For the Good Order to be had thereby:

Civic Archives and the creation of conformity in late medieval London, c. 1475-1525

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ABSTRACT

For the Good Order to be had thereby: Civic Archives and the creation of conformity in late medieval London, c. 1475-1525

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Medieval cities were complex communities supervised and controlled by elite groups who sought to impose their conception of order upon them, a conception which included strict ideas of proper behaviour and social hierarchy as well as the prevention of criminal behaviour.

How they were able to do so in the absence of coercive instruments such as a police force is an interesting problem, and there is little doubt that both royal authority and the members of the elite themselves expected that it was an achievable goal.

This thesis explores a variety of strategies used by the government of late medieval London to maintain order in their city, including the mobilization of peer supervision and the craft guild system. Most significantly, I argue that the composition of the civic court records used as evidence in this study are themselves another tool used by London's mayor and aldermen to promote their ideals of correct behaviour, hierarchy, and deference in the mind of the reader, and therefore in their city at large. This argument has implications not only for the management of medieval urban communities, but also for the approaches taken by historians to medieval documents in general, which must be interrogated carefully to determine the agendas their creators may have had, so that these are not accepted unproblematically by the researching historian.

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Throughout the completion of this thesis, I have been most fortunate to have the support and assistance of many people. I must first express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Shannon McSheffrey, whose guidance, criticism, and support have been invaluable both in the research and writing of this thesis and throughout my Ph.D. studies. She has been generous with her time, observations, and resources, and I thank her for this and her patience throughout the process.

I am also grateful for the assistance of the staff at the libraries used in my researches; at the National Archives in Kew, the Corporation of London Record Office, and at Concordia University Libraries I met extremely helpful and knowledgeable people who aided my work immensely.

I am endlessly grateful to my friends and family for their encouragement and support throughout my studies at Concordia. In particular, I owe a debt to my colleagues in the History Department, especially Matthew Barlow, Paul Hebert, Stephanie Jowett, Sylvia Marques, and Lindsay Pattison, who all provided encouragement, valuable discussion, and suitable distractions when they were necessary. I give them all my most sincere thanks and affection.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is due to my beloved wife Laura, who has been steadfast in her support, confidence, and patience throughout this degree and the preparation of this thesis. I could not have done it without her.

Of course, any and all errors of fact or interpretation that, despite best efforts, still persist in this thesis, are entirely my own.

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Notes on Style and Abbreviations

Throughout this thesis, I have followed a number of conventions when quoting from primary sources, intended to aid ease of comprehension. Abbreviations have been silently expanded and insertions between lines or in margins have been included in the text where they were intended. I have followed the dating system used in my sources with the exception that the year has been taken to begin on 1 January. Spelling has not been modernized, although when multiple spellings were used for the name of a single person, one spelling was selected and used consistently.

English currency during this period consisted of the pound sterling, which could be divided into twenty shillings, which were then made up of twelve pence. The abbreviation for shilling is simply "s", whereas for the pence, a "d", for the Latin *denarii,* was used. The documents also frequently refer to the mark, which was not an actual coin, but was a notional unit of currency equal to two-thirds of a pound, or 13s 4d.

INTRODUCTION

If people in the twenty-first century were asked about medieval society, many would probably not include towns and cities in their description at all, the urban environment generally taking a back seat to crusades, inquisitions, knights in shining armour, and damsels in distress. If they were prompted to imagine a medieval city, most would probably not have many favorable associations. The one fact that almost everyone seems to be able to recall about medieval cities is that chamber pots were emptied onto the street from upper story windows. Overall, the image of a medieval city in modern culture is a place that is filthy, dangerous: a city of chaos.

I originally set out to examine ideas of chaos and of order in an English medieval urban community, with the hope of illuminating how misbehaviour was contained, and orderly relations promoted, in a context that appears to lack many of the institutions of control found in later societies. London was selected as the subject of the analysis, in part because of its importance in English society, and also because of the proliferation of records available for examination. It was also decided to focus on the late medieval period, from around 1475 to around 1525, partly because this period is known to be one during which London was under significant stress, but also in hopes of helping to fill a historiographical gap. Many studies of "medieval" society end in the mid to late fifteenth century, while many works of "early modern" history begin in the 1550s or later. This has left the intervening years somewhat neglected, and although this will not be a particular focus of the current study, the gap also leaves many questions of transition, and precisely when and how the "medieval" became "early modern" unanswered, or answered unsatisfactorily.

The men who held authority in medieval London would have been horrified to learn of the negative impression their city had left on the future. For them, creating and maintaining a community that was not only orderly, but also morally respectable and impressive to visitors, was the primary aim of London's government and institutions of authority. How they attempted to accomplish this task in a community with a population upwards of 50,000, and without the assistance of a standing police force to coerce proper behaviour, was the starting premise of this study, and one of the first questions I set out to answer.

To be entirely fair to our notional modern audience as well, many medieval people had negative ideas about cities, and London in particular. One famous example is the anonymous poem, the "London Lickpenny", in which someone attempting to press a lawsuit comes to the city, is thwarted in all their designs for lack of money to grease various palms, robbed of their possessions, and eventually retreats back to the country, bewildered and disgusted with the disorder and avarice they have encountered.[1] Certainly there were many problems with the society of medieval London, both from the perspective of the authorities and of more "ordinary" residents.

It is also only fair to say that academics engage with this negative vision of the medieval city as well. As an example, Frank Rexroth's recent *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London* is advertised by the publisher as dealing with a habitually violent underclass that aimlessly roamed the city's streets;[2] while this "milieu of the night" is

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[1] "London Lickpenny", accessed online at http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/lick.htm

[2] Cambridge University Press website, accessed online at http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521847308&ss=fro. This text also appears

part of Rexroth's argument, most of his book is actually about strategies of promoting order and not the commission of crime at all. With discussing marketing strategies in any detail, this description certainly follows the expectation that the medieval city was an unsafe and chaotic place, even though Rexroth more or less argues the opposite. Other scholars have felt the need to specifically engage with negative ideas about the city, and attempt to refute them. Arsenio Frugoni, writing on Italian cities, points out that some characteristics of medieval cities that seem negative to modern eyes may have been regarded differently by medieval people. Narrow streets, intended for foot traffic and not vehicles, could provide protection from the elements. Free-roaming animals could help "dispose" of garbage. What seems crowded to us could have been seen as comfortably intimate to medieval people, and the connections forged between neighbours were undeniably useful.[3] Chiara Frugoni rightly points out that modern cities have their noises, smells, and dangers as well, although these are regarded as normal whereas those of the medieval city are condemned as a sign of a poorly built community. She also concludes that the close quarters and human-generated noise of medieval cities would have been seen as a positive by their residents.[4] While she contends that medieval city dwellers were "lucky",[5] and perhaps they were, it is also true that those who lived in these cities, and those who attempted to govern them, faced daunting challenges in making their urban community function as they wished it to. Before proceeding, it is

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on the dust jacket of Rexroth's book. Rexroth's arguments are engaged with in greater detail throughout this thesis.

[3] Arsenio Frugoni, 'Introduction', in C. Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, tr. W. McCuaig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 3-9. Frugoni's analysis is interesting and useful, but not without problems; his observation that city dwellers kept the street in front of their homes and shops clean is somewhat at odds with the idea that they also emptied their chamberpots out of their windows!

[4] Chiara Frugoni, *A Day in a Medieval City*, tr. W. McCuaig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 45-9, 63.

[5] C. Frugoni, *Medieval City*, p. 25.

useful to outline briefly both the community of London and the difficulties or challenges that made it such a complicated place to live in, and to govern.

Structure of the City

London was by far England's largest city, and also its wealthiest. The exact population of the city by the time of this study is a matter of some conjecture, but it was growing reasonably rapidly, and was likely nearing the level reached prior to the Black Death, putting the number of people living there at around 50,000 or 60,000.[6] It would have been visually impressive to the visitor, with both institutional buildings like St. Paul's cathedral, the Tower, and the Guildhall, as well as more ordinary structures such as shops and homes that could reach up to five storeys in height.[7] London was also filled with churches, with roughly one hundred parish churches by the time of this study, and the importance of the parish community will be demonstrated throughout this study.[8] The city's riches depended in part on its position as a port and the centre of England's Roman road system, partly on its control of the international wool trade that was so crucial to the English economy, and also on the large number of people who came to the city to pursue cases in the courts at Westminster or political errands.[9]

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[6] Francis Sheppard, *London: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 92; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 133. Tucker offers a rather higher estimate of 80,000 by 1500: P. Tucker, *Law Courts and Lawyers in the City of London, 1300-1500*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 20-1. That the growth of London was at the expense of England's other urban centres is a well-understood phenomenon in the field, see for instance D. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City, 1300-1500*, (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 46-7; S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 153-7.

[7] Sheppard, *London*, p. 111; Bridgen, *London and the Reformation*, p. 6.

[8] Sheppard, *London*, pp. 119-20; J. F. Merritt, 'Introduction', in J. F. Merritt ed., *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 10-11; Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 14, 74-8, 84.

[9] Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 45-7; Sheppard, *London*, pp. 105, 130.

The large population gave London an endless demand for consumable goods, especially food and firewood.[10] Prior to the Black Death, it is estimated that the city needed a million bushels of grain, or the produce of about 250,000 acres, every year to feed its population.[11] As with most medieval cities, the population of London was not maintained internally, but through continuous immigration, primarily from the south-eastern parts of the country.[12]

The city included open air food markets for meat, fish, grain, and fruit, a livestock market, and covered markets for the sale of food, wool, wool cloth, and other fabrics that needed proper storage. Both because of its location and the markets it provided, London was the most important centre for the sale and purchase of cloth in the country.[13] Its international trade also attracted a large number of foreign merchants, traders, and artisans to the city,[14] from the city-states of Italy, the Netherlands, the Hanse, and "Esterlings" who came from parts of Germany.[15] As we shall see, this community of foreigners was not exactly embraced by English Londoners, and the relationship between the English and foreigners in the city was the cause of several problems during the period under analysis.[16] Foreigners were accused of denying jobs and training to English-born apprentices by only hiring other foreigners to work in their shops; alien beer-brewers

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[10] Perhaps needless to say, this was not a challenge unique to London; see C. Frugoni, *Medieval City*, p. 57; Nicholas, *Later Medieval City*, pp. 44-50; C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976).
[11] Sheppard, *London*, p. 103.
[12] B. Dobson, 'General Survey 1300-1540', in D. Palliser ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain vol. I*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 284; Sheppard, *London*, p. 115.
[13] Barron, *London*, pp. 52-6.
[14] The exact number is difficult to determine, but it has been estimated to be around 4-7% of the total population. J.L. Bolton 'Introduction', in J. L. Bolton ed. and trans., *The Alien Communities of London in the Fifteenth Century: The Subsidy Rolls of 1440 & 1483-4*, (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1998) pp. 2, 5-10.
[15] Barron, *London*, pp. 56, 86.
[16] Ian W. Archer, 'Popular politics in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', in P. Griffiths and M.S.R. Jenner eds., *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 30-1.

were believed to be damaging the livelihoods of English ale-brewers; the foreigners were criticized for not learning the language, for being sexually depraved, and for spending their profits overseas and thus impoverishing London.[17] Sometimes resentment led to hostility, violence, or at least threats of violence; in 1468, for example, there was apparently a plan among London journeymen to cut the thumbs off of "Flemings" found in the city, to prevent them practising their crafts and competing with Englishmen.[18] The Evil May Day riots in 1517, discussed in Chapter Four, were another instance of this. While the number of foreigners in London was not sufficient to provide a real threat, demographically or economically, to English Londoners,[19] it is clear that they were perceived as such, at least some of the time, and the sometimes hostile relationship between the English and their foreign neighbours was one of the many challenges faced by London's leadership.

It is also vital to keep in mind the important divisions within London's English population; the most basic would have been the distinction between citizens, those with the freedom of the city, and those who simply lived there. Citizens had the exclusive right to own property, to buy and sell without restrictions in the city, to join a guild and therefore open a shop, and of course the institutions of civic government were filled entirely with freemen.[20] Non-citizens would have worked as day-labourers, porters, piece workers, and other occupations on the lower tiers of the economy.[21] The exact proportion of citizens is also not always clear, but could have been as high as 75% of

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[17] Bolton, 'Introduction', pp. 18-23, 35, 38. At the time of this study, brewing beer with hops was still primarily a process imported from continental Europe, and regarded with some suspicion.
[18] "Fleming" was a catch-all term used for anyone from the Netherlands, and indeed much of North-West Europe, often in a pejorative sense. Bolton, 'Introduction', pp. 1-2.
[19] Bolton, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[20] Throughout this thesis, the terms "freeman" and "citizen" are used interchangeably.
[21] Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948) pp. 3-5.

adult males, or as low as 25%, with a much lower proportion of women.[22] There would also have been a significant polarization between rich and poor; it is estimated that about 80% of the city's wealth was controlled by 5% of the population.[23] It was only the wealthy who had access to the higher levels of social and political power, and generally speaking the less money one had, the less influential one would be. This picture is somewhat complicated by the variable of "fame" or respectability, or how one was regarded morally by the community.[24] People with bad reputations would have suffered in all their relationships, notwithstanding their wealth or lack thereof. There would also have been a population of people with no pretensions to respectability, and these people would have been a particularly worrisome group for the authorities; we shall discuss them further as this study progresses. It is also true that both rich and poor Londoners often lived in close proximity to each other, and thus bonds of parish and community could have made them more connected than we might sometimes suppose.[25]

Another basic distinction that carried with it very different experiences of London society was that of gender. Obviously women would have been roughly 50% of the city's population, and as such their status was far from homogenous.[26] On one hand, women obviously fell into many of the categories discussed throughout this section; they could be rich or poor, which would have affected how they were seen by their

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[22] C. M. Barron, 'London 1300-1540', in D. Palliser ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain vol. I*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 400; Archer, 'Popular politics', pp. 27-8. Tucker's calculation that before 1550 no more than 12% of the total residents of London is an attempt to consider the total population: Law Courts, p. 24.

[23] Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of life in sixteenth-century London*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 3-4.

[24] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 26.

[25] Archer, 'Popular Politics', p. 29. Thrupp argues that status was determined first by legal status, then by occupation, but it is clear that this was a more complicated equation than that. Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 2.

[26] Women may have in fact been slightly in the majority in urban communities; Bardsley cites skeletal evidence from York as demonstrating that there were ten women for every nine men there: S. Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), p. 68.

community, how they were treated, and how they were permitted to treat others.[27] The wives of citizens enjoyed many of the privileges of citizenship themselves; they were sometimes admitted as guild members on that basis, and could sometimes continue to be guild members even when widowed.[28] Even when married, they could sue or be sued independently of their husbands as *femmes soles.*[29] Women in London also appear to have been responsible for their own financial commitments, such as rent, and could be prosecuted in court regardless of the presence of a husband or male guardian.[30] What this makes clear is that women, at any stage of life, were discrete legal entities and not entirely subsumed into a relationship with a man as is often assumed.[31]

Despite this, however, women had an undeniably secondary status in the city; they could not become the wardens of the guilds they might belong to, and they could not hold positions in the civic government either.[32] Overall, for most women, their status was tied to their relationship to males; first their father, then their husband.[33] While the

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[27] Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, pp. 1-2.

[28] S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 10-11; Ruth Mazo Karras. *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 49-52, 54-5, 66. Women were not, however, given full rights within guilds, but were often included as "sisters" with lesser status and rights: Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, pp. 71-2. Women admitted as sisters do appear in the records, for example in a set of Saddlers' regulations from 1490 which called for a memorial Mass for "all the brethern and sistern ... of the same Crafte and be passed oute of this World": Journals 9, f. 259.

[29] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 234. Beattie traces the *femmes soles* status in London back as far as the fourteenth century and perhaps the thirteenth. It allowed a married woman to practice a trade in her own right, a trade which could be different from her husband's, and meant that neither spouse was responsible for the debts and obligations of the other. Beattie further contends that these were the ordinary rights of all unmarried women: Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp. 26-8. One caveat here is that women would not have been permitted to join guilds so that their economic opportunities would have been significantly restricted.

[30] Beattie, *Single Women*, pp. 27-8.

[31] Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, p. 77.

[32] Bardsley argues that the idea of a post-Black Death "golden age" of opportunity and freedom for women in England is a myth that has now been "largely debunked", that there was no serious challenge to the "gender hierarchy" following the plague, and no real change in the expectations of them. Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, pp. 21-3.

[33] Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, pp. 3, 25.

general life trajectory for most[34] in the city would have ideally included marriage,[35] a single man could at least go into business on his own, a single woman would be in a much more precarious position, restricted to small-scale trade in food products, what the authorities would have termed "regrating", perhaps brewing, or they may have been forced into prostitution.[36]

The status of women in such a society is, however, too complicated to describe as simply "secondary". The wife of a wealthy merchant would have had considerable influence in her community, may well have been involved in helping run the family business, and certainly would have wielded considerable authority in her own household.[37] Such a woman would not have appreciated the observation that she was in any way "inferior" to a humble fruit-seller, and yet by some standards she was. Probably the most helpful way to conceptualize this is to consider that a woman's level of "inferiority" probably depended on the context she was currently in; a male apprentice would be expected to behave with respect towards his master's wife, but she might find herself accused of behaving improperly for criticizing her husband in public. Although a woman's status could be affected by many other variables, her gender was one constant

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[34] Excluding those who devoted themselves to the Church, of course.

[35] Perhaps as much as a quarter of the population remained unmarried in the marriage pattern found in England and much of North-West Europe: McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 1-8; Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); J.M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 3-4, 10-12, 25-6; P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300-1520*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 243-54; John Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective", in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, eds. D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), pp. 104-43.

[36] Bardsley, *Women's Roles*, pp 73, 78, 100; Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 48-50. This is not to downplay the clear advantages husbands derived from a partner capable of helping them run their household and business: McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 20-1.

[37] Bardsley, Women's Roles, p. 102.

that always limited the role she was permitted to play.[38] One unfortunate consequence of all of the above is that women appear in the records used for this study only relatively rarely, which inevitably results in somewhat of a skewed picture of the city. What is important to keep in mind is that even if they are somewhat hidden in the records, women were participants, to some degree, at every level of urban society and would have been affected by all the strategies discussed throughout this thesis.

There is another important distinction to be made, between the literate and illiterate residents of London. This was still a time when the ability to read, or read and write, was far from a given, and literacy or illiteracy would have changed the experience of living in the city to a great extent. The proportion of Londoners who could read is a subject of some dispute, Sylvia Thrupp rather optimistically estimated that 40% of lay male Londoners could read "a little Latin", and 50% could read English.[39] Most subsequent analyses put this number significantly lower; for example, Heather Swanson estimates that it would have been higher than 25% of adult males, and Brigden estimates that "most" Londoners could not read by the time of the Protestant Reformation.[40]

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[38] Bardsley, Women's Roles, p. 3.

[39] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 156-61. Even if what Thrupp means is 50% of male citizens of London (and this is far from clear - she later says that "all the men" of the merchant class could read), this number still seems unrealistically high. For example, the 1498 rule she cites requiring ironmongers' apprentices to write their name, even if enforced, would not mean that they could do any more than this, and certainly not that they could read a word. Some of the difficulty here may be that Thrupp is not clear about her sources, and may not be accounting for sources such as the deposition books of ecclesiastical courts being skewed towards high status individuals and for being a small sample in general. Jo Ann Hoeppner-Moran seems to accept Thrupp's figure for London, however, argues for growing and "sophisticated" middle-class literacy by the fourteenth century and literacy in Latin among peasants by the beginning of the fourteenth century. She fixes an overall male literacy rate between 20-25% in York diocese for her period: J. Hoeppner-Moran *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 18-19, 172, 181.

[40] Heather Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999), p. 135; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 16. David Cressy provides an even more pessimistic assessment that by the seventeenth century, two thirds of England's male population, and nine out of ten women, were illiterate to the point of not being able to write their own names. He further estimates that a 30% literacy rate for the overall population is a good figure, with a higher, although difficult to gauge, level of literacy in towns, especially London. The literacy rate for "tradesmen" is placed at 35-58%: D. Cressy, *Literacy and the*

Although the exact rate of literacy is clearly difficult to pin down, just as cities were generally more literate communities than rural ones, London was probably more literate than other English cities. Bill-posting was a frequent method of disseminating information, and some guilds required that their apprentices be literate.[41] Whatever the precise proportion may have been, the experience of someone who could read a bill or proclamation, or someone who had to depend on another's reading, would obviously have been very different. This is but one example of how the ability to use written documents would have affected one's life in the city, and it is a point which this dissertation will return to numerous times.[42]

In addition to these key categories, and the shop-keepers, artisans and merchants we perhaps usually think of as dwelling in medieval cities, there were also other important groups that helped make up the population. London was home to members of the aristocracy, some of whom were still largely country-based. For these men and women, London was a place for social and political contacts, and perhaps an enjoyable lifestyle, and although they would not have been direct participants in the managing of guilds and government of the city, they would no doubt have exerted influence through their wealth and connections.[43] The wealthiest merchants of London would have shared customs, lifestyle, and social milieu with these city-dwelling aristocrats, intermarried

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Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 2, 59, 72-85, 123-4, 128-9. Cressy also cautions against the use of book ownership as a gauge of literacy levels (a source valued by Hoeppner-Moran among others) pointing out that Bibles especially may have been valued as wards against evil and for the swearing of oaths, and that books could easily come into the possession of the illiterate through inheritance: *Literacy*, pp. 48-51; Hoeppner-Moran, *English Schooling*, p. 152,

[41] C.M. Barron, 'The expansion of Education in Fifteenth-Century London', in. J. Blair and B. Golding eds., *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) pp. 220-4; Hoeppner-Moran, *English Schooling*, p. 174.

[42] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) pp. 52, 145-6, 193, 255-60.

[43] Sheppard, *London*, p. 131; Archer, 'Popular Politics', pp. 33-4.

with them, and indeed some of London's most successful citizens did eventually make the leap to the gentry.[44]

One final group that must be included is London's population of priests and monks, and nuns, who made up a significant portion of the population. As well as serving as parish priests or chaplains, London's clergy would also have served in the Cathedral, sung masses for the departed in private chapels, and participated in the supervision and regulation of the daily behaviour of Londoners. London was also home to monastic houses, hospitals, collegiate churches and chapels, all of which provided employment for clergy and made them part of London society.[45] The priesthood could also provide a reasonably lucrative career to clever men willing to invest in obtaining the necessary education. Although there are not infrequent complaints about the conduct and lifestyle of individual priests, overall the quality and education of this group seems to have been relatively good, and if Londoners were scandalized by priests who behaved

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[44] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 247-52, 280-1. As an example of the lifestyle of wealthy Londoners, consider this account by Erasmus of the life of the humanist John Colet, son of Henry Colet: "He was born of wealthy parents at London. His father was twice lord mayor. His mother, who is still alive, had eleven sons and eleven daughters, of whom Colet was the eldest, and outlived them all. He was of tall and handsome person; studied the scholastic philosophy, Cicero, Plato, Plotinus, and the mathematics; visited France and Italy; studied the fathers, especially St. Augustine; was a diligent reader of law and of English poetry. Also lectured at Oxford, was dean of St. Paul's.": J.S. Brewer ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the reign of Henry VIII, preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and Elsewhere*, 2nd ed. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920) v. 3 p. 105.

[45] The monastic houses in London were the House of Benedictine Nuns, House of Cistercian Monks, the Black, Grey, White, Austin Friars, and Crossed Friars, and the Minoresses without Aldgate. London's hospitals included the Hospitals of St. Bartholomew, St. Katherine by the Tower, St. Mary without Bishopsgate and within Cripplegate, and the Hospital of the Savoy (founded 1505). The collegiate churches were those at St. Martin le Grand, the Chapel of St. Thomas on London Bridge, the College of St. Laurence Pountney, the College in the Guildhall Chapel, Walworth's College in St. Michael Crooked Lane, the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity in Leadenhall Chapel, Whittington's College, and the College in All Hallows Barking: C.M. Barron and M. Davies eds. *The Religious Houses of London and Middlesex* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2007).

badly it may indicate that this was the exception rather than the rule, and a desire for pure spiritual guidance on the behalf of the secular population.[46]

Overall, although London probably became increasingly peaceful, sanitary, and orderly as the medieval period progressed, our period was a time of significant crisis. The community was under many kinds of stress: an increase in population, especially among the poor, the threats of disease and famine,[47] the aftermath of the Wars of the Roses, the turbulent reign of Richard III and subsequent establishment of Tudor control over the country, and finally the religious turmoil spawned by the nascent Protestant Reformation.[48] Overall, London seems to have weathered these stresses reasonably well, certainly when compared to other European cities during roughly the same period.[49] As we shall see, all these concerns and crises are evident in the sources examined for this study, and all these concerns help illuminate the way that London's authorities responded to the problems they faced.

Despite the various challenges faced by the city, its mayors, aldermen, and councillors would have insisted that it was nevertheless in good hands: under the control of capable men who wielded their authority effectively to promote ideas of order and morality that most Londoners shared. The numerous ways that this authority operated

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[46] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 47-67. Along with examples of immoral behaviour to be explored later, Londoners also sometimes complained of the quality of service they received from priests, as in 1514 when they petitioned the king regarding exorbitant fees being charged for the performance of marriages, burials, and other services, leases of church lands, and the cost of tapers used at Mass: *Letters and Papers*, v. 1 p. 961.

[47] There were outbreaks of plague in 1517, 1521, and 1525, along with poor harvests in 1520 and 1527: Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 138-9. Although London's population underwent its most rapid growth after the period under examination here, it was already significantly rising by the time of this study, especially in the suburbs; Barron, *London*, p. 307; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 3-5.

[48] Barron, *London*, pp. 302-7; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 5, 377-8; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 84-6.

[49] Sheppard, *London*, p. 145; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 6-8, 13-21; Sheppard credits London's "internal stability" for the lack of major disorder in the city, although that obviously leaves the question of why the city might have been internally stable.

and was promoted are also important to understand in general before examining the evidence used by this specific analysis.

Governing the City

Although the rhetoric in civic records often speaks of the citizens as being quite homogenous, in fact differences in wealth and privilege probably made the gap between the men who led the city and most of its residents as large as any found in modern society.[50] These were wealthy and powerful men with very clear ideas about how their city should work. The main objectives of the civic authorities in London was to keep "good order"; this included containing lawlessness, but also encompassed economic order, proper behaviour, and even keeping the city clean and easy to navigate.[51] Ensuring a steady supply of food, and keeping the price of food under control, was one of the first priorities of London's government throughout the medieval period, as shortages or excessive prices could easily lead to disorder.[52] Cleanliness in the city was the responsibility of officials such as the scavengers, who were in charge of the maintenance of London's streets and taking precautions against fire, and the rakers, who were charged with clearing garbage and making sure that channels and conduits for the flow of water and sewage were unobstructed. Although it is probable that a medieval city would be at least rather more aromatic than a modern urban dweller might expect, the limited

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[50] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 27.

[51] Barron, *London*, pp. 23, 48; C. Dyer, Standards *of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), pp. 188-91. Regulations existed for the control of dogs, keeping privies from emptying into the Walbroke, and tanners from dumping the waste products of their trade into streams and ditches: R. R. Sharpe ed., *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall: Letter Book L, Temp Edward IV-Henry VII*, (London: John Edward Francis, 1912) pp. 130-1, 149; Wardmote presentments from 1523 in royal records include "a noisome goose house", defective pavement, dangerous cellar doors, fire hazards, poor air quality, a "noisome" gutter, and even a lack of available parking, or at least "posts and rails" for tying up carts and horses. *Letters and Papers*, v. 3 pp. 1514-15.

[52] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 93-6.

evidence we have is that London's streets and water were kept relatively clean, if only because of the strenuous objections that appeared when this was not the case.[53]

By the time examined by this study, London was divided into twenty-five wards, each of which was under the authority of an alderman, who presided over a wardmote court. The wardmote inquests, which by our period took place generally once a year, but as often as the alderman deemed necessary,[54] were a gathering of all the men of a ward, to inquire into questions of impropriety and misbehaviour, both moral and criminal, within the community. Public nuisances such as rubbish and fire hazards would also be brought before the wardmote inquest for discussion and resolution.[55] Some of these issues would have been discovered and brought to the wardmote inquest by a senior ward officer called a beadle, while others might have been reported by ordinary residents.[56] Some cases would have been resolved at this level, while others might be handed up the chain of command to higher civic courts. Wardmote inquests were also the time when the alderman could easily sample public opinion in his jurisdiction, and the time to choose ward officers such as rakers, constables, aleconners, scavengers, and beadles. Many of these positions were opportunities to prove one's suitability for public service, and could be the first rung on the ladder of civic power.[57] The wardmote court itself was overseen by a jury of twelve of the most substantial citizens of the ward; participation on one of these juries may also have been a prerequisite to eventually obtaining a position

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[53] Barron, *London*, p. 126, 255-7, 261-6.
[54] Caroline Barron, 'Lay Solidarities: The Wards of Medieval London', in P. Stafford, J. L. Nelson and J. Martindale eds., *Law, Laity, and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p. 222.
[55] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 142-3.
[56] Barron, *London*, pp. 121-2, 124.
[57] Barron, 'Lay Solidarities', pp. 218, 222, 224-5.

on the Court of Common Council.[58] One final responsibility of the wardmote was to elect the ward's representatives at Common Council.[59]

The Court of Common Council had representatives from each of the wards. Each ward was allocated a number of seats on the council relative to its population, which could be as high as sixteen seats and as low as four. By the sixteenth century, this gave the Common Council a membership of 212. These representatives were chosen by the residents of the ward, and in theory they were free to choose whomever they liked, but in practice the assumption was that all these people would have the freedom of the city and be "substantial" men both in terms of wealth and social standing. In many cases, it also seems that the alderman for a ward controlled the nomination process.[60] The Court of Common Council had to approve any tax that was to be collected from Londoners, made decisions on who would be admitted to the freedom of the city, and was frequently involved in negotiations with the Crown.[61] As we shall see, Common Council was also involved in regulation of London's guilds, policing economic dishonesty and disorder, as well as some issues of morality. Its large membership, however, may have impeded its effectiveness, leading to the growing influence of other arms of the government.[62] The Court met irregularly, although by 1470 it may have sat as little as eight times a year, perhaps because of the difficulty of bringing so many people together.[63]

The next step up the civic chain of command was the Court of Aldermen, and it was the aldermen who held most of the power in London's government. The Court of

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[58] Barron, *London*, p. 122.
[59] Barron, 'Lay Solidarities', pp. 224-5.
[60] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 19; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 142.
[61] Barron, *London*, pp. 129-35; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 19.
[62] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 142.
[63] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 26.

Aldermen met several times a week to render decisions regarding control of the city's economy and the behaviour of its citizens.[64] Aldermen served for life unless excused, had to be of sufficient standing[65] to do credit to the office, and as of the fifteenth century had to live in London, and to have been born in England of an English father. Familial connections do not seem to have been important, wealth and fame was.[66] In general, the aldermen could control who was admitted to their ranks; by custom, a nominee had to be a member of one of the Great Companies, and although the ward provided the nominations for a vacancy, the sitting aldermen could reject any that they believed were unsuitable.[67]

The aldermen presided over the wardmote courts, were responsible for the defense of a section of the city walls or the night watch of part of the city, collected taxes, and were generally responsible for law and order within their ward. The Court of Aldermen rendered important decisions on the city's economy, organization, the punishment and eradication of various kinds of misbehaviour, and negotiations with the Crown. It met four times a week, and appears to have become more and more an integral part of running London as time progressed, especially during the period under examination here.[68] Beyond their governmental role, Aldermen also held a position of great prestige in the community, giving them a great deal of social capital, and by the end of the fifteenth century, becoming an alderman was a key step to making the leap from

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[64] Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 25-6. Officially, decisions made by the Court of Aldermen had to be approved by the Court of Common Council.

[65] In 1469 the monetary aspect of this was set at a net worth of £1000. Respectability or "fame" would have been an extremely important consideration here as well. Among other things, they had to swear not to be involved, directly or indirectly, with the victualling trade. Barron, *London*, p. 139.

[66] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 81.

[67] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 18. By 1550, this custom had hardened into an absolute requirement and one had to transfer to one of the Great Companies in order to join the civic government: Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 26.

[68] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 142.

wealthy commoner to the gentry. The prestige of the aldermen was also carefully protected; it was, for example, forbidden to slander or defame one of these powerful men.[69]

If the aldermen held most of the real power in the city, the theoretical leader was the mayor. The mayor's authority was delegated to him from the Crown. Candidates for the office had to be nominated from among the Aldermen and to have proved their worth by having served a term as Sheriff. They served a term of one year, and then could not be re-elected for at least five years; Barron argues that this was not to prevent one man from monopolizing power, but to spread the burden of office around to as many bearers as possible. Exactly how the decision between nominees was made varied throughout the medieval period, but by the time covered by this study, the selection was made by the Court of Common Council. After his election, the mayor took his oath in the Guildhall and then went to Westminster to swear before the King, or if he was unavailable, before the barons of the Exchequer. The mayor's peregrination to Westminster was a time of pageantry within the city, and upon his return, a banquet would be held either at the mayor's home or at the Guildhall.[70]

The mayor received a number of benefits from his office, including gifts from the city's craft associations, an allotment of wine, and fifty marks from the community of foreign merchants resident in the city. The mayor also had significant power, including supervision of all civic officials, the leadership role in many civic occasions, and the final word in arbitrating disputes and rendering judgements. He also presided over the

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[69] Barron, *London*, pp. 136-46, 197-8. It should also be kept in mind that the office of alderman, like many civic offices, could entail considerable expense, investment of time, and neglect of one's own business, so it was not always regarded with enthusiasm and some citizens paid considerable sums to be excused: Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 142.

[70] Barron, *London*, pp. 147-52.

mayor's court, which heard cases of disputes involving residents in London.[71] While the mayor therefore theoretically had a great deal of power in his hands, it is also clear that the rotation of office, the similar milieu that candidates were drawn from, and the process of selection meant that the decisions made would almost always be in the interests of the wealthy elite represented by the aldermen.

Assisting the mayor, aldermen, and common councillors in their administration of the city were two sheriffs, responsible for administering law and order in the city, as well as enforcing the assize of bread and ale. They also had the responsibility of paying the yearly fee farm to the Crown in exchange for the city's rights; this money was supposed to be covered by the profits from rents and tolls charged throughout the year, but if there was a shortfall the sheriffs were expected to make good the difference.[72] In their ongoing duties, the sheriffs were charged with arresting criminals, summoning witnesses to their trials, declaring royal proclamations,[73] and executing royal writs, as well as seeing to the execution of traitors, heretics, and other felons. The sheriffs presided over their own court, which handled business similar to that of the mayor's court, involving allegations of debt, forgery, mercantile disputes, and trespass.[74] Perhaps in part because of the heavy responsibilities of the office - Barron estimates that the sheriffs could have as many as 200 writs a year to execute, and were responsible for the all of Middlesex county, not just

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[71] The mayor's court included both administrative and legal business, and encompassed the Court of Aldermen "sitting judicially", or dealing with disputes in the margins of their administrative work. Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 8-11; Barron, *London*, pp. 153-7.

[72] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 86.

[73] These proclamations could often be regarding economic activity in the city, such as the enforcement of the Assize of Bread and Ale, a prohibition on the importation of Gascon wine, or official rates of exchange. *Letters and Papers*, v. 1 pp. 266, 459; v. 3 p. 965.

[74] Tucker believes that the Sheriff's Court was second only to the Common Bench in terms of number of cases: *Law Courts*, pp. 1-2, 12-15.

London - the office was not a popular one and some candidates had to be threatened with fines to get them to serve.

The only assistance available were the undersheriffs, who were probably younger men working their way up the ladder of civic respectability and responsibility.[75] The position of sheriff was therefore a demanding one, performed with the minimal assistance of the constables, relatively minor civic officials who accompanied the aldermen on their duties, could enter houses to investigate allegations of misdoings, and arrest or "attach" various malefactors.[76] One reason why men would have been willing to shoulder the burden of a sheriffship was that it was frequently, though not apparently strictly, considered to be a proving ground or prerequisite for later service as mayor. However, the sheriffs and constables hardly constituted an extensive police force; by the time we are examining there were perhaps 200 constables in the city,[77] and only two sheriffs with their deputies. This meant that official office-holders alone could not enforce order or standards of behaviour in the city.

This leads to one of the questions that generated the current study; in the absence of coercive tools like a modern police force, how did the authorities of London, or any medieval city, maintain control and promote the kinds of behaviour that they favoured? As we shall see, a large part of their strategy was convincing people to buy into a system of normative values and deference to authority, both through rewards that would result if they did, and negative consequences that would ensue if they did not. Another part of this system was the expectation that neighbours would supervise neighbours, and

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[75] Barron, *London*, pp. 159-64
[76] Barron, *London*, p. 125.
[77] Barron, *London*, p. 125.

accordingly that one's behaviour - good or bad - would be well known in the community, bringing with it both unofficial and official consequences, whether positive or negative.[78]

There were numerous additional civic offices as well, including the bridge-wardens, common sergeant, who collected the various rents due on tenements owned by the city, the chamberlain, who managed and disbursed the city's funds and was responsible for safeguarding its records, and the recorder, who may have been the most important and influential civic official next to the aldermen. The recorder was chosen by the aldermen, was entitled to wear an alderman's livery, and was paid a substantial yearly salary.[79] Recorders had to be skilled lawyers who recorded pleas and judgements in the mayor's court, to answer complaints about the quality of justice provided in London's courts, and overall to "administer the same law to rich and poor alike", including caring for citizens' orphans who were wards of the city. The recorder also served as the "mouthpiece" of the mayor and aldermen before the king or his council, in court and before Parliament.[80] As Recorders did not serve a limited term, they had the opportunity to become quite influential, although complaints about their being biased were made only infrequently.

In addition to these officials, London had a common crier, a coroner who investigated deaths in the city, a waterbailiff who oversaw fishing in the Thames, and a sergeant of the channel, who was responsible for making sure that the lanes and streets were clear.[81] London's government by the late fifteenth century, then, was a relatively

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[78] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 2-3.
[79] In the fifteenth century, the recorder received £66 13s: Barron, *London*, p. 174.
[80] Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 244-5.
[81] Barron, *London*, pp. 173-96; Many of these lesser offices were seen as and intended to be stepping stones to higher civic office in which a man proved his reliability and suitability for more powerful positions.

complex and elaborate institution, with officials dedicated to dealing with specific aspects of urban life. Although the effectiveness of these officials is perhaps open to question, it is clear that at least the intention was to create a community that was clean, well-ordered, and amenable to business. At least in theory, London was meant to be an orderly, not a chaotic, place. The proliferation of offices and court systems may seem confusing, but overall the evidence is that Londoners accepted the authorities that controlled their community, generally found them to be effective, and that legitimate complaints would get attention and some form of resolution or arbitration.[82]

In terms of prisons for the confinement of those who had defied authority, London had several. The most famous is Newgate gaol, which was the main prison for London and Middlesex county. Newgate was the destination for those suspected of serious crimes, where they awaited justice before the mayor, aldermen, or sheriffs. Newgate was also used by the king for "the safe keeping of dangerous and hardened criminals, approvers, heretics, over-mighty, rebellious and traitorous subjects",[83] which combined with the infamously bad conditions there, would have made imprisonment in Newgate a harrowing and genuinely dangerous experience. From 1378, the gaol at Ludgate was also used to hold freemen of the city who were being imprisoned for debt, or for charges other than felonies and treason. Incarceration here was not as unpleasant as Newgate, both in terms of conditions and the prison population, so being sent to Ludgate was one of the privileges of citizenship.[84] Finally, there were also two prisons

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[82] Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 381-7.
[83] M. Bassett, 'Newgate Prison in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 18:2 (1943), p. 234.
[84] Bassett, 'Newgate Prison', esp. pp. 233-4, 238-41. Conditions in Ludgate may have been a little too pleasant, as apparently in 1419 some debtors were choosing to live there rather than pay their debts: p. 239 n. 2.

known as Counters, each of which was the office and court of one of the sheriffs, and where individuals would be held awaiting trial in Sheriffs' court.[85]

It would also be remiss not to point out the existence of the ecclesiastical court system, even if it will not be part of the analysis here. The Consistory Court met once or twice a week in the Long Chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral, at which litigants could bring suits against defendants for charges such as defamation, attempts to recover petty debts, and for enforcement or dissolution of contracts of marriage. There was also the lower Commissary Court, which operated more like a criminal court, and at which individuals were summoned to account for sinful behaviour alleged against them, often this misbehaviour was sexual in nature, especially adultery and fornication. There were other church courts, such as the Court of Arches, which are not as well understood as no records for them survive. Those who were convicted in ecclesiastical court could face canonical correction, although public penance was often commuted to a fine instead. Individuals could be brought before these courts by neighbours, by church wardens, or by priests who had knowledge of their misbehaviour. The ecclesiastical system's relationship with civic authority is a matter of some dispute - a debate that will not be rehearsed here - but it is safe to say that it was another force attempting to impose a form of order upon those who lived in London.[86]

Although the records of the civic government emphasize its interest in the "common good" and the "commonalty", it would be a mistake to think that the attitudes of the men at the peak of the pyramid of authority and more ordinary Londoners were in

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[85] Barron, *London*, pp. 163-4, 167-9.
[86] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 195-8; R. M. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society of the Eve of the Reformation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1981) pp. 7, 8-10, 12-13, 15, 30-1, 37-9, 49-52, 79-85.

any way homogenous.[87] We shall see many examples of individuals or groups that disagreed with or dissented from the leadership of the mayor and aldermen; in general this could appear through public disputes, contested elections, posting of dissenting bills or notices, or defiance of rules and regulations.[88] However, the existence of dissent or defiance does not necessarily mean that the situation was chaotic or that authority was ineffective, indeed it would be difficult to find a system of authority that did not have some kind of resistance to it. What would have been important to London's leaders was that examples of resistance were confronted, seen to be confronted, and seen to be resolved.

Part of what made a made a man a viable candidate for civic authority was a strong set of Christian morals; wise, sober, or "sad" men were assumed to be the appropriate people to be in charge of most groups.[89] While Barron argues that despite their individual piety, the government of London was secular in its outlook and actions,[90] this interpretation is somewhat difficult to reconcile with their strong invective against lechery, prostitution, and gambling. Indeed a great deal of language used in civic documents invokes godliness and religious themes, suggesting that the religious and secular were significantly enmeshed in late medieval urban culture.[91] Because of the association between immorality and criminal behaviour in the medieval mind, and the extent to which religion was an integral part of daily life, it would probably have been difficult, and artificial, for people at the time to separate their concerns into secular and

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[87] Barron, *London*, p. 10
[88] Archer, 'Popular politics', pp. 26, 34-5.
[89] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 15-18.
[90] Barron, *London*, p. 2.
[91] S. McSheffrey, 'Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh's Controlling Misbehaviour', *Journal of British Studies* 37, no.3 (1998) pp. 274-8

spiritual. In many cases, those in authority probably would have seen handling what appear to us to be moral concerns as part of their remit to promote good order in the city.

London was also home to a wide assortment of guilds and craft associations. By the early fifteenth century there were nearly one hundred organizations dedicated to supervising and controlling different economic activities in the city.[92] These guilds ran the gamut from humble associations like the Fruiters to the powerful association of men involved in the international trade in cloth and wine. Although all these institutions had the same broad purpose, they were not all regarded as equal or treated equally. The guilds of the wealthier or more prestigious occupations - such as the Mercers and Drapers - were held in greater esteem, and had more influence, than those of lesser crafts such as the Tanners. There were twelve guilds in particular that sat at the top of the heap in London society; they were and are often referred to as the Great Companies, and included the Mercers, Grocers,[93] Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners, and Clothworkers. The members of these associations were London's wealthiest, tended to be the ones involved in international trade, and monopolized social and political power in the city as well.[94]

Within each guild, there were differentiations among the membership. Those members who acquired a large number of customers tended to delegate the

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[92] Sheppard, *London*, p. 94.

[93] It is important to keep in mind that medieval people did not use the term "Grocer" in the modern sense of a green-grocer or small-scale seller of food products, they meant someone who sold "in gross", or wholesale, and usually in products such as wine and spices, as well as some food items. *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=grocer&rgxp=constrained

[94] Sheppard, *London*, pp. 94-5; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 5-6. Despite the unquestionably important distinction to be drawn between Great Companies and the humbler trade fraternities, throughout this paper I have used 'craft association' and similar terms to refer to the entire panoply of guilds and economic fraternities in the city. This is purely a convenience, and should not be taken as meaning that there was no difference, for example, between the Mercer's guild and the Cobblers.

manufacturing of their products out to others, which created a more prestigious, wealthier sub-group, and a poorer section that depended on the customer base of the more prominent members.[95] In many guilds, this division was formalized in the separation between liveried members (who had special clothing that denoted their status, were the most senior and most successful, and were likely candidates for guild master or guild warden), and the non-liveried majority.[96] The significance of this division is discussed in more detail in Chapter One, but in short the liveried members were a visible leadership group, and the richness of their official clothes also reflected on the wealth and success of the guild as a whole.

The craft associations of London had, as their primary goals, protecting the rights of their members, supervising the standards and practices of the business, and controlling admission to the craft. However, most of these institutions also had a religious fraternity at their core. These expressions of faith could include a saint that the group honoured, the ideals of promoting Christian fellowship and charity, and holding masses to commemorate the souls of departed brothers and sisters.[97] Again, this shows very clearly how intertwined the secular and the sacred were for Londoners and medieval people generally; in most cases, they probably would not have understood the distinction that modern people want to make between the secular world and the spiritual world. It is also important to realize that guilds had important social functions on top of their economic

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[95] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 4-5.
[96] Barron, *London*, pp. 214-16; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 12-14.
[97] Barron, *London*, pp. 206-7; Ian W. Archer, 'Memorialization in Early Modern London' in J. F. Merritt ed., *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 93-4; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 177-80.

and religious ones: guild ceremonies and dinners promoted respect for tradition, for authority, and loyalty to their brethren.[98]

Each guild had a list of ordinances that laid down the rules for how the craft had to be practised, the prices that could be charged, standards that had to be upheld, as well as the rules for apprenticeship and eventual admission to membership in the fraternity and the election or selection of the guild master and wardens who would administer all of the regulations. These ordinances had to be both approved and enrolled by the civic government, and any changes had to be similarly endorsed.[99] While delegating all of this control to the guilds may make it appear that the mayor and aldermen were giving away a great deal of their power and influence, it is important to remember that not only did the heads of many of the craft associations come from the same tier of London society as the mayor, aldermen and common councillors, but in addition there was significant overlap in the membership of these two groups. Aldermen were very frequently among the leaders of their craft associations, and among the wardens of the elite guilds, we find many future aldermen.[100] In working with the craft guilds, therefore, the mayor and aldermen were not only working with their peers more than they were handing control to outsiders,[101] in many cases they were in fact maintaining control completely. Of course, since the ordinances were not legitimate until approved by the civic government, a significant check on the power of craft associations was maintained.

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[98] Gervase Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994): pp. 430-446; Archer, 'Memorialization', pp. 90-6, Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 35-6.

[99] Barron, *London*, pp. 207-8, 226-8.

[100] Although in theory the office of aldermen was open to any citizen, except participants in the victualling trade, in practice only the wealthiest members of the elite guilds were likely to be able to afford the office: Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 198

[101] Barron, *London*, pp. 232-3.

Conversely, it is also important to note that despite the existence of the guilds and craft associations in London, these organizations did not run the government; London was not a community controlled by merchant companies.[102] It is not difficult to find instances where the interests of the civic authorities and some guild leaders were, at best, imperfectly aligned. The Evil May Day, discussed in Chapter Four, is a prime example of this, and the negotiations over guild regulations and apprentices, discussed in Chapter One, are another. At the same time, however, the men who became common councilors, aldermen, sheriffs and mayors did come from the same economic and social milieu as the heads of the Great Companies, and often held leadership posts in both guild and civic government simultaneously. It is therefore no surprise to find that the Great Companies and the civic government generally seem to have been following the same moral and social agenda. It is worth considering, though, although this concern is not expressed in the records under examination, whether the interests of the Great Companies and the lesser craft associations would always have been the same. In most cases, it is still safe to assume that although the civic government and London's array of guilds were separate institutions, they were institutions that were allied with each other, would usually perceive their interests as being aligned, and would have worked together rather than in competition.[103]

One complicating factor in the control and administration of London was the existence of numerous sanctuaries and "peculiars" in or near the city but lying outside its legal jurisdiction. These sanctuaries included Westminster Abbey, the precinct of St. Martin le Grand near St. Paul's cathedral, and other small jurisdictions near religious

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[102] Barron, *London*, p. 2
[103] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 22.

houses.[104] Southwark, lying immediately south of London, was a grouping of manors that shared a common name, and was administered by its own bailiffs, and was regarded by London's authorities as both a commercial rival and as the site of criminal and immoral behaviour that caused problems in the city.[105] The relationships between all these entities and London was both problematic and complex, and cannot be fully rehearsed here. However, as a rule the mayor and aldermen found these limits or rivals for their power frustrating, and sought to limit their extent and influence as much as possible. In the case of Southwark, beginning as early as the fourteenth century, they made attempts to extend their own control and absorb it completely. These efforts met with at best uneven success throughout the medieval period, and continued until at least 1550.[106]

Obviously no community exists in isolation from those around it, and London had important links to and relationships with other cities in England, foreign cities and kingdoms, members of the aristocracy, and religious houses.[107] Although it would be a mammoth project to outline all of these, one relationship between London and an external power needs to be elaborated to some extent - the links between the city and the English monarchy. This was by far the most influential and important exterior force acting on London,[108] and this relationship will be a significant part of the analyses performed in later sections.

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[104] Barron, *London*, pp. 35-6. For a detailed examination of St. Martin le Grand, see Shannon McSheffrey's forthcoming work.
[105] M. Carlin, *Medieval Southwark*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996) pp. xix-xxii, 101, 108-111, 119, 153-7.
[106] Barron, *London*, p. 36; Carlin, *Southwark*, pp. 119- 25. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.
[107] Dobson, 'Survey', p. 281; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 2.
[108] Barron, *London*, p.4.

A large part of the relationship between Crown and city was symbiotic, or at least semi-symbiotic: especially during times of war, the King was frequently in need of money that Londoners could provide, and in return the city's leaders wanted autonomy to manage their own affairs.[109] These rights included free inheritance of property within the city, the right to elect their own sheriffs, the right to freely elect the mayor, and the right to manage the markets inside the city and to negotiate their own trade arrangements with other English towns.[110] During the period examined for this study, we find several examples of this kind of deal being struck, with different monarchs. As Barron points out, these were not really one-time deals but a continuous negotiation; rights that the Crown had granted could be revoked later if the city or its leaders proved unreliable in some way.[111] However set in stone London's leaders may have wished their city's privileges to be, in fact they were always subject to alteration by royal decree or act of Parliament.[112] Again, the loss of the city's rights was part of what hung over the heads of the mayor and aldermen in the aftermath of the 1517 Evil May Day riots.

However, the city was important to the Crown for more than just money. It was also an important location for ritual displays of power and celebration, as we shall see in Chapter Three.[113] This was a service that London was expected to render to its monarch, although the expense of such occasions may sometimes have given its leaders pause.[114] In truth, this is probably similar to the loans that they "volunteered" to the monarch, both in that they were effectively compulsory, but also because the exchange did have benefits

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[109] Barron, *London*, p. 9; Sheppard, *London*, pp. 99, 108; Archer, 'Popular Politics', p. 32; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 25-6, 34-6.
[110] Barron, *London*, pp. 31, 37-8.
[111] Barron, *London*, pp. 9-10.
[112] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 34.
[113] Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) pp. 3-6, 8-9, 52-3, 57-8.
[114] Barron, *London*, p. 21.

for the city (or at least its leaders) as well, who could exploit their participation in these displays to enhance their own prestige.[115] In addition, the crowds that would have come to attend royal processions would have been a welcome source of income for the businesses of the city. Indeed, it is possible that this opportunity for reinforcing hierarchy and social position explains why London did not have a cycle of play festivals as seen in many other English cities.[116] Finally, England's kings also sought to provide patronage for members of their household by obtaining influential positions or economic opportunities within the city for them.[117]

Although all these demands were undoubtedly significant, there would also have been benefits for London's leaders as well. As we shall see in Chapter Three, participating in royal pageantry could perform valuable functions for the civic authorities in reinforcing hierarchy and deference, as well as giving them an opportunity to display their own wealth and prestige. There could be other more tangible benefits as well; when the relationship between crown and city was particularly harmonious, there were opportunities to rub shoulders with the aristocracy and enjoy royal generosity. For example, the chronicles describe, in 1481, that Edward IV had so much regard for the current mayor - Richard Chawrie - that Chawrie, some of the aldermen and Common Councilors, and perhaps unspecified others, were invited to join the King for a day of

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[115] This point is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.
[116] Barron, *London*, pp. 21-2.
[117] Barron, *London*, p. 25. Particularly clear examples of this are found in the Journals for 25 September 1520, when the Court of Common Council agreed to give John Stadde "Gentleman of the Kinges Chauncery" the freedom of the city, and 20 July 1525, when Robert Johnson "the Kynges old serjeant" was admitted to the guild of Innholders to support himself in his retirement.: Journals 12, ff. 71, 302. Other examples include royal appointments for Simon Dygby, made "comptroller of the little customs in London" in 1509, William Pawne, made "gauger of the city of London" in 1510, and Sir William Sidney, made "keeper of the great scales and common balance, and of the great balance and all weights in the city of London ... with the appointment of clerks, porters, &c. of the great scales and balance, and of the Iron Beam and of the Beam of "le Hanzes Hanges" called "the Stylliard Beame" and of all other clerks, &c., belonging to the same office": *Letters and Papers*, v 1. pp. 93, 151; v. 3 p. 540.

hunting in Waltham forest, a meal at which the wine apparently flowed freely, and then were sent home with two harts and six bucks to share with their households, along with a tun of wine "to make theym mery with". This was duly done at a feast in the Draper's Hall. Again, however, at least part of this largesse appears to have been aimed at securing future loans from the mayor.[118] Clearly, the relationship between London and the Crown was a complex one, and lies outside the scope of the current analysis. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that royal authority was never far from London, both often in a literal sense and in the entanglement between the coexisting systems of power and control.

Analysis of Main Sources

The backbone of the primary source material for this study is drawn from the records left by London's government, and the records of the Court of Common Council and the Court of Aldermen in particular. These records would have been in the custody of the common clerk during the time under examination, as they are today. The records were accumulated largely under the supervision of the aldermen, and gradually bound into collected volumes for which some "tables and calendars" were prepared to aid in their use. For the most part, the careful preservation of these documents through the

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[118] A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley eds., *The Great Chronicle of London*, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983), pp. 228-9; C.L. Kingsford ed., *Chronicles of London*, (Dursley: Alan Sutton, 1977) p. 189; R. Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles: England, Scotland, and Ireland*, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1976) vol 3. p. 349; Robert Fabyan, The Chronicle of Fabian, whiche he nameth the concordaunce of histories, newly perused And continued from the begynnyng of King Henry the seuenth, to thende of Queene Mary, (London: Ihon Kyngston, 1559) accessed online at *Early English Books Online* http://0-eebo.chadwyck.com.mercury.concordia.ca/search/full_rec?SOURCE=selthumbs.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=99857641&FILE=../session/1218030616_19522&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spell.cfg p. 512.

centuries - which is indicative of their perceived value - leaves them in good condition with only sporadic deterioration that affects legibility.[119]

The records of both Common Council and the Court of Aldermen are collected in a sequence of volumes: the Journals and the Repertory Books respectively. Significant material was also drawn from Letter Books, which were volumes compiled from various civic records containing material that was believed to worthy of remembrance, or significant and useful in establishing precedent that would guide future decisions.[120] The Journals and Repertory Books, meanwhile, are broadly similar in format and content, but appear to have worked slightly differently in practice.

Both the Journals and Repertories record the decisions reached by London's civic government regarding many different aspects of governing the city: the approval of guild ordinances, regulations regarding the prices of food, wine, and firewood in London markets, punishments rendered against many kinds of miscreants, the plans for official public ceremonies, and such routine matters as purchasing fire fighting equipment.[121] All these types of entries will be crucial evidence for the analysis conducted in the chapters to come. However, it is also important to take note of what these records do not contain. They are clearly not meant to provide a narrative history of London, or even of the civic government; the elections of mayors, aldermen, and sheriffs are not mentioned with any consistency, nor are many signifiant events in the wider world - none of the controversies surrounding the reign of Richard III and his deposition by Henry Tudor are to be found here, nor indeed are the deaths of any monarchs during the period under examination, except when these events required something specific of London's leaders, in the form of

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[119] P.E. Jones, 'The Records of the City of London', *Archives* 2:11 (1954) pp. 125-7.
[120] Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 16-17.
[121] See for example: Rep 2, ff. 85v, 89v, 91, 104v, 120v.

a public ceremony. The Letter Books, Journals, and Repertories are not meant to tell the story of the city, instead they are an official record with an entirely different purpose.

They also do not contain the deliberations of either body leading up to the decisions that either court eventually made; only the final decision is recorded, and the language describing such decisions generally implies that the court was unanimous. For example, in a 1519 case involving a disputed sale of salt involving two Londoners and a "Ducheman" named John Venyrope, although the case is specifically referred to as being controversial, whatever debates and differences of opinion may have affected the eventual decision in Venyrope's favor are not recorded, merely what was eventually "adiuged by the Courte".[122] Exactly what this implies about the purpose of the texts will be a major part of the analysis conducted throughout this paper, but in brief it is clear that London's leaders were not interested in describing their disputes or disagreements, but in recording decisions rendered by a united authority, almost certainly for later consultation and precedent.

These sources have been supplemented by material that provides a slightly different perspective than the civic records: the Letter Books, which were compilations from the Journals and Repertories of material that was believed to be especially significant, several of the Chronicles of London's history, letters written by medieval Londoners, and Chancery petitions. Petitions to Chancery in particular are a sufficiently unusual source that they are worth briefly describing here as well.

The court of Chancery was a royal court to which, in theory, anyone in England could appeal if they believed that they could not receive justice from the common law or local court systems. Almost any issue could be brought to the court, either because there

[122] Rep. 4 f. 36.

was no solution for it under traditional law, or because the activities of a legal adversary meant that justice could not be obtained in a normal court case.[123] It was meant to be a widely accessible court, and petitions brought to it take the form of apparently personal appeals to the Chancellor, asking for a remedy in a situation where an unforgivable miscarriage or denial of justice is about to occur or has already occurred, requesting his intervention.[124] This decision did not have to be made according to common law, but according to his own sense of "what was fair or just."[125]

In some instances, along with the original petition, a reply from the other party also appears in the records, and sometimes the plaintiff's response to this rejoinder is likewise included. However, the decision eventually reached is not recorded, which is undeniably unfortunate for the historian, but probably necessitated by the purpose of the court - it was not intended to make precedents that would be binding on other cases, but only to resolve the specific dispute in question. Another limitation of the source is that although the petitions may at first appear to come direct from the aggrieved parties, a cursory examination soon shows that they are very formulaic in their composition; those submitting petitions undoubtedly either used professionals to put their case into proper shape to bring before the court, or had sufficient knowledge to do this themselves.[126]

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[123] C. Beattie, 'Single Women, Work, and Family: The Chancery Dispute of Jane Wynde and Margaret Clerk', in M. Goodlich ed., *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 179-80; J. Baker, 'The Court of Chancery', *The Oxford History of the Laws of England*, vol. 6. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 173-4; Timothy S. Haskett, 'Conscience, Justice and Authority in the Late-Medieval Court of Chancery', in Anthony Musson ed., *Expectations of the Law in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), pp. 160-1.

[124] Baker, 'Chancery', p. 182; Haskett, 'Conscience, Justice and Authority', pp. 152-3.

[125] Beattie, 'Chancery Dispute', p. 179.

[126] Beattie, 'Chancery Dispute', pp. 179-81; Haskett, 'Conscience, Justice and Authority', pp. 153, 157-8, 161-2. The need for proper legal framing undoubtedly restricted access to the court to those able to afford the services of a lawyer.

Both these issues necessitate caution from historians; no matter how convincing a petition may seem to be, we cannot know whether the court agreed or not, and care must be taken in taking the descriptions of each event too literally, given the use of formulaic composition and rhetorical exaggeration, intended to guide the reader to a particular conclusion. Despite this, however, the petitions are also undeniably valuable, both for the multiplicity of concerns and issues they record - however distorted - and perhaps especially because of the complaints about authority and its use that often do not appear anywhere else. With the limitations kept in mind, the petitions to Chancery are a rich and varied source for historians interested in many aspects of late medieval English society.

These alternative sources allow us to step outside the version of events given in the civic records, and the original intent of consulting them was to gain multiple perspectives on the city, with the aim of constructing some sort of amalgamated view from which to form conclusions about the creation of order in late medieval London. However, as research progressed, this became less and less of a priority. Instead, the focus of this project has become the perspective provided by the civic records itself. This enters into a view of history, and the sources used by historians, which problematizes many traditional approaches to research. This theoretical frame will be outlined in the next section.

'The Archival Turn'

Although archives have traditionally been regarded simply as repositories of evidence that can be used to verify and support objective conclusions, this perspective

has been challenged in recent years.[127] Increasingly, historians, along with other scholars, have begun to regard archives as not merely the place where the documents we are interested in happen to be, but as institutions that have an agenda - perhaps moral, political, religious, or philosophical - and promote that agenda to everyone who makes use of the archive. From this perspective, an archive is not a passive repository of texts relating to the past, it is instead an active agent in constructing the past, or at least the version of the past that historians are able to encounter.[128] This is not a quality unique to medieval archives specifically or archives created by past societies generally; any collection of documents or information necessarily has an agenda implicit in it.

Simply put, this is because every document or piece of information that is included in an archive is put there by a person who had a reason for including it, just as anything that is not included was excluded by a conscious process as well - if it was not deliberately left out, at least anything that was not preserved or recorded was not considered to be sufficiently important or significant for inclusion, which is obviously a value judgement.[129] Within the archive, this process continues: the degree to which information is made prominent, or relegated to secondary status, made easy to find, or difficult to access, and other considerations of organization are all conscious decisions that have been made in keeping with a certain system of values. As a result, anyone who

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[127] Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories', in Antionette Burton ed., *Archive Stories*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) pp. 4-5.

[128] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Expression*, tr. E. Prenowitz. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) pp. 4-17; Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 70, 76; Thomas Osbourne, 'The Ordinariness of the Archive', *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999) pp. 54-7.

[129] Harriet Bradley, 'The Seductions of the archive: voices lost and found', *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999), p. 113. This obviously does not include accidental loss over time. This is a clearly separate issue from the conscious processes underlying archive construction, although it may make discerning the underlying agenda of a particular archive a more complicated process.

uses the archive is exposed to this value system and is, to an extent, forced or at least encouraged to work within it.[130]

Of course the way that people and events are described, which points of view are included and which are not, and the emphasis given to different parts of narratives continues to impart a certain set of values or priorities upon the researcher. This can be as simple as an illusion of harmony being created by orderly minutes of meetings and court cases,[131] or somewhat more complicated, considering which points of view are emphasized or excluded. The ideological assumptions of the creators or controllers of an archive can therefore be encountered at least twice, through the content of the documents within it - a relatively familiar consideration - and the composition of the archive itself. As we shall see throughout this study, these considerations may sometimes put the researcher in the difficult position of trying to argue from the absence of evidence, or argue that such absence is significant.[132] It is nevertheless essential to include this step in the analysis of evidence, if accepting the values of the archive and allowing them to influence conclusions drawn is to be avoided.

This kind of thinking does make research more complicated, because the evidence we might use in studying the past almost certainly has an agenda or ideological framework, through how it has been preserved and presented, which the researcher must be aware of. It is not something that can be avoided, since any archive must have an agenda of some sort, but it is vitally important to consider what that agenda might be in interpreting the evidence contained within it. Again, this is because failure to do so may result in implicitly accepting the agenda of the archive being consulted, and allowing

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[130] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 45, 66-7, 81; Burton, 'Introduction', pp. 6-9.
[131] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 40.
[132] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 151.

those ideological underpinnings to frame our own conclusions. Consulting evidence in an archive is not simply a case of looking at what is there, or even the process of interpreting what is there; it is also necessary to think about why the texts that are in the archives are included, and why other texts might not be in the archive.[133]

I insist, however, that to accept this perspective is not to abandon any hope of learning about the past. Even if the archive is a constructed or distorted version of the past,[134] a grain of truth is still there,[135] and the construction of the version of the past on offer in the archive may itself reveal something about the people or society that did the constructing. If the inclusions, exclusions, and occlusions in the archive reflect the political, cultural, religious, and philosophical contexts of the people who created it,[136] then far from being frustrating, this in fact provides a valuable resource to historians who may be interested in learning about those various contexts.[137] The archive itself can become another text for investigation and interpretation. While I believe the general approach to history outlined here is important for any research conducted, the current study will focus on how such considerations can illuminate our understanding of late medieval London, and its authorities' quest for order therein.

London's Archival Agenda

While the focus on the archival perspective was a significant change in focus from the beginning of the research that resulted in this dissertation, in many ways it has nonetheless stayed relevant to the premise with which I set out. It is the central

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[133] Bradley, 'Seductions of the Archive', pp. 118-19.
[134] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 147, 154.
[135] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 88. Steedman cautions against succumbing to the illusion that the objectively real past is being accessed in this way: *Dust*, pp. 122-4.
[136] Burton, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[137] Osbourne, 'Ordinariness', p. 59.

contention of this study that the civic archives of late medieval London must be understood not as mere repositories of records, but as institutions that had an agenda as they were created, and that it was the intention of the men responsible for the archives that they promote this agenda to anyone and everyone who consulted the records there. In general, this agenda was to encourage conformity with a set of behaviours and moral standards, and participation in a network of authority and deference within the urban community that was both effective and justified. The many ways that this goal was accomplished will be the most important subject of the chapters that follow.

Katherine French took this approach in her influential study of churchwardens' accounts, arguing that their vague and incomplete nature was not (only) a frustration, but was also useful to the historian. The composition of the documents itself revealed "something about how communities of people with greatly divergent literacies created and used these records."[138] French concludes from the form of the documents that, among other things, the wardens' accounts, like many medieval records, were intended to be read out loud to a wide audience, rather than restricted to a small group of literate people. They also reveal a process of "dictation, transcription, recitation and reception" involved in their creation; they contain information about how they were used.[139] Finally, French also determines that churchwardens' accounts had an agenda; they were meant to help promote not only a desire for regulation from the episcopacy, but also "the

[138] K. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) p. 46.
[139] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 47-53, 62-6. Clanchy agrees that medieval records were usually intended to be recited to an audience: *Memory to Written Record*, p. 52.

priorities and interaction of the laity".[140] This is an interpretation which I believe is useful for the examination of many kinds of medieval documents.

One obvious question related to this is who the intended audience for the message in the archives was. Some urban historians believe that the chronicles and records produced by medieval civic governments were created with the idea of "futurity"; they were written for future generations to get a positive impression of the community and its leaders.[141] They were also intended to set a precedent, to portray what *should* happen in a given situation, not to provide a fair and balanced account of what *did* happen.[142] While it is possible, and perhaps likely, that this is part of the intention behind the records of London's government, I argue that their creators had a more immediate purpose in mind as well.[143] They intended the civic archive to help promote their agenda of deference to authority and conformity to established norms of morality and behaviour, and carefully decided what to include at least partly on that basis.[144]

Broadly, this is in keeping with the well-established idea of court records as a view from the centre, providing the perspective of people in power, but this thesis will argue that the records of London's elite were also meant to actively create, or help to create, the values and behaviours that these men believed in. In other words, they are not only a representation of what the city's mayors and aldermen believed *should have*

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[140] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 66-7.
[141] Anthony Musson, 'Appealing to the Past: Perceptions of Law in Late-Medieval England', in Anthony Musson ed., *Expectations of the Law in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001) pp. 165, 171-3; B. Bedos-Rezak, 'Civic Liturgies and Urban Records in Northern France, 1100-1400', in B. Hanawalt and K. Reyerson eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) pp. 35, 40. Clanchy argues that medieval documents were always intended to be permanent records in some sense, as opposed to the assumed ephemeral nature of much modern writing, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 145-6.
[142] Barron, 'Lay Solidarities', p. 221; Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 92.
[143] Steedman argues that the historian is always the unintended audience of archives and their records: *Dust*, p 75.
[144] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 147.

happened in a series of cases, they were also intended to help ensure that these ideal situations *did* happen, or would at least be more likely to happen, in the future. Deborah O'Brien's argument that the London civic archive was meant to be the repository of absolute truth is certainly convincing,[145] although the question of *the truth according to whom* is an interesting one. The civic archive was intended, through its position of authority and dependability, to promote the truth as the elite saw it, and wished it to be. The reader is meant to take on these values as their own. The records are not only a representation, or a precedent expressing a vision of the city. They are also a tool intended to help make that vision a reality.

Evidence for this interpretation will be provided throughout the chapters that follow, along with support for the use of the archives during the medieval period. The active use of these archives would obviously be necessary if they were to be a useful tool for the authorities in promoting their agenda. This study argues that the archival records of late medieval London were, in fact, an important component in the efforts of the men who controlled the city to promote order and harmony, and eliminate the chaos that is often assumed to be present in medieval cities. London's leaders did not want the city of chaos that their city is so often imagined to be, and they fought to make sure that it was not, or would not, be that way. The civic archive was one of their weapons in that struggle.

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[145] D. O'Brien, 'The veray registre of all trouthe: The Content, Function and Character of the Civic Registers of London and York c. 1274-1482' (D. Phil diss., University of York, 1999) p. 206

CHAPTER ONE: GUILDS AND GUILD REGULATION

Along with London's civic government and the influence of its ecclesiastical court system, another significant form of authority, and therefore participant in the maintenance of order in the city, was the system of craft and merchant guilds. The vital role these associations played in organizing the economy of the medieval city is quite well understood, and does not require detailed reiteration here.[1] However, craft guilds were also an important component of the construction of social order, both by establishing a system of hierarchy and deference, and acting to suppress disorderly and disruptive conduct among their membership. London's craft guilds therefore had an agenda that was much the same as that of the civic government, an observation which is hardly surprising given the significant overlap in the membership of these two groups noted in the Introduction. It is for this reason that I argue that the craft associations of London should not be regarded as a separate or even parallel form of authority in the city; rather, the craft associations were another implement in the toolbox of the leading men of the city, available for the advancement of their goal of constructing and maintaining social order and hierarchy.

In making this argument, I draw perilously close to the debate on the origin and purpose of craft associations in medieval English cities overall. Indeed, my contention that craft guilds were essentially another conduit for elite authority in London may appear to be in agreement with Heather Swanson's interpretation of the guild system in

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[1] London's guild system was outlined in the Introduction, but for a more extensive examination see Barron, *London*, esp. pp. 199-233, and Thrupp's classic *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, along with G. Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1968). For the roles played by guilds in English towns, see P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds, The Corpus Christi Play, and Civic Government' in S. Rees-Jones ed., *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, (York: Borthwick Institute, 1997); G. Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds, and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town', *Past and Present* 154 (1997); R. H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*.

general as an infrastructure that was created and imposed by civic oligarchs, for the express purpose of imposing their control over the merchants and artisans of urban communities. Swanson's thesis is far from universally accepted, with serious criticisms of her model being made by Sarah Rees Jones and Jennifer Kermode among others.[2] This debate is not settled, but it is not my intention to participate in it extensively here. In fact, whether the system of craft associations was created and imposed "top-down" or "bottom-up" is largely irrelevant to the role I see these groups playing in London in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However craft guilds were created, they were very useful to the elite that held authority in the city, and certainly by the late fifteenth century, there was sufficient overlap between the civic government and the leadership of craft associations that to regard them as structures that were significantly separate is impossible.

It should, however, be acknowledged that by no means all or even most of the craft regulations found in the archives necessarily conform to the socio-political agenda of London's elite citizens. In many instances, the ordinances serve the more innocuous purpose of controlling the quality and price of goods on sale in London's market. In

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[2] See Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* and 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), along with responses by S. Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Labour in Medieval English Towns', in P.J.P. Goldberg ed., *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England*, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', and J. I. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval English Towns', in J.A.F. Thomson ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, (Gloucester: Sutton, 1988). I engage with this debate in the context of late medieval York, and express my own concerns with Swanson's model, in my M.A. thesis. See E. May, 'Dyvers Mysdemeanours': Representations of Disorder in York's early 16th Century House Books, (master's thesis, University of York, 2000). One of the criticisms of the 'top down' model is that the origins of craft guilds can sometimes be traced to religious confraternities; this interpretation gains some strength from Founders' regulations from 1516 requiring the members of the guild to obey "all good Rules & Ordeynaunces of Saynt Clementes bretherhed founded and kepte in the parisshe Church of Seynt Margarete in lothbury" on the pain of a fine of 6d, although this is far from conclusive. Journals 11., f. 248. For the popularity of religious confraternities in London, see C. Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish: St Mary at Hill, London, in the Fifteenth Century', in J. Blair and B. Golding eds. *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) esp. pp. 247-53.

some cases, the civic government was responsible for directly supervising the economy. For example, on 13 August 1520, the Court of Common Council issued an order that the aldermen verify that every house shop in their ward at which "huksters" sold butter, cheese, and eggs was using "good and laufull Scales & Weyghtes", and make certain that these hucksters were not engaged in regrating - attempting to buy up a product and then resell it a higher price.[3] It is possible that this task fell to the aldermen as the hucksters did not belong to a guild that would supervise their activities. Many attempts to control London's economy, however, did attempt to harness the guild structure to achieve their goals.

Often, regulations dealing with setting price levels deal with the sale of foodstuffs. These regulations would have affected a relatively wide slice of London's population, including members of guilds such as the Fruiters and Poulterers, along with humbler sellers of produce and foodstuffs who were not members of craft associations. That the mayor and aldermen were exerting their influence over such a diverse group is not mentioned, nor is the fact that these regulations may appear to impinge upon the authority of some of London's guilds. The impression given is instead that these restrictions were an unproblematic and routine exercise of civic authority. Whether these regulations were in any way controversial, or required negotiation with affected groups, cannot be discerned from the picture painted by the records under examination. The picture they wish us to have is one in which the prices of food are kept under tight control, and done so in an apparently unproblematic fashion.

For example, on October 13, 1511, the mayor and aldermen fixed the price of grain at 8s. for a quarter of "good swete drye and marchauntable" wheat, and an entry on

[3] Journals 12, f. 63.

December 4 established a list of fixed prices for poultry, ranging from 3s 4d for "the best swan" or 10d for "the best fesunt henne" through a variety of birds apparently consumed by medieval Londoners, down to 8d for a dozen "peions" and 1d ob[4] for a plover.[5] This list of prices was to be posted in three locations around the city so that no one would be able to use ignorance as an excuse for breaking the rules. This regulation of the victual trade should come as no surprise. The authorities of medieval cities knew that if the supply of food became scarce, or overpriced, the population could become disorderly.[6] Ensuring that staple food items were available to London's population at acceptable levels of quality and price would therefore have been one of the most persistent tasks of the mayor and aldermen. Similarly, the civic government wanted to keep other key consumables such as tallow, discussed below, and firewood available in a steady supply and at what they considered to be a reasonable price.[7] Again, preventing disorder would have been the primary motivation, although simply making sure that the necessities of life were available in the city doubtless factors in as well.

Defying the price limits set could therefore have significant consequences; in 1512, individuals who felt that they had been charged an excessive price for poultry were directed to bring their case to the mayor; they were promised restitution for any excess money they had been charged and violators of the price controls were to be imprisoned

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[4] "ob" is an abbreviation for *obolus*, a Greek and Roman coin, but referring here to an extinct unit of currency equal to one half penny. *MED* accessed online at: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED30041

[5] Letter Book M, f. 183v, 185v.

[6] Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', p. 13; M. Weber, *The City*, (London: Free Press, 1958), p. 73.

[7] As examples: On 11 Jan 1508 regulations were introduced to ensure that firewood was sold at a fair price and in standard amounts, and in 1 Dec 1519 measures were laid down stop citizens from stockpiling firewood in order to obtain 'hygh & excessyve prices' for the commodity: Journals 11, 29; Journals 12, 29v.-30v.

"accordyng to the quantite of his offence".[8] Despite the best efforts of authorities, there were still obviously problems; in 1507 the poulterer Thomas Goldsborough was bound by a sum of £10 to swear that he, his wife, and his servants would "truely observe" the prices set on poultry by the mayor.[9] From explicit cases such as these, and the implicit evidence of repeated resolutions on the prices of victuals in the city, it is clear that if controlling the price of food in London was a significant challenge, it was also a high priority for the mayor and aldermen. One final complication to this picture is the probability, raised by Barron among others, that the fines collected from vendors who broke these restrictions were an important source of income for the civic government.[10]

In addition to controlling prices, regulating quality of merchandise was also important. This was an effort in which, once again, the guilds co-operated with the civic government. In 1476, the Pursers asked for a series of remedies against the treatment of cheaper forms of leather, such as sheep and calf skin, to counterfeit more expensive types such as buckskin and cheverel.[11] Brewers' regulations of 1482 required all ale to be "holsome for mannys body" and "accordyng in strengeth and fynesse to the price of the malt"; tasters were also required to be diligent in screening the quality of the ale produced. Later regulations also required that vessels used for the sale of beer and ale conform to standard measures. It is worth noting that although there was tension in London between English ale-brewers and largely foreign beer-brewers, the Brewers' regulations make no mention of it, and indeed usually refer (as they did here) to ale and beer as being part of the same trade, rather than two competing ones. This is likely

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[8] Rep 2, f. 127v; Letter Book M, 187v.
[9] Rep 2, f. 37.
[10] Barron, *London in the Middle Ages*, p. 179.
[11] Journals 8, f. 136. These deceptions were at least partly attributed to "foreigns"; see below p. 52 for a discussion of this issue.

another example of a selective portrayal of the situation by the creator of these records. Underplaying the importance of foreigners in the city in this way, and making it appear as though the brewing industry was firmly under English control, would have fit into the image of the city they wished to propagate.[12]

In 1505, Robert Coke was fined £4, and William Mantell 40s, for selling "unholsome porke" from a hog that had spoiled. In 1507, Roger Alfray, a Fuller, was condemned by the Court of Aldermen for using water to dilute eight tuns of "oile" into ten tuns.[13] On September 28, 1512, the mayor and aldermen ordered that a large quantity of "corrupte fisshe" that had caused "great deceyte poysonyng and destruccion of the Kynges liege people" be publicly burned as a warning against similar offenses in the future.[14] On 11 May 1515, the wardens of the Waxchandlers' guild asked the mayor and aldermen to approve a set of regulations governing the length and decoration of candles to be used as Easter tapers, church lights, and "bretherhed lightes".[15] In October of 1525, the aldermen were required to verify that the vessels used for the sale of ale and beer

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[12] Journals 9, f. 4, Journals 11f. 30. For a detailed discussion of brewing in England, see Bennett, *Brewsters*, pp. 78-87, 92-3; Bolton, *Alien Communities*, p. 21. Brewing ale had been a small-scale industry frequently engaged in by women, although Bennett's study shows that even before beer brewing began to replace ale brewing, the industry had begun to transform into a more large scale and male dominated one, a process that was more or less complete by the late sixteenth century. This was a process accelerated by the emergence of brewer's guilds, which typically excluded women, in the fifteenth century. In London, although the brewers' guild had an unusual number of female members, they could not become guild masters nor achieve the franchise thereby. See Bennett, *Brewsters*, esp. pp. 25-8, 43, 52-7, 63-6, 70-5, 78-9.

[13] Rep 2, ff. 18-19, 26v. Coke's fine may have been higher because when the poor quality of the meat was pointed out to him by a fellow butcher, he declared that "it wolde not be spyed" and advised selling it anyway. For his "grete deceyte", Alfray was to be set on the pillory for an hour the next 3 market days and his crime proclaimed around the city, although 2 of those days were pardoned owing to "the longe enprisonement that the said Roger haith susteynyd.", f. 38.

[14] Letter Book M, f 218. The problem of spoiled fish being put up for sale in London's markets was evidently a persistent one; see Letter Book M ff. 236, 237-237v and Journals 11, f. 104, in which the burning of "corrupt" fish and eels was also mandated so that everyone selling fish "may take a warnyng therby".

[15] Letter Book M, f. 241. 'Bretherhed lights' were candles used by fraternities, both guilds and religious confraternities. From MED accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED6166

contain an official measure so that customers got what they paid for.[16] Here, the regulatory efforts of guilds and government seems to be entirely benevolent, ensuring that the goods for sale in London were fair value for the money, and to some extent we should not doubt that promoting honest dealing and preventing scams was a large part of what authorities hoped to achieve with such regulation.

At the same time, however, their management of this aspect of the economy is slightly more complex than it may first appear. The company of Bladesmiths required that "every workeman of the Craft ... have his own propre signe & marke" by which his work could be identified.[17] To some extent, this regulation is a pragmatic part of the council's mission to control the quality of goods for sale in London. Having all blades carry unique signs that identified their creators would potentially[18] make it easier to determine who had committed any infractions of quality or fair measure. However, requiring that all blades sold in London bear such marks would also help maintain and perhaps extend the monopoly of the Bladesmiths' Guild over the sale of knives and swords in the city. Anyone wishing to sell blades required an approved and registered mark for their product, which would mean joining the guild, paying one's dues, and submitting to the authority of its wardens. This desire for a monopoly on their trade is obviously not unique to London's bladesmiths; such a monopoly was the objective of

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[16] Journals 12, f. 311v.

[17] Letter Book M, f. 247v. Similar rules are laid down in Journals 11, f. 9v., which also places "Armourers occupyng the ... crafte of bladesmythes" to have such marks for their work, and by 1520, although the Bladesmiths' guild has been "utterly dissolvyd" and its members translated to the Armourers' or Cutlers' guilds depending on the products they manufactured, the same policy of makers marks was required for all those making blades: Journals 12, ff. 38v.-39v.

[18] In this discussion, I am – perhaps unwisely - leaving aside the potentially significant difficulties of forgery and imitation of such marks. However, such makers' marks were not unique either to bakers (the Dyers required all cloth dyed in London to be clearly identifiable with a unique mark; Journals 10, f. 279) or to London, and although imitation of marks was mentioned as a potential problem punishable by disenfranchisement, I found no cases of an individual being accused of it.

medieval trade guilds in general. However, the example of the makers' marks does indicate that even ordinances which appear to be merely prudent or diligent regulations of the urban economy often served a dual purpose; while they were genuine attempts to control prices and quality, at the same time, they also supported and re-enforced the power and authority of the craft associations.

Such examples also remind us that the London's economy was far from being a free market. Participation was restricted, and legitimate vendors were still not free to charge whatever price the market would bear. This was not only true for foodstuffs; the concept of the just price, or a fair level of profit, was pervasive in medieval economic thinking,[19] and attempts to manipulate supply and demand were specifically prohibited. For example, medieval cities would have had a large appetite for firewood, needed both for heating homes and various industrial processes. In 1512, the mayor and aldermen declared that the maximum that could be charged for bringing a cartload of firewood into the city was 4d.[20] The Tipplers of the city were, in 1517, forbidden to sell herring above fixed prices during Lent, so as not to take advantage of seasonal dietary restrictions.[21]

As another example, London apparently experienced chronic shortages of tallow, from which to make the less expensive variety of candles that most Londoners would probably have used in their day to day lives.[22] In March of 1507, the price of tallow was fixed at 9s for a "wayne", or 1d for a "pounde of Caundill"; a dozen candles were to

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[19] D. Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 132-40, 149-52, 153-5, 157-8; Rees Jones, 'Regulation of Labour', p. 140.
[20] Letter Book M, f. 191v.
[21] Rep 3, f. 63v. 7 "red herynges" were to be sold for 1d, and 6 white herring were to also cost 1d.
[22] Wax candles were more expensive to manufacture, and not incidentally, less smelly in burning, explaining their higher price. Wax candles were necessary for dignified, public purposes such as memorial services and the value of wax can be seen in that fines could sometimes be paid either in cash or a quantity of wax. For example, Wiresellers who worked on Saturdays or upon certain holy days were to be fined either 2 pounds of wax or 16d: Journals 10, f. 94.

weigh fourteen pounds.[23] In May 1508, eleven Londoners were bound in a sum of £40 not to export and sell tallow "over the see", and to pay 6s 8d for every pound they had already exported.[24] By October, however, orders were given to search London and inventory the stocks of tallow available and another injunction was given forbidding its export. Again, eleven Londoners swore to obey the ruling, but at the same time, one confessed to selling tallow above the set price and mixing butter in with the tallow, presumably to stretch his stock.[25] In January 1516, Thomas Salter was imprisoned and fined £20 for concealing a "grete quantite" of tallow and then selling it "away oute of the Citie", leaving London "destitute of Candell".[26] On 5 June 1519, five butchers were placed under a bond of ten pounds to obey restrictions on the price of tallow, and not to attempt to sell any of their supply outside the city.[27]

Through all of these judgements, the mayor and aldermen were attempting both to prevent hoarding of tallow or its export overseas, where a better price might presumably be had. Their intent was to ensure a steady supply of tallow, wood, and other crucial goods, at traditional price levels, for London's population. While a detailed discussion of the philosophy of the medieval urban economy is not appropriate here, it is well worth remembering that a market with free access and flexible prices was not what was intended. Certainly from the perspective of the mayor and aldermen, London's economy was meant to be rigidly controlled, both via the influence of the guilds

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[23] Rep 2, f. 25v. A "wayne" referred to a wagon-load, although it is probable that London authorities had some measure of what constituted an offical 'wayne'. *MED* accessed online at: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED51520

[24] Rep 2, f. 45v.

[25] Rep 2, ff. 50, 51v-52.

[26] Rep 3, ff. 2, 4v, 9. Salter would later claim to be unable to pay his fine (f. 11) and had it waived in favour of unspecified other measures and a prosecution before the justice of the peace for using false weights and measures (f. 23v).

[27] Journals 12, f. 7.

themselves and the ordinances enacted by the civic councils. It is of course worth noting that these regulations benefitted London's inhabitants, not those who made their living selling these goods, and that they provided most benefit to the wealthiest citizens, who would of course want to be able to buy cheap food, firewood, and candles, but whose income was not derived from selling such products. We do not find similar limitations on the sale or export of wool or cloth, for example, which was how many of London's richer merchants made their money.[28] Unsurprisingly, the language of the regulations speaks of the benefit and protection of all people, suggesting that the rules had a more benevolent motivation than perhaps they really did. This fits with the general picture that London's elite wished the civic records to provide: that the city was under the control of reasonable, sober, fair-minded men who, among other things, wielded their power for the benefit of all.

If the practices used and prices charged by London's craft guilds were meant to be strictly controlled, the participation of individuals who were not members of a craft association in the urban economy was meant to be even more restricted. The status (or statuses) held by these people was complicated, and the situation is not helped by confusing terminology. Words such as "foreign" or "stranger" were at best imprecise; they could sometimes designate someone who was foreign in the modern sense of the word and was from outside England,[29] but it could also denote a subject of the English crown from outside London, or even a resident of the city who was not a member of the franchise. In some contexts, the word "foreign" designated non-citizen residents of a

[28] Thrupp points out that the only commodity with fixed prices that would have been part of the elite's economic world was fish; *Merchant Class*, p. 95.
[29] Merchants from Italy, Spain, and the Low Countries appear especially frequently in London records.

city, and "stranger" or "alien" meant someone from outside the city.[30] These meanings appear to have consistently applied in late medieval York, for example. However, the terms "foreign" and "stranger" were used quite interchangeably in London during the period of study, and the term "alien" does not seem to have been in wide use.[31] There was, therefore, a wide variety of people who could be described with these terms, and London's trade regulations treated them much the same; they were second-class participants in the economy,[32] with restricted access to the market and restricted freedom of action.[33]

According to an ordinance of 1512, "Foreigns" bringing poultry, eggs, butter or pitch into the city for sale were only allowed to do so on the pavement south of the Grey Friars' or at Leadenhall, and then only before "xj of the Cloke" during summer, or "xij of the Cloke" in winter; violators would forfeit their goods. In addition, foreigns were

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[30] *MED*, accessed online: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED1113, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED16817, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED43224.

[31] This is not to say the term never appears - one instance to be returned to later are the "Straungers aliaunt" referred to in Journals 11, f. 336. However it is certainly not used sufficiently to assume that reference to "foreigns" means non-citizen English in this context, and in fact the word refers to individuals from outside the kingdom on many occasions.

[32] Non-citizen Englishmen were in theory restricted to work as day labourers, piece workers, and manual labour such as water carrying, although some of course attempted to run shops contrary to these restrictions. Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 2-3.

[33] It is important to note that all the limitations placed on foreigns, although they may refer to "the city" as a whole, were in fact only enforceable within the actual jurisdiction of the mayor and aldermen; places such as the peculiars mentioned in the Introduction, and independent suburbs such as Southwark, would not have been subject to these restrictions. The Hanseatic merchants in particular had their own enclave, known as the Steelyard, on the Thames. They had their own guildhall, contributed to the maintenance of Bishopsgate, and the keeping of the watch there. Residents of the Steelyard also had an Alderman who acted on their behalf and did not have to pay any of the tolls exacted on goods brought to London for sale. Merchants from the continent received other grants of royal protection on several occasions; a community of Spanish merchants was established under Edward I, and the rights of merchants from North-West Europe were repeatedly confirmed, as under Henry IV and Edward IV. French merchants were also given exemptions from tolls and duties during the thirteenth century, although this ceased during the Hundred Years War. Barron, *London*, pp. 15-16, 86-8.

expressly forbidden to sell their wares in inns or poulterers' houses.[34] On September 25, 1515, the Bladesmiths' guild sought to have foreigns barred from making helmets, on the grounds that "they have not sufficient Conyng therunto, by occasion wherof many men of honour & other meane men of this Realme have been slayne & perisshed".[35] The language here is significant, as it suggests the Bladesmiths were motivated by concern for quality and safety, not protecting their market share.

In 1518, a proclamation was issued declaring that "a greate multitude of Straungers aliaunts borne out of this Realme" were mending and altering old clothing "in houses Chambres Aleyes & in other places aswele secrete as open", work that impinged upon the bailiwick of the Tailors' guild, although the foreigns called themselves "Bocchers".[36] The Tailors objected to having their business impinged upon this way, especially as the Bocchers' actions threatened "thold persones of the same Crafte [of Tailors] which nowe in their Ages have not the experience nor Cunnyng to Cutt or Shape Garmentes of the newe & dyverse fassions so often tymes newe founde & chaunged" and therefore relied upon mending and alteration to make their living. The remedy was for English bocchers to pay 10s to the chamberlain as a one time fee, and 12d each year to the Tailors. Bocchers from outside England had to pay an elevated fee of 20s, and both groups had to submit to the search and correction of the Tailors' wardens.[37] This act, of course, converted the foreign workers into a monetary asset for the guild and city, and extended the Tailors' authority. The rhetorical strategy is also clever, as the foreigns are

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[34] Letter Book M, f. 201. The restriction on time also forbade any goods from being put out to sale before the mayor and/or his deputies had inspected the market and made sure that the correct prices were being charged, 201v.
[35] Letter Book M, f. 247 v.
[36] Bocchen means to patch up or mend, from *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED5353
[37] Journals 11, ff. 336-336v.

described as being specifically hurtful to older members of the community, a heartstring tug that would have undoubtedly added weight to the suggestion that foreign access to London's economy should be restricted.

The attempt to control the access of "foreigns" to economic opportunities in London was not restricted to manufacturing or retailing trades; in 1500 the Minstrels' guild asked the mayor to approve regulations that forbade musicians who were not guild members from playing on festival days, at weddings, and guild functions upon pain of a fine of 3s. 4d.[38] It is interesting to note that in this case, the foreign minstrels were blamed not only for taking away so much business from citizens that they were "brought to suche poverte and dekay that they be not of power or habilite to bere charges to pay lotte and scotte and do theyr duetie as other fremen do", but also for causing "grete displeasure" and grievous annoyance among Londoners beset by unwanted musicians![39] It is significant here that the "foreigns" are not only described as illicit participants in the labour market – people who should not be there – but also that their actions have damaged the status of citizens of London, who can no longer do their duty as citizens, especially in terms of making necessary payments. In other words, the threat from foreigns is not only economic, it has social consequences as well.

One additional restriction was the prohibition on transactions which were "foreign bought, foreign sold". In other words, it was not permissible for one foreign to sell goods directly to another foreign; at least one member of the transaction had to be a citizen of London, as seen both in specific prosecutions of particular foreigns and general prohibitions on the practice such as this one: "It is enacted and Established that no maner

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[38] Letter Book M, f. 22.
[39] Letter Book M, f. 22.

of foreyner shall in any wise sett to retaill any maner of merchaundise within the said Citee or the liberties thereof to any maner of Foreyner..."[40] This guaranteed that franchised men could not be cut out of the picture entirely, and secured a significant portion of trade within the city for them. Londoners were encouraged to turn in anyone who attempted to evade this prohibition; in 1510, anyone bringing such a case to the attention of the mayor and aldermen was promised a quarter of the value of the goods forfeited. In March of 1516, a certain "Robynet" turned in "Henry Pecok, ducheman" for selling "xxii peces of lynnen" to another "foreyn straunger"; Robynet was awarded 6s 8d "for his costes" and given a further 5 nobles as a reward.[41]

These restrictions were meant to do a number of things, but first and foremost the intention behind them is to ensure that the members of guilds would have as great a share of the market as possible, and would not find themselves undercut or out-competed by foreigns, who had not joined a guild, did not pay dues to the support of the craft, and did not recognize the authority of the wardens. Medieval guilds were meant to ensure that all members of the association could earn a decent living at their trade; among other things, this meant restricting the trade to guild members as much as possible. In a city with an international economy such as London, it was probably impossible, and perhaps not even desirable,[42] to eliminate foreigns completely, but London's civic elite were also clearly not interested in providing a level playing field either.

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[40] Journals 8, f. 169.

[41] Journals 11, f. 104v; Rep 2, f. 80v; Rep 3, ff. 8v, 10v. Incentivising ordinary Londoners to help enforce civic ordinances is a practical remedy to the government's shortage of officials who could observe and punish such offenses themselves. A noble was a coin equal to half a mark, or 6s 8d.

[42] In particular, the involvement of foreigns in the victual trade was probably inevitable, given the difficulty in keeping medieval cities supplied with sufficient food, and that a significant proportion of foodstuffs would have been imported from surrounding rural areas.

As we have seen from the evidence used in the preceding analysis, valuable insight into the regulations used to control London's trade guilds is available through the records of the civic courts of London. Much of this evidence consists of petitions made to the mayor and aldermen, in which a set of rules was submitted for approval, enrollment and enaction.[43] Obviously the rules themselves are interesting, but the language used in such petitions is also significant. The petitions usually follow a similar formula, of which the following are typical examples:

> To the right honorable lord the maire and the right worshipfulles sovereignes the Aldermen of the Citee of London: Humble besechen your good lordshippe and maistershippes the Wardeyns and alle the good folkes of the Craft of Inholders of the said Citie That it wolde please your good lordship and maistershippes for the comon weale of the Kynges people and also for the good rule to be had within the said craft to graunt and establishe these articles folowing and theym to be entred of record in the Chamber of the Yeldhalle of the said Citie before your said lordshippe and maisterships herafter for to be observed and kepte.[44]

> To the Right honorable lord the mair of the Cite of London and his worshipful Brethern thaldermen of the same mekely besecheth your good lordship and maistershippes the good Folk of the Crafte of Foundours withing the said Cite that it wold please the same your good lordship and maistershippes for the wele of the said Crafte and good Rule hereafter to be had and kepte in the same Crafte and also for the Comfort and relef of the pore impotent and good people of the same to graunt unto your said besechers these articles underwriten from hensforth to be observed and kepte and afore you in this honourable Court to be entread of Record for ever to endure.[45]

Even in such formulaic statements, we can see several strategies at work. Most obviously, the wardens of these crafts are at pains to emphasize the authority and elevated status of the mayor and aldermen, casting themselves as poor and humble

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[43] Some craft associations took their ordinances to the Crown, rather than the mayor and aldermen, for approval, perhaps as an effort to circumvent this process, but by the end of the fourteenth century the mayor was attempting to have all such charters approved by the civic government as well, on the grounds that royally approved charters contained privileges that infringed on the mayors' power. Barron, *London in the Middle Ages*, p. 208. Thrupp points out that in guilds where Aldermen were among the wardens, it would have been possible to bypass steps of the court system and threaten difficult members with prison directly, a considerable advantage. *Merchant Class*, p. 22.

[44] Letter Book M, f. 170.

[45] Journals 10, f. 107.

beseechers to their good lords and masters.[46] In some ways, this is simply a prudent linguistic tactic; the guild wardens are seeking the assistance of the mayor and aldermen, and choose a humble, somewhat flattering way of framing the request. However, this also has the effect of reinforcing the social hierarchy for the audience of the petition, reminding them both of the power and authority held by the mayor and aldermen, and their good and worshipful natures that makes it right that they be in such a position. Obviously this is useful to the mayor and aldermen, but we must also keep in mind that the reverse may also have been true. For richer guilds, the wardens making the petition would have been from a similar social milieu as the mayor and aldermen; they too would have been members of the elite upper tier of London's social structure, and would potentially have been members, or future members, of the Common Council or Court of Aldermen themselves. Therefore, the petitioners would also have had reason to burnish the dignity and emphasize the authority of men who were their peers, and of offices they perhaps hoped to hold themselves. It is worth noting, however, as Barron does, that the guilds who brought their regulations in for approval were almost always artisanal, rather than mercantile, guilds. In part this may have been a function of the hierarchy of craft associations in the city, and in large part it is probable that it was not necessary for the elite guilds to bring their ordinances in for approval, since they made up the court.[47]

Even the men who led more humble guilds, who would not have been able to aspire to high civic office, would have had reason to support the overall hierarchy. If

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[46] In some cases, even more submissive language was used; for example, in a Lorimers' petition of 1511 the wardens and fellowship of the company describe themselves as "Piteously compleyning": Letter Book M, f. 181 v.

[47] Barron, *London in the Middle Ages*, pp. 207-8. Sharpe, who edited the Letter Books and many of London's records, found that of the Great Companies, only the Skinners and Tailors had their ordinances recorded. R. R. Sharpe, 'Introduction', in R. R. Sharpe ed., *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall: Letter Book L, Temp. Edward IV-Henry VII*, (London: John Edward Francis, 1912) p. xviii.

they supported the power and elevated status of the mayor and aldermen, they could expect that the mayor and aldermen would in turn support their own authority and prestige. The hierarchy of civic and economic power was a structure that depended greatly on internal reinforcement throughout all its levels; all its members worked to preserve and promote the prestige of everyone else, on the understanding that they would do the same in return. Elite office holders could depend on lower office holders to support their authority, and vice versa. Even in a system with limited mobility, there was a symbiosis or cooperative relationship in maintaining the status of all the members. The evidence is that most people in London were willing to accept an unequal power structure as long as it protected their own status, and provided at least some opportunity for personal advancement.[48]

In addition, the appeal that the ordinances will be for the "common weal" and the profit of the King's people casts the petition in a positive light. We are not meant to see the wardens as men who are interested in what is good for them, seeking to consolidate their own power, increase their profits, or further their economic or political ends. Instead, the rules are described as ones that will be for the benefit of everyone in London, and useful in keeping the city well-ordered and under good rule. This last would have appealed to the civic government, for whom keeping order and good rule was a major priority, but the language chosen in framing the petition is intended to suggest that the regulations being requested will not benefit just the wardens, or even just the guild they lead, but the community as a whole. Such a strategy for gaining approval is not especially novel, but when coupled with another element of the typical petition, I believe it acts to work pre-emptively against dissent as well.

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[48] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 15; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 385-7.

Along with suggestions that the ordinances being submitted for approval will be for the benefit of all, such petitions are virtually always described as coming from the wardens and "alle the good folke" of the craft.[49] This is a significant statement, because it places anyone who might object to these rules in the uncomfortable position of not being among the "good folke".[50] Moreover, the assertion, noted above, that the ordinances will be for the benefit of the entire community only extends this strategy; the good and reasonable members of the craft are in agreement on a series of rules that will be for the benefit of all the king's people. Any dissenters against the regulations would at least implicitly be forced into the position of marginal, disreputable characters who refuse to align themselves with the values and aims of the majority. In other words, the petition seeks to create consensus by suggesting that consensus already exists, that the good and reasonable members of the craft already agree on the correct way of ordering and running the guild. To disagree is to step outside of that consensus and become marginal.[51]

This is a strategy for stifling undesirable opinions and creating conformity that is far from unique to medieval guilds; it can be seen at work in such diverse contexts as modern politics and high school peer pressure. This most immediately suggests that the strategy is one that tends to work, and that people prefer to feel that they are part of the

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[49] As additional examples: Cooks' ordinances from 1475 were submitted as being from the "good men of the Mistery of Cooks", Pursers' ordinances from 1476 by "good men of the Mistery" who came to the Court, with identical language used to describe the Bakers when they submitted a petition that year: *Letter Book L*, pp. 129-30, 138-40, 143-4.

[50] Being considered a "good man" or one of the "good folk" was not automatic - during the period under examination the terms "goodman" and "goodwife" seem to have been reserved for members of the elite, not for everyone. In other words, this was something to be aspired to, and may have added additional incentive for people to agree to things that "all the good folk" were in favour of. Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', pp. 265-6.

[51] The idea that people who refused to conform to the values and ideas of the majority were encouraging rebellious acts by those from lower ranks of society may also be relevant here: Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 40-1.

mainstream rather than on the outside. It may have been particularly effective in the medieval urban community, however, given the importance of reputation and social connections in achieving both business and personal objectives.

Some petitions used less formulaic language, and the phrasing of these is often interesting. In an ordinance of 1475, the Cooks submitted a petition in which they said the regulations were needed because "the said Craft ben often tymes ungovernable and not wel guyded"; similarly, in 1498, the Upholders' guild took the unusual step of describing the regulations they submitted as being necessary because "many evill disposed persons of the same crafte" were "under none obedience governaunce nor guidyng folowyng more there owne pleasure and singuler weys than of thrift and sadnes", threatening the brotherhood with decay and destruction.[52] Most guilds did not go this far, probably because although this petition certainly makes the situation in the Cooks' and Upholders' fraternities sound grave, it also suggests that the wardens have not been able to keep their membership under control. Even if blame could plausibly be fixed on a previous regime, the suggestion of a failure of leadership, and respect for leadership in a guild would have been an embarrassing one for its members and especially its leaders. While the leaders of most associations appear to have preferred to paint a somewhat rosier picture of their situation, the language used in these petitions does cast any potential dissenters as disobedient, ill-ruled individuals opposed to the ideals of thriftiness and sobriety that were so valued by medieval urban society.[53]

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[52] Journals 8, f 98v, Letter Book M, f. 5v.

[53] It is possible that part of the explanation for this unusual language is the relatively lowly status of the Cooks' and Upholders' guilds; the wardens of these associations would have been less wealthy, and therefore perhaps less authoritative, than those of richer guilds. It may also be that their membership would have been less likely to buy into elite social values of thrift and sadness, or simply suspected of having different values, which required an emphasis on "correct" behaviour that would not have been necessary for more elite associations.

Thus far, we have considered evidence that shows how the regulation of London's craft associations controlled the city's economy; it is also evident from these records that the guilds were used to exert significant social control as well. In some cases this control would have been explicit; by the 1470s many of London's guilds had charters enabling them to hold guild courts that could resolve commercial and personal disputes between members.[54] However, preventing such disputes from arising would have been the ideal. One of the most important social objectives of guild wardens was to create and maintain a united membership. The members of craft associations were not supposed to be competitors; they were members of a fraternity that was meant to work together for the good of the craft as a whole. Achieving this meant preventing members from undermining each others' businesses. For example, the Cooks' 1475 petition requested a prohibition against attempts to poach the servants or apprentices of other members of the guild; violators faced a fine of 13s. 4d; this was also the case in the company of Wiremongers.[55] A set of Brewers' regulations from 1482 forbade any member of the guild to "entice or taak away any Custumer or Custumers aforetyme belongyng to any other persone or persones ... occupiyng the said Craft of Bruyng upon payn of x s." Again, the Wiremongers' rules included a similar prohibition with violators penalized 6s. 8d.[56] Obviously, the members of London's guilds were not meant to treat each other as rivals. Moreover, private business practices were not the only form of behaviour being regulated; guild regulations also governed the public conduct of their membership.

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[54] Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 89-90.
[55] Journals 8, f. 100, Journals 10 f. 94v.
[56] Journals 9, f. 4, Journals 10. f. 95v.

In the Bladesmiths' regulations discussed above, any member who should "mysuse hym self in Brawling scoldyng or ungoodly rebukyng another person beyng an householder of the seid Craft" were to be fined 6s 8d; and any apprentice who engaged in such behaviour would cause an identical fine to be levied against his master.[57] Such a prohibition against public misbehaviour was not unusual – the regulations of the Upholders specified a fine of 13s. 4d. for any member who used "ungodely language" or "sclanderous wordes" against any of their brethern,[58] while brothers or sisters of the Cobblers' guild risked a fine of 3s. 4d. for any quarrelling with members, or use of slanderous or defamatory language against a fellow cobbler.[59] The Founders threatened any member of their guild who "shall vex sue [or] trouble" another member with a fine of 3s 4d.[60] These sorts of regulations served two purposes. First, it was part of keeping a generally well-ordered community, which was desirable for all the leaders of medieval London. However, guilds were also organizations that were greatly concerned with their collective reputation, both professionally and socially. Concern for the professional reputation of all members was at least part of the motivation behind seeking out and punishing any individuals who were engaged in dishonest practices; one bad apple might stain the reputation of the entire guild. Similarly, guilds were concerned with their collective dignity and reputation as good citizens, and the shady, disreputable, or ill-ruled behaviour of one member threatened the good name of the organization as a whole.[61]

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[57] Letter Book M, f. 248v.
[58] Letter Book M, f. 5v.
[59] Letter Book M, f. 32 v.
[60] Journals 11, f. 247. At least some of the time, such strictures were not honoured: for example in May 1511, Paul Withypoll, a merchant tailor, pursued a debt of £40 owed to him by John Westou, a mercer, at King's Bench. *Letters and Papers*, v. 1 pp. 244-5.
[61] Disputes that were not successfully contained in house would end up being resolved by the mayor and aldermen, a situation which could damage the prestige of the guild wardens: Barron, *London and the Middle Ages*, p. 228; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 111.

Proper behaviour, however, meant more than just getting along with one's fellow guild-members. Dignified and respectable conduct was expected in all aspects of a citizen's life. The Cooks' regulations of 1475 included a measure forbidding members from attempting "to drawe & plukk other Folk aswel Gentilmen as other comon people by their Slyves and Clothes to bye of their vitailles". This was both to prevent attempts to draw customers away from the stalls of other Cooks, and to prevent "debates and stryves" from breaking out.[62] In other words, the Cooks were expected to sell their wares, and seek customers, in a dignified manner that would bring credit to themselves and their company as a whole.

In addition to his own behaviour, a guild-member was also responsible for the conduct of those in his household, including apprentices and servants. This was evident in the Bladesmiths' regulations mentioned above, but was far from unique to that fraternity. Brewers' regulations of 1493 specify that no member of the guild was to employ any "untrue or deceyvable servaunt" upon pain of a 40s fine.[63] In some cases, a man was even responsible for the quality of his customers; a measure passed by the Court of Aldermen in 1504 charged the city's Tipplers to swear before the Alderman of their ward "that they shall kepe gud Rule and honest in their howses and that they shall not herbour nor logge no man in their howses but such as they will Aunswer for". This promise was to be backed up by 40s worth of surety.[64] In October 1520, an act was passed by Common Council requiring all innholders to "certifie you [the ward's

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[62] Journals 8, f. 98v.
[63] Journals 10, f. 14 v.
[64] Rep 2, f. 8. This regulation for Tipplers is in line with the overall expectation that householders would properly govern the behaviour of everyone in their houses; see for example R.H. Helmholz, "Harboring Sexual Offenders: Ecclesiastical Courts and Controlling Misbehavior," *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998): 258-68.

alderman] at their perell in wrytyng of the manours of all such gestes & straungers as be loged with them & what behavours they be of & of their besynes & cause of their Jorney taryyng as nye as they can". Anyone who the innholder would not answer for was to be turned over to the alderman for examination.[65] No doubt regulations such as these were at least partially motivated by a desire to keep dishonest practices out of the craft, or control the presence of dishonest individuals who might, among other things, damage the respectability of the guild or the city.[66] However, these regulations are also in line with the responsibility householders had for the rule of their home; to keep a disorderly house, or tolerate disreputable or dishonest conduct among the people one was responsible for was to demonstrate personal weakness of character. Maintaining an honest and orderly household was just as important as one's own conduct.[67]

In addition to regulating behaviour, the internal structure of the guilds helped to reinforce the overall culture of authority and deference on which the medieval urban community was based. Within many guilds, there were distinctions of wealth or seniority that gave each association its own internal hierarchy. The membership of many of London's guilds was divided into liveried and non-liveried sections,[68] with liveried members having increased privileges and influence within the guild.[69] This status came with tangible benefits. For example, in the guild of Founders, non-liveried members were restricted to one apprentice, whereas liveried members were permitted to have

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[65] Journals 12, f. 78v.

[66] These regulations also extended to the physical appearance of servants and apprentices, see for instance Journals 10, f. 20 specifying that apprentices in the Curriers' guild be "of right lymmes and not deformed for the worship of this Citee", and similar rules of the Bladesmiths; Journal 10 f. 227. This was in keeping with the idea that outward appearance reflected one's spiritual purity, and that deformed individuals therefore had tainted spirits as well.

[67] See further discussion of this topic in Chapter Two.

[68] This distinction was also frequently referred to as being "of the Clothing". For most guilds, this distinction first appears in the fifteenth century: Barron, *London in the Middle Ages*, pp. 214-16.

[69] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 12-13.

two.[70] It was also the liveried members who would represent the guild at guild functions, civic occasions and processions. This allowed them to demonstrate their elevated status in a very public way, showing off their influence, prestige, and membership in an elite group for the entire community to see.

While liveried status conveyed obvious advantages, it is also true that it was not optional; guild members who were believed to be able to afford the role were frequently required to do so. For example, members of the craft of Upholders who were believed to be "able and sufficient" to enter into the clothing by their wardens, but refused to do so, were to be fined 6s. 8d.[71] Among the Minstrels, anyone chosen as warden who refused to serve was to be fined 20s.[72] In the Saddlers' guild, anyone found "sufficient and honest of condicion"" to take the livery who refused to do so was to be fined 13s 4d.[73] Potential expense is one reason why some might have been hesitant to accept the honour of their craft's livery. Frequently, they were required to pay for their gowns of office; in the case of the Upholders, the liveried members were to buy new clothing every two years.[74] The liveried Saddlers had to pay either an ounce of silver or 3s 4d for their gown of office, apparently each year.[75] The duties of a liveried guild member also required a not insubstantial investment of time, in the form of appearances at public processions, civic occasions, and important guild functions. These appearances were often not optional; liveried members of the Brewers' guild summoned by their wardens would be

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[70] Letter Book M, f. 3v. This was an increase from the limits set in 1492, in which liveried members were permitted two apprentices and non-liveried members restricted to only one; Journals 10, f. 107.
[71] Letter Book M, f. 5v and Journals 10, f. 119.
[72] Letter Book M, f. 22v.
[73] Journals 9, f. 259v.
[74] Letter Book M, f. 5v. Some attempts were made to limit this expense: the Upholders' regulations of 1498 specified that new livery was not to be made of fabric costing more than 4d. per yard; Journals 10, f. 119v.
[75] Journals 9, f. 259v.

fined 4d. if they did not appear, and would be fined 10s. for not attending the election of new wardens.[76] In addition to any other duties they may have had on these occasions, the appearance of a guild's liveried members in their rich clothing showcased both the unity and the wealth of the association to the rest of the community. Some members, however, may have wanted to avoid both the potential expense of liveried status and the need to be available for public appearances. It is also possible that some individuals were not interested in climbing the ladder of power and were content with humble anonymity.

However, as we have seen, this was not always a choice that they were free to make. In some ways, attempts to evade liveried status in guilds are similar to efforts to avoid positions in the civic authorities of medieval cities.[77] Also, the motivations mentioned above likely also explain the apparent reluctance of some men to serve as wardens for their guild; the Upholders, for example, threatened a fine of forty shillings to anyone who refused to serve as warden.[78] Even more than accepting the livery, serving as warden would involve a significant investment of time and energy in keeping order within the guild, providing leadership, and attending meetings and official functions. While we might expect that such important positions and their attendant responsibilities should be left to those who actively seek them, the expectations of medieval communities were obviously different. Those who were able to serve, in terms of wealth and social capital, were not just expected to do so, but were often required to lead.

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[76] Journals 9, ff. 6-6v.

[77] See J.I. Kermode, 'Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser 35:2 (1982) and Weber, *The City*, p. 121. Interestingly, the extant records of London's civic government do not include frequent cases of evasions of civic office in the city.

[78] Letter Book M, f. 5v. This fine was also levied against anyone selected to serve as one of the four wardens' assistants; this role within guilds is discussed in detail below.

The insistence that men who were able to serve do so springs at least in part from the very reasons that some tried to avoid the honour; if such offices were expensive or onerous, perhaps the fairest arrangement would be if everyone took their turn. In the case of craft associations, it was also in their interests to make certain that all members who were wealthy enough to take the livery did so, in order to make the most impressive display possible on public occasions. The rules of the both the Bakers and Upholders specified a fine of 3s 4d for any liveried members who did not appear at functions held by the Mayor or Sheriffs.[79] Similarly, liveried members of the Plumbers' guild who did not appear at occasions "for the honour of the Kynge and the said Cite" were to be fined 12d.[80] In the case of wardens, it is possible that a wealthy, successful member of the guild who did not accept a formal leadership role might be a problematic influence within the association. They would have prestige and influence in any case, due to their wealth and social standing, so it would have been important to have that influence exerted within the official, legitimate channels of the guild. For craft associations, unity was always a primary objective; making certain that all the influential members of the guild were part of the official leadership would have been an important part of achieving that unity. Finally, the connection between wealth and social position in the medieval urban community is once again relevant here; if the community as a whole believed that it was right and proper for the wealthiest citizens to be in authority, then it is also likely that the responsibility to be community leaders came along with business success. In other words, obtaining wealth – something medieval society as a whole was at least

[79] Journals 8, f. 138v, Letter Book M, f. 5v.
[80] Journals 9, f. 180v.

somewhat ambivalent about, ethically[81] - meant that one should also demonstrate one's worthiness and good character by helping to provide the community with order and leadership.

The division between liveried and non-liveried status is the most obvious social division within the craft associations of medieval London. Indeed, in most cases this was the only formal distinction to be made within the brethren of the craft. However, the regulations of many guilds show that there were, in fact, other levels of status within the membership. One of these other levels was those men selected to advise and assist the wardens in their duties and decisions.

Many guild regulations mention the importance of such individuals. As an example, the oath of newly-elected Saddlers' wardens was to be witnessed by "iiij or vj" of the "most honest persones of the said Craft", and they were to have eight assistants to help them select who should be admitted to the livery, which apprentices should be granted membership in the craft, and help supervise the work of the membership.[82] The wardens of the Upholders were ordered not to "procede determyn nor fynysshe any chargable maters concerning the said crafte without thassent and Counceill of the iiij persones chosen and electe to be assistent to theym", on pain of a forty shilling fine.[83] In the Founders' guild, the wardens for the coming year were to be chosen by the sitting wardens, along with "the associates and assistentes of the same".[84] As we can see, these men had a significant position of authority within their guilds, although exactly who they

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[81] Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', p. 9; C.R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City: 1450-1750*, (New York: Longman, 1995) p. 160; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 138.
[82] Journals 9, ff. 259-259v, 261.
[83] Letter Book M, f. 5v.
[84] Journals 11, f. 245v.

were and how they achieved their status is rather vague. It is likely that there is a parallel to be made between this system of wardens and advisors and the mayor and aldermen of the city; London's mayor was the official head of the civic government and probably had the last word on most matters, but he also served a limited term and was not expected to act without the counsel and consent of the aldermen. Just as the aldermen – London's wealthiest and most respected citizens – served for life as advisors, assistants and counsellors to the mayor, and many took their turn at the head position, it is likely that these assistants to guild wardens were the wealthiest and most respectable men of the guild. Even when they were not serving as wardens, these men would have expected, and would have been expected, to have significant input and involvement with the running of the craft and the management of its community. This would have been similar to the parish seniority system, in which wardenship was more of a test for entry into the parish elite was a final destination, and it was men who had proved their worth by serving as churchwardens who really directed parish affairs.[85]

The existence of this group within London's guilds is, therefore, in keeping with evidently widely-held ideas about how governance should work in the community overall. Essentially the guilds, like the government of the city, were under the control of a quite restricted group of men, selected for their position both for their wealth and good character,[86] and although they would take turns at final leadership, overall authority would always be a joint venture by the leader and his peers. In many ways, holding the final authority would have been a less important step than being a member of the

[85] Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish' pp. 253-62.
[86] As an example, ordinances of the newly-united craft of Merchant Haberdashers enrolled in 1502 specify that the wardens should be "of the most honest in havour and saddest and substanciall" members of the association; evidently more than wealth or simple seniority was necessary. Letter Book M, f. 57v.

permanent elite pool of advisors to that position; once there, a man would always hold authority, always be involved and consulted on important decisions, and therefore always wield significant power.

Although how mayors, sheriffs, and aldermen were selected is well understood from electoral procedures extant in the records,[87] the process by which the assistants to guild wardens were chosen is much less clear. Some indications we have hint at a process of "election" or "choosing"[88] without spelling out how it worked.[89] In other cases, the advisors are described as being former or future wardens; the assistants of the Saddlers' wardens were to be chosen by the liveried members of the guild; and it was from this group of eight that the next year's four wardens would be selected.[90] In the Carpenters' guild, the wardens were to be assisted by "vj or iiij of the most honest persones of the same Citie suche as have borne the same office before".[91] In either case, we can expect that these men were an elite within the liveried elite of their guild, once and future wardens to be sure, but leaders within the association regardless of whether they held the office or not. This was obviously an important and prestigious division within the guild community, and there were other such distinctions in status as well.

Among the Woolpackers' guild, when an apprentice completed his term and became a member of the company, he was not eligible to take an apprentice himself until four years had passed.[92] This was not a distinction that had a particular title associated with it, or a visible indicator like the livery of a guilds' leadership, but nevertheless it is

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[87] H.T. Riley, 'Introduction', in *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, ed. and trans. H.T. Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1861), pp. 18-21, 29-31, 35-6, 39-40.
[88] Letter Book M, f. 5v.
[89] A similar process to other elections in the medieval city, with a number of suitable candidates nominated and the decision between them made by a restricted group of voters, seems likely.
[90] Journals 9, f. 261.
[91] Journals 9, f. 137v.
[92] Journals 10, f. 214v.

clear that recently-admitted members had a kind of junior status that restricted their business. We find other examples of this sort of policy: Founders' regulations from 1489 specified that non-liveried members could have only one apprentice; liveried members were permitted two, wardens or ex-wardens were permitted three, and "hym that hath been the upper warden" was permitted four apprentices.[93] A Fullers' petition from 1487 complained that 'simple yonge persons' who had just completed their apprenticeships were attempting to establish their own households, "beying of no substaunce nor havyng any thing of theym self to sustayne" themselves, and were also taking on apprentices without properly considering their origins and characters, and lacking the wherewithal to sustain them. The petition asks that members who have just been admitted to the craft be forbidden to open their own shop until they had been "enhabled by the wardeyns of the said occupacon for the tyme beyng and by iiij other honest persones housholders of the same Feolaship", upon the pain of a fine of 40s. No-one was to be "enhabled" unless they could demonstrate that they had property or goods worth at least ten marks.[94]

The language of the Fullers' petition makes it sound as if the motives are benevolent, and that foolish young members of the company were essentially being saved from themselves. However, it is worth noting that if these young members were not allowed to open their own shops, they would instead have to work for the more established members, who probably preferred a reliable workforce for their own shops, as well as less competition for apprentices. In either case, it is clear that new members of a guild often had a rather informal junior standing that restricted the scope of their

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[93] Journals 9, f. 248-248v.
[94] Journals 9, ff. 144v-145v.

economic activity, either preventing them from taking apprentices or opening a shop. Presumably this was intended to help preserve the status and market share of more senior members of the guild, and it is no great leap of logic to assume that such junior members would also have had less influence within the community of their guild. In any case, the membership of London's guilds obviously cannot be neatly divided into the traditional categories of apprentices and members, or even apprentices, members, and liveried members; there was a more complicated hierarchy within the groups which members had to negotiate.

In fact, this type of distinction could even be found among the liveried members of a craft; Curriers' regulations from 1493 indicate that wardens or ex-wardens were permitted three apprentices, liveried members who had not been wardens were permitted two, while non-liveried members could have only one.[95] In this case, achieving higher standing within the guild conveyed direct economic benefits, in terms of having more apprentices to help with ones' trade. This also shows that even the liveried elite of a craft were not necessarily a homogenous group, but could contain further gradations of influence and prestige.

While the preceding analysis has shown the various ways in which the craft associations of late medieval London served to promote the interests and agenda of the civic elite, it is apparent that the authority of these institutions did not operate in an unproblematic fashion. The civic archives contain many examples of resistance to the authority of the guilds, and attempts to evade the system. Their inclusion in the records likely serves more than one purpose; from a practical standpoint, these cases serve as precedents for how future instances of resistance to the guild structure should be handled.

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[95] Journals 10, f. 18v.

However, the inclusion of these cases also has narrative functions that would have been attractive to the civic authorities. First, each of these cases is the story of order restored - an offense and a remedy - which reinforces the competence and effectiveness of the authorities in the mind of the reader. Additionally, these are often stories of challenges to guild authorities being solved by the mayor and aldermen, which would tend to enhance their prestige relative to guild leaders. While it is true, as noted earlier, that there was often significant overlap between these groups, as we shall also see, most of the cases of challenges to guild authorities deal with crafts other than the Great Companies, so their leaders would not have been aldermen. The overall effect, then, is to burnish the prestige of the very highest level of power in the city, by telling the story of these men as being able to re-establish good order when lesser authorities failed.

One frequent example of resistance to the guild system is efforts to avoid the oversight and control of the crafts and government of London by operating outside their jurisdiction, either in the suburbs of the city or the nearby countryside. For example, the 1489 Founders' regulations specified that any member taking goods for sale at a fair must have their quality inspected by the wardens before packing them up for transport, on pain of a fine of 3s 4d.[96] Even if the goods were being sold outside of London and probably to non-Londoners, the good name of the London Founders was still at stake. In 1499, the Stringers' guild asked the mayor and aldermen to approve a series of regulations including a fine of 6s. 8d. to be assessed against any members of the craft who purchased strings from persons "dwellyng out of the said citee or the fraunchise of the same" and attempted to resell them within the city. Attempts to do so could either have been an attempt to circumvent the imposition of standards of quality by the guild,

[96] Journals 9, f. 248v.

by manufacturing the product where they had no jurisdiction to oversee the process and materials used, or it could have been an attempt to duck the restrictions on bringing the products of non-franchised manufacturers to London's markets.

Given the restrictions, noted earlier, on the ability of "strangers" to participate in London's economy, it would have been possible for citizens of the city to establish a profitable position for themselves as middle men, buying merchandise directly from non-citizen manufacturers and then selling it in the city with the greater opportunities offered to them as members of the franchise. This would have been a matter of some concern for the craft wardens, both because they wished to reserve as great a portion as possible of London's market for the work of guild members, and because the merchandise being made outside the city would, as we have noted, been beyond their ability to scrutinize for proper materials and quality.

There are other examples of this type as well. In 1500, the Dyers expressed concern that members of their craft living in Southwark were making poor-quality goods for sale in London and asked permission to levy a fine of 40s in such cases.[97] In 1501, the Pouchmakers' guild passed a series of regulations including one prohibiting members from avoiding the inspection of the wardens by selling their wares outside the city; the penalty for violators was set at a significant 26s 8d.[98]

In perhaps the clearest case of evasion of the authority of a guild, in 1485 the Cutlers asked for remedies against apprentices, described as "simple persons" who had "departed out of this Citie" and taught "suche conyng as they hadd unto other people", "to the grete hurte of this said Craft". Cutlers' apprentices were also apparently

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[97] Journals 10, ff. 209v. – 210.
[98] Letter Book M, f. 36v.

gathering "in secrete places" and working "by Candill light"[99] to produce goods of questionable quality.[100] These apprentices were attempting to circumvent the authority of the Cutlers' wardens both by going outside their jurisdiction and by producing goods in secret, even though they had not finished their training. Both of these practices would have been serious attacks on the authority of the wardens and the power of the guild as a whole, so it is not surprising that the Cutlers were upset. A fine of 6s 8d was to be levied against anyone doing their work at night, performing any work outside the liberties of the city was to be punished with a 20s fine, and anyone who did not do their work in an open shop was also to be fined 20s. Finally, anyone who taught the craft to people outside the city was to lose their membership in the guild and be "reputed as a foreyn".[101]

It is tempting to assign these actions to a significant group of dissident Londoners who were unhappy with the control – economic and social – of the craft guilds and who sought to make alternate arrangements. However, we must be very cautious in forming conclusions based on our evidence. It is just as possible, for example, that artisans who wished to practice their trade outside the city limits, and thus outside the jurisdiction of London's craft guilds, were not civic rebels or labour activists, but shady businessmen who wanted to evade the standards of craftsmanship and quality called for by guild regulations. The way such attempts are described in the records appears to support this interpretation, and some cases appear quite clear cut. For example, in 1510, the butcher Robert Coke, who had previously run afoul of the regulations governing his craft,[102] was again in trouble, this time for moving his trade from "stallis and standynges" within the

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[99] The description of individuals working in secret or at night was a common means of suggesting dishonesty in medieval records; a respectable person worked openly and by day.
[100] Journals 9, f. 76.
[101] Journals 9, ff. 77v-78.
[102] see above p. 48.

city to "the subarbis oute of the libertie of this cite", which was described as being "to the evill president of other persons". Given his past record, it is difficult to conclude that Coke was doing anything other than trying to evade the standards of quality imposed by his guild and the civic government. He was ordered to resume selling his wares inside the liberty of London, where they could be supervised, on pain of disenfranchisement if he did not. The concern here is likely to have been both to prevent the dishonest sale of poor-quality meat and to prevent a citizen of London from staining the city's reputation by engaging in such behaviour; Coke would either have to behave better under the watchful eye of London's authority, or cease to be a citizen.[103] However, as usual we must remember that the accounts created in the archives were not value-neutral; these records were created by and largely for the civic elite, and the description of evaders in this way is undoubtedly part of the attempt to control and prevent such evasion. Even the allegation of low-quality goods, frequently made in cases such as this, could well be part of the rhetorical strategy of the authority behind the records; offenders such as Coke are not legitimate businessmen seeking greater freedom, from this point of view; they are scurrilous characters peddling shoddy goods, to the detriment of honest Londoners.

The description of the men who sought to evade the authority of the trade guilds in such a negative light made it difficult for others to align themselves with them; having been described as shady and dishonest characters, any other Londoners who wished to agree with them were at risk of taking on the same label themselves. According to the official civic account of these disputes, the mayor, aldermen and guild wardens did not face reasonable objections from respectable businessmen who voiced legitimate concerns about the way in which London's economy was regulated. In fact, any concerns evaders

[103] Rep 2, f. 89v.

may have rarely appear in these records at all. They can often only be deduced from the actions that they took. The records instead tell the story of dishonest and unscrupulous characters who tried to escape the fair and just oversight of proper, established authority. While it is probable that some of these people really were dishonest or unscrupulous, that should not and does not eliminate the equal probability that at least in some cases, more complicated forms of dissent were also being expressed, or at least their expression was being attempted. Without the other side of the story, it is extremely difficult and perhaps impossible to establish the exact nature or extent of such dissension, but it is surely being overly sceptical, and accepting the official version to too great an extent, to assume that it did not exist.

In fact, there is good evidence of cases in which dissent found more concrete expressions. For example, in 1502, the Court of Aldermen took action to end a dispute within the Fullers' Guild:

> As touchyng the varyaunce dependyng be twen the fullers beyng in cloithyng and the Iorneymen of the same Crafte It is agreed that fromhensforth the saide Iorneymen shall macke non assemble but in the fullers hall and in non other place And that every such assemble of the saide Iorneymen be made by the licence and knowlayge of the Wardens and in the presence of on the of the wardens at the leste and over that that the Cofer wich the saide Iorneymen have standyng in the blacke Frerys wheryn their comen monye and buryng cloithe remaynith yn shalbe brought to the fullers hall their to stande and remayne for ever and that at every tyme whan they will occupie and of their comen mony or the saide cloither for buriyng of and of their brethern or other cause reasonable they shall doo the same by the discrescion of the saide wardens or on of theym and in no wise p[re]sume to tacke uppon theym to open the saide Cofer or any thyng to tacke oute of the same but by thadvyse knowlaige and discrescion of the saide wardens or on of theym uppon payne of imprisonement.[104]

This brief judgement reveals a quite significant split within the company; the non-liveried fullers had evidently been gathering together on their own initiative, without the

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[104] Rep 1, f. 136.

leadership of their craft, and had started to keep their own funds. This would be a significant break from the official authorities of their guild, and seems, with the reference to "burying cloithe", to be an attempt to begin to look after many of their own interests. Unfortunately, the records do not tell us *why* the journeyman fullers began to do these things, only that they had and that they were ordered to stop. Similarly, when in 1507 Sir Lawrence Aylmer, then mayor of the city, was called on to arbitrate "all matters of variaunce" between the wardens of the Founders' guild and "other of the lyvery of the same Craft and the yomanry of the same",[105] we are given no details of the case, beyond the fact that here the rank and file of the company had at least some allies among its liveried leadership. That the mayor and aldermen would have wanted to reassert the authority of the fullers' and founders' wardens is of course no surprise; the influence that craft associations had over their membership was a key part of the overall system of control over the communities of London. We can regret, however, that we do not know what led the humbler members of the Fullers' guild to do what they did. Perhaps they felt the leadership of their guild were not looking after their best interests. Perhaps the poorer members of the company felt alienated from the wealthier elite. We do know that the journeymen of other guilds had tried to apply collective pressure for better pay and better working conditions, beginning in the fourteenth century and continuing up through the period currently under examination,[106] so the split in the Fullers' guild was not unprecedented.

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[105] Rep 2, f. 51.

[106] Barron found evidence for such action by journeymen and yeomen in the guilds of the shearers, skinners, saddlers, spurriers, cordwainers, curriers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and ironmongers: *London*, pp. 211-14.

Even in cases where some details are available, these details frequently do little more than tantalize. In September of 1510, the journeymen of the Shearers' guild petitioned the Court of Aldermen to allow them to continue the "kepyng of their masse and their lyght" allowed to them in a grant from the mayoralty of William Horn, along with "other thinges in their said graunte specified", complaining that their wardens were currently preventing them from doing so.[107] In November, the court passed an injunction forbidding the journeymen shearers from having "congreyscons nor conventicles within themself nere kepe severall dirige by themself".[108] Here we know a little more about the dispute, but not everything. We know the journeymen shearers wished to hold their own mass and have their own light as a sign of their devotion, but we do not know why this was, nor why the wardens of their guild wished to prevent them from doing so. However, we do see once again that a split within the membership of a guild was not something that the authorities of London, whether guild wardens or the mayor and aldermen, were willing to tolerate and allow to continue. Craft associations were meant to be unified bodies, firmly under the supervision and control of their leadership.

With the evidence left to us in the court records, unfortunately the historian can frequently do no more than speculate or make educated guesses. While we may therefore be frustrated with the records, we should also realize that this silence in the archives is probably quite deliberate. As I shall argue throughout this thesis, the men who created the records of London's various authorities were very aware that their records had an audience, and crafted the content of those records to deliberate effect. In this case, had the objections or demands of the journeyman fullers been made part of the

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[107] Rep 2, f. 96v.
[108] Rep 2, f. 105.

record, then anyone who consulted the records of the court would of course get to encounter these demands. They might then sympathize or agree with them, which could reawaken a dispute that was hopefully now ended, or spread it to new contexts. Overall, by recording the reasons behind dissent against authority, the mayor and aldermen risked undermining that authority by giving a voice and, perhaps, legitimacy, to dissent.

Even in the case of the Shearers' guild, where the demands of the journeymen were partially provided, filling in all the details might have been too touchy a subject. In fact, the decision to leave some details of the journeymen's petition in the vague category of "other thinges" – the courts were certainly not shy about including extensive details when it suited them to do so[109] - may have been intended to keep more controversial or dangerous demands than religious observations out of the official record. As in the case of the Fullers' and Founders' guilds, the story of this dispute is being very carefully managed; the exact causes and even the precise nature of the break within the Shearers' guilds are not spelled out, and it is difficult to conclude anything other than that this vagueness is deliberate. A complete picture of the case is not what the creator or creators of these records wished us to have.

Instead, the impression left here is simply of certain actions – the separate meetings and maintaining of funds by the journeyman fullers, or the separate devotions of the journeymen shearers – and the fact that these actions were found to be illicit, and have now been stopped, or certain undesirable situations – the split within the Founders' – and indications that the situations will be resolved. The impression created is of improper activity discovered, action taken by legitimate authority, and order restored,

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[109] See, for instance, the extensively detailed regulations regarding the precise size of various types of stone to be produced by the Freemasons; Letter Book M f. 169-169v.

apparently without difficulty or conflict. The mayor and aldermen, at least, appear in the records as entirely in control of the situation. We do not find further indications of divisions within the Fullers' guild, so perhaps they did indeed put an end to the conflict in this case. We also do not find many cases similar to this, where there were open breaks by large groups with the legitimate authority of craft associations. However, this does not mean that objections to that authority were rare.

It is best not to push this analysis too far, in the absence of strong evidentiary backup. However, it is clear, even from the managed story told by these problematic sources, that the trade guilds of late medieval London were an important part of the creation and maintenance of order and deference in the city by the power-holding elite. It is probably no surprise that there were also various kinds of objection and resistance to this particular tool, although the longevity of the guild system attests to the utility and effectiveness of the guilds in achieving the goal of social and economic regulation. It is certainly true that many Londoners would have had good reasons to buy in to the guild system and support the institutions, not only because membership in a guild was meant to assure one of a decent living at their craft, but also because guilds could provide support in times of illness, in old age, or in case misfortune or mismanagement led to poverty.[110] The desirability of such a safety net would have helped convince many Londoners to consent to and participate in the guild system, and in truth the sort of people who would have had the opportunity to become guild members would have been likely to value the good rule and order promoted by craft associations as well. For respectable Londoners, an ordered, controlled world was the environment they sought and the environment they

[110] The Cobblers' regulatations of 1501 provided that the quarterage dues paid by members would be used "towardes the Sustentacion of the poure and impotent persones of the same Fraternite", Letter Book M, f. 33. Other examples are frequent: Journals 9, f. 139-139v, Journals 10, f. 298v.

hoped to succeed in, by forming social links to other members of the community and gradually climbing the ladder of deference. In this way, the respectable citizens of London had as much reason to support the guild system as the city's authorities had to promote it.

One final note of interest regarding the guild system is that the impression one would garner from the contents of the civic records is that London's government had sole supervision of the city's craft guilds. However, this was not actually the case, and royal authority could come into play as well. In 1501, Henry VII gave permission for a guild of haberdashers to be formed, and in 1502, a new guild of the hurers[111] and hatter-merchants of London was formed by royal patent. In 1513, the Dyers' guild went to the king to have their previous charters, both of which were royal charters, confirmed.[112] In 1517, Henry VIII ordered five wax chandlers to "examine into and punish all adulterations in the manufacture of waxen images, torches and candles, contrary to the statute", and in 1518 the Star Chamber verified that the measures used by the vintners' guild were legal, and directed the mayor and aldermen to allow their use.[113] This does not really undermine any of the analysis performed in this chapter, although it does serve as a reminder that the civic records are one particular side of the story regarding medieval London, and as we shall see throughout this thesis, it is a side of the story with a particular point of view and its own objective.

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[111] A hurer is a maker and seller of caps, from *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED21526

[112] *Letters and Papers*, v. 1 pp. 185, 561. It is worth noting that the haberdashers' guild was to be formed "in honour of St. Katharine the Virgin", and the guild of hurers and hatter-merchants was to be "in honour of St. James", once again emphasizing the overlap between craft guilds and religious confraternities.

[113] *Letters and Papers*, v. 2. pp. 1057, 1232.

CHAPTER TWO: RECOGNISANCE BONDS

Measures such as the regulations of trade guilds and ordinances enacted by the mayor and aldermen are perhaps the most familiar and obvious means that the leaders of medieval London used to create and impose order, but they were certainly not the only ones. The importance of reputation or fame in medieval urban communities has been frequently commented upon,[1] and it is clear that reputation and community pressure were used as tools by the civic elite to promote conformity and obedience. A great deal of evidence of to this effect appears in the Journals; one specific manifestation of this is the records of recognisances, which were essentially bonds made with the chamberlain guaranteeing good behaviour. Personal bonds or pledges were not an unusual way of sealing agreements in medieval society, and the recognisances recorded in these records were used for many purposes, such as ensuring that price controls were honoured,[2] making sure that the city would not be held liable for debt claims against an orphan formerly under the government's care,[3] or promise not to cause disruptions by fencing in public.[4] In 1525 a recognisance bond of fifty pounds was used to guarantee that the new

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[1] Among many others, see F. Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, tr. P.E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 57, 211-14; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 164-89; M. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 12, 24-5, 78-80; Rees-Jones, 'Problem of Mobile Labour', pp. 151-2; Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', pp. 9-11; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 78; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 2-3.

[2] For example, on 21 July 1520, Robert Bruyer was bound in the sum of 10 pounds to respect the price limits on meal set by the mayor: Journals 12, f. 61. "Meal" probably refers to any ground grains, often wheat but not necessarily. *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED27242.

[3] On 18 February 1507, five men of assorted occupations entered into a bond of 100 pounds to guarantee that the the mayor, aldermen, and chamberlain would be discharged and "save[d] harmeles" from any claims against the estate of a recently married orphan: Journals 11 f. 7v. The government of London was responsible for the wardship of orphans of citizens and approving their marriages.

[4] Journals 12, f. 298v. The bond refers to playing "at the Buklers" which was a kind of fencing using a shield and sword. *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED5418.

chamberlain would live up to his oath of office.[5] For this reason, these bonds appear very frequently in the records, but their importance stems from what the content and composition of the agreements can reveal about how order was created and maintained in medieval London. It is useful to consider an example of these texts before proceeding with their analysis.

On 24 March 1496, John Graveley, a carpenter, recognised himself as indebted to the chamberlain of the city in sum of forty marks. Walter and William Wilson, also carpenters, also entered into a debt of twenty marks. The entry in the Journals went on to spell out the terms of this debt:

> The condicion of this recognisance is suche that if the said John Graveley Carpenter fromhensforth be of good aberying ayenst the kynge our soveraign lord and obedient unto the mair and minstres of this Citee of London and over that take no Wages above the ordenaunce for the Wages of laborers made in the last statute of Parliament holden at Westminster the 24th day of October last past and also that the same John refuse not ne disobey nor procure ne excite any other persone or persones to refuse or disobey to worke for the wages provided and ordeyned by the said estatute that than this Recognisance to be voide or elles to stand in strength etc.[6]

As we can see, a recognisance was essentially a bond, in which what was usually a group of people agreed to pay a specified sum of money to the Chamberlain if the terms of the agreement were violated. These terms, generally speaking, would require that a specified person must act in a particular way, either ceasing a disapproved kind of behaviour or adopting a desired one. In the example just provided, John Graveley had to cease his apparent labour activism,[7] and neither demand higher wages for himself nor encourage others to do so. If he did not abide by this agreement, he would forfeit forty

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[5] Journals 12, f. 310.
[6] Journals 10, f. 68v.
[7] Unfortunately, I have been unable to uncover any further details of Graveley's dispute with the Carpenters. For some consideration of disputes within craft associations, see Chapter One.

marks to the Chamberlain, and his cosigners would have had to pay the twenty marks they promised also. As long as he behaved properly, the debt would have gone uncollected.

The violations being managed in this way are interesting; we find recognisances that require people to be obedient to the wardens of their guild, to cease a feud with a neighbour and accept arbitration, or to follow a particular regulation. A common example of this last category deals with the size of weirs that could be used to catch fish in the Thames. In 1503, the yeoman Henry Clifford, a widow named Margaret Whaplode, and the netmaker Thomas Buterson were bound, in the sum of 10s., not to cast "blodebags"[8] or other things of an illicit nature into the Thames.[9] In 1498, twenty-six men were all bound in a single mass bond not to use prohibited "Dredgyng nettes" to fish in Thames, on the pain of a £5 penalty.[10] There are very many examples along these lines, indicating that the authorities of medieval London used this kind of agreement to enforce the rules and regulations of the city's economy as well as the more personal disputes that will be discussed below. However, the focus on individuals, rather than the use of a general bylaw or ordinance, must indicate that these were people who were known to be disobedient or not compliant with city regulations. As we shall see, it is likely that recognisance bonds were a tool that was deployed against problem cases who had already demonstrated their unwillingness to conform to expectations.

Many bonds required their subjects to agree to have a dispute resolved via arbitration. This, in itself, is not a surprise: medieval courts often sought to restore

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[8] Presumably this refers to the leavings of slaughtered animals, from *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED5268

[9] Journals 10, f. 322.

[10] Journals 10, f. 116 v.

aggrieved parties to harmonious relations through an agreed upon, or at least accepted, settlement, rather than inflicting a punitive judgement.[11] This restoration of harmonious, agreed-upon relations was seen as more desirable than an imposed, one-sided deal that might allow bad feelings to continue to fester, and cause further disruptive disputes in the future. Recognisance agreements were clearly one method that the authorities of London could use to try to achieve this goal.

In many cases, it is the mayor, often along with one or more aldermen, who were to be the arbitrators of the dispute. However, this was not always the case. For example, on 15 August 1504, William Nightyngale was bound, in the sum of 30 pounds, to obey the arbitration of William Bayly and William Norton, a shearer and a draper, in his dispute with William Page; Page entered into an identical agreement. It was only if Bayly and Norton were unable to reach a settlement by the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel that the matter would be referred to the mayor, William Capell. [12] In cases like this, the bond accomplishes the goal of ending the dispute in the short term, and requires the disputants to accept its long-term settlement as well. Obviously not all disagreements or fallings-out between residents of London, or even citizens of London, would have been managed in this way. It is probable that only disputes that had the potential to cause public disorder, or threatened to damage authority through an undignified display of disunity, would have required this kind of measure to control. Unfortunately, the bonds

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[11] See, among others, McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 56-8, 187-9; Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', p. 13; E. Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law in the Later Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser., 33 (1983) pp. 49-67. The apparently low conviction rates of medieval courts can be at least partially explained by the abandonment of prosecution in favour of a settlement by the involved parties: A. Musson and W.M. Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century*, (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1999) pp. 186-7.

[12] Journals 10, f. 321.

do not include the root cause of the dispute, so we are left in the dark as to its precise nature.

In many cases, the arrangements made via these agreements do not appear as though they should require special compulsion; individuals were expected to obey the directives of the mayor, respect the wardens of their guild, and be generally well-ruled in their daily lives, without the threat of financial penalties. Moreover, in many cases the recognisance bond seems to deal with matters that could be dealt with by other methods: the courts of craft associations, ecclesiastical courts, or an appearance before the court of aldermen. So why did some cases call for this apparently special treatment? The most probable answer is that a recognisance bond was a special, higher level of enforcement that could be deployed in problematic cases. To help make this clear, consider the following example.

On 8 September 1497, John Long, a butcher, and his fellow butcher Jacob Alexander agreed to a bond of twenty pounds, the condition being that John would be well ruled in his behaviour and obey the wardens of the Butcher's guild.[13] Now, John Long, as a member of his guild, should have been obedient to his wardens with or without this bond, and if he defied or disobeyed them, the guild would have had its own internal system of fines to levy against dissenters, as has been already been considered. In some cases, guild regulations even specified a system of escalating fines for unrepentant offenders or people who refused to pay: those who violated the wax chandlers' quality standards were fined 13s 4d for their first offense, and 26s 8d for their second offense.[14] Since these other measures existed, what a recognisance like the one

[13] Journals 10, f. 104.
[14] Journals 9, f 192.

that John Long entered into must be is the next step beyond that, a further attempt to get a difficult member of the community to play by the rules.

In the chandler's regulations mentioned above, a third offense carried a penalty of four marks, with possible expulsion from the guild. This would not have been a desirable outcome for the guild's leaders, however. To expel a member would be to admit, publicly, that they had been unable to impose their authority upon this individual. Questions might have been raised about the suitability of the wardens to lead to guild, and the associates of the expelled man might begrudge his loss of livelihood. It would be much more prestigious, reinforce their authority more, and be more conducive to harmony within the craft, if a submission of some sort could be obtained. In this way, the offender would publicly acknowledge that he had been wrong, and was now willing to accept the authority of the wardens, satisfactorily ending the dispute and burnishing the prestige of the guild leaders. I believe that recognisance agreements were another way of obtaining that submission, and of avoiding the last resort of expelling a troublesome member.

What is most interesting to me about these bonds is the strategy employed in order to gain submission and obedience. In these cases, the blunt force of a harsh fine, a stint on the pillory, or imprisonment is not used or threatened. Instead, these recognisances use the community to try to achieve a desired standard of behaviour. While some of them have only the person whose behaviour is in question as security, most of the bonds are entered into by a number of people, most of whom have apparently not acted inappropriately or done anything wrong. The effect of this is to create a group which has a vested interest in regulating the behaviour of the offender, because, if

nothing else, it is their money at stake if the bond is broken. It does not take very much imagination to imagine the pressure that Jacob Alexander would have brought on John Long to obey the butchers' wardens, with the very considerable sum of twenty pounds at stake! Perhaps best of all for the mayor and aldermen, this would be an unofficial, "off the record" influence, requiring no further attention from legal authorities. In addition, any problems Jacob Alexander had in getting John Long to continue to behave are conveniently invisible; the impression created is of a painless solution. The pressure on John Long and other people under similar bonds would have been integrated into their daily lives and routine social interactions.

In fact, given the importance of one's immediate contacts in managing behaviour under normal circumstances, the recognisance bonds appear to be a continuation of an existing social process. The idea of pledging or swearing an oath on behalf of another was a practice that had deep roots in English society, traceable back to Anglo-Saxon society.[15] "Wager of law" or "proof by oath-helper" was a long-standing tradition in English law, which allowed any free English person to clear themselves of a crime by swearing an oath attesting to their innocence, with the backing of trustworthy neighbours who were also prepared to swear to the innocence of the accused. This was an alternative to verdict by jury that could be used in any case not involving bloodshed,

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[15] S. Olson, *A Chronicle of All that Happens: Voices from the Village Court in Medieval England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1996) pp. 45-6. Interestingly, Olson concludes from her evidence that after 1350, people in village society felt less bound by community standards, and that by the fifteenth century "villages no longer recognized the right of their fellows to control their conduct": pp. 54, 86, 175, 231. Olson's interpretation is contrary to McIntosh's evaluation of English society, in particular that although community-based concern with misbehaviour may have risen and fallen over time, it was never entirely absent; see *Controlling Misbehaviour*, esp. pp. 1-4, 12-13, 23-5, 31-3, 40, 57-8. The evidence from London used for this study certainly supports the latter thesis, and there is little if any evidence for the urban context to support Olson's model.

from 1285 onward.[16] In London's commissary court, guilt was often determined by a process of compurgation, in which five or six "honest" neighbours swore to the truth or innocence of allegations made.[17] The recognisance bonds follow this general pattern, although not the precise form. Reputation in the community and the ability to marshal supporters on one's behalf was an asset that could be exploited in a variety of contexts.[18]

So who are these people that are co-signing the recognisances? In some cases, they are other members of the offender's guild, so his brother merchants or craftsmen have agreed to look after the behaviour of one of their own. Again, this is an extension of the usual role of the guild community; many regulations governing the conduct of members make it clear that craft associations had a communal reputation and therefore an interest in policing the behaviour of the membership internally. In many cases, however, the co-signers are a more assorted bunch. On 4 July 1499, the recognisance of 20 pounds which bound John Mason and Thomas Saller, both shearmen, and Edward Heath, a fuller, to appear before the mayor and aldermen and obey their correction, was cosigned by one other fuller, and another shearman, but also by a painter, a brewer, a tallow chandler, and a mercer.[19] This was by no means a unique case: in 1489, the draper John Martyn's promise to appear before the mayor and aldermen was cosigned by a glazer, a stationer, a tailor, and a hat merchant.[20] Later that year, the goldsmith John Gregorie swore to appear before the mayor and aldermen, and obey their judgment in his

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[16] Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 198-9. In civil courts, 6 oath-helpers were usually required, and in some cases additional freemen were necessary.
[17] Wunderli, *Church Courts*, pp. 10-11.
[18] McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 23-5
[19] Journals 10, f. 159.
[20] Journals 9, f. 228.

dispute with the mercer Thomas Hoore; his bond was supported by two bowyers and two grocers.[21]

It is certainly easy to understand why members of a guild would agree to police the behaviour of one of their members, especially when it is remembered that these were groups that were very concerned about collective reputation and dignity. But, this cannot account for the other people, not linked to an offender via guild affiliation, who cosigned recognisance bonds. As another example, on 12 April 1519, a baker named Robert Carter was bound in the sum of twenty pounds to obey the rules and wardens of his craft; the men serving as sureties were a farrier, a brewer, and a salter.[22] What could have motivated them to enter into an agreement which carried, if nothing else, a quite serious financial penalty if it failed? These must be the offender's neighbours and fellow parishoners, people with whom he or she had forged links within the community. These individuals must, obviously, have believed that the offender was not an irredeemably bad person, because they were willing to put their money and their reputations on the line to that effect.

Whether they were craft brethren or neighbours, the co-signers became another part of the attempt to create order in the city, specifically targetted at a problem element of the community, and well-motivated to see that they conformed in future. These people clearly had different motivations for doing what they did, including trying to preserve the worshipful reputation of a guild, wishing to keep the peace, attempting to steer an acquaintance back onto the proper path, or a combination of the these. However, in all these cases, the recognisance agreements made an element of the community

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[21] Journals 9, f. 237v.
[22] Journals 12, f. 4v.

responsible for ensuring conformity in a particular case. This did not dilute the authority of the mayor and aldermen, since the cosigners only had responsibility in this specific matter. In addition, the registration of the bond with the civic leadership kept the agreement within their bailiwick. Moreover, we should recall that those given access to the various kinds of authority in the medieval city were all of the same broad type: respectable, sober, well-to-do men. Although it is not explicitly stated, it is inconceivable that the guarantors of proper behaviour in these agreements were individuals whom the mayor and aldermen would have believed to be of shady or questionable character. They were not giving responsibility to unknown quantities; they were reaching out to their natural allies. Along the same lines, these bonds used the pre-existing nature of the medieval urban community – the importance of reputation, the power of social pressure, and ties between neighbours and fellow parishoners – to control forms of behaviour that were seen to be harmful. It would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the mayor and aldermen, with the very limited manpower at their disposal, to actively supervise and regulate the behaviour of offenders like John Long or John Graveley. Instead, the recognisance agreements quite cleverly took advantage of the character of medieval London to do the work for them.

A natural extension of this analysis is to consider what happened to individuals who did not have people who were willing to enter into a recognisance on their behalf. To an extent, this consideration is somewhat speculative, since my research has uncovered no entries describing an individual who had misbehaved, could find no-one to support them in a recognisance, and the consequences they suffered. However, it is only logical to assume that this must have happened on some occasions, although the process

of seeking, and failing to find, cosigners would not have been recorded. It is certainly true that there are some recognisances where only the offender is responsible for the breaking of the bond. In many of these cases, the recognisance is of the sort that was meant to end a feud, and in which the two parties both made an agreement to accept the arbitration of a neutral party to end their dispute.

This appears to be no more than common sense; if an individual were to break this kind of agreement, the only person who would benefit would be the person with whom they had a long standing, probably bitter, disagreement. Presumably, the wish to avoid damaging their own case, while simultaneously benefiting an enemy, would have been incentive to keep most people who entered into these sorts of deals in line. The importance of reputation is significant here once again; if a person broke their word to keep to the settlement of an arbitrator, they would be easily cast as obstinately disruptive, ill-ruled and unreasonable by their opponent. This would not only prejudice the resolution of that specific conflict, but would also affect the individual's 'fame', with all of its potential social and business consequences.[23] Breaking a bond of this type could therefore have quite serious repercussions, both immediate and long-term, and perhaps for this reason no cosigner was seen to be required.

In addition, since the bonds often refer to the abandonment of court cases, the breaking of the agreement would be easily verified by the institution of the courts themselves; one could scarcely hope to (re)commence a legal action without leaving some record of the deed! In these cases, then, it may have been that extra supervision, in the form of co-signers, was seen as unnecessary. These interpretations gain some

[23] Rosser, for instance, emphasizes the importance of reputation in obtaining credit and employment in an urban environment: 'Negotiation of Work', pp. 9-10.

support from the bonds entered into by William Nightyngale and William Page mentioned at the beginning of this chapter; in these cases the £30 penalty for breaking the agreement would not be forfeited to the chamberlain of the city, but to their opponent in the dispute.[24] The motivation for Page and Nightyngale to behave would therefore have been quite strong, both to avoid forfeiting a considerable sum to a person they had a strong disagreement with, as well as to maintain a respectable front leading up to the arbitration.

What happened, though, to a person who was disrespectful and disorderly, but did not have people who were willing to be co-signers in the kind of recognisance we have been discussing? These agreements are, comparatively speaking, quite lenient treatment. Assuming the offender behaved, no money was lost, no public humiliation was inflicted, and no time in prison was served. It seems extremely probable that if a person was shady and unpopular, or of ill fame as medieval people would have said, and therefore unable to find supporters willing to guarantee their behaviour, they would be exposed to these harsher forms of justice, which we can clearly see deployed elsewhere in the records.[25] They might then have to pay a sizable fine, be sent to one of London's gaols, or subjected to time on the pillory. It is difficult to imagine how people might have been forced to co-sign for a recognisance bond, so we must assume their participation was voluntary, presumably because the people doing it felt that the person they were signing for was both worth the risk and deserved their help. Assuming this interpretation is correct, links to respectable community members take on an added level of importance for medieval Londoners. Those who could rely on the support of their neighbours could

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[24] Journals 10, f. 321

[25] See especially Chapter Four. Olson found direct evidence that village courts would fine individual were were unwilling or unable to find people willing to pledge on their behalf: *All That Happens*, p. 47.

expect very different consequences if they acted improperly than more marginalized individuals who did not have people to speak on their behalf. Community support would have made the difference in this society, for a person who misbehaved, between a very livable agreement to improve one's conduct, and a much less palatable punishment.

Again, these conclusions are somewhat conjectural, since we lack direct evidence of an individual being fined or imprisoned because they had no-one to co-sign a recognisance. However, it is possible to make some comparisons, using examples of people being punished for conduct similar to that regulated by the recognisances. In one such case from 1493, a shearman with the surname Jakes was sent to Newgate for declaring before the mayor and aldermen that he would rather "dye or be hanged" than obey the wardens of his guild.[26] Similarly, in 1515, Henry Wadelove was fined a relatively modest 6s 8d for his "divers unsyttyng and sedicious wordes" spoken against Alderman William Bayly, but this was a reduced sentence given after Henry asked Bayly, the mayor, and the other aldermen for their forgiveness and pardon, literally on his knees in the council chamber.[27] In these cases, we see the more blunt force penalties of fines or imprisonment being deployed against individuals who had committed similar acts of disruptive behaviour to those we see being controlled by recognisance bonds. Why was such a bond used in one case, but not in all? At least some of the time, it seems very likely that the reason was that suitable cosigners could not be found, and therefore different means had to be used to solve the problem. Without the support of community members who were believed to be capable of guaranteeing their conduct, individuals in such a case would have been exposed to these harsher forms of behaviour control.

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[26] Journals 10, f. 5v.
[27] Letter Book M, f 251v.

Some of the best evidence to support this interpretation of how recogniscances worked is the case of John Piers. On 15 February 1482, John Piers, a tailor, was sent to prison for his disobedience shown to his wardens. Five days later he was additionally charged with defying the mayor and aldermen, as well as posting "seditious bills".[28] Piers seems to have gotten out of prison, another five days later, by signing a recognisance of forty shillings that guaranteed his good behaviour, cosigned by two brewers, John Olyver and John Talbyner.[29] When Piers had previously been "committed to prison", it was for an unspecified length of time. Typically, urban authorities employed this tactic to extract a submission to their authority from a defiant citizen. We cannot know, in this case, if the recognisance was demanded of Piers, to guarantee his future behaviour, or if it was his idea for getting out of jail. What we can say, though, is that the difference between Piers committed to prison and Piers restored to freedom was the willingness of community members to vouch for his conduct.

It is also worth noting that, in an apparently unconnected case, the hosteller William Arlond was sentenced to stand on the pillory for a half hour for his posting of "diverse sedicious & slaunderous billes of certeyn honest persones".[30] There is no evidence that Arlond was able to escape his punishment by offering a bond for good behaviour, and of course we cannot know whether or not he had connections to people who would have been willing to cosign such a bond. However, the records tell us that Arlond faced the public humiliation of the pillory, whereas John Piers, who we know *did* have community support, had committed an offense very similar to Arlond's, and more besides, was able to escape similar treatment. While the evidence we have lacks detail,

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[28] Journals 9, f. 13.
[29] Journals 9, f. 13v.
[30] Journals 9, f. 14v.

and is not as direct as might be desired, the indication we have is that different treatment for similar offenses was possible, and that one factor that determined the treatment a person got was the willingness of other community members to vouch for their conduct.

In another telling case, entered into record on the Feast of St. Matthew in 1519,[31] a merchant tailor named Robert Wade ran afoul of the civic government for attempting to "Sowe Scisme debate & Stryfes" at the election of new Sheriffs, by alleging - apparently among other things - that the bridgemasters were "greate Regrators" conspiring to hoard grain in order to extort a high price from the city's bakers. Wade had apparently also told the wardens of his own guild that the bridgemasters should be fired from their offices for this reason. For this, he was put in gaol, although "yt was Shewed to hym by the mayr that yf he wold be bound be Recognisaunce or elles Fynde Surete tappere here to morowe to make ansuer to the premissez That then he shuld be at large", although Wade refused to do this. Even after a night in prison Wade was defiant, telling the mayor and aldermen "That he Was at the puttyng in of the seyd Maysters ... & that he trusted to be at their Goyng oute". Again, the mayor and aldermen said that if he entered into a bond signed by sufficient sureties he would be allowed to be at liberty; Wade again refused and was returned to gaol for an undisclosed length of time. After this, he finally "humbly Submytted hym selff to theym & putte hym to their ordr & Jugement", acknowledged that his " Wordes of malice & evyll" had been untrue, after which he was required to appear before the Court of Common Council " knelyng upon his knes", and beg the pardon and forgiveness of those he had wronged. Wade apparently accomplished this satisfactorily and was forgiven.[32] Although in this case a recognisance bond was

[31] The Feast of St. Matthew is observed on 21 September.
[32] Journals 12, ff. 17v.-18v.

never actually used, the mayor and aldermen offered Wade better treatment - release from gaol - if he was willing and able to find community members willing to swear to his good behaviour and appearance in court. This is also, of course, the official version of events, casting Wade as an unreasonable slanderer who rejects the benevolent offers of the authorities before finally admitting his wrongdoing and submitting to proper order. This is such a convenient narrative that we should be suspicious, although the point regarding the role of the recognisance bond still appears valid.

The idea that people with strong community support would get better treatment from the medieval justice system is a commonplace in our understanding of the culture. It seems very likely that recognisances are a similar phenomenon, again highlighting the importance of reputation and links to the community in the medieval urban context. The most serious problem with this interpretation are the cases in which a single person, the offender, is the security for his own behaviour. For example, on 24 February 1496, John Worliche, gentleman, entered into a bond of 40 pounds in which he promised to drop cases in the king's and sheriff's courts against the goldsmith David Pante and accept the arbitration of Henry Colet, the mayor.[33]

Similarly, the alderman Sir William Horn was entered into a recognisance, bound in 100 marks to obey the decision of the mayor and numerous arbitrators, in his property dispute with Lady Joan Lisle and the mercer William Bromwell. Horn evidently required no additional support in making this agreement.[34] Later entries indicate that

[33] Journals 10, f 67v.
[34] Journals 10, f. 7.

Lady Joan and Bromwell were bound in identical bonds.[35] Neither of these bonds had cosigners either. Thus, in some cases of recognisances without cosigners, as in the examples just given, the people in question were quite respectable. John Worliche was a gentleman, William Horn a knight, alderman, and former mayor of London, and Joan, baroness Lisle was of noble status.

It may be that their personal reputation was a sufficient guarantee of their behaviour, without requiring other members of the community as backup. This picture is made more complicated by later agreements, made several months later, in which Joan de Lisle's agreement to arbitration in the dispute was guaranteed by two drapers, Thomas Wynham and Laurence Aylmer. At the same time, William Bromwell was bound in an agreement cosigned by John Watts, a fuller, and John Festian, a shearer; William Horn had Richard Grant, a fuller, and Henry Brand, a cordwainer, as his sponsors.[36]

By this time, different arbitrators are named, so it seems likely that the previous arbitration had failed. That the parties involved now had to find cosigners to guarantee their conduct must at least suggest that one, some, or all of them had acted improperly after making their first agreement, and that further security was now required. If so, then this property dispute would indicate that although a good reputation might initially garner generous treatment from te courts, this was a privilege that could be revoked, or lost through improper or obstinate conduct.

Another example of this type appears in the records for 22 March 1487. Two fletchers, John Curate and Robert Holdynby, entered into bonds requiring them to be "of

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[35] Journals 10, f. 9. It is interesting that Joan and William were bound by seperate agreements, rather than a single one, given that they were apparently on the same side of the case, but whether this reflects a difference in their status, or some potential conflict of interest between them, is purely speculative.
[36] Journals 10, ff. 33-33v.

gode beryng havour[37] and conversacon and of honest demeanour within and towardes the feolaship of the Crafte of Fletchers of this Citee accordyng to the lawes reules & ordenaunces of the same Cite". The penalty for violating the bond was ten pounds.[38] While we have little to go on regarding the standing of John Curate beyond his citizenship, and his apparent ability to part with the sum of ten pounds, his association with Robert Holdynby gives us an additional clue. From 1487 to 1489, a Robert Holmenby, also called Holdyngby, was one of the wardens of the Worshipful Company of Fletchers.[39] Assuming this is the same man, and it seems safe to do so, then Holdyngby was a man of considerable stature, and it is probable that either Curate was similarly respectable, or benefitted from Holdyngby's prestige in his treatment in this bond. It is also possible that, since their offence was apparently against their fellow fletchers,[40] their guild brothers were expected to watch over Curate and Holdynby's future conduct. In any case, this bond provides additional support for the interpretation that elevated personal status could garner more lenient treatment from London's authorities in case of misbehaviour.

While this interpretation of recognisance bonds without cosigners is attractive, it is impossible to be certain. In particular, this is because it is simply not possible to gauge the respectability of all the people who appear in these agreements, and therefore demonstrate that all individuals who were the only signers of a bond were especially respectable. On such difficult example is the somewhat shadowy case of Richard

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[37] "havour" includes both behaviour and manners; from the *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED20187

[38] Journals 9 f. 144.

[39] James E. Oxley, *The Fletchers and Longbowstringmakers of London* (London: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1968) p. 103.

[40] Obviously there is a need for caution in interpreting the description of their offense; see further discussion of this issue below.

Syngleton. On 12 February 1492, Syngleton was bound in the sum of £20, the conditions being that he was to be "of good behavour ayenst our sovereign lo[rd][41] Kyng and all [his] liege people and also be of good and honest ... and lyvyng and in nowise fromhensforth habuse nor use th... of Agnes Fyssher Synglewoman in any suspecious or prive...".[42] Here Syngleton agrees, as far as we can tell, to cease improper conduct towards Agnes Fyssher, and to be of generally respectable conduct. Although the entry is not complete, it is clear that he did not have any cosigners for this bond. The description we are given does not provide context about Richard Syngleton, not even his occupation, to help us understand why this might have been the case.

The damaged manuscript in the Syngleton case may deny the historian details which would help to explain why he did not require a cosigner for his bond. However, in many cases, these details are simply not present. In 1495, the butcher John Partriche entered alone into a bond requiring him to appear in court before the mayor and aldermen, obey the judgment against him, be well disposed towards his wardens, and promise not to sell unwholesome meat.[43] The penalty for breaking the bond was 100 shillings.[44] Here, we simply have little to suggest why Partriche had no cosigners for his agreement.

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[41] MS torn here and "rd" assumed as the most probable reading.
[42] Journals 10, f. 1v. Unfortunately the MS for this entry is torn, making the entry fragmentary as indicated.
[43] Partriche's problems with his guild were not over; on 12 Oct 1508, the Court of Common Council issued a complex resolution to a dispute between Partriche and the butchers regarding his rights as owner of the "Scaldyng hous" in Eastcheap, limiting what he was allowed to charge and specifying that he was allowed to keep the bladders and bristles from the hogs brought to his facility. He was also required to give a Christmas breakfast for all the servants and apprentices of the butchers of Eastcheap: Journals 11, ff. 50-50v. Scalding was the immersion of slaughtered animals in hot water to remove the skin, from *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED38705
[44] Journals 10 f. 55

In the cases of John Partriche, Richard Syngleton, and numerous other individuals who signed bonds guaranteeing their good behaviour, there is very little to go on that might explain why they did not require a more robust security than a sum of money and their own good word. Logically, there must have been reasons why some individuals required cosigners, and others did not, although the nature of the documents may not let us know what these reasons were. Individuals may have had reputations that are not made known to us by the records, or they may have benefited from connections that were not remarked upon.

We may wonder, for example, why the mercer William Bromwell did not require a cosigner for his bond in the property dispute between William Horn, Joan de Lisle, and himself. Was his connection with a noble lady the reason, or was his own standing as a mercer sufficient? It may be that these people had a good enough reputation that their promise was not thought to require the support and supervision of others. However, we cannot be truly certain, in these and other cases, why the subjects of the recognisance bond were not required to obtain cosigners for the agreement.

The picture is further complicated by cases such as the one involving the goldsmith John Gregorie noted earlier. Gregorie was required, on the pain of forfeiting ten pounds, to appear promptly in the court of the mayor and aldermen, and there obey their ruling regarding his "controversy" with the mercer Thomas Hoore.[45] However, unlike other cases where both sides of a dispute were bound to appear and obey,[46] there is no sign that Thomas Hoore was required to enter into a recognisance regulating his behaviour in the matter. It could be that Hoore was perfectly willing to appear in the

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[45] Journals 9, f. 237v.

[46] For example, see Journals 9, f. 254, on which Thomas Horsley and Thomas Harryson swore a bond of 40s to obey the arbitration of Richard Tripland and Richard Fowler in their dispute.

mayor's court, and that only Gregorie required compulsion to turn up. However, it is not unreasonable to suspect that fame may have been at work here; Hoore was a mercer, and therefore part of the social milieu from which the mayor, aldermen, and Common Councillors were drawn. It is certainly possible that his membership in this prestigious elite group garnered him an easier ride when navigating the court system.

Does this entry record a case in which one disputant refused to appear in court and have the matter settled, or an instance of social standing resulting in very different assumptions being made about individuals, and very different guarantees of their behaviour being necessary? It is unfortunately impossible to say, but hopefully it is becoming clear that the recognisance bonds were not simple boilerplate solutions that were applied in exactly the same way to every situation. There is every reason to believe that the status of the individuals involved, both in terms of their professional relationships and links forged in other contexts, directly affected how the regulation of their behaviour via the recognisance agreements was handled. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure exactly how this process worked, since so much of it appears to have happened behind the scenes and off the archival camera of the historians – the dynamic behind these decisions is not in the records, except implicitly.

There are cases, however, which give us interesting insights into the complexities of the medieval urban community. On 24 October 1493, William Ussher, a mercer, was bound in the considerable sum of £100 to be "of good beryng ayenst the Kyng and all ... his liege people and also be redy and furthcomyng afore ... the Kyng or his Counsell or elles afore ... the mair and aldremen &c. upon a laufull warnyng...".[47] In short, Ussher promised to behave himself and to appear in court when summoned. What makes this

[47] Journals 10, f. 20v.

entry interesting is that he was also required to see that his servants, Robert and Laurence, were similarly well behaved, and to see that they would be in court when called. On the same page is a similar bond, requiring the mercer John Picton to see that his servant, Nicholas Fraunkes, appeared before the mayor and aldermen before month's end, on the exceptional penalty of a £500 fine. Interestingly, one of the cosigners for Picton's bond was William Ussher.[48] Both these agreements demonstrate that masters were responsible, quite literally, for the conduct of their servants. Not only did a man's ability to keep his household in good order reflect upon his own character,[49] but he could be legally and financially responsible for their conduct as well.

The arrangements made in recognisance bonds hints at other relationships as well. On 19 August 1494, two men, Bernardus de via Cava and Catanens de Grymald, entered into a bond of £20 that guaranteed that Alice Eyer, a "senglewoman",[50] would promptly appear in the mayor's court and obey its judgment.[51] Although this case is complicated by the fact that these men do not appear to have been citizens of London - from their

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[48] Journals 10, f. 20v.

[49] C. Beattie, 'Governing Bodies: Law Courts, Male Householders, and Single Women in Late Medieval England', in *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850 - c. 1550*, eds. C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. Rees Jones eds. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003) p. 204; Rees Jones, 'Problem of Mobile Labour' pp. 135, 145, 150; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and Men in Later Medieval England', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. Hadley (London: Longman, 1999) pp. 56-70; Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, p. 110.

[50] Karras argues that "singlewoman" was, by the late 15th century, code for a prostitute, although her interpretation is not universally accepted. Karras, *Common Women*, p. 55. Goldberg offers a more optimistic interpretation of the term as meaning a woman who was liable for her own affairs, although that does not seem to be the usual meaning in these records: P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes: Streetwalking in Comparitive Perspective" in K. J. Lewis, N.J. Menuge and K.M. Phillips eds., *Young Medieval Women*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999) p. 185 Beattie disputes that 'singlewoman' was a euphemism for prostitute as well, arguing that the use of the term indicated specific ideological concerns and essentially agreeing with Goldberg that it usually meant a woman liable for her own affairs, and especially one not under the control of a brothel-keeper: 'Governing Bodies', pp. 201, esp. n.6, 214-15.

If Alice Eyer was a prostitute, it is plausible that she would not have had sufficient resources to guarantee her own conduct, and of course raises interesting question as to why the two men were willing to put up their own money on her behalf.

[51] Journals 10, f. 31.

names they are likely to be foreign merchants - they do seem to be acting on Alice Eyer's behalf; she is not actually bound by the terms of the recognisance. We cannot tell whether this was because the word of a woman of humble status was not seen as sufficient security for a legal agreement,[52] or if it was seen as inappropriate that she be bound in such an agreement, or if she did not have the resources to find her own surety. It is even possible that the two men were simply doing her a favor, out of obligation or affection. However, it is clear from this case that, at least some of the time, men could adopt full responsibility for the conduct of certain women. What we do not know, from this evidence, is whether this reflected a relationship of obligation, one of dependence, one of affection, or a combination of these.

Just as interestingly, it appears that under some circumstances, men could also enter into recognisance agreements on behalf of other men. On 1 and 2 June 1495, the fuller Thomas Warren, and then the skinner John Mote, entered into bonds of five pounds and 100 shillings, respectively, to guarantee that a man named John James would be well ruled, well spoken, and promptly appear in the mayor's court.[53] At the same time, John Gardyner entered into a bond of 100 shillings to guarantee the appearance of Edward Tyncrosse in the mayor's court, and Thomas Jakenet guaranteed the appearance of both John Pollard and John Butler, in separate twenty pound agreements. Robert Penson, a skinner, was bound in the sum of twenty pounds to see that William Barram and Nicholas Graston would appear in court, William Rutland was bound to guarantee the

[52] Women could and did enter into recognisance bonds in many cases, see above pp. 86 and 99.
[53] Journals 10, f. 46 v.

appearance of Thomas Daniell, and the shearer John Payour was sworn to see that Richard Corbet appeared.[54]

Unfortunately, these bonds contain no details beyond the names of the men involved and the terms of their promise, so we do not know what circumstances lie behind this flurry of recognisances. Since, with one exception, they were all enacted on the same day, it is tempting to imagine that they might be in some way connected, but there is nothing to indicate that this is really the case. Since no occupation is given for any of the men whose appearance in court is being guaranteed, it is possible that these were the servants or apprentices of the individuals who were putting up the surety and entering into the bonds; as we have seen, a master taking responsibility for his servants would not have been unusual. However, if that is the case, it is somewhat strange that this master/servant relationship was not made explicit. With no firm details to clarify the picture, we are left with the possibility that there were other circumstances under which a man might sign a recognisance agreement on behalf of another man to whom he was not related, perhaps a friend, relative by marriage, or close business associate. Unfortunately, in this case, the sparse language of the records leaves us with a tantalizing hint rather than a satisfying answer to our questions.

The evidence of the recognisance agreements nevertheless helps to reveal the complicated nature of status in the medieval city. It is frequently tempting to assume that an individual's position in the community was determined, in a relatively uncomplicated way, by their wealth or family connections. It is this sort of understanding that has made the terms oligarchy and plutocracy attractive to some historians of medieval urban

[54] Journals 10 f. 46v.

centres.[55] While these terms are not entirely inaccurate, they do paint a deceptively simple picture of social standing in the late medieval city. Status was not simply equatable to wealth, nor to family. It was a far more complicated attribute, including one's financial standing, but also encompassing occupation, reputation amongst parishoners and neighbours, friendships and business connections, the conduct of one's household, and the lifestyle one lived.[56] One's status in an urban community was a complex equation, involving many factors, and we gain some insight into the calculations this equation involved through the records of recognisance agreements, even if the indirect or implicit nature of this evidence means that we must be cautious in drawing hard conclusions.

However, I do think it is fair to say that these recognisances, of which very many appear in my source material, indicate the deliberate use of the community, and the links between people, as another tool by which the elite of medieval London sought to create their ordered city. These agreements mobilize peer pressure, admittedly with a monetary motivation, to try to obtain compliance with standards of behaviour. Like the authority of trade guilds, and the blunter instruments of imprisonment, humiliation, or exile, recognisances were one way in which the leading men of London tried to fight disorder, dissent, and disrespect in their city.

This picture is somewhat complicated by the deployment of the recognisance bond mechanism against individuals who were not only not citizens of London, but were

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[55] Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, pp. 72, 115; J. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 87-8; S. Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy" in Late Medieval England', in J.A.F. Thompson ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, (Gloucester: Sutton, 1998) pp. 70-3, 76-7; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 142-3.

[56] Rees-Jones, 'Regulation of Labour', p. 152; Rosser, 'Negotiation of Work', pp. 9-11; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations' pp. 96-7.

not English at all. On 26 April 1489, Peter of Valladolid, described as "mercator de Hispanii", entered into a bond of one thousand marks with the chamberlain of London. The condition of the bond was that Peter of Valladolid would keep the peace with another Spaniard, Peter of Salamanca, until the mayor and aldermen of London rendered a decision to settle the controversy, which was to be done by the feast of the Ascension.[57] At the same time, Peter of Salamanca was bound in an identical agreement. Peter of Valladolid's bond was cosigned by two London drapers, who agreed to pay 500 marks if the arrangement was violated; Peter of Salamanca's bond was similarly cosigned by two different drapers.[58] Finally, another Spanish merchant, Alfonsus de la Towre, was entered into an identical bond, cosigned by the same drapers who guaranteed the behaviour of Peter of Salamanca, which probably puts him on the same side of whatever the dispute may have been.[59] However, these bonds were apparently insufficient to put an end to the dispute. On 13 May, Peter of Salamanca and Diego de Castro, another Spanish merchant, entered into a bond of £100, to guarantee the good behaviour of Peter Ordianius. Three days later, they were back in court, along with another Spaniard named Martus de Malvynda, sponsoring another £100 bond to guarantee that Franciscus de Medena would also keep the peace.[60]

At first these agreements seem to be quite different from the other recognisances we have considered in this chapter, since their subjects are so palpably not part of the community of London's citizenry. As we have noted, concern about the encroachment

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[57] The Feast of the Ascenscion of Jesus is observed forty days after Easter Sunday, which in 1489 would have been 29 May. Perpetual Julian Calendar accessed online at http://www.tpub.com/content/armymedical/MD0357/MD03570093.htm and date of Easter calculated at http://www.smart.net/~mmontes/ec-cal.html

[58] Peter of Valliadolid's cosigners were Thomas Boterell and John Bounde, Peter of Salamanca's were William Brograve and John Lanarigge.

[59] Journals 9, f. 250v.

[60] Journals 9, f. 251.

of foreigners into the economic and even sexual domains of Londoners is a common subject of entries in the Letter Books and Journals.[61] However, it is a false distinction to say that they were not part of the community at all; the community of any medieval city would have included far more than those who had gained the franchise, and unfranchised residents may have been especially vulnerable to pressures exerted by their neighbours. The Spaniards who signed these bonds would have found their business in London far less profitable at best, and completely extinct at worst, if they gained the reputation of being untrustworthy or unsavory characters.

Moreover, they were surrounded by Londoners, already suspicious of foreign influences in the city, who would presumably have been only too willing to turn them in if they strayed from the terms of the bond. In all probability, there would have been no shortage of volunteers to keep an eye on Peter of Valladolid, Peter of Salamanca, and their compatriots. However well-to-do they probably were, a moment's consideration of the position of these Spanish merchants illustrates the problems anyone who occupied a relatively marginal position in urban society could face. They were easily excluded or cast out, since they had few rights in the city, and no organized body to advocate on their behalf. For anyone who wished to interact with respectable society, maintaining community approval through proper conduct and a good reputation would have been essential. Although they may very well have been wealthy international merchants, able to take their business elsewhere, as it were, their status in London itself was still vulnerable.[62]

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[61] Bolton, *Alien Communities*, pp. 18, 35-9.

[62] A complete interruption of trade with foreigners, especially Spaniards, would have been extremely unlikely, though, due to the importance of Spanish trade to London's economy: Barron, *London*, p. 114.

Along with these considerations, it is also clear from this case that at least these particular Spaniards were, to some degree, a part of the same community as English Londoners. Both Peter of Valladolid and Peter of Salamanca were, after all, able to find citizens of London to cosign their bonds and guarantee their behaviour. While it is probable that these were business associates of the Spaniards, perhaps eager to maintain their own profits, it is also likely that they could have found other merchants to trade with. If these Londoners were willing to put their names, and their money, on the line, we must assume that they felt that their trading partners were worth the risk and worth the trouble.[63] These were evidently men who respectable London citizens felt to be of sufficient character, or good enough fame, to be worth the expenditure of social, and potentially literal, capital on. It is worth wondering, although we can do no more than wonder, what would have happened if there had been no citizens of London willing to cosign these bonds. How essential was it for these foreigns to have the support of English Londoners? From the evidence of John Piers' case, we may suspect that they were fortunate to have it.

In some ways, this complicates the picture of relations between the citizens of London and foreign traders. Frequently, the relationship is described as an antagonistic one, and this is perhaps not surprising, given the frequent ordinances against foreigns and strangers that appear in the records under examination. The Evil May Day riots are sometimes explained as violence that was manufactured by a citizenry that was ill-disposed towards the foreigners in their midst. While there can be no doubt that relations

[63] Although it might be tempting to infer some inequality of status from the lower amount put forth as security by the London drapers, this is almost certainly not the case. First, the case of John Graveley from p. 85 must be kept in mind; his cosigners were also bound for a lower amount than he was himself. Further, in both cases, we see two cosigners bound in exactly half the sum of the offender's agreement; in all probability, two people each agreed to be responsible for half of the required stake.

were sometimes strained, and that the economic rights of foreigners was a matter of frequent contention, we must also recognize that this was not the whole story. Londoners and foreign merchants could and did form relationships that went beyond business transactions, to the point where they had faith in their character and were therefore willing to vouch for their conduct. It is clear that the foreign entrepreneurs who came to London were not merely tolerated, and not always resented. At some times, and in some cases, they were truly the peers of the Londoners with whom they traded.

This also continues to complicate our picture of status in the city generally. Obviously, bonds could form between citizen and non-citizen, although at least in this case the non-citizens in question were of considerable stature. Even so, it is clear that the line between citizen and non-citizen was not necessarily the prime determinant of status in the medieval urban community, as is often supposed. We have also seen that neither wealth, nor membership in rarefied social circles, meant everything; elite fletchers such as John Curate and Robert Holdyngby could still find themselves censured, at least temporarily. The important distinction was between respectable and non-respectable, and respectability, the good fame which we have so frequently mentioned, was manufactured in a variety of ways. A prestigious occupation mattered, and wealth suggested, to the medieval mind, that one was suited for authority. However, personal conduct and lifestyle also mattered, as did the opinions held by one's neighbours.[64] Whether one was respectable or not had significant social and business consequences, and as this chapter has begun to demonstrate, determined how one would be handled by the court system. Losing respectability, and becoming of ill fame, would have been a

[64] Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', p. 262.

significant threat that could be, and was, used by the civic authorities of London to ensure the proper behaviour of many of the city's residents.

It is only those who had no pretensions to respectability, who did not care about their fame and had no aspirations to be a part of the respectable world, who would have been invulnerable to this kind of pressure, and these forms of control. This group is a shadowy one, frequently leaving few traces in the records, but it was also the group that was most feared by the men in authority over medieval cities. Concern about what the disreputable masses might do lies behind many of the regulations that attempted to guarantee the supply of vital foodstuffs and control their prices; scarce or over-priced food could very swiftly lead to disorder in the city. Similarly, concern with the more marginal elements of society motivated much of the legislation dealing with masters' responsibility for their apprentices' behaviour, and the concern with "mighty beggars".[65]

So far we have considered the recognisances as mechanisms for social control, and specifically as a concrete manifestation of the internal reinforcement of behavioural standards by community groups in medieval London. However, we must also be cautious not to treat these texts too unproblematically; as with much of the content of the documents under study, we must remember that the recognisances provide a particular perspective on the disputes they were intended to resolve, and this perspective is not a neutral one. In fact, the recognisance agreements provide a version of events which works to promote conformity and authority, beyond the explicit contents of the agreement.

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[65] A "mighty beggar" was a person attempting to live off of the charity of the community, even though they were capable of working. These people were a constant concern to civic authorities, as will be explored in Chapter Four.

One specific way in which they do this is by silencing dispute. The text of the recognisance agreements does not include the issues that caused the disagreement; it merely records the stark fact that there was a dispute of some kind, and that this dispute has now been resolved. While it is frequently possible to make some deductions – an agreement to obey guild wardens suggests strife within a trade association – we lack specific details about what caused the unrest, what the issues were, and how widespread it might have been. In the relatively rare cases in which we have any background information at all, these come from a separate entry in the records.

In the example of John Curate and Robert Holdynby noted above, for example, the wording of the bond suggests that the pair offended, with implied bad behaviour and improper words, against "the Feolaship of the Crafte of Fletchers",[66] which makes it seem as though these were the actions of two isolated individuals against the entire, unified body of the brotherhood of their company. This may indeed have been the case, but lacking any details about their offense or offenses, we must also consider the possibility that the wording of this bond is a rhetorical device, similar to the phrasing of petitions for craft regulations discussed in Chapter One. The intention may be to marginalize, and therefore neutralize, whatever disruption Curate and Holdynby caused, by assigning it to two isolated individuals, in opposition to all the other disapproving members of the association. Lacking any details at all about their offense, we cannot know if Curate and Holdynby were drunk and disorderly at a guild meeting, if they had well-reasoned criticisms of the conduct of the fletchers' wardens, or if they were shady businessmen with objections to the regulation and supervision of their guild. Finally, given Holdynby's apparent status as one of the Fletchers' elite members, it is possible

[66] Journals 9 f. 144

that the behaviour for which they were censured arose from some kind of political or factional dispute within the brotherhood.

This kind of vagueness was not unique to a single case. On 1 February 1508, a saddler named William Bully was placed in a bond of twenty pounds, requiring him to "be obedient and of good aberyng ayenst the mair Aldermen Recorder Shireffes and other Counseillours officers and maisters of this Citie" until Easter, presumably by which time he would have appeared "before the mair and aldermen to aunswered to all suche thinges as shalbe leyd and obiect ayenst hym for this mysdemeanyng and disobedience ayenst any of the said Counseillours or officers"; Bully was also required to abide by any punishment the court might find appropriate.[67] The bond here gives a general idea of the offence, but leaves out many of the details other bonds include; far from saying exactly what Bully did or said, the text here does not even specify exactly which officials he was disobedient towards. The purpose behind this could very well be to protect the dignity and worship of the men Bully offended against; his disobedient words or actions, as well as what led him to disobey, are not in the records where they might embarrass leading citizens or incite sympathy.

There are many similar examples. On 7 July, 1525, a saddler named Thomas Aunsell, along with three cosigners[68] in a bond of 100 marks, which required him to appear before the mayor and aldermen on "Tewesday next after the feast of Saint Barthalmew thappostell now next comyng",[69] and continue to attend court sessions until he had made satisfactory "answer to all thinges maters & causes as then shalbe alleged

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[67] Journals 11, f. 31v.
[68] The cosigners in this case were two more saddlers, Richard Jakson and Richard Mylard, and a tailor named Thomas Hogoyn.
[69] The feast of St. Bartholomew is 24 August.

ageynst hym".[70] Similar phrasing was used in the twenty shilling bond requiring William Tolverton to appear in court to "answere to all thinges that ther shalbe alegged and obiected ayenst him". [71] On the one hand, the terms of these bonds do give the court a great deal of latitude to bring forward whatever charges or issues they might choose to focus on, and this may be part of the explanation for the language chosen. On the other hand, this could have been done without leaving the agreement entirely free of specific charges, charges which could serve as useful purpose to those in authority.

We do know that in some cases, London's courts were not shy about including the details of an offender's actions, as was the case with shearman Jakes noted above.[72] In that case, Jakes' words made him seem like an unrepentant rebel, for whom harsh remedies were both necessary and appropriate. It is therefore tempting to speculate that if the details were left out of some accounts, it is because the case was less cut-and-dried, and the behaviour of the accused less obviously incorrect. However, this can be nothing more than speculation, since we have no data on which to base firm conclusions. I would argue that Curate and Holdynby's misbehaviour must have been persistent, in order for more informal regulation by their neighbours, fellow parishoners, and guild brothers to have been abandoned, and this more formal remedy pursued. Another possible interpretation again relies on Holdynby's high standing within the Fletchers; it is at least possible that the specifics of his offense were kept out of the records to avoid undue tarnish upon the reputation of a member of the upper echelons of London's society. Beyond these somewhat speculative considerations, however, Holdynby and Curate's

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[70] Journals 12, f. 299.
[71] The bond is dated 5 August, 1520, and Tolverton was to appear in court on the Tuesday after the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (8 September). Tolverton is not actually bound personally, but rather his conduct is guaranteed by Gregory Stott and Robert Harrys, both fishmongers. Journals 12, f. 66.
[72] See p. 90.

side of the dispute is quite effectively silenced by the way in which the matter was recorded; that this was entirely unintentional seems to me extremely unlikely.

In a case brought to the court of Chancery, on the other hand, both the accused and the accuser had the opportunity to present their side of the story, for the record. In this forum, in many cases, far from being silenced or downplayed, the dispute is preserved, and in a sense, both sides receive some legitimacy from that preservation. Neither has been stricken out or removed following the decision that the court reached. Of course, this impression is heightened since, as Chancery was not a court of record, the decision itself is not included.[73] With both sides of a case provided, and no final judgment included, it is tempting for the reader to reach his or her own decisions about which party's story is credible, who was in the right, and who was wrong. The text of the recognisances provides no such temptation. To an extent, the differences between the records of the court of Chancery and the civic courts of London may explain why the details of the dispute are not included in the text of the recognisances; they were documents that enforced a decision, and therefore one of their main purposes was to be "of record".

However, this should not lead us to discount the effect that removing the details of the dispute has on the audience of the text. All that is given is the fact that the dispute has been resolved; the reader is not allowed to know what the issues driving the dispute were, and is therefore not given the opportunity to agree (or disagree) with them. Only the fact that there was a dispute is recorded, and that in the context of the bonded party agreeing to abandon it, presumably recognizing that their behaviour was wrong, as they now swear not to behave in a similar fashion in the future. Rather than being tempted to

[73] Beattie, 'Chancery Dispute', p. 179; Haskett, 'Justice and Authority', pp. 160-1.

reach their own conclusions in a case, the reader is given *only* the conclusion, the condemnation of some individuals as wrong, and the assurance that their wrong behaviour is at an end.

The impression left is one of a dispute that has been discarded, although the circumstances that led to its end are obscured. Did John Long, the defiant butcher, voluntarily agree to give up his defiance of his wardens, perhaps after having been persuaded that his position was wrong? Did both sides agree to accept the judgment of an arbitrator, and then accept the verdict without complaint? Or was he forced to agree to enter into the bond, perhaps threatened with large fines or imprisonment? We know, in some cases, that these tactics were apparently used against some individuals.

In most cases, though, the text of the recognisance leaves the reader little or no information about the cause of the dispute it resolved, or the circumstances leading up to the enaction of the agreement. The picture the text creates is of an individual who has given up his dispute – one which is perhaps no longer important enough to record – and consented to enter into an agreement to guarantee his conduct in the future. Here is a picture of a threat neutralized – by whatever unknown means – and authority restored.

This impression is sharpened by the marked absence of entries referring to the violation of recognisance agreements: the collection of prescribed fines, for example, or complaints against individuals who were going back on their word. It is true that there are several examples of recognisances apparently being reissued. For example, on 19 October 1490, Elizabeth Hill and John Croke were bound in the sum of 500 pounds to obey the arbitration, arrangement, and judgement of the mayor and aldermen in resolving

their dispute over the marriage of Hill's daughter Agnes.[74] Only five days later, they were once again bound, this time in the sum of 200 marks, to obey the same conditions.[75] Obviously the reduction in the amount of the bond is significant, although we do not know what lay behind it, whether one or both parties balked at being liable for the amount, or if the mayor, aldermen, or chamberlain decided the sum was too high. We can imagine some loss of face on the part of Hill or Croke in having to admit to being unable to live up to the terms of a just-made agreement, so perhaps the reason for the reissuing of the bond was left out to save their blushes. It is also possible that some fresh dispute arose, necessitating the change in amount and reissuing of the bond, but not recorded.

In all these cases, there is no explanation given as to why the agreement is – apparently – being redone. Were the terms violated? Did a disagreement arise as to exactly what those terms were? Or did the bond simply fail to end the dispute, with the parties once again agreeing to a settlement? It is difficult to interpret such instances of repeatedly reworked, reworded, or reissued bonds as anything other than cases in which the process was not working well; if the dispute was resolved by the original bond, why reword or rework it later? However, the details of any difficulties are left out of the record. Any fresh dispute over the bonds themselves, or recurrence of old disputes, is concealed, perhaps quite deliberately. There is no dirty laundry being aired here.

Instead, the reader is provided agreements with no clear sign that they were ever violated; although there is evidence that they were, even if it is not as explicit as historians might like. For example: On 2 May 1491, a butcher named William Dee was

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[74] Journals 9, f. 262. For the details of this dispute, see McSheffrey, *Civic Culture*, p. 118.
[75] Journals 9, f. 263.

bound in the sum of ten pounds to obey the judgment of the mayor and aldermen against him, and to pay the assessed fine, for casting animal parts into the Thames. The bond was cosigned by William Swan and David Donyngton, both shearers.[76] So far, so typical, and there is no explicit mention that Dee failed to do as he promised; the Journals do not record his violation of the agreement or an order to collect the money promised by Dee, Swan, and Donyngton if the bond was broken.

However, on 25 November, the King ordered that Dee, described as in prison under the sheriffs' custody, be brought to court at Westminster.[77] There is no mention made as to what Dee was doing in prison, but the possibility that he was incarcerated after breaking his bond certainly exists. However, without the details of Dee's arrest and imprisonment, we can make no firm connection between the bond and his incarceration. Perhaps more significantly, we cannot say with certainty that the recognisance failed, at all. From the available evidence, the recognisance might have worked; according to the story told by our records, all these agreements succeeded magnificently.

It may well be that dealing with the violation of such bonds was not the business of the court of Common Council or the court of Aldermen, and that the records of agreement breakdowns were meant to be preserved elsewhere. However, the impression created, of a successful remedy to disharmony and disobedience, administered and overseen by secure authority, is undeniable. Moreover, it is unlikely that this impression would have been lost on the creators of the record, given their careful management of the text demonstrated in other contexts. If some of the absence of evidence for failed

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[76] Journals 9, f. 271v.

[77] Journals 9, f. 288. It is possible (and even probable) that Dee filed an appeal at Chancery or Star Chamber to obtain royal intervention in his case, although I have not yet been able to find the record of this.

recognisances can be explained by functionality, we must also acknowledge that this functionality was useful to the authorities behind the documents in creating the impression of a problem that, in each case, had been firmly and successfully dealt with.

Not only that, but this is not a threat that can be expected to re-emerge, since good behaviour is guaranteed by the amount of the bond and, in many cases, the supervision of the co-signers. Overall, the impression created is one of a community in which order is not under threat, in which former dissidents have acknowledged their faults and sworn not to re-offend, and of a community which will help enforce shared standards of conduct.

As a result, it is possible to see the recognisances as texts which act to create conformity in two different ways. Most obviously, they are the records of a process by which this was explicitly done; dissidents or troublemakers were bound by these agreements to conform to specific behavioural norms, by their own word, and therefore their reputation, by the supervision of others, and of course by the financial penalty for breaking their agreement. However, these recognisances also carry an implicit message of a community in which individuals, isolated cases of disruption, are identified and brought back into conformity, the disputes they caused laid aside and future harmony is a certainty. It is unlikely that the process was ever really this neat, with no lingering resentments or grudges pursued through other means. Those who felt that they had been unfairly treated might still find their situation unjust, and dissent, or at least potential dissent, might remain. The picture created by the text of the recognisance agreements, however, is one of final resolution, order restored, and conformity created.

CHAPTER THREE: PUBLIC RITUAL DISPLAYS

Historians of medieval towns and cities have frequently noted the importance of public ritual in these communities. Processions, plays, and gatherings of various kinds had a number of key functions, which included promoting social cohesion, normative values, and reinforcing hierarchical authority structures. Public displays were an opportunity for guilds, fraternities, and governing bodies to showcase their wealth, dignity, and unity to the community through a large participation in community rituals by members in lavish livery. Such displays would show the groups that participated in a good light, and therefore help to justify the authority they wielded in the community. For this reason, community leaders in most cases valued and promoted these ritual events. Participation was often mandatory, both so that the display would carry the greatest possible impact, and reach the largest possible audience.[1]

London was home to an "active and extensive theatrical life", including street pageantry, royal entries, Midsummer festivities, and the mayor's riding, from at least the twelfth century. These occasions were often centred on Cheapside, London's widest street and also the habitat of the city's merchant elite, who often sponsored the pageantry.[2] The evidence from late medieval London also shows that public ritual displays were seen as important and valuable occasions by community leaders of various types. Some of the festivities originally had a practical purpose, and then became elaborated. For example, the Midsummer Watch began as a military muster, in response

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[1] M. Berlin, 'Civic Ceremony in Early Modern London', *Urban History Yearbook* (1986) p. 18; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550' in P. Clark and P. Slack eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) p. 57; G. Rosser, 'Myth, Image, and Social Process in the English Medieval Town', *Urban History* 23:1 (1996) 5-25.

[2] A. Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 4-7.

to the 1181 Assize of Arms requiring free men to own arms for national defense, and in obedience to statutes of Henry III and the 1285 Statute of Winchester requiring towns to hold watches to preserve civic peace and view the arms of their citizens. Over time, London's Midsummer Watch came to also include "mechanical giants, musicians, devils, and wood and canvas pageants carried by porters" in which Biblical scenes were depicted.[3] In this case, a practical occasion became a festival one, over time.

There are other instances of ritual occasions in which a practical purpose is harder to discern, although it is nevertheless there. A large number of guild regulations touch on the subject, requiring their members to be a part of public gatherings. The Drapers had a "continuous tradition" of an election feast and accompanying pageantry from the early fifteenth century, and the Blacksmiths, Cutlers, Brewers, Carpenters and Tallowchandlers all apparently included plays as part of the festivities surrounding the election of new wardens, at least in part to help defray the cost of the feasting.[4] Upholders' regulations from 1498 specified that all members of the craft were to buy "one livery of gownes and hodes" every two years, for use on occasions "for the worship of the said Crafte', in particular the feast of St. John the Baptist and other "haly days".[5] A Plumbers' petition from 1488 threatened a penalty of 12d to any member of the craft who, given adequate notice, still failed to attend upon the guild wardens "for the honour of the Kynge and the said Çitie".[6] A list of Fullers regulations from the same year called

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[3] Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, pp. 50-1, 153-5; S. Lindenbaum, 'Ceremony and Oligarchy: The London Midsummer Watch', in B. Hanawalt and K. Reyerson eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 171-88.

[4] Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, pp. 73-92. Other associations that may have held plays as part of their ceremonies include the Pewterers, Bakers, Founders, Weavers, and Waxchandlers.

[5] Letter Book M, f. 5v.

[6] Journals 9, f. 180v.

for a fine of 2d to be collected from any members who failed to appear "for the Worship of the saide Citie and the same Crafte" when summoned by their wardens.[7]

In all of these cases, participation in ritual displays is portrayed as a duty and an obligation, which should emphasize that these rituals were useful to those in authority, as a means of rehearsing and reinforcing the social hierarchy, and as a chance to show off their own elevated status.[8] The records, by portraying non-appearance as an act worthy of a fine, help to create the impression that most Londoners would have agreed that attending rituals was proper, and that those who might choose not to were not merely anti-social or misanthropic, but something close to criminal. London society was not something that a citizen could easily opt out of.

Such mandatory participation in public displays is connected to the requirement, noted earlier, for affluent members to accept the livery of their guild. For members of the guild, the appearance of their leaders in ritually elevated positions and luxurious clothing helped to reinforce the hierarchy of power within the craft association.[9] Just as important would have been the effect on those who witnessed such appearances, but who were not members of the guild. The prestige garnered by a craft association in ritual display came both from the luxurious dress of its members, which highlighted the wealth of the group at the same time as the shared livery emphasized their unity, and also from the number of members present. A large turnout would have more visual impact and be more impressive than a small one, and therefore it was important not only to have all

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[7] Journals 9, f. 211v.

[8] Of course such participation could very well have been attractive to humbler members of society too, as a chance to be seen in association with society's elite and demonstrate their own dependability. This is not the point of view being worked from in the records, however.

[9] Archer, 'Memorialization', pp. 90-8; G. Rosser, 'The Essence of Medieval Urban Communities: The Vill of Westminster, 1200-1540', in R. Holt and G. Rosser eds., *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History*, (London: Longman, 1990) p. 233.

those who were capable of becoming liveried members do so, but also to have all of these members present at public events.

However, public assemblies were not only important to the guild, but to the civic government as well.[10] Ordinances submitted by the Bakers in 1475 included the requirement that every liveried member of the craft "shall awayt upon the masters of the same Craft upon sufficiaunt warning", but "also upon the maire and Shereffes of London at suche seasone as been accouustumed", with any absentees to be fined 3s 4d.[11] What this makes clear is that gatherings of craft associations were not only useful for the guilds, but also to the government. An assembly of the leading members of London's crafts showcased the wealth and dignity of the entire community, which reflected well on the men who ran it: the mayor and aldermen.

This aspect of mandatory attendance was a common component of guild regulations regarding public events. In 1482, a set of Glovers' ordinances specified that "every person of the same craft" was to answer "all maner of somons and warnyng of the wardens ... for the honour of the said Citee and the good Rules & guydyng of the same Craft". Those who failed to attend had to pay for their default with a pound of wax.[12] This regulation appears to govern more than one kind of assembly, including gatherings of the guild and civic ceremonies, but all kinds of gathering are obviously quite important. Although there are no specifics, this ordinance shows that the leadership of the Glovers thought of assemblies as potentially having more than one function,

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[10] These occasions were also attended by courtiers and members of the royal government, highlighting the close links between the upper tiers of London society and the royal sphere: Archer, 'Popular politics', p. 28. This also indicates that city events were prestigious (and pleasant) enough to be worth attending for members of the aristocratic world.

[11] Journals 8, f. 138v.

[12] Journals 9, f. 10v.

including burnishing the prestige of the entire city and promoting obedience and unity within the craft. The penalty to be forfeited by members who did not attend is also significant; given that the Glovers maintained a light in the Charterhouse,[13] this measure ensured that members who failed to contribute to the guild's public display in one instance would contribute to a different showcase of the fraternity's dignity and prestige.[14]

Finally, it is worth considering, given the uncertainty about exactly who guided the aims of guild petitions, whether the desire for perfect attendance at public events represents the Bakers and Glovers' interests, or the city government's, or a mixture of the two. We know that the mayor and aldermen in particular were very interested in public ritual as a chance to showcase their dignity and elevated status. A set of Founders' regulations from 1489 included a typical requirement that "every brother" of the craft "attend and awayte upon the wardeyns of the said Craft ... when the same Wardeyns have Comaundement by the mair and Aldremen so for to do and also to Wayte uppon the mair and Aldremen and Shirriffes of the said Citee".[15] Although this rule is part of a petition ostensibly submitted by the Founders guild, it shows that the mayor, aldermen, and other civic officials, desired the presence of guild representatives at public events – it is the mayor and aldermen who are expected to command the presence of the Founders, rather than the Founders asking to participate. Of course it is impossible to say whether the petition represents the wishes of the Founders, or whether it has been shaped by the civic government, but this example helps to show that public ritual displays benefited more

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[13] See below p. 142.
[14] Collective acts of piety were important to many groups in medieval society, since it allowed them to perform more impressive acts than would otherwise be possible: French, *People of the Parish*, p. 36.
[15] Journals 9, f. 247v. The fine for not appearing was 6d.

than one group. It is likely that the mayor and aldermen wanted guilds to participate in public events just as much as the guilds wanted to take part.

One strange-seeming resolution from early 1486 also relates, after careful consideration, to the question of maximizing attendence at ritual displays. The entry deals with relatively minor civic officials, the "sergeauntes & yomen bothe of the mair Shireffes & Chamberlain", who yearly receive livery "atte Festes of Cristmas and Pentecost". The complaint is that these men have their gowns made so long "that they may not doo service in this Citee if nede required", and a resolution is passed that in future, the gowns must be made with a hem that is at least a foot "above the Soole of the Foote", with any violators to be expelled from their office.[16] The concern here is obvious; the government wants to make sure that civic officials are able to perform their duties and make public appearances in practical garments. The reason why the sergeants and yeomen might have had their livery made over-long in the first place is less obvious, although the entry specifies that they "have their livery" each year, not that they must purchase it. If the gowns are provided by the city, then one possible explanation is that these relatively humble civic officials were requesting excessively large garments to maximize the amount of luxurious cloth obtained thereby, perhaps with an eye to selling the cloth once the year was up. Whatever the reason was, this slightly odd passage again highlights the importance placed on attendance at public events; in terms of visual impact and a show of unity, it was important that all members of the civic government appear at gatherings, and failure to do so was unacceptable.

Another resolution from 1502 specified that at all "waytyng days", the sergeants who attended upon the mayor and aldermen had to be properly attired, wearing their

[16] Journals 9, ff. 104-104v.

gowns of office, carrying their maces "openly shewed" and girdles with swords, bucklers, and "short daggers" displayed.[17] In this instance, the intention is to maximize the prestige won for the civic leaders, by making sure that their attendants would have a dignified appearance. Given that the mayor and aldermen were interested in using public ritual displays to benefit themselves and their position in London society, it is possible that at least some of the petitions regarding the participation of guilds in these assemblies reflect their interests and not that of the craft associations. Although the language of the petitions themselves is crafted so that the motivation appears to come from only from the craft association, thus creating the impression of a guild which spontaneously desires to do its civic duty, it is possible that this was a clever rhetorical tactic on the part of the civic government, or if the petitions really do represent the interests of guild leaders. Whichever group's interests were being served here, it is clear that they believed that public ritual occasions were an important part of achieving those aims, and that the effect of a ritual gathering was enhanced by a larger turnout.

Public ritual gatherings, especially ones that involved representatives of different parts of the community, were opportunities to do more than showcase and reinforce the prestige of the groups that took part. They were also an opportunity to display and reiterate various kinds of hierarchy – which groups or persons had precedence over which other groups and persons – by assigning positions or roles within the ritual that made these distinctions clear.[18] In London, one example of this was the order that representatives of the guilds were to stand in at public assemblies; the crafts were ordered

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[17] Journals 10, f. 269.

[18] B. McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities', in B. Hanawalt and K. Reyerson eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) pp. 189-93; B. McRee, 'Religious Guilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum* 67 (1992) pp. 69-72; Rosser, 'Social Process', pp. 6, 17.

according to their position in the hierarchy of prestige and influence. This practice appears several times in the records: On 15 June 1500, the guilds of London were called to make an assembly for the transportation of the body of Edmund Tudor, the King's infant son, to Westminster. The order specifies that the guilds are to be ordered "after the degrees of the Craftes ... the meanest Craftes to be first sette forth..."[19] Since the order crafts took in public rituals indicated their level of prestige, the exact details of this ordering could be contentious. For example, in 1507 the Court of Aldermen issued a judgment that the Stockfishmongers "wich lately haith dissevered theym from the Fishmongers", would take their place "next to the vynteners" in all public displays.[20] In 1511, the Court made a general resolution requiring "all maner of Felaushippes shall kepe the order of goyng in procession & stondyng as it was ordeyned in master Shaa daies",[21] which implies some dispute or attempts to change the ordering, although no details are provided.

Group gatherings were not always intended to influence the rest of the community. The Upholders' regulations also included a requirement that, after the semi-annual election of new wardens and assistants, the new wardens were to hold a dinner for the entire craft, for which each member would contribute 16d.[22] Similarly, the Painters' guild was to enjoy a dinner in their common hall each time their quarterage dues were collected, perhaps both to make gathering the dues easier and paying them more palatable.[23] The opportunity to attend convivial feasts, enjoy good food and

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[19] Journals 10 f. 191.
[20] Rep 2, f. 55.
[21] Rep 2, f. 134. This could refer to the mayoralty of Edmund Shaa, in 1482, but more likely means that of Sir John Shaa, in 1501.
[22] Letter Book M, f. 6.
[23] Journals 9, f. 283v.

companionship, and make useful business connections, is often cited as one of the reasons why guilds and fraternities were popular in medieval communities.[24] These dinners would have been a chance for guild members to enjoy themselves, and would presumably have helped promote unity within the craft. However, this picture is complicated by the fact that attendance was mandatory – no brother was to be excused unless he was too sick to attend. Once again, opting out of ritual displays was not acceptable.

This tells us that the dinners must have been more than pleasant feasts for the membership, and that they performed other functions that were useful to the leadership of the guild. At the same time as they were enjoying a good meal and the company of their fellows, the Upholders would also have been formally introduced to their new leadership, who would presumably have been given pride of place at the dinner or roles leading the festivities. Kate Giles has argued that even the architecture of the buildings in which such events were held were designed to highlight the elevated status of guild leaders.[25] In other words, these dinners were an opportunity for the internal hierarchy of the guild to be reinforced, and for each member to be reminded of their position within that hierarchy. The leaders of medieval guilds realized that conveying such messages in an enjoyable context had the potential to be more effective than the use of blunter instruments would have been, and the fact that members were not entitled to skip the dinners shows that the message being delivered there was seen to be a very important one. In 1487, the Carpenters submitted a petition that included a number of rules

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[24] Rosser, 'Fraternity Feast', pp. 431-2, 437-8, 440-2.
[25] K. Giles, 'Framing Labour: The Archaeology of York's Medieval Guild Halls', in J. Bothwell, P.J.P. Goldberg and W. Ormrod eds., *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England*, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000) pp. 75-6.

regarding gatherings.[26] There was to be a yearly dinner held in their common hall the Sunday after the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin,[27] to be followed the next day by a mass held in the "Chirch of Alhalowen in the Walle", at which prayers would be said for "all the Brethern Sistern Benefactours and Frendes of the saide Crafte". For the mass, the Carpenters "maister, wardens and Feolaship" were directed to first assemble in their hall, clad in their livery,[28] and then process together to the church. Following the service, they were to return to the hall and enjoy "suche repast as for them shalbe ordeigned by the ... maister and wardeyns of the ... craft".[29] Attendance at both the Sunday dinner and the Monday mass were mandatory, with any member who failed to appear without "a reasonable excuse" to forfeit 3s 4d. The attendance of guild members at other functions, including "quarter daies", "obits" and "masses" was also mandatory, under the same penalty. Similarly, the Founders' guild was to keep a mass dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the Sunday following the feast of the Assumption which all members, liveried or not, were required to attend.[30]

The function of the dinner and mass was almost certainly similar to the Upholders' observances, although there may be an additional significance in that the date of the dinner fell on the start of the term of office of the master and wardens, who were to be elected on the feast of St. Lawrence and to commence their administration on the feast

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[26] Journals 9, ff. 136v.-141Bv. MS contains consecutive folios numbered 141. For the sake of convenience the second of these was considered to be 141B.
[27] 15 August.
[28] Although, as noted in Chapter One, most guilds drew a distinction between liveried and non-liveried members, and this petition does refer to members being "of the Clothing": Journals 9, f. 140. However, the entry is also quite explicit in its reference to the entire fellowship of the craft wearing their livery "of gownes and hoodes" for this occasion.
[29] This part of the entry is slightly confusing, as it refers to a dinner held on the Sunday, followed by a mass the next Monday, which appears to be followed by another collective meal. If the entry is read carefully and taken at face value, it clearly does call for two separate meals.
[30] Journals 11, f. 246. The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is 15 August.

of the Assumption.[31] The dinner would therefore have been an opportunity for the new leaders of the guild to symbolically and publicly take the reins, and for the assembled fraternity to be reminded who was now in charge. In this way, the dinner served an additional, specific function as well as the general effects noted earlier. Here again, the language of the document places those who might not wish to attend the festivities into a category of misbehaviours who should pay a fine for their transgression. Again, the consensus value of participation in the dinner and mass is promoted by the suggestion that it already exists, and that any who do not want to be a part of it are therefore clearly troublesome characters in need of discipline.

In addition to the dinner and mass, the master and wardens of the craft were to call together "suche of the ... Feolaship as they shall thynke convenient" in their common hall "to have Comunacon as well for the supportacon and continuance of the good Rules and ordenaunces of the seid Crafte as for the Reformacon repressyng and punysshment of Rebellions or mysdoers ayesnt the same Rules and ordenaunces". This is a significant insight into how the guild was meant to be governed; according to this regulation it was to be done in public, or at least with access given to a significant number of the fraternity. This public reiteration of rules would have been useful in a semi-literate community, in which most members would not have been able to read written lists of regulations, and public handling of punishments creates at least the impression of transparency and even-handedness, just as "Comunacon" suggests that input from the members was possible and welcome.

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[31] As above, the Feast of the Assumption is 15 August, and the feast of St. Lawrence is 10 August, giving a five day period for administrative changeover.

However, we should be cautious in making optimistic assessments about how much input ordinary members of the Carpenters had into the running of their guild from this evidence. For one, the master and wardens were required only to include the members of the fraternity that they found convenient, not all the members, most of the members, or even a fair representation of the members. They could presumably choose whoever they liked to be part of these sessions, and likewise exclude whom they liked. Additionally, although communication certainly implies a two-way exchange to modern readers, it is certainly possible to provide a forum in which views can be expressed without necessarily intending to take those views into account when making decisions. The entry certainly does not say that the master and wardens were to take the advice or counsel of the members they thought convenient to invite to these weekly sessions, so we should not assume that too much power-sharing was going on here.

It is an interesting question whether the description of the Carpenters' weekly sessions was deliberately crafted to create the impression of inclusive meetings at which ordinary members had significant input as a way of putting a good face on what was still an essentially elitist process. Without further details about exactly how many of the Carpenters were likely to be invited to the meetings, and how the sessions operated, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions. However, the vagueness of terms and phrases like "Comunacon" and "suche of the ... Feolaship as they shall thynke convenient" may well have been deliberately chosen, in order to give the master and wardens as much latitude to run the guild as possible; in this case, the freedom to exclude troublesome members or ignore dissenting points of view. Once again, the language of this entry requires careful interpretation.

The leaders of guilds also wanted to be sure that the socially powerful occasions of public ritual were used to promote their agendas, and not someone else's. A petition from the Pouchmakers' guild, submitted in April of 1488, demonstrates this well. One article from the list states that "no persone of the said Craft any time of the iiij Assemblies in a yere of the same nor any other tyme shall reherse or make any contente debate stryff or malice Wherthrugh the same Craft may be put to any disturbaunce or grevaunce", upon pain of a fine of 3s 4d.[32] To some extent, this is a typical prohibition against infighting amongst guild members, as discussed in Chapter One. However, it is interesting that the clause specifically mentions the quarterly assemblies of the fraternity. These would have been prime opportunities for any dissidents in the guild to voice their discontent, and the Pouchmakers wardens wanted to be sure that these gatherings were not hijacked and used for any purposes other than their own. It was also not possible for members to voice their dissent by absenting themselves from guild meetings, as a fine of 4d was to be collected each time a pouchmaker failed to appear. The intention of the guild wardens is clear: for the entire fraternity to be present, and to be exposed only to the message they wanted to promote. Whether these regulations were in response to a specific disagreement within this guild, or were merely a prudent safeguard, is not evident in the records. In addition to requirements for members to participate in ritual occasions, we also find attempts to prohibit guild members from making unsanctioned public displays. This appears to be another attempt to keep control of public ritual displays. For example, a Coopers' petition from 1488 contains a directive that no member of the guild was "to come to my lord the maires feestes or to my maisters the Shireffes feestes or any other feestes or dyners within the said Citie where any grete

[32] Journals 9, f. 187.

assemble of people shall be" unless they were specifically summoned or assigned to go by the guild wardens. The penalty for breaking this restriction was set at 6s 8d.[33] Similarly, Saddlers' ordinances from 1490 required that "no persone hereafeter presume to take uppon hym to come unto my lord the mair or my maisters the Shireffes Festes or to any other Festes where any great assemble of people shalbe" unless specifically invited or assigned to go by the Saddlers' wardens. The penalty leveled at violators was also 6s 8d.[34]

Feasts held by the mayor or sheriffs would have been prestigious events in London's social and civic calendar; they were opportunities to be seen with the community's elite and to make valuable social and business connections. The Coopers' and Saddlers' wardens would have wanted to make certain that men who went were appropriate representatives of the fraternity, in terms of their wealth and bearing. Deciding who was and was not allowed to attend prestigious occasions would also have been one of many methods available to the wardens for rewarding loyal members and penalizing malcontents or outsiders. Finally, there could also have been a political element in deciding who their representatives would have been, with any troublesome members who did not support the status quo cut off from access to influential public events. There could also be restrictions on who was allowed to hold gatherings, or where they were allowed to hold them.

A pasteler's ordinance from 1495 specified that any members of the craft who were employed as household cooks by the Mayor or Sheriffs were not allowed to use their employer's houses to hold any "Festes or dyners for any weddynges obites Crafters

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[33] Journals 9, f. 184v.
[34] Journals 9, f. 260

or otherwise", on pain of a fine of 40s.[35] The rule against household employees using their employers' home to host gatherings is probably not surprising, although the considerable fine attached indicates that this was not merely seen as unprofessional behaviour. Instead, the regulation is intended to prevent appropriating the mayor or sheriffs' prestige and authority by holding a dinner in their home. By doing so, these household cooks could have created the appearance that the gathering had the approval and support of the mayor, and made use of the setting to lend prestige to the proceedings. This use (or misuse) of their wealth and social capital would have been something the mayor and sheriffs would have wanted to prevent.

This leads to the question of whose interests were really being served by the ordinance. Although it is entitled as "Ordinaco' dez pastelers" in the Journals, the entry does not follow the usual format of describing a bill brought in by the pastelers and submitted for approval. It also does not include any other rules about the pastelers' trade, and consists only of this one regulation. Since this particular resolution seems mostly in line with the interests of the mayor and sheriffs, not the pastelers, it likely originated with the civic government and not the guild, but was labelled in the records as a set of craft ordinances as a rather half-hearted attempt to avoid the appearance of interfering with the operation of a craft association. While this would be in line with the general uncertainty as to who crafted the guild petitions, and whose interests they serve, without explicit evidence nothing specific can be proven. However, this particular case serves as a good example of why these considerations must be kept in mind during any analysis of these sources.

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[35] Journals 10 f. 59. The Pastelers were cooks specialising in pastry, from *MED* Online at: http://0-ets.umdl.umich.edu.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32586.

Overall, then, we do not know precisely what lies behind these regulations. However, it is clear that the leadership of London's craft guilds wanted to be certain that when members of their group participated in public ritual displays, they did it under the control of the guild wardens. Guild leaders would not have wanted to have the impact of their own display fragmented by having members participating under other affiliations, perhaps suggesting loyalty to another person or group, and potentially undercutting the authority of the guild wardens. Moreover, they would not have wanted guild members participating in any display unless they had sanctioned it.

The prestige available from the attendance of their members at public events was a kind of social capital, and the wardens of London's guilds wanted to be sure that they had control over how and when that capital was spent. It has also been argued that public ritual displays were an opportunity for the expression of dissent, or objection to established norms, as much as they were chances to reinforce these standards. Ben McRee in particular has convincingly shown that it was possible for particular groups in an urban community to mount a challenge to the status quo through the way they participated in public ritual.[36] This would have also entered into the thinking of community leaders as they tried to control who participated in public events, and what form that participation took. It is worth noting that the civic authorities competed for this social capital as well; in 1475 an ordinance was passed prohibiting aldermen from bringing more than one servant "to carry his gown" to the ceremony at which a new

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[36] McRee, 'Unity or Division?' pp. 189-90, 195-9, 202. This was not unique to English, nor even to Christian, urban culture: R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 332; H. Lutfi, 'Coptic festivals of the Nile: Aberrations of the past?' in T. Philipp and U. Haarmann eds., *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 252, 271-2.

mayor was elected.[37] Bringing a large number of servants would highlight the wealth and influence of a particular alderman, rather than the dignity of the assembled group.[38] From a corporate perspective, the unity of the government, and the dignity of the aldermen as a whole, would have been a much more desirable objective.

Despite their importance to political and economic authorities, realms usually classified as secular, public ritual displays in cities often had strong religious connections. In many English towns, processions or pageants on Corpus Christi day were of key importance in maintaining relationships of power and hierarchy. Although London does not appear to have had Corpus Christi pageants,[39] many examples of public ritual in the records did have a religious connection. The Upholders' ordinances noted earlier included both the connection of public displays and feast days, as well as a yearly group mass. Once a year the fellowship was to gather for a mass at the Austin Friars, and every member was to make an offering of at least 1d. Attendance was mandatory, with any members who missed the mass to be fined 12d.[40] This service would not only have been an opportunity for the Upholders to appear to the community as a united, respectable fraternity, but also a chance for the group to gain 'spiritual capital' through their piety and charity. The benefits were social and political – the Upholders would

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[37] *Letter Book L*, pp. 132-3.

[38] Given the occasion, such a display might have been particularly useful in influencing the outcome of the election.

[39] Barron argues that the frequent royal pageants and processions in London may explain the absence of a Corpus Christi cycle there; the various economic and social functions of these pageants would have been sufficiently filled by royal occasions. Barron, *London*, p.22. Patrick Collinson points out that London did have play cycles (sadly lost), but that unlike the Corpus Christi plays in many English cities, these cycles were entirely under the control of the civic government rather than the guilds: P. Collinson, 'John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism', in J.F. Merritt ed., *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 31. Lancashire adds that there were outdoor religious plays and wrestling held outside London's walls in Clerkenwell that were attended by Richard II and Henry IV, although the practice seems to have lapsed in 1409: Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, pp. 55-7.

[40] Letter Book M, ff. 5v, 7.

appear as sober, upstanding citizens who deserved influence and authority – but also spiritual. It is certainly not possible to determine whether one or the other of these benefits was a higher priority for the Upholders, although it should be recognized that the two effects went together. Part of the reason that the public appearance of the Upholders was prestigious and garnered respect in the community was its connection to a spirituality that was one of the common threads that united all Londoners.

Other guilds had similar observances. New members of the Cobblers' guild had to contribute two pounds of wax towards the maintenance of "the light of the said fraternite ordeigned and founded in thonour of Godde and Seint Kateryn" at the chapel of the Crutched Friars.[41] This permanent offering to a popular saint would have not only reaped spiritual benefits for the Cobblers, but would also have been a convenient public reminder of their piety to all the visitors to the chapel. This would help to reinforce the image of the Cobblers as a respectable guild within the community, an objective that might have been of particular importance to them given their humble status as subordinate to the Cordwainers' guild.

Rules from a 1482 Fletchers' petition included a yearly mass at the Austin Friars on the feast of St. John the Baptist, and a quarterage fee of 2d to be levied from all the guilds' members towards maintaining "v tapers of wex at the said Frere Austeyns in the wirship of God & seint John Baptiste". Anyone who failed to attend the mass was to forfeit either 6d or a pound of wax towards maintaining the tapers.[42] Here again is the importance, not just of collective public appearances, but of collective religious observances. In addition, the specific penalty the Fletchers wished to collect from

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[41] Letter Book M, f. 32v.
[42] Journals 9, f. 53v.

absentee members ensured that failure to contribute by attendance would be made up by contributing to maintaining the candles, another public sign of their devotion.

In 1485, a Pursers' petition included the requirement that a "solempne masse" be held each year "at the Grey Friers within Newgate" on Trinity Sunday. Every brother and sister of the craft was to be there "in their best aray", and to make an offering of 1d, "for thonour of Godde and worship of the said Craft". Any absent members were to pay 6d. The appearance of the Pursers in their finery at a divine service would have been an opportunity for the guild to be seen in its best light, and this regulation gave members a strong incentive to attend by making it significantly more expensive to skip the service than to attend and make the required offering. Again, however, the spiritual importance of this group service should not be underestimated; holding the mass and making the offerings would have been seen as very valuable acts in their own right, with the social effects an important corollary but not the prime motivating factor.

The Trinity Sunday mass was not the only time the Pursers were to assemble for divine service; in addition whenever any brother or sister of the craft died, the Wardens and however many other members they felt appropriate were to assemble with "all suche torches as be longying to the same Crafte be", "to bring the Body honestly to the Erthe". Anyone who was summoned to such a funeral and who failed to attend was to be fined 4d.[43] Again, this was a public display of unity and piety that the Pursers would have been interested in making for those reasons, but again, spiritual motives must not be discounted. It has frequently been noted that one of the primary benefits that medieval city-dwellers wanted from the fraternities they joined was the provision of a proper burial service, which could be expensive but was extremely important to one's fate in the

[43] Journals 9, f. 53v.

afterlife. This provision in the Pursers' regulations was meant to guarantee that all members of the craft would get a dignified Christian burial, and the fact that participation was mandatory made certain that even humble, or perhaps unpopular, members would still receive a suitable funeral.

Since these observances were to include the elite members in their guild livery, they would have burnished their prestige by making them. However, it should also be clear that the spiritual benefits were very real to them at the same time; the fates of the souls of deceased Saddlers in Purgatory were an ongoing concern and was the responsibility of the current members of the guild. These kinds of posthumous prayers would, like the promise of a dignified burial, have been one of the things that made fraternities attractive to people in medieval cities. Communal religious observances were multi-faceted events that served a variety of social and spiritual ends, and this fact is yet another demonstration of how thoroughly intertwined spiritual and secular matters were in medieval society.

In some cases, the arrangements made for religious services can help make the web of relationships between groups in London slightly more clear. In 1502, the Leathersellers submitted a bill of ordinances that contained similar observances, including a yearly service to be held in the church of St. Thomas Acres and a "fest or dyner" to be held in their "comon halle" on or around the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. In addition, the craft would contribute to the maintenance of a light in the Charterhouse of London, and a yearly obit held there on the feast of the Assumption.[44] However, the Leathersellers were evidently not a wealthy enough guild to do all these

[44] Letter Book M, ff. 59v.-60. The dinner was to be held on the feast day itself if it fell on a Sunday or Monday, on the next Sunday if it fell on a Saturday, or another day "at the pleasure of the wardens" if the feast day fell on another weekday.

things independently, and so the ordinances specify that they would do these things as "parteners" of the Glovers guild. This shows how important such observances were to Londoners, probably both in terms of their social and spiritual importance. A fraternity that was not able to make public religious observances on their own would apparently not have been satisfied to simply do without; instead they found a way, via a connection to a related guild, to participate in some fashion. This should make it clear that religious rituals were not optional bonuses that groups could participate in if they chose, they were an important, perhaps vital, part of a fraternity's role in the community.

It is also probable that this arrangement reveals more about the relationship between the Glovers and the Leathersellers. The two crafts were obviously involved with one another economically, with the Leathersellers vending products manufactured by Glovers. It is likely that this made them somewhat subordinate to the Glovers in London's hierarchy of craft associations, similar to the relationship of the Cobblers guild, who repaired footwear, to the Cordwainers, who were manufactured it.[45] Contributing to the Glovers' religious observances did reap benefits for the Leathersellers, but it also publicly reiterated their subordinate status. The arrangement would therefore have had important benefits to the Glovers, beyond the financial contribution of the Leathersellers, as it reinforced their elevated status relative to the other craft. The fact that the Leathersellers were contributing to their observances would have boosted their prestige and increased the value of these rituals to them significantly.

The 1489 Founders' petition mentioned earlier also included religious observances; at the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin,[46] "every brother of the same

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[45] Journals 11, ff. 18-23v.
[46] 15 August

Craft of Foundours as well being of the Clothyng and not of the Clothyng shall attende uppon the Wardeyns of the said Craft" at "Seint Laurence Chirch in the old Iury of London" to participate in a "solempne masse for all the bretherhode". All members were to make an offering, and the penalty for missing the service was 6d.[47] The wording here makes very clear that the communal devotions would benefit all the members of the guild, and it is probable that this included deceased, as well as current, members. However, it is also interesting that the author chose to specify that liveried members and non-liveried members were to attend, rather than just saying that all members were expected to be there.

It is possible to interpret this phrasing in a number of ways. It is possible that in some cases, non-liveried members would not have been allowed to attend guild services such as this, which would have made being invited to the mass an important indicator of status. However, since other examples of guilds holding joint devotions included all their members, and we do not find examples of non-liveried members being excluded, there is another, perhaps more probable, way of interpreting this wording here. When the Founders assembled for their service, the entire guild would of course be shown in its united strength and piety, but the liveried members would stand out simply because they were "of the clothing" – they had their official robes or gowns that marked them as senior members in the guild. Just as the wording of this regulation makes the existence of and distinction between these groups within the Founders guild clear, the different attire of the members would have done the same for observers of and especially participants in the service. In this way, this service would have carried the messages

[47] Journals 9, f. 248. Unlike other examples cited in this chapter, the amount of the offering is not specified.

mentioned earlier, but would also have been yet another opportunity to demonstrate and reiterate the hierarchy within the guild for its members. At the same time as the Founders were making a prestigious display of their unity and religious zeal to the community, they may also have been reinforcing power relationships within the guild itself.[48]

Although London did not have an annual Corpus Christi pageant cycle, there was a tradition of plays and shows connected with the election of a new mayor; performances and celebrations would be held along the route the mayor took on his way to Westminster to be officially recognized in his position.[49] Unfortunately, we lack very many specific details about these celebrations, but it is likely that this was an occasion to honour the mayor, promote normative values, and perhaps relieve community tensions by acting out inverted social relationships. It is also true that pageantry and celebrations would have performed a quite practical function - they attracted visitors to city who would hopefully become customers for the city's merchants, craftsmen, innkeepers and victuallers.[50] In many towns and cities in England, such celebrations and pageantry continued well into what is usually termed the early modern period, but in London, the civic government sought to put an end to the shows surrounding the mayoral election at a relatively early date.

On 15 October 1481, the mayor and aldermen passed a resolution that "from hensefurth in the maires goyng or comyng to or from Westmynster when he shall take his

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[48] McRee, 'Unity or Division?' pp. 190-2.
[49] These festivities evolved into the Lord Mayor's Show that continues in London to this day: Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, pp. 52-3.
[50] Barron, *London*, p. 22.

Othe shall no disguysyngs nor pageon be used or had".[51] A later, mostly identical resolution from 22 October also called for a fine of £20 to be levied against any "felyship" that might defy the resolution, although this line is stricken through in the manuscript.[52] It is not entirely clear why the civic government would have wanted to ban the pageantry surrounding the mayor's election; the entry gives absolutely no motivation or justification for the ban being put in place. It is possible that the government was concerned about celebrations turning violent, or they may have felt that the message or messages of these "paggeons" were not sufficiently under their control. Gervase Rosser, among others, has argued that civic pageantry was not only an opportunity to reinforce normative values, but was also a forum in which public challenges to the status quo could be advanced. If the leading authority figures of London felt that some of the performances done at the time of the mayor's riding were intended to undermine or challenge aspects of their administration, they might well have decided the simplest solution was to prevent the challenges from taking place by banning the pageants entirely.

As is often the case, it is also not clear why this prohibition was apparently passed by the Common Council three times; first on 15 October, again on 22 October, and then again on 23 October. Some portions of the first resolution that were stricken through were included in the two later iterations,[53] so part of the explanation may be that the wording and precise terms of the ban were being worked out. It is tempting to speculate

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[51] The mayor had originally ridden on horseback to Westminster to be sworn in before the King or the barons of the Exchequer, although this was changed to a water journey in 1453 for reasons that are not entirely clear. After the swearing in, the new mayor held a banquet - in his home prior to the early sixteenth century, in the Guildhall thereafter - said a prayer at St. Paul's, and then proceeded home in a torchlight procession. Barron, *London*, pp. 152-3; Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, 145-51.

[52] Journals 8, ff. 253v, 255, 257. The £20 fine was threatened in the earlier resolution, although that portion of the entry is stricken through in the MS.

[53] The wording of the second two versions is virtually identical.

that, if the mayor's riding pageantry was popular, that there might have been objections to the ban, and that the council had to repeatedly discuss and enact the resolution to get it in place. Some indirect evidence for this popularity is found in a set of Painters' regulations from 1491, which specified that the members of the guild were, in addition to their dues, responsible for paying to hire the barge used to "wayte upon the maire or the Shereffes when they go to Westminster to take their oth", a full ten years after the celebrations were supposed to be banned.[54]

If the civic government of London, or even a particular mayor, was having trouble enforcing their ban on public displays surrounding the mayor and sheriffs oath-taking, it would have been understandable if such a dispute was left out of the records. Such a split between government and guilds would not cast the civic government in a very good light, nor would an inability to enforce the wishes of the mayor and aldermen. However, as there is absolutely no explanation whatsoever for the reiterations of the ban on mayor's riding pageantry, it is impossible to be definite. While we can be sure that the government must have had some reason for repeatedly passing the same resolution, that reason was either too banal or too embarrassing to be included in the record, leaving the motives of the mayor and aldermen concealed once again.

In addition to benefiting the guilds and civic government of London, it appears that public ritual gatherings were seen as desirable by other groups as well. In 1514, the "warden of the housse of Greyfreres" came before the court of Common Council and suggested that "yt may please the same maier & aldremen & their successours to visite yerely their seid house & churche in the Fest of Seynt Francis", pointing out that according to "diverse bokes of Record & Wrytttnges" that the Grey Friars' house had

[54] Journals 9, f. 283v.

been "bylded & funded by diverse worshepfull citezins of this Citie as mayor & aldermen of the same". The court agreed to the proposal, resolving that each year on 4 October, the mayor and aldermen would "visite the seid house of Grey Freres", "in their Scarlet gownes & Clokes".[55]

An annual visit from the mayor and aldermen, in their civic finery, certainly would have been a prestigious occasion for the Grey Friars, associating their house with the highest echelon of London society and implying that the friary had the endorsement and support of the civic government as well. Indeed, the Friars' warden seems to have been suggesting that the mayor and aldermen should support the house, through his evidence that their worshipful predecessors had done so in the past. Given the increasingly controversial status of monastic groups in England at this time,[56] the Grey Friars might have been especially eager to make an alliance with London's leadership.

Again, however, we should not necessarily take this entry at face value. As we have seen, many groups in London held annual, public, religious observances that were an important part of their calendar. Such occasions were prestigious for the groups that participated in them, providing an opportunity to showcase wealth and unity as well as piety and religious devotion. For this reason, it is likely that the annual service at the Grey Friars would have been something that the mayor and aldermen wanted to observe, for their own reasons. There is no suggestion of this in the way the entry is written, which makes it seem as though the proposal originated only with the friars, for whom the

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[55] Letter Book M, f. 224.

[56] French, *People of the Parish*, p. 179; C. Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) pp. 89-95; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); G.R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558*, (London: Arnold, 1977) pp. 9-11; J.A. Youings, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971) pp. 15-16; A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, revised ed. (London: Collins, 1967).

mayor and aldermen are essentially doing a favour by agreeing to the annual service. This does represent the civic government in the elevated position of being asked to make an appearance, and benevolently agreeing to do so. As usual, these considerations are largely speculative, although it is certainly possible that this arrangement was more of a cooperative venture than is represented in the Letter Book, and that the record was designed to put the civic government in the best possible light.

We have seen that although precise details are scarce, public ritual displays of various types were seen as important occasions by medieval Londoners. At the same time, it is also true that public displays in the city were of importance to people outside the city, in particular the royal government.[57] Royal entries to the city required a ceremonial turnout of the city's citizenry, and there are numerous references to these in the records. In 1475, Edward IV returned to London from France and was greeted by the mayor and aldermen, in scarlet livery, and five hundred "dyvers commoners" in murrey robes.[58] In 1485, Richard III was met by the mayor and aldermen mounted and "clad in scarlet", and upwards of five hundred of London's most substantial citizens in violet livery, who escorted him "to the Warderobe, beside the black friers, where for that tyme he was loged". This was also an opportunity for the monarch to "request" a loan from London's merchants. There was a similar turnout for Henry VII upon his first arrival in

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[57] Royal entries into important cities with accompanying pageantry were common traditions in France, the Low Countries, as well as England. Henry VII in particular appears to have emphasized the use of public ceremonies to help establish the legitimacy of the Tudor dynasty: Anglo, *Early Tudor Polity*, pp. 3-7. However, the importance of London as a site for royal ceremonies was far from a Tudor invention: Barron, *London*, p. 9; Archer, 'Popular politics', p. 34.

[58] Kingsford, pp. 186-7. Murrey is a dark or purplish red compared to mulberries; from *MED* Online http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED28942.

his capital.[59] Following his coronation, when Henry VIII and his queen departed the city, the streets of London were hung with tapestries and "cloth of arras", the merchants' home turf of Cheapside was hung with "cloth of gold", and all along the route "everie occupation stood in their liveries in order, beginning with base and meane occupations, and so ascending to the worshipfull crafts. Highest and lastlie stood the maior with the aldermen..."[60]

In some cases, we have even more precise details. For example, for the first entry of Henry VII into London, the Grocers, Mercers, Drapers, Fishmongers and Tailors were to be represented by thirty members, the Butchers, Brewers, and Dyers by ten, and on down to guilds such as the Bladesmiths, Blacksmiths, and Spurriers who were to have but a single representative.[61] These varying levels of representation could reflect the relative wealth of the guilds; while elite guilds such as the Mercers could easily field thirty members in appropriately lavish attire, more humble guilds probably could not match that display. However, this occasion would also have reinforced the hierarchy of London's craft associations, with the more prestigious guilds from the upper tiers of the society visibly dominant by their larger numbers, while lesser guilds would make a lesser impact.[62] One can almost envision the assembly as a graph-like representation of the relative prestige of the guilds involved.

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[59] Fabyan, pp. 518, 520; *Great Chronicle of London*, pp. 235-6, 238-9; Holinshed, v. 3 p. 479; Kingsford, pp. 192, 193. This appears to have been standard procedure not only for royal entries, but also for the arrival of ambassadors and papal emissaries: Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, p. 130.

[60] Holinshed, v. 3 p. 547.

[61] Journals 9, f. 85v-86. The entry enumerates sixty-five separate crafts that were supposed to take part, and calls for a total turnout of 435 representatives of London's guilds to meet the King. A later, similar list enumerates sixty-four guilds and a total of 433 representatives; f. 157v.

[62] M. James, 'Ritual, Drama, and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present* 98 (1983) pp. 4-5.

This would not only have indicated to the king and his companions who the upper tiers of London society were, it would also have reinforced the hierarchy for Londoners who took part or observed the royal entry. The simple expedient of having more prestigious guilds claim a larger share of the stage would both illustrate the relative levels of power and perpetuate those relationships by diminishing some guilds while exalting others.[63] When Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon passed through the city on their way to their coronation, again the guilds of London were to assemble, this time lining the route the royal couple would take. In this case, instead of having their number of representatives specified, each guild was given a set amount of space to occupy; the Tailors, Mercers, Grocers, Drapers and Fishmongers were allotted twenty-six yards of the route each, while guilds such as the Bowyers and Fletchers had to make do with only four yards, and the Spurriers only three.[64] Although the method is obviously different, the aim here was the same; to give a greater share of the display, and therefore more prestige, to the more powerful guilds in the city. This occasion, like other royal visits, was a chance to play out London's hierarchy on a very grand stage.

A royal visit was also evidently an opportunity to reinforce the exalted position of the civic government. The arrangements made prior[65] to Henry's entry to the city specified that the "persons of quality" involved in the display would all be dressed in

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[63] Although these functions would have been undeniably useful, Barron argues that by the fifteenth century participation in royal ceremonies were not voluntary, and that the best the civic government could do was try to reduce the expense of the occasion: Barron, *London*, p. 21.

[64] Journals 10, f. 370v. The list includes forty-five guilds.

[65] The arrangements made on ff. 85v-86 were made on 31 August 1485. The second set referred to here were made sometime in October, November or early December – there is no date for the resolution itself, although the previous entry is dated 4 October and the next date given is 14 December - and refer to the "next visit" of the King; evidently Henry VII's first visit has taken place.

robes of "bright murrey",[66] which would have created a fine display of unity among the guild leaders assembled to greet the king. Unity of leadership was an important priority for the men in authority in urban communities, but in this case they appear to have decided that it was more important to give the men who literally governed their due. A new set of arrangements, enacted several months later, specified that the mayor and aldermen should wear "togis de scarlett", which would now set them apart as a special group among the assembly.[67] In addition, further gradations of seniority and prestige were to be displayed; Aldermen who had been mayor were to be attended by three servants, while those who had not been mayor were to have only two attendants. The mayor was to have fifteen servants attending him, and the sheriffs were to have twelve apiece, along with eight constables.[68] In all these cases, these attendants were to be clearly set apart from the men they attended upon by wearing "medley" robes.[69]

This later arrangement would obviously not have created a picture of complete unity; instead, a hierarchy of dignity and authority would have been visibly represented, with the civic government set apart from the rest of the men representing the guilds of London. Not only would this new format have set the government apart from the guild representatives, it would also have given them elevated status, by having servants in attendance on these more dignified persons. Within the government, the different levels of authority would also have been on display; the mayor's position as head of the

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[66] Journals 9, f. 85v. Murrey is a dark-red or purplish colour, from *MED* online at: http://0-ets.umdl.umich.edu.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED28940.

[67] It is tempting to speculate that this new colour of robes is sufficiently close to the dark red robes of the rest of the representatives to suggest an affinity between the groups while still making the distinction clear, but it is not necessarily clear that this was the intention.

[68] Journals 9, f. 157v.

[69] Medley refers to "Cloth made of wools dyed and mingled before being spun", which could be either multi-coloured or of a single hue; from *MED* online at: http://0-ets.umdl.umich.edu.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED27186

government gave him the most prestigious representation, the sheriffs were likewise given a display reflecting their position, and even distinctions of seniority among the aldermen would have been indicated. The new, more complicated format would have more completely displayed the gradations of social status in London's community, once again serving to remind observers who occupied the various levels of authority, and to reinforce that hierarchy in the minds of onlookers. We do not, unfortunately, know whether these changes were made because there were complaints about high-status individuals not being sufficiently distinguished in the previous format, or whether this new set of arrangements is simply a refinement of the concept, but it is clear that for whatever reason, a decision was made to use the opportunity provided by royal visits to not only represent and reinforce the hierarchy of guilds in London, but also to give the city's government an even more prestigious representation.

It is also interesting to note that, in September 1497, when Prince Arthur[70] was to visit the city, the Court of Aldermen issued orders that "all vagabundes" and those infected with "the greate pockes" were to "avoyde the Citie" on pain of imprisonment.[71] The "great pox" is usually taken to mean syphilis, which suggests the concern here was not contagion but morality; individuals who were sufficiently debauched as to have a venereal disease were not a suitable audience to receive the prince. When coupled with the direction to get rid of "vagabundes", usually meaning the idle poor,[72] this appears to be intended to make sure that London not only looked its best, but was also morally

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[70] The entry does not actually specify which of Henry VII's sons was coming to London, referring only to "my lorde prince". However, since Arthur was still alive in 1497, it seems most likely that he would have been the one referred to by this title, and not the younger Henry who, while technically a prince, was not Prince of Wales.

[71] Rep. 1, f. 41v.

[72] *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED50681

clean, for the royal visit. That the records do not come out and say as much may indicate a desire to focus on practicality and leave the question of London's morality out of the record, or simply that the writer here is assuming his audience will know the implications of the great pox and vagabonds.

A year later, Katherine of Aragon's arrival in London from Spain was apparently to be greeted with literal pageantry, with arrangements made for "The Story on the Bridge", "The Story on the grete Conduit & the Pagent ther", celebrations that were to have other stations at "The Conduite in Cornhill", "The Standard in Chepe", and finally "The second Stacion atte Conduite in Gracechirchstrete".[73] Unfortunately these sparse details tell us little about exactly what sort of shows and stories were performed to mark the princess's arrival,[74] but this does not appear to have been a unique event; the directions for the "Story on the grete Conduit" mentions that the mercer Robert Weston is dead and that his son John is taking his place, and under "The Conduite in Cornhill", the arrangements note that Aungell Doun, a grocer, has left the city and William Butler has been elected in his place. Presumably Doun and Robert Weston were previously involved in organizing specific parts of this pageantry, and have now been replaced. Lacking details to flesh it out, this entry is a tantalizing indication of how much of an occasion royal entries into the city could be, and how much of an opportunity they were for public displays of various kinds.

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[73] Rep 1, ff. 61v.-62. The arrangements do not mention Katherine by name, but "the prynces that by godes grace shall come out of Spayne" seems a clear reference to her.

[74] Other sources indicate that six scenes were performed, depicting the quest for and attainment of Honour, through Katherine's upcoming marriage to Arthur: Anglo, *Spectacle*, pp. 57-97.

In addition to providing suitably spectacular receptions for royal visits,[75] Londoners were also expected to make public displays marking other important events. When Henry VII's queen Elizabeth died in 1503, the guilds of the city were to make a significant display as part of her funeral. Similar to the arrangements for royal entries, different guilds were to provide different numbers of representatives, although in this case they were to be torch-bearing riders. As an example, the Goldsmiths, Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers and Tailors were all to provide twelve "Ryders" each while the humblest guilds, such as the Tallowchandlers and Armourers, were only to have two representatives. In total, 332 torches were to be carried by the representatives of the guilds, who were all to be dressed in black gowns and black tippets.[76] The mayor was to have two attendants, "clothyd in blake", and each alderman was to have one black-clad servant as well.[77] These are only part of the very detailed and extensive arrangements to be made for the queen's funeral. What this shows is that an assembly of representatives of London and its craft guilds was seen to be sufficiently dignified to be part of a solemn and important royal event. It also shows that even at times like this, public displays had such social power that hierarchies and power relationships needed to be properly represented.

On 21 September 1515, "messengers of thexchequir" conveyed a royal command[78] to the mayor. The mayor and "his brethern" were to "be at the Cathedrall Church of Seynt Paule this day at evensong to cause lawdes & thankes to be Gevyn to

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[75] The show of "civic subservience" would have burnished royal power at the same time as it performed the other functions outlined earlier. Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, p. 133.

[76] A tippet is "An ornamental piece of cloth, usu[ally] long and narrow, worn separately covering the shoulders or as part of a hood, the sleeves, etc.", from *MED* online at http://0-ets.umdl.umich.edu.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED45950

[77] Rep 1, ff. 122v-127v.

[78] The messengers were apparently sent by the Thomas Wolsey, the Chancellor and Archbishop of York, but the directions had originated with the King.

almyghty God by Syngyng of Te Deum and other Cerymonyes ... for that the Quenes grace beyng of late Conceyved with Childe ys nowe thanked be our Lord quykened". This news, they were reminded, should be "to the grete Joye & Comforte of all the Kynges treu & lovyng Subgettes".[79] The mayor and aldermen[80] duly attended the service in their civic finery. It is not surprising that Henry VIII would have wanted public celebrations of Katherine's pregnancy, but this example does demonstrate that public displays in London had considerable importance.

On 23 July 1518, a papal legate was welcomed to London not only by "the clergy of London with copes of gold, crosses and censers", but also at "At London Bridge an oration was made to him", after which he passed by the crafts of London making their appearance along Cheapside, and was greeted by the mayor and aldermen. The legate then attended a service at St. Paul's - the account does not relate whether London dignitaries were in attendance - before being conveyed to "his lodging at Bath's Place."[81] In July 1519, Henry VIII commanded a triumphal entry into London for "the Reciept of the Right honourable ambassadors of the Kynge of Romans"[82] to take place upon "Relyke Sonday"[83] in which the mayor and aldermen, in their scarlet cloaks, along with "all worshepfull Craftes in Order and in ther last & best livery", beginning at the west door of St. Paul's Cathedral "and so downe to Baynardes Castell uppon eversyd of the stretes Furnysshed to wayte & attend my lord Cardynalles comyng & other lordes

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[79] Letter Book M, f. 247.
[80] The term "brethren" when the mayor is concerned usually meant the aldermen, and the entry specifies that the mayor and his brethren wore scarlet robes for the service, which was the usual attire of the aldermen.
[81] Letters and Papers, v. 2. pp. 1336-7.
[82] Presumably Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, only a few weeks after his election to the throne.
[83] Relic Sunday is celebrated the third Sunday after Midsummer's Day, which in 1519 would have been 10 July. Calculated using ecclesiastical calendar online at http://www.smart.net/mmontes-cgi-bin/cal-form.cgi and Perpetual Julian Calendar online at http://www.tpub.com/content/armymedical/MD0357/MD03570093.htm.

with hym in to Poulys Church", following which they would hear a Te Deum "and other observances". In addition, there were to be torches and celebratory fires lit throughout the city to mark the arrival; each alderman was responsible for seeing that their ward was suitably decorated. Here the king was clearly using the display made by Londoners to serve his political ends by making an impressive showing. In this case the service of Londoners was even more literal; the aldermen were to "purvey [the ambassadors] housses in Cornehull to stond and be att their pleasures."[84]

Obviously the civic leaders of London were seen as a desirable addition to these ceremonies, the dignity and prestige of which would be enhanced by their presence.[85] It is of course very likely that the mayor and aldermen would have been only too happy to be a part of this event anyway, thereby showing themselves in a prestigious connection to royal power as well as making yet another public show of their piety.[86] As usual, there is no mention of these benefits in the record; the mayor and his brethren appear only as obedient subjects obeying a summons. While no doubt they did receive royal commands, it is also probably not accidental that they chose to not to portray themselves of thinking of the benefits they hoped to derive from the occasion.

In addition, the reference to the joyful reaction expected from Henry VIII's subjects can be read in a straightforward fashion – the king and archbishop expected that

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[84] Journals 12, ff. 9-9v. Some of the motivation here may have been to placate the new Emperor and the King of Castile in the aftermath of recent riots against foreigners, see *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. pp. 144-5.
[85] Not only would London's wealthy citizens provide a suitably prestigious audience for royal ceremonies, the city itself could enhance the effect of royal pageantry. For example, Henry VII's use of St. Paul's as the site where he presented his standards after his victory at Bosworth suggested that his victory had been divinely inspired: Angelo, *Spectacle*, p. 10
[86] Lancashire, *Civic Theatre*, pp. 63-5. It is also worth considering that putting on a good show for a royal entry might have helped persuade the monarch that the city's rights and privileges should be preserved or extended: L. Attreed, 'The Politics of Welcome: Ceremonies and Constitutional Development in Later Medieval Towns', in B. Hanawalt and K. Reyerson eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) pp. 208-10.

people would be happy to hear the news – but it is also possible to read it more in the way of a suggestion: if they were Henry's "treu & lovyng" subjects, they should provide an appropriately lavish response to their sovereign's good fortune. Henry may even have been attempting to drive public opinion by ordering celebrations that would create the impression that this was very good news. However, the command for the mayor and aldermen to be part of the celebrations does show that the public display of Londoners was important and prestigious to people from outside their community as well, and that these displays had the potential to impact people from outside the city as well as its denizens. A further example indicates how important this impact could be.

In January of 1508, Henry VII wrote to the mayor and aldermen regarding the betrothal of his daughter Mary to Charles of Burgundy (the future Charles V).[87] The letter emphasized the benefits of the alliance - the creation of "a grete ample and large Amite" between England and the Holy Roman Empire, contributing to the "suertie strength defense and comfort" of both – and praising the union of Mary to such "noble lynage and blods". Finally, it appealed to the wallets of London's leadership by pointing out that the arrangement would lead to "the free and sure entercourse of merchaundis" in Charles' holdings. This done, Henry ordered that "ye wol cause demonstracions and tokens of reioysing and comfort to be made in sundry places within our Citie". The King declared that he knew "right well" that Charles' subjects had already held such celebrations, and that London, along with other unnamed cities in England, must follow suit both as a question of honour and "so that thereby it may be evidently knowen what gladnesse and reioysing ys generally takyn and made by you and other our subiectes".

[87] Letter Book M, ff. 138-138v. Although the marriage never took place, the importance of rituals connected to it are not diminished by this fact.

What this shows is how important public displays could be, not only to the local community, but to international politics as well. At the time, this marriage alliance was considerably prestigious for Henry and England, and London's reaction was evidently important, both in terms of diplomacy with the Emperor and, apparently, attempting to shape the English reaction to the betrothal by having London lead the way with a celebratory response. Similarly, in March 1503 Henry VII requested public celebrations of a "leage" recently made between England and the Holy Roman Empire, which were to include bonfires, hogsheads of wine put on street corners (albeit with sergeants and Sheriff's yeomen to keep the peace) and lights hung from windows along Cornhill and Cheapside.[88] While a discussion of the importance of London to England's foreign policy and domestic policies is outside the scope of the current analysis, this episode clearly demonstrates how powerful public displays could be; they were not only effective forces within the community that created them, but could have significant effects outside that community as well.

As in other urban centres in England, and elsewhere, public ritual gatherings and displays were clearly an important part of life in medieval London, and these were powerful occasions at which reputations could be made or reinforced, and relationships of power challenged or reiterated. It is unfortunate that we rarely have specific details about the precise form these displays took, which would obviously allow for a more thorough analysis. However, even just with the evidence of the general shape of these occasions, who was meant to participate and under what terms, it is possible to get a sense not only of the importance of public ritual in late medieval London, but also how

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[88] Rep 1, f. 130. Out of respect for the recent death of the queen, there was not to be any "mynstralsi", however.

aware of that importance medieval Londoners were, and how concerned they were with how that power was used to shape their community

Of course one question that remains is to ask why these rituals appear in the records, especially in such detail. To some extent, there is on obvious element of practicality here: The accounts of how public displays should be performed, and who should participate, establish and maintain precedents for how things should be done, so that there would be guidelines to refer to in the future. Especially if we remember how important custom, and customary ways of doing things, were to medieval people, it makes sense that Londoners would have wanted to make sure that these socially powerful ritual displays were done in the correct, traditional way, and that the city's authorities in particular would have wanted to keep these occasions under control and "on message".

There are other factors to consider as well, however. The inclusion of detailed accounts of occasions when Londoners were asked (or required) to participate in the ceremonial entries of members of the royal family or other dignitaries also highlights the prestige of the city and its leaders. Having London be used as a stage for important political moments in England, and its leaders asked to participate and arrange the particulars, indicates that both are powerful and worthy of admiration. For this reason, it makes sense that these occasions, and the fact that the mayor and aldermen were asked to arrange them, would be a part of the records we are examining, so that future readers would be reminded of these facts.

Finally, if we return to the concept of the accounts of ritual displays in these records as guidelines for how they were meant to be done, I believe some aspects of the

displays may have operated as blueprints in another sense. The details of who should participate, and the levels of representation allocated to different groups, serve as expressions of London's social hierarchy, as noted earlier. However, this is more than a useful happenstance for the historian; such a rehearsal of relative levels of power in the city, in a matter-of-fact way that seemingly takes such relationships for granted, tends to reinforce the hierarchy in the minds of the reader. In the same way that I argue the creators of these records attempted to create a consensus of opinion by suggesting that one already existed, these descriptions of power relations in the city in fact propagate a specific hierarchy by suggesting that this hierarchy is not only pre-existing, but has always existed, and is prestigious and admirable. Such a textual act not only tends to reinforce the desired outcome - maintaining the hierarchy through positive association - but also tends to make dissent more difficult, by aligning it with break from customs that have worked in the future.

The power of ritual occasions in medieval urban communities is relatively well understood, as we have seen. In addition, though, it is evident that even the descriptions of these events in the records served functions as well, functions that would have been useful to the men who created the records and ran the city. This, as we have seen, is true of many of the strategies used by civic authorities; not only were the strategies themselves arguably successful, but their recording and recounting of the use of these strategies served their purpose of maintaining order in the community as well.

CHAPTER FOUR: 'SERIOUS' DISORDER

In the preceding chapters, the analysis has been focused on a variety of methods used by the authorities of medieval London to encourage conformity and fight dissent, in particular the use of various kinds of community pressure and public ritual displays. We have also noted that the records produced by the civic authorities were another of these tools, intended to shape the way people using the records saw the city and therefore guide their behaviour.

Thus far, most of the material which has been examined has pertained to setting up and establishing regulation of both economic and social activities that were expected to be an ordinary part of London society. Of course, any authority must also deal with more exceptional circumstances; in addition to dealing with shady merchants and personal rivalries, London's leaders also had to cope with acts that were actually criminal.

If the influence exerted on the city through recognisance bonds, guild regulations, and managed public displays was an arguably indirect method of control, certain types of misbehaviour apparently required that the mayor and aldermen take more direct action against particular offenders. Both the kinds of action that they took, and against whom they frequently chose to direct these measures, reveal further important details about their objectives for London's community. There is a massive body of scholarship dealing with medieval crime, crime in medieval cities, and crime in medieval England. In part this is no doubt because criminal behaviour is exciting, and in part because, as I argue here, it is sometimes easiest to understand how a system is intended to work by examining the ways in which it fails to work. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are a great

number of points of contention in the historiography of medieval crime, relating to the effectiveness of medieval justice, the targets of its prosecutions, and the reliability of its records.[1]

However, these debates are tangential to the present analysis, since the material that is our primary interest here is not drawn from criminal courts. It was not the regular business of the Court of Common Council or the Court of Aldermen to prosecute and punish felons or administer the King's Justice. However, as we shall see, these courts did take action against particular offenders, or particular types of offenders, many times during the period under examination. In some of these cases, we must again wonder what motivated the mayor and aldermen to intervene in a particular case, and to include it in the court records. If, as has been argued, the civic records of London are to be understood as conveying a message or agenda to the reader, then the inclusion of each case must be considered as a part of that message.

In some instances, this reason is not difficult to uncover. It was the responsibility of London's government, and any local authority, to keep the peace and maintain good order in their jurisdictions. Failure to do so was one of the reasons why the Crown might relieve a local authority of his position, so clearly the mayor and aldermen of London would have wanted their official records to portray them as vigilant and active in

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[1] A by no means exhaustive list of useful sources consulted in the preparation of this thesis pertaining to this includes: A. Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasant's Revolt*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Musson and Ormrod, *Evolution of English Justice; C. Carpenter, The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437-1509*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 53-60; E. Powell, 'Law and Justice', in R. Horrox ed., *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 29-41; P. C. Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) pp. 30-8, 47-9, 59-67; A.L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England, 1270-1461* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989) pp. 137-9, 143-4; J. Post, 'Faces of Crime in Later Medieval England', *History Today* 38 (1988), pp. 18-24; J. Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); T. A. Green, 'Societal Concepts of Criminal Liability for Homicide in Mediaeval England', *Speculum* 47 (1972), pp. 669-94.

detecting and eliminating sources of disorder in their city. One such category of offenders is that of "vagabonds" or "mighty beggars". Put simply, these were people who begged or sought other charity in the city, although – in the judgment of the authorities – they were able-bodied and capable of working for their living. As in many other contexts in medieval society, these individuals were very unwelcome and steps were taken to remove them from the community. Although charity to the deserving poor was seen as laudable and perhaps necessary for the salvation of the wealthy,[2] the idea of idle people living off the misguided generosity of others was a cause for concern.

Caroline Barron and Frank Rexroth argue that measures against "mighty beggars" appeared across Europe in the years following the Black Death; in an economy with a severe labour shortage, people who were idle despite being capable of working would have been a particular problem, especially if they compounded their lack of contribution to society by demanding charitable support.[3] Marjorie McIntosh also believes that there was an escalating concern with poverty and the poor across England, although she places its origins at about 1460.[4] Steven Rappaport argues that although the absolute number of vagrants in London probably was going up in the sixteenth century, this growth was relative to the growth of the city's population, and that the overall rate of vagrancy remained low.[5] London's leaders may have only been aware of the rising numbers, or

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[2] C. Frugoni, *Medieval City*, pp. 70-2.
[3] Barron, *London*, pp. 275-6; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power,* pp. 74, 85-6. Rexroth further contends that ideally, the recipients of charity should not only be needy, but also be ashamed of their need; p. 226.
[4] McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, p. 11. McIntosh also notes that vagabonds were often believed to be likely to be involved with other kinds of misbehaviour: 'Finding Language for Misconduct: Jurors in Fifteenth-Century Local Courts', in B. Hanawalt and D. Wallace eds., *Bodies and Disciplines: The Intersection of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 102-5.
[5] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 5-6.

they may simply have shared the philosophical concern about poverty, but in either case they obviously saw the unworthy poor as a problem which needed tackling.[6]

Actions against vagabonds appear relatively frequently in the records of civic authorities. In 1475, the mayor issued a proclamation "on the King's behalf" that "vagabonds and masterless people" should leave the city or face humiliation in the stocks.[7] On 11 April 1483, the Common Council took action against the "grete multitude of vagabundes idill persones and Comen beggers" in the city, people who were "of myght and power for to gete their levyng by the labour of their bodies or other lawfull Occupacion". These individuals were also accused of frequently breaking "the peas of our soveraign lord the king"; in other words they were not merely idle, but disorderly and dangerous. All such "myghty beggers", both men and women, were ordered to leave the city by the following night, or face an escalating scale of punishments: for their first offense, they would be "sett in the Stokkes" for three hours, for their second offense, six hours, and for a third offense they were to be imprisoned for six days and then expelled from the city.[8] While this resolution is unusually detailed and eloquent in its language, measures against the idle poor were not uncommon. In 1485, a somewhat similar order was given for all "vagabundes and Idill people which have no masters to Waite uppon nor noon other reasonable cause for their abidyng within this Citee as well Soldeours as othere" to leave the city within three hours of the proclamation being read, upon pain of unspecified imprisonment.[9] In July 1502, all aldermen were ordered to have their constables search their wards for anyone providing lodging to "myghty Beggars or Idle

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[6] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 3.
[7] *Letter Book L*, p. 136.
[8] Journals 9, f. 17v.
[9] Journals 9, ff. 84v-85.

persones"; anyone doing so was do desist or face "imprisonement".[10] Some of these examples appear to have been connected to wider events in the kingdom, and a desire to prevent disorder. 11 April 1483 was two days after the death of Edward IV; the death of the monarch would always have been a traumatic event, but in this instance there was also significant political uncertainty regarding the succession and who would effectively rule England. Edward IV's heir was only 12 years old, and although the king's brother Richard had been named Lord Protector, he was also quickly engaged in political manoeuvers to secure his own position; later that month he would have the brother of Edward's widowed queen arrested, along with Edward V's half-brother and Edward IV's former chamberlain, all for allegedly plotting against Richard and the new king. Although the controversies of Edward V's short reign were probably not anticipated, it would have been reasonable to expect and fear disorder following Edward IV's death, and for London's governors to take steps that would, as they saw it, remove disreputable and potentially dangerous persons from the city before they could cause trouble.[11]

Our example from 1485 also comes at a time of potential disorder in the city; although there is no specific date on the entry itself, it clearly comes at the very end of the reign of Richard III, as the next folio recounts Henry VII's victorious entry into the city and is marked "Incipiente Regne H 7^{mo}".[12] It seems likely, then, that this measure against vagabonds was also motivated by a concern for disorder in the city, especially since the latter part of the entry includes a curfew for all legitimate denizens of the city,

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[10] Rep 1 f. 86.
[11] For context on Wars of the Roses, the controversies of Edward IV's reign, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester's rise to taking the throne as Richard III, see Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, esp. pp. 206-10 and R. Horrox, *Richard III: A Study of Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1989), esp. pp. 26-7, 89-101, 114-21.
[12] Journals 9 f. 85v.

who were to be in their homes by 9 at night and not come out until 5 the next morning, as well as lengthy details regarding watches to be performed by civic authorities. In this case, the concern with potential trouble in the city seems clear, and the attempt to remove vagabonds part of an overall effort to keep order in London during a chaotic time.

It is of course interesting that in neither case did London's authorities mention this wider context as justification of or explanation for their actions. It is possible that they deliberately avoided engaging with the context surrounding these acts against vagabonds so that London's government could steer clear of the stormy political waters surrounding both Edward IV's death and the deposition of Richard III. In both cases, the records simply recount what was done, not why it was done, and therefore no question could possibly be raised about the propriety of that decision, nor would London's loyalties become an issue as matters played themselves out. However, it may well be that the mayor and aldermen felt no need to provide any reasoning for their actions, perhaps expecting that this would simply be understood by their readers.

Moreover, there are not always obvious connections to wider events behind these crackdowns on "mighty beggars". In July 1502, there was no obvious reason for London's leaders to fear disorder; Prince Arthur had died in April but it seems unlikely that the disruptions of that even would have continued three months later. These episodes indicate a number of things. London's poor were considered, among other things, as a source of potential disorder who were safer out of the way during troubled times. For historians, they provide further evidence that the records may not always tell the entire story, and that the evidence may have been tailored to suit the purposes of the people who created it. However, the sheer number of examples of action taken against

vagabonds in London also indicates that the undeserving poor were a persistent concern for the men who ruled the city, in whatever context.

On 21 March 1516, an order was given that was described as "the iijde Serche" for "vagabundes & myghty beggers".[13] In July, Robert Samon was banished as a vagabond, after having a yellow 'V' affixed to his clothing.[14] On 24 September 1517, the court ordered that all "myghty beggars & vagabundes" in London gaols should be brought to Leadenhall, where a yellow V would be affixed to their clothing, and they would then be driven through the streets "with basons ryngyng" and out of the city.[15] In January 1518, every Alderman was ordered to choose two or three of "the most discrete persones of every paryssh within his seyd Ward", determine who the truly "Impotent Poure" of the ward were, and compile a list of all "myghty vaguraunt & Strong beggers vagabundes & Suspecte persons" for the court so that "a farther direccon may be had in that behalf".[16] By 6 February, Stephen Hawkyns was being paid 6s. 8d. for every 100 tokens he made for distribution to the deserving poor, so that they would be easily identified. The tokens were distributed twelve days later, with 1,042 handed out throughout the city.[17] A resolution such as this one emphasizes that the mayor and aldermen wished to be fair; they would systematically determine who the deserving poor were, give them a way of proving that status on future occasions, and punish only the undeserving, idle poor, who are described as strong but also suspect persons; being

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[13] Rep 3 f. 11v.
[14] Rep 3 f. 93v.
[15] Rep 3 f. 164.
[16] Rep 3 f. 190
[17] Rep 3 ff. 192, 194. At least some of these initiatives were probably the result of royal orders; in 1519 a proclamation was made in response to an order from the King's Council calling for each alderman to identify the deserving poor in their ward so that tokens could be given to them, and the duty of monitoring the city's beggars and arranging for the expulsion of any without tokens was assigned to "Henry Barker carpenter" and two assistants. Interestingly, legitimate beggars were also expected to help identify the unworthy poor. Journals 11, ff. 337-339.

healthy and poor implies a moral failure. This, coupled with the 'mightiness' of the individuals, suggests that these people could be a threat, and further justifies the actions against them. These are not good-hearted people down on their luck, they are lazy, sinful, and probably dangerous burdens on the community.

The mayor and aldermen were evidently quite sincere in their desire to expel vagabonds from the city; this is evident not only from resolutions such as the ones above, but also from cases such as the following. In December 1518, the painter John Abbott replaced Henry Barker in his role "for thavoydyng of vagabundes & myghty beggers out of this Cite" because Barker "dyd not his diligence aboute the same". The position included unspecified wages and a set of livery.[18] By this time, if not earlier, civic authorities had established at least one paid position in the government whose role was apparently to seek out vagabonds and see that they were removed from the city. The impression here is that the resolutions against mighty beggars were not merely lip service paid to the issue, but instead represent a real determination to see vagabonds removed from London's streets.

Especially given the popularity of public acts of charity and piety noted earlier,[19] the attitude expressed by London's authorities towards beggars may seem slightly surprising. However, it is well known that medieval people of various types were greatly concerned about the presence of the undeserving poor in their community, and it is clear that it was these individuals who were the target of the examples above. The objection was to "mighty beggars"; people who were not impoverished through illness or misfortune, but were capable of supporting themselves and did not. Such people were

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[18] Rep. 3 f. 250v.
[19] See Chapter Three.

assumed not only to be taking advantage of community charity, but also to be morally deficient and to have the potential for leading others into sin.[20]

The action against vagabonds taken before a royal visit, mentioned in Chapter Three, may also reflect a concern with the appearance of London as a community to visitors. All these efforts stem from the same root cause; that poor people considered to be undeserving were undesirable characters who were not suitable for reformation via coercion or punishment, but simply needed to be removed from the community entirely. Vagabonds were not the only group targeted in this way.

Quite frequently, London's civic courts took action against prostitutes and bawds, a fairly generalized category that seems to have included pimps, procuresses, brothel-keepers, perhaps brothel clients, and people whose sexual morality was otherwise in question. The following cases are far from an exhaustive list, but provide a representative sample of the way prostitutes and their clients appeared in the records under study. In December 1483, four women were convicted as "Comon Strumpettes" and one as a "Comon bawde"; they were all to be humiliated on the pillory at Cornhill before being expelled from thie city.[21] In June 1490, John Spicer was sentenced to spend an hour on the pillory after being convicted as "a common bawde".[22] In November 1493, John Meriell alias John Norfolk was convicted by ward mote inquest[23] as a bawd who

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[20] McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 81-3, 91-3, 95; M. Rubin, 'The Poor', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 172-3, 174-5, 176-8.

[21] The women convicted as strumpets were Margaret Gilbert, Joan Philip, Alice Nicols and Joan Halyburton. Rose Borowe (also spelled as 'Burgh' in the same entry), a widow, was convicted as a bawde. On their way from prison to the pillory, and from the pillory to their expulsion from the city, all the women were to wear "ray hodes", carry white rods, and be accompanied by "mynstralsy". It seems likely that Borowe may have served as a "madam" for the other four, but this is not explicitly stated. Journals 9, f. 40.

[22] Journals 9, f. 230v.

[23] Meriell is described as being "laufully atteynted as well by xij mene after the lawes and Custumes of this Cite", Journals 10 f. 31v.

had arranged for a thirteen year-old girl to be "Ravisshed and devoured". Meriell was sentenced to three market days on the pillory and expulsion from the city.[24] In July 1496, five women condemned as "strumpettes and comen harlottes" were sentenced to be paraded through London wearing "ray hodes" and carrying white rods before being expelled from the city.[25] In October 1496, Peter Lacy and his wife Alice were also convicted as bawds, for arranging a liason for Margaret Worman in the house of a Lombard. They too were to be ritually humiliated and expelled from the city.[26] On 29 June 1510, Cutberd Bekworth, and Thomas Roo, having been indicted by the wardmote court in Portsoken for "kepyng of comon Bawdry", were ordered to be shaved and humiliated on the pillory at Cornhill.[27] Later, in July, Edward Penson and Robert Milles were indicted as "comon bawdes" and for "other misrule by them comytted". On the next market Friday, they were to have their hair clipped up above their ears, and then to be taken "with basons and pannes afore theym" to the pillory at Cornhill, where their offence would be read out and they would endure the crowd's mockery for half an hour.[28]

Attempting to return from banishment would have been extremely risky, since if such a person were recognized, they would face even harsher punishment. In October

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[24] Journals 10, f. 31v. If Meriell returned to the city he was to be imprisoned for a year and a day.
[25] The women in question were Agnes Hall, Agnes Brown, Agnes Edward, Margaret Haidon and Alice Poyman. The route they were to follow was from (presumably Newgate) "prison to Algate and from Algate to the pillory in Cornhill ... and from thens to be conveyd thrugh Chepe to Newgate and ther to be voyded oute of this Citee". As usual, this procession was to be accompanied by "mynstralsy". Journals 10, f. 48v.
[26] Margaret Worman is described as a "senglewoman", which often seems to have been code for a prostitute in late medieval England: Karras, *Common Women*, p. 55. It is not specified that Worman's rendezvous was with the unnamed Lombard, although this seems most likely. No punishment for Worman herself is recorded. The details of the Lacys' punishment were to stand on the pillory for the next four market days before being exiled, their processions again to be accompanied by "mynstralsy". If Peter or Alice Lacy returned from exile, they were to be imprisoned for a year and a day. Journals 10, f. 78v.
[27] Journals 11, f. 112.
[28] Letter Book M, f. 176.

1490, Cristyn Stone was arrested by the authorities after having being convicted as a "comon strumpet" in 1472.[29] Although she had been publicly shamed and then expelled from the city, she had at some point returned, and adopted the alias of Cristyn Houghton. It seems probable that Stone/Houghton must have been turned in by someone, as it seems unlikely that civic officials would remember a particular convicted prostitute from an eighteen year-old case. In any event, she was sentenced to another hour on the pillory, and then to spend a year and a day in prison, before presumably being ejected from the city once again.[30]

Medieval prostitution, and prostitution in London specifically, has also been the subject of a great deal of study which illuminates much of the content of these cases. Ruth Karras argues that prostitutes, while probably regarded as something of a necessary evil, were also seen as a source of potentially infectious immorality that was most dangerous because it could spread to otherwise respectable members of society.[31] It was possible for the daughters of respectable families to be drawn into immorality if prostitutes were allowed to appear to be successful, if their low status was not properly emphasized, and also of course by coercion or economic need.[32] This would have been

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[29] The entry specifies that the conviction was during the mayoralty of William Hampton, who was mayor in 1472. The case itself appears in Journals 8, ff. 49v-50, in which Stone is banished from the city, and sentenced to three market days on the pillory and imprisonment of a year and a day should she return. Significantly, anyone who turns her in is promised "a nobel for his labour." A noble was a gold coin worth 6s 8d, so this was a fairly substantial incentive. From *MED* accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED29609

[30] Journals 9, ff. 264-264v. Stone/Houghton's case also appears in *Letter Book L.*

[31] Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 5-6, 57-9, 62, 137.

[32] Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes', pp. 176-7.

the primary threat of prostitution perceived by London's leaders, and preventing it their primary aim.[33]

Prosecution of prostitutes was therefore not really intended at wiping out the practice, but in making it clear that prostitutes, and any woman who chose (or was obliged) to behave as they did was outside of respectable society, and should be treated accordingly. In other words, the objective of prosecutions like the ones cited above was not to wipe out prostitution in London, a goal which would have been believed impossible and probably not desirable, but to reduce the potential danger from prostitutes by keeping them strictly outside of respectable society and away from respectable women, as well as underlining the morality of the men in authority. It is also possible that action against prostitution was part of a wider attempt by the powerful men of London's society to promote proper sexual behaviour - focused on marriage - among London's youth.[34]

This is in line with Frank Rexroth's analysis of the objectives of London's leadership generally. Rexroth contends that the primary target of the public ceremonies of expulsion that bawds and prostitutes were subjected to was not the wrongdoers themselves, but the audience who witnessed their humiliation.[35] Such rituals served to

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[33] Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 22, 54-55, 57-62, 137; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 273-5. McIntosh sees this as a concern which did not become prevalent among community leaders in smaller market centres in England until the 1460s, and grew thereafter: *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 70-4.

[34] S. McSheffrey, 'Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation', in J. Murray ed. *Conflicted Ideologies and Multiple Masculinities* (New York & London: Garland, 1998), p 252; Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 6, 11-20, 41, 48-50.

[35] Karras argues that shame based punishments such as the striped hoods and public processions were aimed at "part time or casual prostitutes" rather than careerists, "for whom shame might not be a consideration". In other words, they were a firm reminder for women who might (for a variety of reasons) be close to crossing the line of respectability themselves: Karras, *Common Women*, p. 15. McIntosh argues for an increasing shift towards humiliation-based punishments in the late fifteenth century: *Controlling Misbehavior*, p. 39; Shannon McSheffrey also emphasizes the shaming aspect of being presented before a ward mote inquest, and the resulting damage to reputation: 'Men and Masculinity', pp. 250-3.

remind people that there was a strong line between proper and improper modes of living, that it was possible to slip out of respectable society if one was not vigilant, and that there were harsh consequences for allowing oneself to slide into immorality. Furthermore, the audience would also have been reminded that it was London's elite citizens who were granted the privilege of deciding exactly where that line lay.[36]

Thus far, there is little for the current study to do along these lines other than to say that the evidence analysed here conforms quite well with the conclusions outlined above. However, there is one aspect of the treatment of prostitution in these records which is more specific to our analysis, and worth considering in greater detail. We are still left with the task of explaining why the prosecutions of particular women for their sexual behaviour appear in these records; given the relatively low number of these cases, and their sporadic appearance, it is surely inconceivable that these are all, or even most, of the women that the mayor and aldermen could have identified as prostitutes or morally "loose". How, then, were these cases selected as worthy of being recorded?

If we use Karras' understanding of legislation against what she terms as whores, specifically that such laws were not meant to eradicate prostitution in English cities, but instead to contain a threat to the social order by keeping whores "in their place", one possible, although tenuous, explanation becomes possible. I have argued elsewhere that individuals presented for other kinds of behaviour, especially those placed under recognisance bonds, appeared before the courts, and therefore in the records, because

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[36] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 51, 217-18, 263, 291, 304-8, 312. Tucker argues that public humiliation may have been a more effective deterrent to misbehaviour than fines because of the permanent damage to reputation: *Law Courts*, pp. 38-9.

previous attempts at mitigating their behaviour through familial, communal, or informal pressure had failed.[37]

It is possible, and perhaps probable, that the women condemned for their sexual behaviour in these records were considered by the authorities, or at least someone in authority, to have been particularly dangerous to the social order, perhaps because of where or how they plied their trade, or who they were approached or were approached by.[38] Perhaps their behaviour had been too blatant, too obvious to be ignored or tolerated.[39] Perhaps they had previously been warned off of particular behaviours by authorities, refused to toe the line, and had therefore come to be regarded as obstinate problem cases against whom harsh measures were necessary and justified.

This is an attractive explanation as it deals with both how particular women became targets and the tendency for these cases to appear in clusters - the authorities took action against a number of women regarded as threats. However, there is one significant problem: none of the cases in the Letter Books or the records of the Court of Aldermen make any mention of a string of previous offenses, attempts at reform - or at least control - obstinate refusal to behave, and hence a justification for more the stringent penalties of public humiliation and expulsions from the city. This is slightly odd, as we might expect the mayor and aldermen to want to clearly illustrate how justified their

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[37] McIntosh argues that such unofficial methods of control would usually have been sufficient: *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 24-5.

[38] Karras argues that the targets of such prosecution were women who had somehow "bothered their neighbours" or upset the community around them. While this interpretation certainly seems likely, it seems equally likely that there would have been other solutions attempted before the courts became involved. Karras, *Common Women*, 25-6.

[39] McSheffrey, 'Men and Masculinity', p.258.

actions were by highlighting the obstinate and irredeemable character of the women being prosecuted.

However, I believe that they may have had other priorities. If, as I argue throughout this study, these records must be thought of as having an agenda, and being crafted to portray London according to the goals and values of the city's merchant oligarchs, it becomes possible to conclude that emphasizing the past failure of attempts at controlling these women would in fact have been extremely counterproductive. Such a case history would only show the ineffectiveness of the previous actions of various authority figures and suggest that they were incapable of controlling these sexually immoral women. Since I contend that one of the things the language and composition of the court records was supposed to do was show the *effectiveness* of the oversight and control provided by the mayor and aldermen, and leave the impression of a community in good order and harmony, this would have been the last thing they wanted to do.

It is also possible that these apparent surges in interest reflect the priorities of particular aldermen or mayors, individuals who exercised the opportunity to take action against prostitutes (or their customers) when they were in a position to do so, or at least see that such actions became part of the records.[40] This, of course, raises the question as to why such moral crusaders would not have claimed credit for their actions, especially if they believed previous administrations had been unduly lax in this regard. Once again, however, we must keep in mind that our sources are a carefully managed source. The

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[40] McSheffrey, *Civic Culture*, p. 179. Of course it is entirely possible that the actual number of prostitutes and their customer being prosecuted was remaining more or less the same, and that it is their inclusion in the records that was changing. However, the decision to have such prosecutions recorded could have been part of a particular moral agenda in the same way as an actual crackdown could.

interests of the creators of these records would not have been served by highlighting differences in the moral agendas, efficiency, or effectiveness of various mayors and aldermen. Instead, they would have wanted to portray the civic elite as a whole as morally upright and effective rulers of the city, united and unanimous in their purpose. Indeed, the impression given by both the Journals and Repertory books is of one, long, unbroken administration - the various mayoralties are highlighted only in marginalia, and changes in the roster of aldermen can only be deduced from new names that appear among the list of men present at each court session, or from names that disappear. Providing an explanation for a set of actions against prostitutes and bawds might have done no more than create the undesirable impression that such an explanation was necessary.

Given that "loose women" were universally condemned by medieval thinkers, civic leaders hardly needed any extra justification for their actions, and could instead have once again created a history of their actions that cast them in a very good light: problem elements of the community identified, suitably dealt with, an example for others provided, and the dangerous figures expelled, restoring order once again. The difficulty here is that, once again, this is an argument that cannot really be confirmed, because it depends on the absence of evidence and the fact that some things are not mentioned in the records.

This interpretation is necessarily somewhat conjectural, then, but it does cover the available facts in a persuasive way. It is surely impossible to believe that the people prosecuted for sexual misbehaviour in these records were all those whom the mayor and

aldermen could identify as acting in this way. From available evidence, most people guilty of sexual misconduct were dealt with either in wardmotes or in the ecclesiastical court system. The higher courts of Common Council and Court of Aldermen were not the proper venue for such prosecutions at all. Instead, it makes sense that these were individuals whose behaviour stood out in some way, either because of what they did or that they had resisted past attempts at controlling it. It also makes sense that having decided to take action in these cases, London's civic authorities also decided to create a record of their action that once again left the impression of leaders who were in unchallenged control of the situation.

If prostitution was believed to be a threat to the social fabric and moral well being of London and its population, necessitating a particular kind of action on the part of authorities, another specific type of misconduct required its own vigorous countermeasures. Numerous times in the records of London's civic authorities, we find action being taken against perjurers whose false testimony threatened the legitimacy of legal proceedings.[41] While in many ways, courts in medieval England do not conform to modern expectations, recognizing and reacting to the threat of deliberately false testimony is easily understandable. In some ways, it was understood that participants in a court case would bring predispositions to the proceedings; for example, and somewhat contrary to modern expectations, jurors in medieval court proceedings were not meant to

[41] Tucker argues that although London courts had a reputation for being biased against non-Londoners, perjury was "not a large scale problem": P. Tucker, 'London Courts of Law in the Fifteenth Century: The Litigant's Perspective', in C.Brooks and M. Lobban eds., *Communities and Courts in Britain 1150-1900*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1997), pp. 38-9. For a dissenting view, see Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order*, pp. 13-18. Not the least threat, of course, was the risk of being falsely imprisoned, as in the case of the physician James Semel, who appealed to the king that he had been jailed on the strength of false information given by John Bernuel, "advocate of London": Letters and Papers, v. 2. p. 1133. Testimonials were later sent on Semel's behalf by Margaret of Savoy, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the King of Castile: *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. p. 21.

have no knowledge or preconceptions about cases they were involved with; instead, by all appearances jurors were selected precisely because they knew the context of a case, knew the people involved, and could be expected to determine the truth of what had happened. However, it was expected that witnesses would tell the truth as they knew it, and to deliberately distort the truth for one's own ends could not be tolerated. We have already seen, in the discussion of recognisance bonds and elsewhere, the importance of individual opinions in London's courts, and of course the veracity of witness testimony was as crucial to the credibility of medieval courts as it is to modern ones. London's authorities were, unsurprisingly, also well aware of this danger and took frequent action against perjurers.[42]

In July 1498, the Court of Aldermen took action against four men accused of committing perjury both in London and "other places of this Realme". Gabriell Reve, a fuller, John Porter, a brewer, Robert Serle, a tailor, and Thomas Fissher, another brewer,[43] were all declared guilty of "the Greate infamy of detestable and haynous periurie". However, the consequences were relatively light; all four were barred from serving on "any enquest or Iurie withyn this cite" and from appearing in court cases unless they were the plaintiff, the defendant, or specifically summoned by the mayor.[44] While it is hardly surprising to find men with a reputation for lying under oath barred from serving as witnesses, it is slightly surprising that no other punishment was

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[42] It is also worth considering that London's courts had competition from the courts at Westminster and the royal court system, so it is possible that maintaining the belief that London's courts were fair and reliable factors into the concern with perjury also: Tucker, 'London Courts', pp. 27-8, 37.

[43] In the MS, two virtually identical resolutions regarding these four men appear consecutively. Aside from minor differences in phrasing, the main difference is in the first version, no trade is given for John Porter and Thomas Fissher is listed as a grocer. Given that there are many more corrections to the phrasing of the first iteration, it appears that the second version represents a final draft of the resolution. For Fissher to have been a grocer, a high-status trade, would make him a poor fit with the other three men.

[44] Rep. 1 ff 37-37v.

contemplated against these individuals who had behaved so detestably. One possibility is that, as they had apparently served on juries in London in the past, they were of sufficient social standing to make expelling them from the community entirely undesirable or at least problematic. The hope may have been that these relatively well-to-do citizens would behave better in future. It is also possible that the mayor and aldermen were unable or unwilling to level firmer sanctions in a case involving offenses apparently committed outside of their jurisdiction, and were therefore more cautious in dealing with this case. Similarly moderate sanctions were used against six men found guilty of "detestable periury that renneth upon them thurhoute this Citee" in 1505; once again they were barred from being "putte or somoned in an Iuries or Enquest" held in the City.[45]

Further examples demonstrate, however, that perjurers often faced more serious consequences for their dishonesty. In early June 1509, the shearer Robert Jakes and the fishmonger Henry Stockton were disenfranchised for their "detestable periury".[46] An account that appears to deal with the same case appears in the Letter Books, and adds some familiar names: John Derby (alias Wright), Richard Smyth, and William Sympson, along with a new addition, a gilder named Thomas Yong.[47] Although the records of the Court of Aldermen do not contain many further details of the case, the account in the Letter Books specifies that Yong, Jakes, Wright, Derby, Smyth, and Sympson "have taken money for to conceyve felonyes and other enormyties" which led to the "enditing

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[45] Rep 1 f. 171v. The men were: Richard Smyth, a carpenter, John Wright, alias Derby, a bowyer, William Sympson, a fuller, Thomas Chyrcheley, a shearer, John Brampton, a draper, and George Gay, no trade given.

[46] Rep 2. ff. 69v. Thomas Chyrcheley was excused for his own perjury by presenting "the Kynges letters of pardon", presumably a royal pardon for his offense.

[47] Letter Book M, f. 159. The case in the Repertory Books is dated 8 June, the case in the Letter Book is dated 5 June.

of sume of the late maires Shireffs and aldermen of the same Citie of treason felonyes and misprisons".

The Letter Book also contains further details of their punishment; on the next market day the six men were to be taken, seated backwards on horses, to the pillory on Cornhill and stand while their offense was proclaimed. John Wright, Richard Smyth, and William Sympson were declared to have offended "more haynously" and for this and "many mo dyvers causes" they were actually to be placed in the stocks at Cornhill.[48] From there, the six were to be taken to Fleet Street "by the most high ways" for their offense to be proclaimed again, and after this they were to be expelled from the city.

Since Wright, Smyth and Sympson were repeat offenders, it is probably not surprising that they received harsher treatment than for their first perjury conviction. However, their punishment was only slightly more severe than that given to Yong, Stokton, and Jakes, who were likewise expelled from the city, instead of merely being barred from serving on juries or appearing in court as Wright, Smyth, and Sympson had been in 1505. It seems likely that part of the reason for this is that they had attempted to frame members of the civic government for serious crimes; this perjury was of a more serious nature than that "betwen parties and parties" that seems to have been what the 1505 case involved.[49] An attack on the mayor and his government would always have been harshly punished, and in all probability perjury in criminal matters would have been regarded as more serious than in suits between individuals.

It is also likely that some of the reason for the harsher measures in 1509 can be traced to the aftermath of a well-known case of perjury involving Edmund Dudley and

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[48] Letter Book M, ff. 159-159v.
[49] Letter Book M, f. 159v. This kind of perjury is listed among the previous offenses of Wright, Smyth, and Sympson, a likely reference to the earlier case.

Sir Richard Empson, who were both found guilty of treason and executed earlier that year, ostensibly for conspiring against Henry VIII by planning to control his monarchy or overthrow him by force. These charges appear to have been entirely manufactured and based on false testimony, and that this was done so that Dudley and Empson could be prosecuted for violations of Magna Carta that had benefitted Henry VII. Although the punishment of these "unscrupulous lawyer-politicians" may have been welcomed, there is also evidence that judges and other legal officers had misgivings about prosecution under such false pretenses, and were thereafter careful to ensure that charges and testimony in their courts were valid and reliable.[50]

Another perjury case that may be connected to this one appears in the Repertory books on 14 June 1509. George Jakson, a plumber, and Christofer Rothery,[51] a fuller, were disenfranchised "for their greate periurye and inordinate mysusyn of theym self a gaynst the kynges subiectes".[52] In November, Jakson was ordered to "avoyde out of the house and warde where he duelleth" within fourteen days, or face imprisonment.[53] The reason why this last step was taken is not provided, however, so it may have been motivated by another, different offense, or by Jakson's bad character generally, rather than his perjury specifically. In any case, the punishment of Jakson and Rothery was harsher than that given to Wright, Smyth, and Stokton for their offenses, although the cases may actually be connected. In February 1511, George Jakson is named as being one of an otherwise anonymous group of jurors who "in the last Kinges dayes indyted the

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[50] Baker, *History of Laws*, pp. 88, 582-4.
[51] This may well be the same Christopher Rothery who was summoned before a consistory court to answer accusations that he had been dishonest in marriage arrangements made in 1487: http://digitalhistory.concordia.ca/consistory/obj.php?p=518.
[52] Rep 2. f. 71.
[53] Rep 2, f. 74v.

maire and certeyn Aldermen of Felonys and treason". Although this is several years removed from the 1509 case, the detail that the perjury was an attempt to frame members of the civic government for treason makes it likely that the case is the same.[54] Assuming this is the same case, the punishment of Jakson and Rothery fits the pattern used for the other offenders.

One final case of perjury appears in July 1525, when George Thomson, Peter Dayesman, John Clerk and William Sergeant were stripped of the franchise and their shops were boarded up, after which they were expelled from the city.[55] The "heynous dedes" these men apparently committed were to cause Rauf Egerton, a haberdasher, and his wife Margaret, to be falsely indicted for "murder and Felony" before the court of King's Bench, "before the Kinges Counsaill" and in the Guildhall through their "false and dampnable surmyse and Imagynacon". This act was described as being not only a miscarriage of justice, but also as damaging to the City's liberties, presumably because at least some of the court cases had been pursued in a "Foreyn Shire", while Egerton and his wife were citizens of London. The Common Council apparently agreed that the "heignous and dampnable conspirators" had committed a grave offense and ordered their immediate expulsion from the city.[56]

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[54] Rep 2 f. 84. Unfortunately the other names of the jurors are not specified so the connection cannot be confirmed. Rothery is not named as being involved, but as he was indicted for perjury in the same resolution as Jakson, it seems likely that he was another of the jurors in question. The resolution further orders that any other jurors who participated in the perjury should also be disenfranchised.

[55] George Thomson and William Sergeant were shearers, Peter Dayesman was a barber, and John Clerk a spurrier, making them citizens, although they were described of being "of symple reputacions" and are thus unlikely to have been very high status.

[56] Journals 12, ff. 298v., 302v.

As we have seen, the punishment for sexual misconduct, perceived idleness, and perjury were often quite severe, and also often theoretically permanent in nature.[57] In the records examined for this analysis, we find no examples of bawds, vagabonds, or prostitutes being exhorted to reform themselves and reclaim respectable status. In large part, as argued earlier, this may be because the cases in these records represented the end point of a process under which various types of pressure had already been brought to bear against these individuals, resulting in a final punishment being meted out. We have also considered the reason why this process might have been left out of the records instead of being included: to retain a history of failed attempts at control would have undermined the message that London's authorities wished their archives to convey.

However, many other offenders were offered the opportunity to improve their behaviour and thereby become acceptable members of the community once again. In some instances, the payment of a fine or some public penance was required to atone for an offense; such methods were explored in Chapters Two and Four. This idea of penance and redemption is in keeping with Christian ideas of sin and forgiveness, and reinforced the idea of authority figures as merciful in the exercise of their power. It is also true that a public submission could be more useful to those in authority than a simple punishment would have been.[58]

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[57] Exile from the city in particular seems to have been a punishment that some people simply risked defying, as in the case of Christian Stone/Houghton noted above, or gained tacit approval from the authorities for their return. Henry Stockton, also mentioned above, came from a well-connected family and from the composition of his will, he was living at his family home at the time of his death: PCC Prob 11/16. Banishment from the city, of course, also left residence in the various peculiar jurisdictions mentioned in the Introduction a possibility, and the availability of royal pardons meant that many punishments or court sentences were frequently lifted. K. J. Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), pp. 3, 17-18, 92-108.

[58] Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 17-18, 63, 91-3, 136-7. 151-3.

These mechanisms are quite familiar, serving both as a tangible punishment for an offense and potentially as a deterrent at the same time. In addition, many offenders were instead required to make a public act of submission to one or more authority figures in order to reclaim respectability. Sometimes submission rituals resulted in greatly reduced punishment of an offense, while at other times the act of submission was the only consequence inflicted upon an offender. Whether standing alone or used in combination with other methods, public acts of submission to authority were clearly an important part of the process of encouraging conformity in medieval London. Some of these cases were referred to in Chapter Two, in the context of recognisance bonds. However, it is useful to consider the process of submission itself in some detail.

On 23 October 1516, the shearer Richard Hampton confessed to speaking "diverse Sedicous Sclaunderous & obprobrious Wordes of master Milburn aldreman", and the court of Aldermen sentenced him to forty days in Newgate and to make a procession, "barehed barelegged & bare feet", holding a taper and with a sign affixed to him declaring his offense, through many busy parts of the city.[59] However, after Hampton "humbly upon his knees Submytted hym to this Court & also to master Milburn", he was spared the punishment, although he was required to promise to behave respectfully in future, and entered into a recognisance bond of ten pounds to that effect. Interestingly, Hampton's submission is described as "Requiryng the seyd Court to instance the seyd master Milburn to pardon & forgeve hym".[60] This suggests that the court was not allowed to refuse to forgive an offender who was willingly to proclaim

[59] The candle was to weigh one pound and to be paid for by Hampton. The route taken was to go from Newgate "thrugh oute all Chepe & to Seynte Anthonyes the Well with ij bokettes to Ledenhalll & so doun Cornhill & thrugh Seynte Laurens Lane to the Chapell of the Guyldhall".
[60] Rep 3 f. 112.

publicly his fault and remorse, and it is tempting to draw a parallel between this and the requirement that priests grant forgiveness to all genuinely penitent sinners. These examples demonstrate that ritualized submission was a relatively common part of proceedings against offenders of various types in medieval London. Although the process was not uniform, the public nature of the act, and the necessity for some form of humble, submissive posture or action, are common features.

A case from late 1518 provides a detailed account of such public submissions. The first mention of it is on 8 December, with the commission of a fletcher named Richard Holmes to Newgate gaol "there to remayn tyll this Court be otherwyse advised". Holmes was to be given back "his Chales of Gold with the Paten First & the Ryng with the Dyamond" that he had previously surrendered to the court, which had presumably guaranteed that he would appear when summoned.[61] The following day, perhaps unsurprisingly, Holmes was back in court, and "humbly submytted hym selff uppon his knees & fully promysed to abyde & stand to such ordre & direccon as this Court shall take of & in that behalf". Holmes was immediately bound in a recognisance of £100 to that effect.[62] It is interesting that the valuables Holmes had surrendered as surety were apparently sufficient to make him turn up in court, but imprisonment was required to get him to accept the court's judgement. It is also significant that his submission was not immediately taken at face value, but was reinforced by a bond that would have brought significant consequences if Holmes broke his word.

On 18 December, the mayor and aldermen's decision in the case was recorded. At nine o'clock on the following Friday, Holmes was to appear in the Fletchers' Hall,

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[61] Rep 3, f. 251.
[62] Rep 3, f. 252.

where two aldermen, the Fletchers' wardens, and their assistants would be waiting.[63] Holmes was to "stand before theym barehed & in good lowly maner", and to say:

> I knowlegge here to you masters that I diverse & many tymes obstinately & inobediently used & also disordred me otherwyse then became me agenst you my masters the Wardens of this Felyship & also ageynst the good Rules Statutes &s Ordynaunces as well of this Cite as of this Felyship contrary to the good & due ordre of Obedience, Of all which premissez I am very sory & hertely besech you to pardon & forgeve me all my seyd mysdemeanours & disobediences. And here faythfully & unfaynedly I promytte you that Fromhensforth I shalbe of a good Conformyte to you nowe my Wardens beyng & also to theym that hereafter shalbe as shalbecume a good Citezen to be accordyng to thordre & direccon taken by my lord mayre & my masters his brethern in this behalf.[64]

This lengthy and intricate statement is not just a simple admission of guilt from Holmes; obviously more was required. He had to admit that he had not only behaved improperly towards his wardens, but also that such behaviour meant that he had been a bad member of London's community at large. His apology and request for forgiveness therefore encompasses both the authority of the wardens and the authority of the mayor and aldermen. The humble manner in which he was to deliver this request, even to the point of specifying that he be bareheaded, removed any possibility of further defiance and would have been as much a part of restoring proper order and deference to authority as the speech itself. This was to be a complete, unconditional surrender from Holmes, to which the authorities he had offended against would then magnanimously respond.

After Holmes' speech, his wardens were to stand – being seated while he delivered his address would have further reinforced their position of power – and take him "by thand & lovyngly & Charytably ... remitt & forgeve the seyd Richard all his

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[63] It is eventually revealed that fourteen or fifteen members of the Fletchers' company were present, in addition to the wardens: Rep 3. f. 256.
[64] Rep 3. ff. 255-255v.

seyd mysdemeanours & disobediences & so sette hym there in his place accustumed".[65] We could scarcely hope for a clearer illustration of what this process was meant to do: the intention was not to punish Holmes or expel him from the community. It was to have him publicly acknowledge that he had been wrong, acknowledge the elevated position and power of key authority figures, and then be restored to his proper place in the hierarchy of deference of medieval London.

Finally, Holmes was to pay the costs incurred by his wardens in pursuing their case against him, placed at forty shillings. Amusingly, Holmes apparently failed to appear at the designated hour, which could only have been a significant embarrassment for the assembled authority figures. Holmes was sent for and required to explain himself, and he swore on the gospels that he had believed that he was supposed to appear on Tuesday, not Friday. This was accepted, and he duly appeared and made the submission required.[66] It is interesting to wonder whether this was truly a mistake on Holmes's part, or if it was one last act of defiance, but by accepting his story, the mayor, aldermen and wardens ensured that they would get what they wanted, which was the ritualized act of public submission from this offender.

This case appears to be the end of a long dispute between Holmes and the Fletchers' wardens, involving an initial "bill of Compleynt" against Holmes, an answering deposition from him, a "Replicacon" from the Fletchers, and a "Reioyndare" from Holmes. The wardens' case was apparently supported by "good & sufficient" witness testimony and the decision of the court reached through "Rype & deligent deliberacon". One of the intentions here is clearly to emphasize that the ruling against

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[65] Rep 3. f. 255v.
[66] Rep 3, f. 256.

Holmes was arrived at after a lengthy and fair process. Since Holmes is not mentioned as producing any witnesses on his behalf, and is said to have proved "no thing ... on his behalf", the impression that the case involved a lone man against not only his wardens, but many of his peers, is skillfully created.[67] In other words, the reader is left with no reason to doubt that the judgment against Holmes was correct and that his submission in the Fletchers' hall was appropriate. The elevation of what seems to be an internal guild matter to the city level may appear to be contrary to the priority most guilds placed on keeping disputes 'in house'. However, in this case it was probably useful to the Fletchers' wardens to use the civic records, prestigious as they were, and with their reasonably wide audience, as the place where Holmes' submission, and therefore the reinforcement of their authority, would be recorded.

Similarly, on 8 February 1519, the Court of Aldermen dealt with a case involving the price of wood for sale in the city. On 24 January, the mayor had apparently been inspecting the "Byllettes & Fagottes" for sale at "the wode wharffes" and discovered that John Scotte was selling his billets[68] for six shillings, to which the mayor objected, saying "that he [Scotte] had no suche pryce of hym".[69] Scotte replied that the mayor "ought not nor shuld sette eny price here", to which the mayor retorted that "he wold set the pricy therof er he went thens" and ordered Scotte to sell "xvj byllettes for a peny", adding that this would be for the benefit of "the pour people then being present". Perhaps unwisely, Scotte continued his defiance, suggesting that "the mayor shuld sette no price of his

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[67] Rep 3. f. 255.
[68] A billet was "a piece of wood cut and split for fuel", from *MED* online at: http://0-quod.lib.umich.edu.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED4635, in this case the price probably indicates a set amount of firewood rather than a single piece.
[69] In other words, the price Scotte was charging for his merchandise was not one that the mayor had approved.

wode and bad hym go home & sette a price of his Furres" and objected that he "was no true Iuge & that he came to Robbe him."

One of the sheriffs was present and urged Scotte to "be ordered & Ruled" by the mayor, to which Scotte responded that the sheriff should "go home & sell his wyne & seyd that he sold for ij d that cost him but ob." At this point, the mayor ordered Scotte's arrest, perhaps unsurprisingly given his defiance of the price limits set for his trade, the mayor's authority, and his suggestion that both the mayor and Sheriff were dishonest businessmen themselves.

Scotte went to gaol in a defiant mood, promising "that though he went to warde he shuld cume out again". However, by the time he appeared in court, Scotte "humbly knelyng upon his knees & sore wepyng" confessed the truth of the accusations against him and "asked my lord mayor & master Spence [the sheriff] hertely forgevnes & promysed never more to comytte any suche lyke offence."[70] As a result, he was released without a fine or further punishment, although he was bound in a recognisance of twenty pounds to help guarantee his future behaviour. In this case, many details of Scotte's offense were provided, presumably to make it clear that his arrest and imprisonment were entirely justified, given his defiant behaviour and (presumably) slanderous comments about the mayor and sheriff's business practices. This impression is strengthened in the mind of the reader by Scotte's eventual, tearful submission to proper authority.

The general pattern of refusal to behave, punishment, submission, and forgiveness is fairly straightforward in terms of interpretation. The offender is asked to change his behaviour, refuses, and is therefore punished, often with imprisonment. Some

[70] His change of mind may have been caused by the conditions he found in prison. Medieval prisons were well known for the danger they posed to the health of inmates: Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 28-9.

time elapses, during which the offender reconsiders his position, either out of genuine regret or the recognition of a no-win situation and the desire to regain his freedom. A ritualized submission to authority is required both so that the previous behaviour is formally, publicly acknowledged as wrong, and so that proper relationships of power and deference are seen to be restored. This pattern of condemnation and submission was a general pattern of justice during the late medieval and early modern periods in England; authorities routinely pardoned offenders who humbly repented their past behaviour, and harsh punishments were generally reserved for "those who had deliberately adopted misbehaviour as a way of life". These pardons or remissions of punishment were believed to not only form bonds of gratitude, but also to reinforce the prestige of the pardoning authority. In some ways, a public submission could be more valuable to those in authority than actually administering the punishment.[71]

However, when considering the way such acts are described in our sources, there are further nuances of interpretation possible, particularly in cases such as this one. In December 1507, the poulterer Thomas Goldysbrough was condemned to Newgate gaol for his seditious words before the Court of Aldermen, in which he vehemently objected to the price controls in his trade; Goldysbrough declared that "if sum of the Aldermen myght have a swan for xij d and thereby to distroye a poore man they Caryd not", and then "dispitesfully bade the maire and aldermen to tack his horses and mack theym mery w[ith]all." However, immediately following this, Goldysbrough's punishment was changed from imprisonment at Newgate to imprisonment in the "prison of the Compter", in light of his "grete submission" and ill health. Immediately following that decision,

[71] Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 1-7, 63. 92-5, 119, 136-8, 151-3; Tucker argues that reforming individuals through the use of "great threats and moderate punishment" was one of the main concerns of the mayor and aldermen: Tucker, 'London Courts', p. 30.

and still apparently at the same court session, Goldysbrough was entered into a recognisance bond of ten pounds in which he promised that he, his wife, and his servants would obey the regulations regarding the price of poultry in the city.[72]

The important factor here is that Goldysbrough submitted on the same day as his initial refusal to be ordered by the mayor and aldermen. While it is possible that Goldysbrough was sent to prison, almost immediately caved in, and was back in court later that day to ritually submit, there is another possible explanation worth considering. Just as the submission to authority itself was highly ritualized, it is possible that another ritual was at work here. Perhaps Goldysbrough, and other defendants in similar cases, were prepared or resigned to submission to authority, but wanted to register their continued unhappiness with a person or situation. Their initial refusal to accept the authority of the court, followed by a very rapid submission, would be a public way of doing this while still ultimately agreeing to back down, whether out of respect for the authority of the mayor or simple recognition of the futility of defying an authority that could sentence offenders to indefinite prison terms. Again, there is no explicit evidence that this is what was going on in cases such as that involving Thomas Goldysbrough, but it is in keeping with the ritualized nature of the submission process, and perhaps a more probable scenario than a defendant going from bold defiance to abject surrender in the space of a single day.

The contrast between these cases involving ritual submission and the earlier examples of the treatment of vagabonds, bawds and perjurers is a sharp one. People who were believed to be salvageable had a variety of methods open to them to redeem

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[72] Rep 2, ff. 37-37v. It is not explicit in the records that Goldysbrough was therefore not imprisoned, but this seems to be by far the most probable interpretation.

themselves in the eyes of the community, whether through a public act of contrition and submission, the payment of a fine, or obtaining the support of their peers. Most of these methods also assume that the person in question is concerned with their own respectability and will want to protect it. However, there was clearly another class of offender, who were not given the opportunity to redeem themselves, and who were dealt with by being expelled from the city. These were people who the authorities believed could not be made into respectable members of the community, and indeed many of them may have been invulnerable to the kinds of pressure that the mayor and aldermen were capable of bringing to bear. A person who is already an outcast from respectable society, such as a beggar or prostitute, would not be particularly concerned about threats to their reputation, for example. It is for this reason that it is reasonable to suppose that this kind of offender would have concerned the authorities of late medieval London the most, and this helps explain why the treatment meted out to them is so uniformly harsh.

Despite this harsh treatment, however, the frequency with which such cases appear in the records must indicate that offenders of this type were not uncommon in medieval London, despite their marginal status. It would be a mistake to assume that they were any less a part of the community of London than the men and women who were more acceptable to authority figures. The tension between the marginal and mainstream populations of the city must have been an ongoing reality for the community. This ongoing tension would have been very different from episodes of specific unrest, of which there were numerous examples in London's history but apparently few during the period under study.

Obviously, however, no discussion of dissent and disorder in late medieval London can avoid the events of late April and early May in 1517, culminating in the widespread riots of young men against foreigners known as the Evil May Day. Through April and May of that year, resentment of London's foreign merchant population seems to have been undeniably on the rise, with minor incidents of quarrels and violence against foreigners instigated by young Englishmen occurring several times.[73] The May Day riots themselves were probably the worst outbreak of violence in the city since the rebels of the Peasant's Revolt had come to town; around 2,000 of London's young men[74] took to the streets around seven o'clock in the evening, and launched violent attacks on the homes and businesses of foreign merchants. Attempts by the alderman John Mundy to quell the violence failed, and the riot continued for hours.[75] Eventually, the Lord High Admiral, the Duke of Norfolk, and other nobles helped put an end to the disorder, and London was occupied by troops.[76] In the aftermath, an investigation failed to turn up proof of meetings or plans for the riot beyond the xenophobic exhortations of a broker named John Lincoln. Lincoln and many of the other rioters were indicted for treason, since the foreign merchants in London - and elsewhere in England - were under the king's protection; thirteen were ultimately found guilty and executed.[77]

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[73] Holinshed, v. 3 pp. 618-20.

[74] Rappaport, who downplays the importance of the riots, puts the number of participants at closer to 1,000: *Worlds within Worlds*, p. 16.

[75] Sheppard, *London*, pp. 194-6. There had been a previous riot by London apprentices against foreign competitors believed to have unfair economic advantages in 1493: Holinshed, v. 3, pp. 508, 620-1.

[76] *Letters and Papers*, v. 2. p. 1031. This account of the riots, from the Venetian ambassador, says that 5,000 soldiers were sent to the city, although the numbers of troops in medieval accounts should always be regarded with scepticism. In any case, the intervention of outside authorities in the crisis would have made the humiliation of London's leaders all the worse.

[77] Holinshed, v. 3. 622-4.

Some historians argue that the May Day riot was a spontaneous explosion of resentment against foreign merchants in particular[78] and the lot in life of apprentices and journeymen generally, while others perceive an event which developed over time and that may have been planned.[79] Rappaport in particular is sceptical of any real political motives behind the violence, arguing that such explanations were really excuses for youthful misbehaviour that "would have happened anyway".[80] Rappaport may be right about the frustrations experienced by young men in London, but his contention that the May Day riots were really nothing unusual[81] seems difficult to maintain. Certainly, although the loss of life was not great - Francis Sheppard contends that "not a single life was lost"[82] - Henry VIII, who was responsible for the safety of the foreign businessmen, was sufficiently angry to execute the ringleaders,[83] and the humiliation of London's leaders, who were responsible for keeping good order in the city,[84] was similarly large.

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[78] Barron believes the Italian and Hanseatic merchants in London had influence "out of proportion to their numbers" which is at the root of many contemporary complaints against them: Barron, 'London 1300-1540', pp. 401-2. This interpretation may gain some strength if the Venetian ambassador's belief that there was another "conspiracy of the mob to murder the strangers and sack their houses" in September was valid: *Letters and Papers*, v. 2. p. 1166.

[79] J. L. Bolton in particular argues that the May Day riots must be seen as the culmination of a century of resentment against foreigners which could not be contained by the institutions of parish, ward, and company: *Alien Communities*, pp. 1-2, 18-19, 35-40; see also Archer, 'Popular politics', pp. 30-2; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 131-3; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 15-17. See also citations of Bridgen below for evidence (and argument) regarding a long-term buildup to the riots.

[80] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 10-11.

[81] According to Rappaport, similar disturbances, motivated by unemployment, plague, and inflation, continued in London frequently until the 1590s, although they were neither large nor threatening: *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 13-14.

[82] Sheppard, *London*, p. 196.

[83] Following the executions, it is also true that Henry seized the opportunity to publicly pardon 400 men who had been arrested for participating in the riots in a stage-managed affair at which his queen and Wolsey pleaded for mercy, which the monarch duly provided: A. Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and his Court*, (New York: Ballantyne Books, 2001), p. 201; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, (London: Eyre Meuthen, 1968) p. 67.

[84] This was the traditional responsibility of local authorities, see for instance Musson, *Law in Context*, pp. 104-5; C. Barron, 'Richard II and London', in A. Goodman and J. Gillespie eds., *Richard II : The Art of Kingship*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press ,1999) pp. 132-5; Maddern, *Violence and Social Order*, pp. 1-4, 15.

While it is neither useful nor necessary to attempt to reproduce any of the detailed studies which have already been made of the Evil May Day, some of the ways in which these events manifested in the records used for this study are worth including in the analysis. The reactions of London's authorities to the May crisis both throw further light on the methods they used to try to control dissent and disorder in the city, and illustrate the somewhat precarious nature of the authority they held. In particular, the records pertaining to the May Day riots provide strong evidence for the theory that London's civic records are an archive with an agenda, and were carefully composed and selected to promote that agenda.

The mayor and aldermen were well aware of the worsening situation leading up to the May Day riot, and did make some attempts to stop the violence escalating. As early as April of the previous year, bills had been posted about the city denouncing the King's support of foreign wool merchants, allowing them an unfair advantage in the market, and by 1517,[85] resentment and dislike of foreigners appears to have been common among Londoners.[86] Francis Sheppard argues that the foreign merchants may also have been a convenient scapegoat for apprentices and journeymen who saw little prospect for advancement in their own careers for a variety of reasons.[87] In any case, the

[85] This resentment may have been somewhat justified; as late as 1540 foreign merchants still controlled as much as half of England's cloth exports, for example. Sheppard, *London*, p. 142

[86] Bridgen argues that by the spring of 1517, resentment of strangers "was almost universal" in the city, and that London's always turbulent apprentices were primed for action: *London and the Reformation*, pp. 121-30. This is in agreement with the situation as described by Holinshed, although he also outlines a specific triggering incident involving a carpenter named Williamson being swindled out of 'two stockdooures' by a French merchant: Holinshed, v. 3. pp. 617-18. True or not, resentment of foreign merchants in London was hardly a new phenomenon: Barron, 'Richard II and London', pp. 140-1 The meaning of "stockdooure" is not entirely clear, although given Williamson's occupation as a carpenter it is probable that these are literally doors of some kind he had made for the French merchant.

[87] Sheppard, *London*, p. 194

mayor and aldermen appear to have recognized the potential for trouble and taken steps to stop it happening.

On 30 April, the vintner James Styrley was bound in the sum of £100 in a recognisance that he and his servants would "well & honestly behave & bere theym selfes agenst Frenshmen & other Straungers".[88] Obviously there had already been some kind of trouble involving foreigners in London, and Styrley's household had been identified as being significant contributors to the unrest. In this case, the court attempted to use one of their standard countermeasures to end the violence against foreigners, attempting to bind particular individuals who they must have believed were inciting violence to behave peacefully.

However, Styrley and his servant do not appear to have been the biggest threat in the court's eyes. That same day, the Court of Aldermen issued an injunction against the skinner William Danyell[89] and his servants "shall from hensforth hurte nor bete eny Frenshman[90] or other Straunger", although the terms were rather harsher than in Styrley's case; Danyell was ordered to obey "upon payn of dethe & losse of his goodes".[91] Interestingly, this resolution is not presented in the format of a recognisance bond, as

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[88] Rep 3, f. 142.

[89] Danyell appears to have had previous trouble with foreigners, as he was involved in an action of debt against a French merchant named Anthony de Salla: C 1/64/300. De Salla had complained to Chancery about his condemnation in this debt action by a jury of six Englishmen and six "Flemings": C 1/66/408. Danyell was also entangled in another debt action involving the will of a tallowchandler named John Stevynson, against a "Dutchman" named Reynold van Bokem, a weaver, and his wife Elizabeth: C 1/117/39. These cases may have given Danyell particular reason to be hostile towards foreigners, although surely he cannot have been unique in that regard.

[90] Although Frenchmen were not a significant portion of London's foreign population, this specific detail makes sense in light of Danyell's history mentioned above. In addition, one account of the riot mentions that "the French secretary" was attacked, his house sacked, and he only escaped death at the hands of the crowd by fleeing into the belfry of a local church: *Letters and Papers*, v. 2 p. 1031. If the secretary was some sort of diplomat, there may have been a particular complaint on the matter from the French, and a particular point of emphasis made to London's authorities. It is also true that Londoners were often less than exact in describing the nationalities of foreigners from time to time.

[91] Rep 3, f. 142.

Styrley's was. In other words, it does not appear that Danyell had given even the appearance of consent to obey the mayor and aldermen; this is simply an order being given. This may explain the severe penalties Danyell was threatened with, or it may be that he had already proven unwilling to reform his behaviour when more moderate means were used.

Precisely how Styrley and Danyell were selected as targets by the mayor and aldermen is also unclear in this context, since the reasoning behind their selection does not appear in the records, nor do they appear in accounts of the riots in the Chronicles. In short, these men are not the most famous instigators of trouble or xenophobic hostility in London prior to the May Day riots; in March, it was the Mercers' company who made a resolution to "'subdue all strangers that be breakers of the privileges of the City", and according to Holinshed, it was the broker John Lincoln who began inciting the citizenry to action against foreigners in April, even recruiting a canon of St. Mary Spital to make an Easter sermon encouraging Englishmen to fight against strangers.[92] Now, organizing bombastic speeches is quite a different thing than organizing violence, so it is possible that Styrley and Danyell attracted the attention of the mayor and aldermen because they were preparing for real action against foreigners, which could not be tolerated in the same way that xenophobic rhetoric could. It is also possible that they were used to direct the blame away from more influential members of London society. In either case, it is

[92] Holinshed, v. 3. pp. 617-20; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 129-30. This canon is presumably the preacher mentioned in the letter of the Venetian ambassador as "abusing strangers, alleging that they not only deprived them of their industry, and of the emoluments derivable thence, but disgraced their dwellings, taking their wives and daughters ; adding much other exasperating language, persuading and exhorting them not to suffer or permit this sort of persona to inhabit their town; by which means he so irritated the populace, that from that day they commenced threatening the strangers that on 1 May they would cut them to piecs and sack their houses.": *Letters and Papers*, v. 2 p. 1031.

interesting that neither the Mercers' resolution, nor Lincoln's exhortations, are mentioned in the records currently under examination.

More resolutions followed. Danyell and his servants were also forbidden "to go forthe on May Day now next comyng", indicating that the mayor and aldermen were well aware that there was trouble brewing surrounding the celebration. Whether Danyell obeyed this order or not, ultimately the efforts of London's government were unsuccessful, perhaps illustrating that the sequence of events was already too exceptional for typical, or even somewhat exceptional, remedies to handle. The failure of these bonds also points to the intensity of feeling against foreigners in London in 1517; either these men were willing to risk paying a significant financial penalty to continue to incite violence against foreigns, or there were many other people who were also encouraging the rioters. Despite the apparent ineffectiveness of recognisance bonds in combatting violence against foreigners prior to the Evil May Day, the mayor and aldermen continued to use this method after the riots. For example, on 28 May, the draper Thomas Howell was bound in the sum of £400 to "have no maner of conversacon with Laurence Benning of & uppon any Wordes concernyng a marmur or Grugge born by the Citezens agenst merchaunt Straungers whereof the said Howell & Laurence laterly had Convercacon togeder."[93] Perhaps because of the exceptional nature of the May Day violence, the civic government continued to believe that one of their standard methods of controlling misbehaviour would be effective, despite their inability to prevent the May Day riots through these means.

The Repertory Books do not include a description of the riots themselves, however the records from the immediate aftermath of the Evil May Day do provide some

[93] Rep 3, f. 145.

insight into the relationship between the civic leaders and royal authority. On 11 May, the mayor and aldermen met with representatives of many of London's most influential craft guilds "to thentent that [they] shuld geve their advice what Sute were best to be made to the Kinges highnes for thees late attemptates[94] on May Day last". [95] In addition, six aldermen, along with the recorder, were detailed to "fele my lord Cardynalles mynde concernyng the nombre of persones that shall cume to the Kinges grace for the seyd Sute to be made".[96] The threat to those in authority in London was very real at this point; the King could have declared that the civic government had failed to maintain law and order and replace them, or even revoke the city's liberties. Accordingly, the mayor and aldermen needed to reassure Henry that they were capable leadership figures and, in all probability, to make profuse apologies to try to win back the King's favour.

On 12 May, another group of aldermen was appointed to go before the King to determine "when the mayre & aldremen & diverse of the Substauncyall Comoners of this Cite shall sue to beseche his grace to be good & gracious lord unto theym & to accepte theym nowe beyng most Sorowful & hevye for theese late attemptates doon ageynst their wylles".[97] The court appearance being arranged here sounds very much like the ritualized submissions the mayor and aldermen required of many offenders against their

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[94] An "attemptate" is a violation or infringement of some kind, so this term is almost certainly a rather oblique way of referring to the riots. From *MED*, accessed online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED2901

[95] Rep 3, f. 142 v. The crafts named are the Grocers, Mercers, Drapers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Merchant Tailors, Skinners, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners, Shearers and Dyers.

[96] Rep 3, f. 143. The aldermen were Aylmer, Jennyns, Monoux, Mirfyn, Baldry, and More.

[97] Rep 3, f. 143. The delegation of aldermen is similar but not identical: Aylmer, Jenyns, Monoux, Mirfyn, Yerford, Brugge, Baker, More, and the recorder. The "substantial commoners" selected were: William Buttry (mercer), Campion (grocer), Nicholas Warley (goldsmith), John Wylkynson (draper), Ganne (draper), Roy Hall (grocer), Bryggyns (haberdasher), Craddok (draper), Dalton (skinner), John Lewes (Merchant Tailor).

own authority; the delegation of Londoners had to appear before their monarch, apologize for their failure and humbly ask for lenient treatment.

It is also worth noting that the "substantial" representatives from outside the government were taken almost exclusively from London's elite craft associations: three drapers, two grocers, a mercer, a goldsmith, and a merchant tailor were joined by one skinner and one haberdasher. This selection may simply reflect the wealth of the men chosen, but the idea of what made a man "substantial" also included more qualitative aspects as well, as we have seen. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the government simply selected the nine wealthiest men; instead, they chose individuals who had the dignity and social prestige to make suitable representatives of the city. This episode gives yet another example of the hierarchy of London's craft guilds in action.

The need to regain the confidence of royal authorities and simply to ingratiate themselves with influential figures in Henry's government probably explains a number of resolutions recorded after the events of the Evil May Day were over. For example, on 26 September, the court of Aldermen resolved that

> ...master Recorder [and] master Shelley[98] shall forthwith Ryde after my lord Cardinall to Syon & yf that he be goon then to folowe after towardes Wyndersore [Windsor] & to make plegge to his grace what diligence ys here doon about suche simple persones as nowe be in prison for sedicous wordes by theym lately spoken concernyng an Insurrecion to be made upon Straungers.[99]

This need to reassure the Chancellor about how the government was dealing with continuing threats against foreigners in the city speaks to the state of mind of London's civic leaders, who were clearly rattled and very conscious of their precarious position

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[98] The Recorder at this time was Richard Brook, and Shelley is presumably William Shelley, who would replace him as Recorder in 1530. J. Noorthouck, *'Addenda: The Recorders of London', A New History of London: Including Westminster and Southwark (1773)*, accessed online at http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46798.

[99] Rep 3 f. 166.

with respect to royal authority. The chancellor had obviously been a useful intercessor in behalf of London's government, as a delegation of ten aldermen and the recorder was detailed to "devise what thinges of plesure shalbe geven to my lord Cardynall & to other of the lordes as they shall think convenient for their benevolence doon concernyng this last Insurrectcon."[100]

Such diligence in consulting with the chancellor was apparently not typical procedure prior to the May crisis. The obvious conclusion is that the mayor and aldermen wanted to continue to show proper respect for and deference to royal authorities, as well as to show the chancellor that they could be trusted to keep London under control. However, we should also consider the possibility that these kinds of consultations were usual procedure prior to May 1517, but were not typically recorded. This would make sense, as the subordination to royal power that these episodes portray does not show London's leaders in a particularly prestigious light. Leaving such content out would therefore fit with the posited agenda of using these records to reinforce London's social hierarchy, but leave the question as to why previously unwanted content was now being included. Such a decision could be explained by the desire, after the May riots, to highlight the reliability and obedience of London's leadership. While we cannot really know which of the above interpretations is correct, the implications are more or less the same. Whether the mayor and aldermen were truly adopting a new way of doing things, or merely changing their decision of what to emphasize in the records, London's leaders clearly felt the need to do things differently following the events of the Evil May Day, and to demonstrate their willingness to govern according to royal requirements.

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[100] Rep 3. f. 144v. The aldermen were Aylmer, Jenyns, Monoux, Boteler, Exmewe, Myrfyn, Yerford, Brugge, Mundy, and Aleyn.

In another case of absence of evidence, it is also worth noting that although there are references to the Evil May Day in the Repertory Books, there is simply no reference to the events in the Journals. Although it is true that the Journals are not a chronicle of events in London, they are the record of an important civic court, and it might have been expected that such major riots would have occasioned at least some mention. While we might conclude that riots would never be entered in the records of civic courts that were not criminal courts, in at least one case they were: In July 1510, issued a proclamation in reaction to "open murdres makyng of affrayes and other offences done contrary to the kinges peas within this citie", forbidding the carrying of weapons within London and calling for vagabonds and "Idill people Which have no maisters" to be expelled from the city. [101] In September 1519, a complaint from the city's Sergeants and Yeomen complained that, along with the costs and charges of their office, some of them had been maimed and killed in the execution of their duties, and therefore asked that their families be allowed to maintain "vytalyng and Chafering houses" to support themselves.[102] In some cases, acts of criminal violence clearly could make their way into the Journals, one way or another, although the May Day riots do not. However, the absence of any reference to the May Day riots could be explained by the simple fact that the Evil May Day was a disaster for the mayor and aldermen; they had failed to keep order in the city, been unable to prevent the escalation of violence, and enraged the King through their failure. It is not surprising that the men on whose watch the riots happened might have chosen not to emphasize these events in records where it might be avoided. There would certainly be no chance that Londoners at the time would forget the May Day riots, but

[101] Journals 11, ff. 112-112v.
[102] Journals 12, f. 17.

with their concern for futurity noted earlier, it is not unlikely that if such an event did not absolutely *have* to be mentioned, and passed along to future generations, it would not be.

However, this interpretation is complicated by the fact that the May Day riots are mentioned, or at least referred to, in the Repertory Books. If the riots were excluded from one set of records, why not do so with all of them? There are two possible explanations here. One is that the royal commands, and London's response to them, simply could not be left out of the records entirely, however much that may have been desired. The second is that this evidence may be further support for the interpretation that the Repertory Books were a less public set of records than the Journals. While we have already seen evidence of various groups having access to the Journals and Letter Books, there is no such evidence of public (or semi-public) access to the Repertory Books. It is therefore possible that the matters dealing with the Evil May Day could be more safely dealt with in a forum that fewer people would have access to, and the unflattering details kept out of more public contexts. While there is still no explicit evidence that supports this interpretation, the marked difference in the Journals and Repertory Books of May 1517 is at least quite suggestive evidence that the latter documents do indeed represent a more private record than the Journals.

It is also interesting that, in all of the cases in which people involved with the Evil May Day were punished, there were no details given as to what their reasons for violence against London's foreign population may have been. In other words, this is another example of one side of the story being left out of the record. While it is true that this side of the story is not strictly relevant to the process of punishing rioters, we have seen in a variety of contexts that authorities were not shy about including detailed accounts of

offenders' actions when it suited their purpose to do so. In fact, in many cases the details appear to have been included to underscore the guilt of the accused and the appropriateness of any punishment meted out. In this case, however, no details were given, possibly because London's authorities did not want to enter the objections raised by the May Day malcontents about the role foreigners played in the city into the official record. This decision may reflect a concern with royal oversight in the aftermath of the riots, or it may have been because they wanted those objections removed from the community's memory as much as possible. Entering the motives and agenda of the rioters into the record would give future readers a chance to encounter their argument, and perhaps agree with it. Given that friction between Londoners and strangers/foreigns was a not-infrequent occurrence in the city, the mayor and aldermen may have been particularly motivated to "hush up" this particular issue as much as was possible.

It is also possible that the mayor and aldermen may have, to some extent, agreed with the hostility towards foreigners in London, if not with how this hostility was expressed. Certainly the relationship between the mayor, his government, and London's foreign population was always a troubled one, no doubt in part for economic reasons, and in part because "outsiders" were frequently blamed as the originators of many kinds of undesirable behaviour in the community.[103] Despite this, London's leaders were facing the wrath of Henry VIII in the aftermath of the Evil May Day, and this concern may have led them to make sure that the records of their activities in response to the riot were above reproach, and contained nothing but a zealous attention to duty. Even so, they may not have wanted to condemn explicitly specific points of view to which they were sympathetic, in avoidance of hypocrisy, if nothing else. Either of these explanations

[103] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 90.

allows us to understand why the particular motivations of the May Day rioters were left out of the civic records examined here, and the fact that we cannot determine which is correct underlines the need for thought and caution in interpreting documents such as these, and the agenda that may inform their content and composition.

The cases discussed in this chapter illustrate three main points. First of all, the authorities of late medieval London made a clear distinction between offenders who were redeemable and those who were not, and treated the two categories quite differently. Those who were essentially respectable were given multiple opportunities to return to conformity and proper behaviour. People who could not make that claim to respectability were expelled from the community. In either case, however, there appears to have been standard procedures for handling offenders from either category.

The accounts of these transgressions, and the responses of the authorities, also portray them as reasonable men, willing to extend mercy to the remorseful, but also capable of taking actions that - again, according to the stories told in the records - solved serious problems facing the community. These accounts of serious misbehaviour, far from telling a story in which those in authority were ineffective, portrays them as entirely worthy of their exalted position, and as leaders who are quite capable of keeping the community in good order. To the reader of these records, it must have been hoped, obedience and deference to these men would have been a natural reaction.

At the same time, when confronted with a truly exceptional situation such as the Evil May Day, the mayor and aldermen appear to have tried to deploy some of their standard tactics to control the situation, only to find them ineffective. What this tells us is that although the tools available to authority figures in late medieval London were

reasonably effective at managing the community on a day to day basis, they were not able to cope with all situations. It was possible for disorder to be too widespread, or to have too much momentum behind it, for standard attempts to reassert rules of behaviour to be successful. Although this would no doubt have been a concern to the mayor, aldermen, and other leaders of the community, it is worth noting that modern urban communities and their governments are still similarly vulnerable to widespread outbursts of disorder, despite the very different methods of control available to them.

CHAPTER FIVE: COURT TROUBLES

The preceding chapters have used records of two of London's civic courts to gain some insight into the types of disorder that the mayor and aldermen were concerned about and how they attempted to deal with these behaviours. While it is undoubtedly true that courts and their records are a very useful way of learning about misbehaviour and its management, they are not a perfect source. Some of the reasons for this, especially that the records must be seen as reflecting the values and agenda of London's mercantile elite, have been part of the analysis throughout this thesis. We have seen several times that one of the impressions that the creators of these records wished to leave was that the civic courts, and the various other tools for controlling behaviour at the disposal of the mayor and aldermen, worked very well if not perfectly, and that problems were neatly resolved through these methods. For this reason, there is not a great deal of evidence pertaining to problems and failures within the civic courts, although the glimpses that are available do allow some conclusions to be drawn.

Two kinds of problems with the courts' control of misbehaviour in London have already been alluded to. The first of these is perjury, which was examined in Chapter Four. Perjurers, especially the apparently professional perjurers that appeared in some of these cases, are an obvious threat to any court system that depends heavily on witness testimony and personal references as part of its deliberative process. As we saw in the earlier analysis, London's authorities were well aware of this threat and attempted to deal harshly with perjurers. The second problem evident from the records is simply the continual recurrence of some of the problems that the mayor and aldermen were attempting to grapple with: the price and supply of tallow is one example, noted in

Chapter One, of an issue that the civic government appears to have been unable to solve. However, it would be rather harsh to judge the competence of London's medieval government based on its inability to solve all of the problems before it – outside of fiction, what authority does? Neither of these two examples of problems with the courts of medieval London, then, are particularly illuminating.

Fortunately, however, there are other insights available from the records. One such incident deals with, on its face at least, the practical or even mundane issue of getting individuals to perform jury service when asked.[1] In February 1519, for example, the Common Council issued an ordinance in reaction to a recent act of Parliament restricting jury service to those with property worth at least forty marks, or at least 100 marks if the case involved debt or damages of forty marks or more.[2] Parliament had obviously been following the standard medieval thinking, noted earlier, which held that the wealthy had the necessary wisdom and morals to hold positions of responsibility, and did not want jurors attempting to deal with matters above their competency. However, this had caused problems in London. Apparently, a significant number of men who qualified for jury service did not want to, and sought to avoid it through the influence

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[1] Tucker argues that the relatively small number of men who qualified as jurors made them "overworked and probably ... uncooperative": *Law Courts*, p. 225. It is also possible, and indeed perhaps likely, that cases such as these are part of the well-known 'flight from service' phenomenon in late medieval England. A significant factor in men refusing to fill civic office appears to have been both the costs that could be incurred and the time away from one's business; potentially more money lost. See S. Rees-Jones, 'York's Civic Administration 1354-1464' in S. Rees Jones ed. *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, (York: University of York, 1997) p 124; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 93-8; Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', pp. 74-80; Kermode, 'Urban Decline?', pp. 181-2, 190; Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 59, 63. Kermode argues convincingly that in at least some cases, civic governments could raise funds by nominating men for posts they could not afford to hold, and then collecting fines when they refused to serve: Kermode, 'Urban Decline?', pp. 194-6. Olson identifies the same phenomenon, for similar reasons, at the village level: *All That Happens*, pp. 104, 110-11.

[2] An earlier standard from 1414 required jurors to be free and have an income of at least two pounds a year ; in 1495 this was revised to having property worth at least forty marks, or 100 marks in cases involving disputed sums of forty marks or more. This was probably a lower bar than the 1414 standard and reflected the difficulty in finding sufficient numbers of qualified jurors: Tucker, *Law Courts*, pp. 224-5.

they had over civic officials, namely the sergeants whose job it was to summon men to jury service. According to the Journals, many of these sergeants were obliged to wealthy Londoners, who were their sureties in bonds, or even the sergeants' oath of office.[3] Accordingly, the sergeants would not summon men they were indebted to in this way, and the burden of actually serving on juries fell on smaller group of people who were increasingly unwilling to perform the office. The proposed solution was for the aldermen to provide a list of everyone in their ward who qualified for jury service, from which the town clerk would select juries for every case as they came up.[4] Jury service was obviously something that at least some Londoners wished to avoid, and their attempts to do so provide some insight into how status and influence worked within the urban community.[5]

An even more interesting example appears in the Letter Books for October 1515: A grocer named William Gardener was given a summons by one of the Sheriffs' sergeants to appear before the mayor as part of a jury empanelled in a land dispute. Gardener vehemently refused to do so, claiming to have "a Writte of discharge"[6], and even "toke the panell & precept & with penne & ynke blottyd & strake out his name". The sergeant duly reported these actions to the mayor and aldermen, and Gardener was sent for. Perhaps surprisingly, he answered the summons, appeared in court on October

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[3] This provides another insight into why people might have agreed to be the surety on bonds such as those examined in Chapter 2; it forged bonds of obligation that would be exploitable in a variety of contexts.
[4] Journals 11, ff. 330v-332. The unspoken assumption here is that the town clerk would be less likely to be influenced in the way the sergeants were.
[5] This was yet another area where royal patronage could be helpful, as in the case of Thomas Curll, a grocer who got an exemption from not only jury service, but also service as coroner or justice, from the king in 1513: *Letters and Papers*, v. 1, p. 539.
[6] Exemptions from jury service, as well as various other civic obligations, were not uncommon and could be awarded for a variety of causes, including age, infirmity, or lack of funds, purchased, or given as a reward for service.

24, where he "Confessyd the blottyng and strykyng of his name out of the seid panell" and then submitted himself to the "Grace of the Court". Gardener was first ordered to provide ten pounds worth of surety to obey the directions of the court in the matter,[7] and on the following day was assessed a fine of 100 shillings.[8]

At first glance, this incident is not too enlightening; jury service has seldom been a welcome obligation, so it is not especially surprising to find that medieval people were sometimes no more enthusiastic about it than modern people are. However, it is at least evident that the authorities of medieval London took this evasion quite seriously, as is evident from the size of the fine. Their concern was no doubt drawn partly from practical considerations; juries were frequently used in criminal and civil court cases and evasion of their responsibility to serve on them would therefore have been a significant problem if it happened on a large scale. Such an action would obviously also have been regarded as a defiance of authority, something which was always seen as a deeply problematic act, as we have seen in the earlier sections of this study. It is also probable that the heavy penalty imposed was meant, like many of the punishments handed out in London courts, to be a deterrent against similar offenses. One of the reasons for objecting to jury service would have been time away from one's business, but if it was known that the potential fine would exceed the cost of the lost time, more people summoned to jury duty would be likely to acquiesce, if not agree enthusiastically, to conform.

The fact that Gardener seized the document that declared him to be a member of the jury and crossed out his name is also interesting. While it may have been a simple

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[7] Gardener produced "iij Goblettes Gylte with a cover enclosyd in a Case of ledder" as his pledge. Letter Book M, f. 258.
[8] Letter Book M, ff. 257v.-258.

act of somewhat childish defiance, Gardener's defacement of the paper may also be connected to the status of the written word in late medieval English society. While medieval England generally, and London in particular, were far more literate societies than had been true in the earlier parts of the Middle Ages, it can at best be described as semi-literate,[9] and there is good evidence that written documents maintained an unusual kind of force and interactive nature even by the time of the current study.[10] Chapter Six includes one such an example,[11] and it is possible to interpret Gardener's action in a similar light: by crossing out his name, he was literally removing his responsibility to serve on the jury. In other words, Gardener (and others at the time) viewed a document that summoned twelve citizens to form a jury not as merely a representation of an act that had already been completed (the empanelling of the jury), but as actually embodying that act in an ongoing way.

This was why, as will be examined in Chapter Six, an old act could be updated with later names; because it was not just the record of an act with legal force, it *was* that legal force *continually*. A document of this type was not necessarily a 'finished article', its authority could be accessed again by later writers, either legitimately, as in the case in Chapter Six, or illegitimately, as in Gardner's outburst. Alterations would also frequently have gone unnoticed, given that such texts would most often have been read

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[9] French, People of the Parish, pp. 47-66; Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 237; L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991) Ch. 13; M.J. Carruthers, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 155-6; Hoeppner-Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 18-20, 150-2, 160-1, 172-6, 181; Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, pp. 15-17, 59, 72-6. C.R. Friedrichs, considering Europe as a whole, estimates that by the mid-sixteenth century 20% of men and 5% of women could sign their names: Friedrichs, *Early Modern City*, p. 270; Thrupp argues for a much higher figure, with 40% of men able to read Latin and 50% able to read English, although this seems excessively optimistic: Thrupp, *Merchant Class of Medieval London*, pp. 156-8.

[10] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, p. 12; M. McLaren, "The Textual Transmission of the London Chronicles", *English Manuscript Studies* 3 (1992), pp. 62-4; Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 145-6; Cressy, *Literacy*, p. 8.

[11] See p. 240.

out loud to a largely illiterate audience.[12] Thus, crossing one's name out from a jury list was not just a defiant act, it destroyed the obligation one had to appear on the jury at all.[13]

Obviously this must not be pushed too far, as neither Gardener nor anyone else involved with this case expressed this point of view. It is ultimately possible that the act of crossing out his name was nothing more than a fit of pique. However, incidents like this, and the one in Chapter Six, are strong hints towards a perception of the written word that made it more than a simple record and regarded it as something with special, ongoing power. This realization must then have implications for how all the records used in this study are regarded, and these implications will be one of the primary foci of the Conclusion.

The importance of juries in London's courts is at least part of the reason why attempts to evade jury service would have been harshly dealt with, and would also have made any dishonest conduct by jury members an even more serious problem.[14] Some examples of this kind of offense do appear in the records. On 27 March 1490, John Martyn, John Harper, John Swetyngham and William More[15] were all brought before the Court of Aldermen for their conduct as jury members. The four had been part of a jury "sworn and charged in an enquest betwix William Bully playntyf and William Okeley defendaunt", but it somehow came to light that "they wolde here nor gyve Credens to any evidence geven unto theym for the part of the saide William Okeley but of the parcialite

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[12] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 49-50; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 164, 170.
[13] This is in line with Steven Justice's interpretation of the destruction of documents during the Peasants' Revolt as a means of obliterating an old feudal culture by destroying its documents; S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) esp. Chapter One.
[14] Clearly, false testimony by witnesses would have been another significant problem; some cases of perjury were analysed in Chapter Four, p. 177.
[15] From later recognisance bonds, John Martyn was a draper, and William More was a goldsmith.

and favor not dreding God nor their consciens gave therin a fals verdict ... for the part of the saide William Bully...' Not only this, but they 'caused certeyn other of their fealisship[16] by betyng & manassyng for to do the same'. [17]

The council ruled that all four should be taken "on horsebacke without any Sadell", first to the pillory at Cornhill, and then to the "Standard in Fletestrete". They were to have "papers on their hedes", presumably detailing their offense, and at both stops they were to sit and (presumably) endure the derision of the crowd while a proclamation was made explaining their crimes. Next, they were to be taken to Newgate gaol, "there to abide as long as it shall pleas my saide lorde maire and my maisters thaldremen". Finally, upon their release, the four men were to be "discharged and dishabled of enquestes Inquisicons Iuries Recognisaunces and other Offices and Councelles within thie Citie of London forevermore to their Rebuke and Shame and to thexample other [sic in MS] semblable mysdoers hereafter." Swetingham, Martyn, and More (but apparently not Harper) were also bound in recognisances of twenty pounds each to obey the mayor and aldermens' decisions and to be of good and honest conduct before them. William Bully, the benefactor of their actions, was bound in the sum of forty pounds to also appear before the courts when summoned, and obey its decisions.[18]

It is probably no surprise to see that London's authorities wished to deal very harshly with men who had conspired to pervert the operations of one of its courts, and used violence to force others to go along with their scheme. The public shaming and announcement of their crimes would have at least seriously damaged the reputations of

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[16] Presumably, here meaning other members of the jury, given the specific mention of giving a verdict.
[17] Journals 9, ff. 226v-227.
[18] Journals 9, ff. 227-228v. No bond appears in the records for John Harper, and no decision appears to have been rendered against Bully for the actions of the four jurors.

all four men, with likely ongoing consequences for their personal and business relationships. A stay in Newgate was likely to be quite dangerous, and potentially expensive as well as inmates were expected to pay for their own upkeep.[19] Finally, excluding these men from future roles in court proceedings or on councils was probably not only prudent, but also limited their ability to hold prestigious or influential positions in the future. They would not only have been unable to serve as jurors again, but would also not have been able to have positions within their guilds[20] or wards, even if their peers had been willing to give them the opportunity. This punishment, then, was a thorough demolition of their positions in London society, aimed at men who had shown themselves, in the eyes of the civic authorities, to be not merely unreliable, but deliberately dishonest.

It is interesting that no punishment is recorded for William Bully, who (at least temporarily) benefitted from the actions of Martyn, Harper, Swetyngham and More. Indeed, the creators of the record do not appear to have been as outraged by Bully's benefitting from the conduct of dishonest jurors as they were by the dishonest conduct itself. Bully is only mentioned in passing in the case punishing the four jurors, and he is not himself described as dishonest. It is possible, although it seems unlikely, that the four took action without his knowledge, and he was exonerated on those grounds. It is also possible that he was given some sort of punishment, which for whatever reason does not appear in the records. In this case, whatever punishment Bully was given, and the nature of that punishment, could have been affected by his status and connections, which could possibly have garnered him more lenient treatment and allowed him to avoid both

[19] Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp 28-9; Bassett, 'Newgate Prison', pp. 238-45.
[20] Martyn and More are presumed to be members of the guilds for the trades provided for them in the records, and it is probable that Harper and Swetyngham would have belonged to a craft association as well.

immediate public shame and permanent infamy by having his sentence laid down in the records.[21] Once again, an analysis of this case is to some degree defeated by the lack of detail in the records, but what is quite clear is that the priority was not to name and shame the man who had benefitted from the dishonest jury, but to punish the jurors themselves.

This pattern was followed in a similar case from 1491, in which all twelve members of the jury[22] empaneled in the case between Thomas Hargill and Richard Tanner were found to have refused to hear any evidence in favour of Richard Tanner and then "not dredyng God nor theyr Conscience gave therin a false verdicte".[23] As in the earlier example, the men were to be punished with public humiliation,[24] an indefinite stay in Newgate gaol, and disqualification from participating in any further "Enquestes, Inquisicions Iuries Recognisances and other offices and Councell within the cite of London for evir more". While one member of the jury, Robert Kilton, was singled out as the ringleader,[25] and given the additional punishment of being placed on the pillory during the proclamation of the offense, no action was apparently taken against Thomas Hargill, who benefited from the jury's partiality.[26] Here again, the focus for blame and

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[21] It is as least possible, although by no means certain, that this William Bully is the same as the William Boly, alias Bully, who died in 1533. If so, he was a freeman and saddler, and left property worth sixteen pounds a year to the Saddlers' wardens, indicating a reasonable amount of wealth and probably respectability that could have saved him from the worst consequences of this case. G.S. Fry ed., *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem for the City of London: Part 1*, 1896. no 54. Accessed online at http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=65868#s7

[22] The type of jury in the cases that follows was unfortunately not specified.

[23] The twelve men were Richard Haket, Robert Huston, Will Mathon, Richard Verdon, Will Thorneton, William Walshe, John Clerke, Andrewe Greshape, Robert Kilton, Thomas Lyall, Robert Lacy, and Richard Water. No occupations were given for any of the men.

[24] The men were to be taken on horseback, without saddles, and "with paper on their hedes beryng the Scripture for perjury and false verdict" from "the Countour in the Pultry" (where they had presumably been incarcerated) to the pillory at Cornhill, where a proclamation of their offense would be read, and from there to Newgate gaol.

[25] Kilton was condemned for "procuryng other of the same Iury to the same perjury".

[26] Journals 9, f. 280.

punishment was on the apparently dishonest jurors, not the man who stood to gain from their conduct, and the message apparently was that a juror who did their job improperly could expect the wrath of the authorities to descend primarily upon him.

Whether this would have been an effective strategy for preventing bias among jurors or not is debatable, but it is clear that in the eyes of London's authorities, it was the bias and even violence of Martyn, Harper, Swetyngham and More that was a threat demanding thorough and public action, and action that would be be both witnessed immediately and recorded, probably both as a deterrent and to demonstrate that London's leaders would not tolerate the manipulation of the city's courts, and were fully capable of detecting and punishing such offenses that did happen.[27]

Another concern was that the court system itself could be used maliciously or improperly. In February of 1487, the Court of Common Council took action to curtail what it perceived as improper use of London's courts. The resolution specified that "as well thattourneis of the maires Court as of the Shireffes court within the Citee of London and oder pleders in the same Courtes have nowe of late used to plede plees dilatory and other untrue pleas to the grete delay of Right iustice and hurt of the Kyng oure soveraign lordes subgiettes..."[28] The accusation here is essentially that both employees of the city courts,[29] and others, were bringing cases which they knew to be false or lacking merit, in

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[27] Exactly how this offense came to light is not clear in the records, which state only that their crimes were "sufficiently proved". Presumably the men who were physically forced to go along with the conspiracy would have been damning witnesses. Journals 9, f. 227. Unsurprisingly, the mayor and aldermen do not appear to have had a spotless record of detecting biased juries; Thomas Elyse and William Botery complained that Hugh Aleyn had fixed the jury in their debt case by promising them a cut of any award he recovered, C 1/64/689, and there are numerous examples of juries apparently refusing to hear evidence on behalf of a foreigner in a case involving an Englishman, c.f. C 1/64/302 and C 1/64/995.

[28] Journals 9, f. 132v.

[29] Many, and perhaps most, individuals bringing a case to court would have retained the service of a professional who knew the forms and conventions of effectively pleading a case, among other considerations: P. Brand, "Inside the courtroom: lawyers, litigants and justices in England in the later

order to inconvenience the targets of these suits and put them to the expense of fighting the case. This tactic could be an effective part of an ongoing conflict with a rival or enemy; whether the suits were won or lost was more or less immaterial as long as the target of them had to spend both time and money defending himself from them.[30]

This concern appears to have been a well-founded one, as there is evidence of specific instances of malicious use of the courts. Sometime between 1475 and 1485,[31] Thomas Kyrkeham and his son William complained that William Skylman, a fishmonger, had brought false actions of debt and trespass against them, hoping that imprisonment would force them to sell him a piece of land he had long coveted "for litill or nought". The Kyrkhams could not get out of gaol on bail, as Skylman had also convinced an aldermen to "ley his comaundement upon them" despite their offers of surety. The aggrieved pair petitioned the Chancery to force their release and to rule in the matter.[32] Around the same time, a gentleman named William Yong also complained to the royal Court of Chancery[33] that Cristofer Kesten, objecting to Yong's proposed marriage to Kesten's widowed sister Elizabeth, filed a false action of trespass against him "in the Counter", causing Yong to be imprisoned and "fals fetred like a thef". Kesten allegedly then took the further step of obtaining "an alderman's comaundement" that prevented Yong from getting out on bail. Yong therefore appealed to the Chancellor for a writ of *corpus cum causa* that would remove the case to the Chancery and the reason's

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middle ages" in *The Moral World of the Law*, ed. P. Coss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 94-6, 101-3.

[30] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 5.

[31] The petition is addressed to the Bishop of Lincoln, who was Lord Chancellor between 1475 and 1480, and 1483 and 1485.

[32] C 1/64/185.

[33] As with most of the Chancery petitions, there is no specific date attached to the case, but it is addressed to the Bishop of Lincoln, placing this case sometime between 1475 and 1485, when Thomas Rotheram and then John Russell, both Bishops of Lincoln, were Chancellor.

for Yong's imprisonment examined.[34] If Yong's account is true, Cristofer Kesten made use of London's courts to damage a personal enemy, and as ever, there are a variety of ways of interpreting the events based on the information we have. Kesten could have been a possessive sibling standing in the way of his sister's happiness, or he could have been a protective brother using any available means to fend off a predatory suitor. Either way, a case before the courts would have been among the weapons that Londoners could use against their enemies and rivals.[35]

Both Yong and the Kyrkhams could also have been presenting entirely fabricated tales to the court to try to get the judgement they wanted. Although we cannot make any determinations about the merits of the cases based on the versions of events we have, this is not why the petitions are of interest. What is important here is that these men expected the Chancellor would find their stories - that the courts of London were being dishonestly used against innocent men - credible. In other words, whether these specific allegations are true or not, such abuses of the court system must have happened sometimes, and perhaps not infrequently, if Yong and the Kyrkhams expected their petitions would be favorably received by the Chancellor.

Similarly, in the very early sixteenth century,[36] the widow Joan Burton complained that although she was "of good name and fame", she had been presented at

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[34] C 1/66/308 Yong alleged that the action had been brought in Elizabeth's name, but had really been instigated by Cristofer Kesten. It is worth noting again that Chancery petitions were composed in an attempt to gain a favorable judgement, and are therefore likely to be highly slanted or even fictionalized versions of events that should be not be relied upon as unproblematic purveyors of actuality.

[35] This may be the same person, identified as Christopher Kechyn, who appeared in a Consistory Court case around the same time. See McSheffrey, *Civic Culture*, pp. 61, 127-8.

[36] The petition is addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, placing it either between 1486 and 1493, when John Morton was Archbishop and Chancellor, or 1504 and 1515, when William Warham was Archbishop and Chancellor. However, Henry Kebyll was only an alderman from 1502 onwards. Alfred B. Beaven, *Aldermen of the City of London*, vol. 2, accessed online at http://patp.us/genealogy/aldermen_1500.aspx.

the wardmote court for "misrule kepyng" by "diverse evyll disposed persons" whose identities she did not know. As a result, Burton had been committed to prison by the ward's alderman, Henry Kebyll, until she signed an obligation requiring her to leave her "mansion & dwellyng place in his Warde". However, Burton was still liable for the rent on the property for some time to come,[37] and since she no longer was able to make any income from the property,[38] she had been forced to surrender "certeyn plate" to her landlord. She therefore appealed to the Court of Chancery, so that she might know the identities of her original accusers and answer the charges against her properly. The allegation here is once again of a false presentment being made to harass or damage a woman as part of a vendetta or grudge, and once again, although Burton's story may not be the literal truth, it again illustrates that such allegations would have been seen as credible.

Similarly, Alice Bleyston, another widow, appealed to a different royal court, the Court of Star Chamber, against what she claimed was a false suit against her by the shearer Laurence Montgomery. Bleyston alleged that Montgomery had her imprisoned in the Counter, and then brought before the mayor's court for a fraudulent debt of 39s. He won this case through the false testimony of "two partiall men of his greate and famyler acquetance", causing her to be found liable for the debt as well as Montgomery's court costs and damages. She further accused Montgomery and his wife of having beaten her while outside the city, and having seized several articles of her husband's clothing and "other stuff" from her. Montgomery's response was that Bleyston had hired

[37] Her petition states that she owed rent until the Annunciation of the Virgin, or March 25th.
[38] This suggests Burton may have been keeping an inn or alehouse, which could be the origin of the claims of misrule.

him to carry her goods to London and then refused payment, and was now harassing him through the courts over a case that had already been fairly decided.[39]

The records of the Court of Star Chamber do not say how this case was resolved, but for our purposes it scarcely matters. The idea of using the court system to inflict damage or inconvenience upon an enemy is clear in both Bleyston and Montgomery's version of events. Moreover, neither would have made these allegations if they did not expect them to be seen as credible; simply put, they expected the Star Chamber judges to believe that the courts were sometimes used as weapons in disputes. Bleyston's story fits best with the civic regulations under discussion, but again, even if her story was false, it is founded upon the idea that reasonable, learned men would believe that London's courts were sometimes used maliciously. In other words, the mayor and aldermen had practical concerns in mind in drafting their ordinances.

The Common Council resolved that in the future, anyone found to have used malicious court cases to waste the time and money of their victims was to be barred from bringing any further suits before the city courts, and if the offender was an attorney, they were to be immediately dismissed.[40] The records do not indicate if this penalty was enforced against any of the unspecified individuals whose conduct necessitated the resolution, but does at least promise vigorous action against future offenders. However, it is striking that unlike perjury, or deliberate bias among jurors, no public humiliation, imprisonment, or expulsion from other positions of authority was deemed appropriate in these cases. The language used in discussing this offense is significantly milder as well; although the cases themselves are described as "untrue" and "false", the offenders

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[39] STAC 2/5 ff. 23-5. There is no specific date placed on the case, but STAC 2/5 covers the years from 1509-1547.
[40] Journals 9, f. 132v.

themselves are not given these descriptors, and the offense is not called "detestable" in the same way as perjury and jury bias. Therefore it appears that this offense was not believed to be as bad as other types of misconduct in court, although it is hard to say why this is, since dishonest use of the court system seems to be a common thread connecting them all.

The same pattern appears in another act of Common Council from 1502, which again took action against the filing of malicious suits. This resolution held that "many persones daily been and in tyme past have been arrested at divers means [and] sutes uppon divers and severall playntes and acconds and the playntif or playntiffs ... continue their sutes and procede not to Iuggement in the same by reason Wherof the parties defendauntes been kept and held in prison by long tyme and space as well for right small causes or none as for false feyned and untrue causes", which could be to their "utter undoyng". The act also implies that defendants, who were often required to give substantial sureties to guarantee their good behaviour and presence in court, were being denied their money or property for extended periods of time in the same way.[41]

This is the same strategy discussed earlier: inflicting damage on an opponent by filing a weak or entirely baseless lawsuit, used as leverage to get the target of the suit held in gaol or deprived of property, and then continuing the case for as long as possible to maximize the embarrassment, discomfort, and inconvenience. Once again, the court wanted to make sure that this kind of abuse did not happen, and provided a relatively simple remedy. At the end of every quarter, "the Recorder, Townsclerk and undershireffes for the tyme being ... or any other person lerned sittyng in Iuggement in any of the seid Courtes" was given the power to discharge persons from gaol who they

[41] Journals 10, f. 246.

felt had been victimized in this way, and return sureties that they believed were being held for too long.[42] Put simply, if these learned men believe a case was being deliberately and maliciously delayed, they could provide relief for the victim. Presumably, once this was done, the plaintiff would have no reason to continue the suit, since they were no longer inflicting damage on their target.

Once again, it is striking that no other action was required against someone who used, or abused, the court system in this way, even if their case was believed to be false or feigned. Apparently, although filing suits for malicious purposes was seen as being abusive, it was not an abuse that required punishment, merely a remedy. As in the earlier action, although the conduct does seem to have been regarded as dishonest, it was not dishonesty of the same stripe as perjury.

It is possible that expected roles within court have something to do with this. Plaintiffs, by definition, made accusations against the targets of their suits. Some of these would be proven true and some demonstrated to be false, but the bringing of the accusation was acceptable behaviour for the initiator of court cases. Making an accusation that one knew to be false, or thought was probably false, was obviously not correct, but it was still performing this role, and the defendant would have the opportunity to defend themselves against the suit and prove their innocence. A witness, however, played a different role - their entire purpose was to tell the truth, so if they perjured themselves they were not doing their job poorly, they were not doing it at all. Similarly, a juror's in deciding a case was to consider the evidence and render a fair verdict, if they refused to consider some evidence and were biased in making their decision, again they were not not playing the role that was assigned to them. A plaintiff,

[42] Journals 10, f. 246.

in other words, was expected to be a partial advocate for their side of things, whereas a witness was expected to be a teller of truth, and a juror to make fair decisions. The difference is between playing an accepted role, albeit dishonestly, and simply not playing that role at all. This kind of language is not used in the records, however, so the real reason behind the different approaches to what seem to be similar offenses cannot be discerned with confidence.

In any event, filing meritless court cases was clearly an abuse of the courts to further a grudge or vendetta, although hardly an abuse unique to the medieval context. It is interesting, however, that in the earlier case, it was the attorneys employed by the mayor's and sheriff's courts who were the primary focus of the resolution, along with the unspecified "others". It is possible that the reason for this is that the attorneys would have been very familiar with the workings of the courts, and therefore most likely, and to have the most ability, to bring these abusive cases. It is also possible that they may not have always been doing so on their own behalf, but may have used their positions to help friends or contacts pursue their ends in this way.

Further, it is interesting that the 1487 resolution is as forthcoming as it is about the conduct of the city-employed attorneys, revealing that members of the governmental machinery were engaged in dishonest and malicious conduct. As we have frequently seen, such embarrassing details could easily be left out of court resolutions; in this particular case it seems as though it would have been particularly easy to aim the resolution at more vaguely-defined dishonest people rather than drawing attention to the attorneys, and therefore the civic courts and government as this resolution appears to do.

However, it is important to realise that the attorneys so named were not themselves members of the governing elite; these were people who worked for them, but were not really members of their circle of peers. From this perspective, the Common Council's resolution, instead of exposing the authorities to embarrassment, does the opposite. They are shown to be diligent in policing the behaviour of those who worked for them, rooting out misbehaviour when it happened and insisting on change. This was precisely how responsible men in the city were supposed to behave; they were responsible for the behaviour of their apprentices, servants, and all the members of their household.[43] From a medieval point of view, this resolution is not an embarrassing exposé of a corrupt system, it is instead the portrayal of the Common Council as responsible heads of the household who are not only aware of the conduct of those who work for them, but also willing and able to discipline them for their misbehaviour.

There is also some opportunity to see examples of misconduct by members of the governing elite themselves. Within the records of London's courts, these examples are rare; later in this chapter we will examine a case in which an alderman was punished for misconduct, but in that case he had acted against the mayor. Preservation of good rule and proper hierarchy demanded his punishment, the assumption being that an alderman who defied the mayor was acting against the settled order of authority and deference within the city. It is very difficult, however, to find evidence that suggests that members of the government were doing their jobs dishonestly or simply incorrectly, or abusing their position of power.

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[43] Examples of masters being held accountable for their apprentices' or servants' conduct were explored on p. 107.

It would be naive to conclude from this that London's numerous mayors and aldermen had a virtually spotless record civic management during the fifty year period of this study. It is surely inconceivable that London's residents and citizens never had misgivings or complaints about how they were being governed. We do find some examples of complaints about the civic government in other sources. In 1477, Humfrey Heyford was criticized for allowing efforts to repair the city walls to lapse, and was described as a "ffeble and weke" man who "had not his mynde so fresshley". Although Heyford did attempt to enact a program of cleaning the town ditches, this "cam to small effect". In 1494, the Common Council apparently nominated John Hert to be one of the Sheriffs "for malice", as he could not afford the office. In 1502, William Remington presided over a very active administration, holding a court sesson every afternoon at which he "callid beffore hym many matiers and Redressid theym afftyr the Best of his myend, But not to all mennys pleasurs". Finally, in 1508 William Capell was "put in vexacion by sute of the kyng" for unspecified actions taken during his mayoralty. Capell was eventually condemned to the Tower and stayed there until Henry VII's death.[44] However, these complaints are not explicit in the records of the court. Once again, to understand this, it is important to operate from the perspective of regarding these sources as containing their own agenda.

I have frequently argued here that the civic court records are intended to convey a particular image of the city and especially its government; briefly, an image of an orderly city under the benevolent control of respectable authorities.[45] Obviously, including a large volume of complaints about their conduct would be contrary to this

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[44] *Great Chronicle*, p. 226, 320; Kingsford, pp. 187-8, 200, 262.
[45] This is not, of course, an idea unique to London, see Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp.110-112, 122-4; Bedos-Rezak, 'Civic Liturgies', pp. 35, 45-6.

purpose, and in addition, the men who governed London probably would not have seen such complaints as legitimate in any case. Their authority was granted by the King and part of the natural order of things; people who complained about it were therefore not citizens with honest concerns, they were defiant malcontents whose point of view certainly did not need to be carefully recorded.

However, it is possible to discern some resistance or objection to the control of the civic government. Once again, the regulations regarding the price of tallow, discussed first in Chapter One, are a useful example. Through most of the the period covered by this study, the government of London tried to fix the price of tallow, and tallow candles, and to prevent tallow being sold outside the city for a better price. However, it certainly appears from the multiplicity of resolutions, investigations, and prosecutions over the matter, that this was at best an ongoing struggle, and perhaps even a losing battle. Surely at least part of the problem was that butchers and tallow chandlers felt the restrictions were unfair, and therefore resisted them; the only other interpretation is an astonishing incompetence on the part of the civic authorities. It is also surely not too great a leap of logic to think that the people who disagreed with and resisted these measures, some of them themselves businessmen, made reasonable, articulate arguments in favor of their position. The creators of the records, however, would not have wanted to tell the story of a debate between the government and the governed, and would not have wanted to include the arguments made against them as potential inspiration or precedent for future defiance. The story they wished their records to tell was, once again, that of an authority that was firmly and incontestably in charge, facing resistance only from the unreasonable and the malicious.

These points, however, lack an ideal level of evidentiary support; again we find ourselves either reading against the text to support the interpretation, or arguing from absence of evidence. Fortunately, there are some examples of direct evidence for misconduct by members of the governing elite in medieval London. In June 1516, Cardinal Wolsey, "with other my lordes of the Kynges most honorable Counsell" delivered a bill of "certeyn Articles" that required specific concerns be addressed: "the Sedicious Brutes there dayly hadde", disobedience among the "communes", the excessive price of food and cloth, "the lak of execucon of the Statue of Apparaill", the number of vagabonds within the city, and the number of houses where "unlaufull Games" were played.[46]

This bill, unfortunately not reproduced verbatim in the records, was a reasonably harsh rebuke of the mayor and aldermen's control of the city, alleging that they were failing in their responsibilities to keep law and order in London and run its economy fairly.[47] There is an implied threat here, since the civic government only held authority because the King had assigned it to them, and only under the condition that they perform exactly the duties that Wolsey's bill declared them to be negligent in. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the record of the presentation of the bill was immediately followed by three indictments for selling fustian at an excessive price, and a resolution for further pursuit of cloth-sellers who were ignoring price limits.[48]

Wolsey's bill, then, indicated that the civic government was not fulfilling their responsibilities, but no potential consequences for failure to do a better job are

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[46] Rep 3. f. 86. The reference to unlawful games probably refers to gambling with cards or dice, but could also refer to tennis or bowling.
[47] Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'' pp. 78-80.
[48] Rep 3, ff. 86-8.

mentioned. Especially given the character of Henry VIII, it is unlikely that the bill presented by Wolsey would have been merely a mild suggestion. It is probably not surprising, however, that any sanctions the government were threatened with were not recorded; this entry would already have been an uncomfortable fit into the story the creators of the records wanted them to tell, and laying out penalties they might have to face would have shown London's authorities to be just as subject to correction as the residents of the city they controlled, a serious blow to their prestige. The indictments of the fustian sellers mentioned above, along with further resolutions regarding the price of food and illicit games,[49] would have perhaps placated royal authority, and the record of them does something to restore the archival narrative, by showing the government taking immediate, decisive action to address the problems laid before them.

While this entry is interesting for the hints it provides of where London's government faced difficulties, and where they may have fallen short of their goals, it lacks detail[50] and is aimed at the civic government generally rather than at individuals. There is some evidence, though, that does allow us to see particular members of the government accused of acting improperly. Specifically, a rather densely-worded resolution passed in 1475 contains, at least obliquely, criticism of the conduct of the mayor.

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[49] On 7 June, the Court ordered Alleyn Hall to close the "Tennys playes" he kept. On 9 June, Thomas Jenyns was entered into a surety of 200 pounds, requiring him to stop hosting gambling with dice and cards in his house, and all aldermen were required to report the names of anyone keeping tennis courts or bowling alleys within their wards. Four aldermen were also appointed to look into the price of food. By 19 June, the initiatives were still ongoing; 3 men were entered into bonds requiring them to stop keeping tennis courts on their properties. Rep. 3, ff. 88-9, 90.

[50] In particular, the lack of detail about the "Sedicious Brutes" is frustrating. One possible interpretation is that these were related to the issue of foreigners in the city, leading up to the Evil May Day unrest the following year.

On 7 November, the Court of Common Council made a number of rulings dealing with how court cases should be handled within the city. They resolved that a case that had been removed from civic court to a royal court could not then be returned to civic court, as the "Iuges of this Citee" had been refused. It was also decided that plaintiffs or defendants who were absent from the city on business could not have their cases delayed until their return; they had to appoint an "attourney or some other person" to look after their interests.[51] Along with these reasonably straight-forward resolutions were some more interesting determinations regarding the role of the mayor. It was decided that "the maire shuld take no mater into his handes but if if appere to hym that it be a mater of conscience", or in other words personally "geve Iugement or elles brynge the parties to compromise"[52] in a case where he believed something unfair or unjust was happening.

There were, however, some restrictions about how and when a mayor was to "take a matter into his hands". First, he had to make both parties aware that this was happening, and summon them to the Guildhall together for "examinacons and to geve Iugement". It was also necessary that the parties find sufficient surety to guarantee that they would abide by the mayor's decision, and not pursue the matter in another court.[53] However, in addition to this, "it is thought that the maire should take no mater into his hand until such tyme as the partie be greved & hath no remedy by cours of the comon lawe for if any mater be at an issue or triall of xij men or may come to an issue or triall of

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[51] Journals 8, f. 113v.

[52] The idea of compromise is interesting here, suggesting that the mayor could intervene if he believed that a negotiated settlement would be a better resolution than a court judgement against one party. Restoration of amicable relations and harmony was the best possible result to medieval thinking, not a punishment that might leave grievances to fester. Musson, *Medieval Law in Context*, pp. 90-1; Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', p. 63.

[53] The reason here is that "it were a rebuke unto the maire havyng the mater bifore hym that it shuld be hadde out of his handes", in other words that it would damage mayoral authority to be overridden by another court. Journals 8, f. 114.

xij men the parte is not hurt ne greved til he know whether xij men will passe ayenst hym or not."[54]

Some of this seems to contradict the idea that the mayor could take action in a case that he felt was a 'matter of conscience', but the implication is fairly clear nonetheless: the mayor was not to subvert or bypass the role of the courts in deciding cases, and that the decision of a jury was preferable to the mayor's judgement. In fact, this resolution places a strong limitation on the mayor's ability to take matters into his own hands; while it confirms the mayor's right to act in cases where an injustice seemed likely, he could only do so after a hearing by jury had been attempted, and found to be unsatisfactory. Further, his decision should ideally bring the parties to a compromise, rather than merely finding fault.

That such a resolution was believed to be necessary suggests that the mayor must have been acting outside these limits, and was interfering in cases, or taking them 'into his hands' in ways that were seen to be improper or excessive. This act of Common Council was drawing, or redrawing, the boundaries. The mayor had significant power and influence as the head of London's government, but not unlimited power, and as he only served a one-year term, it was power that he borrowed rather than owned. The power of the mayor to "take matters into his hands" was a valuable tool for the government, to correct perceived miscarriages of justice and promote harmony, but it had to be used in specific ways that did not give too much power to the mayor or undermine the regular operations of the courts.

It is true that no specific complaints about particular mayors or particular cases appear in this resolution, but this should not surprise us. Even if a mayor was believed to

[54] Journals 8, ff. 113v-114.

have acted inappropriately or unfairly, protecting his reputation and the prestige of the mayoral office would have still been one of the objectives of the creators of the records. This is another case where including specific details would have been seen as detrimental to the overall purpose of the civic archive, and so what is left is only implied criticism, and the clear record of a government that took prudent steps to control the behaviour of its members and ensure that the power they held was not abused.

There are other examples as well. The sergeants of the city were not immune from responsibility for their actions. At the end of May in 1509, Richard Fillowe, one of the Sheriffs' sergeants, was dismissed "for his mysbehavour ayenst the comen people of this Citie by him late done", and forbidden to hold further civic office.[55] In August of 1516, a sergeant Pacchet,[56] was found to have had kept a "carre"[57] in the city, contrary to a recent ordinance.[58] Pacchet had been ordered to leave his cart at Leadenhall until the mayor and aldermen made a ruling on the matter, but instead he reclaimed his vehicle, and had "unsyttyng wordes to my lord mayre & to his Officers" while doing so. For this conduct, Pacchet was to be dismissed as sergeant, and was required to surrender both his mace of office and the offending cart, and he was not to be restored to his position "without thassent of this Court".[59] The following month, another sergeant, Thomas Andrewes, who had apparently also been fired following "divers complayntiss" made

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[55] Rep 2., f. 68v.

[56] His given name is not provided in the MS, although there is a blank space where it was presumably meant to be filled in later.

[57] A "carre" was a small cart, presumably Pacchet was renting it out or earning money transporting cargo about the city. The alternate meaning of "chariot" appears unlikely here. From *MED*, online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=carre&rgxp=constrained

[58] Whether the ordinance was against the ownership of such "carres" by civic officials, or against "carres" generally, is not specified, and the ordinance in question could not be found in the records.

[59] Rep 3, f. 100v. Pacchet duly played his part in the narrative of punishment, submission and forgiveness on 26 September, when he surrendered his mace and submitted to the authority of the court, for which he was restored to his position as sergeant. Rep. 3, f. 106v.

against him, was readmitted following his "humble submission" before the court, and his promise to keep "a Boke & declaracon of all suche Forfaytures as he shall sease & take in the markettes", which would be scrutinized by the Chamberlain.[60]

Both these men may have expected that their position of authority within the civic government would protect them from the consequences of their actions, whether an improper carting sideline, or what seems to have been embezzlement of money or property seized. This turned out not to be the case, so a job in the civic government was obviously not carte blanche to behave as one wished. In Pacchet's case, at least part of the problem would have been that he directly defied the mayor's authority, but Andrewes seems to have been dismissed based at least in part on the complaints made against him.[61] Once again, this fits well with the narrative that the records were supposed to tell; although recording misconduct by its employees would have been somewhat embarrassing for the government, that these offenses had been detected and correction had taken place again portrays the government as aware of what was going on in the city, and able to deal with problems that arose.

Similarly, in February 1517, John Burdon, the "underbaylly" of Southwark,[62] was accused by "diverse & many pore men" of making unfair exactions and extortions against them, to the sum of "xxv li & more". Burdon, "Smyth the understyward there" and Olyver Turnour, the bailiff, were all to appear before the court, with their Court Roll,

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[60] Rep 3., f. 105.

[61] Who the complainants were is unfortunately not specified in the act restoring Andrewes to his job, and no record was found of his prior dismissal.

[62] The status of Southwark relative to London, and whether the mayor and aldermen of London had jurisdiction there, was a matter of protracted dispute from at least the fourteenth century until 1550. At the time of this case, there was a continuing legal wrangle over the matter; a charter in 1444 had given London's government essentially complete jurisdiction over Southwark, although its residents had objected and a petition to Parliament in 1462 seems to have annulled the 1444 charter. Carlin, *Southwark*, pp. 119-125.

to answer to the charges. By mid-March, the Court of Aldermen had apparently decided not to take action against Burdon, although he promised "hensforth ... to entrete the pore people ther that they shall have no cause eftesones to compleyene to this Court".[63] The impression here, at least, is that Burdon's conduct had not been as bad as the accusations made against him, although obviously the relations he had with the people of Southwark were difficult at best. It appears that it was this broken relationship that the mayor and aldermen most wanted to heal; Burdon was not being disciplined for his previous actions, but he was required to smooth things over with the residents of his borough. Here again we see that harmony between Londoners was one of the primary goals of the civic government, and restoring or achieving it was a higher priority than mere punishment.[64]

The episode also reveals, or appears to reveal, that it was possible for even humble residents of London - the poor men of Southwark - to bring forth a complaint about the civic government, and have that complaint taken seriously and then remedied. This *may* have been the case, but it undeniably fits well with the story that the creators of the civic records wanted them to tell. How "poor" these complainants actually were is something we cannot know,[65] nor how much credence they were actually given. What we have is a fairly uncomplicated story of a complaint and its solution, a story which certainly does tell us something about power relations in medieval London. We must not forget, in this case and in others, though, that this is the story that the creators of these records wanted us to read.

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[63] Rep. 3, ff. 130, 137. Another Southwark underbailiff, William Harnour, was called to account for his own "diverse & many mysdemenours by hym to be doon agenst my lord mayre & his auctorite & other sedicous wordes by hym spoken", although Harnour's answer to these charges is not in the records. September 1518, Rep 3, f. 231.

[64] This was also a higher priority than meting out punishment in ecclesiastical courts: Wunderli, *Church Courts*, pp. 42-3

[65] The adoption of similar language in framing guild petitions was remarked upon in Chapter One.

In particular the status of Southwark complicates this picture. Officially, the five manors of Southwark, and the baliffs' courts held there, were outside the authority of the mayor and aldermen of London, a fact that London's leaders were eager to change despite royal support for the rights of Southwark's manors.[66] The mayor and aldermen may therefore have been particularly happy to have received these objections about the misconduct of officials in Southwark, as both the act of complaining to them, and that of correcting the problem, suggested that the manors *were* under their authority, a precedent they would have been pleased to set, especially given the disputed jurisdictional rights over Southwark noted above. Another similar effort can be found in July of 1519; following riots targetting London's foreign population, the mayor and aldermen were ordered to make a detailed search for "suspected persons" throughout London and its suburbs. They duly arrested a large number of "idle, vagrants, and suspicious persons", including thirty-nine in Southwark where they probably did not have jurisdiction.[67] There are therefore wider political issues potentially at work here than the conduct of John Burdon, and we do not know how much the "pore men" may have been encouraged to bring their complaints to London's government as part of a larger agenda. In this example, even more than the other cases we have seen, we must be very cautious not to take the picture created for us in the archives at face value.

It does appear, though, that the mayor and aldermen were genuinely concerned with the conduct of their employees, however much we treat the records with caution. On 4 September 1498, the Court of Aldermen ordered that "for sundrey consideracions", Robert Hall, the keeper of Ludgate gaol, was to be dismissed, and the Sheriffs were

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[66] Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 36.
[67] *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. pp. 125-9.

specifically forbidden to give him his job back.[68] On 30 July 1517, William Henmerssher, the "fermour" of London's toll collectors was ordered to appear before the Court of Aldermen, with "all his servauntes & deputees" and their "bokes & recordes", to answer to complaints made against them that they "dayly exacte & extorsionsly take & gader moche more then they oughte to take" in their duties.[69] In October of the same year, George Grenall, a "yoman of the Comptour" was fired and exiled from the city for his "many mysdemeanours & offenses & specyally for his vicous & detestable Rule".[70] In June of 1520, two constables, one of the parish of St. Michael in Wodestrete, and one of St. Peter's in Cheapside, were imprisoned in the Counter for failing "to take & arreste certeyn persones which there Ryotously made assaute & affray in pertourbaunce of the Kinges pees".[71] This appears to have been a relatively straightforward case of dereliction of duty, but it may also be connected to a "grete charge" that had just been given to the mayor and aldermen "by the Kinges Counsell at Grenewyche for & concernyng the goode Rule of this Citie & most Specally nowe in the Kinges absence", which required that each Alderman read the oaths of the constables in his ward to them and emphasize that they be diligent in doing their duties.[72]

While all of these examples show the civic government as willing and able to deal with misconduct by its members, they all also deal with relatively minor figures within the administration. This is not to say that a sergeant or a prison yeoman could not have

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[68] Rep 2, f. 29v.
[69] Rep 3, f. 155v. Exactly who made the complaints is not specified, just that the Court was "credibly enfourmed". Henmerssher promised to bring in these accounts on 14 September; Rep 3, f. 161v.
[70] Rep 3, f. 170. Although the entry says that the Court of Aldermen had previously committed Grenall to prison for these offenses, no earlier mention of the case could be found.
[71] The constables' names are given only as Portyngton and Maynard. Rep 4, f. 55.
[72] Rep 4, ff. 55-55v. That the oaths were to be read to the constables may reflect that not all of them would have been literate, or may indicate that this was to be a public ceremony so that both the constables and the population of the ward knew what their responsibilities were.

significant influence, but they were certainly not from the apex of the social hierarchy. Moreover, these were probably not men who ever *would* ascend to the level of the mayor and aldermen, so these were not actions taken against members of the elite who shared London's most powerful positions. Cases of misconduct involving these men are even rarer and more difficult to uncover, although they are possible to find.

In October of 1510, there were apparently allegations that the mayor had improperly interfered in the Sheriffs' election; as the wardens of the mercers, fishmongers, goldsmiths, haberdashers, and skinners were all called before the Court of Aldermen to testify whether or not the mayor had "laboured unto them to make master Fitzwilliam Shiref".[73] The wardens all declared that he had not, and there the matter apparently ended, although the allegations must have carried some credibility to get the response that they did, and the case still demonstrates that the mayor was meant to use his influence only in specific ways, and that interfering with an election was outside the bounds of proper conduct.[74]

Although the mayor was apparently exonerated in this matter, Fitzwilliam was not. The investigation into the election apparently continued until 18 February 1511, when he was suddenly "disfraunchesed for ever", with no details about what he had been found guilty of doing indicated. This appears to be another case of the record being kept deliberately vague, so that those who were not already privy to its details would not learn anything scandalous by consulting the records. Fitzwilliam was not in disgrace for long, however; by 22 February, the court decided that he could be readmitted as a freeman if

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[73] This appears to have been William Fitzwilliam, made alderman in 1504 and eventually sheriff of London from 1506 to 1507. From Beaven, *Aldermen of London*, v. 2.

[74] Rep 2, f. 100. The mayor at this time was Henry Kebyll, and if he did attempt to get Fitzwilliam elected as Sheriff, his interference failed. Barron declares that there were "no recorded protest" to sheriffs' elections, although this seems to have been one: *London*, 159.

he paid a fine of 1000 marks, or he could agree to serve as Sheriff and have the fine waived.[75] By 6 March, he had apparently made his decision, paid his fine and been readmitted to the freedom of the city; on 15 May the court moved to find a replacement for Fitzwilliam among the aldermen.[76] In all of these entries, exactly what Fitzwilliam had done is never made clear, although the terms under which he was offered readmission to the franchise seem to indicate that he was attempting to *avoid* the office of Sheriff, which was not actually uncommon in medieval English cities.[77]

In any case, the episode does not appear to have permanently damaged his career, at some point he was readmitted as an alderman, was knighted in 1515, and later served as sheriff in Essex, Hertfordshire, and Northamptonshire.[78] More to the point, Fitzwilliam's offense does not seem to have been interference in the shrieval election; it does not make sense that he would have been campaigning to get himself elected and later offered the remission of a substantial fine if he became sheriff! In addition, the fact that he was soon brought back into government is strong evidence of exactly how restricted an elite the top of London's civic hierarchy was; Fitzwilliam could not easily be replaced, and moreover, the idea that wealth carried with it not only the right, but the obligation to hold a position of power, was likely at work here at well.[79] This case, then,

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[75] Rep 2, f. 108: "At this Court it is agreed that maister Recorder the Chamberleyn & the town Clerk shall go to my lorde Chaunceler and their have this this Auctorite by this Court to sey to hym that William Fitz William shall be a freman of this Cite & of his owyn company & non alderman & to paie m'l marcs for hys fyn or ell to be Shrief of this Cite & discharged of his seid fyn Or ell to be a freman & alderman & to chaunge his Companie & be of an other Felawshipp and to paie no fyn if the Comen Counsell will therto agree."

[76] Rep 2, ff. 108v, 112v.

[77] In London and in other English medieval cities, the Sheriffs were directly responsible for the city's fee farm, and would have to pay it from their own pocket if there was a shortfall: Barron, *London*, pp. 30, 147-8, 159-63; J. I. Kermode, 'Urban Decline?', pp. 180-1, 190

[78] Beaven, *Aldermen of London*. Exactly when and why Fitzwilliam was restored to his position as alderman is not evident in the records.

[79] Friedrichs, *Early Modern City*, 180; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 18-20; Rigby, "Urban 'Oligarchy'", p. 64

contains two different offenses - the mayor's alleged interference in the election, and Fitzwilliam's attempt to shirk his civic obligations by evading the office.

Another example, from September 1519, involves a dispute between the mayor and an alderman, James Yarford.[80] Yarford was engaged in discussion with the mayor regarding "the profite of Ledenhal by hym afore tyme taken & Receyved by the comaundement of this Court for ij yeres", when the discussion apparently became heated, and Yarford uttered "unsyttyng words" to the mayor. He was therefore ordered to produce £40 surety for his good behaviour, although following a humble submission made before the court, he was not required to pay any fine.[81] Although it was at least implied, by the investigation of his conduct, that Yarford had been dishonest in his management of the Leadenhall funds, which he had apparently used to satisfy his creditors, that was not what he was in trouble for, although Yarford did eventually agree to produce some of the outstanding funds.[82]

Obviously part of the problem was that was not properly doing his job as alderman and advisor to the mayor. However, the more significant issue was certainly his defiance and lack of respect for the mayor and his authority. This would have been unacceptable from any Londoner, and has nothing to do with whether or not the offender was an alderman. Therefore, while these cases certainly do involve misconduct by high-ranking members of the city government, their misconduct is not dependent upon the positions they hold. There are more direct examples of London's civic leaders being accused of doing their jobs dishonestly or poorly.

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[80] The mayor at this time was Thomas Mirfyn. Yarford is commonly listed as the mayor of London for 1519, and is listed as such in these records by November.
[81] Rep 4, ff. 22v, 23, 24.
[82] Rep 4, f. 27.

On 7 September 1515, Roger Bafford, a former sheriff, was ordered by the Court of Aldermen to bring in the gargantuan sum of £100 pounds as surety that he would "stand & abide such ordre & direccon as this Court shall awarde for hym for suche mysdemeanours as he hath used & dyd at the tyme of his Eleccon of Shireff". Bafford was given a week's extension to produce the money on 12 September, and finally delivered his surety on 19 September. Finally, on 28 November, Bafford's fine was set at 100 marks, meaning that 50 marks were to be returned to him, or perhaps not collected at all.[83] Here again, his offense was not specified, only that he had made a "humble submission".

It seems likely that whatever Bafford's misdemeanors were, they were substantial, given the size of the sum he was required to produce. As we have seen, such cases often ended with a fine that was substantially lower than the surety required; this allowed the court to convey the seriousness of the offense with an initially large sum, and then to appear merciful by remitting some of the penalty.[84] However, although this was the pattern followed in this case, his eventual fine was still very large, suggesting serious misconduct.

However, despite the apparent gravity of the offense - and any offense committed by one of the Sheriffs, directly linked to the law as they were, would have been a serious concern - no details about what Bafford allegedly did were recorded. Once again, this must be an example of details being deliberately omitted. As we have seen previously,[85] details could well have been left out to protect Bafford from unnecessary embarrassment,

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[83] Rep 2, ff. 184-184v, 204. Whether the money had actually been collected from Bafford is not clear, although many of these cases do describe cash or goods being surrendered to to the Court, to be returned later if the terms of the bond were kept.
[84] Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 63, 92-3, 119, 151-3.
[85] See especially the cases beginning on p. 114.

and to prevent those consulting the records from learning juicy details about misbehaviour among London's elite if they were not already privy to them. Anyone reading this entry who was already familiar with Bafford's case would know what was being discussed, and anyone who did not would not bring any skeletons to light if they were consulting the archives. Instead, the comfortable narrative of an offender identified and brought before the court, submitting to the authority of that court, and receiving a just punishment, is presented.

There is evidence available of cases accusing members of London's government of serious misbehaviour that contain more details, but to find it we must go outside the records of the civic courts. Around the turn of the sixteenth century,[86] the glasier Hugh Blossom and his wife Alice alleged in a petition to the Court of Chancery that an Alderman had unfairly intervened in an ongoing feud they had with William Clerk and his wife Beatrice. The Blossoms claimed that Clerk and his wife had slandered Alice Blossom, for which Hewe and Alice sought and obtained a judgement against them in ecclesiastical court. However, the Clerks complained to one of the aldermen,[87] who imprisoned Hewe Blossom, only to be released if the Blossoms would agree to discharge the Clerks of their penance.[88]

This case shows, first of all, the importance of personal relationships; the Clerks seem to have had some kind of useful link to an alderman who was willing to use his

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[86] The undated petition was addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury as Lord Chancellor; John Morton was Archbishop and Chancellor from 1486-1493, and William Warham was Archbishop and Chancellor from 1504-1515.

[87] Here the MS appears to read "John Monyax", but there is no such person among London's aldermen. The most probable identification is George Monoux, alderman for Bassishaw from 1507 onwards. Beaven, Aldermen of London.

[88] C 1/116/76

influence to help them in their dispute with the Blossoms.[89] Relatively humble residents of London could exploit contacts like this in their disputes, and certainly in their more mundane business and social lives, to further their interests. The case also, however, shows an alderman willing to use his power improperly, as Hugh Blossom does not appear to have committed any offense that the civic government needed to police, and the penance the Clerks apparently complained of had been given by the ecclesiastical courts. Obviously it is possible that the version of events given by Hugh and Alice Blossom conceals some good reason for the alderman to have intervened on the Clerks' behalf, but the suggestion here is that civic officials were prepared to use their power in unofficial ways.

The alderman in the Blossoms' case seems to have been on questionable ground, although perhaps not himself criminal, but there are examples of more serious misbehaviour among high civic officials. In 1475, the fishmonger Thomas Edmond initiated a plea in the Chancery regarding the conduct of one of London's most elite citizens. Edmond claimed that his brother Robert had borrowed slightly over £40 from Sir Thomas Cooke, then one of London's sheriffs,[90] and paid back all but four pounds by the time of his death. However, Cooke used the original obligation of debt to try to claim sixteen pounds, six shillings and eight pence from Robert Edmond's executors. When this failed, he bided his time until he held another influential civic office, that of deputy mayor.[91] At this point Cooke called Thomas Edmond before him and threatened him

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[89] It is possible, of course, that the Clerks fabricated a charge against Hewe Blossom, but this appears unlikely since this dishonest act surely would have been mentioned in the petition, and the terms for Hewe's release were apparently tied to the Clerks' penance and not some other act.

[90] Cooke was sheriff from 1453 to 1454, so this was obviously a long running case.

[91] The MS for this case is mutilated and reads "depute to the ..." here, but deputy mayor seems the most probable reading. This position does not appear, however, to have formally existed, so it may reflect an unofficial "assistant" status similar to those in craft guilds discussed earlier.

with prison if he did not sign several obligations, including responsibility for the £16 6s 8d he believed was owed to him.[92] Cooke then used this document to win a judgement in the mayor's court against Edmond, leading Edmond to appeal to the royal Court of Chancery for relief from what he saw as extortion using the authority of high civic office as the leverage with which to extract money.[93]

No verdict in Edmond's case is recorded, but it serves as an example of how the elite of London could have used their positions to their advantage, perhaps dishonestly. The mayor and aldermen had considerable power to imprison people for indefinite stretches of time, which would have been a powerful tool in any dispute, whether their grievances were legitimate or not.

Also in 1475, the alderman Robert Drope was accused of attempting to collect the same debt twice: Two men, William Baldwin and John Aylmer, had borrowed 140 pounds from Drope, which they used to buy pepper. Baldwin and Aylmer asked a friend of theirs, a tailor named Robert Duplacche,[94] to enter into an obligation with Drope regarding the debt as well, presumably to provide additional surety. However, Drope nevertheless initiated a case in the Sheriff's court over the debt, and Aylmer duly confessed to his debt and was sent to prison, after which he offered to find additional surety and make yearly payments until the debt was satisfied. According to Duplacche, however, Drope refused, keeping Aylmer imprisoned, and continued his suit in the Sheriff's court, seeking to win a judgement against him as well. Duplacche appealed for

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[92] The terms of the other obligations are unfortunately not specified in the MS.
[93] C 1/47 269.
[94] This is likely to be the same person as Robert Duplage, who appears in Consistory Court records at the same time. McSheffrey, *Civic Culture*, pp. 87-8.

the Chancellor to look into the matter and provide redress against what, in his view, was pure profiteering on the part of an alderman.[95]

In 1501 or 1502,[96] a Lucchese merchant named Nicholas Bonvix[97] made a petition to Chancery complaining about the conduct of London's Sheriffs, Laurence Aylmer and Henry Hed.[98] Bonvix claimed to have lawfully purchased thirty sacks of wool from a merchant native to Coventry in Westminster, but then unfortunately had to transport the wool through London to ship it overseas.[99] When he did this, Bonvix alleged that Aylmer and Hed fraudulently seized his goods for being foreign bought and foreign sold, and held on to them long enough that Bonvix was going to miss the arrangements he had made to ship the wool to the Continent. To get his goods back, he was forced into a recognisance bond in the sum of £400, which would be forfeited to Aylmer and Hed if the wool was found to have been foreign bought and sold. Aylmer and Hed then apparently empaneled an inquest in the Sheriff's court[100] to prove that the wool had been illicitly traded and claim the £400; Bonvix further alleged that despite the witnesses he produced in his favor, the jury was made up of acquaintances of Aylmer and Hed, and therefore expected it to rule against him. His petition to the Chancellor asked

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[95] C 1/47/275

[96] The two accused sheriffs served during both years.

[97] Although it does not appear connected to this case, Bonvix shows up in the records again in 1514, receiving a general royal pardon along with Jeronimo Frischobaldi and Leonard Frishobaldi of Florence, and Anthony Cavallari of Lucca. Unfortunately, their offenses are not mentioned. *Letters and Papers*, v.1 p. 782.

[98] Henry Hed or Heed was accused of beating his daughter, defaming his servants in public, and described as an "intemperant man" in a defamation case against him. McSheffrey, *Civic Culture*, pp. 74-8.

[99] In one sense Aylmer and Hed's allegation that the wool had been foreign bought and foreign sold appears to be accurate, as Bonvix bought his goods directly from someone who was not a citizen of London. However, given that the transaction did not take place in London either, this seems a rather predatory interpretation of London's liberties.

[100] "before theym" as stated in the petition.

that the recognisance be voided and that the two Sheriffs be made to answer for their conduct before the Court of Chancery.[101]

Bonvix's petition essentially accuses the two men most responsible for law and order in London[102] of using their powerful positions to attempt to rob him, first of valuable goods, and then of an astonishing sum of money. It is of course possible that his side of the story as presented in the petition is entirely false, but first of all, it serves to demonstrate exactly how powerful London's most elite citizens were, in this case seizing property and then holding the inquest into the propriety of the action in a court they ruled over. Bonvix may have been especially vulnerable as a foreigner, but cases like these make it clear that London's civic leaders had remarkable power if they chose to use it. Moreover, as I have argued several times during this discussion, Bonvix must have at least believed that his claims were credible to bring them before the court; in other words, even if he was fabricating a story to get the result he wanted, he expected that the Chancellor would believe that the story of London's sheriffs extorting goods and money from merchants was at least possible.

In the 1520s,[103] John Semper, a merchant tailor, alleged that he had been assigned by Nicholas Partryche, the alderman for Billingsgate ward, to collect money from the ward's merchants that would be loaned the king. Semper collected £218, and turned the money over to Partryche, but later discovered, through consultation of the records of Thomas Emond, one of the King's receivers, that Partryche had only delivered £200 to the King, and kept the residue. Semper, perhaps unwisely, went to Partryche and asked

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[101] C 1/253/32
[102] Barron, *London*, pp. 159-62.
[103] Again, although the entry is not itself dated, the series of pleas runs from 1515 to 1518, and Nicholas Partryche was not an alderman of Billingsgate ward until 1521, Beaven, *Aldermen of London*.

for a document that would absolve him from any blame regarding the missing £18. Instead, Partryche threw Semper in gaol, which Semper complained was to "his greate losse and hynderaunce" and "also to his greate rebuke and loss of his credence". Accordingly, Semper appealed to the Chancellor for a writ of *corpus cum causa* so that the case could be heard in the Court of Chancery.[104] Whatever the outcome of the case,[105] Partryche does not seem to have fallen into disgrace, as he remained alderman of Billingsgate ward until his death in 1525. However, the case again illuminates the potential for abuse of positions of power in London, either to persecute one's enemies, or simply enrich oneself.

On 31 August 1521, members of the Bakers' guild complained to Cardinal Wolsey that they had been unjustly imprisoned both in Newgate and the Counter gaols "because they would not take out of the Bridgehouse ... [blank in record] quarters of musty wheat." According to their appeal, this was part of a scheme by "two crafty bridgemasters of London, with the support of a covetous alderman" to enrich themselves both by selling spoiled wheat, by overseeing "the size or weights of bread", and dominating the sale of wheat and meal in the city. The bakers allege that this would have enabled the men to make a stupendous fortune: £1,733 6s 8d a year.[106] Unsurprisingly, London's authorities[107] soon provided their own side of the story. The bakers had been expelled from Council for maliciously "sowing schisms and grudges against the

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[104] C 1/442 50 Semper's concern about the damage to his reputation from being imprisoned is interesting here.

[105] It may not have gone well for Semper; the *Letters and Papers* for 1524 include "articles against" him for his allegations of false imprisonment against the mayor and Partryche, claims that the mayor and aldermen in fact had no right to imprison anyone, that Partryche had a vendetta against Semper and a cooper named John Charley, and boasting that he would get a result "that all England would speak of" from the Cardinal, all done "in the Church of the Crutched Friars". *Letters and Papers*, v. 4. p. 97.

[106] *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. p. 630.

[107] Apparently the united mayor, aldermen, and Common Council.

purveyors and buyers of wheat conveyed to the garners at the Bridgehouse", and for falsely alleging that wheat stored in the Bridgehouse was spoiled and not suitable for baking, thereby enabling them to raise the price of bread by creating a shortage. The mayor and aldermen resolved on a £10 fine for further defiance.[108] Again, we do not have a resolution to go along with the complaint and the rejoinder, but again it does not particularly matter. Here is a clear allegation of misconduct by members of the governing elite, and just as clearly there was no confidence among the bakers that they could get a fair resolution from authorities in London.

Somewhat similarly, in 1521 a group of "Joiners Strangers" appealed to Cardinal Wolsey, complaining of "the ill treatment they suffer from the joiners Englishmen, who daily and hourly put them in prison by feigned actions, surety of the peace and the mayor's commandment." Despite an agreement that every foreign joiner who was a householder pay 4d a year for the privilege of practicing their trade within the city, with journeymen to pay 2d a year, apparently the Joiners' guild continued to "make new acts against them in their hall", and imprison the "Joiners Strangers" if they would not submit to them.[109] Wolsey's action is not included in the record here, but the foreign joiners' allegation is that the mayor, aldermen and guild were - in this case at least - all perfectly aligned in persecuting them. Again, given this it is not a surprise that the foreign joiners would have gone to an authority outside London in this case.

No doubt cases such as these do not appear in the civic records for two reasons. First, as we have frequently seen, the civic government of London generally, and the mayor and aldermen in particular, acted to look after each other's interests and protect

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[108] *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. pp. 630-1.
[109] *Letters and Papers*, v. 3. p. 631.

each other's prestige and power. This would have been as obvious to medieval Londoners as it is to us today, so most people would probably not have expected a good result if they attempted to bring a case against a member of the elite in a civic court where his peers would be the judges.[110] This must have been a fairly strong feeling if in a case such as that of Robert Duplacche, which seems to be a fairly clear-cut case of double dealing, the aggrieved party still felt it necessary to go to a court outside the city to obtain justice.[111]

Further, any objections that were brought before Common Council or the Court of Aldermen could simply not have made it into the records, given what has already been established about the composition of the civic documents and the selective inclusion of details. Accusations of criminal or dishonest conduct by the mayor, aldermen, or other high civic officials would not have fit into the narrative of a well-governed, well-ordered city that London's archive was meant to relate to anyone who consulted it. Accordingly, we cannot escape the possibility that some, perhaps many, examples of this sort of behaviour were deliberately omitted or concealed with vagaries in order to present the picture that the creators of the records wanted readers to take away.[112]

As well as examining each of these cases individually, it is also worth considering this genre of behaviour as a whole. It is worth noting, first of all, that the examples drawn from the Letter Books and Repertories all represent relatively isolated cases; there is nowhere near the prevalence of defiance and abuse of the court systems as there are

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[110] Kermode identifies similar feelings of "helplessness" in cases involving an alderman in late medieval York as helping fuel resentment of the civic goverment there: Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', p. 99.
[111] Obviously the record of the case was Duplacche's version of events, so some caution is necessary, but if even the basic facts are correct then it is difficult to know what Drope's defense would have been.
[112] S. McSheffrey, "Detective Fiction in the Archives: Court Records and the Uses of Law in Late Medieval England", *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): pp. 66, 73.

offenses against price controls, standards of product quality, or even vagrancy. There are basically two ways of interpreting this. The first is to conclude that such actions were genuinely rare occurrences, and that most Londoners who were given summonses or directions by the civic courts obeyed them. This is not an unreasonable point of view; most people are not rebels in the making, and it is entirely possible that most Londoners, or at least citizens of London, simply respected the courts and their authority, and would have gone along with their direction unless given a strong reason not to do so. If so, this would suggest that the mayor and aldermen were reasonably successful in their project, remarked on frequently through this thesis, of creating the idea of themselves as legitimate and respectable authorities in the minds of London's populace.

However, once again we must be cautious. I have also frequently argued that these records must be regarded being themselves a part of that project, and that their content must not be taken at face value. The rarity of these cases must urge some caution – surely the mayor and aldermen cannot have had it *quite* this easy – and so must the apparent effectiveness of their control of the problems that did occur. As in the case of William Gardener, such examples of defiance that appear are resolved successfully, and often apparently easily; the offenders confess their crimes and are harshly punished. This creates what should now be a quite familiar narrative of misbehaviour, countermeasure, and order restored.[113] This narrative, although it is of a potentially disruptive act, in fact bolsters the authority of the mayor and aldermen because it ends with them taking decisive and, most crucially, effective action that resolves the problem.

Because of this, there is some reason to suspect that not all of the cases of defiance of London's courts have made it into the records, especially those that were not

[113] McSheffrey, 'Detective Fiction', p. 73; Friedrichs, *Early Modern City*, p. 254.

resolved satisfactorily, as these would *not* have provided such a useful narrative for the readers of civic records.[114] Obviously, since we lack an "objective" source that might tell us exactly how much has been left out of the records, it is impossible to draw hard conclusions on this issue, but once again it is important to use caution in interpreting the records left for us, and to realize that the portrait of harmony and effective control may not reflect reality, and may conceal misbehaviour that was more endemic and prevalent than the reader is led to believe, as well as countermeasures that were less effective than the stories told in the court records suggest.

Perhaps fortunately, I believe it is possible for both interpretations of the relative scarcity of these cases to have some validity to them. There is no really strong evidence for large amounts of open defiance of the authority of the mayor, aldermen, and court system in late medieval London; although specific instances of defiance undoubtedly happened, it is not possible to show that it was long-lasting or widespread. Medieval London does appear to have been a community that, on a basic level, *worked*: people went about their daily lives in a relatively orderly fashion, and the city was governed by an authority that was seen to be legitimate and whose decisions were generally respected.[115] This was not, as far as it is possible to tell, a city teetering on the brink of riotous chaos and anarchy. Steven Rappaport argues that the evidence supports neither "pervasive instability" in London, nor "a single incident of urban revolt aimed at overthrowing the established government", indicating a city that was well under control.[116] However, I believe that it is also undeniably true that this was precisely the

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[114] Bradley, 'The seductions of the archive', p. 113.
[115] Barron, *London*, p. 302; Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', p. 79.
[116] S. Rappaport, 'Social Structure and Mobility in Sixteenth Century London: Part I' *The London Journal* 9:2 (1983) pp. 107-8. Archer argues that Rappaport overestimates the "essential orderliness of the capital"

impression that the authorities of medieval London wanted us to take from the records of their work, and that they crafted these records to that end.[117] As a result, there were undoubtedly more problems than these records would suggest, and their measures for controlling these were almost certainly not as effective as they would have us believe.

There is also one other way that this picture is complicated; by the attitudes of and towards the residents of London who were not citizens, had no prospects of respectability or good fame and perhaps no pretensions to either. These people certainly did *not* respect the authority of the mayor, the aldermen, and their courts, and may well not have regarded them as legitimately in charge of anything.[118] Susan Bridgen estimates that only a quarter of eligible men became citizens,[119] and although not all non-citizens would have been unconcerned with authority and their reputations, the point is that the number of people who were not even part of the formal socio-economic system of the city was substantial.[120] However, as I have remarked several times through the course of this analysis, this group of people only rarely feature in the available records, and the consideration of exactly how this group fit into the picture of late medieval London society is another subject to be examined in the Conclusion.

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but agrees that "Disillusionment with the elite does not appear to have been generalized." Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 4-6. This is contrary to Rexroth's view of London, in which he argues violence was an omnipresent threat, although this perspective seems to lack evidentiary support: Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 32-3.

[117] Barron, 'Lay Solidarities', p. 221; Archer, *Pursuit of Stablility*, p. 40.

[118] This is the segment of society that Rexroth believes to have been the primary concern of London's authorities: Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 16-18; see also B. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 6-8.

[119] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 138.

[120] C.R. Friedrichs, *Urban Politics in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 5.

CHAPTER SIX: USE OF RECORDS

In the preceding chapters, the documents created by London's civic authorities have been considered primarily as evidence to support a variety of arguments about the creation and maintenance of order and deference within the city. While it is certainly true that the records do tell a story about how the elite of London tried to accomplish this goal, it is also true that the records themselves were a part of their efforts. They were conscious that the documents they were creating were in use by various groups and individuals in the city; accordingly they were conscious of the effects those documents could have on the people who read them. The civic leaders of London were concerned about access to their archive, and they were also very concerned about the content of that archive; they managed the content of the documents, the story told by their records, very carefully and in order to achieve a desired effect. As we have come to expect, this effect was to increase the prestige of the city's leaders, and therefore their suitability to govern, and to reinforce standards of behaviour that were expected of all residents in the city.

To understand how the archival records worked as part of the effort to create order in the city, we must first consider exactly what the records were for. On the surface, this appears to be a simple question – the documents created by the civic courts of London were meant to be a record of its proceedings – but this answer is an incomplete one. M.T. Clanchy famously pointed out the exceptional status of written records in a semi-literate society, and the unusual significance and power that documents still held in late medieval England is often forgotten by modern readers who are so immersed in a culture of literacy.

It is often argued that civic records are aspirational texts that depict the city more as its leaders wished it to be than as it actually was;[1] this very significant realization is one key part of understanding what the records of medieval London were for. Jacques Derrida argues that "There is no political power without control of the archive",[2] and the political leaders of medieval London appear to have recognized the usefulness of the civic archives in achieving their ends.[3] Rather than expecting the stories told by our sources to be unproblematic accounts of the facts of various cases, we must instead recognize that the records are a form of argument that attempts to convince their readers of something; they attempt to establish a desired impression of the city, its government, the community, what happened in these groups, and how they reacted to events. This is a point that has been made numerous times throughout the thesis, but it is worth emphasizing here because it is still only part of the answer to the question of the purpose behind the archival records of medieval London.

Understanding that at least part of their function was as aspirational texts is important, but it is only one component of the answer. If the sources aim to convince the reader of the existence of a particular London, a London that operated in a particular fashion, according to particular values and under the supervision of a particular authority, that still leaves us to wonder who, exactly, the men who created these records imagined that reader to be. Who was the reader in their minds, and at whom were they aiming their argument? This reader must have been an important figure to the elite of medieval London, given that they crafted their records so carefully for his benefit.

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[1] Bedos-Rezak, 'Civic Liturgies', p. 40.
[2] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 4 n.4.
[3] Significantly for this point, the traditional oath of the Town Clerk required him to see that "nothing likely to be derogatory to the Corporation was extracted.": Jones, 'Records', p. 125.

Clanchy has argued that at least some medieval written records were created with posterity in mind; their creators were consciously writing for the future in a broad sense.[4] It makes sense that such an account would be carefully crafted; the impulse to tell a story in a way that valorizes one's own role and glosses over one's missteps and failures is undoubtedly a common one. The image-conscious elite men of medieval London would unquestionably have wanted anyone who might read their records to come away with the impression of a well-ordered city under the control of sober, reasonable authority. This was the primary responsibility of the government of medieval cities, to their community and to their King, and they would certainly have wanted their records to tell a story in which their aims were achieved.

However, we also know that the creators of these records had a more immediate audience in mind than a general idea of the future or posterity. These were active archives, in the sense that they were being consulted at the time of their creation by members of the community they describe. This audience would have been very important to London's authorities, perhaps more important than the vaguer considerations of future generations. They would unquestionably have been aware of this audience, and it is because of these contemporary readers that the records of London's civic authorities must be seen as another part of their efforts to create order, consensus, and deference within their community. In other words, at the same time as these records recorded, in some form, what the mayor, aldermen, and common council did and what they achieved, they were also intended to help them in achieving these objectives.

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[4] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 92, 145-8; Derrida, *Archive Fever*, pp. 16-17.

In order to make this argument, the active use of these records must first be established.[5] Fortunately, this is relatively easy to do, as there are specific references to the use of civic records for a variety of purposes. Some of these are rather general allusions to previous mayoralties, while others quote the volume and page numbers of particular records. In 1488, a detailed set of Coopers' ordinances refers to several old regulations that they feel need to be enforced: one found "in the book of H the leef CCCij in the time of John Fressh", one "in the book of I the leef xx iiij ij in the tyme of Drew Baryntyn", another "in the book of K the leef CCCj in the tyme of Geffrey Boleyn" and another "in the forsaid book of I the leef CC xlv in the tyme of Richard Whityngton", and finally one "in the said book of K the leef C xx iiij v in the tyme of Robert Large".[6] Obviously the Coopers had done their homework, but this is not an isolated example.

In 1498, the Pursers and Glovers supported their petition to be combined into a single guild by arguing that both associations were good members of the community and had paid whatever charges the civic government required of them. This could be confirmed in the "bokes and Recordes of the same Court".[7] In 1503, the Vintners specifically asked that an old charter granted to them by Henry III be observed, along with "the ordinance entred in the Boke of the O in the cxvij lefe".[8] In April 1508, were granted their request to have "all suche ordenaunces and decrees" made for the

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[5] Clanchy argues that "Making documents, keeping them in archives, and subsequently using them again for reference were three distinct stages of development", so this is not as trivial a consideration as it may appear from a modern perspective. *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 168, 184.

[6] Journals 9, f. 183-v184

[7] Letter Book M, f. 13. The second component of this argument was that the two crafts were now so decayed in wealth and numbers that they would no longer be able to meet these obligations, giving the mayor and alderman a tangible reason for granting their request.

[8] Letter Book M, f. 81. The petition unfortunately does not state whether these rules and privileges had been entirely forgotten, and had now been re-discovered in the archives, or if there was a continuing problem with enforcing them. In the latter case, indicating that the Vintners' rights could be traced back as far as Henry III could have helped add weight to the argument for their continued enforcement.

governance of their craft confirmed, and specified some that they were particularly interested in.[9] In 1516, the Girdelers, Cordwainers, and Curriers were "streightly charged" to "observe and kepe all suche ordenaunces and rules as apperyth in the time of mayralte of master Horn late mayor, anno tercio H viij".[10] In 1511, the wardens of the Dyers claimed that a lane "in the warde of Dowgate callid Bretasee lane" was "their severall ground". The mayor and aldermen ordered a search to be made "in the bokyes & recordes of the Citie" regarding the claim, which concluded that the lane was a "comen lane of the Citie".[11]

These references alone demonstrate one important use of court records in medieval London; the decisions of the mayor, aldermen, and Common Councillors served as precedents to guide future decisions. This is both in keeping with legal thinking that persists to the present day, and with the specifically medieval philosophy that privileged the traditional way of doing things. Medieval courts often referred to the oldest established memory as the 'correct' answer to a question – the answer from "time out of mind", so it is not at all surprising to see that records in London were used to establish precedent to guide or support new decisions or rulings.

The power of precedent can be further established by the fact that, on occasion, it was necessary to declare specifically any past opinions on a subject void. For example, in 1507, a resolution governing standards of quality for Cordwainers and Cobblers specified that these rules were to be "observed and kept fromhensfurth ferme and stable

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[9] The document names "the Boke of h the CCxlvj leef ... the boke of k the CClxxxvj leef ... the boke of l the leef CClxxviij and the boke of M the iij leef": Journals 11, f. 33v. It is interesting here that these acts were, by the language here, not automatically considered to still be in force, but had to be confirmed and put back into effect. Most probably the founders were referring to rights and privileges they had once had, but had also neglected, creating the impression and precedent that they did not have the privileges at all.
[10] Rep 2., f. 9v.
[11] Rep 2., f. 125.

any Acte or ordenaunce to the Contrarie made not Withstondyng".[12] It appears that all old resolutions were considered to be still in force unless explicitly annulled; an entry from 1513 specifies that "the Article of an Acte made in the tyme that master Richard Gardyner was maier concernyng the settyng a werke of estraungers & aliens shall be crossid & adnulled".[13] Evidently, old resolutions did not expire, but remained in force until they were specifically voided, and this had to be indicated by literally crossing out the old act from the records. Cases such as these implicitly acknowledge two things; first, that people in the city could access rulings made in the past, and try to bring those decisions to bear on current situations. In other words, this is further evidence of the active nature of these archives. Second, this evidence demonstrates that past precedent was seen to be powerful, since in some cases the authorities in the city sought specific exclusion from its influence.

In some cases, the power of a past ordinance was quite literally recycled by the court. On 21 February 1510, the Court of Aldermen passed a resolution which bound nineteen men to obey restrictions on fishing for smelt in the Thames, on pain of a 40s fine.[14] The nature and purpose of the entry is not remarkable, however its subsequent use is interesting. On 27 February of the following year, two more names were squeezed into the list. The next day, another name was added. Next, on 5 March 1512, another name was written in. On 25 February 1514, three more men were written in, and then finally on 7 March, two final names were squeezed in.[15] Not only does it show that the

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[12] Rep. 2, f. 22

[13] Rep 2, f. 160. Gardyner was mayor in 1478.

[14] Two names have the notation "mort" next to them, presumably indicating that they had since died. Another has been crossed out, which obviously indicates that the person is no longer part of the bond, although the reason for this is unclear.

[15] Rep 2, f. 82. The dates of these additions can be placed with confidence not through any paleographical skill on the part of the researcher, but due to the fact that they were conveniently dated.

records were being actively used in managing fishing in the Thames, but it also indicates that the original resolution from 1510 continued to have potency four years later. No new resolution was required; new names could simply be added to the list. The original agreement of the mayor and aldermen to put the resolution in force continued to carry weight several years later and could be used to make expansions of the resolution binding. Not only was this archive active in the sense that it was being consulted, but past documents within it obviously continued to have immediate power.

It is also true that the mayor and aldermen were concerned with maintaining some kind of oversight over written records in the city. For example, in July 1516, Elizabeth Hale, the widow of John Hale, was allowed to have "all suche bokes of plees & all other" records that John had used, "except suche as concerne the liberties & Custumes of this Citie".[16] This would have been desirable not only because Hale's records would have been useful to the government, but also because they were a potential source of precedent. The mayor and aldermen would have wanted to have knowledge and control of any judgements that might come to bear on future cases. We also know that this concern extended to craft regulations. Craft guilds were supposed to have their regulations scrutinized and approved by the mayor and aldermen, although obviously many kept their own records as well. In these instances, the mayor and aldermen wanted to make certain that any rules given the appearance of officialdom by their presence in a written record have in fact been approved and enrolled properly.

It was not only the mayor and aldermen who were wanted to control access to records. In at least some craft associations, the group's official documents were also not for public consumption. A set of Upholders' regulations from 1498 specifies that the

[16] Rep. 3, f. 34v.

wardens were to have "the boke of thordenaunces and rules concerning the same craft" in their custody and were not to show it "to any persone of the said Crafte nor of any other Crafte" unless this had been discussed with and approved by their four assistants.[17] Rules such as this appear to conflict with the expectation that all members of the guild should know and obey the rules of their association; allowing consultation of the records would presumably have allowed literate members to familiarize themselves with the regulations as necessary.

However, while guild wardens undoubtedly wanted their members to know the rules of their trade, they had other objectives as well. Primarily, we should keep in mind that the rules of a craft could change over time, as new sets of ordinances were approved and enrolled with the mayor and aldermen. Presumably the guilds' records would have contained the older ordinances as well as the latest edition, and even if these older rules had been officially discarded they might still have been used as precedents by individuals who disagreed with current policies. In other words, by tightly restricting access to the actual records, and disseminating their regulations by public reading, guild wardens attempted to maintain control over the message being delivered. All their members heard, and were instructed to obey, were the current rules. This message would not be muddled by older versions, practices that were no longer followed, or measures that had been superseded. Even literate members who might have preferred older, alternate rules and regulations would have found it difficult even to establish exactly what those rules had been and obtain the evidence to support their argument. The method of presentation chosen by London's guild wardens gave them very good control over the message they

[17] Letter Book M, f. 6v.

were delivering, and made it much more difficult for alternate points of view to gain traction among the membership.

The control provided in this way would not have been absolute; most obviously, older guild members would have been able to remember past practices and decisions. As we have already observed, the memories of older members of the community were given significant weight both in the community at large and in legal proceedings specifically.[18] If younger guild wardens were trying to change long-standing practices, we can easily imagine a scenario in which they would have faced significant opposition from older members of the guild with memory evidence of the way things had always been done. However, it is also true that older members of the guild were more likely to have achieved leadership positions in the guild, and therefore be among the controlling authorities rather than its opponents.[19]

All of the above evidence here also indicates that there was at least some public access to the records created by civic authorities; some people had the opportunity to peruse the archives for past decisions that might be relevant to their current situations. The idea of public access would have been part of the expectation, clearly expressed in the records, that the residents of London know the rules of the community they lived in. We know this from other indications as well: from the public posting of poultry prices noted in Chapter One to the frequent requirement, in guild ordinances, that the regulations be regularly read out to the assembled membership of the craft.[20] When the

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[18] See Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 193, 266-7 and Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 10-12.
[19] See Chapter One for evidence regarding the limitations placed on new and younger guild members.
[20] That the regulations were to be read out, instead of being posted, shows consideration for the fact that many guild members would likely not have been literate. Reading aloud may also have been the standard in medieval culture generally: Clancy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 52; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 164, 170.

guilds of Girdlers, Cordwainers, and Saddlers were warned to obey the rule that tanned leather was to be brought to the Leadenhall for sale, they were reminded that the relevant ordinances had been "openly in this Court redde & declared"; in other words, they had no excuse for not knowing them.[21] In addition, when the Court of Aldermen made a ruling, the judgment was to be "openly redde and rehersed" at the next session.[22] The contents of the archives, or at least the rulings and decisions they recorded, were obviously meant to be at least somewhat public. Londoners were expected to know the rules that affected their lives, or at least ignorance of them was not a defense.

While we know that the authorities of London wanted many, perhaps most, of their rulings to be known to the community, so that they would be obeyed, there were clearly difficulties. As we have seen, some rulings were published in public form or read out to assemblies to aid their dissemination. However this was not always done, which could have left some members of the community, either due to their own illiteracy or the controlled access to civic records noted above, ignorant of regulations and bylaws relevant to their trade or daily living. Occasionally, this was used as an attempt to excuse improper behaviour, as in 1489 when William Reddy asked the mayor and aldermen to reconsider his dismissal from the post of keeper of the gaol of Newgate. Reddy argued that his violation was caused by "ignorance & of none evill purpose nor entent" and that Reddy "never knewe ne herde of" the ordinance that he had broken.[23] Based on this, he asked to be restored to his former position, presumably better informed.

Unfortunately, the entry does not include the decision made by the mayor and aldermen regarding the petition, so we do not know whether Reddy was successful in

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[21] Rep 3, f. 9v.
[22] Rep 1, f. 56v.
[23] Journals 9, f. 237.

getting his job back. However, simply the fact that he advanced the argument is significant. It is possible, of course, that his ignorance was feigned, but it is unlikely that he would have submitted his petition without having some expectation that it might succeed. In other words, Reddy must have believed that his contention that a civic official might not know all the regulations governing his position was a credible one. This tells us that the decisions made by London's authorities may not have been always perfectly communicated to the public, and that sometimes the rulings recorded in the archives were not known to the people they affected. This gives the records an interesting status in the city. They were unquestionably the official repository of the rules of proper conduct in the community, but this was a repository to which not everyone had access, either directly or via dissemination of the contents.

Writing something down was how a rule was made official, and given force, but those writings would not always have been known to Londoners. In such as situation, it is possible that there would have been conflicting understandings of what the law or community standard on a particular matter was, and that at least some apparent violators were in fact conforming to a conflicting narrative of what authority wanted. We can see some concern for such conflicting narratives when the mayor and aldermen ordered various craft associations to bring in their records so that all the ordinances in them could be scrutinized and enrolled. For example, following a commandment in 1488 that all the guilds bring in their ordinances to be examined and enrolled, the Cutlers and the Hurers submitted sets of regulations which "theyr predecessours of long tyme passed" had made "which have not ben authorised within the said Citee". Although they emphasized that the ordinances were for "the sadde and politique Rule and Governaunce" of their craft,

they also recognized that they needed the authority of the mayor and aldermen to legitimately enforce the rules.[24]

Similarly, in October of 1490, the wardens of the Saddlers' guild brought in "their booke of their ordenaunces" to have the contents examined and approved, after the mayor and aldermen had issued a ruling declaring all regulations not approved by their court "to be cancelled & utterly to be voide." The Saddlers did argue that the ordinances had been created by "their predecessours longe tyme afore this", and in any case it had been done not out of defiance, but for the "politique guydyng" of their craft. However, they also said that they had been "not of power to rewle and governe the saide Crafte" since the mayor's declaration, and humbly asked for their ordinances to be approved.[25] Similarly, in 1502, the Woolpackers were ordered to bring in "all such bookes of ordynaunces as they use" for inspection.[26]

Obviously the civic government did not want the guilds to be enforcing rules that had not been officially approved; although they were happy to delegate authority to the guilds, to help keep order in the city, the mayor and aldermen certainly did not want the guilds to be independent authorities. Their actions were to be within the scope defined for them by civic authority, and they were to wield only the power outlined for them. Making certain that the guilds did not have differing definitions of what that power was in their own records would have been an important part of maintaining this relationship. It is tempting to speculate about what other conflicting narratives of authority might also have existed in the city, perhaps ones that did not take any written form at all.

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[24] Journals 9, ff. 199v, 213v.
[25] Journals 9, f 258v. Whether the Saddlers had simply not been attempting to enforce the regulations following the court's declaration, or if they had been unable to do so because people were aware that the ordinances had been voided, is not clear from the record.
[26] Rep 1., f. 114v.

Unfortunately, without specific evidence we can say nothing definite and can only imagine that at least some of the offenders condemned in civic courts were not necessarily evil-minded or deliberately disobedient, but were instead obeying a standard of behaviour that differed from the official one established by the mayor and aldermen, and preserved in the records.

It is also unfortunate that Reddy's petition does not specify what his offense actually was, and what ordinance he was found to have broken. It would be interesting to know, for example, if it was a very new rule that he might not have heard about yet, or a very old one that he may never have been familiar with. However, his omission may have been deliberate, as I contend that other omissions in the records were. In this case, Reddy may not have wanted to remind the mayor and aldermen of his wrongdoing at the same time as he was asking them to give him his job back. Instead, his petition tells a simple story, that of a well-intentioned man who made a mistake due to being uninformed, not ill-intentioned. Reddy even mentions that he is a native Londoner, "brought up of a child" in the city, presumably to underline that he is a reliable member of the community and not an outsider about whom suspicions might linger. The petition's argument skims over the offense as much as possible, focusing instead on Reddy's character and humble request for forgiveness, a strategy that certainly would have been intended to affect the court, but now also affects the story told by the court's records.

In addition to restrictions on access to the documents they kept, the deliberations of the mayor and aldermen were not intended to be entirely open access. In January of 1502, the Aldermen were sworn "to kepe the secrettes of this court" and not to disclose

anything spoken in a session that "myght hurte any person or brother of the same". The following month, an order was given that, during session, the door to the chamber used by the "mairies court" leading to the "booke howse" be shut and bolted on the inside, so that only the Aldermen and "those that been sworn" could have access to the proceedings.[27] All Citizens of London obviously did not have the right to observe the proceedings of their civic government in action. Instead, as this entry makes clear, the mayor and aldermen were worried about having every aspect of what went on in court be available to anyone who might be interested; only specific individuals were to be allowed to know all of what went on in the meetings.[28] In other words, the public – however restricted that public may have been – was only meant to have access to the final product, to the records that represented the final result of whatever deliberations had gone into reaching a given decision.

There are several different motivations that can explain this policy. First, it is not surprising that the mayor and aldermen would have wanted their deliberations to be 'off the record', given their desire to present a united front. Unity and consensus were common priorities for all sorts of authorities and institutions, including guilds and governing bodies. The unity of their membership was a source of prestige for these bodies and the presentation of a united front helped stifle potential dissent. Division in the ranks, if publicly known, could have undermined rulings by providing a prestigious

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[27] Rep 2. ff. 57, 59v. This probably refers to the Great Hall of the Guild Hall, which had a vestibule connecting to the Library, the entrance to which was "concealed in the panelling" by the nineteenth century. The Library, constructed in 1425, does not appear to be where the records used in this study were kept, but rather a collection of mostly theological books, as it was described in 1549 as being for "education in Divine Scriptures". On the other hand, as no contemporary catalogue of the collection survives, it is impossible to be sure. J. J. Baddeley, *The Guildhall of the City of London, Together with a short Account of its Historic Associations, and the Municipal Work carried on therin*, 7th ed. (London: The Ballantyne Press, 1939) pp. 48-9, 100-102, 148.

[28] To some extent, this may be connected to the suspicion and disapproval of eavesdroppers in medieval society generally, see McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 9, 57, 65-7.

exponent for an alternative viewpoint. If it had been known, for example, that one or more aldermen had disagreed with the decision to have William Arlond placed on the pillory for half an hour, for posting "sedicious & slaunderous billes", or that Will Hariot should pay five marks for "such woordes as he hath spoken in the presence of the courte of the maire and aldermen in contempte of the same",[29] then opinion of those aldermen could have justified continuing disagreement with, and perhaps defiance of, the eventual determination of the court. Put simply, it was not in the interests of London's authorities to have dissenting or minority opinions in the public domain, so only the final verdict is part of the record. Votes for and against are not recorded, nor are any issues or points that caused debate or disagreement in reaching the decision. In the record to which some members of the public had access, the authorities of London simply appear to have made a decision, with no dissension and no alternative points of view.

This is a fairly crude way of managing the message provided by the archives, but I contend that such managing, or crafting, of the story told by London's records was done in a variety of other, more subtle ways. We have already seen how the language of craft ordinances was designed to cast the leadership of guilds in a good light and marginalize dissenters.[30] In Chapter Two, I argued that the language of recognisance bonds was very carefully managed to present the impression of problems which had been solved, and of good order that was now restored. The same technique can be found, being used throughout the records, for different but similar purposes.

Recalling the 1507 case of the poulterer Thomas Goldysbrough is useful here. As we saw above, Goldysbrough was sent to Newgate gaol for "greate disobedience and

[29] Journals 9, f. 14v, Rep. 1, 52v.
[30] See Chapter One.

seducious wordes spoken in the presence of a full courte of the maire & aldermen", and his condemnation and punishment was a typical portrayal of a disobedient and rebellious individual being strictly dealt with by authority.[31] However, this was not the end of the story. Taking into account Goldysbrough's "greate submission" and also his "seknes", the court decided not to send Goldysbrough to gaol, but instead settled on binding him in a recognisance bond obliging him, his wife, and his servants to obey the price limits placed on poultry in the city, not to encourage others to disobey the regulations governing the sale of poultry, and to report any offenders that he became aware of to the mayor.[32]

This decision highlights several important things. Far from continuing to protest that the poultry prices set by the mayor and aldermen were unfair, Goldysbrough is now shown to admit that he was wrong and to submit humbly to the authorities he had defied. This authority is also shown to be merciful and benevolent, both forgiving a rebel and taking his health into account in deciding his punishment. The narrative is of a serious offence which deserved serious punishment, but also of submission to proper authority and therefore order restored. In fact, the offender is apparently transformed into an ally of the civic government. In contrast to Goldysbrough's "disobedience", the mayor and aldermen appear as fair-minded and essentially benevolent men who wield their authority in a merciful way.[33]

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[31] Rep 2. f. 37.
[32] Rep 2, f. 37
[33] Mercy was considered to be an essential attribute of those in power, and of justice throughout English society during this period. The strategy of imposing a harsh penalty, obtaining a penitent submission that reinforced the position of authority figures, and then demonstrating mercy by remitting some or all of the punishment, was also common in many contexts. Specifically, Henry VIII issued a number of general pardons during his reign: Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 1-3, 60-3, 92-3, 119-20, 136, 151-3.

Many other cases in the record follow a similar strategy, this time in punishing a dishonest oil seller. On 10 January 1508, Roger Alfraye, a fuller, was convicted of buying eight tuns of oil, diluting it with water to fill ten tuns, and then putting the mixture up for sale. Alfraye's "deceitfull compassment", "grete deceyte" and "fals usyng of the feate of merchaundises" was described as being not only to "the greate desceyte of the Kynges subiectes byers and occupiers of the saide oile" but also as being to "the greate disclaunder of this citie".[34] In other words, Alfraye's deception was not only unfair to his customers, it was a stain on the reputation of the whole community. The court decided on a fairly harsh punishment; on the next three market days he was to be placed on the pillory for an hour, and his crime was to be proclaimed in five prominent places in the city.[35] This punishment would be deeply embarassing for Alfraye, and was intended to serve as a deterrent against similar offenses in future.

However, once again, the authorities reconsidered, and taking into account the amount of time Alfraye had already spent in prison,[36] waived two of the days of his punishment, meaning that he would ultimately only be brought to the pillory once, on the next market day. Here again, the mayor and aldermen appear as reasonable and fair-minded authority figures, who are willing to make sure that even dishonest members of the community receive no more punishment than they deserve. Again, the picture created by the narrative of this case fits in with the objectives of London's authorities. A serious offence was described, and both the gravity of the deed and the bad character of

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[34] Rep 2, f 38

[35] These places were: the Conduit of Fleet Street, the cross at Cheapside, the pillory at Cornhill, Leadenhall, and "Sceynt Magnus Corner".

[36] Time spent in a prison was a significant consideration both as a punishment and a potential threat; medieval and early modern prisons are well known to have been extremely hazardous to the health of the inmates and deaths were far from uncommon. Kesselring, *Mercy*, pp. 28-9.

the offender were explained. A significant sentence was decided upon, both to punish Alfraye and warn against similar offenses in the future. But then, the punishment was lessened, in light of the fair-minded consideration of the mayor and aldermen.

Through this picture, improper behaviour is discouraged, both through the threat of humiliating punishment and the negative description of the character of people who would commit such acts. Even if they avoided prosecution in court, most members of the community would not have wanted to risk doing things that would make them appear dishonest or disreputable in the eyes of their peers. Obedience to authority is simultaneously encouraged by the portrayal of the civic government as a tough-but-fair, reasonable institution that acts to protect the entire community and inflicts only such punishment as is deserved and necessary.

Cases like these are instances in which the language used in recording a case makes that record into an argument for proper behaviour, not only through the crude deterrent value of punishments given out, but also through the way that both authority and offenders against that authority are described. These are stories that have a specific relevance to the case they describe, but also a more general purpose of reinforcing obedience, deference to authority, and conformity.

If it is clear that the language used in these records was carefully chosen to achieve a desired effect in the reader, it is also true that, in some instances, the language that was not used is just as important. In other words, while the content of the records is important, an analysis of them must not neglects what is not in them, or what the creators of the records decided to leave out. As an example, consider the following case:

On 21 August 1506, the mercer John Knyght was fined 6s 8d for having the constable of his ward arrested "by Writte".[37] Knyght had apparently done this to prevent the constable, who is not named, from distraining the wages of Connell the Raker.[38] Knyght's offense, in the eyes of the mayor and alderman, was that he had interfered with the duties of a constable[39] and disrespected civic authority. Such offenses would obviously have been a significant concern; if citizens were allowed to prevent fines from being collected or punishments enforced then the authority of the civic government would have been significantly undermined. While Knyght's prosecution is therefore understandable, the case is also slightly more complex than this.

He did not prevent the constable from carrying out his duties by force or intimidation, instead he had apparently obtained a court order that not only protected Connell but was of sufficient force to have the constable arrested. This must mean that Knyght was able to make a somewhat convincing argument in support of this action. Obviously, Knyght's case could have been a completely bogus fabrication, invented solely to help Connell, or it could have been based on very real objections to the circumstances under which Connell's wages were being garnisheed. However, the reader cannot know whether Knyght's writ was based on a false, genuine, or embellished argument, because whatever justification he had for his writ is not included in the record of his prosecution. Instead, the document simply records Knyght's fine for "hys

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[37] Unfortunately, the type of writ used by Knyght is never specified.
[38] Rep 2., f. 13. "Raker" was a city job first appearing in 1357, charged with making sure that garbage was cleared away and that gutters and conduits for water flow were unobstructed. Barron, *London*, p. 126.
[39] Constables were responsible for pursuing and arresting offenders, raising the hue and cry when a crime had been committed, and assembling juries for inquests. Barron, *London*, p. 125.

contempt" and how it was to be distributed.[40] In other words, Knyght's side of the story is entirely left out of the record.

This eliminates any inconvenient possibility that anyone reading the case might identify with Knyght and agree that the constable was acting improperly. In addition, the reasons why the constable was confiscating money from Connell are also not mentioned, eliminating another potential source of disagreement with authority. No details are given that might suggest that Connell should not have had his wages distrained in the first place, or that Knyght was correct to try to prevent the constable carrying out the order. Instead, a very streamlined narrative is presented, that of an unforgivable offense against authority and its punishment. This serves the agenda of the mayor and aldermen quite well, once again creating the picture of a problem which has been solved, not a potentially still-simmering dispute, and an offender who has been punished, not a figure who might still garner sympathy.

It must be acknowledged that there are – potentially – significant objections to this analysis. It is always hazardous to argue from silence, but in this case I believe there is a strong case to be made that when details were left out of the record in the documents of London's civic courts that this was done so deliberately. The first strong indicator that this is the case is that the recorders were obviously not shy about including extensive detail when it suited their purpose to do so. For example, a set of mason's regulations from 1510 specified that paving stones were to be at least five inches thick, stones for use as mantels or doorjambs were also to be at least five inches thick, providing the stone was four to four and a half feet in length. If such a stone was five or six feet long, then it had to be at least six inches thick, and seven or eight foot long stones had to be at least

[40] Rep 2, f. 13. The constable was to receive 2s 8d "for his costes" with the remainder going to the city.

seven inches thick.[41] This level of detail was not unique; similar pains were taken in specifying the standards for lumber sold in London,[42] and a 1488 set of Coopers' regulations specified that soap barrels must hold thirty gallons, beer barrels thirty-six gallons, kilderkins of beer should contain eighteen gallons, and firkins of beer nine gallons.[43]

It might possibly be argued that the detail in these regulations was necessary to their purpose, whereas that is not true of other court proceedings. However, we do find cases of other types that include many particulars, such as John Davy and Henry Wadelove's alleged slander of alderman William Bayly.[44] Here, the court did include specific information about the background of the case, including the slanderous words allegedly used. In many ways this inclusion makes sense; laying out what offenders said and did reinforces the judgment in the case by illustrating exactly how offensive and improper their behaviour was. As we have seen, offenses such as these were not seen as mere breaches of decorum, but genuine threats to order and good governance.

It is still true that evidence of instances in which details were included does not necessarily prove that the lack of details in other cases was deliberate. However, there is also evidence that demonstrates that the particulars of a case were, at least some of the time, intentionally left out of the record. On 28 March 1514, one of the aldermen, Henry Worley, was ordered to appear at the next court session with £20 in surety and "to stonde & obey such direccon as this Court shall take of & upon certen wordes by hym hadde to

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[41] Letter Book M, f. 169.
[42] Letter Book M, f. 139.
[43] Journals 9, f. 184,
[44] Rep 2. ff. 187-187v. For a full discussion of this case, see p. 96.

hys Felowship of goldsmythes concernyng a certen acte made by this Court."[45] In this case, it is undeniable that the record was crafted to be deliberately vague and leave the particulars of Worley's offense out. This creates an interesting question as to why this was done. It is of course significant that the offender here was an alderman, one of the governing elite of the city. While he had apparently transgressed against acceptable standards of behaviour in this case, his peers may have decided that making the details of that transgression a permanent part of the record were not in his, or their, best interests.

Not only was Worley part of their elite, and therefore might have expected more lenient treatment based on that connection alone, but he was also a man who was still in an influential position the city. He was not being removed as an alderman, so he would need to continue to exert authority and command respect in the community. Just as laying out the details of an offense was desirable in some instances, to make it clear to the reader that the offender was a misruled and disruptive person against whom action was justified, in this particular case leaving out the details was equally desirable, to preserve the dignity and worship of Worley as much as was possible. This was important not only for his personal reputation and effectiveness as a leader in the community, but for the government as a whole. It must be kept in mind that the leaders of medieval urban communities were not only concerned with personal reputation, but with the collective honour, prestige, and dignity of the groups to which they belonged. Just as the bad conduct of one guild member reflected badly on the entire association, the misrule of

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[45] Rep 2, f. 174v. Worley appears to have defied the court at least briefly, as he was later directed to post a surety £40 for his departure from the court and "divers words" said to his guild regarding the still-vague "acte made by this Courte", but was listed among the aldermen attending a session on April 6. On 19 October, Worley was finally assessed a fine of £20, 10 marks of which were later forgiven. This last ruling still refers to the vague "certen Wordes" regarding a "certeyn Acte". Rep 2, ff. 175-6, 193v, 208v. Worley's case also appears in Letter Book M where the details are likewise vague: Letter Book M, ff. 226Bv, 233.

one alderman was potentially damaging to the prestige of the rest. This, coupled with the emphasis placed on unity and unanimity within the governing forces of London, made it important that the damage done to the reputation of Henry Worley be minimized as much as possible.

However, it is also interesting to see that the record was crafted in such a way that people who already knew about the case would be able to recognize it and recall the "certain matter" between Worley and the Goldsmiths and probably what the "certain words" had been. These people would know that the Court of Aldermen had done the right thing in disciplining Worley, but others who consulted the records, and who did not know the particulars of the case, would not learn any salacious details that might damage the reputation of an alderman or besmirch the government he belonged to. By writing the story of the case the way they did, the creators of this record had the best of both worlds.

We can contrast the Worley case with another example of an alderman in trouble. In October 1514, Richard Haddon[46] was ordered to appear before the Court of Alderman to explain his conduct towards the mayor, John Tate. Tate alleged that Haddon had accosted him in the street regarding a case, after Tate had "comytted oon to warde for a certeyn offence by hym comytted". Haddon is described as harshly condemning this decision: "By God you do hym wrong", and continued his objections despite Tate's warning that "yt became hym not to tell hym in that place". Haddon missed his first court summons, but eventually did appear, saying that his advice to Tate had been "yf

[46] Haddon was himself an alderman, a former mayor, and had in fact preceded Tate in that office. This may explain why he felt so confident in pressing his point of view on Tate, but it is also significant that these facts are not mentioned in the record of the case. Haddon's actions might have been seen as acceptable if his role in London's government was included, and the story this case is supposed to tell is that questioning the mayor in public, and undermining his authority thereby, was unacceptable behaviour.

you comytted this man to ward withoute due examinacon had you do him wrong". He also admitted to accusing Tate of costing the Chamber 600 marks by refusing to take his advice regarding the election of a Sheriff. At this point Haddon gave up a gold ring worth £10 as a surety that he would obey the court's decision regarding his behaviour, although the ring was later returned to him without a fine being assessed.[47]

The contrast with Worley's case is clear; the particulars of Haddon's offense were not left out. His exact words, or versions of them, were included in the records of his case. The record is only vague regarding the case Haddon was apparently upset about, referring only to a certain offense committed by an unnamed individual. Once again, we can discern an agenda behind the handling of the information in the records of this case.

Haddon's offence appears to have been significantly different from Worley's because he challenged the authority of the mayor in a public place. While we can assume the mayor and his aldermen had discussions and disagreements over how to rule in a given case, in public, authority was meant to present a united front. Although Haddon argued that he was only giving "good Councell"[48] to the mayor, he was doing it in an inappropriate way that could undermine the authority and dignity of the office. Such conduct would have been anathema to the image medieval urban authorities wanted to project and to the way the government of London was supposed to operate. In other words, instead of protecting Haddon's dignity, the court would have wanted to spell out exactly what he had done so that it could be very explicitly condemned. The details of the case Tate and Haddon disagreed over may have been left out to avoid distracting the reader from the issue at hand; whether one agreed or disagreed with Haddon about how

[47] Rep 2, ff. 195v, 197-197v, 208v.
[48] Rep 2, f. 195v.

that case was handled was irrelevant. Mentioning the case might have provided Haddon with justification in some reader's eyes, and was at best a distraction from the main issue: that his public rebuking of the mayor was intolerable under the model of authority operating in medieval London. Accordingly, his offense was carefully spelled out, as was his confession that he had been wrong, and his submission to the authority of the court.

That was the message the record was intended to convey: that openly disagreeing with the mayor's decisions was improper behaviour, even for an alderman. The story we are told is that the offender admitted he was wrong and agreed to accept the consequences of his bad acts. In other words, order and proper deference to authority was restored. The fact that Haddon was not fined fits this narrative well; it was the admission of guilt and submission to authority that the court was after, not a monetary fine. Having a defiant or disorderly individual admit that his conduct was wrong, agree to behave better in future, and accept the judgment of proper authority was much more useful to the men who governed medieval cities than adding £10 to the Chamberlain's accounts would be, because such submissions reinforced the position of authority and the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within the city. The court took an identical view decision in the case of Roger Preston, who was accused of speaking "opprobrious wordes" to John Brugge, alderman and then sheriff, in 1514. Preston, who had compared Brugges' ability to keep order in his household to a barrel of spoiled fish, was ordered to surrender £10 to the court, but he was excused from ultimately paying any fine at all, after he had "humbly submytted hym as well to this Court as to the seyd

master Brugge & here knowlegged his offence & ungoodly demeanour."[49] Haddon and Preston's confessions and submissions were the best possible result for the court, and that is the story they would have wanted the official record to tell also.

These cases establishes that at least in some cases, specific information about an offense was deliberately left out of the account set down in the records, and we can understand some of the reasons why this might have been done. Unfortunately we cannot establish exactly how often the gaps in the stories told by archival sources were deliberate omissions to serve an agenda, how often they merely reflect the nature of the source itself, or how often the creators of the record may have lacked the details themselves. However, the fact that these gaps were, sometimes, an intentional part of the tailoring of medieval records should be a part of any analyses of these sources. The men who created the archives of medieval London, and other urban communities in England, had a particular story they wanted to tell, and wanted the records of their city to leave a specific impression on those who consulted them.

Along with recognizing that the language used in describing people and events in the civic records of London was frequently intended to promote conformity and acceptance of community standards, and also observing that the way in which these records were used in the city was yet another way of reinforcing authority, we must also consider that the archive of documents left from medieval London is itself a tool to promote the social agenda of the men who wielded power in the city. To an extent, this is linked to the use of the documents discussed above. However, this analysis can be extended further.

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[49] Rep 2, ff. 183v, 207.

Every document that is placed in an archive is placed there by a person or group of people, who choose to put it there for a specific reason.[50] Some of the time, perhaps even most of the time, that decision can be explained in terms of functionality; the archive is meant to be a record of the proceedings of the civic government of London, and therefore much of the business of its councils and officers is preserved on that basis alone. However, this is not the end of the story. There are many indications that not all the business of the civic courts was recorded in the Journals, Letter Books, and Repertory Books. Some of this evidence is suggestive rather than conclusive. The Repertory Books include an entry, dated 4 June 1509, which goes through the usual opening formula of listing the aldermen present at the meeting, but then records no business transacted at the session. An identical entry for the following day likewise records the aldermen present, but nothing more.[51] These entries are, to say the least, puzzling. Obviously the court must have met on those days, otherwise there would not be the roll calls of aldermen in attendance. As is usually the case from session to session, the lists of attendees is significantly

[50] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 18, 68-9; Bradley, 'The seductions of the archive', p. 113.
[51] Rep 2, f. 69.

different,[52] so they cannot be merely formulaic. Despite this, the entries end after the roll calls, leaving the reader to wonder what business was done at the court. The obvious answer is: nothing worth writing down.[53]

It is possible that literally nothing was done, and that the meetings were simply aborted for some reason, but it seems improbable at best that the mayor and aldermen would go to the trouble of gathering together and then adjourn without doing a thing. It is much more likely that they did discuss some issues, but that these deliberations were not considered worth recording, possibly because no final decisions were reached. If this interpretation is correct, then the documents cannot be seen as a record of literally all the proceedings of the civic government, but are instead a record of those proceedings considered worthy of being entered into the record, at least in part for the story particular cases told and the values their resolution promoted. The next important question is to ask what would have been considered unworthy of entry into the record, and what the criteria for making that determination might have been. To some extent, we are left to speculate, since no guidelines appear in the records themselves. However, some deductions can be made from what has been included.

Some of these indications come from the apparently selective inclusion of cases such as these: In 1478, William Pierson, parish priest of St. Botolph-without-Aldgate was taken in "in the detestable syn of lechery" with Agnes Harris; the court ordered that

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[52] 4 June: Mayor Recorder Chawry Haddon Kneysworth Ailmer Hawes Bradbury Graunger Acherley Shoore Fitzwilliam Copynger Monnouckes Butteler Reste Mirvyn Exmue, 5 June: Mayor Recorder Chawry Tate Capell Kneysworth Aylmer Hawes Bradbury Graunger Warner Acherley Shoore Fitzwillyam Brown Copynger Monnockes Butteler Reste Myrvyn Exmue.

[53] It is also possible, though impossible to confirm, that whatever happened at the meeting was considered to be too sensitive to be included in the records, even vaguely. While this is a tantalizing possibility, it seems unwise to speculate further without any evidence to build upon.

no-one in the city was to "reteyn hym in wages or salary" on pain of a fine of 100s.[54] In 1488, five confessed prostitutes were ordered to be taken through the city in a ritual procession,[55] have their names and offenses publicly proclaimed, and then be expelled from the city. In 1490, John Spicer was sentenced to spend an hour on the pillory after being convicted as a "common bawde". In February 1499, Margaret Clyderowe confessed to enticing Elizabeth Farnoles to commit "the detestable vice and synne of lechery" with a Spaniard. For her offense, on the next three market days, Clyderowe was to carry a white rod and be dressed in a striped robe, led "with mynstralsy" to the pillory for an hour, and then to be imprisoned for a year and a day. In July 1515, Margaret Hopper was ordered to leave the city within seven days after confessing to having two children from adulterous affairs, one with an unnamed goldsmith and one with Sir Thomas Baker, a priest, who had allegedly been carrying on with Margaret for seven years.[56] Policing such moral and sexual behaviour was theoretically not the regular business of the civic courts,[57] both as relatively few appear and as it is well known that these kinds of offenses were the business of the ecclesiastical court system.

The immediate question, then, is what these particular cases are doing in the civic records. Shannon McSheffrey has argued that such cases, especially those involving

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[54] The implication is that Pierson would no longer be priest of his parish, although the mayor and aldermen did not have the authority to order this.

[55] The women were to be dressed in "Ray hodes", to carry white rods, and to be taken through the city "with mynstralsy".

[56] Journals 8, f. 177; Journals 9, ff. 40, 230v; Journals 10, f. 148; Rep 3, f. 33v.

[57] In theory at least, policing matters of morality was the business of London's ecclesiastical courts and not the secular system: McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 25-6, 37-8. While Barron argues that the city's leaders were primarily secular in their outlook, there is significant evidence that they also did see the moral conduct of London's residents as their business as well. See Barron, *London*, esp. pp. 1-2; McSheffrey, *Civic Culture* and Wunderli, *Church Courts*. As outlined in the Introduction, one area of overlap was the wardmote inquests, which could refer cases of immoral behaviour to the ecclesiastical courts for further action. Finally, Brigden argues that there was an expectation that citizens would deal with each other according to Christian morality, and that "A clear association was made between breaching the laws of the Church and offending against the moral code of the City": S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 26-7.

sexual misconduct by priests, can be explained by an increasing feeling among civic officials that ecclesiastical institutions were not doing a good enough job policing such misbehaviour.[58] Since they believed very strongly in public morality, they took matters into their own hands. Unfortunately, they do not explicitly say as much. Moreover, it seems very unlikely that the relatively few cases of actions against prostitutes and fornicators represent every instance of sexual misconduct going on in the city. Therefore, these cases were included in the record for some particular reason. It may be that these were the cases that had escaped the net of the ecclesiastical authorities and were thus being mopped up by civic authorities. It could also be that the offenders were people who were especially well-known to the mayor and aldermen, or whose actions had particularly offended or upset them. The decision to make these cases part of the record could therefore have been selected because they were 'high profile', and would have been tangible examples of the moral leadership of the mayor and aldermen.

It is probably impossible to determine exactly what motive or motives lay behind the decision to include particular morality cases in these records. However, we can be certain that these are not all the cases of sexual or moral misconduct in London during the period under examination, and therefore the cases in the civic records were deliberately selected, because they were seen to be important. Certainly, the prosecution of procuresses, prostitutes and unchaste priests underlines the good moral character of the mayor and his aldermen, and we may say with some confidence that this consequence of including morality cases in the civic records would not have been lost on the men in question.

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[58] S. McSheffrey, 'Whoring Priests and Godly Citizens: Law, Morality, and Clerical Sexual Misconduct in Late Medieval London," in D. Woolf and N. Jones eds., *Local Identities in England 1400-1700*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), also see Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 43-5, 63-8.

If we accept that what has been left out of the record is sometimes as important as what has been included,[59] and that excluding certain things can shape a message as much as including others, many parts of the record begin to show additional meaning. For example, the petitions for guild ordinances considered in Chapter One are undeniably useful for the insight they provide into the priorities and objectives of the leadership of London's craft associations, but there is another aspect to consider as well. Nowhere in the Journals, where the bulk of these petitions were recorded, do we find a case of a petition being submitted by a guild and then rejected by the mayor and aldermen, nor are there instances in which some parts of a proposed list of ordinances were accepted, and others rejected. We do not find the mayor and aldermen requiring changes or alterations to any aspect of the petitions brought before them; the story told by the records is always of a petition humbly submitted by a guild and approved in its entirety.

In fact, there is almost no evidence of guild petitions failing at all. That the petitions did have to be approved as well as recorded is evident from a 1503 ruling, found in the Repertory books of the Court of Aldermen, that "the bill of the Fletchers shall passe in maner & forme as the said bill specifieth."[60] Some of the only evidence that petitions could fail at all comes from the same source, in an entry from 1498:

> Where as the hurers and hattermerchauntes desiren by their bill to be enfraunchesed encorporate and unyed as on Fealoushipp and on bodye It is agreed and acordid for dyvers consideracions the courte movyng that they shall stande and abyde ij severall Fealoships as the have ben in tyme past...[61]

Although the hat merchants' bill was apparently not a list of regulations, but a request to unite two craft associations, this does show that the process of bringing a bill before the

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[59] Steedman, *Dust*, p. 151.
[60] Rep 1. f. 121.
[61] Rep 1, f. 33v.

mayor and aldermen was not just a formality; it was possible for such petitions to be turned down. Given this, the nearly unblemished record of harmonious cooperation between guilds and government laid out in the Journals and Letter Books must surely strain credibility, and cause further thought about the sources and the story they tell.

It is, at least, highly improbable that the civic government and guild leaders virtually always agreed exactly on what the rules and regulations of each trade in the city should be, through successive regimes or administrations. There must surely have been disagreements at times, or at least negotiations, about what the rights and responsibilities of craft associations would be. However, these episodes, however common or rare they may have been, were not included along with the petitions that did succeed. To some extent, this may be explained by the nature of the sources themselves; if the documents were meant to serve as records of ordinances that had been approved and thus put into force in the city, it does make some sense that rejected petitions would not be included. It is certainly simpler to have a record of what the rules are, rather than one which contains both valid and invalid regulations. The act of writing down a set of regulations may also have been part of the process of putting them into effect; by inscribing them into the written record, the rules were given permanence and force. Thus, both functionality – what the records were for – and the status of written records in medieval society – still somewhat exceptional and having special force – may explain why all the records of guild petitions are uniformly successful ones.

However, there are other possibilities to consider as well. We have seen that various forms of authority in London placed emphasis on their unity, that they were all

together against transgressors and offenders of various types. I think it is also true that the numerous manifestations of civic authority in the city – mayor, aldermen, sheriffs, guilds – wanted to emphasize that they were essentially united as well, or at least on the same side. It would certainly not have been beneficial for the leaders of a guild to appear to be in conflict with the mayor and aldermen, but it would also not have been helpful to the mayor if he was seen to be in significant disagreement with guild leaders. Harmony and co-operation would always be more prestigious than conflict, and provide no opportunity for playing different kinds of authority against each other. It was in the best interests of all the authority figures in London to create the impression that they were all on the same general side, and all in general agreement about what constituted proper conduct within the city.

We cannot expect that this agreement always really existed; there would almost inevitably have been disagreements between the different institutions of authority in the city. However, I argue that these disagreements were concealed in the official record as much as possible, and that at least part of the reason why there are so few rejected trade petitions in the records, or negotiations over which aspects of a petition to accept was that a picture of harmony and co-operation was deliberately being created. It is true that the formula of petitions submitted and approved helps to highlight the power of the mayor and aldermen, but if this was the primary agenda, then having records of petitions turned down, or changes demanded, would accomplish the same thing. The picture we are given in the records not only makes the mayor and aldermen appear extremely benevolent, always granting the requests brought before them, but also shows the "good folk" of the guilds and the civic government in perfect co-operation in their running of

the city. This leaves little room for any dissenters to find a respectable way to frame an argument against the status quo, since they would be defining themselves as against all the reasonable leadership of a community that agreed precisely on how things should be done.

It is also interesting to consider that the very rare examples of disagreement over guild petitions appear in the records of the Court of Aldermen, and not in the Journals or Letter Books. As we have seen, the evidence we have of London's civic archive being actively used for research by contemporaries refers to these sources only. No instances were found of medieval Londoners citing references to the Repertory Books. It is tempting to deduce, then, that the Journals and Letter Books might have been available to some members of the community for consultation, while the Repertory Books were not.[62] We also know that access to the archives was restricted, although the specifics of the restrictions are not clear.

In 1502, the Court of Aldermen passed a resolution that no-one could "looke nor serche any recordes or bookys of this Citie excepte the councell lernyd and sworn to the secrettis of the same withoute the Comen clerke or on of the iiij Clerkys of the maireis Courte be present wich clerck after any such serche or Copie of the any recourde made shall immediatly laye up the bookes or Recourdes under lock." In addition, the clerks and attorneys of the court took an oath in which they promised to keep the contents of civic records "secret among your selfe" and not to show documents to anyone without

[62] It is true that, as noted earlier, judgements recorded in the Repertory books may have been read out publicly: Rep 1, f. 56v. However, this order specified only that it should be read to the Court, and then only for the purposes of catching omissions or errors. Exactly who would have been given access to such sessions, and heard the recitation of the judgements, is unclear.

the approval of at least two of the Mayor, Recorder, and Town Clerk.[63] It is interesting that at least some of the information in the records was considered to be "secrettis" not suitable for public consumption, and evident that access to the civic archives was meant to be controlled. Both supervision and, presumably, permission were required. Moreover, the desire to have such restrictions in place acknowledges the potency of the archive in the medieval city; records were powerful, and only reliable individuals should have access to them. The desire to carefully control the content of the records is also a natural consequence of that power.

If the hypothesis regarding the status of the Journals, Letter Books, and Repertory books is correct, then the message of unity and agreement between mayor, aldermen, and craft associations conveyed by the Journals and Letter Books would not have been threatened by the very slight evidence for disagreement between guilds and government. The more public records therefore would convey a desired message to the public, while the more private records of the smaller court could safely record inconveniently contradictory business. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what the rules were for accessing the civic governments' various records, so these differing statuses, and purposes, of types of records in the archive cannot be conclusively established.

Indeed, these are arguments that must only be pushed so far, since far from being based upon evidence, they are based largely upon the lack of evidence. It is not responsible practice for historians to seize upon every absence from a set of records and claim that it conforms to a political or social agenda. However, it is important to keep in mind that, just as everything that has been included in a set of records was placed there for a reason, everything that was not included was left out for a real reason too, and when

[63] Rep 2, ff. 57v, 60.

we find a persistent, sustained silence on a particular subject, we may very reasonably begin to wonder what the motivation for this silence might have been. In this specific case, the lack of records regarding disagreements between craft guilds and civic government can quite confidently, if not absolutely, be assigned to the picture of united, harmonious authority that London's leaders wanted to create.

Knowing that means that historians must be cautious not to accept the discourse of the records too uncritically; we are, essentially, being sold a version of events and we should not simply accept one side of the story as objective truth, even if it is the only side of the story we have. In addition, though, knowing that the records are crafted to tell a story also means that it is possible to discern, from that story, what many of the values and priorities of the men who created them were. This makes these carefully managed, crafted, perhaps slanted or biased, records extremely useful in efforts to understand the community of medieval London. Although what they tell us about the objective reality of the city must undoubtedly be treated with healthy scepticism, they tell us a great deal more about the community that the city's elite wanted to create, and wanted readers to believe existed. This insight into the normative values of the medieval urban community is unquestionably of greater value than knowing exactly what Henry Worley said in a certain matter regarding the guild of Goldsmiths.

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter, and numerous other points of this project, included some thoughts on the status of the written word in late medieval English society, and expanding upon and integrating these ideas is one of the objectives of this Conclusion. As we briefly discussed in the Introduction, although estimates vary, the level of literacy in late medieval England was not high; among the residents of London we can be relatively certain that significantly under half of adult men could read, with an even lower figure for women.[1] While it is true that lack of ability to write does not necessarily imply inability to read, since these were separate skills in medieval pedagogy,[2] to an extent this is a sword that cuts both ways. Merely being able to sign one's name to a parish register does not necessarily imply the ability to do anything beyond that,[3] and does not necessarily indicate the ability to read what is being signed. Even Clanchy's evidence of peasants using seals on documents,[4] viewed sceptically, does not demonstrate that the documents could be read, or that the seals were anything more than part of a ritual of agreement. Estimating the level of literacy in medieval society is a difficult task at best, although I believe that the burden of proof is on those who argue for extensive literacy rather than those who argue for lower numbers; after all, it is reasonably well established that the ability to read was not a survival skill for people running a business in the medieval world.[5]

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[1] Hoeppner-Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, 1340-1548, pp. 19-20, 181.
[2] Hoeppner-Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 18, 49, 61.
[3] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 232-3
[4] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 233. Clanchy also usefully points out that the term *literatus* in records often indicated the ability to operate in Latin, not the ability to read or write in the vernacular, or could even just mean "exceptional erudition" rather than reading and writing ability: pp. 186, 231.
[5] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 7-9, 125-6, 147-8, 237.

The Archives in London

However that may be, it is obviously not accurate to imagine, as modern society tends to, the medieval world as an illiterate world. Certainly by the period under examination here reading and writing were sufficiently incorporated into society that quasi-literate, or semi-literate, are the most accurate descriptors for medieval urban communities.[6] This means that the records used as evidence in this study would perforce have had a limited audience; there would have been many who could not read them, and these would not always have been the poorest members of society. It is therefore necessary to exercise some restraint in assessing the influence of written documents.

However, it appears that by the late medieval period, people were reasonably comfortable with working with the written word, even if they could not read themselves. Most people probably would have understood what a bond or ordinance was, and understood that it had some official force, even if they could not read the content. Inability to read the document would not necessarily have prevented access to the content, however; it is extremely probable that documents with content relevant to a wide audience could have and would have been read out loud to ensure that everyone knew what was being agreed upon or enshrined. Reading out loud appears to have been the standard mode for medieval people,[7] so to some extent this would have been natural, but it would also have been a practical measure in a quasi-literate society. In particular,

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[6] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 52; Hoeppner-Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 62, 69, 150-1, 160-1.

[7] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 52-3; Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 52, 231, 255, 259, 265, 271; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 164, 170.

French argues convincingly that churchwarden's accounts were used in this way, and my own analysis of the York House Books indicates the same thing.[8]

This means that the effects of the written world were probably relatively widespread; those who could read would have explained the content of proclamations, ordinances, and recognisances to those who could not.[9] In court, judgements such as we have examined thus far would probably have been read out as well as being recorded in the Journals and Repertory books. It would clearly be an anachronistic exaggeration to imagine any kind of mass media campaign in medieval London, but I believe we are on safe ground to envision written documents as the seeds of ideas that their creators could reasonably hope would take root in the wider community as their content was spread and shared.[10]

There are two additional wrinkles to consider here. One is that from the evidence we have seen, written documents still had a somewhat unusual status to medieval people. Although they were relatively common, they also seem to have had a continuous legal force, rather than being the record of an act that was now completed. Accordingly, if changes or additions were made, these changes might have legal force as well, whether they were new additions to an old ordinance - as seen in Chapter Six - or the destruction of one's obligation to serve on a jury, as seen in Chapter Five.[11] Medieval documents were, to modern sensibilities, unusually active in their status, and this must be kept in mind when we assess their content and evaluate how people reacted to them.

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[8] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 50-1; E. May, *'Dyvers Mysdemeanours': Representations of Disorder in York's early 16th Century House Books*, Unpublished MA diss., 2000, pp. 9-20; Rexroth argues that this was done with cases of sexual misconduct recorded in the Journals as well, although his evidence for this is not completely clear: F. Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 292-3.
[9] French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 50, 58.
[10] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 156.
[11] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 193, 265-7.

The final consideration is simply one of audience - although these documents were probably read out, at some point, to a reasonably wide slice of London's society, or at least a reasonably high proportion of Londoners could have learned what was in them, there would also have been those who were not numbered among the intended audience, who perhaps never learned what was in the records we have examined, and this may not have been seen as a problem. In short there were people, probably very many of them, who lived in London, but who were not targeted by, and perhaps to amenable to, the content of the documents this study is based upon.

The 'Invisible' Londoners

Much has been made, throughout this thesis, of the importance of reputation and peer pressure as tools used by medieval authorities to promote conformity and suppress dissent, and we have seen many instances of this tactic being deployed in medieval London. I have argued that in many cases this would have been an effective strategy; medieval people relied upon the personal relationships they formed to find customers and suppliers, to receive credit, to find a marriage partner, and to be accepted into fraternities and parish groups.[12] To gain ill fame would be a potentially crippling disadvantage, both socially and economically. Thus, if the authorities could encourage or create the belief that individuals who behaved in certain ways would lose face in the community, for many the risk would have been too great to contemplate. However, as we have also noted, there would have been people who lived and worked in London, as with any medieval community, yet would have been immune to these weapons.

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[12] French, *People of the Parish*, p. 67; McSheffrey, 'Respectable Masculinity', pp. 269-70; Karras, *Common Women*, p. 26.

These people would largely[13] have been those who lived on the lowest rungs of London society, or to use a somewhat threadbare term, dwelled in its margins. This category would have included outright criminals, such as thieves and forgers who lived entirely outside legal and social norms. We would also include those whose occupations were somewhat in a grey area between tolerable and not. Historians often place prostitutes in this category, since medieval philosophy saw prostitution as somewhat of a necessary evil but individual prostitutes were frequently condemned.[14] Regrators and hucksters, who bought goods (often food) and then tried to resell it at a small profit, probably fit here also; the practice was frowned upon but tolerated within limits. Finally, this category would also include those who were simply poor or disadvantaged, earning a living however they could, perhaps relying on charity occasionally or completely to survive.[15]

What all these types of people would have in common is that they would have no pretensions to respectability as London's elite, and what we might cautiously term mainstream London society, would define it. They would have known that they had little prospect, if any, of climbing the *cursus honorum* and achieving elevated status in the community, or even of finding themselves embraced by respectable Londoners. The way of life of these marginal Londoners would preclude any such transactions. As a result, it would matter little to them what the members of a "club" or social grouping that they could never hope to join thought about them or said about them. If community

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[13] It is possible that aristocrats and their servants would fall under this heading as well; there are complaints to be found about the behaviour of the nobility and their households in the wider community. The aristocracy and those attached to them would have been unlikely to pay much attention to the opinions of commoners, and therefore would not have been concerned about their "fame" in London in the same way as ordinary residents.

[14] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 51-3, 273-5; Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 4-6, 14-18, 20-3, 32-3.

[15] Geremek, *Margins of Society*, pp. 6-11. Geremek argues in particular that one need not commit crimes to be part of the "reprehensible" marginal world.

disapproval, or the spectre of it, was one of the more powerful tools in the arsenal of London's authorities, these perhaps otherwise vulnerable residents of the city would have been particularly invulnerable to its effects.

It is for this reason that several historians of medieval communities believe that this group would have been the one that those in authority were most concerned about, or even afraid of.[16] Frank Rexroth in particular argues that it was this group who motivated most of the social control measures enacted by authorities across England, originally out of fear that the marginal elements of communities could be exploited by French agents during the Hundred Years War. His position is that many social control measures in late medieval London were aimed at containing the threat of this marginal group, and reminding the respectable of the dangers of slipping down into the realm of ill fame.[17] It is certainly possible to imagine this being the case, although in the evidence examined for this study, we lack explicit statements to that effect, or much explicit engagement with society's truly marginal figures at all.

That there were such marginal people in late medieval London is an obvious fact; unfortunately many details about their lives do tend to elude us. Rexroth speculates that they may have been relatively well organized and integrated, which is in some ways similar to Geremek's views on the poor and excluded in medieval Paris.[18] An organized underworld would unquestionably have alarmed the mayors and aldermen of London,

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[16] Geremek, *Margins of Society*, p. 14.

[17] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 18, 29-33, 56-8, 263. Lemert argues that this is generally the case for societies dealing with deviant behaviour, but also points out that if punishment is seen to be unjust, it may in fact encourage future deviation rather than discouraging it. E. Lemert, 'The Concept of Secondary Deviation', in E. Lemert ed. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967) pp. 40-4. This may help explain why the records used in this study were at pains to provide such a cut-and-dried account of offenses and offenders; so that there was no chance of sympathy being generated. Lemert's perspective is useful but should be approached with caution, as he asserts that there was no "generalized public opinion and interest" in pre-modern societies.

[18] Geremek, *Margins of Society*.

although they do not refer to its existence directly. Whether this means that there was no such organization in London, whether the civic authorities failed to note it, or if they did and wanted to downplay its importance and influence, is an open question based on the records under examination here.

We do not know the attitudes of such marginal figures towards authority and mainstream society - if they tried to live up to the expectations of respectability as best they could, whether they simply ignored it as a world they could not enter, or if they despised it. Sociologists who study deviance postulate that what may be defined by authority as deviant behaviour may instead be a group within society following a set of values specific to them, which they believe to be appropriate to their situation or standing. In addition, those who feel excluded or marginalized may pursue deviant behaviour as a reaction to their exclusion, or to try to adapt to a group which they find themselves forcibly categorized with.[19] This perspective can be useful in imagining the status of marginal Londoners; the values and behaviours promoted by the civic elite may not have seemed very relevant to them, may have seemed unattainable, and could have been resented as representative of the system which left them clinging to a precarious social perch. It is also easy to envision the marginalized as a source for unrest and disruption, although this does not seem to have been the case during the time we are concerned with here. Such unrest as is evident, in the form of defiance of authority, appears to have come from members of the mainstream, as noted throughout the thesis and especially in Chapter Six.

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[19] E. Lemert, 'Social Structure, Social Control and Deviation' in E. Lemert ed., *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967) pp. 8, 14-16.

The lack of expressions of dissent from this marginal lower class of non-citizens in London can be partly explained by the nature of the records; as I have argued throughout this analysis, the records were crafted to further the particular agenda of the civic elite; specifically, they were meant to portray the city as well-ruled and well-ordered. It is also possible that those occupying such marginal positions in the city did not express the problems or grievances they had in ways that would have been recorded. Heather Swanson argues that "disadvantaged groups tend to express their discontent within the same group", and this may have been what was going on in late medieval London.[20] It is also often argued that lower-class unrest remained quiescent until given direction by more established figures who would use the threat of the masses to further their own political agenda; Barron advances an example of this taking place in London slightly before the period under examination here.[21]

However important this group may have been in the minds of London's leaders, it is significant that this importance is not really conveyed in the records examined for this study, and indeed the marginal elements of society are mentioned relatively rarely. In part this is no doubt because their transgressions would have largely been dealt with elsewhere, at wardmote courts, ecclesiastical courts, and perhaps even the Sheriffs' courts. In this sense, their failure to appear reflects the nature of the source material. Rexroth's argument that the civic authorities were not concerned with crimes that took place between members of the marginal population, but only took action when their

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[20] Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, p. 90.
[21] C. Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals, 1438-1444', in R. Holt and G. Rosser eds., *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1200-1540*, (London: Longman, 1990) pp. 160-1, 176-8.

actions affected the mainstream, may also explain some of their relative absence from court records.[22]

However, there is another layer of interpretation that can be added as well. The marginal residents of London, who had no pretensions to respectability, probably did not share the values of the governing elite, and may have been ambivalent in their respect for and obedience to the governments' authority, would probably have been a segment of the population that the elite simply wished was not there. By deemphasizing the importance of marginal groups in the official records of the civic government, the official story of what that government did, the impression that this troublesome population did not exist, or at least was not very important, and was certainly not an important challenge to civic authority, is created.

Here again it is possible to argue that the archives promote an agenda, or a version of events that the creators of the records wished to manufacture in the minds of those who read them. Obviously they could not make London's marginal population disappear simply by wishing that it was so, but they could certainly try to persuade those who used the archives that these people were unimportant, not a threat, and perhaps just as importantly, not really a part of London society at all. I believe that overall, the archival agenda was to create and help promote an idealized London, a London in which the civic government was in full control, and one which did not include figures from the margins.

London's Archival Agenda Revisited

This idea of an archival agenda has been central to the analysis performed throughout this dissertation, and although elements of this agenda have been discussed in

[22] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 306.

specific cases it is important to understand the objectives of the civic archive in totality, as it is this that will enable a real understanding of the archives themselves. Overall, the evidence brought forth throughout this discussion, when considered from the perspective on archives outlined in at the outset of the study, brings to light a clear set of values implicit in the records.

I believe that the objectives the authorities of late medieval London had as they created their archive were first, to promote good order in the city based on sober, Christian values shared by residents who lived together in amicable harmony and deference to authority.[23] The primary way that this was to be accomplished was to suggest that such harmony and consensus already existed, and that anyone who dissented from asserted mainstream values were therefore necessarily unsavory and disreputable characters.[24] In addition, the records serve to justify the essentially oligarchic rule of the civic elite, as directed primarily by the group of men who achieved, or could hope to achieve, the status of aldermen. They do so by suggesting that the harmonious society noted above is the creation of, and is being maintained by, the men running the civic government, who take active and successful measures against such problems as do occur and wield their authority fairly and effectively. That debates, disagreements, and divergent points of view among the authorities are almost never included in the records strengthens the appearance of consensus values and united authority.[25] Overall, the records are intended not only to create a particular impression of late medieval London,[26]

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[23] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 37-9.
[24] Karras argues that by establishing what was deviant, legal discourse also asserts power and legitimates actions against people who fall into that category: *Common Women*, p. 13.
[25] Tucker, *Law Courts*, p. 4. While it might be possible to advance the argument that no such disagreements took place, and that London's authorities always agreed on what to do, I find the idea so inherently implausible that I am prepared to dismiss it.
[26] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 114, 153-4, 184.

but also to help create the orderly city that London's leaders wanted to have. Those who consulted the records would hopefully absorb the values espoused in them, and thus be more likely to support the city's apparently successful status quo.[27]

In part this examination of the records of London's civic elite serves as a useful and I think convincing case study for the argument that all studies that use medieval archival sources, and probably studies that use any archival sources, must include this kind of analysis. The creation of an archive is a series of decisions of what to include and what not to include, and how to organize what has been included. These decisions necessarily reflect the value system of the person or persons making the choices, consciously or unconsciously. If we, as scholars, are not to accept unproblematically these value systems when conducting research then we must pay close attention to the composition of our sources as we study them, along with the analysis of their content. In addition, the "archival turn" can be a useful perspective for uncovering the value systems of past societies, a goal which is undoubtedly valuable in and of itself.

As much as I believe this perspective is important, this study did not begin as an inquiry into archive theory or the practice of historical scholarship. It was, of course, intended to be an examination of the community of a medieval English city and the strategies used by its leaders in coping with disorder and misbehaviour. The preceding chapters have laid out a number of these, some familiar and some relatively novel. One very important tool also turned out to be the sources themselves, for the records of London's civic authorities indisputably have an agenda and a purpose. That purpose is to create, both in the minds of the reader and in the community that used the records, a

[27] McSheffrey, 'Fiction in the Archives' pp. 66, 73; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, p. 189.

harmonious city based on deference, shared values, and respect for authority; not the oft-imagined chaotic medieval city, but a city of order.

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