, 1939-1953; Sutton, Deborah. *York Civic Records: Volume IX.* (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1978.)

I
Introduction

The sheriffs of York, accompanied by two aldermen, were charged by the City to meet King Henry VII a few miles outside of town in April, 1486. They had been sent to escort him back to town and "ber ther white Roddes Afor his grace."[1] They did so, and when the party came within two miles of the City, they were greeted by "the Maier and Aldermen cled in long gownys of skarlet and other of the Couneseil."[2]

The records at York Minster make mention of the religious orders that were involved in the welcoming procession:

> And half A myle withoute the gate of that Citie The precessions of al the orders of freres Receyued the king And after theym the priour of the Trinities with his Brether Thabbot of Seint mary abbey with his Covent The Chanoignes of Seint leonardes & then the generall procession of [the Towne] al the parisshe Chirches of the saide Citie...[3]

After being presented with a politically-charged set of white and red roses, the King had the keys of the City presented to him by Ebrauk, the mythical hero-founder of York. Here are the first two stanzas of the poem read by Ebrauk for the occasion:

Ebrauke

> Most reverend rightiuose regent of this rigalitie,
> Whos primative patrone I peyre to your presence,
> Ebrauk of Britane, I sitt nat this Citie
> For a place to my pleasour of moost prehemynence;
> Herunto I recoursid for most convenience

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[1] Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, eds. *Records of Early English Drama: York* 2 vols. (*REED: York*), (Castlegate: University of Toronto Press, 1979), I, 146.

[2] *REED: York*, I, 139.

[3] *REED: York*, I, 146-47.

In comforthing that by cource of liniall succession,
Myne heires this my Citie shuld have in possession.

Of right, I was regent and rewlid this rigion.
I subdewid Fraunce, and let in my legence;
To you, Henrie, I submitt my Citie, key and crowne,
To reuyll and redresse, your dew to defence;
Never to this Citie to presume ne pretence,
Bot holy I graunt it to your governaunce,
As a princepall parcell of your inheritaunce.[4]

The Assumption of Our Lady, a pageant of York's ancient and famous Corpus Christi cycle, was then performed.[5] Afterwards, the King was brought to the City's Common Hall where he enjoyed another lyric as recited by the character of the Biblical King David. Again the image of Ebrauk was employed to reinforce York's antiquity:

When I reynid in Judie, I know and testify
That Ebraunce the noble which subdewid Fraunce,
In memorie of this triumph did edify,
That the name of his noble shuld have continuance,
I witnesh that this Citie, without variaunce,
Was never deflorid be force ne violence.
Wherefore I have chosyn it for my place to your presence.[6]

A number of other celebrations were put on, and the City appears to have enjoyed a carnivalesque atmosphere for at least a few days.

It is evident that Henry VII received a festive welcome to the City of York while on his post-accession tour of 1486. The description of it is unusually detailed, giving us an exceptional glimpse into, among other things, some of York's fifteenth-century

[4] Angelo Raine, ed., *York Civic Records* XIII vols. (*YCR*), (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, 1939-1953), I, 156.

[5] *REED: York*, I, 149.

[6] *YCR*, I, 158.

historical imagery, entirely in the form of orders as to how the King was to be received. Why were such images employed, and what purpose did they serve?

*

We identify ourselves through memory. We use it to locate things in place and time, to put them into context. As humans, memory is central to our cognitive being, and therefore to our *mentalité*. For many groups, this means the rearranging of certain thoughts, as well as the forgetting of others, in order to keep a certain consistency with the present. After all, a thought only survives the moment if it has meaning in the ever-present "now." It is common knowledge that memories often fade and change over time. Pierre Nora has found that by its very nature, memory is a consistent narrative which functions as an active and living bond between the past and the eternal present. It is in fact history, or the representation of the past, which is constantly being rewritten, and therefore constantly changing.[7] In a few instances, though, history provides us with an example of a more dramatic shift, an abrupt change in the way the past is perceived. Such is the case with English towns and the Reformation.

Most studies of popular constructions of the past and oral history have tended to concentrate on their usefulness as historical evidence or on the amount of "truth" contained within them.[8] Recently, historians have become interested in memories of the

[7] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), 8.

[8] See, for instance, Roger D. Abrahams, "Story and History: A Folklorist's View," *Oral History Review* 9 (1981), 1-11; Teresa Barnet, "Analyzing Oral Texts, or, How Does an Oral History Mean?" *Oral History Review* 18, no. 2 (1990), 109-113; Charles W. Crawford, "Oral History: The State of the Profession," *Oral History Review* 2 (1974), 1-12; Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose" in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984); Richard M. Dorson, "The Debate over the Trustworthiness

past for their own sake.[9] How did Early Modern English people view the past?: a question more easily posed than answered. It must first be decided what is meant by "Early Modern English people," then "the past." Surely not all of the English had similar notions of history. Divisions were created by gender, occupation, environment, class, ethnicity, literacy and education, among other things. Secondly, as far as "the past" goes, one would think that oral tradition would be more apt to preserve events that had occurred in recent history, those things that were still found in living memory. Other than the literate scholar, did the "commoner," including the many literate and semi-literate merchants and urban professionals, have any knowledge of, or any care for, the

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of Oral Tradition in History" in *Folklore: Selected Essays* (London, 1972) and *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays Toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (London, 1976); Stephan Stewart Evans, *The Heroic Poetry of Dark-Age Britain: An Introduction to its Dating, Composition, and Use as an Historical Source* (London, 1997); George Lawrence Gomme, *Folklore as an Historical Science* (London, 1908); Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. I, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1960); Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2nd edition (Chicago, 1985); Albert Bates Lord, "Homer, the Trojan War, and History," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 8 (1971); Michael R. Marrus, "Folklore as an Ethnographic Source: A *Mise au Point*" in *The Wolf and the Lamb: Popular Culture in France from the Old Regime to the Twentieth Century* (Saratoga, 1976); Alfred Nutt, "History, Tradition, and Historic Myth," *Journal of British Folk-Lore* 12 (1901), 336-39; Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, trans. H.M. Wright (Chicago, 1965) and *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, 1985).

[9] Some of the more recent studies include James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992); Patrick H. Hutton, "Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs: The Problem of Memory in Historical Psychology," *Historical Reflections*, vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter 1993), 1-16; Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7-25; James Pennebaker, Dario Paez and Bernard Rimé, eds., *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives* (Mahwah (New Jersey): Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, vol. I (New York: Verso, 1994); Keith Thomas, "The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England," *The Creighton Trust Lecture*, 1983; Robert Tittler, "Reformation, Civic Culture and Collective Memory in English Provincial Towns," *Urban History* 24, 3 (1997), 283-300 and *The Reformation and the Towns in England : Politics and Culture, c. 1540-1640* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998); Daniel R. Woolf, "The 'Common Voice:' History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England," *Past and Present*, 120 (August, 1988), 26-52; "Memory and Historical Culture in Early Modern England," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, n.s., 2 (1991), 283-308; and "Of Danes and Giants: Popular Beliefs about the Past in Early Modern England," *Dalhousie Review*, 71/2 (Summer 1991), 166-209.

past in a national or global sense?[10] Also, what does one consider to be "true" history? Was Homer not the historical "truth" for centuries? Until recently, did not the majority of Westerners consider the books of the Bible to be the "gospel truth" of things ancient, incapable of being questioned? Early Modern notions of the more distant past could be a patchwork of historical events, socially-constructed memory, mythology and "common sense," itself a social construct.

The study of memory has been of interest to scholars since the time of Freud and his lesser-known contemporary, Maurice Halbwachs. Patrick Hutton has provided us with a quick and comprehensive summary of their views on memory and history.[11] Essentially, Freud argued that memory involves the interplay and repetition and recollection based on a personal, psychological dynamic. According to this theory, memory is exchanged between the unconscious and conscious mind. Memory is the product of individual experience. It is therefore an individual phenomenon.[12]

On the other hand, the formerly-neglected works of Freud's French contemporary, Maurice Halbwachs, have recently been noticed by historians. He shared Freud's views, but Halbwachs differed in the sense that he argued that memory is based primarily on a social dynamic. Memory is collective, not individual. As the theory goes, memory is

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[10] Jonathan Barry has pointed out that, for vocational reasons, many of the "common" and "middling sort" were literate to some extent or other. See "Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective" in Tim Harris, ed., *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 69-94.

[11] Hutton, "Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs," 1-16.

[12] Sigmund Freud, "Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psycho-Analysis; Recollection, Repetition, and Working Through" in *Collected Papers*, vol. 2, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 366-376.

aided, distorted and simplified by social interaction, discussion, repetition and commemoration. Memories are only important as they have significance in present conceptions which are shaped by social forces. What is remembered is therefore a function of society's influence on the individual.[13] An individual remembers childhood as a part of a family, a neighbourhood as part of a community, a job as part of a factory or office community. As James Fentress and Chris Wickham have pointed out, Halbwachs argues that memories are only individual so much as they are the particular convergences of group memories.[14] Without these social frameworks, individual memories would fade with time. Halbwachs admits that past memories cannot be recovered, but their shadows do exist in the forms of symbolic and written commemoration. It is through these that one may catch glimpses of this powerful socio-historical force. They are the physical embodiments of memory which is, according to Halbwachs, collective.

The most recent studies on collective memory are largely based on Halbwachs's interpretations. Scholars stress that the way that people think and talk about historical events is largely shaped by both the conscious and unconscious needs of the present.[15] As Keith Thomas has argued, the "most common reason for invoking the past was to

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[13] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 30-33, 124-27 and *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925: reprint, Paris: Mouton, 1976), 114-145. A somewhat abbreviated translation appears in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 35-189.

[14] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, ix.

[15] James Pennebaker and Becky Banasik, "On the Creation and Maintenance of Collective Memories: History as Social Psychology" in Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé, eds., *Collective Memory of Political Events*, 3-4.

legitimate the prevailing distribution of power."[16] People discuss and remember the past; this in itself helps to construct a consensus of the past by recounting certain events (and not others) in a certain order. Raphael Samuel points out that even historians tend to arrange certain "facts," and not others into a working narrative when the participants themselves saw things as they occurred quite at random.[17]

So whether a society is aware of it or not, memories change over time to fit the demands of their "present." All memories are artificial mental reconstructions of the past. The fabrication and maintenance of an historical memory is a complex social process, involving its repetition, reproduction and acceptance, but it must of course also have an origin. Sometimes it can originate in literature, actual historical occurrences, and so on. What is particularly pertinent to this work is the notion that memory can originate in a conscious construction. Such is the case when, say, an official textbook for public school children is altered to suit the tastes of the present, or with the establishment of a new public holiday with "new traditions," such as Remembrance Day. In such cases, a handful of people (as Thomas asserts, often those in positions of political power), perhaps responding to popular will as much as not, are germane to a collective memory by encouraging specific kinds of commemoration which are favourable to their interests, interests which usually include deference and the maintenance of social harmony.

The activity of remembering of course involves forgetting, or the omission of memory that is of little consequence to the present. The "Halbwachian" tradition maintains that individuals tend to forget that which casts them in a negative light. It is

[16] Thomas, "The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England," 2.

[17] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 435.

therefore not uncommon to resurrect -or reconstruct- a memory for the needs of the present, though the historical "fact" may long-since have been forgotten. The essential function of these shared images of history is to foster cohesion within the group, allowing it to justify current attitudes and behaviours.[18]

Group memories are therefore distorted in a number of ways, the usual effect being the sustenance of a positive group image. Forgetting happens over time in groups as in individuals. Old memories are replaced with newer ones which are more suitable to the ever-changing present. An interest group is often at the root of this change in imagery, but something must be said for those who listen, accept and pass along these biased views. If at odds, it seems that people tend to remember flattering versions of the past rather than those which are necessarily truthful as well (a "true" memory may also be flattering). As a recent study by Roy Baumeister and Stephen Hastings has pointed out, the distinction between intentional and unintentional distortion is blurry indeed, primarily because, by definition, self-deception cannot succeed if it is recognised as such. Though the intentions and motives of those in positions of power who consciously construct these distortions is of considerable historical interest (it is often the case that, due to the availability of sources, this is all that *can* be studied), one mustn't forget their audience, those who absorbed and subsequently transmitted the distortions. People want to think of their social group in positive terms. This same study has found that in the face

[18] Dario Paez, Nekane Basabe, and Jose Luis Gonzalez, "Social Processes and Collective Memory: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Remembering Political Events" in Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé, *Collective Memory of Political Events*, 147.

of both "truthful" and flattering accounts of the past, most people find it easier to remember, discuss and commemorate the latter.[19]

These memories or images can also be created and maintained by symbolic reconstructions of the past, which may appear in forms ranging from scholarly historical studies to dramatic performances. A recent study by Juanjo Igartua and Dario Paez on this relationship between art and collective memory of the Spanish Civil War has found that the former acts as an "external container" of the latter, of the emotions, beliefs and attitudes of the society. Art can be quite influential in maintaining and reconstructing the past.[20] Pierre Nora has developed the important concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or the memory and importance intentionally vested in material forms such as landscape and natural phenomena, monuments, emblems, commemorations, public architecture, portraiture, symbols and even written works such as standard texts and manuals. These "sites" may be man-made or natural; there importance lies only in their ability to evoke mnemonic associations. He stresses that these kinds of objects are mostly important to scholars as they are the physical representations of a conscious and deliberate memory.[21] By studying the intentions behind them, one is in fact studying aspects of collective memory.

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[19] Roy F. Baumeister and Stephen Hastings, "Distortions of Collective Memory: How Groups Flatter and Deceive Themselves" in Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé, *Collective Memory of Political Events*, 292-93.

[20] Juanjo Igartua and Dario Paez, "Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events: The Case of the Spanish Civil War" in Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé, *Collective Memory of Political Events*, 80 and 99.

[21] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 12, 19, and 23-25.

Many memories of the past seem to be based on permanent local sites, such as the passing of a famous person through a certain visible valley or over a fjord, or the origin of a mound or temple.[22] This may help to explain why less static urban populations seem to have a more easily changed and fluid sense of the past; if collective memory is evoked through oral tradition over a physical location, a much more quickly changing urban population would naturally have more difficulty transmitting one in tact.[23] Immediate spatial concepts are often easier to grasp than more abstract temporal ones. Samuel goes as far as to conclude that the "art of memory... was pictoral art, focusing not on words but on images."[24] He argues that a mental map was created by past societies using spatial rather than temporal images as markers. Ideas were given symbolic abodes. As Baumeister and Hastings have already pointed out, changes in memory over time often go unnoticed by a group unless there are documents to freeze them in time, like when one looks at an old photograph of oneself, only then realising that the face seen in the mirror each day has undergone significant changes over the years. As Nora argues, objects are only mnemonically significant if one invests memory into them, whether it be the old photograph or a new commemoration of the past.[25] Indeed, visual imagery and oral tradition are some of the more important vessels for the transmission and maintenance of memory.

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[22] See, for instance, examples in Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 93, and Woolf, "Of Danes and Giants," 71-180.

[23] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 114-15.

[24] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, viii.

[25] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 22.

Though most scholars recognise the collective side of memory, it has been stressed that scholars must not simply view the individual as an automaton, passively obeying the collective will.[26] This is a major recent addition to Halbwachs's works, which have tended to view collective consciousness as curiously disconnected from the individual consciousness of which the collective is composed. The modern student of memory must take both into account.

Given the limitations and paucity of sources, it is often impossible for historians to reconstruct an accurate picture of collective memory as held by the masses in the remote past. However, one may conclude that, based on the most recent scholarship, collective memory often manifests itself in the form of popular commemoration in oral tradition, dramatic performances, processions, and so on. These kinds of sources will serve as a window into some aspects of the minds of sixteenth-century English urbanites, members of a society in transition.

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The study of collective memory, of how communities construct and view the past, has been of interest to historians for a number of years. This trend is particularly evident in the Annalesian concern with *mentalités*. English historians have only recently begun studying perceptions of the past in earnest. Prominent scholars in the field include Keith Thomas and Daniel Woolf. They tend to emphasise the practical reasons for sustaining an oral tradition in an essentially illiterate environment. Woolf in particular explores the different kinds of memory and the use of mnemonic devices for the recollection of the

[36] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 7.

more distant past. He argues that in Tudor England, writing was simply an aid to memory; writing was its student, not its master.[27]

The study of collective memory in Early Modern English towns is only now beginning to thrive, though interest in the urban history of the period began to burgeon nearly thirty years ago with Peter Clark's and Paul Slack's *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*.[28] Studies of provincial towns have tended to focus, not without good reason, on economics and politics. The field has since developed and expanded into a number of interesting areas, including quite lately the study of shared notions of the past, or collective memory.

The study of collective memory and the Reformation in England's urban communities is a particularly fruitful exercise. Rather than catering to the usual slow shifts in memory, the Reformation ushered in a sharp break with Catholicism along with its shared images of the past. Civic order and obedience was a goal shared between the urban elite and the traditional Church in pre-Reformation towns. Distinctions between religious and secular celebrations were unclear as most holidays were a composite of both.[29] Susan Brigden has found that such religious obligations as participating in the mass, taking oaths, joining fraternities as well as partaking in communal religious observance and charitable giving in sixteenth-century London had an important impact on a communal sense of social obligations. The Church sustained the "power of

[27] Woolf, "Memory and Historical Culture in Early Modern England," 283-308.

[28] Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

[29] David Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York" *Northern History* XVII (1982), 81-84.

conscience" to urge town-dwellers to live "in charity" with each other.[30] Invoking a memory of the past which was favourable to the interests of the pre-Reformation civic elite, which of course included the clergy, was one of the most common methods used to keep the peace and maintain control. The ceremony and tradition alone involved in masses, processions and oath taking must have given them an air of legitimacy.

The Church also employed rather more direct references to the past in order to instil communal order and deference. Eamon Duffy has noticed an increasingly popular trend in the fifteenth century: that of remembering and honouring the dead. Religious communities would collectively offer prayers and gifts for the souls of departed members listed on the bede-roll (a written list of deceased members of the community for whose souls parishioners were to pray[31]), particularly for the more important and obeisant ones, such as benefactors or particularly ardent Church supporters.[32] The reading of the bede-roll to the parish, which must have had a profound effect on a predominantly illiterate audience, was not simply to aid the departed souls in the afterlife, but also presented for imitation a "pattern of piety, and instilled in the hearers a sense of the parish and its worship as a continuing reality."[33] In this way, and through the manipulation of images of the dead, Catholicism encouraged reverential and conformist behaviour among the living. David Palliser has found that it "was the parochial unit which gave the citizens

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[30] Susan Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London," *Past and Present*, no. 103 (May, 1984), 67-86.

[31] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 27-28.

[32] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 329-30.

[33] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 337.

[of York] their strongest sense of continuity with the past, through those intercessions linking the living with the dead which were at the heart of late medieval religion" and "which had the primary claim on [their] loyalties."[34]

The mass-destruction of traditional religious iconography and, particularly in this instance, tombs and inscriptions in the 1530s and 40s, was therefore a deliberate attempt to erase all memory of "false miracles" and popery and, by definition, inconvenient aspects of the past. The "sacrament of forgetfulness" came to be encouraged and highly valued by many.[35] This destruction was a symbolic act which had the effect of casting the past into a collective anonymity.[36]

Margaret Aston has noticed that the destruction and removal of much of the Catholic iconography resulted in the loss of some very politically-useful imagery, though many of the physical remains were to encourage a new generation of antiquarians and historians. She argues that the traditional iconography was one of the more important aspects of English consciousness and sense of identity. The "barbarous holocaust" of Henry VIII's reign was an intentional attempt break with history, and a renewed interest in recording this disappearing past was one of its results.[37]

David Palliser noticed the often violent alterations in physical contexts of worship and the destruction of a whole system of popular Catholic life centered on ceremonies, rituals and pageants. These "violent alterations" changed the "mental and physical

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[34] Palliser, *Tudor York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 228.

[35] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 480.

[36] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 494.

[37] Margaret Aston, "English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the

context of the Tudor citizen's world."[38] All this effacing of memory left a gap in the public consciousness. How were collective memories affected by such pressing concerns?

Recently, Robert Tittler has noticed a number of significant trends in urban political culture throughout the period. He argues that the Reformation was a watershed for town politics. The loss of Catholicism and its civic traditions, rituals and imagery created a cultural void in English towns. Civic governments needed new ways of encouraging deference and new traditions to legitimize their authority in light of this as well as other contemporary developments. The increase in population and visible poverty only emphasized this need. There were also stark changes in social stability, particularly keenly felt in the urban environment. Civic governments actively engaged in the scramble for property after the dissolutions of both the 1530s and late 1540s, and the investment, by the Tudor State, of greater authority in local hands, resulted in a stronger local bureaucracy. Finally, there was a shift in the middling and larger towns of official attention from local to national affairs as provincial towns became increasingly important in the affairs of the nation. This demanded a system of "self-policing." It was necessary for a town's citizens to *want* to obey their superiors. Tittler argues that in these towns there was a shift from a strong sense of fellowship and civic identity amongst the freemanry, from an egalitarian tone of political relations, and from a doctrinally-informed

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Past" *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973), 231-34 and 254-55.

[38] Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York," 115.

culture with relatively harmonised inequalities to a more rigidly structured hierarchy and greater economic and social polarisation.[39]

He then argues that one of the ways that the urban elites responded to these needs was through the same kind of refashioning or fabrication of tradition discussed earlier, including the re-writing of local history and creation of visual reminders or, as Nora puts it, "*lieux de mémoire*" of a proud and obeisant urban past, virtually a one-way exchange from the top-down. Essentially, the official collective memory of the community is cut after the Reformation (though the media are not) and a new one is sent in to take its place.

By examining various types of dramatic and visual arts, Patrick Collinson has noticed that in the period from the official Reformation until about 1580, there was less opposition to the older medieval artistic media than to any blasphemy or "false doctrine" that might be contained in them. The iconoclasm of the 1530s and 40s was more an attack on the message than on the medium. In fact, it was quite common for staunch Puritans to adapt popular drama with a few revisions into a religious context or to compose sacred and religious lyrics for popular tunes such as "greensleeves." In essence, until later in the second half of the sixteenth century, the English looked backwards for their models and forwards to their objectives.[40] The destruction of the old and the acceptance of the new is not complete until the closing decades of the century. Collinson, and indeed Tittler, contend that the official Reformation was a watershed for

[39] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 13.

[40] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: MacMillan, 1988), 94-126.

popular drama and art in general, but that the change itself may not be as sudden and sharp as once thought.

The available evidence must be seen as not only the product of the desired change in collective memory as presented by society's upper social groups, but as the product of the social exchange among many levels of society. There was a constant exchange of ideas in both directions. Thomas agrees that scholars must not forget that the commoners had nearly as much access to written material presented orally as the literate had access to folk traditions.[41] Such was the case with ballads, theatre, almanacs, and chivalric romances in the form of chapbooks. As Woolf points out, ballads, for example, were written primarily for an illiterate audience, so the authors often drew upon well-known and popular themes and tunes. He believes that ballads, then, are both products of and contributors to popular literature, equally accessible to both literate and non-literate groups.[42] Harris also reminds us that recent research questions the productivity of bi-polar analyses and has shown that there was considerable diversity within social groups themselves based on, for example, gender, literacy, region and income.[43] I would argue that the distinction between elite and popular urban culture is a blurry one at best, and that surviving historical documentation, though almost inevitably products of the urban elite, must be considered as reflections of popular sentiment as well, as "outside containers" or "*lieux de mémoire*."

[41] Thomas, "The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England," 4.

[42] Woolf, "Of Danes and Giants," 166-209.

[43] Harris, *Popular Culture in England*, 1-27.

Consider the following example. Elizabeth Lira has found that official histories and other attempts at reconstructing collective memory are sometimes, most often at first, incongruous with some ground-level collective memory.[44] Such was the case with the Chilean dictatorship of 1973 to 1990 and its many human rights violations, particularly in the early years of the regime. Even though an important historical change, such as the Reformation in English towns, may have occurred in a more distant past, one of course must not forget that they were very real and traumatic for those involved. Some civic imagery used to reinforce a new collective memory after the Reformation was, at least at first, incongruous with some of the older collective memories, as I shall point out in the case of the elimination of York's Corpus Christi pageants. Many other images, as Tittler points out, such as that of King Ebrauk, survived and were in fact re-emphasized.[45] So the new civic collective memory was not simply "constructed" by the elite out of political necessity in order to fill an enormous and critical cultural void. Some older images were employed as well.

To speak of independent creativity, Thomas admits that the common people knew that oral tradition, particularly in the more essentially illiterate sections of society, held much legal weight and was central to common law. He has demonstrated how oral accounts of past events often served very practical purposes, such as protecting pastoral and land rights, though he also argues that the source of many of these traditions is literary.[46] The point is that one should not simply regard the "new" history and tradition

[44] Elizabeth Lira, "Remembering the Past: Passing Back Through the Heart" in Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé, *Collective Memory of Political Events*, 233.

[45] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 277.

as the creation of the post-Reformation urban elite but as the product of a number of more subtle influences, including the pre-existing tradition and the practical contemporary concerns of the town's citizens which can hardly be retrieved due to the lack of evidence. As Tittler points out, were Lady Godiva and King Ebrauk not part of Coventry's and York's pool of historical imagery before the Reformation?[47] Such traditional images were then manipulated to serve the needs of the civic elite. This should be kept in mind when investigating the available evidence.

The Reformation serves as a particularly interesting and productive subject when examining the transitions and change in collective memory. Catholic iconography, symbolism, and formal tradition had acted in a number of capacities in Medieval England, not the least of which was to instil a sense of civic pride and contentment. One need look simply to York to see the importance of the Minster or of the Corpus Christi processions. But Crown and Parliament demanded that such observances be terminated in the 1530s and 40s.[48] Tittler argues that with this, including other national demographic and political trends, the urban elite of most provincial towns found it necessary to alter these images of deference and pride along more secular and civic lines, to change the vocabulary once the old images had been destroyed. Fentress and Wickham have noticed this change in a number of situations: The Stoics and Neo-Platonists re-interpreted myth allegorically and pseudo-historically, and the Medieval Church preserved and

[46] Thomas, "The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England," 1-9.

[47] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns*, 275-79.

[48] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 451.

recontextualized pagan folklore and tradition, as even today is evidenced with various aspects of celebrating Halloween and Christmas.

The concept has been termed "grafting;" scholars of oral tradition such as Richard Dorson and Jan Vansina have noticed that societies are capable of "grafting" certain tale types into the skein of history, on actual historical characters and events. They argue that, though there are indeed tale types and traditional oral themes, actual people and events of the past can be "grafted on"[49] to them, making them reliable historical conduits. In other words, certain types of historical phenomena (ie: flattering or nostalgic accounts of the past; stories which relate to an immediate phenomenon) are inherently more likely to be preserved than others. As Tittler has argued, this is noticeable in the historical imagery in English towns after the Reformation; the change is in the names, the objects and the vocabulary of collective memory, not in its essential construction and framework. People continued to have a shared sense of the past which encouraged civic pride and deference.

Many past societies valued tradition in a way that modern Westerners might find difficult to grasp. Plautus is still famous for his slapstick attacks on the powerful Roman *mos maiorum* ethic. The immense value placed on tradition and precedence is understandable in societies so vulnerable to Malthusian checks. Sixteenth-century York

[49] For example, in 1946 Dorson took down an account of a brutal lynching that had occurred in Wisconsin in 1881. Each perpetrator was mentioned by name, as was their individual "divine" punishment. The basic structure of the tale is quite common, and Dorson has been able to identify it in a number of places, including the United States and Europe. He has been able to confirm the names of the men in this version of the story and how they died through legal and other written records. It appears that the particulars of the incident were "grafted on" to a common outline. One should not discount the "truthfulness" of a tale simply because the structure and themes are common in other societies; some kinds of stories are more likely to be passed on than others. See Vansina, *Oral Tradition* and Dorson, "The Debate over the

was certainly no exception. As I have mentioned, precedence held the power of law in Early Modern England, particularly for the illiterate. Common lands were common because they had always been so, or had been demarcated by a mythical character in times immemorial. Precedence was used in farming techniques, something the eighteenth-century agriculaturalists discovered much to their annoyance. It was not so much that tradition was a link with the past, but a practical instrument of survival.

Historical imagery therefore had immediate contemporary significance to the citizens of Early Modern English urban communities. To call something "auncyent" was to give it an air of legitimacy. There was no better way to enforce a new law than to find its precedent. The townsmen of Faversham, upon replacing their old ceremonial sceptre with a new one, referred in their assembly book to the making of "a new ancient staffe."[50]

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If such a great transition in historical imagery exists, it might be productive to see how it worked in an individual English urban community. I would like to see the extent to which the symbols of collective memory were altered in York, in what ways, and when. The proposition is a challenging one. After all, as Jonathan Barry has pointed out, most studies on English towns have been politically or economically-oriented, and those that do examine civic culture have focussed overwhelmingly on London.[51] I begin by examining the degree to which the symbols of the traditional urban collective memory were incongruous with post-Reformation attitudes and needs. How were the common

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Trustworthiness of Oral Tradition in History."

[50] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 273.

[51] Barry. "Provincial Town Culture," 198-234.

societal trends of "forgetting," as discussed by Fentress and Wickham, and of "intentional distortion," argued by Baumeister and Hastings, developed in the quickly-changing cultural atmosphere of post-Reformation York? Did the urban elite make intentional attempts to alter collective memory? In what kinds of "external containers" or "*lieux de mémoires*" did the new civic ideals manifest themselves and why? Were the national trends detected by Tittler, such as the advent of civic portraiture as well as the rewriting and reconceptualization of civic history and drama along more secular and urban lines, also found at the time in York? Was there a cultural "void" that needed filling? Was there tension between the ideas attached to the old and the new sites of memory? In short, I have decided on a detailed examination of the findings of the aforementioned scholars in order to see if they hold water when applied specifically to one provincial town: York.

York forms the subject of this work for a number of reasons, not the least of which being that, quite simply, many of the primary sources are available to me locally, this being one of the greatest concerns of any North American scholar working in English history. My list of primary documents is by no means complete, but before I decided on which town in particular would be the object of my investigation, I had a number of criteria which, upon further investigation, were best met by the resources available on the City of York.

To begin, David Palliser has produced a full-length monograph (as well as an entire corpus of material) on Tudor York, outlining the major themes in the City's Early Modern past, which stands as the authoritative work on the subject.[52] This text, along

[52] David Palliser, *Tudor York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

with Tittler's work on the Reformation and English towns in general, will serve as the launching-point for the project.

Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Rogerson have edited two volumes on York for *The Records of Early English Drama* series which Tittler has used extensively in his discussion on civic drama and other popular entertainments.[53] These texts exhaustively document references found to mimetic activity in the City for the period. These kinds of sources are particularly important because they are some of the *lieux* of which I spoke. The works contain a number of references to the types of characters, places and events that are frequently encountered when studying collective memory. I have used them to get an idea of the extent to which drama and public performances in York reflected the City's history as a construction of the civic elite, and when such a change may have occurred.

Palliser made exhaustive use of Angelo Raine's eight-volume *York Civic Records*, a comprehensive selection of Corporation minutes or "House Books."[54] These volumes are invaluable to my study, providing me with court records, civic projects and purchases, and other first-hand information on the business of running an Early Modern city. Scholars have found in them records of patronage for civic portraiture and historical writing, prices paid for and brief descriptions of new civic regalia, ordinances about public performances, and so on. These are important sites of memory as well. The

[53] Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: York* 2 vols., (Castlegate: University of Toronto Press, 1979). See Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 311-34.

[54] Angelo Raine, ed., *York Civic Records* VIII vols. (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, 1939-1953).

records begin in 1476 and cover the period until 1588.[55] They are sketchy at first, but by the time of the official Reformation they begin become increasingly detailed, including more and larger descriptions of civic proceedings. They are second in importance to none in this work, and are referred to regularly.

Perhaps the most obvious *lieu de mémoire* of a city is its physical construct. A study that examines the former architecture and general make-up of a town (including pre- and post-Reformation town and guild halls, city walls, natural oddities, religious houses, and so on, many of which no longer exist) should include the use of one or more of the many popular antiquarian studies which were produced from Leland's times in the 16th century until the 19th century. Many of these studies were of England or the British Isles in general, focussing only briefly on York, or any other city for that matter.

Only a few towns are able to boast of one such study of their town in particular, or even of their shire. Though William Camden's *Britannia*, a national survey, contains an account of the City which is mainly historical,[56] York is quite unfortunate in that it curiously lacks a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century historical study. What it does have is a work in the form of Francis Drake's *Eboracum* of 1736, which was largely recopied and expanded upon in W.M. Hargrove's *History and Description of the Ancient City of York*, 1818.[57] Although it is not as ancient as the few other urban surveys that do exist, it has the redeeming quality that it exists at all.

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[55] Deborah Sutton has since added volume IX, which covers the years 1588-91: *York Civic Records: Volume IX* (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1978).

[56] William Camden, *Britannia*, trans. Edmund Gibson (London, 1695).

[57] Francis Drake, *Eboracum: Or, The History and Antiquities of the City of York*, ed. K.J. Allison (1736; reprint, London: EP Publishing, 1978): W.M. Hargrove, *History and Description of the*

When one compares the sources available, it becomes clear that the best overall choice is to examine the Early Modern City of York. Though I will not shy away from comparisons between York and other provincial towns when it is necessary -indeed, this kind of contextualization can be oftentimes quite helpful- the project is a case study of York and collective memory after the Reformation.

York was chosen as the subject for my project for more than simple reasons of archival convenience. It is within York that I sense the possibilities for detecting important differences from the broader English urban trends around the time of the Reformation. Since Roman times, York had been a city of great national importance, if only for military and strategic reasons. Palliser certainly argues that it had been England's "second city" since at least the thirteenth century when its importance grew as a result of disputes with the Scots.[58] York had played host for many royal visits before the Reformation; upon more than one occasion, court had been held in the castle. York already had a strong civic tradition by the time of the Reformation. The growing polarisation in urban areas between the elite and the commoners detected by Tittler on the national scale, which he argues was one of the pressing concerns of the elite for the maintenance of order,[59] may, as he recognizes,[60] have taken place at a much earlier time in some of England's older and most politically autonomous towns. It would be an important contribution to the field to see if, and the degree to which, some of the changes

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Ancient City of York 3 vols. (Castlegate: W.M. Alexander, 1818).

[58] Palliser, "Thirteenth-Century York – England's Second City?," *York Historian* 14 (1997): 2-9.

[59] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 13.

[60] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 12.

in historical imagery which had occurred in other English urban communities during the Reformation had also happened in York. Perhaps the need was not as great.

Tittler wisely agrees with W.G. Hoskins's belief that only a fool would seek to generalise about the history of English towns. The former proposes exceptions to the trend of change in historical imagery as a result of the split with Rome, particularly in the case of larger and more politically autonomous towns such as Lincoln, Southampton, and Colchester, though no mention is made of England's "second city."[61] I propose that it is well worth exploring. Perhaps post-Reformation York civic government did not experience the trend towards increasing secular and civic imagery as much because it had long-since existed.

If the need for civic deference had long ago made itself apparent in York as a result of a pre-Reformation polarisation between the common citizens and the urban elite, growing population pressure when York was "booming" in the fourteenth century, and other such problems, then the change towards a need for greater civic obedience based on symbolism and collective memory as detected by Tittler on a national scale in the sixteenth century may be less noticeable in York. Or, because York was a much more conspicuous urban centre, particularly after the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, the need for order and control may have been even more central. Though I do intend on making note of any differences that I may find between York and the larger national trends, rest

[61] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 12-13. He does, however, include York in his list of towns on p. 18 that had "certainly attained at a relatively early time the sort of polarized, hierarchical, and oligarchic characteristics which would come to prevail amongst a great many more towns... in the sixteenth century and after," characteristics that increased the need for deference.

assured that the main goal of my work is to produce a description of the vocabulary of immediate pre- and post-Reformation collective memory.

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Before I launch into a detailed investigation of the City's historical images, perhaps a very general introduction to York would help put this study into context. The City is located in the north-eastern quarter of England where the rivers Ouse and Foss meet. It is able to trace its roots back to Roman times when the area served as a garrison. Its Latin name was "*Eboracum*," from which "Ebrauk" almost certainly derives. It has already been suggested that Early Modern Yorkers were able to trace their roots back to this mythical character who supposedly had founded the City years before the Illiad had been compiled. They were also proud that both Severus and Constantinus Chorus held court there at one time or another.[62] This fact was surrounded with a number of oral traditions.[63] The City declined in importance during the Anglo-Saxon period, but was to regain much of its former glory in the Middle Ages. It is at this time that York begins to be described as "England's second city," as Camden notes.[64] As I have pointed out, the City had been the seat of His Majesty's court on a number of occasions, and was a particularly important military base against the Scots.[65]

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[62] P.M. Tillot, ed., *Victoria County History: A History of Yorkshire: The City of York* (*VCH: York*). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 2.

[63] Drake, *Eboracum*, 46-7.

[64] Camden, *Britannia*, 718.

[65] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 40-59.

The sixteenth century was a difficult one in England. Poverty and vagrancy grew steadily along with the population in general, and the cities bore a visible share of this burden. York fared particularly poorly in this domain, especially once tensions with Scotland had subsided. The half-century after 1510 saw the Corporation's financial plight at its worst.[66] The wandering poor flocked to the City in a desperate attempt at survival while many of York's artisans and professionals were forced to leave to seek their fortunes elsewhere. While the average overall population, which was in constant flux, had declined since from a peak of perhaps 15 000 around the year 1400 to a sixteenth-century average of about 10 000, partially as a result of a series of devastating epidemics, the number of poor was swelling.[67] Nevertheless, it was still the largest town north of the Humber in the sixteenth century, with the possible exception of Newcastle.

York's formost historian describes the Reformation town as "a deeply conservative city, unresponsive to the Protestantism which was taking hold in many other parts of England."[68] The Pilgrimage of Grace in particular has been used to support such positions. As a reaction to the break with Rome, nobles, gentry, clergy and commoners from all over the shire led by Robert Aske combined forces in rebellion and occupied the City of York from October untill December of 1536. Palliser argues that the uprising had the support of the majority of York's citizens, all the way up to the ranks of the aldermen.[69] There were several motivations behind the uprising, including economic

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[66] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 82.

[67] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 10, 112, 220.

[68] Palliser, *The Reformation in York. 1534-1553* (York: St. Anthony's Press, 1971), 30.

[69] Palliser, *The Reformation in York*, 5-7.

concerns. 1535 and 1536 witnessed poor harvests while peacetime taxation (Cromwell's subsidy of 1534) persisted. One could argue, though, that the Pilgrimage was primarily motivated by spiritual concerns and had the support of the commoners.

The governing body of Early Modern York consisted of a mayor and two councils: the aldermen (or Twelve) and the Twenty-Four.[70] There was indeed a third council which was known as the Forty-Eight, and later the Common Council, and was composed of leading members of the craft guilds, but it convened only sporadically, and seems to have been only rarely involved in policy-making. Effectively, the Corporation was headed by the other two councils, often simply referred to as "the Council."

Mayoral elections had been held every February since the fourteenth century, unless a mayor died in office, in which case an impromptu election would often be held. Mayoral candidates were almost invariably drawn from the ranks of the aldermen. A mayor served for only one year at a time, but often the same men served three terms or more in all. Later in the fifteenth century, the number of terms that one man could serve was limited to two, and even then only at eight year intervals. After 1517, a Common Council would nominate three aldermen who had not held the position within the preceding six years and had not already served twice to be voted on by the aldermen and the sheriffs. The mayor represented the dignity of the City, and since at least the fourteenth century was preceded by civic sword- and mace-bearers.

Though officially the mayor was the supreme civic authority, he would have been foolish to oppose the wishes of the two inner councils, particularly the aldermen. The

[70] The following brief introduction to the government of York is taken from *REED: York*, I, x-xiii and Palliser, *Tudor York*, 60-72.

mayor was the thirteenth and often junior member of this inner council, doing his time in a demanding position, one which many of the senior aldermen shied away from when possible. The office was onerous, and they were probably glad to leave it to their younger colleagues.

The aldermen were elected by the mayor and existing aldermen as vacancies appeared. They most often considered members of the Twenty-Four, ex-sheriffs or, particularly in the sixteenth century, influential Mercers. After 1517, it was the responsibility of the commons to offer up three appropriate candidates when it was necessary, one of whom would be chosen by the mayor and other aldermen.

The Twenty-Four, or Privy Council as it began to be called by Elizabeth's reign, was composed almost entirely of ex-sheriffs. They were involved in most of the major decision-making, and were required to attend official civic events just as the mayor and aldermen were. This body corresponded closely to the Common Council of many other towns. The name should not be taken as a numerical description, as no more than eighteen were ever counted in attendance at a Council meeting.[71]

The City of York elected two sheriffs annually on the 21st of September. After 1517, the Common Council nominated four candidates, of whom two were then elected by the aldermen and existing sheriffs. They were essentially royal servants, and acted on the King's behalf. They ensured that the City's free farm and other taxes were duly paid to the Crown, and held a court in the King's name. After their year in office, they often became members of the Twenty-Four. Unlike the mayors, they were never called on to take office twice.

[71] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 61.

Like the mayor, the sheriffs were accompanied by sergeants-at-mace and other ceremonial trappings. The sheriffs had been responsible for the Midsummer's Day celebrations since the beginning of the sixteenth century, celebrations which became more popular and important to the City as the sixteenth century wore on.

The three chamberlains of the City acted as treasurers and accountants, making and recording most of the City's payments and other financial transactions. They were elected by the mayor and two head councils every year on the 3rd of February. They, along with the sheriffs, the councils and the mayor, comprised the governing bodies of sixteenth-century York.

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This first chapter has been an examination of collective memory and its construction, the historiography on provincial civic culture in general, the primary sources used for this work and the reasons why York is an appropriate test subject. The next few chapters will examine the primary sources themselves pertaining to post-Reformation civic culture in York. In my second chapter, which concerns itself with popular mimetic activities, including minstrelsy and civic drama, I examine the kinds of things that reflect some of the urban elite's attempts to instil deference and to legitimize itself after the Reformation. I do this in order to see the degree to which York conforms to larger national patterns as detected by Tittler. The third chapter examines processions and popular traditions, and which ones were altered or substituted, and why. Chapter four explores the uses of civic regalia and symbols, such as swords, maces, vestments and various insignia, paying particular attention to the attempts made to remodel or replace visual symbols for old ones and the new ones employed. Other *lieux* for which less

evidence has been found are discussed in chapter five, such as civic architecture and art, ruins, natural curiosities and the intentional preservation of memory through writing, though little historical writing as such exists.

It is always important to study the previous state of affairs in order to come to a fuller understanding of historical change. This stage is particularly important to this study. The pre-Reformation differences between York and other towns, based on the aforementioned studies of national collective memory produced by Thomas, Woolf and Tittler, may produce important discrepancies in civic culture after the Reformation, if only that a strong civic culture had already existed in York. Each of the following chapters, then, includes a short description of the vocabulary of pre-Reformation collective memory concerning each subject individually. Once the stage has been set, each section will then consider its topic in light of the sixteenth century.

Finally, in my conclusion, I consider whether York sustains the national paradigms mentioned in the last few pages or makes exceptions to them, and to what degree. Does the City witness a change in the vocabulary of political culture and collective memory to the same degree that other provincial towns do? What might account for the possible differences?

II
Drama and Minstrelsy

Anne Higgins argues that in York, as in other English cities that had established strong civic governments centered in the trade guilds, much of the competition between civic, ecclesiastical and other groups for dominance in town life was played out in ceremonies in the City's streets and markets. Plays and processions in particular "depicted visually the unity and hierarchy of those who lived in the town."[1]

Civic drama and minstrelsy could serve the function of being *lieux* in themselves. Performances such as York's Corpus Christi cycle reinforced prevailing economic and political structures through tradition. Traditional civic plays were to be put on and minstrels were to perform on demand, either at civic functions or at the receptions for official visitors, to enhance "the honour" of the City, a phrase used by contemporaries meaning "good reputation." Indeed, the City considered it to be very integral to this honour for Council members and civic officials to show solidarity at these public religious and secular civic performances. When in 1572 two aldermen refused to accompany the mayor to the showing of an officially-sanctioned dramatic performance, for example, they where put in ward for contempt and finally disfranchised for their

[1] Anne Higgins, "Streets and Markets," in John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, eds., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77-92, 78. This point is well made in the literature on the subject. See Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550," in Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 57-85; Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," *Past and Present* 98 (February, 1983), 3-29; and, to a lesser extent, Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London."

obstinacy.[2] Mimetic activity was indeed an important vehicle for the transmission of politically and socially useful civic concepts in sixteenth-century York.

Drama and other kinds of histrionic performances seem to have undergone the most significant changes as a result of the Reformation. It has already been noted that Collinson has found that the English looked backwards for their models and forwards to their objectives until about the 1570s. This is certainly the case in York as well. Many traditional forms of mimetic activity come under unprecedented scrutiny by the civic authorities almost immediately following the official Reformation, largely as a result of pressure from the Crown and the Archepiscopal authority. York's Civic Council ordered that scripts be written and delivered to appropriate authorities for inspection, dramatic performances, both by civic waits and travelling players, be much more regulated and, by the 1570s, many traditional kinds of performances be either modified to suit changing tastes or eliminated altogether, like Medieval York's celebrated Corpus Christi pageants, though as I shall point out there is evidence to suggest that even some of these were performed until the end of the century. The nature of civic performance in York had both religious and secular elements at the beginning of the sixteenth century; by the end, it was largely composed of the latter.

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By far the most important to the honour and good fame of all religious performances in Late Medieval York was the cycle of Corpus Christi plays. These fifty-two miracle plays were performed in a carefully pre-determined order, based both on chronology and the social importance of the craft responsible for producing an individual

[2] *VCH: York*, 152.

pageant. The cycle essentially traced biblical history from the Creation until Domesday, with few apocryphal additions.[3] It had been performed in York since at least the fourteenth century, making it the oldest known Corpus Christi cycle.[4] The tradition itself was so established and "auncyent" by the period in question that it was a *lieu* in itself.

Though there was a Corpus Christi fraternity, of which most freemen were members at one time or another in their lives, each craft guild was responsible for putting on a specific play every year. The Shipwrights had *The Building of Noah's Ark*, the Taverners and vinterers had *The Marriage in Cana* and the Bakers had *The Last Supper*, to name but three.[5] Indeed, in his study of the cycle, Jeremy Goldberg has found that the link between a particular craft and its pageant is fairly apparent, such as the Pinners' *The Crucifixion* and, to a modern perspective more macabrely still, *The Death of Christ* by the Butchers.[6]

Some of the poorer, less important or newer guilds combined their efforts and resources to put on a play. The Woollen-Weavers, for example, produced *The Assumption of the Virgin* pageant until 1553 when it could no longer afford to do so. They were subsequently ordered to take over the "sledmens pagiant," *The Travellers to*

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[3] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 232.

[4] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 273-74.

[5] For a full listing, see *REED: York*, I, 657-85.

[6] Jeremy Goldberg, "Craft Gulids, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," in *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (York: University of York, 1997), 142-43.

Emmaus, and the Sledmen in turn were to produce *The Raising of Lazarus* with the Capmakers.[7]

Though the pageants were essentially religious in nature, it was strictly the responsibility of the Corporation to ensure their annual production. Complaints from the guilds about the cost of producing the pageants proliferate in the records of the City Council or House Books. Members would often complain to the Council about the excessive costs involved, and sometimes they refused to produce their play in protest.[8] In 1505 the Drapers complained about the excessive costs of producing *The Death of the Blessed Mary*, and that some Tailors and Hosiers were selling broadcloth in the City and should therefore contribute.[9] A more general complaint about expenditures was issued by the Commons less than two years later.[10] The financial burden was indeed pressing at times, but a question of craft honour was involved. Much like "the cycle as a whole defined the identity and projected the honour of the town community in relation to the world outside it, so the play-unit defined the identity and projected the honour of the particular occupational community in relation to the social body in which it was involved."[11] There are also instances where the Corporation gave financial assistance to individual guilds when it was especially needed, though this kind of generosity was rarely

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[7] *YCR*, V, 88.

[8] See, for instance, *YCR*, I, 92.

[9] *YCR*, III, 14.

[10] *YCR*, III, 149.

[11] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 17.

exercised.[12] It was the responsibility of each guild to produce its own pageant year after year. The Corporation itself, as a distinct part of the urban community, was no exception. It produced *The Coronation of the Virgin.*

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The cycle served social and political functions. Mervyn James describes the theme of Corpus Christi in terms of body. This concept provided urban communities "with a mythology and ritual in terms of which opposites of social wholeness and social differentiation could be both affirmed, and also brought into a creative tension" with one another.[13] Essentially, he argues that the holiday and its rituals were both models and expressions of the urban social bond. They contributed to social integration while also re-affirming the prevailing social, political and economic circumstances. The plays provided a mechanism by which the "tensions implicit in the diachronic rise and fall of occupational communities could be confronted and worked out," flexible enough to promote complex and multi-layered urban harmony, as opposed to the simple cleric/lord/vassal division of the countryside.[14]

Let us consider the example that Goldberg forwards: *The Building of Noah's Arc.* Early in the play, God asks Noah to build a ship, but he has no understanding of the craft of the shipwright:

> Noah: A, lorde, thi wille sall euer be wroght
> Os counsill gyfs of ilka clerk,
> Bot first, of shippe-craft can I right noght:
> Of er makyng haue I no merke

[12] See, for instance, *YCR*, VI, 159.

[13] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 3-29.

[14] James, "Ritual, Drama and Body Social in the Late Medieval English Town," 15.

God then gives him instructions:

> God: Noe, I byd the hartely haue no thought,
> I shall the wysshe in all thi werke,
> And even to itt till ende be wroght;
> Therefore to me take hede and herke.[15]

It must have been amusing for contemporaries to hear a craftmaster of the Shipwrights' Guild utter the line "of shippe-craft can I right noght:/ Of ther makyng haue I no merke," but Goldberg suggests that the meaning went beyond mere entertainment. God was confirming the master-apprentice relationship by acting as the former. The craft, as an example among many, "thus becomes a vocation enjoying divine sanction in much the same way the priest, the lord, or the ploughman had a place according to an earlier, but in the context of urban society, already redundant tripartite division of society."[16] By having an assigned pageant in the cycle, each craft was attempting to establish its place within the community.

Higgins agrees. York was divided "into a complicated map of areas of intertwined privileges, obligations, and influence, shoulder to shoulder in the narrow streets."[17] Frequent disputes arose as a result of such complexity. The Corpus Christi pageants acted as instruments for working out social identity and political structure by presenting a model of unity while at the same time differentiating between the City's constituent parts.[18] Each group asserted its rights and jurisdiction by performing its play

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[15] Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," 141.

[16] Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," 141.

[17] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 81.

[18] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 84.

stage facing outward, toward the rival franchises.[19] While the cycle may have been the symbolic manifestation of such struggles for influence, it also served as a model to which citizens were urged to conform.

This was very much in the interest of the ruling elite. As I have mentioned, they too participated in the cycle. The final performance, which was produced by the Mercers, was known as the *Domesday* pageant. The group dominated civic government and regularly sat in judgement in the sheriffs' plea court know significantly as "Domesdays." The pageant, put on at the doors of the Guild Hall, was a magnificent one, but what is of importance here is that it stressed civic obedience and conformity, with particular emphasis on charitable giving, with eternal rest as a reward. At the very door of the Hall stood the *maisondieu* or almshouse of the Guild of St. Christopher and the Mercers' own hall which was above the Trinity Hospital.[20] All this to say that, as Goldberg suggest, perhaps guild "drama and social reality [were] not so far apart" in pre-Reformation York.[21]

England broke with Rome by Act of Parliament in 1534. York's Civic Council ordered that the Creed play rather than the Corpus Christi cycle be performed in 1535.[22] Though the Corporation minutes understandably fail to mention the Pilgrimage of Grace, immediately in 1536 the Council decreed that the Corpus Christi play would not be

[19] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 87.

[20] Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," 159-60.

[21] Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," 160.

[22] *REED: York*, I, 257.

performed in that year. Aside from the practical concern of being a city-under-siege,[23] these ordinances suggest that there was a degree of uncertainty as to the compatibility of the changes that were happening in London with some of York's traditional religious civic traditions. In keeping with Royal statute,[24] the Corpus Christi Guild was dissolved in the 1540s along with a great many of York's fraternities.[25] When Henry VIII visited York in 1541, an embarrassed and eager-to-please Council broke precedent and did not appear to have ordered the performance of a religious play at all for His Grace, save the rather uncontroversial *Domesday*.[26] The remaining mimetic performances offered were as follows:

> ...Smyth Clerke of Saynt William Chappell of Ousebrig came personally befor the said presens and promysyd to maik a showe with syngyng and oyer mellody after the best facion that he could deuyse on the leydes before the said Chappell.[27]

There were then to be a few other shows "with sygyng and melody" involving minstrels. They were careful not to offend.

In answer perhaps as much to the concerns of the guilds as to the growing economic misfortunes of the City,[28] the Council began to impose limits on the amounts to

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[23] It was still possible to have the Pater Noster performed in 1536. See *YCR*, IV, 5. In fact, Palliser suggests that the commons were quick to support the Pilgrimage, and that the mayor and alderman, after a show of reluctance, freely admitted the insurgents within the city's walls. See Palliser, *Tudor York*, 234-35.

[24] Palliser, *The Reformation in York*, 22.

[25] *REED: York*, I, xv.

[26] *YCR*, IV, 60; *REED: York*, I, 270.

[27] *REED: York*, I, 272.

[28] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 135.

be spent for the Corpus Christi celebrations.[29] That it was still central to the honour of the City is evidenced by the steady stream of fines issued to all non-participants. Even the houses on the parade route between stations were to be decorated under penalty of fine.[30] The Council ordered in 1546 "that Corpus Cristie play shalbe playd this yere and that billets shalbe delyveryd farth for the same accordyng to the ancyent custome."[31] This ordinance's very presence in the Corporation minutes hints at its importance; the annual performance of the Corpus Christi cycle was most often simply taken for granted. Such decrees become more common from this point on.

The reformed English Church abolished all processions in 1547 and the feast of Corpus Christi itself in 1548.[32] Rather than comply, York's Civic Council ordered that the cycle be performed that year without the staunchly Catholic "deying of our Lady, assumpcon of our Lady and coronacon of our Lady" pageants.[33] Similar ordinances were issued in 1549 and 1551.[34]

An epidemic swept through the City from 1550 to 1552. As a result, the cycle had been cancelled in 1550. Only ten stations were to be observed in 1551 because "the

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[29] *YCR*, IV, 93.

[30] *YCR*, IV, 109.

[31] *YCR*, IV, 139. "Billets" were written warnings issued by the Corporation to the crafts responsible for pageants a few months before the Corpus Christi cycle was to be performed in a given year. They became more common in the second half of the sixteenth century.

[32] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 89.

[33] *YCR*, IV, 176.

[34] *REED: York*, I, 291-92, 293 and 297.

syknes [had] ben latly within this Citie and to avoyde occasion of lyke this somar by reason of confluence and blyndyng togiders of every sort of people at this Corpus Christi playe."[35] Though civic authorities were aware of the dangers involved, the cycle was still popular and important enough at mid-century for it to be performed regardless of the epidemic, however abbreviated. It finally took a second wave of the epidemic in 1552 and "warres and alsoo contagiouse" diseases in 1558 for it not to be delivered.[36]

After Mary took the throne, the Corporation was quick to order that the Corpus Christi pageants be performed "as hath ben accustomed; and that thois pageants that of late were left forth shall be played ageyne as before tyme they were chardgs of theym that were wont to bryng theym forth."[37] Up until this point, then, the evidence suggests that some of the "popish" content, not the medium itself, had come under fire immediately after the official Reformation, which agrees quite well with Collinson's model.

Controversy over the strong Catholic elements contained in this annual civic ritual erupted again in the 1560s. The royal proclamation issued in 1559 "For Prohibiting Unlicensed Interludes and Plays" is seen as marking an important milestone.[38] Similar denunciations arise thereafter. Article xxviii of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 reads: "The Sacrament of the Lord's supper was not by Christ's Ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up or worshipped."[39] The feast of Corpus Christi was then

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[35] *YCR*, V, 56.

[36] Palliser, *The Reformation in* York, 27; YCR, V, 179.

[37] *YCR*, V, 100.

[38] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 322.

[39] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in Late Medieval England," 21, n. 66.

excluded from the Calendar of the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer. York's House Books began referring to the Corpus Christi plays more than ever, either ordering or disallowing certain performances, namely those with strong Catholic overtones.[40] The cycle was ordered to be performed in 1561 "as hath ben accustomed except onely the paiants of the dyenge, assumption and coronacon of our Lady."[41] A touching vignette appears in the Corporation minutes later on that year when it was agreed that none of the plays would be delivered:

> And for soo moche as the late fest of Corpus Christi is not nowe celebrated and kept holy day, as was accustomed, it is therfor agreed that on Corpus even my Lord Mayour and Aldermen shall in makyng the proclamacon accustomed goe about in semely sadd apparell and not in skarlet.[42]

Most of the references to the Corpus Christi pageants had been in the form of complaints, and most of the decisions made had simply been transcribed, lacking a human element. Here though, it appears as if the Council members of this conservative town were reluctant to let go of their beloved civic traditions as well.

The texts of the plays continued to be revised and altered to suit contemporary tastes, but now with even greater fervour. Civic governments throughout the country were now armed with the above-mentioned statutory and proclamatory authority. In 1566, those Corpus Christi pageants which had not yet been put into writing and registered were ordered to be so as quickly as possible by John Clerk, York's recorder,

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[40] *YCR*, VI, 35, 56, 124 and 144.

[41] *YCR*, VI, 8.

[42] *YCR*, VI, 17.

"to be examined with the register and reformed."[43] They were performed intermittently throughout the turbulent 1560s. In 1568 "dyvers commoners of this Citie were much desyerous to have Corpus Cristy play this yere, wherein these presens [the City Council] wold not agree but that the book therof shold be perused and otherwise amendyd before it were playd."[44] Again in 1575, the City ordered all civic playbooks which were then being held by the Archbishop to be brought in so that they could be revised and reformed.[45]

The last date to which the evidence allows us to say with certainty that the cycle was performed is 1569, though as I shall soon point out, scattered references do appear for several years thereafter.[46] The Corpus Christi plays were likewise silenced in Norwich in 1564, in Kendal in 1586.[47] At the mayor's oath-taking in 1580, York's commons again earnestly asked that the Corpus Christi plays be performed again that year. The mayor said that he and the Council "wold considre of their request,"[48] a phrase that, as Tittler notes, was "well worn by Queen Elizabeth to Parliament and (in general) by parents to children."[49] Most other references from the commons had come in the form of complaints, usually concerning the costs involved in production. One must, of course,

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[43] *REED: York*, I, 351.

[44] *YCR*, VI, 135.

[45] *YCR*, VII, 108.

[46] *YCR*, VIII, 7; *REED: York*, I, 390; Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 329.

[47] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 582.

[48] *REED: York*, I, I, 392-93; *YCR*, VIII, 26.

[49] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 329, n. 105. The request was indeed made in 1580, not in 1578. See *REED: York*, I, 393.

expect these in the Corporation minutes. Here, though, one witnesses a rare instance where the commons seem to speak out. The Corpus Christi celebrations were ancient and as dear to York's commoners as to its elite. The records then fall silent on the issue.

This in effect marks the end of the Corpus Christi cycle in York, but there are a few references to individual pageants being performed in the City after the cycle itself had been officially abolished. If a record of payment "to the bakers for ther chardges of there pagiant" serves as any indication, *The Last Supper* appears to have been performed for the Midsummer interlude in 1585.[50] That same year, a list of payments was composed "by my Lord maiour & aldermen of dyuers occupacions towardes the chardges of the play on mydsomer even."[51] Though the exact nature of "the play" is not made clear, over forty separate listings appear for expenses incurred by the guilds that were involved, suggesting a format suspiciously similar to that of the former Corpus Christi cycle.

One of the most important pageants of the old cycle was that of *The Coronation of the Virgin* which, as I have mentioned, had been traditionally performed by the mayor and his brethren. Due to its obvious Catholic character, it was one of the first individual plays to come under question. Remarkably, it seems to have been performed again in 1585 as part of the Midsummer show.[52]

These references suggest that, though the cycle itself may have been discontinued in 1569, a number of the individual plays may have been performed for a number of

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[50] *REED: York.* I, 420, 425.

[51] *REED: York.* I, 421-22.

[52] *REED: York.* I, 419 and II, 684.

years thereafter. The commons certainly seemed to have wished it. It appears as if the conservative citizens of York made great efforts to keep their beloved Corpus Christi celebrations alive. The elimination of these plays was more of a process which spanned a few decades, rather than a single event.

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A number of other religious plays were produced in sixteenth-century York. The records first mention the Pater Noster and Creed plays around the beginning of the fifteenth century, the latter likely being the younger of the two.[53] Though no copies of the texts from York survive, they were both instructional plays. The former set out to teach about the Lord's Prayer and was clearly linked to the seven sins and seven virtues. The latter was designed to inform citizens of the Apostles' Creed. It was divided into twelve pageants. They were both shorter than the Corpus Christi cycle, but were still of considerable expense, often replacing the the cycle when the need arose.[54] Both had become well-established traditions by the beginning of the period in question.

That attendance at these civic productions, particularly by Council members, was crucial in maintaining and enhancing the honour of the City is made evident through the many ordinances which made it mandatory. In 1525, for instance, it was agreed that the mayor and his brethren were to attend the Creed play that year, which incidentally was being performed at the Common Hall, or face a stiff fine.[55]

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[53] *REED: York*, I, 6-7 and 68.

[54] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 66-67.

[55] *YCR*, III, 104.

James has found that the dramatic aspects of religious celebrations in York, which were of course symbolic manifestations of social realities and ideals, came into conflict with the liturgical aspects, which led to the separation of the two in 1426.[56] The City also had the power to order the performance of said plays, proving that they were from an early date at least partially a civic, as well as a fraternal and ecclesiastical, responsibility. When "Richard of Gloucestire" came in 1483, "it was agreid that the Creid play shall be playd afore our Suffreyn lord the Kyng of Sunday next cumyng a pon the cost of the most onest men of every parish in this Citie."[57] It ordered the Corpus Christi Guild in 1505 to perform the Creed play under penalty of twenty pounds.[58] It even seems to have had the authority to call the text in to be reviewed "and to take an order as towchyng playng of the Creyde play as he [the mayor] shall thynk good for the mooste profett and avauntage of the sayd Citie" as early as 1545.[59]

Though the Creed and Pater Noster made frequent appearances in the House Books long before the Reformation, they appear to have received more attention afterwards. Johnston and Rogerson point out that the sudden concern of the City Council regarding the production of these plays after 1547 does not represent new dramatic activity in York but simply a shift in responsibility from the suppressed guilds to the

[56] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 6; Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 86.

[57] *REED: York*, I, 130-31; *VCH: York*, 62.

[58] *YCR*, III, 12.

[59] *YCR*, IV, 125.

City.[60] though I would point out the significant civic control exercised before this point and argue that their content was coming under increased scrutiny as part of a general trend near mid-century. It does, however, become evident that the City was becoming more directly involved in mimetic activity generally, particularly after the royal statute of 1559.

The Creed play was only to be performed in 1562 "if apon examination it may be shalbe played."[61] Again in 1568 it was to be revised and rewritten where necessary by the chamberlains.[62] Later that year, the dean of the Cathedral Church of York, Master Hutton, wrote a letter advising that the Creed play contained too much "disagreeing from the sinceritie of the gospell" which could not be altered or removed as "the wholle drift of the play shuld be altered." The Council decided "to have no play [that] yere and the books of the creyd play to be delyveryd in agayn."[63] In 1572 the Pater Noster play was to "be perused amended & corrected" before it could be produced again.[64] As I have pointed out, the calling in and revision of such texts became quite common at this time. The Pater Noster was never performed in York again.[65]

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[60] *REED: York*, I, xvi.

[61] *REED: York*, I, 340.

[62] *YCR*, VI, 133.

[63] *YCR*, VI, 134.

[64] *YCR*, VII, 46.

[65] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 581.

Minstrels and waits had certainly been commissioned by the Corporation long before the sixteenth century. The House Books make their first specific mention of them in 1422.[66] Orders were issued for a few players, hand-picked by the Council, to hire out and dismiss other players for various functions at the Corpus Christi celebrations. Minstrelsy was largely secular in nature, drawing its themes mostly from common folk motifs and lore, as opposed to such civic religious performances of the Pater Noster, Creed and Corpus Christi plays, though civic minstrels would sometimes be asked to perform on these occasions as well. Civic minstrels, more commonly known as "waits," were distinct from bands of travelling players, which came to be increasingly popular over the course of the sixteenth century, in that they were both specifically commissioned by the City and sedentary as permanent civic employees. As David Griffiths points out, one of their primary functions was as night watchmen, or more accurately as criers of the hour and kind of weather, but they also served the City as musicians and general entertainers, which is the aspect of their craft with which I am primarily concerned.[67] As employer, the City therefore had near autonomy in deciding on the kinds of performances which were to be produced. As Charles Phythian-Adams suggests, they also appear to have served the very practical function of emphasizing the seasonal and predominantly pastoral framework of Early Modern urban society through music and drama.[68] There

[66] David Griffiths, *'A Musical Place of the First Quality': A History of Institutional Music-Making in York, c. 1550-1990* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1994), 65-66.

[67] Griffiths, *'A Musical Place of the First Quality'*, 67-68.

[68] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 70.

were three waits in York at the beginning of the century until 1566 when one more position was opened.[69]

They were responsible for a variety of performances. In 1554, the City's waits were paid "for goyng before the procession vppon fryday after Corpuscrysty day," and then again "for mydsomar Evyn Accustomyd."[70] A "base shalme," (ie: bass shawm) a kind of wind instrument, was to be purchased for "nycolas Wright, one of the wayts" so that he might play it on appropriate occasions.[71] The wait was essentially the "jack-of-all-trades" of Early Modern secular show business.

It seems as if they were greatly appreciated in pre-Reformation York. In 1486, a former wait named Robert Shayne, for "the space of xl yeres and more" was to receive "thirtene shelings... and a house of the commons."[72] Though I must admit that I am unaware of the exact circumstances which surrounded this presentation, it is certainly extraordinary, to say the very least, to see any civic employee being granted accommodations for life, let alone a wait. Griffiths suggests that York's "waits were given housing by the corporation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," though evidence for such a claim is scanty.[73] Another minstrel, Roger Smalwod, who had been performing in the City for some time, "of his awn cost for the wurship of the Citie" had fallen "viij s iiij d" into debt by 1505. It was pardoned by the Council. Later, in 1529 it

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[69] *YCR*, VI, 121.

[70] *REED: York*, I, 315.

[71] *YCR*, VI, 16.

[72] *YCR*, I, 170.

[73] Griffiths, '*A Musical Place of the First Quality*', 70.

was agreed that "every oone of the common waytts of this City [should] have of the Chamberleyns xij s a pece for thayre lyvere for the worshipp of the said City."[74]

I have already mentioned that the City attempted to regulate public performances within its walls by selecting appropriate players. In 1490, it went as far as to order that no rewards were to be "yeven by yere from this day forwerd" unless it had been Corporation-approved, though the actual effect of this ordinance is more difficult to judge.[75] In 1541, though, it came to light that the former mayor "Maister Dogeson" had decided while in office to pay and reward "barwards and straunge mynstrells... against the auncyent custome and usage of the said City."[76] The Council then agreed that none were to be hired out in the future unless they were the King's, Queen's or Lord Prince's minstrels, under penalty of stiff fines. The mayor was not excepted.

It was not until after the Reformation, and particularly around the 1550s and 60s, that these secular performances were to receive a great deal of attention from civic authorities. Players appear to have disguised themselves as the Queen's in order to be able to perform.[77] Aside from the fact that secular drama was becoming more popular throughout the country at the time, the increased attention given to York's waits may also have been due to some problems which arose between them and the City. In 1561 an official complaint against a Thomas Moore was issued by his fellow waits, Nycolas Wright and Robert Husthwait. Moore was said to have participated in "unthrifty

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[74] *YCR*, III, 129.

[75] *YCR*, II, 55.

[76] *YCR*, IV, 53.

[77] *REED: York*, I, 322.

gaming," and was also accused of not learning and practising "the instruments and songs belongyng the said waytes."[78] Then in 1566, "for their mysdemeanour," the exact nature of which is not specified, they were "dischardged of their office and [had] personally delyvered in their sylvar collars to the Chamberlaynes."[79] In 1572 for "certayne consideracons the waites [were] called in and their cheynes, cognysances [were] taken frome theym and [they were] not to serve as waites" in the future.[80] Again no explanation is offered. Later, in 1584, "John Clarke and Baltherston, two of the wates of this Cittie," were caught in a similar and perhaps more amusing situation. They were dismissed because of drunkenness and because they had "gone abroad in the contry in very evill apparell with their hose forth at their heeles."[81] Though these specific situations may have been particular to York, it is representative of the trend for civic governments to assume and exercise a greater degree of control over minstrelsy, an art which was growing while being watched ever more closely. Religious performances were not the only ones being scrutinized.

There was an obvious need to formalize the profession. Very few entirely new craft guilds were created in the sixteenth century, but it was decided in 1554 that the civic waits, musicians and minstrels should have "a ffelawship... and propre ordynances,"[82] and they were given just that in 1561. They were granted a charter in which they were

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[78] *YCR*, VI, 16.

[79] *YCR*, VI, 199.

[80] *YCR*, VII, 53.

[81] *YCR*, VIII, 80.

[82] *REED: York*, I, 312.

directed to perform the play of Herod *Questioning the Three Kings* in the Corpus Christi cycle which used to be produced by the Masons.[83] The "ordynall of the musycions commonlie called the minstrelles" was then "reformed, augmented and published" in 1578.[84]

References to waits proliferate in the House Books from this point. Records of employment and dismissal were kept with greater regularity.[85] In 1567, after the number of waits had been increased to four, "Robert Hewert, musician" was appointed to the new position of "chief wayte.[86] A 1579 ordinance ruled that only citizens could be waits. Aliens were not to be tolerated "upon payne of vj s viij d."[87]

Some other forms of secular performances also make their appearance at this time. Thomas Grafton, a schoolmaster, offered to write speeches and interludes for the Midsummer's show of 1585, though this was hardly received by the citizens as a replacement for the Corpus Christi pageants (compiled speeches do not sound very exciting), and they are not heard of again.[88] After all, travelling companies were becoming increasingly popular.

In York as in the rest of England, travelling players appear to have become very much in vogue by the 1580s, though they had certainly been gaining in popularity for a

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[83] *REED: York*, I, 334-38.

[84] *YCR*, VII, 183.

[85] *YCR*, V, 161-62.

[86] *YCR*, VI, 125.

[87] *YCR*, VIII, 23.

[88] *YCR*, VIII, V, 76-78, 101 and 103.

number of years by that point.[89] Raine sees these performances as attempts at some kind of substitution for the Corpus Christi plays.[90] But, as Tittler argues, these increasingly popular wandering bands were also seen as being potentially subversive to the social order. They wore costumes, inverted gender, were not part of a traditional community and transported their audience into a world where the normal rules of speech and behaviour were suspended. Civic governments, with the cooperation of Crown and Parliament, soon devised strategies to cope:

> Under the emerging licensing laws of the day, visiting players came first to the mayor, presented their licence to perform, and awaited his pleasure in granting them permission to play. He then often requested that they put on their first performance in his presence, so that he could scrutinize the play itself, and so that they would know of that scrutiny.[91]

It also became more common to order that performances be given indoors for similar reasons.

York was no exception to these trends. Players began to perform inside York's Common Hall, as the Earl of Sussex's and Lord Hunsdon's players did in 1581.[92] It became so common that the City was forced to limit the number of performances that any one band could deliver there, and it ordered that "no interludes, playes or other devises for assemblinge of the common people at the Common Hall of this Citie be played, published or put in exercise ther" except by permission of the mayor and aldermen.[93] At

[89] See, for instance, *REED: York*. I, 382.

[90] *YCR*, VIII, v.

[91] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 324.

[92] *YCR*, VIII, 51.

[93] *YCR*, VII, 180.

the same time, a bill was attached which ensured that they would be first given before the mayor and aldermen, then before the commoners,[94] though the House Books record no real effort at suppressing bands of travelling players until about the 1590s.[95] This rise of performance in privately owned, not public, spaces signalled a permanent change throughout the cities of the nation. Higgins argues that citizens no longer rubbed shoulders with each other while watching their neighbours perform with the tools and products of their daily work.[96]

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I do not wish to overstate the degree of change that had occurred in the nature of civic drama and public performances in York as a result of the break with Rome. The City had strong pre-existing traditions, including religious and secular performances. Long before the Reformation, as James argues, "the dramatic aspects of the feast were liable to conflict with the processional and liturgical aspects" of the Corpus Christi celebrations specifically in York.[97]

Though such traditional religious performances were suppressed after the Reformation, particularly by royal statute, there were also, as James suggests, a number of other factors unrelated to religious concerns which may also have contributed to the decline of traditional drama, namely the Corpus Christi cycle, in larger cities with guild-

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[94] *YCR*, VIII, 51.

[95] *REED: York*, I, 464 and thereafter.

[96] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 91.

[97] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 6.

based economies such as York.[98] These include the decline and impoverishment of guild organizations, the pauperization of town populations, the changing role and character of town societies, increasing government support of urban oligarchies and the Protestant anti-ritualistic bent which begins to take hold of urban culture throughout the sixteenth century. If, as Higgins, Phythian-Adams and James suggest, the cycle plays reflected contemporary civic affairs, they were to lose much of their meaning and importance as a result of the shift from a gulid- to a market-based economy. Also, the new dramatic fashion of professional playwrights and players "made it impossible for the traditional drama, now seen as primitive, ridiculous and naïve, to project any longer the honour of a town."[99]

The religious plays were not pursued in earnest by the civic elite until at least the second half of the century, and there is evidence to suggest that some of them continued to be presented long after in different contexts, as was the case with some of the Corpus Christi pageants. Civic minstrelsy came under stricter regulation in York as in other towns, though attempts had certainly been made to that effect before the Reformation.[100] The very fact that there were official civic waits in itself is an indication of this. It must be said, however, that the Reformation did effect a good many changes to dramatic performance in York as it had elsewhere. Quite a bit of tension and uncertainty is evident from the 1530s until after the mid-century mark when actual reforms begin to take place in the field. Generally, there was a shift in emphasis from religious to secular mimetic

[98] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 26.

[99] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 26.

[100] Griffiths, *'A Musical Place of the First Quality'*, 74-78.

activity. This is the case, quite simply, because of the strong religious elements found in most aspects of drama proper. Secular civic traditions, such as the public entertainment by the waits, were to continue throughout the period with little change. In any event, the Reformation was not to have the effect on public processions and ceremony that it had on drama.

III
Procession and Ceremonial

In the complex and ever-changing urban environment, procession and ceremony enhanced the "honour" of the City and ensured continuity within its walls by promoting cohesion as well controlling conflict.[1] Processions and popular traditions in York seem to have changed little over the course of the sixteenth century, particularly in comparison to civic drama. Though some of the older secular civic traditions such as the Yule riding came under fire and the religious ones, like the Corpus Christi procession, were often altered or replaced, many survived in much the same form after the Reformation. A pattern begins to emerge: specifically secular civic traditions tended to survive with fewer scars than did their Catholic or non-Christian counterparts. When a "popish" or "heathen" tradition became unacceptable, it was either altered to conform to contemporary religious norms or it was replaced, usually with an older civic and secular tradition which began receiving increased attention, as was the case with the Corpus Christi procession and the Midsummer's Day show of armour.

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The procession with the host for Corpus Christi, sometimes accompanied by a large feast, was distinct from the cycle yet integral to the Corpus Christi celebrations themselves. It had taken place in York, usually on the day or Friday after Corpus Christi Day, almost every year since at least the fourteenth century when it was becoming the

[1] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 69.

most appropriate mode of celebrating the eucharistic feast all over Europe.[2] The tradition began at about the same time or slightly after that of the cycle plays which are first mentioned in the 1370s.[3] It shared the route of the City's Corpus Christi plays at first, but had diverged significantly from it by the mid-fifteenth century.[4] Miri Rubin has found that the gradual insertion of local and political meanings into the eucharistic procession over the course of the fifteenth century was at work everywhere, and York was certainly no exception.[5] Like so many others, this formal procession served the purpose of affirming for the citizens the traditional social and political order within the City. Peter Greenfield agrees with Tittler in asserting that the ceremony involved in such processions as Corpus Christi, and later Midsummer, "involved the entire population in a ritual affirmation of community, yet at the same time, the order in which civic officials marched, and the ceremonial garb they wore, advertised their position and authority."[6] Higgins argues that each group, including individual crafts and religious bodies, "moved into different territory as a way of beating the bounds of [their] particular influence and power."[7] At the same time though, each group was also presenting itself as part of the larger community, or what James refers to as "the body."[8]

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[2] Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 243.

[3] *VCH: York*, 96.

[4] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of English Drama*, 84.

[5] Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 258.

[6] Peter H. Greenfield, "Touring," in Cox and Kastan, *A New History of English Drama*, 252-68, esp. 260.

[7] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of English Drama*, 85.

[8] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 4. Rubin has

The Corpus Christi was York's most important customary procession. The civic and religious elite would parade along with trade guilds and fraternities. The citizens cheered and celebrated as civic dignitaries passed with prominent guild members to the Minster and St. Leonard's Hospital.[9] Religious and secular symbols were employed together, helping to maintain each others position. Though the procession contained strong religious overtones, it was primarily the responsibility of the civic political elite and guild members. The procession itself was a ritual which represented the ordered society to which citizens were being encouraged to conform. The more modest crafts were followed by the wealthier ones. Phythian-Adams has suggested that in general, the order at Corpus Christi processions was determined more by the contribution of each craft to civic office-holding.[10] Then came the civic elite and, last of all, marching beside the host with its attendant clergy was the mayor.[11] This ancient tradition was in itself a *lieu de mémoire*: this is the way things had been in times passed, and it gave them an air of legitimacy.

The processions were so important in the establishment and maintenance of civic deference that the House Books are full or ordinances which ordered Council members to take part in them or be heavily fined. Attendance in proper civic vestments maintained the honour of the City and was proof of solidarity amongst the ruling elite. Failure to

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recently called this hypothesis into question. See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 270-71.

[9] *VCH: York*, 96.

[10] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 63.

[11] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 5.

attend or attendance in improper attire, whether as a result of carelessness or conscious disobedience, undermined the City's position and did not go unpunished.

The guilds themselves were also required to take part, bearing their torches and taking their established places in the procession. The House Books contain many records of ordinances ordering guilds to carry torches in front of them during the procession, fines levied for not having done so, the resolution of disputes, and so on.[12] An edict of 1476, which was similarly repeated over the next hundred years, ordered all those guilds and guild members that took part in the Corpus Christi pageants to also take part in the procession with the Council members under penalty of forty shillings.[13] After jurisdictional disputes between the Weavers and Cordwainers were resolved in 1493, the Council ordered that they should proceed and carry torches together peacefully in the Corpus Christi procession as a symbolic act of reconciliation.[14] It appears as if the torches themselves served as a kind of civic imagery. In any event, the march was certainly a matter of practical contemporary concern.

Partaking in the procession was a matter of conforming to prevailing craft and political norms. In 1492, to cite one example of many, the Cordwainers attended but did not carry their torches as a way of protesting recent ordinances. This symbolic act of civil disobedience was quickly dealt with. The leaders of the "revolt" were imprisoned

[12] *YCR*, III, 199 (index).

[13] *YCR*, I, 6.

[14] *YCR*, II, 96.

and all members of that guild were to be fined. Civic officials were given permission to confiscate the fines directly from the Cordwainers' shops if necessary.[15]

When new guilds were formed or older ones amalgamated, it was important that this be publicly reflected. As James notes, the plays, as "the natural complement of the Corpus Christi procession," made "available a means by which visual and public recognition could be given to changes in the relationships of superiority, dependence or co-operation which existed between occupations."[16] Though he argues that the plays may have been best suited for these purposes, I have found evidence for this in the processions as well. When the Carpenters, Joyners and Carvers wanted to join together and form one guild in 1530, for example, they requested that the Council accept their proposal "for goyng in processyon the next day after Corpus Christi day" so as to make the union official.[17]

The observance of the Corpus Christi procession continued throughout the period of the official Reformation and dissolutions with little change. The aldermen continued to be ordered to have their torches "borne before the processon on the morow next after Corpus Christi day" for the honour of the City or be fined.[18] Crafts were commanded to do likewise and to go in order as "apperyth in the register thereof mayde" or be fined

[15] *YCR*, II, 90. For other examples of fines, disputes and edicts over the carrying of torches by guild members in the Corpus Christi procession, see II, 56, 59, 70, 71, 73 and 93; III, 39.

[16] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body," 15.

[17] *YCR*, III, 132.

[18] *YCR*, IV, 51.

"withoute any pardon."[19] The feasts afterwards continued to be lavish. A few of the expense lists survive. In 1554, for example, the list included large payments for cheese, mutton, chicken and copious amounts of ale and wine, bringing the total cost of this banquet to an exorbitant "v li, xiiij s, and vij d."[20] Though the Corpus Christi procession does not seem to have come directly under fire itself during this period, the fact that the celebrations on Midsummer's Day began to receive more attention may be indicative of some instability.

The celebration of Midsummer's Day had certainly occurred in York long before the Reformation. The character of the celebrations stemmed largely from its pagan origins. According to David Cressy, the ultimate origins of the holiday are as fire and fertility rites celebrating the triumph of the sun and the renewal of summer vegetation,[21] but it eventually came to be part of a kind of sixteenth-century street culture which involved gaming, bonfires and various mimetic activities.[22] As I have mentioned, older secular traditions were often given increased importance after "popish" ones had been suppressed; this gave them a sense of legitimacy in a society which so valued tradition.

After the Reformation, though, the character of the Midsummer's Day celebrations in York changed somewhat. The sheriffs' show of armour came to be a very popular civic tradition, one that emphasized the strength of the City. At first, only the

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[19] *YCR*, IV, 5.

[20] *REED: York*, I, 316-17.

[21] David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 3.

[22] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 25-28.

sheriffs and their men were to ride in their (and later in the City's) armour as a display of force with which the City could support and enforce its will. The first reference to the sheriffs' "ride" occurs in 1517 when it was associated with "Christenmes," and was to be performed according to "the olde ancient custome of this Citie,"[23] but it soon became associated with the Midsummer's celebrations. The first mention of the riding and display of armour on Midsummer's eve occurs in the House Books in 1551:

> Also it is agreyd that the Sheryffes of this Citie shall Ryde vppon Mydsomar Evyn with ther officers a nombre in hornes/ and at other tymes as haith of auncyent tyme accustomyd.[24]

Though the procession of armour had certainly been presented in York before, the use of the term "auncyent" in this passage is again used to validate it as it increased in importance. Similar ordinances proliferate in the House Books from this point on. The processions were taken very seriously: The sheriffs were often ordered to put them on under penalty of heavy fines, or "upon payne" of having their armour "to be forfeited by theym."[25] Indeed, the evidence suggests that the Midsummer show of armour had steadily gained in popularity and importance by the 1550s when it appears as though the Corpus Christi processions had been silenced.[26]

In fact, the riding acted as a bridge between the two celebrations, as it was sometimes ordered to be part of the Corpus Christi Day in the transition period of the

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[23] *REED: York*, I, 215.

[24] *REED: York*, I, 297.

[25] *YCR*, VIII, 36.

[26] *REED: York*, I, 297, 302-03, 307 and 323.

1560s and 70s.[27] It was decided in 1562, for example, that billets would be issued to the sheriffs so as to give them official warning "to provyde for rydyng with harnessed men on Corpus Christi day and Mydsomer even accustomed," and similarly in 1572.[28]

So for a time the show of armour was included in the more important civic processions, but it eventually became associated solely with Midsummer as the Corpus Christi processions went the way of its cycle plays. The last mentions of the Corpus Christi processions proper occur in the during the reign of Mary.[29] Though an exact date as to their final appearance in York cannot be found, they almost certainly fell out of use before the cycle plays ended in 1569.

Dozens of orders to perform the Midsummer show of armour appear in the House Books beginning in about the 1570s, and more often again in the 1580s, as the show became more important and magnificent. In 1584 the sheriffs were to be given gunpowder "to helpe to sette for the showe for the worshipp of this Cyttie" as had been done in the past four years, and as much of the City's armour as could be found was to be lent for the show, implying that some of the citizens were to take part in this civic show of force as well.[30] In 1581 the aldermen and members of the Twenty-Four were ordered to supply three and two able men respectively from then on for the riding.[31] This ordinance appears again in 1582, save that in this instance "men in armour" was

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[27] *YCR*, VII, 47.

[28] *YCR*, VI, 48. See also *REED: York*, I, 341, 356, 365.

[29] *REED: York*, I, 310-11, 320 and 324.

[30] *YCR*, VIII, 76-78.

[31] *YCR*, VIII, 46.

specified.[32] It was not uncommon for citizens to be asked, as they were in 1582, "on midsommer even next [to] attend on Maister sheriffes in their best Armor" or be fined.[33] As time went on, more and more citizens were asked to take part in the show. In 1585 and 1587, all who were capable of attending, including servants, were to do so.[34] Failure to participate was punished with fines just as it had been under the Corpus Christi processions. There were still numerous demands for the aldermen and members of the Twenty-Four to attend, particularly when the show of armour was becoming much more important to the City in the 1580s.[35] The sheriffs were to dress "in ther redde gownes" and carry "the Citties auncient," a new civic ceremonial banner.[36] The show, much like the Corpus Christi procession, served the purpose of instilling deference and reaffirming traditional authority. Rather than playing on traditional religious beliefs and economic structures, though, the show in armour was clearly a display of civic might.

By the 1580s, the religio-civic Corpus Christi celebrations had been in effectively replaced with the secular and civic ones of Midsummer.[37] Tittler has found a similar instance which occurred under Henry Hardware's mayoralty of 1599-1600 in Chester. Hardware disrupted many of the traditional pagan images associated with the

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[32] *YCR*, VIII, 57.

[33] *REED: York*, I, 400.

[34] *YCR*, VIII, 101 and 140.

[35] See for instance *REED: York*, I, 396

[36] *REED: York*, I, 411. For similar ordinances concerning the "ancient," see 464, 469, 480.

[37] *REED: York*, I, xv (intro)

Midsummer's show there, such the giant and the naked boys, the devil in feathers, and the dragon, and replaced them with a man in armour on horseback:

> Recognition of Midsummer was not therefore abandoned but rather folkloric figures which had traditionally featured in its celebration gave way to a semiotic vocabulary more appropriate to the times. The man in armour was as stark a symbol of the city's resolve to maintain public order as could be devised, unambiguous in its intent to civilians and soldiers alike.[38]

Here is a very clear example of the intentional and sharp break in historical imagery, an attempt by the civic elite to construct memory. Phythian-Adams has noticed the remarkably similar transition which occurred in Coventry in the same period.[39]

Similarly in York, the prohibition of traditional pagan and Catholic images, coupled with the introduction or re-emphasis of accepatable "auncyent" traditions, including the show of civic armour and manpower as well as the carrying of the City's "auncient" or banner, attest to this. Due to the lack of evidence, it is difficult to ascertain how successful they were, but thereafter the Corpus Christi procession is rarely mentioned, while the show of armour continued to be popular throughout Elizabeth's reign.[40] This is not to say that many town dwellers did not resent the change, as was seen earlier with the request made by York's commons to continue the plays, and that it was not slow and sometimes painful, but as the discourse and *lieux* changed, preserving the old memory and tradition became increasingly difficult and less likely. A new "auncyent" tradition, and a new memory, had come to take its place.

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[38] Tittler, "Henry Hardware's Moment and the Puritan Attack on Drama," *Early Theatre* 1 (1998), 53.

[39] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 79.

[40] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 27.

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A number of dubious traditions are brought to light under the reign of Mary. When she took the throne in 1553, the powerful conservative Catholic forces in York were quick to reinstate many of the traditional processions "accordyng to the auncient custome of this Citie" which had been suppressed during the reigns of Henry and Edward.[41] The number of ordinances increased dramatically over the course of her reign. The St. George's Day procession and mass were to be held again. The Whit Tuesday procession was to be observed on the Ouse with both the civic and religious elite of the City, including the first mention of the participation of "the Lady Maioresse with Ladies... accordyng to the old laudable custome," and the Corpus Christi procession was to be held with the "torches and other solempnyties according to the old usage."[42] The words "auncient" and "old" are clearly being employed to re-establish the legitimacy of these traditions.

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The riding of Yule and Yule's wife presents us with a particularly interesting and demonstrable example of York's historical imagery in transition. As I have mentioned, older dramatic and mimetic traditions had come under increased scrutiny in the 1560s and 70s. James argues that the folk festival of the Yule riding at York "aroused the same sort of disapproval in Puritan circles as did the cycle plays" for similar reasons, viz. the increasingly popular urban anti-ritualistic bent regarded the observance as increasingly

[41] *YCR*, V, 105. Also, the cost of a dragon interestingly occurs on the list of expenses for the procession in 1554.

[42] *YCR*, V, 105.

superfluous and potentially disruptive.[43] Duffy sees the observance as a ritual of disorder and half-disguised paganism. Such traditions in general were to face increasing opposition at this time throughout the country.[44]

Yule's riding was a popular procession commonly associated with Christmas in York.[45] Ronald Hutton traces its roots to a major feast of the Scandanavian and Norse peoples which marked the new year. Though the exact nature of the festival remains unclear, it was enough to inspire strong condemnation by ecclesiastics in York when the province witnessed a fresh infusion of paganism after the Viking settlemements of the ninth and tenth centuries.[46] By the sixteenth-century, two people in sheepskins disguised as Yule and Yule's wife would parade throughout the City handing out cakes and nuts to the accompaniment of music and dancing. They were followed by the City's children who, judging by complaints recorded about the amount of noise and misrule they created, must have enjoyed the spectacle very much.

A curious broadside dating from around 1570 attempted to defend the "Yulic" tradition in acceptably orthodox terms, claiming that the tradition is an essentially Christian one in origin.[47] It seems likely that it was written in response to a growing number of criticisms. The broadside contains two poems followed by an explanation of

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[43] James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," 29.

[44] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 581-82.

[45] The following description is taken from a detailed account from c. 1570 in *REED: York*. I, 359-62.

[46] Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6-7.

[47] *REED: York*. I, 359-62.

the "true" Christian meaning behind the various images and traditions associated with the riding. The first poem strongly ties the tradition with the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The author rejoices and gives thanks in six four-line stanzas for the gift of God's son, making no reference to the riding save for the refrain, which reads:

> *The ayre therefore resounds,* Yule, Yule, *a Babe is borne,*
> *O bright and blazing day, to saue mankind that was forlorne*[48]

"Yule" is clearly being used as an exclamation of Christian thanksgiving. The author seems to be establishing that Yulic imagery is a metaphor, an acceptable vehicle for the worship of Christ. The prominent Christian imagery in this work serves to clearly affirm the compatibility of Yulic celebrations and Christian doctrine.

The second poem, entitled "*The meaning of* Yule, *in Yorke,*" addresses the Yulic imagery in more specific terms. The author posits that the term "cometh of Yulath, that is to say, A babe is borne for vs,"[49] though this is quite unlikely. It may in fact be a descendant of the Old English "geol" which refers to a heathen feast which lasted twelve days, later referring to Christmas Day or Christmastide.[50] On the other hand, Hutton suggests that it derives from the Gothic "heul" or Anglo-Saxon "hweal" meaning wheel or the root-word which yielded the expression "jolly,"[51] or again as Cressy postulates, it

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[48] *REED: York,* I, 359.

[49] *REED: York,* I, 360.

[50] J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), XX, 784.

[51] Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun,* 6.

might stem from the Anglo-Saxon midwinter month of "Giuli."[52] The ultimate Teutonic origins of this word are obscure, but they are unlikely to be Hebraic.

Rather than seeing the peculiarity of the tradition in York as evidence of its unorthodoxy, the author sees it as a blessing to the City, a sign of divine favour:

> It was not without cause, that God gaue the grace,
> With *Yule* to welcome his deare sonne, who Sathan did deface,
> Triumph O Yorke, reioyce, this priueledge is thine,
> In this all other townes, thou doest, and Citties ore' shine.[53]

The sheepskin which Yule wore is said to be a representation "the lambe of God which Iewes on crosse did reare," and the cake "betokeneth very well,/ The bread of life which came from heauen in earth vs to dwell." The children who followed the procession were like the angels who praised and sounded trumpets in celebration of Christ's birth. The nuts were in fact symbols of Jesus himself who was of "faire *Iessies* branch." The nuts were cracked as he had been "crackt vpon the crosse."

The reader is then presented with a glossary of terms and symbols in prose. The author seems to be pushing the limits of credulity here, if he hasn't already, as he expands upon what he argues to be the actual Christian meaning behind much of the Yulic imagery. To begin with, the "man wrongfully called Yule, and his wife" are in fact supposed to be representations of "true Isralites crying *yule*, and rejoicing for their deliuerence from Sathan, through Iesus Christ,"[54] as opposed to the "Iewes" mentioned earlier. The children "crying after them do signifie our Children and Successors, who

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[52] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 2.

[53] *REED: York*, I, 360.

[54] *REED: York*, I, 361.

shall celebrate this Feast to the worlds end. with ioyfull & triumphall clamours." All the celebrations and "musicke, resemble the mirth and melody of Angels."

A number of the other Yulic symbols are explained thereafter, but perhaps the most interesting and incredible attempt at reconciliating this tradition with attempts to reform at this time is the explanation of the nuts which are handed out throughout the procession. The immaculate conception is accounted for:

> Nuts casten abroad, puts vs in remembrance of that most noble Nut our sauiours blessed body, springing miraculously from that beautifull branch of *Iesse*, the most pure and imaculate virgin. As it was possible (according to Saint Austen) for the rod of Aaron, to bring forth Nuts, against the common course of nature. So was it possible for the blessed virgin, to bring forth that most excellent nut our sweete Sauiour, contrary to the lawe of nature...[55]

The author goes on to explain how the nut is also a symbol of the trinity:

> For the Nut hath in it body a triple vnion, that is to wit, *Testam* the shell, signifying the bones; and *Corium et nucteum*, the skinne, and kirnell signifying the flesh & inward soule of our Sauiour.

The above-mentioned explanations clearly demonstrate that the author is trying to convince his readers that the riding of Yule in York should continue because the imagery, when "properly" decoded, reveals the tradition to be in harmony with Christian doctrine.

This attempt at reconciliation between the riding of Yule at Christmas and contemporary reform sentiment is based on philosophical and theological premises which are shaky at best. It was to come under fire by persons no less than the Archbishop of York "and certayne others the Quenes Maiesties Commyssionars," who in 1572 (the same year as the last performance of the Pater Noster) wrote a letter to the mayor and aldermen protesting about this "very rude and barbarouse custome maynteyned in this

[55] *REED: York*. I. 361.

Citie and in no other Citie or towne of this realme." They protested that Yule and his wife rode "throughe the Citie very undecently and uncomely, drawing great concurses of people after them to gaise, often tymes comyttyng other enormyties" and drew people away from divine service.[56] The broadside, like so many other attempts at reconciliation throughout the country at this time, was unsuccessful; after reading the letter, the Council agreed "that no disguysed persons called Yule & Yule's wif nor yet the Sheryffes Seriantes shall ryde this yere not any yere frome hensforth."[57] The records then fall silent on the issue.

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There were many other traditions, for which less evidence exists, that were not to survive the sixteenth century. An ordinance recorded in Archbishop Grindal's Register is worth quoting at length here:

> ffor the laytie
> ...
> Item that the minister and churchewardens shall not suffer anye lordes of misrule or sommer Lordes or ladyes or anye disguised persons or others in christmasse or at may gammes or anye minstrels morrie dauncers or others at Ryshebearinges or at any other tymes to come vnreverentlye into anye churche or chappell or churchyeard and there daunce or playe anye vnseemlye partes with scoffes ieastes wanton gestures or rybaulde talke namely in the tyme of divine service or of anye sermon.[58]

This command was made under threat of excommunication and other ecclesiastical censures. The passage is quite unique in that it contains references to many of York's folkloric traditions. Phythian-Adams has found that the office of mayor was

[56] *REED: York*, I, 369.

[57] *REED: York*, I, 370.

[58] *REED: York*, I, 358.

institutionally ridiculed at Christmas by a Lord of Misrule as well, a tradition which in fact confirmed and reinforced the prevailing political order by reversing it: "in disfiguring the structure temporarily, the participants were in fact accepting the *status quo* in the long run." Such observances were means of "canalizing traditional periods of licence."[59] This attempt to put an end to them in York occurs at about the same time as the attacks on Yule's riding. Again, passages such as these indicate that the impulse to reform was growing in and around the 1570s, which of course supports Collinson's position. Though it stands to reason that one proclamation could not possibly have ended them, such popular traditions were soon to fade into obscurity. The fate of the Corpus Christi processions has already been noted. Like it, as well as the tradition of Yule's riding, most of these traditions were not able to weather the reforming impulses of the second half of the sixteenth century, but some others did.

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There was a degree of continuity in the performance, but perhaps not the meaning, of a civic procession known as the "beating" or "riding of the bounds" over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Since the Middle Ages, the mayor and his "bredren," along with "iiij or ij of evere Craft within the said Citie, ij old and ij yong, or j old and the othir yong" and a host of commoners, would ride annually from point to point around the City, defining its limits and traditional rights.[60] One of the principal ceremonial duties of the sheriffs was to be part of this riding, "during which they

[59] The "Lord of Misrule" himself appears usually to have belonged to the office-holding class. Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 67-69.

[60] *YCR*, I, 113.

proclaimed the civic by-laws at certain specified places within the liberties of the City" and to give a feast for the Corporation at their own expense.[61] The addition of the forest of Galtres to the City in 1482 was made official only when it had been duly and ceremoniously included as part of the procession's route.[62] References to the riding are common in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The older members of each craft were in attendance so as to confirm that the traditional rights were maintained and that the same boundaries were ridden. The young were present so as to be able to serve in this capacity in the future. Memory was being intentionally shaped and preserved. This tradition relied heavily on historical imagery and physical landmarks which were used as reminders, or *lieux de mémoire*. Though steeped in historical imagery, the riding of the bounds also had the immense contemporary importance of affirming rights of pasturage and land use. One need simply look at the degree of unrest amongst the commoners whenever an annual riding was cancelled, or the numerous times attendance was forced under penalty of fines.[63]

The tone of the references to the riding begins to change around the time of the official Reformation, yet another example of the uncertainty of the times. Typically, there are many more references for the 1530s and 40s, the majority of them ordering that the bounds be ridden in a given year.[64] In 1548 the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs, members of the Twenty-Four and:

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[61] *REED: York*, I, xii.

[62] *YCR*, I, 63.

[63] *VCH: York*, 315; *YCR*, I, 71.

[64] *YCR*, IV, 31, 95 and 181.

> dyverse honest persens ... dyd view and ryde the lymytts and bounds of the said Citie accordyng to the tenour, forme and effecte of the chartes registryd and other auncyent wrytyngs of recordes of the said Citie by the discression and advyce of the Counsell lernyd of the said Citie.[65]

The Council seems to be reassuring the townsmen in writing that they were following the traditional route, indicating the recent conflict over this point. The need officially to order the procession may be an indication of the uncertainty which surrounded the tradition at the time, as well as the fact that enclosures of common lands were happening more often. A riot occurred in 1539 at the riding when it appears that certain common lands were not recognized as a result of such an enclosure.[66]

References to the riding appear in the House Books in 1549 and 1553. The ordinances simply state that the bounds were not to be ridden in those years "for dyvers consyderacons."[67] The last reference in the period appears in 1566 when the citizens requested and obtained a revival of the practice "for that we may knowe our lybertyes and loose no part of our ryght."[68] After that, the next mention of the tradition appears in the House Books of 1693, then only a handful of times until the nineteenth century.[69] It seems reasonable to assume that the riding of the bounds ended in the mid-sixteenth century for a while, or was observed sporadically at best.

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[65] *YCR*, IV, 181.

[66] *YCR*, IV, 38.

[67] *YCR*, V, 22 and 94.

[68] Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York," 85.

[69] *VCH: York*, 315.

Though Hargrove, an indefatigable antiquarian, curiously fails to make any mention of it, Drake hints briefly at the riding. He takes his reader on a walking tour of the city limits, doing so from memory by proceeding from one landmark to another, including stones and crosses, as if he had it committed to memory in this way. Though no direct mention of the procession is made, he stops in his tour only to note the only two surviving common pastures, bearing a striking resemblance of the sheriffs' ancient duty. He also remarks that when a new boundary had been agreed upon, it "was rode," as if he were taking the riding for a given.[70] So either it ended for a time altogether or its importance began to diminish, not as a result of the Reformation, but of the increased number of successful enclosures and as common pasture within the city limits proper came to be a thing of the past.

It fails to make frequent appearances in the records because it lost much of its meaning and importance. K. J. Allison states that the tradition continued until 1830, but that in its later years, it had become a festive occasion, being more of a civic celebration than a confirmation of rights which had long since fallen into disuse. Halts were made along the way and the train of citizens was given cake and ale. On the first day the junior officer at mace would carry a few dozen of these cakes and a six-gallon barrel of ale on his course, which must have been to the amusement of the spectators.[71] I have no doubt that such an observance existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it seems only loosely based on the practical and meaningful tradition of earlier times. It has more the air of revival than continuity. So the question of whether the tradition continued in

[70] Drake, *Eboracum*, 244-45.

[71] *VCH: York*, 318.

the second half of the sixteenth century seems less important than the fact that it likely lost much of its contemporary significance.

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There are a number of examples of civic and largely secular popular traditions which came under fire as well in the period after the Reformation, but emerged largely unscathed. "Fish" or "Fishing Day" was a tradition in York which survived into the sixteenth century. The celebration was an annual one which involved the whole town. In essence, the "Mayor and his Brethren and Consell" would fish in the Ouse and then put on a banquet, though it is unclear as to who was invited to the feast.[72] One might compare this to other modern traditions such as driving the last spike on a rail line or ground-breaking at the site of a new edifice; York's civic officials were symbolically partaking in the labour of the citizenry and thereby strengthening existing bonds while reaffirming the City's social composition. More importantly, as Palliser suggests, Fish Day appears to be an instance where civic officials symbolically reaffirmed traditional fishing rights over the Ouse.[73]

The first mention of Fish Day is in an ordinance which appears in the Corporation minutes in 1542, calling for the observation of the tradition that year, though Palliser proposes that the observance was a Medieval survival.[74] A similar enactment appears in 1547,[75] hinting that the tradition, like others forms of popular tradition, was coming under

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[72] *YCR*, V, 183.

[73] Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York," 85.

[74] Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York," 84.

[75] *YCR*, IV, 79 and 157.

question and closer scrutiny after the official Reformation. Legislation was introduced in 1558 which called for a cutback on spending related to civic ceremonies and feasts which included Fish Day, though this was of course part of a general demand for the reduction of spending, perhaps as much the result of the increasing visibility of poverty as a desire to reduce the lasciviousness of such traditional celebrations.[76]

The next reference to Fish Day is found in the House Books in 1574. This of course is not to suggest that it had not been regularly observed or questioned over the past thirty years. These references do, however, coincide with the general pattern of interest in Late Medieval popular tradition, which peaks both after the official Reformation in the 30s and 40s, then again in the 60s and 70s. In any case, the 1574 ordinance commanded the mayor, recorder, aldermen, Twenty-Four and the chamberlains to fish in the Ouse "accordyng to their olde custome" and put on a banquet afterwards.[77]

There are other indications that Fish Day came under fire at this time. A letter by Henry Hastings, earl of Huntingdon and Lord President of the Council in the North, was received by York's Civic Council in 1577 defending the holiday and asking Council members to continue observing it, saying that it is only done "of good pollycie," that it does not "tend to the mayneteynninge or reviving of anie popish superstition," and that it "hath in yt no smack at all of popery, but is grounded onelie upon policie to procure a plentie wher dearth is growne."[78] Further evidence suggests that local religious agitators were responsible for the uncertainty over the holiday's future, and that Huntingdon, as

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[76] *REED: York*. I, 325-7.

[77] *YCR*, VII, 95.

[78] *YCR*, VII, 141.

someone who Palliser argues had taken a keen interest in the City's prosperity, had the backing of the Crown in this matter.[79] Huntingdon was an ardent Protestant who actively pursued and imprisoned Catholic recusants. He also supported the repression of traditional civic observances, such as the Pater Noster and Yule riding, which were effectively terminated in his inaugural year of 1572.[80] Fish Day, he argued, was in the public's interest and not at all "popish."

One must also keep in mind that the Rebellion of the Northern Earls, or Rising in the North, of 1569, as Paul Slack argues, sent "a tremor through the propertied classes," resulting in the first coherent English poor law of 1572.[81] It impelled local activity throughout the country, but especially in the north. It seems likely that Huntingdon's defence was part of an effort at poor releif in the City.

There may yet be another reason why the annual observance was defended by Huntingdon. There came a diminished consumer demand for fish brought about by the Reformation legislation which removed meatless days from the English calendar.[82] As the first concrete references to Fish Day in York appear in the 1540s, perhaps the holiday was at least in part designed as a "political lent" to help the local fishing industry.[83]

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[79] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 55.

[80] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 247-48.

[81] Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Longman, 1988), 124.

[82] Tittler, "The English Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century: The Case of Great Yarmouth," *Albion* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1977), 56.

[83] David Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the later Tudors, 1547-1603* (New York: Longman, 1992), 345 and 373.

Legislation on the national level certainly began to be issued soon thereafter. A statute had been passed in 1549 that directed the English to eat fish on Friday, Saturday, the Ember Days, Vigils and all of Lent, which was reinforced in 1553.[84] A proclamation in favour of the observation of this political Lent was then issued in 1559 and again in 1561. In 1563 the policy was enforced with greater stringency, and Wednesdays were added as well.[85] It seems likely that Fish Day would have been defended by Huntingdon as part of this larger national policy.

In any event, strict observance of the tradition was ordered by the Council in 1578.[86] The last reference to Fish Day appears in the Corporation minutes in 1580. Again, the tradition was to be observed, banquet included. Perhaps the lack of evidence from this point is an indication that the controversy subsided and that Fish Day continued to be observed. The fact that the last *known* reference approves of the celebration does not indicate that this position was to prevail, though it seems likely that it did, much like other secular civic *lieux*.

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A number of processions which relied heavily on historical imagery were clearly preserved in York throughout the period in question. Phythian-Adams argues that, apart "from the possibility of future promotion and the actuality of present influence... the

[84] *The Statutes of the Realm*, IV (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1963), 424-26; Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Roclamations*, I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 539. See also W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times* (1903; reprint, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), II, 68-72.

[85] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Roclamations*, II (1969), 108-09 and 163-65.

[86] *YCR*, VII, 141 and 167-68.

exaggerated social precedence of ceremonial occasions was an office-holder's basic reward" for their time-consuming and unremunerative work.[87]

Descriptions of the ceremony surrounding the death of York's mayors while in office remain remarkably similar throughout the period. Electing a new mayor then becomes an obvious problem. The Corporation records make mention of the ceremony surrounding the election of a new mayor usually only when the former one has died in office. Ceremonies and oaths are usually recorded in the minutes in these cases, perhaps to ensure that proper tradition was being observed. In 1492, the new mayor, along with his sword and mace bearers, was "sworne in the forme of auncient tyme acustomed" in the Common Hall for all to see.[88]

Consider the following characteristic examples. Mayor John Feribby died in 1491 while in office. The sword and mace were carried before the casket in procession to its final resting place. William White was chosen as his replacement. Then, the "wand of honour tipped with silver was borne before him to his house."[89] In 1508 the mayor, Sir John Petty, was buried "with swerd and mase born by the esquyers afor the body and corse and sex Aldermen beryng the sayd corse to the sayd churche." In 1538 Mayor John Shawe died in office as well. He was buried "after the auncient and laudable custome of the said Citye," that is to say that the casket was led by the sword- and mace-bearers, appropriate regalia in hand. "Maister Northe" was then elected and sworn in before the citizens in the Common Hall, again "accordyng to the auncyent custome of the said

[87] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 62.

[88] *YCR*, II, 81. For other such instances, see *YCR* II, 55

[89] *YCR*, II, 65.

City," and the commons took an oath of fidelity. Afterwards, the mayor was ceremoniously accompanied home where he gave a feast "accordyng to the said auncyent custome." [90] When Mayor Edmund died in 1576, Ralph Hall was elected. After the election, "the said newe Mayour, having the sworde and guylted mace and the sylver maces caried before hym" followed by the recorder, aldermen, sheriffs and members of the Twenty-Four, proceeded to his home, though no banquet is mentioned.[91] Even when the new mayor-elect in 1564, James Simpson, was too ill to attend the ceremony, the serving mayor Thomas Appleyard and the court attended to him in his house where the official ceremonies and swearing in took place.[92] This is an indication of the immense contemporary significance and immediate necessity of the tradition.

References to mayoral processions and feasts in the House Books seem to increase slightly in number and length after the 1530s or so, but this is largely due to the changing character of the records themselves. The only tension involving the mayoral feasts came in the last half of the sixteenth century in the form of orders to keep the expenses at reasonable levels, probably due to the visible extravagance of such banquets in an economy that was only beginning to recover. In 1558, for instance, mayoral and other civic processions and feasts were ordered as always, but were to have limited budgets in such lean years.[93] It was ordered in 1580 as well that new mayors were no

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[90] *YCR*, IV, 27-28.

[91] *YCR*, VII, 127-28.

[92] *YCR*, VI, 73-74.

[93] *YCR*, V, 177.

longer to serve venison at the feast or pay a fine of £10, an enormous sum.[94] So the electoral traditions were deemed important enough to continue despite hard times. Other than this, the mayoral feast continued to be observed much as it had since the fifteenth century. Both this and the mayoral burial tradition were almost exclusively of a civic and secular nature, and both were to survive the sixteenth century. Drake describes the mayoral processions of his era in remarkably similar terms, regalia, procession, feast and all.[95]

It might seem unusual that one of the traditions which was least touched by the Reformation and its after-effects was the civic procession to York Minster. Calls for Council members to follow the mayor in procession in proper civic attire for the honour of the City are relatively common throughout the century. In 1476, a typical ordinance calls for all aldermen, members of the Twenty-Four, the sheriffs and other "bredren" of the City "for the honour of this city [to] go with the Mayor for the time being to all Processions in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter, when summoned – under penalty of 2d."[96] In 1578, to take an example from the other end of the spectrum, they were ordered to go to the Minster "decently apparailed" in scarlet and crimson "upon payne of such fyne or punnyshment as my L. Mayour shall thynke good."[97]

If any change is detectable, it would be that mayoral processions to the Minster became more common. The sheriffs were ordered in 1586 to attend the Minster in scarlet

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[94] *YCR*, VIII, 26.

[95] Drake, *Eboracum*, 185.

[96] *YCR*, I, 2.

[97] *YCR*, VII, 182.

gowns whenever the mayor went, on every Sunday and feast day, "from the Lord Maior house to the Minstor to Sermon & after Sermone, from the Minster to the Lord Maiors house."[98] The possibility that processions to the Minster had become more of an everyday occurrence is not as significant as the reality that they remained important and that descriptions of them remain remarkably similar throughout the sixteenth century.

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It has already been pointed out that members of the City Council were often ordered to attend civic functions in proper civic vestments from the fifteenth straight through until the end of the sixteenth century. These ordinances were usually in reference to a specific event or observance, but the City went so far on occasion to issue general commands. Civic officials were commanded "at all tymes herafter come to counseills, offerants, processions, sermons and other assembles" or be heavily fined.[99] It seems as if there were always a few Council members who did not realize, or did not seem to mind, that their non-conformity in such matters was an attack on the honour of the City.

In 1534, two discharged aldermen, Robert Elwald and William Dogeson, were restored to dignity by the Council. The manor which this was done was as much a condition of their readmittance as an official act of acceptance:

> ...they frome now furth in all assemblys and congregacons hereafter within the lybertys of this City shall have the auncyent and superoryte of the xxiiij that have beyn Shiryffs and to goe next the Shiryffs bothe in processyons and at other assemblys.[100]

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[98] *YCR*, VIII, 126-7.

[99] *YCR*, II, 96.

[100] *YCR*, III, 167.

They had to conform to the traditions of the City in public, a very real declaration of their loyalties.

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One of the qualifications for surviving the Reformation (along with the trend to control and repress processions and popular traditions) might include a lack of specifically pagan or unorthodox religious elements, subversive elements such as the *Coronation of Our Lady* or the idolatry involved in paying respect to Yule and his wife at the birth of Christ. After all, was the Corpus Christi not replaced with a clearly civic and secular show of armour? Were the surviving and re-emphasized traditions such as the mayor's feast and the sheriffs' show of armour not specifically civic and secular as well? This certainly seems to be a valid point, and one that Phythian-Adams has found to be the case in Coventry as well.[101] What must be noted here is that though the Reformation ushered in numerous changes in the realm of civic processions and popular traditions, rendering them more secular in nature, a specifically civic tradition existed well before, one which was capable of persisting to some degree.

[101] Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 80.

IV
Regalia and Insignia

It has already been noted that a number of visual symbols of power had been employed in York's processions and civic ceremonies before the Reformation. Ancient civic swords, maces and traditional vestments, among other things, served the purpose of legitimizing the present order by emphasizing precedence and right, or "auncienty." No doubt the citizens of Faversham had this in mind when, as was noted earlier, they made reference in their assembly book to the making of "a new ancient staffe" to replace the old one.[1]

Historical imagery in the form of civic regalia and insignia in York seems to have been affected the least by the Reformation. This is not to say that there were no changes. Pre-Reformation York had its relics and religious icons like most other medieval towns. Some were well known and enhanced its honour and prestige, but they were not employed in conjunction with the civic authorities for this specific purpose as the aforementioned religious plays and processions had been. A number of civic swords, maces, banners, wands, vestments and various other kinds of visuals did, however, meet these requirements. Unlike many post-Reformation English towns, to which these kinds of regalia were new, such images had been used in York since at least the fourteenth century, probably because the need for civic order and deference had presented itself earlier in York as it grew in size and importance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[1] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 273.

In any event. it continued to use the same kinds of regalia and insignia throughout the sixteenth century with little change. Though new swords and maces were sometimes obtained as gifts. or old ones refashioned, their essential function of instilling civic deference was altered very little throughout the period.

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Tittler very briefly mentions that post-Reformation civic regalia:

> served to bind the generations in much the same way as the sight and use of church plate had done (and in some cases continued to do). In fact, the destruction of a very substantial amount of traditional church plate and other material accoutrements of traditional worship probably made the local possession of civic plate and regalia even more important than before.[2]

Though strictly speaking such religious images were not regalia, they served a similar purpose in the Medieval City. They often had strong local associations, were well-known to citizens, and regularly attracted pilgrims and travellers from great distances. They therefore served to enhance the honour of the City.

As I pointed out, order and deference were goals shared between the secular elite and the clergy in pre-Reformation towns. Brigden argues that participating in the mass, taking oaths. joining fraternities as well as partaking in communal religious observance and charitable giving in London helped to form a communal sense of social obligation. In order to accomplish this, the Church evoked the "power of conscience."[3] A common method used to keep the peace and maintain control was to invoke a memory of the past

[2] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 272-73.

[3] Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London," 67-86.

which was favourable to the interests of the present, one which included the clergy as well as the civic elite.

One should not forget the increasing importance of rembering the dead in the fifteenth century and the prayers and gifts offered to the souls of former members of the religious community as listed on the bede-roll.[4] The reading of the bede-roll presented for imitation a "pattern of piety, and instilled in the hearers a sense of the parish and its worship as a continuing reality."[5] In this way, and through the manipulation of images of the dead, Catholicism encouraged deference among the living. Palliser argues that in York, it "was the parochial unit which gave the citizens their strongest sense of continuity with the past" and "which had the primary claim on [their] loyalties."[6] The destruction of traditional images was therefore a deliberate attempt to erase memory and make a break with the past.

Aston argues that some politically-useful imagery was lost as a result of the holocaust of traditional iconography. She argues that it was one of the more important aspects of English consciousness and sense of identity. The iconoclasm Henry's reign was an intentional attempt to make a break with the past.[7]

In York as in England generally, Medieval religious images were solemnly displayed in public processions for all to see. Torches were carried "in the procession

[4] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 329-30.

[5] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 337.

[6] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 228.

[7] Aston, "English Ruins and English History" 231-34 and 254-55.

around the body of Christ on the same feast of Corpus Christi."[8] They probably served the practical funtion of illumintion, though there is evidence to suggest that they were images in themsleves by the sixteenth century, as was noted earlier. The Corpus Christi guild was also in possession of an extremely rich and elaborate shrine which was paraded at the procession.[9]

Other examples include a shrine at the tomb of Archbishop Scrope, who was beheaded in 1405, which was visited by thousands in the fifteenth century as numerous miraculous healings were said to have occurred there.[10] Also, the skull of a certain St. William, a twelfth-century archbishop of York, was kept by itself in a reliquary of silver, gilt, and covered in jewels. It was the City's greatest and most famous relic, so much so that it was brought before Princess Margaret, daughter of Henry VII, for her to kiss when she visited the City in 1503.[11]

Palliser discusses the effects of the Reformation on York:

> On the customary moulds of thought they must have been shattering, but they were almost totally unrecorded. The material effects are more obvious: all the monesteries, friaries, chantries and religious guilds, and a third of the parish churches, were swept away, accompanied probably by both grammar schools (temporarily) and several hospitals (permanently), and by most church plate, jewels and images.[12]

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[8] *REED: York*. I. 6 and 164.

[9] *REED: York*. I. 50-51 and II. 643 and 770.

[10] *VCH: York*. 346.

[11] *VCH: York*. 346.

[12] Palliser, *The Reformation in York*. 29.

These and other such religious images, which were at least partially supposed to instil civic pride and deference through the veneration of tradition and the past, were cut short as a result of the Reformation. Was there a "void" that needed filling?

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As was the case with Henry VII's visit to York in 1486, secular civic regalia and insignia, including swords, maces and vestments, were often employed as an assertion of civic power to outside authorities since Medieval times. Ordinances to display such imagery abound in the Corporation minutes for occasions varying from the visits of bishops, Scottish ambassadors, landed gentry and nobility, royalty and so on. When Queen Margaret visited York in 1503, she was greeted outside the City, and then escorted to it by the sheriffs "so beryng theyr wandes tofore hir."[13] Upon entering the City, she was preceded by the civic mace while the mayor had the sword carried before him. The mayor's footmen were ordered to wear their civic vestments with "the armez of the Citie and his awn [the mayor's] armes."[14] The Corporation then offered her "a goodly standyng silver pece" engraved with the arms of the City.

An interesting episode then appears to have occurred between Sir William Conyers, sheriff of Yorkshire, and the mayor. The latter protested at Conyers' bearing "his rodde tofore the Queene" in the City as it was a political act, the meaning of which would surely not have been lost on the Queen and other spectators.[15] When ordered to lower his colours, he reluctantly agreed, only to raise them again immediately upon

[13] *REED: York*. I, 195.

[14] *YCR* II, 185-88.

[15] *YCR*, II, 189.

passing the City's limits. Such a tense situation serves to show the very real contemporary significance of regalia as a symbol of power and authority.

Save this incident, similar receptions were given to official visitors throughout the period, including the Queen of Scots in 1516.[16] Henry VIII came to York in 1541. This visit is particularly interesting as it occurred only a few years after the Pilgrimage of Grace. This recent civil disobedience, which as Palliser suggests had just as much support with the civic elite as it did with the general citizenry,[17] must have weighed heavily on the minds of the former who were surely rather anxious to affirm their loyalty to the Crown. There was to be "also goodly faynes with the kynges armes the Quenes armes & the prynce grace armes & with the armes of the City & other proper conceyttes" at "Mikellyth barre" where the procession was to enter the City.[18] Upon its arrival, the mayor and "hys Brederin felle downe of ther kneys" and addressed Henry as, among other such things, "in Eyrth supreme hede of the Churche of England," and then formally and publicly apologized for being "your Subiectes layte offendours in thies North partes" as they had "traitoryously offendyd" him with "the most odyous offence of traterous rebellyon."[19] The Corporation's principal gift to him was "a cupp of sylver double gylt with armes of this City."[20] This example may not be particularly representative because

[16] *YCR*, III, 49.

[17] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 50.

[18] *REED: York*, I, 273.

[19] *REED: York*, I, 273-74.

[20] *YCR*, IV, 67.

of the apparent desire to re-affirm loyalty to the Crown, but even still familiar regalia was employed.

There is a reference to a reception held for the Lord President of the Council of the North upon his return to York in 1561. Thirty horses were to be prepared, and the mayor, aldermen, members of the Twenty-Four and chamberlains, dressed in the appropriate civic garments, were also each to bring "one hable horse furnisshed with brydle and sadle."[21] References to the official greeting of Lord Presidents become fewer, and they seem to become less important as York became more comfortable with and used to the Council's presence.[22] Though there were minor variations, the same kinds of regalia were used in the same kinds of ways when visitors were formally received into the City throughout the sixteenth century, whether it be to assert a political position or to make amends.

Regalia was also commonly used on routine civic occasions for the citizens' benefit. The mayor, when in office, represented the dignity of the City. To make this aspect of his duty clear, both to himself and others, he was given a sergeant-at-mace to precede him at the end of the fourteenth century, and another to follow him with a sword. Ordinances to this affect abound:

> ...that the sword berer with the sword and the mais, and all the sargaunts with thar maisis, shall atend apon my sayd lord the Mair... and bryng hym hom with the mais and the sword afore hym.[23]

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[21] *YCR*, VI, 22.

[22] See, for instance, *YCR*, VII, 17.

[23] *YCR*, I, 87.

Sheriffs were also accompanied by such ceremonial trappings, but usually only on official and public occasions.[24] One need simply look in the index of the first volume of Raine's *York Civic Records* to see the number of offices relegated to civic historical regalia: the mayor's mace bearer, the esquire to the mace, the mayor's six servants-at-mace (including the sergeant-at-mace), the sheriff's sergeant-at-mace, the sword bearer, the gentlemen to the sword, and the yeoman sergeant-at-mace.[25] Though many of these offices were largely ceremonial, the fact that so many existed in the 1480s and that standards had been set for eligibility[26] serves to indicate that York already had well-established civic images and traditions long before the Reformation.

The first known civic sword was in use by 1439.[27] It was redecorated in 1586, as recorded on the blade, and was frequently repaired.[28] The great York benefactor and Lord Mayor of London Sir Martin Bowes donated the second in 1545, which immediately became the one most often used. Contrary to Drake's opinion, these were York's only two civic swords.[29]

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[24] *REED: York*. I, xi.

[25] *YCR*, I, 189.

[26] *YCR*, I, 37.

[27] *VCH: York*, 546.

[28] See, for instance, *YCR*, I, 31; IV, 62.

[29] The first sword was owned by Emperor Sigismund, who gave it to Richard II in 1389. Richard gave in turn it to the city. Drake recognizes Sigismund's sword, but then mistakenly assumes Richard gave the city another. See Drake, *Eboracum*, 222.

Civic swords, much like maces, were carried before the mayor on official civic occasions, on Sundays and almost anytime he went about town. There is even an isolated reference to it being lent out. Sir Oswald Willesthrop was formally permitted to borrow the civic sword and to have it borne before him in 1558, suggesting that it had quite an aura of respectability about it.[30]

A mace or maces were probably borne before the mayor and sheriffs before the privilege was officially granted in a charter of 1396.[31] The only indication that any new mace was fashioned occurs in 1580,[32] and not again until well after the period, but the original mayoral and sheriffs' maces were of course kept in good repair.[33] There is an instance in 1502 where it appears that "the mayce tofore the Maier [was] new maid with a diademe,"[34] and again in 1541 "the great mace [was] to be newe giltyd."[35] The point here is that there does not seem to be a change in the upkeep of old or purchase of new civic maces in York as a result of the Reformation.

It was important for the honour of the City that the mayor and sheriffs have their maces borne before them on public occasions. George Essex, sheriff in 1500, was fined

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[30] *YCR*, V, 171.

[31] "...mayor might carry his sword erect save in the king's presence and the mace-bearers of the mayor and sheriff were to have maces of silver or gilt adorned with the arms of England" *VCH: York*, 69.

[32] *VCH: York*, 546; *YCR*, VIII, 32.

[33] See, for instance, *VCH: York*, 70.

[34] *YCR*, II, 171.

[35] *YCR*, IV, 62.

as "he failed to have his mace borne before him when visiting a vintner."[36] There were many similar instances.[37]

Both the mayoral sword and mace were ceremoniously carried before the casket of John Ferriby who died in office in 1491.[38] In 1508, Sir John Petty, Lord Mayor, was buried "with sword and mase born by the esquyers afor the body and corse."[39] So it seems as if civic swords and maces were used in much the same way and as often before the Reformation as after. In fact, there were at first six sergeants-at-mace, and later only four.[40]

Though some of the civic regalia enjoyed by a few of England's larger towns predated the Reformation, regalia-making came to be "a virtual cottage industry" in the period between 1540 and 1640 as a host of growing communities were incorporated.[41] Here is a particularly demonstrable instance where the evidence for York does not apply as well to Tittler's model (a point which Tittler himself suggests[42]), perhaps because a city like York had already enjoyed traditions of self-government long before the Reformation.

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[36] *VCH: York*, 546.

[37] See, for instance, *YCR*, I, 25

[38] *YCR*, II, 65.

[39] *YCR*, III, 25.

[40] *VCH: York*, 546.

[41] Tittler, "Reformation, Civic Culture and Collective Memory in English Provincial Towns," 289.

[42] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns*, 18.

Civic gowns had long been a part of York's visual imagery. Each office had its prescribed dress. Wearing these clothes showed solidarity and co-operation amongst the civic elite, but it also served the perhaps greater function of again enhancing the honour of the City. Orders for officials to wear civic vestments on official occasions proliferate the House Books, both long before and after the Reformation. These were accompanied by threats of imposing heavy fines upon any dissidents. The wearing of civic garments on appropriate occasions was indeed of very real contemporary importance to the City.

Council members were ordered to wear their civic vestments, usually of scarlet or crimson, on nearly every official civic occasion in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for which there is an entry. The mayor and aldermen had been ordered to be "cled in long gownys of skarlet" for Henry VII's visit.[43] In 1500, each alderman and former mayor was ordered to wear his "cloke of scarlet... at every assemble and procession apon payn of v marks."[44] When Queen Margaret visited the City in 1516, the "lorde mayre with his brethren in Skarlet ye xxiiijth in Cremyssen" were to greet her at the City's gates.[45] As of 1544, aldermen were to wear "a velvett typett aboute [the] neck" as a sign of office whenever they went about in town, though this was likely the custom beforehand as well.[46] This was repeatedly requested of them.[47] Again in 1554 the aldermen "accordyng to the auncient and laudable usage of this Citie" were ordered to

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[43] *REED: York*. I, 139.

[44] *YCR*, II, 147.

[45] *REED: York*. I, 215.

[46] *YCR*, IV, 98.

[47] See, for instance, *YCR*, V, 117.

wear skarlet cloaks on official civic occasions or be subject to fines and other reprimands.[48]

Consider the following case taken from a 1561 entry in the House Books:

> ...for avoydyng miscordre in the laudable rites and usages of this Citie it is nowe aggreed that Maister Criplyn, one of the xxiiij shall wayte apon my Lord Mayour in his crymson gowne on saynt Blasy day next and other usuall dayes and tymes that hath and shalbe used...[49]

One may surmise that there was an issue as to the appropriateness of his wearing the vestments, or Criplyn had in the past not donned them on one or more occasions, either of which seems to have caused "miscordre in the laudable rites and usages of this Citie." The next year, ten members of the Twenty-Four, including Robert Criplyng, were called before the Council to answer the following charges:

> ...not wearyng thar crymson gownes with typpetts on St. Stephan day, newe yeres day and twelth day at their assembley in the Mynstar emongs the Aldermen, accordyng to the auncient and laudable usage of this sayd Citie.[50]

When asked to defend themselves, four of the accused were pardoned as the court believed that "their sayd defaltz were rader of negligens or ignorant than of any sett stubbornesse." The others were not punished because they agreed to wear the "apparell which they and theyr predecessours have ben accustomed to weare for the worship and prayse of this Citie." These junior members of court were perhaps unaware of the amount of importance vested in vestments, but they were certainly quickly informed.

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[48] *YCR*, V, 98.

[49] *YCR*, VI, 34.

[50] *YCR*, VI, 142.

The first cap of maintenance is supposed to have been given to the City by Richard II in 1396, and new ones were bought in 1445 and 1580.[51] It seems to have been the responsibility of the Skinners of York "to make and sustene yerely of theyr costs and chargez an hate of mayntenaunce of good, fyne and pure gray for the honour and wurship of this Citie."[52] There is evidence that it was in fact often repaired and cared for.[53]

All this to say that, similarly to other civic images, the wearing of vestments had very real and immediate contemporary significance. In this there was no difference as a result of the Reformation. Civic vestments continued to be employed in the same situations, and orders to wear them are evident in the House Books as much before as after. Similarly to the civic swords and maces discussed earlier, the evidence concerning York in this matter seems to set it apart from the general model as outlined by Tittler. It does not appear as if the Reformation had a significant effect on the use or meaning of civic vestments in York.

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There were also other kinds of civic apparel. As their importance grew, there was a need to recognize official civic waits as opposed to travelling players. On the arms of their red and blue livery was sewn the arms of the city from at least as early as 1525. The

[51] *VCH: York*, 546; *YCR*, VIII. 32-33.

[52] *YCR*, II, 152.

[53] *YCR*, IV, 62.

first reference to a wait's silver chain occurs in 1505,[54] then again in 1530.[55] In 1557, a new wait by the name of Robert Husthwait received "the sylver cheyne with the skutcheon apon suerty to be delyvered unto hym by weight and tale."[56] A "newe sylver cheyne aggreable with thother iij cheynes" was to be made in 1566 as a result of an increase in the number of positions available.[57] In 1585, the Corporation paid a goldsmith by the name of Thomas Turner "xxix s iiij d... for newe florishinge and trimminge of the sutchons and shynes belonging to the iiij waytes of this Citie."[58] This is one of the few instances where new civic apparel was introduced in the sixteenth century, clearly because the position itself was becoming more important. By wearing the chains, the civic waits partook in the respectability afforded to other officials. It is important to note, though, that York's waits were donning the City's arms and chains of office before the Reformation proper.

There were also some objects which were specifically associated with the office of mayor. A couple of references from the early years of the sixteenth century have been found to a "yerd of the tre with ends of silver and over gilt" which was presented to a new mayor-elect.[59] When William White was elected in 1491 to replace the recently-deceased mayor, "the wand of honour tipped with silver was borne before him into his

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[54] Griffiths, *'A Musical Place of the First Quality'*, 72.

[55] *YCR*, III, 134.

[56] *YCR*, V, 161-62.

[57] *YCR*, VI, 121.

[58] *YCR*, VIII, 94.

[59] *YCR*, III, 12 and 26.

house."[60] A 1554 record of payment makes mention of "a whyte wand" given to the mayor "as Master of the Corpuscrysty gyld."[61] Later in the sixteenth century mayoral plate was introduced, which had begun with yet another donation by Martin Bowes, and was passed from one mayor to another.[62] In 1564, Mayor Thomas Appleyard gave Mayor-elect James Symson, along with "the sword and great mace, the basyn and ewar of sylver gilt gyven by Maister Bowes" as a symbolic transfer of power.[63] The collection grew over the years and was kept in the mayor's residence.[64] Like other such collections of civic plate throughout the realm, it represented the collective contributions of benefactors over the years. The material came to have strong local associations and thereby "served to bind the generations in much the same way as the sight and use of church plate had done."[65]

There are numerous ordinances for the bearing of torches at the Corpus Christi procession, which suggests that they served symbolic as well as practical function, though the evidence is sketchy. All crafts were expected to conform in this matter. Proceeding in the parade without carrying torches was a deliberate act of nonconformity and civic disobedience, and many crafts did so in protest of a given situation. This applied equally to the civic elite. In 1476, each of them was ordered to "have a servant

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[60] *YCR*, II, 65.

[61] *REED: York*, I, 317.

[62] *VCH: York*, 546.

[63] *YCR*, VI, 73-74.

[64] *YCR*, VII, 84-84; VIII, 93, 132.

[65] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 272.

with him bearing a Torch to the praise of God and in honour of the City under a penalty of xl s."[66] Every alderman and sheriff was to have his "torche borne light" in 1536's Corpus Christi procession or pay a similar fine.[67] "Maister Dogeson. Maister Dobson and Maister White," aldermen, were fined "iij s iiij d" each for not carrying their torches in the 1547 procession.[68] In a sense, bearing torches at the Corpus Christi procession served a purpose similar to that of civic clothing.

The City appears also to have had a hand in Early Modern recreation and sports. There exists an isolated reference to a civic bell given as a prize by an alderman to the citizen who came first in a horse race in 1530.[69] It was then to be returned to the mayor so that it could be reissued to the next year's winner. Later on in the century, the traditional sport of archery was pushed on the citizens over the playing of "cardes and dise" as an appeal to a heroic English past, as well as for the obvious reason of encouraging military preparedness. The Corporation argued

> ...for mayntenaunce of artillerie and againsts unlawfull games; whereupon yt was agreed that billitts shalbe made furthwith to constables of everie parishe to cherge all the inhabitants to provyde for themselves, ther sones, servants, servants and apprentises bowes and arrowes...[70]

Such references rarely appear in the records probably because they were hardly of pressing concern to the Council, but it is safe to assume that there were other, less formal

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[66] *YCR*, I, 6.

[67] *YCR*, IV, 5.

[68] *YCR*, IV, 157.

[69] *YCR*, III, 131.

[70] *YCR*, VI, 155; VII, 46; VIII, 36.

civic visual images which circulated in sixteenth-century York, many of which certainly reinforced the same kinds of things that their more formal cousins did. In the case of the bell, the City appears to have asserted its position among the citizen-spectators. There was an exchange of recognition and "honour" between the victorious contestant and the City, and a civic bell was the recognized and coveted trophy. Archery, on the other hand, was seen as a strong tradition, integral to the English character and sense of identity. By promoting it, the City stressed a link from the present to the proud quasi-mythical English past.

The civic "anciant" or "auncyent" is first mentioned in 1584, and then a number of times thereafter.[71] Its exact nature is unclear, but it seems to have been a banner that was developed in close association with the Midsummer's Day show of armour. Its very name is yet another example of an appeal to the past to legitimize the present. Its appearance at this time suggests that some regalia was introduced as part of some of the new traditions that emerge at this time in the fields of drama and ceremony, though this certainly seems to be the exception that proves the rule.

One of the most striking examples of longevity in civic insignia is that of the common seal, which was of course used to mark official civic documents, but civic officials at times also swore on it, indicating the degree of veneration in which it was held.[72] The one used in the sixteenth century probably dated from the thirteenth, and was certainly in use by 1335.[73] The obverse depicts a triple-towered castle, each flying

[71] *REED: York*, I, 411, 464, 469 and 480.

[72] *YCR*, III, 151.

[73] *VCH: York*, 544.

unmarked banners. The legend reads: "SIGILLUM CIVIUM EBORACI." On the reverse is St. Peter, holding two large keys over his right shoulder, and a banner topped with a cross in his left hand, with the legend: "S. BEATI PETRI PRINCIPIS APOSTOLORUM."

The first common seal is now lost, but a twelfth-century impression survives. It too depicts a triple-towered castle with the inscription: "[SIG]ILLUM CIV..... FIDELES R...NS." St. Peter holding two keys in one hand and a cross and banner in the other is depicted on the reverse. The legend reads: "[SIG]ILLUM ECLESIE SAN[CTI PET]RI CATHEDRALIS EBORACENSIS." York had therefore consistently been using an similar common seal for at least 300 years by the time of the Reformation, and continued to do so well past it. The strong religious and Catholic image of St. Peter, who of course was strongly associated with the Minster, continued to be York's hallmark.

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Tittler has found that civic regalia, namely civic maces, became more ornate and ceremonial in English urban communities throughout the sixteenth century, and even came to be used on less formal occasions.[74] Perhaps, but in essence civic regalia in York changed comparatively little. Though old maces or swords were sometimes remodelled, and on other occasions new visual images introduced, which must be expected over such a long period, civic regalia had not been affected in the same way that drama and ceremony had been. As I have mentioned, for instance, civic swords and maces were refashioned, repaired or received just as often before the Reformation as after. There were Catholic images which were strongly associated with York before the Reformation,

[74] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 274.

and which probably served to enhance and maintain its "honour," but the majority of visual images of civic precedence, seniority and traditional power were essentially secular in nature. York already had well-developed civic traditions by the end of the fifteenth century, and these images continued to be employed in much the same way throughout the period. A "void" was only filled to the extent that there was continued emphasis placed on standard forms of civic regalia and insignia.

V
Other *Lieux de Mémoire*

Other *lieux* for which less evidence exists include architecture and art, natural and man-made landmarks, and the intentional preservation of memory through writing.[1] It has already been noted that sixteenth-century England faced a sharp increase in population as well as poverty. When one considers this as well as the iconoclastic tendencies of the post-Reformation period, it is not difficult to understand the decrease in the production of new buildings and works of art until at least the 1560s and usually much later. This at least partially accounts for the noticeable lack of evidence here, but what of writing? York curiously lacks detailed antiquaries' studies, studies which had been common in a great many other English towns. The first such work on England's "second city" was produced only in 1736. Perhaps this was because of the strong civic and secular traditions which were to survive the Reformation; perhaps a sense of discontinuity with the past was less keenly felt in York, and there was therefore less of a need to preserve it in writing.

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I shall begin with an unfortunately brief examination of the urban environment. Though York's citizens surely continued to take pride in older Medieval buildings,

[1] Memory could also be reproduced orally relatively faithfully over many years by a number of mnemonic devices, including the previously-discussed example of having the young follow the beating of the bounds, though references to such instances are rare for the period in question. See Thomas, "The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England;" Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, 1985); and W.F.H. Nicolaisen, ed., *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1995).

particularly the Minster,[2] construction all but stopped in sixteenth century.[3] This was mostly due to the City's decaying fortunes. Though some towns, such as Bristol and Exeter, were very active during this century, York was a city in deterioration, unable to afford the expense involved.[4] Though its fortunes were to be partially revived after the 1570s, it would never attain its Late Medieval level of importance and affluence. It quite simply had to make due with those edifices constructed during its earlier period of prosperity. It certainly continued to take pride in York Minster, though it was one of very few to be proud of amongst such "physical decay."[5] The Council was shocked when the Ouse bridge collapsed in 1565. It took nearly two years to rebuild, primarily as a result of the City's destitution.

Higgins argues that by being performed at certain key locations, civic plays and processions were used to invest meaning into a city's streets, buildings and markets as well.[6] This was most certainly the case in York. Built just off the river Ouse, the sturdy and respected Guild or Common Hall was several hundred years old by the sixteenth century. Like those of Exeter or Norwich, it was as large as any in England.[7] It appears as if the mayor and his bretheren sat together on one bench, probably as an act of

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[2] It was said that the very site had been a place of worship since early Christian times. *VCH: York*, 343.

[3] *VCH: York*, 118.

[4] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 82.

[5] *VCH: York*, 106-07.

[6] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 78.

[7] Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 126.

solidarity, until 1577/8 when it was decided that a "mete and convenient chaire" be made for the mayor alone.[8] The Commom Hall was the City's pride, acting as the centre not only of politics, the administration of justice, formal receptions and town life in general, but of drama and civic processions as well. Most of the latter which, of course, were not directed at the Minster, ended up there for entertainment and feasting. It was also a centre for dramatic performance. Excluding the Mercer's pageant, the first outdoor performance at the Common Hall recorded in the Corporation minutes occurred in 1527, and more regularly thereafter.[9] Indoor performances become common only in the last quarter of the century.[10] One might describe the Common Hall itself as a *lieu* as it played host to a number of others, lending them its respectability and "auncienty."

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Though little evidence of civic portraiture as such exists, one is able to detect a change in one of Early Modern York's most visible fine arts: stained glass. The images produced from Medieval times up until the Reformation were of course overwhelmingly religious, commissioned by parish churches, religious houses and the Minster. There are, however, a few exceptions. In St. Michael, Spurriergate, for instance, there are a few depictions of English kings.[11] This being said, it was quite common to have at least a few secular images in the glass of even the most pious churches in England, similarly to the caricatures often seen in the margins of holy texts transcribed by religious orders.

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[8] Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, 115.

[9] *REED: York*, I, 243.

[10] *REED: York*, I, 384.

[11] Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *York Historic Buildings in the*

Stained glass in the period after the Reformation began to take on much more of a secular character, though not necessarily a civic one.[12] It must be said, however, that the amount of glass commissioned and produced fell sharply in the period, similarly to the pattern seen in architecture, but probably due to iconoclastic tendencies as well. Only in the closing years of the century does any glass begin to be produced again, of which almost nothing survives. Scholars must rely largely on depictions of prominent individuals and the insignia of craft guilds of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century works to form an idea of what sixteenth-century glass must have resembled.[13]

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The visible ruins of a number of recently-destroyed religious houses, among other curiosities, inspired antiquaries and historians to preserve the past in writing, as Margaret Aston has noticed.[14] I have already mentioned that these kinds of studies became common in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the past became visibly ruptured after the Dissolutions. Though Drake was not to write his *Eboracum* until 1736, a trend to preserve various Corporation documents is increasingly noticeable throughout the sixteenth century.

As Thomas has pointed out, precedence and tradition held much legal weight in Early Modern England, particularly if this could be proven with documents. Beginning in the second half of the fifteenth century, one begins to notice the increasing demand for

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Central Area: A Photographic Record (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), 53.

[12] *York Historic Buildings in the Central Area*, 7-8.

[13] See, for instance, *York Historic Buildings in the Central Area*, 186-87

[14] Aston, *English Ruins and English History*, 232.

such documents in York as well. In 1477, for example, the Corporation demanded that the citizens of Appleby produce "a copy of the Liberties of Appilby, granted by the King, and a copy of an agreement between the City of York & the said town" so as to prove that they were not to pay certain taxes to York.[15] Apparently, York was attempting the widen its tax base, and only a previous written agreement would render such a move invalid. After debate, the Council established in 1495 that the Corpus Christi Guild had the right to perform the "Crede play this yere and every tent yere successively as aperith by a writtyng with the said maister and keepers."[16] Precedence had legal weight, particularly when preserved in writing.[17]

The Council became more concerned with keeping written records beginning in the late fifteenth century. The House Books themselves are testaments to this. In 1500, a new book called the *Acta Diversorum* was to be kept for "all actez and ordinauncez," and a *Liber Memorandum* for future reference as well.[18] In that same year, after the riding of the bounds, which was normally committed to memory through the use of visual aids, it was ordered that the common rights and route taken be preserved in writing[19]. More and

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[15] *YCR*, I, 19.

[16] *YCR*, II, 120.

[17] There is an instance where the records make mention of a precedence plea which was not written: citizens formally protested to the Council in 1547 over recent enclosures, asking that they "...occupie and enjoy ther comon in the said closes according as they and there predecessours have alwais hadd and used heretofore withoute mynd of man... as there predecessours have always hadd in tymes past." There is no record of the decision. See *YCR*, IV, 162-63.

[18] *YCR*, II, 147.

[19] *YCR*, II, 163-65.

more guilds were paying to have their ordinances recorded to be referred to in case of dispute.[20]

The offices of the town clerk and recorder came to be more important near the turn of the century. The former's duties had once been simply to keep records, but his responsibilities and status seem to have grown by the sixteenth century. The early fifteenth-century recorder was not much more than a legal advisor, someone who needed to be little more than literate. His sixteenth-century descendant, however, often acted as mayoral representative when formally welcoming guests to the City, and besides the mayor was the only official individually listed in the Corporation minutes as attending meetings. In fact, as early as Henry VII's visit, the "Recordr of the Same Citie had the Speche in bidding the king welcome."[21] The changing nature of these positions in York seem to follow the national trend.[22] When the mayor, William White, died in 1505, a new one was to be chosen: "And the Maister Recorder shewed and opynly declared the chartour, sayng that by theyr chartour the eleccon of the Maier for the residue of this yere is the Aldermen and the Conseill of the Chambre." The recorder was asked to perform in such a capacity more often throughout the century. His office was an increasingly important one.

This charter was an amalgam "of all suche usags and customez as the Mayre and Citizens of this City hayth usyd withoute tyme of mynde," and it was used and referred to

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[20] *YCR*, II, 205.

[21] *REED: York*, I, 146.

[22] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 223 and 226-27.

more often as the sixteenth century progressed.[23] Beginning about mid-century, it became important to record that civic elections were held according to it. After a mayor was chosen in 1554, the electoral regulations were to be read aloud in their entirety to any franchized citizen who wished to hear them.[24] The House Books are filled with requests to have the charter renewed by the ruling monarch, either when one took to the throne or after a recent crisis which would have jeapordized traditional privileges.[25]

The use and preservation of writing noticeably increased around the time of the official Reformation. The Guilds of St. Christopher and St. George were asked to gather their "graunts and writyngs" in 1533 so that they could "be serched, seen and examyned" by the Council in order to resolve a dispute.[26] In 1552, the mayor of Heden refused to pay a new shipping tax because his city was "tolle free at Hull" according to a charter dated from the time of King John. York's common clerk was to verify the document for authenticity.[27] If this status was granted in perpetuity, it would have to be honoured. Older guilds that had not yet had their ordinances put into writing did so. Recently-formed guilds recorded their ordinances as a matter of course. The Council became more insistent in retaining copies of these ordinances. In 1561, for example, the ordinances of

[23] *YCR*, III, 129; see also IV, 147-48, 157 and 196.

[24] *YCR*, V, 98.

[25] *YCR*, IV, 157; VI, 50; and VII, 51.

[26] *YCR*, III, 155.

[27] *YCR*, V, 83.

the fledgling Minstrels' guild were ordered to "be inrolled in the old register of parchement with the bosses."[28]

Civic authorities became concerned with the content of traditional dramatic performances almost immediately after the Reformation. This concern was reflected in the increasing demand for written copies of such performances so that they might be reviewed. As early as 1536, ordinances were being issued for all occupations to proceed in the Corpus Christi celebrations "as it apperyth in the register thereof mayde."[29] Though mention is made of a Corpus Christi account book a few years beforehand,[30] this is the first mention of a text which was used specifically as a guide for the shows themselves. The register is mentioned much more often thereafter.[31] The "Ancient booke or Registre of the Crede play" is first referred to in 1565 when it was delivered to St. Thomas's Hospital "to be saffly kept emonges thevident as it was before."[32] The number of references to such registers suggests that it became more important to have formal copies of the texts of such performances.

Demands for copies of civic plays increased exponentially after this point. It was ordered in 1557 that "suche pageantz as be not registred in the Cite booke shall be called in to be registred by discrecion of my lord mayor."[33] In 1566, the Council similarly

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[28] *YCR*, VI, 30-31.

[29] *YCR*, IV, 5.

[30] *REED: York*, I, 244.

[31] *REED: York*, I, 278, 280, 313, 317, 324, 330-31, 351, and 390.

[32] *REED: York*, I, 348.

[33] *REED: York*, I, 324.

agreed "that the Pageantes of Corpus christi suche as be not already Registred shalbe with all convenyent spede be fayre wrytten by Iohn Clerke in the old Registre." A list of all such pageants then follows. All this was being done so that the dramatic performances could "be examined with the Register & reformed," all at the City's expense.[34] As I have pointed out, these documents were examined and subsequently revised by civic authorities.

The need for copies of dramatic performances obviously reflects a growing concern over their content, but the use of written documents in general had increased dramatically by the 1570s. The ancient city customs were to be translated into English in 1581 in order to make them more generally accessible at a time when English had all but completely eliminated Latin as the official language of civic government.[35] Copies of York's charter were demanded as never before, and the City requested copies of neighbouring cities' charters as well, often to resolve, or indeed prevent, legal disputes. In 1577, York was to receive a duplicate of Hull's new charter so that the recorder and other legal consultants could cross-reference it with York's so as to come up with a new "foreyn bought and foreyne solde" policy.[36] The City began requesting documents from bodies within the City as well. The sheriffs' court records were to be given in 1570 "to the Common Chambre ther to be safly kept to the Citie use whan soo ever the L. Mayor shall please."[37]

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[34] *REED: York.* I, 351.

[35] *YCR*, VIII, 47.

[36] *YCR*, 155, vii.

[37] *YCR*, VII, 14.

The demand for documents to be "safly kept" by the Corporation began to occur more frequently. The tendency to intentionally preserve civic documents becomes increasingly noticeable beginning in the 1560s. In 1567, the common clerk was ordered to go through all the Corporation's records, to put them in order "and as nede shall requyre boxes to be bought for saff kepyng the sayd evydencs accordyngly."[38] It was agreed in 1570 that:

> ...convenyent howses shall be severally made with lokks and keyes in some mete place of the howses of the chapell of the Ouse brig by disreccon of the Lord Mayour, that is to say, for kepyng of the records of the Sherefs courts, and one for thold records now in Mr Grenes hands, and thother for suche new records as Mr. Birkby hath...[39]

It was again ordered in 1573 that the records of the sheriff's court be brought to "Ousebridge in a hows there apoynted for that purpose, and that a lock and three keys shalbe made for the said howse."[40] It seems as if the Council decided that the safekeeping of a variety of civic documents together in one archive was enough of a priority to warrant such a project. The record of transfer of 1571 survives. It lists at length all "such books, rolls, and records as belong to the sayd Cytie."[41] The exchange itself was a rather important and formal occasion which was done in the presence of witnesses, while all documents were marked with official seals.

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[38] *YCR*, VI, 126.

[39] *YCR*, VII, 15.

[40] *YCR*, VII, 81.

[41] *YCR*, VII, 38-39.

That these documents were treated with reverence is evidenced in 1579 when their keeper, Mr. Birkbye, was unavailable to open the archives, the mayor and councilmen assumed the right to call on a locksmith "to search records ther in ther presents and to tayke furth suche records as they shall thynke good for the necessarie affaires of this Cyttie, and to leave a noat of suche records as they taike away."[42] The Council deemed it necessary to peruse the documents with witnesses, keeping written accounts of which documents were borrowed. Birkbye was ordered to make a set of keys for the Council the following year.[43]

Basically, memory preserved in writing became more important to the City over the sixteenth century. As Aston has pointed out, this trend was witnessed in most urban communities of the period.[44] Tittler too has noticed an increase in the concern for preserving written records of the local community.[45] It cannot really be said, though, that civic authorities in York attempted intentionally to alter a sense of the past through writing as a *lieu* in the same way that they did with drama, public processions and regalia. Civic writing in York at the time seems to have been a reflection of other such attempts, rather than being an active agent in itself. Though the documents could be reviewed and altered, it was essentially the public performances themselves that were the *lieux*.

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[42] *YCR*, VIII, 24.

[43] *YCR*, VIII, 35.

[44] Aston, "English Ruins and English History," 231-34 and 254-55.

[45] Tittler, "Reformation, Civic Culture and Collective Memory in English Provincial Towns," 292-98.

One of the most interesting *lieux* which I have had the pleasure to pursue is that of York's natural oddities and man-made landmarks, and the historical associations vested in them. These associations often appear as proverbial "straw men" in the aforementioned antiquary studies which set out to disprove them. Unwittingly, these all-to-often brief references afford the modern researcher a rare glimpse into the minds of some of the illiterate members of past societies.

Drake picks up on some of York's oral folk traditions. A number of them surrounded three rather odd hills just outside of the City, which must have been man-made due to their remarkable symmetry. Drake's preferred explanation, based largely on "the constant tradition of the inhabitants of York," had it that they were burial mounds of the Emperor Severus who was slain at York by the Picts.[46] Indeed, the hills bore his name. Based on this, as well as other evidence gathered from previous studies, Drake sides with oral tradition, something that, as Woolf has pointed out, was certainly quite rare by the eighteenth century.[47]

While on his tour of the City in 1586, William Camden noticed a number of pyramids, some over twenty feet tall, in the vicinity of Boroughbridge. He contends that they were of Roman origin, probably serving the function of road markers, as opposed to "the silly stories of their being those bolts which the Devil shot at some cities hereabouts, and so destroyed them."[48] Drake noticed them as well. He also opposes popular tradition, arguing that they were probably of Roman origin, being either road marks or

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[46] Drake, *Eboracum*, 14.

[47] Woolf, "History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England," 120.

[48] Camden, *Britannia*, 715.

religious monuments of some kind. Interestingly, he too notes the "ridiculous traditional story [that] is told of them by the country people hereabouts."[49] To them, the pyramids were known as the "devil's arrows," and they possessed miraculous powers. It seems as if these *lieux* had supported the story for over 150 years.

Though few references to such physical *lieux* survive, and even fewer references to the tales surrounding them, one may deduce with some certainty that a great number of them were present among the citizens of Early Modern York. If the tales which do survive are at all indicative of their brethren, and if one can assume that the sites that they surround reflect at least a part of the common attitudes and beliefs, York's citizens could be proud of what they perceived to be their city's past. The House Books mention that a statue of Ebrauk which formerly stood at St. Saviourgate was "newe maid" and moved to a much more prominent and honourable position in front of the guildhall chapel in 1501.[50] Though such references are rare, it seems as if the civic elite recognized the power of such devices and employed them in Early Modern York.

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[49] Drake, *Eboracum*, 24-25.

[50] *VCH: York*, 70; *YCR*, II, 171.

VI
Conclusion

I now return to the representative example of imperial visits. Towards the end of the period in question, 1603 to be precise, King James paid a royal visit to York as a break in his journey to London as the new king. It was only the second one since that of Henry VII in 1486.[1] He was welcomed with a remarkable degree of pageantry and ceremony. When he was within three miles of the City or so, this being the limits to which its liberties extended, he was greeted by "maister Bucke and maister Robinson, Shireffes of the Citie" who "with humble dutie presented him with their white staues" as an act of obedience. The King returned them as a ceremonious confirmation of reciprocal privileges and responsibilities. They accompanied him and his party to within a mile of the City, where the imperial representative in the north, Lord President Burleigh, received him. One must remember that the Council in the North had been a real presence in York for almost seventy years by this time. The next station in James's journey to York is an appropriate illustration of this.

This motley crew of royal and civic representatives then made their way "neare vnto the Citie." They were hailed by:

> three of the Sergeants at Armes, late seruants to the deceased Queene... who deliuered up their Maces, which his Maieste with Royall curtesie, rediliuered to them, commaunding them to waite on him in their olde places, which presently they did. And at the same time the Sergeant Trumpeter, with some other of his fellows, did in like maner submit

[1] The following description is taken from a pamphlet entitled "The True Narration" (London, 1603) as reprinted in *REED: York*, I, 514-15.

> themselues, and render their seruice, which he beningly accepted, & commanded them in like manner to waite on him.

These gestures were almost identical to the sheriffs' described above. The sergeants and their men used tradition and ancient images of power and authority as a display of loyalty to the new King, and he in turn confirmed their positions. The symbolic exchange was mutually beneficial.

They then approached the City's gates where they were greeted by its most prominent citizens, including the aldermen and the Lord Mayor himself. "There a long Oration [was] made," though the text of it does not survive. It is evident, however, that a ceremony was involved, and that the mayor offered the King the familiar "Sword and Keys" of the City, along with numerous other gifts. This is the first time that one hears of the keys of the City being offered to anyone since Henry VII.[2]

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[2] Predictably, James ceremoniously returned the keys, but an interesting dilemma occurred over the bearing of the civic sword:

> ...but about the bearing of the Sword there was some small contention, the Lorde President taking it for his place, the Lorde Mayor of the Citie esteeming it his. But to decide the doubt, the Kings Maieste merily demaunded, If the Sword beeing his, they would not bee pleased, that hee should haue the disposing thereof. Wherevto when they humbly answered, it was all in his pleasure, his Highnesse deliuered the Sword to one, that knew wel how to vse a sword, hauing beene tried both at Sea and on Shoare, the thrise honoured Earle of Cumberland, who bare it before his Maieste; ryding in great State from the gate to the Minster.

The sight of anyone but the mayor of York bearing the civic sword before the King in an official civic procession to the Minster serves to illustrate some of the changes historical imagery had experienced over the century. In the past, only the Lord Mayor, or his representative, had the right to bear the civic sword before royalty, and then only pointed down. By 1603, the Council in the North had established itself as a local presence to the degree that it was able to contend with the mayor for such a solemn and honoured civic responsibility, but here I am flirting with a veritable Pandora's box. The degree to which civic and imperial historical imagery competed in York in the century or so after the creation of the Council in the North is a topic that I propose may well be worth pursuing.

No mention is made of a dramatic performance during this visit, though it has previously been noted that there was in 1541, but this may simply be due to the nature of the record itself. It must be said, though, that the same kind regalia, invested with the same kind of meaning, that had been used in 1486 was also employed in 1603. Henry VII received a festive welcome to the City of York while on his post-accession tour of 1486. In both cases, the sheriffs of the City first greeted the monarchs three miles out of town with their white wands of office. Each monarch was formally greeted by the aldermen and offered the keys of the City. Though no specific mention of civic vestments is made in the second visit, one may safely assume that the civic officials were appropriately dressed.

Though the image of Ebrauk may not have been employed in 1603, it would be in James's second visit in 1617.

> When we look vpon the foundation of this auncient Cittye of yorke, builded by Ebrauk the fowerthe king after Brute, made a matropolitan Cittye, graced with an Archiepiscopall Sea. a primate of England, And call to mynde that in tymes past, this was the emperiall Cittye...[3]

Tittler argues that in 1486, Ebrauk's role "seems not only to have been to welcome Henry to the City, but to let him know that York traced its origins to well before the line of the Tudors and their ancestors."[4] Higgins agrees: "But no gesture in a town was simple or innocent. While slavishly greeting its monarch, the City also asserted its own authority. By giving him its key, the City, not the king, permitted entry."[5] These statements hold for James's second visit as well. In David's poem, Henry was reminded of how Ebrauk

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[3] *REED: York*, I, 552.

[4] Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 277.

had made great contributions to English history, and that he was as old and on par with some of the Bible's most respected kings of antiquity, a notion that James was confronted with as well.

Of immediate significance here is that, unlike the one Henry VII received at the beginning of the period in question, this civic reception appears to have been almost entirely secular in character.[6] Though the City's Corporation minutes make no mention of the passage describing the religious orders and their involvement Henry's reception quoted at the beginning of this work, it is clear that civic religious elements were present. He also had the firmly Catholic *Assumption of Our Lady* performed for him. This type of activity was noticeably absent when James was received. Other than this understandable discrepancy, the historical images employed were remarkably similar in both cases.

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Though the leading citizens of York do not seem to have been especially attached to the papacy when Parliament broke with Rome, attacks "upon time-honoured rituals and institutions were quite another matter, and the City seems to have become restive in the summer of 1536."[7] The citizens lost only St. Clement's and Holy Trinity, but surely feared for the rest. This rift in popular *lieux* and the fear of more may then contribute to an understanding of the Pilgrimage of Grace and its support among York's commons. Surely they supported the rising for economic and conservative religious and moral reasons, but the sharp break in historical imagery as a result of the dissolutions and other

[5] Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 77.
[6] The day after his arrival, James attended a sermon in the Minster. See *REED: York*, I, 515.

[7] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 234-35.

forms of material iconoclasm must also have contributed to the prevailing sense of outrage and urgency.

York was essentially a conservative city during as well as after the Reformation. Some citizens continued to request prayers for the dead until 1551, and traditional will formulae remained predominant.[8] This conservatism is also witnessed by the longevity of the Corpus Christi plays, both as the complete cycle and then individually.

The position propounded by Collinson holds particularly true in sixteenth-century York:

> It is only in the 1570s that the historically minded insomniac goes to sleep counting Catholics rather than Protestants, since only then did they begin to find themselves in a minority situation. I would even be prepared to assert, crudely and flatly, that the Reformation was something which happened in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.[9]

For the most part, reformers from about the 1530s until the 1570s looked to alter some of the "popish" content in much of the civic historical imagery, but did not make many contentions about the forms of presentation themselves.

It has since become popular to view the Reformation as more of a process than an event, a creature which really only took a firm hold on the public consciousness by the end of the century. Tittler is essentially correct in arguing that there was more of an immediate change, though, in civic historical imagery as a result of the royal decision to split from Rome. Though they were not replaced or eliminated altogether in the 1530s and 40s, York's traditional civic performances, such as the Corpus Christi cycle, came under investigation, and some traditional processions, such as the Corpus Christi again,

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[8] Palliser, *Tudor York*, 252.

[9] Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, ix.

lost some of their former meaning and importance. In general, the civic elite emphasized traditional secular forms of civic historical imagery, while religious forms began to be questioned. I am by no means attempting to buck the now-popular notion of a "gradual Reformation," but I am willing to recognize that the break with Rome did have immediate effects on historical images, primarily the religious ones, sanctioned by the civic elite, images that were strong containers of the popular consciousness.

It has already been noted that Tittler argues that the loss of Catholicism and its civic traditions, rituals and imagery "left an enormous and critical cultural void" in English towns.[10] He contends that civic governments needed new ways of encouraging deference and new traditions to legitimize their authority in light of this as well as other contemporary developments. One of the ways that the urban elite responded to these needs was through the refashioning or fabrication of tradition, including the re-writing of local history and creation of visual reminders or "*lieux de mémoire*" of a proud and obeisant urban past. Essentially, the official collective memory of the community was cut after the Reformation (though the media were not) and a new one was sent in its stead.[11]

Tittler does not deny that there may be exceptions to his model. It appears as if York was one of them. As a result of my labours, my concern with the model as applied to York would be in emphasis. I would like to stress that there was also a large degree of continuity in York's civic historical imagery. Unlike a great many other towns, it already

[10] Tittler, "Reformation, Civic Culture and Collective Memory in English Provincial Towns," 287.

[11] Tittler, "Introduction," *The Reformation and the Towns in England*, 3-22, esp. 21.

had well-developed civic institutions and images of deference by the time of the Reformation when other towns were only beginning to experience a need for them. Admittedly, civic religious images were destroyed to the point where the citizens of York felt the need to rebel, but the Pilgrimage subsided after only two months. Though there was certainly a break in religious imagery (and even some it, such as a number of individual Corpus Christi plays, continued to be performed until the end of the sixteenth century), York continued to use much of the same civic historical imagery to instil pride and deference in its citizens that it had before the Reformation. This holds particularly true in the case of York's civic regalia and insignia where almost no change at all is detectable as a result of the Reformation. There was no "void" left, and no "new traditions" came to replace the old Catholic ones; there was simply a shift in emphasis.

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